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Borrowings of Neo-Moorish Architecture from Moorish Architecture and their Reinterpretation. Case of the Philippeville Town Hall

Los Préstamos de la Arquitectura Neo-Morisca a la Arquitectura Morisca y su Reinterpretación. El Caso del Ayuntamiento de Philippeville

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ABSTRACT

Charles Montaland, a french architect who carried out many neo-moorish projects in Algeria. One of his most notable works is the Philippeville town hall (now Skikda), completed in the early 1930s. To create this work, the architect drew inspiration from moorish traditions which are mainly represented by the architecture of the medieval Berber dynasties and the Ottoman Kasbah of Algiers. Based on the architectural description of the town hall, the analysis of the city's archives and the study of examples of medieval and Ottoman mosques as well as patio houses of the Kasbah of Algiers, this article attempts to identify the various borrowings taken up in the town hall and their reinterpretation. Besides architectural and decorative elements, the architect also adopted key organizational features from houses and palaces of the Kasbah, such as the sqifa, the wast el-dar, the shin, the byout and the qbou. To enhance the moorish appearance, he incorporated three distinctive mosque features: the minaret, the courtyard, and the dome. The architect successfully merged these elements and apply them to a work that was new in terms of its function, materials and construction techniques.

KEYWORDS

Philippeville Town Hall, traditional architecture, historic monuments, moorish, neo-moorish, borrowings

RESUMEN

Charles Montaland es un arquitecto francés que realizó numerosos proyectos neo-moriscos en Argelia. Una de sus obras más notables es el ayuntamiento de Philippeville (actual Skikda), terminado a principios de la década de 1930. Para crear esta obra, el arquitecto se inspiró en las tradiciones moriscas, representadas principalmente por la arquitectura de las dinastías bereberes medievales y la Kasbah otomana de Argel. A partir de la descripción arquitectural del ayuntamiento, el análisis de los archivos de la ciudad y el estudio de ejemplos de mezquitas medievales y otomanas, así como de casas patio de la Kasbah de Argel, este artículo intenta identificar los diversos préstamos tomados en el ayuntamiento y su reinterpretación. Además de los elementos arquitectónicos y decorativos, el arquitecto adoptó también elementos organizativos clave de las casas y palacios de la Kasbah, como la sqifa, el wast el-dar, el shin, los byout y el qbou. Para realzar el aspecto morisco, incorporó tres características distintivas de las mezquitas: el alminar, el patio y la cúpula. El arquitecto logró fusionar estos elementos y aplicarlos a una obra nueva en cuanto a su función, materiales y técnicas de construcción.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Ayuntamiento de Philippeville, arquitectura tradicional, monumentos históricos, morisco, neo-morisco, préstamos

INTRODUCTION

The neo-moorish style, since its appearance at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, has been the subject of writings by numerous researchers in heritage and art history. Among these researchers, we can mention François Béguin who, in a work dating from the 1980, studies in chronological order the evolution of this style, which he calls «Arabisances», on both an architectural and urban scale in the three Maghreb countries (Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) under the French occupation (Béguin, 1983).

Tunisian art historian Jelidi (2010) analyzes the evolution of this style, which she calls: « hybridation architecturale », in the former French protectorates of the Maghreb: Tunisia and Morocco. In this article, the author is not interested in borrowings from local architecture, but rather in the reasons behind this choice. Algeria is completely excluded from this study, due to its particular political context at the time.

« Hybridation » is the term used by Bel Haj Hamouda Cherif (2018), another Tunisian researcher, to characterize this architectural trend, this time limited to the work of Jacques Marmey in Tunisia.

In the early 2000, Oulebsir (2003) provides an overview of this style in Algeria, particularly in Algiers, from its beginnings to its decline in the early 1930. Although this period, which constitutes the decline of the neo-moorish style in Algiers, is in fact its apogee in Philippeville. More recently, other researchers have dealt directly or indirectly with this style. We can reference Aïche (2015) who discusses of the neo-moorish in an article devoted to the mosaic of the Maison Tossut, but also in a section of a book with Claudine Piaton and Thierry Lochard (Piaton et al., 2016) where they deal with the neo-moorish in the city of Algiers.

Nevertheless, the city of Philippeville and the architect Charles Montaland are almost neglected in all of these writings, even though this city contains at least ten neo-moorish buildings belonging to this architect. All of these structures date back to the 1930, which is considered a period of decline for this style.

However, an article published in 2022 studies the political and socio-cultural context of two african architectural styles: neo-moorish architecture in Algeria and afro-brazilian architecture in Benin. The author, Kelouaze (2022), states that the town of Skikda (formerly Philippeville) was built entirely in the neo-moorish style. In fact, this is the only document we have that mentions neo-moorish architecture in Philippeville.

More recently, a doctoral thesis was defended in 2023 (Chalabi, 2023) on neo-moorish architecture in Algeria and its «patrimonialization». In her work, Amina Chalabi talks briefly about the neo-moorish public buildings in Skikda, including the town hall, which she describes in detail. However, this research deals more with social and political aspects than historical and artistic ones. It is, in fact, the most recent and detailed academic document on the subject.

The first half of the 20th century, particularly the 1930 and 1940 (Paul Cuttoli's mayorship), was the period of great architectural achievements in the city of Philippeville. The city saw the construction of a serie of monumental buildings designed, for the most part, by the architect Charles Montaland, and mostly in a neo-moorish style. Most of these buildings are still in use and have retained their original functions.

