

New Moorish architectural identity in Tlemcen, Algeria

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Abstract: In Algeria, the city of Tlemcen is home to 60% of the country's Arab-Islamic architectural heritage, also known as Moorish. During the French colonization, the rich Moorish historical and architectural heritage was largely diminished. The architecture of Tlemcen's historic old town was gradually replaced by classical architecture in the early days of colonization, and then by modern architecture from 1940 onwards. After the independence in 1962, the city has carried out huge programs of facilities and new housing, based on modern architectural principles. In 2011, Tlemcen was designated a "Capital of Islamic Culture" and, in preparation for this international cultural event, new cultural facilities and hotels have been built, inspired by Moorish heritage. Given the heterogeneity of references and in particular the identity crisis ensuing in architecture in Tlemcen, this event was the key moment for validating a stylistic choice, which directly recounts the history of the city. The question is: what authenticity is expressed by the current use of the Moorish referent? Is it technical and material authenticity, or merely symbolic and cultural genuineness? This study delves into the question of identity in architecture. It analyses the new Moorish-style buildings in Tlemcen and highlights their contribution to the quest for a local identity and the ambition to produce local architecture. The article supports the hypothesis that architecture is an effective means of expressing identity and that it has always had, and continues to have, a close relationship with memory. The methodology is based on a combination of several investigative tools: surveys, photographs and archive consultation. These tools helped develop a building analysis grid, which serves as a repertory for describing the buildings, according to two levels of reading of the architectural work. We have chosen three Moorish and four contemporary buildings to which the different criteria of the analysis grid are applied. The results of the analysis of the new buildings show that, in a way, they enabled to establish continuity and dialogue with the Moorish heritage.

Keywords: Moorish-style, revival, authenticity, identity, contemporaneity

INTRODUCTION

According to Marçais (1950): "Tlemcen has long symbolized the Muslim city through the quality of its monuments". Indeed, Tlemcen has witnessed the passage of several Arab-Muslim dynasties (Almoravid, Almohad, Zianid and Merinid), all of which have left their mark on the town, testifying to its history. Tlemcen alone comprises 60% of the country's Arab-Islamic architectural heritage (Cote, 2014). This makes it one of the region's richest heritage sites, with many fine monuments, such as the great mosque dating from the 11th century, the governors' palace "El Mechouar" and the Sidi Hassen mosque built in the 12th century, as well as the remains of the ancient Almohad ramparts and the Mansourah archaeological site. This heritage is also referred to as Moorish, in reference to its Moorish architecture, which owes its name to the 10th-century Almoravids, masters of Marrakech and the Maghreb (Zerrouki, 2021).

During the French colonization, Tlemcen's rich Moorish historical and architectural heritage suffered extensive erasure and destruction. The city was partially remodeled according to the French ideology that justified colonialism as a civilizing project aimed at modernizing and transforming colonial territories.

From 1842 to 1903, a series of radical transformations changed its spatial and morphological structure (Kari et al., 2021). The advent of colonialism marked a break with its traditional architecture, but also upheavals and changes in architectural production. As a result, the architecture of the historic old town was gradually replaced by classical architecture in the early days of colonization, and then by modern architecture from 1940 onwards.

After 1962 – the year of the country's independence – the pressure of demographic growth and population movements led Tlemcen to produce a large number of housing units and facilities, whose design was modelled on the modern, standardized architectural model derived from the Athens Charter, in which the bar and tower had prevailed. The emergency situation had taken its toll on the question of finding a compromise between "tradition" and "modernism". It was only when the city of Tlemcen was designated a "Capital of Islamic Culture" by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) for 2011 that the architectural and urban value of the city's old quarters was recognized. In addition, a number of new cultural buildings were erected to coincide with this international cultural event, such as the Andalusian Studies Center, the Mo-

hamed Farah Exhibition Pavilion, the Imama Islamic Institute, the Imama Mohamed Dib Library and the Mansourah Cultural Palace, which had all displayed an architectural identity bearing the Moorish symbolic referent.

The watchword guiding all these new cultural achievements was dialogue with the Moorish referent. These new buildings expressed the desire to perpetuate the city's ancient architectural traditions. We hypothesize that, faced with a situation of identity crisis in architecture, the international Islamic cultural event was the key moment for validating this stylistic choice, which directly tells the story of the city. The Moorish heritage corresponds to what Alois Riegl called "desired monuments", with the difference that their memorial value is conferred both by their creator and by posterity (Popescu, 2004). Today, you cannot walk around Tlemcen without noticing that: alongside the monuments and historic sites that bear witness to its prosperous Arab-Islamic past, many new buildings are emerging, displaying a language with Islamic heritage references, at least at first glance. This observation has obviously been reinforced in the wake of its designation as the "Capital of Islamic Culture 2011".

A question arises: What authenticity is expressed by the current use of the Moorish referent? Is it technical and material authenticity, or just symbolic and cultural genuineness? This article delves into the question of identity in architecture. It analyses the new Moorish-style buildings in Tlemcen and highlights their contribution to the quest for a local identity and the ambition to produce local architecture. This article supports the hypothesis that architecture is an effective means of expressing identity, and that it has always had, and continues to have, a close relationship with memory.

