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THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSERVATION  
MANAGEMENT FOR A  
PRE-INDUSTRIAL NORTH AFRICAN CITY:  
THE CASE OF THE MEDINA OF TUNIS

Thesis for the degree of M.A.

by

Justin McGuinness

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Faculty of Social Sciences

Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic  
Studies

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10 MAR 1993

University of Durham  
Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

ABSTRACT OF MA THESIS

The development of conservation management for a pre-industrial North African city: the case of the Medina of Tunis

The thesis deals with the development of policies and planning instruments for the conservation of the built fabric of the Medina (Old City) of Tunis, North Africa. Part I looks at the type of city which the Medina represents, namely a pre-industrial urban fabric influenced by Islam; the discussion rejects the notion of 'Islamic city' per se, but examines the extent of Islamic influence on the built form of the city. Part II traces the history and development of the Medina, and hence how the city survived the upheavals of the XIXth century to remain as an example of a pre-industrial city worthy of conservation. Part III traces the development of concepts of heritage conservation in Tunisia with particular reference to the medinas. It then outlines the development of the legal and institutional framework for the protection of the Medina, before moving on to discuss the management of the Medina as heritage in the 1980s. The conclusion suggests that the Medina may be surviving despite conservation management. The difficulties in implementing heritage policy may be related to the nature of the Tunisian state and its use of urban policies as a state legitimating device and this would seem to be a promising direction for future research.

Justin McGuinness, January 1992

Mémoire de M.A. (Master of Arts)  
Université de Durham.  
(Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies)

Résumé:

**Evolution de la notion de conservation d'une cité maghrébine pré-industrielle : la Médina de Tunis.**

Cette recherche s'intéresse essentiellement à l'évolution des notions de conservation du patrimoine bâti et des politiques et opérations de sauvegarde (réhabilitation, rénovation) dans la Médina (ville ancienne) de Tunis.

La première partie représente un essai de définition. On parle souvent de la Médina comme étant représentative "d'un urbanisme musulman homogène", mais à quel point peut-on vraiment parler de "ville islamique"? Le chercheur préfère le concept de tissu urbain influencé par l'Islam dans son développement, au concept de ville islamique. Il voit Tunis comme représentative d'une cité pré-industrielle qu'il convient de préserver, et étudie les changements que la Renaissance européenne a apporté aux villes médiévales en Europe, changements que n'ont pas connus les villes de l'Afrique du nord.

Dans la deuxième partie, le chercheur suit l'histoire de Tunis en insistant sur les processus de développement du tissu urbain, et il s'interroge sur les raisons de la survie de cette ville jusqu'à nos jours.

La troisième partie suit l'évolution des notions de préservation du patrimoine bâti en Tunisie, avec référence spéciale aux médinas. Après avoir traité du cadre institutionnel et juridique de la protection de la Médina, l'auteur décrit la gestion de la Médina sur le plan urbanistique pendant les années 80, et esquisse les principaux problèmes pour la conservation de l'espace historique.

Dans la conclusion, le chercheur observe que la Médina reste relativement bien préservée parce que les fonctions qu'elle a développées pendant les trente dernières années (espace productif et commercial pour petites entreprises, parc immobilier bon marché), ne sont pas incompatibles avec sa structure physique. La résistance des acteurs techniques et l'obstacle des structures de propriété ont par ailleurs rendu les démolitions et la spéculation immobilière à grande échelle difficiles. Cela dit, une vraie politique de sauvegarde reste à définir.

Les difficultés rencontrées par les professionnels et techniciens de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme pour la réalisation d'une politique de sauvegarde relèvent de divers facteurs: rôle du patrimoine dans l'économie et la vie nationale, perceptions de la Médina, et nature des rapports entre décideurs, techniciens, et population, aussi bien que moyens, humains et financiers, qui peuvent être consacrés à la sauvegarde.

Une direction à explorer pour un futur projet de recherche serait une étude du discours de l'Etat tunisien en matière de politique urbaine, tout en considérant comment l'Etat se sert de telles politiques comme support de sa légitimité.

Justin McGuinness

juin 1992

اطروحة شهادة الماجستير:  
تطور مفهوم الصيانة و سياسة  
المحافظة على التراث في مدينة "ما قبل صناعية"  
بشمال افريقيا  
ملخص البحث

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موضوع البحث الذي تعالجه هذه الاطروحة يتمثل أساسا في تطوّر مفهوم الصيانة بمدينة تونس العتيقة و تطوّر السياسة المتّبعة للمحافظة على نسيجها العمراني . حاول الباحث في الجزء الأول تعريف الفصيلة العمرانية التي تنتهي اليها هذه المدينة التاريخية اذ هي تمثل بالنسبة له نيجا عمرانيا مطابقا لنسيج المدن الماقبل صناعية و لكن مع شديد التأثير بقيم الاسلام .