Among these, the town hall is one of the city's landmark buildings and one of the key works of its creator, the architect Charles Montaland. It was his first major achievement in Philippeville during the mayorship of Paul Cuttoli, Senator-Mayor of the city from 1929 to 1949. Due to its significant artistic and historical value, the building was officially listed in the Algerian National Heritage Register by a ministerial decree in June 2017 (Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne, 2017).

To create this work, the architect, like all neo-moorish architects, had to draw inspiration from the local architectural culture, whether domestic or religious, represented essentially by the achievements of the medieval Berber dynasties but also those of the Ottomans for about three centuries before the French colonisation. This historical and cultural background serves as the foundation for our analysis. In this article we want to show how the architect took architectural and spatial elements of moorish architecture and reinterpreted them to create a public architecture known as « neo-moorish ».

METHODS

Our research involved an extensive review of the town hall archives, which are located within the building, currently the headquarters of the Popular Communal Assembly of Skikda. These archives include two types of documents: graphic documents drawn up by the architect's office (plans, sections, facades and details at different scales) and written documents (specifications, minutes, invoices, tenders, situations, certificates, estimates, lists, etc.).

Since the built project is almost identical to what is drawn, the study of the archives is almost sufficient for us to restore the graphic file of the building. Nevertheless, in order to update the graphic documents and fill in the gaps, we had to carry out some field checks using accessible tools, namely: a tape measure (for short distances), a laser rangefinder (for long distances) and a photographic camera.

The detailed study of the archives and the consultation of other bibliographical references, in particular the articles in the magazine «Chantiers nord-africains», enabled us to draw up the architectural monograph of the building following the method of Pérouse de Montclos (2003).

For this monograph, we were able to reconstruct the 3D model of the building from which we made all the 2D graphic parts. To do this, we used two software programs: one for 3D modelling, namely SketchUp, from which we were able to draw the various 2D graphic parts (plans, sections and facades) using AutoCAD.

In order to identify and verify the borrowings made by the architect in designing the town hall, we have resorted to a detailed observation and study of the building, and then to a comparison with moorish buildings, in particular the Ottoman houses of the Kasbah and the medieval mosques of the Maghreb, with Sakina Missoum's work on the house of the Kasbah of Algiers (Missoum, 2003) and the works of Georges Marçais (1962, 1926 et 1927) on Muslim art in the Maghreb as our main references.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE STYLE OF THE WORK: NEO-MOORISH

Our research focuses on the neo-moorish style as it was widly adopted in the Maghreb, specifically in Algeria, during the French colonisation and which draws its inspiration from the architectural past of the region: architecture of medieval Spain and the Maghreb and Ottoman Algeria and Tunisia.

In Algeria, the main sources of inspiration for neo-moorish architecture are: the Almoravid mosques of the 11th and 12th centuries, which are the great mosques of Algiers, Tlemcen and Nedroma; the Zianid and Merinid architectural ensembles of the 13th and 14th centuries, in particular el-Mechouar, el-Mansoura and el-Eubbad; and finally, the Algiers Kasbah of the Ottoman period, with its rich domestic and religious architecture.

In Algeria, the colonial administration began to take an interest in the local style from the beginning of colonisation (1830).

At that time, in order to restructure the Kasbah, the military administration had to build new streets, but with the aim of keeping the architecture of the moorish houses by adding a French facade. The two most representative examples of this trend are: the former building of the mining departmenton Bab Azzoun Street, an Ottoman house with a courtyard that develops on two levels with a neo-classical facade; and Dar el-Hamra on Mohamed Bouras Street (ex Philippe), an Ottoman house with a neo-classical facade and a neo-moorish facade (Piaton et al., 2016.).

Some architects adopted this style at the end of the 19th century, such as Albert Ballu, for the design of the casino in Biskra between 1892 and 1898, and Benjamin Bucknall for the restoration of some villas in El-Biar at the end of the 1870. However, their initiatives remained individual (Oulebsir, 2003).

It was under Charles Célestin Jonnart, General Governor of Algeria from 1903 to 1911, and on his initiative through several circulars, that the neo-moorish style became the official style of the State. One attends from then on the creation of the masterpieces of this style of the town of Algiers, in particular: the headquarters of la Dépeche Algérienne and the shops Galeries de France by Henri Petit; the post office and the prefecture by Jules Voinot.

Architectural creations in this new style were not limited to the city of Algiers; during this same period, this style spread to other cities in the country, especially for the design of public buildings, such as the medersa of Tlemcen by Henri Petit and the medersa of Constantine and the railway station of Oran by Albert Ballu.

THE WORK MASTER: CHARLES MONTALAND

Charles-Henri Montaland was a French architect born in Lyon in 1871. He began his architectural studies there at the fine art school before moving to Paris in 1895. He arrived in Algeria in 1905 and remained there until his death in Algiers in 1946 (Hueber, 2016).

Starting from 1905, Montaland served as the architect of Philippeville for nine years. It was during this period that he designed two of the city's main buildings: the municipal theatre in a neo-baroque style and the Meriem Azza Palace in a neo-moorish style.