LITERATURE REVIEW: AUTHENTICITY AND IDENTITY IN ARCHITECTURE

The notion of authenticity originated with the Venice Charter (1964), which requires that the restoration of historic monuments and sites should always be preceded and accompanied by a study of the archives, and which prohibits any alterations whatsoever except where applicable (Hsieh, 2015). Conceived in the spirit of the Venice Charter and as an extension to it, the NARA Declaration (1994), in particular the provisions of Article 10, stipulates: "*Authenticity [...] Its role is crucial in any scientific study, conservation or restoration work, as well as in the procedure for inclusion on the World Heritage List or in any other cultural heritage inventory*" (ICOMOS, 1994). The question of authenticity is inevitable when we talk about heritage conservation. Understanding the history and significance of a site over time is crucial to identifying its authenticity (ICOMOS, 1996). Architecture also represents a form of human expression that is established over time.

However, it remains fragile, malleable, even unstable, to the point of being maintained, restored, transformed, and sometimes even destroyed (Verdier, 2014). The authenticity of a building arises at the time of its transformation or renewal, which is in fact limited by the notion of authenticity, which implies technical, material, symbolic and cultural values. Authenticity raises questions when it comes to modifying or rebuilding a building. According to Thierry Verdier (2001), all architecture is resistance. Through its materiality, as through its presence, architecture is what remains. Architecture has always had an obvious link with time. Through the built that remains, and through the memory that is rebuilt, the architect is captured by temporality. "*Every architectural gesture, every project, every realization, every attitude, intends to be a posture of the present, but we know very well that every work of art is a rewriting of the past*" (Verdier, 2001).

The question of authenticity in architecture is its existence, which goes beyond the question of truth to reach a kind of excellence of the true (Verdier, 2014). Schnell and German (2014) have focused on concepts related to the notion of authenticity in architecture. In their view, the right balance needs to be struck between "truth and falsehood, accuracy and deception, the original, the copy, the fake". Moreover, Edwar Al Kharrat (2004), like the provisions of the Cracow International Charter (ICOMOS, 2000), specifies that from an axiomatic point of view, it is an illusion to think that a ready-made projection of a historical age could be transposed into the present; the past cannot be copied or repeated. The relevance of architecture often lies in its ability to render perceptible the abstraction of an idea, which is in essence linked to the past, on what we perceive as the tip of our dome of the future. Memory then becomes the selection of our experiences (Verdier, 2001).

On another note, and according to the San Antonio Declaration, we speak of identity "if the local population identifies with the site and what identity the site reflects" (ICOMOS, 1996). Identities are social constructs, which actors appropriate in various ways (Eckmann, 2004). The concept of identity has evolved in its own way in the face of globalization and has broadened as its links with place have become increasingly complex (Jones, Pappas, 2023). According to Jan Assmann (1992), an identity can be constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed: "*identity is therefore changeable, understood as an ongoing process, and does not revolve around what we were or could have been, but refers to what we have become through our collective history and our personal trajectories*".

Memory is in fact a central aspect of identity. Architecture has always had a close relationship with memory. According to Thierry Verdier (2001): "*Architecture is often no more than a summons to memory*". But are there any constants that underpin identity? Yes, in fact, according to Jean-Paul Cassulo (2016), permanence, recognition of the same, difference within the same cultural corpus and belonging to a whole identifiable by its components, are the four constants that found identity. As to the question of 'how to put architecture – and therefore architects – back at the service of a strong identity?' Jean-Paul Cassulo explains that the first thing to do is to identify and understand the territories in which it is established, and then to draw on the materials (stone, earth, light, plants) that occupy these territories to create architecture with them.

The Amsterdam Declaration of 1975 emphasized essential considerations, including that today's architecture is tomorrow's heritage: "*We must do everything we can to ensure that our contemporary architecture is of the highest quality*". In this sense, Carmen Popescu (2004) points out that the expression of identity through architecture is inescapable: "*When we begin to wonder about how to express identity in the 21st century, architecture proves to be an effective instrument: a public art par excellence [...], welcoming foreign visitors and offering them the quintessence of the country that produced it. Influenced by the climate and built with the materials of the soil in which it is erected, architecture also reflects the level of culture of its builders. In this way, the image of a nation is built at the same time as its architecture*".

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that identity and authenticity are linked, as stated in the Cracow Charter (ICOMOS, 2000): "*Identity is [...] the common reference both to the present values emanating from a community and to the values of the past identified in authenticity*". More radically, Edwar Al-Kharrat (2004) finds that the two notions of authenticity and identity have a mutual relationship of intersection, interpenetration, and interdependence. Nevertheless, in his view, authenticity, like identity, can be challenged by the emergence of a certain degree of 'globalization' in the sense of standardization and levelling, thus erasing distinctive characteristics.