He was then appointed architect of the colony's schools, dealing in particular with the indigenous schools (Cotereau, 1933). He thus contributed to the establishment of rules for this type of construction and built no less than 60 schools, such as the indigenous primary school for girls in Mostaganem, (L'école de filles indigènes

de Mostaganem, 1929) and the upper primary school for boys in Maison-Carrée (now el-Harrach) (Pane, 1934).

Continuing as an architect for the general government, he succeeded Henri Petit as the deputy inspector general of civil buildings and served on the commissions for historical monuments and ancient theatres. In 1930, he was awarded the title of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur.

By joining the Groupement Algérien des Architectes Modernes in 1933, Montaland himself claimed to be a modern architect, especially from the 1920 onwards with the expansion of the use of reinforced concrete. He is moreover the author in 1927 of the Bonduel building, Berthezène street (now Doctor Saadane Cherif) in Algiers, the first building entirely built in reinforced concrete in Algeria (Le premier immeuble en béton armé construit à Alger, 1929). It is in this same style that he realized the same year another building in Algiers, that of Salama, Michelet street (now Didouche Mourad) (Immeuble moderne à Alger, 1929). Another modern building in Algiers is the student house on Baudin Boulevard (now Colonel Amirouche), built in the early 1930 (Cotereau, 1934). In Philippeville, his most remarkable modern works are the sports park and the handicraft house, both built in the early 1930 (Cotereau, 1933). He concluded his serie of modern buildings by the municipal theatre of Sidi Bel Abbès, built in the mid-1930. (Le théâtre municipal de Sidi-Bel-Abbès, 1938)

However, the architect is most famous for his neo-moorish buildings, particularly those in Philippeville, the first of which was the Meriem Azza Palace, followed some fifteen years later by the town hall, the post office and the railway station (La nouvelle gare de Philippeville, 1936), but also the town hall of Mostaganem (L'hôtel de ville de Mostaganem, 1927), El-Biar post office, (Edifices publics à El-Biar. L'école maternelle et l'hôtel des postes, 1936) and above all the Algerian palace at the colonial exhibition in Paris in 1931 (Le palais de l'Algérie à l'exposition coloniale internationale, 1930). Finally, at the end of the 1930, Montaland began the largest neo-moorish project of his career in Philippeville, namely the « cité indigène ».

Yet, one project particularly highlights the architect's distinctive approach: the municipal theatre of Philippeville, designed in a neo-baroque style and initiated in 1909. This masterpiece stands out not only in the architect's portfolio but also across Algeria during the French occupation, showcasing a distinctly Italian rather than French aesthetic, making it a unique architectural feat in the region.

During his forty years of practice in Algeria, Montaland created works that were as numerous as they were diverse in style, func-

tion and size. He created theatres, schools, town halls, post offices, apartment buildings, etc. But his most important work, designed in 1930 at the beginning of the Paul Cuttoli mayorship in Philippeville in a neo-moorish style, remains his town hall, which is the object of study in this article.

PHILIPPEVILLE TOWN HALL

As previously highlighted, the town hall represents Charles Montaland's most significant neo-moorish achievement in Philippeville during the tenure of Mayor Paul Cuttoli. Situated north of the city's colonial core and directly facing the sea, the town hall forms part of a quintet of neo-moorish structures, four of which Montaland designed within the same decade. These buildings, all featuring their own gardens, are strategically located on the same block along the seafront boulevard. Moving from east to west, they include the town hall, the central police station, the syndicate of initiatives, the Bank of Algeria (designed by Gustave Umdenstock), and the post office. The construction of the town hall spanned from 1930 to 1932, led by the Algerian firm Louis Grasset, with various suppliers and subcontractors contributing to the project.

The town hall is a compact building of a more or less rectangular shape with a surface area of approximately 2040 m², 68 m long from east to west and 32 m wide from north to south. It is hollowed out in the centre of a large void occupying 10 % of the total surface area of the right of way and consisting of two courtyards. At the northeast corner of the building stands a square-based minaret occupying 30 m² of space and rising to a height of 35 m. In front of the eastern facade of the building is a garden (ex Aristide Briand Square), partly rectangular and partly semi-circular, with a total surface area of around 800 m².

The building, according to the architect's original plans, is made up of three distinct parts in terms of their functions and the treatment of their facades. These parts are clearly visible on the northern facade, where they are expressed by different offsets, templates and treatments. The minaret belongs to the eastern part of the building.

The eastern part, dedicated to receptions, includes the two large galleries (the one on the ground floor and the one on the first floor), the wedding hall with its outbuildings and the festival hall.

The central part includes the services of the town council with: the archive rooms in the basement; on the ground floor, the coun-

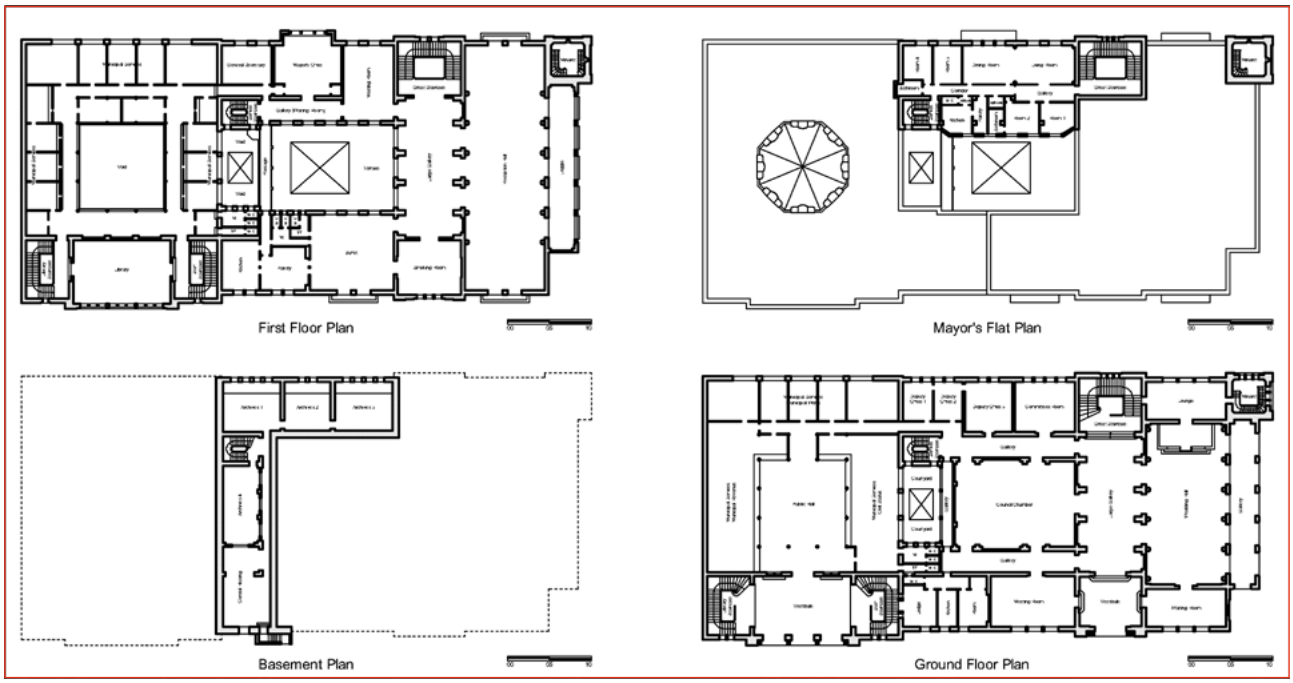

Figure 1. Plans of the town hall. Source: Author, 2021.

cil chamber, the meeting and committee rooms, the offices of the deputies and the caretaker's lodge; on the first floor, the mayor's office, the secretary-general's office, the buffet and its outbuildings; and finally, the mayor's flat on the second floor.

The western part, dedicated to municipal services, contains all the offices and services organised on two levels around a large public hall with a library on the first floor (Figure 1).

The two main building materials of the town hall are brick masonry and reinforced concrete. All the walls are made of masonry. The reinforced concrete is reserved for the floors structure, domes, lanterns and the framework of the minaret. This makes it a building with an orientalist appearance but with modern construction techniques and materials. As for the infrastructure, the building is erected on 178 Franki piles supporting reinforced concrete footings and measuring an average of 8.5 m in depth.

The building faces outwards on three free facades, the fourth of which is adjoined by the central police station:

- The southern facade opens onto Gustave Passerieu avenue (now Zighoud Youcef), an important street which serves the five buildings mentioned above (all the entrances to these buildings open onto this street) and which separates them from several apartment blocks designed in part by Charles Montaland;
- The eastern facade overlooks Georges Clémenceau