METHODOLOGY

A field survey was carried out in the old town of Tlemcen, based on a qualitative sample of buildings constructed in two periods: Moorish buildings inherited from the medieval period, and buildings constructed on the eve of Tlemcen's designation as the "Capital of Islamic Culture in 2011". The aim of this approach is to verify the degree of authenticity achieved by the buildings of the 2011 cultural event, compared with Moorish heritage buildings. This study is based on a combination of several investigative tools: surveys, photographs, and archive consultation. Based on these tools, a building analysis grid was developed, which serves as a directory of building descriptions. For our study, we have chosen three Moorish and four contemporary buildings, to which the various criteria of the analysis grid are applied. Our analysis is based on two levels of reading of the architectural work (Mahbub, 2020; Martin, 1947):

1. The basic principles of Moorish architecture:
 - Geometry;
 - Light;
 - Architectural elements;
 - Unity inside, expressiveness outside;
 - Introversion.
2. Decorative elements of Moorish architecture:
 - Building materials;
 - Colour;

Tab. 1. Principles of Moorish architecture. (Source: Authors, 2023)

Moorish architectural principles									
Basic principles					Decorative elements				
Geometry	Light	Architectural elements	Unity inside, expressiveness outside	Introversion	Building materials	Colour	Calligraphy	Vegetal elements and arabesques	

Moorish buildings in Tlemcen (analysis of examples)

During the French colonial period, notably in 1872, Edmond Duthoit, architect engaged with the French department of historic monuments, was sent to Algeria as the first chief architect of historic monuments. His aim was to identify and survey buildings representative of Moorish architecture. Edmond Duthoit had worked on several monuments in Tlemcen. We focus on three monuments:

1. The Great Mosque of Tlemcen, built in 1136 by the founder of the Almoravid dynasty, Yousef Ibn Tachfine;
2. The Sidi Belhacen mosque, built in 1297 by the ruler of the Zianid dynasty, said Othman ibn Yahya Yaghmurâsan;
3. Sidi Boumediene mosque, built in 1339 by the Merinid sultan Abou l'Hassan Ali.

The three historic monuments are classified as national heritage. They are located in the old town of Tlemcen, known as the medina. Its compact urban fabric is structured by streets and alleyways serving the dwellings (Fig. 1). Table 2 presents the three Moorish buildings in Tlemcen. It specifies the basic principles and decorative elements of Moorish architecture applied to these buildings.

Figure 2 concerns the Great Mosque of Tlemcen and shows its floor plan, roof, exterior envelope, and interior decorative elements. Figure 3 shows the plan, main façade and interior decorative elements of the Sidi Belhacen mosque. Figure 4 shows the

- Calligraphy;
- Vegetal elements and arabesques.

Table 1 presents the principles of Moorish architecture. It shows that Moorish architecture is based on basic principles, as well as decorative elements. Decorations were among the most important unifying aspects of Moorish architecture (Mahbub, 2020). Moorish buildings offer a perfect blend of architecture and ornament: "Ornamentation is added to architecture like a rich fabric covering the interior walls of the building and, more rarely, its exterior as well" (Martin, 1947). As for the forms of these buildings, they are simple: "Stripped of this cladding, architecture is most often reduced to simple, static forms like the cube and the hemisphere of a dome" (Martin, 1947). Moorish architecture is distinguished by: "decoration and polychromy" (Benyoucef, 2010). Relative preference is given to interior decoration over exterior expression. Moreover, light is an important material (Bonnéric, 2013).

CASE STUDIES

Table 1 shows the combination of criteria on which Moorish architecture is based, allowing us to deduce whether the new buildings erected for the 2011 international event meet these criteria. This comparative study of Moorish and contemporary buildings should enable us to determine the type of authenticity between old and new buildings.

plan, exterior envelope and interior decorative elements of the Sidi Boumediene mosque. Figure 5 shows details of the mosques.

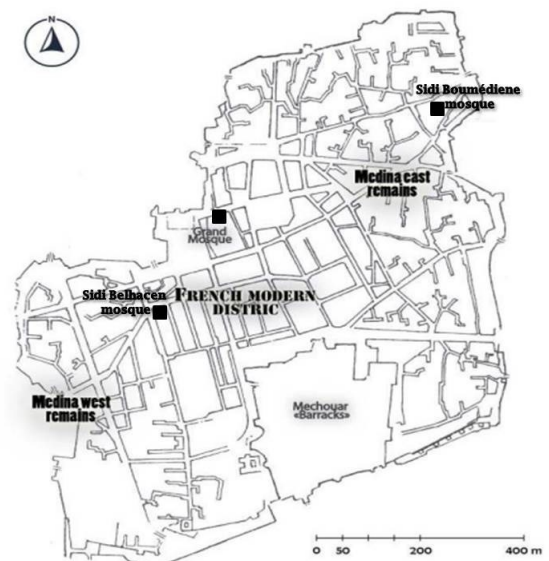


Fig. 1. Location of the three Moorish buildings in the Medina of Tlemcen. (Source: Kari et al., 2021, adapted by the authors)