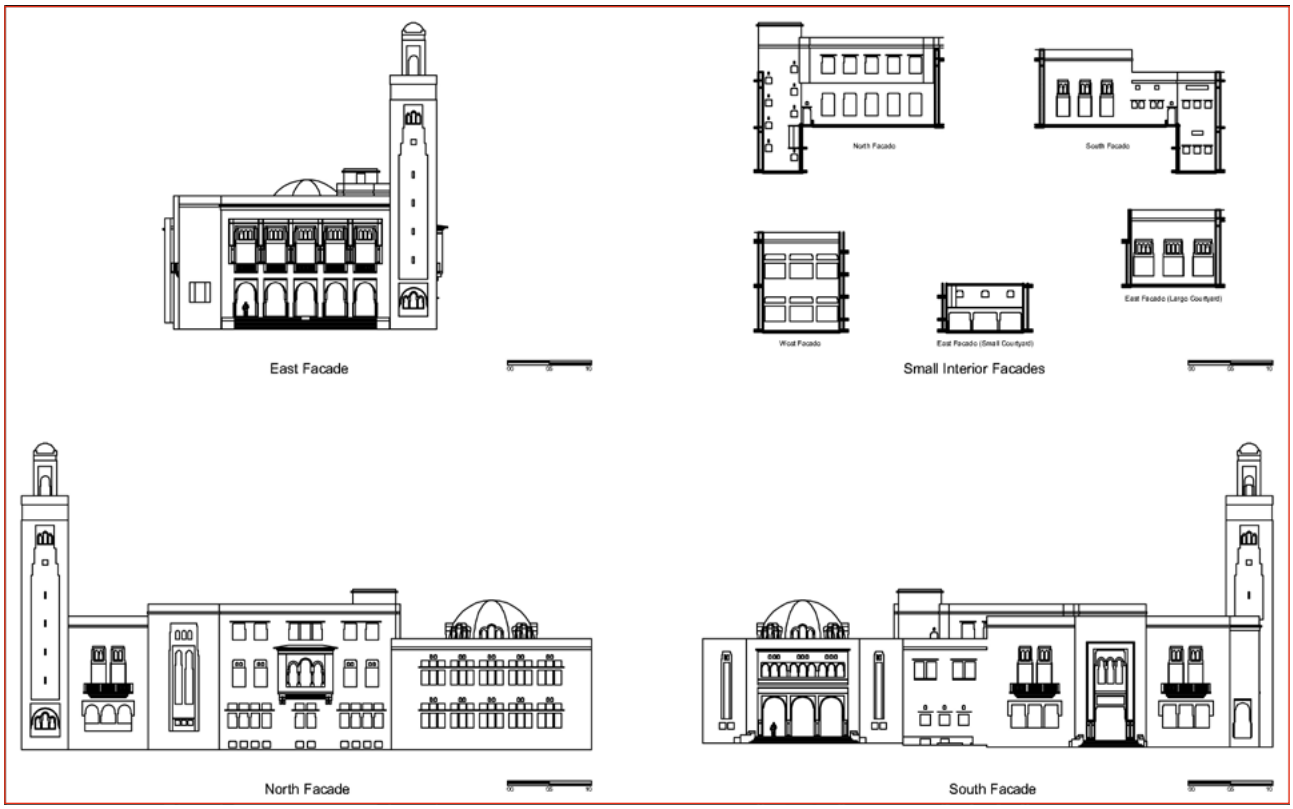

Figure 2: Facades of the town hall. Source: Author, 2021.

street (now Didouche Mourad), the main axis of the city, which separates the town hall from the de Marqué square (now 1er Novembre 1954) which, in turn, has always been the large and main square of the city;
- The northern facade faces the seafront boulevard, a road that separates the city from the port.

The building is also open to its two inner courtyards through five small facades which are as well treated as the large outer facades (Figure 2).

In addition to the architectural value of the building, the town hall has other categories of heritage assets, including:

- Paintings: more than a hundred painting boards (works of art), eighty-three of which are listed as movable cultural good by the Ministry of Culture. (Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne, 2009).
- Sculptures: four bronze sculptures, three of which are installed outside on the garden terrace.
- Gardens: a semi-circular garden in front of the town hall is an integral part of the building's design.

BORROWINGS FROM MOORISH ARCHITECTURE AND THEIR REINTERPRETATION

In addition to the architectural elements borrowed from moorish architecture, such as arches, columns, capitals, clerestories, stucco, faience or mosaic decorations, moorish carved woodwork (railings, staircase banisters, etc.), the architect also took over spatial and architectural entities. It is this type of borrowing that we have concentrated on in this article. In its overall appearance, the town hall resembles a moorish mosque, while the municipal services section is organized around a central space, mirroring the layout of houses in the Kasbah of Algiers.

BORROWINGS FROM THE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE KASBAH OF ALGIERS

As mentioned above, the western part, that of the municipal services, has an organisation inspired by that of the moorish houses of the Kasbah of Algiers. It is accessed through a large vestibule which opens onto a large public hall around which are organised all the counters and offices developed on two levels and served by galleries with arcades.

The main compositional elements of patio houses can be seen, namely:

THE VESTIBULE (THE SQIFA)

This entrance vestibule is inspired by the *sqifa* of the entrance to the moorish houses of the Kasbah of Algiers. Like these, it is a space that both separates and connects the outside (the street) and the inside (*wast el-dar*). This vestibule communicates with the street through three large doors and with the hall through a single central door (unlike the traditional *sqifa*, which has only one door on each side); this is in response to the large flow of the public, bearing in mind that this vestibule serves not only the hall on the ground floor, but also the library, the counters and the offices on the first floor through two large staircases: the library staircase and that of the staff.

Unlike the Casbah house, where tradition demands the preservation of the privacy of the occupants of the house, hence the presence in general of a chicane entrance, in the town hall this problem does not arise, in fact, the vestibule and the hall commu-

Figure 3. Left. Niches with basket-handle arches, the town hall vestibule. Source: Author, 2019. Right. Benches with basket-handle arches, the sqifa of Palais des Raïs (Bastion 23). Source: under Creative Commons license from Wikipedia https://tinyurl.com/v5tzdwut.

nicate visually through the glass surfaces that separate them and the door does not open onto a corner of the hall but directly onto the middle of one of its sides.

On either side (right and left) of the door separating the vestibule from the public hall there is a bench built of masonry covered with tiles; a reinterpretation of the *doukkana* of the traditional *sqifa*: a bench built into the thickness of the wall, surmounted by a basket-handle arch that rests on twin columns, and which serves to make visitors comfortable while they wait or talk. Behind this bench, on the other side (the public hall side) of the wall and on either side of the door, two niches on each side are made in the thickness of the wall and surmounted by two basket-handle arches resting in the middle on two twin columns; this is exactly the configuration of the *dakkakin* of the large houses in the Kasbah (Figure 3).

THE PATIO (THE WAST EL-DAR)

The architect, in his design of the municipal services block, borrowed from the houses of the Kasbah the *wast el-dar*, literally the « centre of the house », to make it the « public hall ». Just as in the houses of the Kasbah of Algiers, the entire western part of the town hall is organised around this space.

In the present study case, the patio is mainly used as a waiting area for the public. Unlike the *wast el-dar* of the large moorish houses, this hall is not open-air, but covered by a large dome that allows its protection from rain and sun as well as its natural ventilation and lighting (Figure 4).

This hall, which extends over two levels, is surrounded by arcades on its four sides: three arcades per side. The arches of this

Figure 4. Left. The patio of the town hall, surrounded by arcades and covered with a dome. Source: Author, 2019. Right. Palais des Raïs (Bastion 23), wast el-dar. Source : under Creative Commons license from Wikipedia https://tinyurl.com/y9rxztej

hall are stylised arches, unlike those of the Kasbah, which are broken and overstepped. Each of the arches is framed by a band of Tunisian faience tiles and supported by two simple cylindrical columns covered with mosaics in yellow, green, brown and gold tesserae. These mosaics are set in moorish designs in the upper part and form the capitals (Cotereau, 1933).

THE FIRST FLOOR GALLERY (THE SHIN)

As in the patio houses of the Kasbah of Algiers, and given that the central space is the void over the hall, the spaces on the first floor are all served by an arcaded gallery that closes off this void. However, on the ground floor, the office spaces open directly onto the hall, so there is no need for a service space.

This first floor gallery opens onto the ground floor via wooden railings reminiscent of those in the houses of the Kasbah (Figure 5).

THE ROOMS (THE BYOUT)

For the layout of the office spaces, the architect adopted the same principle of organising of the *byout* of the courtyard house around the patio. Unlike the houses in the Kasbah, which can only have one room on each side of the patio, in the town hall there are several offices on each side, with the exception of the south side, which is occupied by the vestibule on the ground floor and the library on the first floor.

These offices do not open onto the hall (on the ground floor) and the gallery (on the first floor) through doors as in the houses

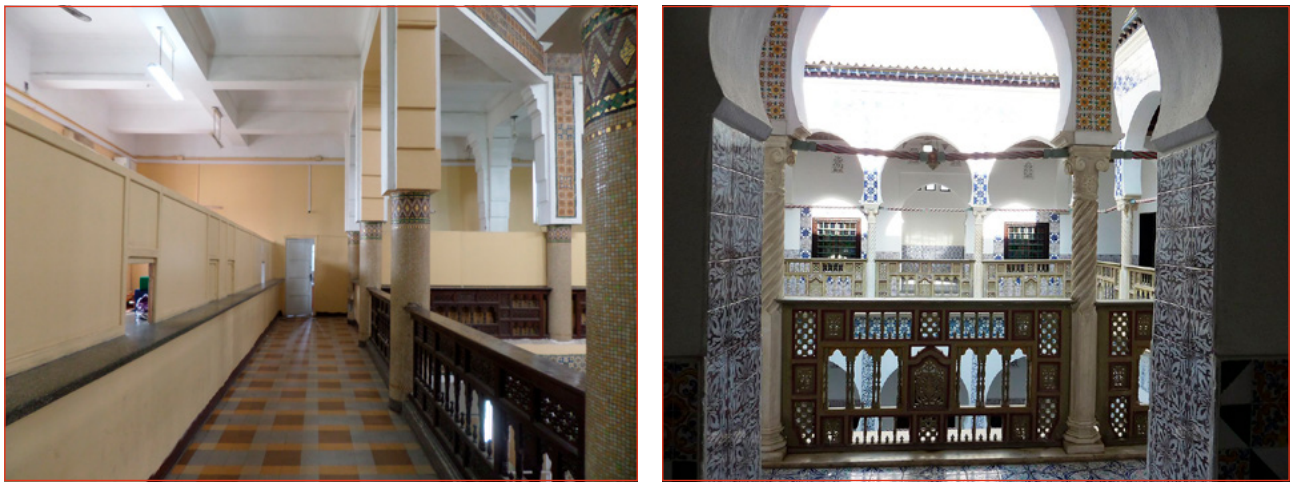

Figure 5. Left. Upstairs gallery of the town hall. Source: Author, 2019. Right. Palais des Raïs (Bastion 23), upstairs gallery. Source: under Creative Commons license from Wikipedia https://tinyurl.com/yhzu27y3

of the Kasbah, but through simple counters: a marble counter on the ground floor and small openings on the first floor. The majority of these offices open onto the outside through large openings, onto the waterfront on the north side and onto the courtyard on the east side, as opposed to the rooms in the Casbah houses which only open onto the patio through a door and a maximum of two windows on either side of the door.

THE RECESS (THE QBOU)

The qbou is a recess in the back wall opposite the front door of the rooms in the Kasbah of Algiers. It is a sort of alcove, often marked by a semicircular arch, with an average width of 2 m, the depth of which depends on the availability of space outside. When this recess is on the upper floors and overlooks the street, it takes the form of an corbelling that can project up to 50 cm.

This borrowing is not located in the municipal services like the four previous ones, but rather in the mayor's office on the first floor of the central part. This recess is 140 cm deep, compared to a maximum of 50 cm in the Kasbah. This was made possible by the use of reinforced concrete, which allowed for relatively large overhangs.

This space is largely open to the outside through three large windows with arches supported by four marble columns. The qbous of the Kasbah, on the other hand, are opened, if at all, only by two small windows located in the narrow side walls and placed at the height of a seated person.