Tab. 2. Principles of Moorish architecture applied to old buildings in Tlemcen. (Source: Authors, 2023)

Moorish architectural principles		Great Mosque of Tlemcen (1136)	Sidi Belhacen mosque (1297)	Sidi Boumediene mosque (1339)
Basic principles	Geometry	The building measures 60 * 50 m and is preceded by a square courtyard measuring 20 m on each side.	The building is small. The minaret is 14.5 m high.	The building measures 28.45 * 18.90 m. The inner courtyard measures 13.5 * 12 m.
	Light	The courtyard is the mosque's main source of light. The presence of windows framing the mihrab (architectural niche cut into the wall of a mosque to indicate the direction of Mecca, in which the imam says the prayer) to the south and on the east façade contributes to the mosque's illumination.	Windows on the east, west and north facades help illuminate the mosque.	The courtyard helps diffuse light. The spaces furthest from the courtyard receive the least light.
	Architectural elements	Dome with stalactites; Inner courtyard lined with galleries; Doors with horseshoe and poly-lobed arches; Roof tiled with sloping sides.	Ribbed dome; Stalactite dome; Onyx columns; Doors with broken horseshoe arches; Cedar roof.	Cupola with stalactites; Courtyard lined with galleries of cruciform pillars bearing semicircular horseshoe arches; 7-m-high arched entrance porch.
	Unity inside, expressiveness outside	The exterior is sober with simple forms, while the interior is a space of great decorative richness.	A simple building with no courtyard or pool. The interior is richly decorated.	The exterior is sober, while the interior is richly decorated.
	Introversion	The patio is the main source of light.	No patio	The patio is the main source of light.
Decorative elements	Building materials	Stone, brick, marble, plaster, ceramics, and wood.	Stone, brick, marble, plaster, ceramics, and wood.	Stone, brick, marble, plaster, ceramics, bronze, and wood.
	Colour	Polychromy of windowpanes and ceramic motifs.	Ceramic decoration in three shades (green, brown, and white).	Four-tone zelliges (a style of mosaic tilework): white, brown, green, and yellow.
	Calligraphy	Rich calligraphic inscriptions	Rich calligraphic inscriptions	Rich calligraphic inscriptions
	Vegetal elements and arabesques	Floral decoration on sculpted plaster and on the glasswork of the openings.	Walls decorated with false arcades and arabesques with smooth, wide leaves; Mouldings decorated with floral and epigraphic motifs+ Capitals decorated with palm leaves.	Walls carved with arabesques; Walls decorated with sculpted plant elements.



Fig. 2 (left). Grand mosque of Tlemcen. A) Exterior view of the Great Mosque of Tlemcen; B) View of the sloping tile roof; C) Plan view; D) The dome; E) The entrance to the mosque. (Photos: Discover Islamic Art (MWNF), source: Lafer, 2024).

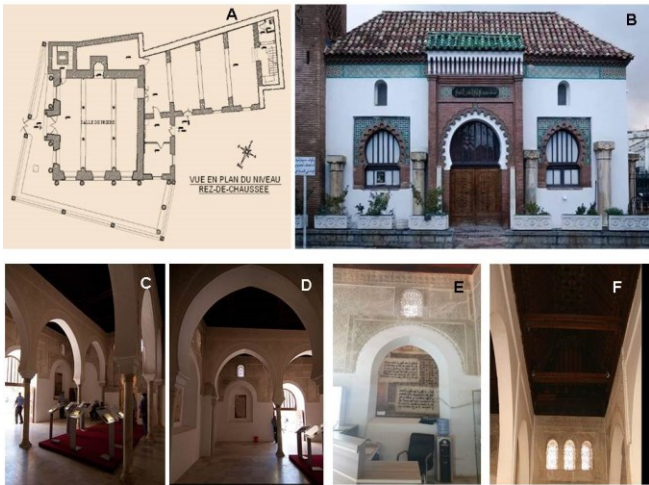


Fig. 3. Sidi Belhacen mosque. A) Plan view of the Sidi Belhacen mosque; B) Main facade of the mosque; C) Onyx columns; D) Broken horseshoe arch; E) Wall decoration; F) Cedar roof of the mosque. (Photos: Authors, 2023)



Fig. 4. Sidi Boumédiene Mosque. A) View of the exterior of the Sidi Boumédiene mosque; B) Plan view of the mosque; C) The entrance porch; D) Detail of the decoration on the entrance porch, watercolor by Edmond Duthoit, 1872; E) Detail of the spandrel on the reverse of the large interior arch of the porch of the Sidi Boumédiene mosque, watercolour by Edmond Duthoit, 1872. (Photos: Authors, 2023; Koumas, Nafa, 2003)