On the facade, this corbelling is supported by reinforced concrete brackets: a reinterpretation of the inclined wooden logs that support the qbous in the Kasbah of Algiers. In addition to the glazed

Figure 6. Corbelling of the mayor's office. Source: Author, 2019.

windows, arches, columns and brackets, this corbelling is enhanced on the outside by cornices, a frieze and a large surface sculpted in bas-relief, in contrast to the austere qbous of the Kasbah, which has no ornamentation on the outside and whose expression on the facade is limited to simple blind volumes (Figure 06).

BORROWINGS FROM THE RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE OF THE MAGHREB

When we look at the town hall, we have the impression that it is a moorish mosque, with its minaret and dome, but also its inner courtyard, seen from above. Indeed, these are the three elements that the architect borrowed from moorish architecture to give his work the appearance of a mosque.

THE MINARET

The minaret of the town hall is inspired by the moorish minarets represented by the most original, oldest and best preserved of its kind, namely the minaret of the Almohad mosque of the Koutoubia.

Of the three famous Almohad minarets, the Koutoubia minaret is the most representative of this style: the Giralda in Seville was heavily modified to serve as the bell tower of the Cathedral, and the Hassan Tower in Rabat was never completed.

Before the Almohad period, the minarets had a square base, but did not yet have the moorish shape that we know, they were inspired above all by the minarets of Damascus, such as the great mosques of Kairouan and Cordoba.

The Almoravid mosques, for their part, did not initially have minarets: these were all added later, namely by the Zianids in the case of the great mosques of Algiers, Tlemcen and Nedroma.

As for the dynasties after the Almohads, notably the Merinids, they were strongly inspired by the Almohad minarets to build their own.

Same as the example of the Koutoubia, the minaret of the town hall consists of two superimposed entities: a tower with a square base and a lantern surmounted by a small dome (with a circular base and broken profile at the town hall; with melon-shaped sides at the Koutoubia); of similar proportions but of much smaller dimensions. The four facades of the minaret of the town hall are identical, apart from a few details in its lower part, as it is stuck to the building by the southern and western facades (Figure 7).

The decoration of the facade of the minaret of the town hall, simpler than that of the Koutoubia, is essentially composed of bays, recesses and niches of rectangular (sort of loopholes), square or semicircular forms and large surfaces covered with ceramic tiles. Nevertheless, there are obvious similarities between these two minarets, notably the two wide ceramic bands that surround the upper parts of the tower and the lantern.

At the Koutoubia, as in the majority of moorish minarets, the different floors of the tower are accessed by a staircase or ramp that develops around a core. This core is the central element of the minaret's structure; it is also the core that, by extending beyond the tower, constitutes the lantern. In the case of the town hall, the structure of the minaret is essentially a reinforced concrete post-and-beam system, so the architect did not use a structural core in his design. The centre of the tower is therefore occupied by a lift, while the staircase occupies the south-west corner of the minaret.

Figure 7. Left. The minaret of the town hall seen from the terrace. Source: Author, 2019. Right. The minaret of the Koutoubia. Source: under Creative Commons license from Wikipedia https://tinyurl.com/ms85x44z

The lantern, on the other hand, is simply placed on the last floor of the tower.

THE COURTYARD

The majority of mosques in the Muslim world, including those in the Maghreb, have a courtyard that occupies a large part of the lot. The Ottoman mosques of Algiers are an exception: they either have a very small courtyard (e.g. the Ali Bitchin Mosque) or no courtyard at all (e.g. the Pêcherie Mosque).

The courtyard of the town hall is in fact a merger of two courtyards of different shapes and sizes: a small courtyard of about 40 m^2 starting from the ground floor and a large courtyard of about 160 m^2 starting from the first floor, i.e. a total of about 200 m^2 (Figure 8).

Mosque courtyards are generally used and lived in: they can be used, among other things, as ablutions areas with water basins or fountains, but also as prayer areas in good weather. Unlike the courtyards of mosques, the two courtyards of the town hall are not intended to be lived in, but rather have a purely technical role;

Figure 8. The courtyard of the town hall: the interior facades and lantern of the council chamber in the middle. Source: Author, 2019.

they allow for natural ventilation and lighting of the spaces around them but also below them, i.e.:

- Ventilation and side lighting through windows for the spaces surrounding the courtyards;
- Ventilation and zenithal lighting through small windows in the lanterns of the council chamber in the large courtyard and the archive room in the small courtyard.

The courtyards of moorish mosques are usually surrounded by galleries with arcades, one of which gives access to the prayer room. In the town hall, the two courtyards are not surrounded by galleries or arcades, with the exception of the lower arcaded gallery that borders the small courtyard on the east side; they receive the small interior facades: windows of different shapes and sizes according to the spaces.

Figure 9. The dome of the town hall seen from the terrace. Source: Author, 2019.

THE DOME

The dome of the town hall is hemispherical with an octagonal base. The use of octagonal forms has existed since the beginning of Muslim architecture in the Maghreb: the circular-based dome of the great mosque of Kairouan is supported by an octagonal mass on a square plan.

But the use of octagonal domes is especially widespread in the mosques of Algiers from the Ottoman period, of which the main ones are: the Ali Bitchin Mosque (1622), the oldest Ottoman mosque that remains today; and the Ketchaoua Mosque (1794), which was completely redesigned at the beginning of the French occupation to become the cathedral of Algiers, and of which only writings and graphic material remain.

The dome that most resembles that of the town hall, of the last two, is that of the Ketchaoua mosque: a large octagonal dome covering the central and square space of the prayer hall (public hall for the town hall) and pierced by a total of twenty-four small win-

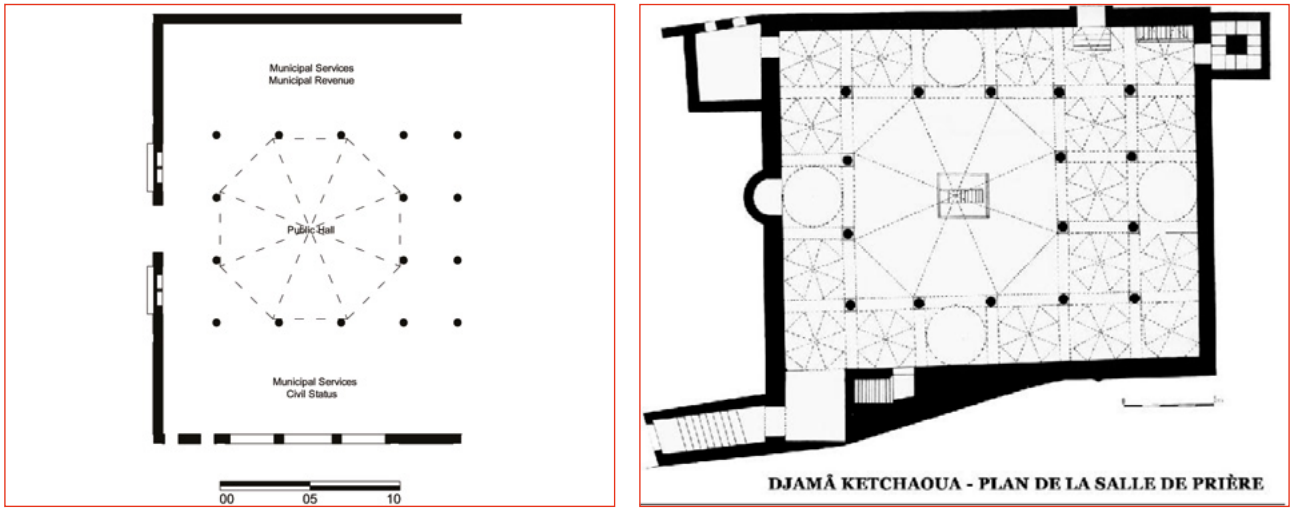

Figure 10. Left. Plan of the public hall of the town hall. Source: Author, 2021. Right. Plan of the prayer room of the Ketchaoua mosque. Source: Royalty-free image. https://tinyurl.com/y4b879kr *

* Plan of the former configuration of the Ketchaoua mosque (during the Regency of Algiers) according to the findings of Amable Ravoisié in 1842.

dows (eight groups of three windows for the eight sides) in the shape of a semicircle (Figure 9). This dome does not only resemble that of the town hall by its shape, but also by its dimensions: approximately 12 m in diameter for the Ketchaoua Mosque and 10 m for the town hall.

In the Ketchaoua mosque as in the town hall, this dome is supported by twelve columns. It is supported directly on the eight columns in the middle, and through the intermediary of shell trunks on the four columns in the corners, in the case of Ketchaoua. In the case of the town hall, the four columns of the corners participate in supporting the load of the dome through reinforced concrete beams (Figure 10).

In the dome of Ketchaoua, the three windows in each side are identical and arranged in a pyramidal shape: two windows form the base and one window forms the top. As for the dome of the town hall, in each of the eight sides there is a group of three round-headed windows: a large central window on either side of which are two smaller windows.

The dome of the town hall is not entirely opaque like that of Ketchaoua: it is made of « translucent concrete », allowing, through the glass bricks that cover its upper part, more zenithal illumination, in addition to the illumination provided by the twenty-four side windows.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we closely examined architectural plans, facades, and various historical texts to understand how architect Charles Montaland was able to respond to the requirements of the client, which consisted of creating a modern public facility with a moorish appearance, therefore in the « neo-moorish » style.

Montaland effectively diversified and combined his sources of inspiration and borrowings from moorish architecture and adapted them to create a work that is modern in its materials and construction techniques and also in its function. He did not limit himself to one type of architecture, but drew inspiration from both the religious and the domestic to create an architecture that is neither religious nor domestic, but public and administrative.

Dawing inspiration from domestic architecture, Montaland adapted key elements from the houses of the Kasbah of Algiers to meet the building's specific functions. Namely: the *sqifa* to create the entrance vestibule; the *wast el-dar* to create the public hall; the *byout* to create the offices; and finally the *qbou* to enhance the value of the mayor's office and to highlight it on the facade.

To give the town hall the appearance of a moorish mosque, he borrowed three of the most characteristic elements of moorish religious architecture: the square minaret, the courtyard and the octagonal dome, while modifying their function, especially those of the courtyard and the minaret, to adapt them to the new use.

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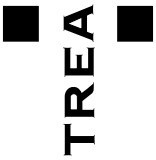

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