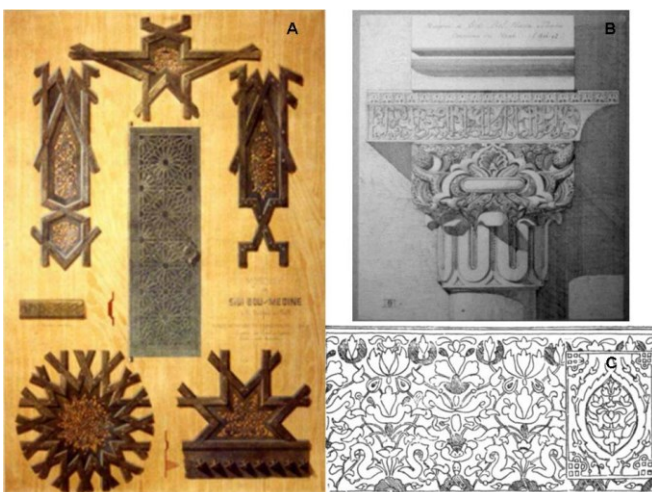


Fig. 5. Details of mosques. A) Details of the interior door of the large porch of the Sidi Boumédiene mosque, drawn by Edmond Duthoit in 1872; B) Detail of the capital of the Sidi Belhacen mosque, drawn by Edmond Duthoit in 1872; C) Specimens of painted decor. (Source: Oulebsir, Mercedes, 2009)

The results show that the exterior appearance of Moorish buildings in the city of Tlemcen is sober. The buildings are geometrically shaped and feature quite different light structures. In the case of the Great Mosque of Tlemcen and the Sidi Boumediene Mosque, the inner courtyard is the main source of light, and openings are mainly oriented towards the inner courtyard. Whereas in the case of the Belhacen mosque, it is the openings that are the main source of light. In addition, these buildings have pitched tile roofs and incorporate a variety of architectural elements such as domes, columns, monumental doorways, arches, and galleries. These buildings have richly decorated interiors, with abundant calligraphic inscriptions, and their walls are chiseled with arabesques and decorated with carved plant elements.

Contemporary architecture inspired by the Moorish style in Tlemcen (analysis of examples)

Since the country's independence in 1962, the undeniable desire for affirmation (Niemeyer, 1974), but also the desire to revamp the image of cities, led the State to call on renowned modern architects such as Oscar Niemeyer (who designed several universities in Algiers and Constantine) and Kenzo Tange (who designed the University of Oran), and other European architects to build large-scale structures. Nevertheless, as part of the 2011 cultural event, this time, the State has entrusted the construction of cultural facilities to architects trained at local universities who have chosen to work with the Moorish style. In our paper, we present three cultural facilities (the Andalusian Studies Centre, the Abdelkrim Dali Palace of Culture and the Mohamed Dib regional library) and the Renaissance hotel of the Marriott hotel chain.

The Andalusian Studies Centre is located in the Imama district, to the west of the city of Tlemcen. It covers an area of 10,000 m². The Abdelkrim Dali Palace of Culture is close to the Centre for Andalusian Studies. It covers a total area of 15,000 m². The palace was named after Abdelkrim Dali (1914–1978), a symbolic figure in the field of Andalusian music in Tlemcen. The Mohamed Dib library is also located in the Imama district, close to the first two buildings. The library is named after Mohamed Dib (1920–2003), a writer born in Tlemcen. As for the Marriott hotel (Renaissance), it is located on the Lalla Setti plateau, to the south of the town. It covers an area of 91,000 m². The Lalla Setti plateau overlooks the entire city of Tlemcen and offers a breathtaking panorama (Fig. 6).

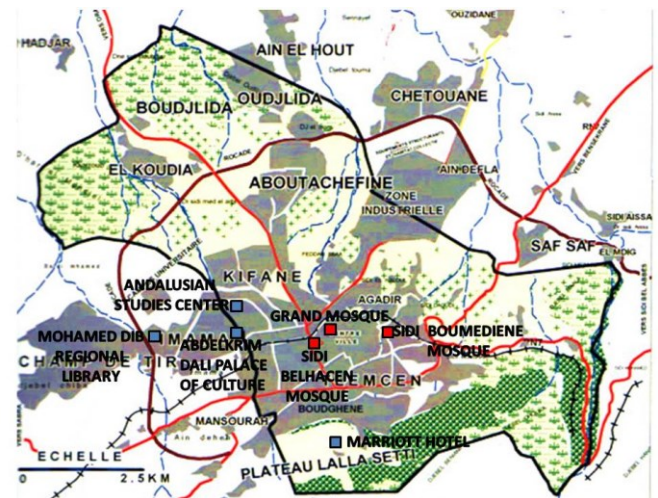


Fig. 6. Location of the Moorish and contemporary in Tlemcen. The principles of Moorish architecture have also been applied to contemporary buildings in the city of Tlemcen, built to mark its designation as the Capital of Islamic Culture in 2011. (Source: Municipality of Tlemcen, 2019, adapted by the authors)

Tab. 3. Moorish architectural principles applied to contemporary buildings of 2011, in the city of Tlemcen. (Source: Authors, 2023)

Moorish architectural principles		Andalusian Studies Centre (2011)	Abdelkrim Dali Palace of Culture (2011)	Mohammed DIB Regional Library (2011)	Marriott Hotel (Renaissance) (2011)
Basic principles	Geometry	The building was inspired by the Alhambra palaces in Granada, Andalusia. It is composed of multiple rectangular spaces, arranged around small patios connected to a large Patio of the Gazelles.	The building measures 100 * 100 m. The interior courtyards each have a surface area of 350 m2.	The building is misshapen and lacks an interior courtyard.	The building is misshapen and lacks an interior courtyard.
	Light	The presence of several patios and large bay windows on the four façades contribute to the building's brightness.	The presence of two interior courtyards and large bay windows on the four façades contribute to the illuminating of the building.	The large bay windows on the four façades help illuminate the building.	The multiplicity of types of opening contribute to the building's brightness.
	Architectural elements	Cupola; Inner courtyard lined with galleries; Horseshoe-arched doors and windows; Pitched tile roof. The treatment of the building envelope on the patio is completely in modern-style glass, while the galleries are Moorish-inspired.	Cupola; Bare-capital columns; Horseshoe-arched doors and windows; Gemini window; Roof tile cornice.	The building's envelope is rounded off by merlons and a tile cornice set on wooden brackets. Bare-capital column Poly-lobed arch with arabesque frame; Claustra not clad with glass.	Cupola; Masonry moucharabiehs, furnished with series of horseshoe arches, separated horizontally by earthenware panels; Column with bare capital; Poly-lobed arch with arabesque frame; Horseshoe-arched.
	Unity inside, expressiveness outside	The exterior is sober, while the interior is richly decorated.	The exterior of the building is monumental, while the interior is richly decorated.	The exterior of the building is hybrid, while the interior is richly decorated.	The exterior of the building is sober, while the interior is richly decorated.
	Introversion	In the middle of the courtyard is the Fountain of the Gazelles, modelled on the Lion fountain. The building communicates with the garden and the water.	Extroverted building but also features 2 courtyards.	Extroverted building with no interior courtyard.	Extroverted building with no interior courtyard.
Decorative elements	Building materials	Reinforced concrete, brick, marble, stone, plaster, and wood.	Reinforced concrete, brick, earthenware, marble, stone, plaster, and wood.	Reinforced concrete, brick, earthenware, marble, stone, plaster, and wood.	Reinforced concrete, brick, earthenware, marble, stone, plaster, wood, Stucco.
	Colour	Monochrome	Green earthenware; white marble.	White and yellow marble; Polychrome earthenware motif.	Coloured Marble; Polychrome earthenware motif; alternating colours.
	Calligraphy	Presence of calligraphic inscriptions.	Presence of calligraphic inscriptions.	No calligraphic inscriptions.	No calligraphic inscriptions.
	Vegetal elements and arabesques	Walls carved with arabesques; Walls decorated with sculpted plant elements.	Framed in interlaced stucco; Horizontal register with diamond pattern; Wooden cladding with openwork star motif; Geometric frieze.	Horseshoe-shaped arcatures encircled by arabesques; Plaster frame with floral motif.	Horseshoe-shaped arcatures encircled by arabesques; Plaster frame with floral motif.

On the face of it, the design of the four contemporary buildings is based on the principles of Moorish architecture. Semi-directive interviews with the architects who designed these buildings reveal that they were indeed inspired by Tlemcen's Moorish heritage buildings. The decorative registers used on the exterior of the buildings are sober and faithfully reproduce the Moorish tradition, while the interior incorporates a variety of architectural elements such as columns, monumental doors, arches, and floral and geometric decorations. However, with the exception of the Andalusian Studies Centre, the other new buildings are extraverted, their roofs not sloping, but rather flat. New techniques and materials were used, such as reinforced concrete and special insulating glass. The interiors are bright with light. The presence of interior courtyards and large bay windows on all four façades contribute to the brightness of these buildings. At a glance, the four contemporary buildings blend well and merge into a homogeneous whole.

Table 3 presents the four contemporary buildings of 2011, in Tlemcen. It specifies the basic principles and decorative elements of Moorish architecture applied to these buildings. Table 4 presents the results of the application of Moorish architectural principles to contemporary buildings in Tlemcen. It shows the similarities and differences in the design of contemporary buildings compared to Moorish architecture. Figure 7 shows the similarities between the patios of the Lions of the Alhambra Palace in Andalusia (Spain) and the patio of Gazelles of the Andalusian Studies Centre in Tlemcen. Figure 8 shows the exterior envelope, interior and fountain of the Gazelles of the Andalusian Studies Centre in Tlemcen. Figure 9 shows the ground plan, external envelope, and interior decorative elements of Abdelkrim Dali Palace of Culture. Figure 10 shows the exterior envelope and interior decorative elements of Mohamed Dib Library. Figures 11 and 12 show the exterior envelope and interior decorative elements of The Marriott hotel.

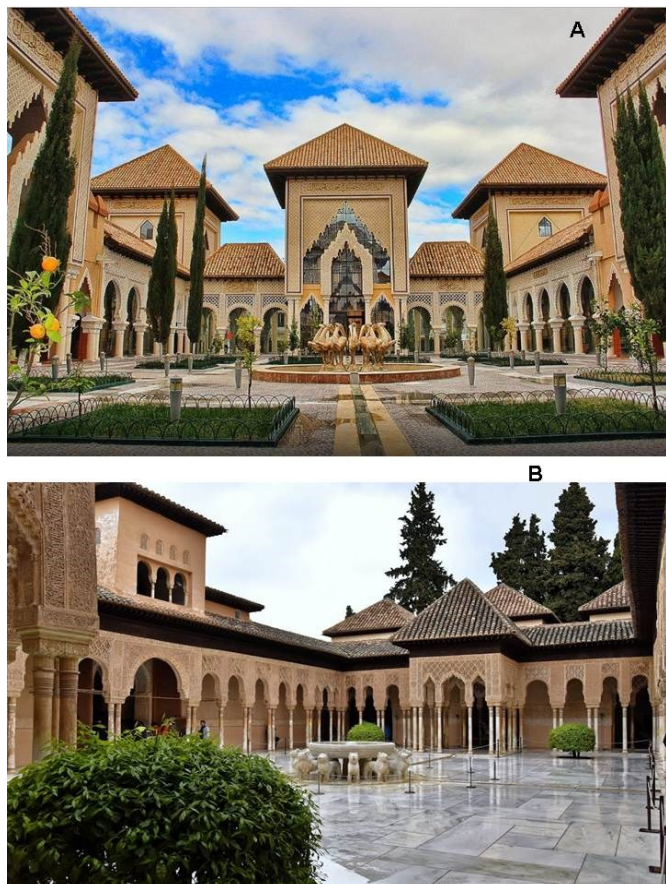


Fig. 7 (left). Similarities between patios in Tlemcen and Alhambra. A) The patio of the Andalusian Studies Centre in Tlemcen; B) The Patio of the Lions of the Alhambra Palace in Andalusia (Spain). (Photos: Authors, WikiArquitectura, 2022).



Fig. 8. The Andalusian Studies Centre. A) View of the exterior of the Andalusian Studies Centre; B) View of the walls in the Patio of the Gazelles; C) View of the Fountain of the Gazelles. (Photos: Authors, 2022)

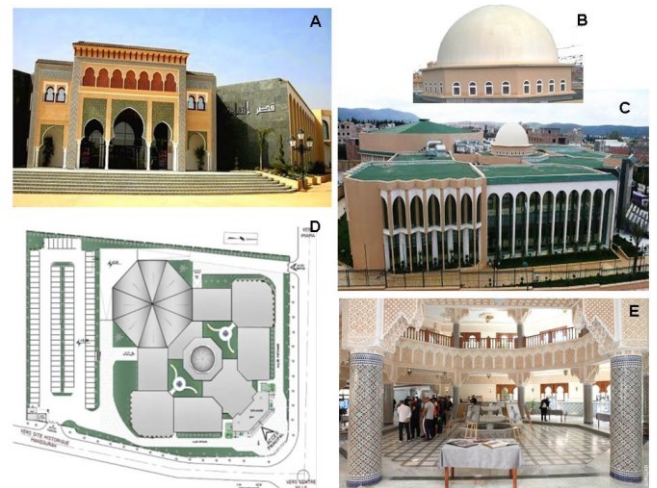


Fig. 9. Abdelkrim Dali Palace of Culture. A) View of the main entrance to the Palace of Culture; B) The dome; C) View of the side façade of the palace; D) Plan view; E) Main hall of the palace. (Source: Authors, 2022)



Fig. 10. Mohamed Dib Library. A) View of the main entrance to the library; B) A poly-lobed arch with an arabesque frame; C) View of the library exterior; D) Entrance hall of the library. (Photos: Authors, 2022)



Fig. 11. The Marriott hotel façade. A) The main façade of the Marriott hotel; B) View of a moucharabieh supported by three brackets.; C) Details of an arched balcony; D) A poly-lobed arch with an arabesque frame. (Photos: Boulbene, 2012)



Fig. 12. The Marriott hotel interior. (Photo: Authors, 2022)

Tab. 4. Results of the application of Moorish architectural principles to contemporary buildings in Tlemcen. (Source: Authors, 2023)

Moorish architectural principles applied to contemporary buildings		Andalusian Studies Centre (2011)	Abdelkrim Dali Palace of Culture (2011)	Mohammed Dib Regional Library (2011)	Marriott Hotel (Renaissance) (2011)
Basic principles	Geometry	X	X		X
	Light	X	X		X
	Architectural elements	X	X	X	X
	Unity inside, expressiveness outside	X	X		X
	Introversion	X			
Decorative elements	Building materials	X	X	X	X
	Colour		X	X	X
	Calligraphy	X	X		
	Vegetal elements and arabesques	X	X	X	X

RESULTS

The design of contemporary buildings is controversial. There are similarities and differences observed in the design of contemporary buildings compared to Moorish architecture (Tab. 4). In the first case, the Andalusian Studies Centre responds to a greater or lesser degree to the principles of Moorish architecture. Except that the center is multicultural. It is the confluence between two cultures: Moorish and modern. The envelope of the buildings overlooking the Patio of the Gazelles is a good illustration of this fusion: it is partly made of glass, in a modern, yet Moorish-inspired style. The architecture of the other three buildings is extraverted, which goes against the logic of the introverted Moorish buildings of old Tlemcen.

What is more, the three contemporary cultural buildings are public facilities for study, reading and meeting. These functions require a high level of visual comfort: hence the need for a high level of illumination, enhanced by the presence of large, glazed openings. The buildings maintain high level of brightness in keeping with their functions (Bonnéric, 2013). The decorative registers used on the exterior of the buildings are sober and faithful to Moorish tradition. All the decorative richness was introduced inside the buildings. Nevertheless, calligraphic in-

scriptions are virtually absent in the Mohamed Dib library, and new materials and construction techniques have been used in their architectural expressions. The three contemporary buildings only partially reflect the principles of Moorish architecture. Their authenticity is not technical and material. The results of the analysis of the new buildings inspired by the Moorish style show that, in a way, they have made it possible to establish continuity and dialogue with the Moorish heritage.

DISCUSSION

The twentieth century saw architectural thinking evolve in directions that were as diverse as they were contradictory. The two main periods identified are those of 'modernity' and reactionary 'postmodernity' (Bohli Nouri, 2015). Postmodernism has the merit of having given importance to history in contemporary creation (Pomerleau, 2009). According to the postmodernists, in order to define the contemporary identity of an architectural intervention, it was absolutely necessary to have recourse to history, to which heritage belongs by definition. With Tlemcen having been invaded for decades by modern architecture that supports the rejection of ornament and symbolism, the 2011 international cultural event provided the opportunity to

reconnect with different architectural traditions and turn its back on the universalism championed by the moderns.

Against this backdrop, Tlemcen's Moorish heritage has come to the fore for its symbolic, cultural and, in particular, historical value, as a way of addressing the issue of identity in architecture and the city. In a way, the new, Moorish style-inspired buildings have enabled, above all, to forge an orientation for architectural practice in Tlemcen, until then variable and very open to all kinds of foreign influences. Through these contemporary buildings, the architects have adopted an architectural style that rehabilitates the Moorish tradition. The architects have expressed their desire to break with colonial and post-independence traditions, which reproduced imported occidental models, and to reclaim a prestigious past dislocated by the colonial enterprise (Zerrouki, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The city of Tlemcen boasts a priceless Moorish heritage, indicative of its glorious past. As part of the international cultural event "Tlemcen, the Capital of Islamic Culture" in 2011, contemporary buildings were erected and the Moorish heritage has fully played its "identity role", as explained by McLean (2006): *"Heritage transforms the material into an 'identity past' that is preserved because of its significance"*. In fact, the architectural style of contemporary buildings is a free reinterpretation of the old Moorish style. On the surface, Tlemcen's contemporary buildings are not far from the authenticity they claim to express. Contemporary architecture in Tlemcen is evolving towards this new paradigm. Nevertheless, this style has other assets: it responds to an international event, marks its era and breaks with the identity crisis in architecture that persisted in the city. It is culturally and symbolically authentic.

Today, visitors to the city can see that, alongside its beautiful Moorish monuments, new buildings have been erected that have a hybrid appearance, both modern and Moorish. Clearly, architecture "is" (this is what exists in the present) (Verdier, 2014). But it is also true, as confirmed by the words of writer Victor Hugo: *"Architecture writes history"* (Chemetov, Marrey, 1984). Nowadays, contemporary buildings in Tlemcen bear witness to the city's identity and development. Moreover, the international Islamic event allowed the Moorish style to rise from the ashes. It was a kind of reconciliation between the city and its Moorish heritage, but above all it stands for an orientation of architectural practice in Tlemcen, which until then had been variable and very open to all kinds of foreign influences.

Nevertheless, in order to guide the architectural design of buildings in Tlemcen in the future, measures need to be taken. Among other things, a corpus of Moorish architecture is to be drawn up, targeting all the reference elements to be used. This corpus will serve as a dictionary of local architecture. Secondly, this corpus of local architecture must be integrated into the architects' training programs. The ultimate aim would be to achieve equally satisfactory results as in neighboring Tunisia, which has fully embraced its Moorish architectural identity. Leila Ammar (2006) explains that this state of affairs has been made possible by the introduction of a well-defined vocabulary: *"This phenomenon of asserting Tunisian cultural identity by selecting elements from the vocabulary of reinterpreted traditional architecture is so deeply rooted in people's minds, particularly at institutional level, that it has come to constitute a new 'norm', and it is hard to imagine today's domestic architecture without its share of glazed tiles, geometric decoration in openwork figures and arcades on the façade"*.

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