و الى جانب دراسة هذه التأثيرات الإسلامية يستعرض الباحث التغييرات التي أدخلتها النهضة الأوروبية على مدن العمور الوسطى بعفة عامة .

أما في الجزء الثاني ، فبعد دراسته لتاريخ مدينة تونس و تطورها العمراني يتخلّى الباحث الى تعينها كمدينة ما قبل صناعية جديرة بالصيانة .

و يتابع بعد ذلك في الجزء الأخير من البحث دراسة تطور مفهوم المحافظة على التراث و مبادئه في تونس معتمدا على البحوث الخاصة بالمدن التاريخية بها . فيرسم الاطار التشريعي والمؤسسي الخاص بحماية المدينة العتيقة و يحلّل الطرف العملية التي تتوخاها المؤسسات المعنية بالمحافظة على التراث و كذلك المشاكل المختلفة التي تعترض طريقها أو التي لاقتها في الثمانينات .

و في النهاية يعتبر الباحث أن المدينة العتيقة بقيت حيّة و حافظت على نسيجها العمراني رغم التّقاء و السّلبات التي ميّزت سياسة الحفاظ على التّراث و ذلك لانها تمثّل رميدا سكنيا مرمّما و مركزا اقتصاديا لا يستهان به . و يرى أن دراسة الخطاب الرّسمي الخاص بالسياسة العمرانية و بسياسة التّهديب والتّجديد العمراني قد تمثّل وجهة مهمة لمشروع بحث قيم .

Frontispiece  
The Medina of Tunis circa 1968  
(Source: Asm archives)

The central Medina is in pale orange - note the empty area of some 15 ha of the Hafsia. To the north, in red, is the Rbat (suburb) of Bab Souika, and to the south, the Rbat of Bab Jezira. Quarters developed in the course of the XIXth century stretch away to the East and North.

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## INTRODUCTION

Middle Eastern cities have expanded prodigiously over the last fifty years. A pre-industrial birth rate, coupled with a post industrial mortality rate, have meant that cities like Cairo grew from one million inhabitants in 1927 to over 8 million in 1990. Rapid growth has brought huge problems of strained services, traffic, pollution and inadequate housing, unresolved by planning measures.

At the heart of these new Middle Eastern metropolises, the old quarters or medinas, in the case of North African cities, have been reduced to mere quarters of the wider urban area, often the first point of contact with city life for rural migrants. The compact traditional housing and the way of life embodied by it have often been viewed as anachronistic obstructions to modernisation by government. The narrow streets are inaccessible to motor traffic, the souks house outdated industries, and the modern élite may have very different aspirations and values to those embodied in traditional medina society.

In many instances the old cities have been perceived by ruling groups and planners as vestiges to be eradicated: the traditional courtyard houses of the old city of Koweit were expropriated and razed to the ground to be replaced in part by banks and modern commercial buildings; in the cases of Baghdad and the Iranian cities modern roads were driven through the ancient urban fabric.

Once considerable inroads have been made on this ancient urban fabric, socio-economic problems conspire to hasten the physical decline of historic city centres. The richer inhabitants depart for new modern suburbs, leaving the old and destitute behind, soon to be joined by rural migrants. Overcrowding and poverty change the character of a Medina from that of a centre of urbanity to that of a marginal quarter.

In contrast to the destruction witnessed in many Middle Eastern Islamic cities, the historic cities of the central Maghreb countries, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, have been fortunate in that their physical fabric has survived intact. In Morocco this was largely due to Marechal de Lyautey's insistence on separate development for coloniser and colonised, the result being a cordon sanitaire separating ancient Medina from ville nouvelle.

Tunisia, though colonised earlier than Morocco, was equally fortunate in that such historic cities as Bizerte, Kairouan, Sfax, Sousse and of course Tunis conserved their traditional urban morphology, although their economic and social character changed considerably: seaside Hammamet has witnessed the restoration of traditional housing as homes for the rich, Sousse and Tunis have restored monuments and tourist bazaars while Sfax witnessed the tripling of the number of shops and workshops between 1960 and 1980 (Gdoura, M.1982). By the late sixties consciousness of the value of the historic cities gave rise to the development of a conservation movement, concerned to preserve the character of the medinas. Eventually Tunis was recognised as being of sufficient importance to be listed as part of the world heritage in 1979, the first Arab city to be so classified.

Given that the Medina of Tunis has been added to the Unesco world heritage list, and that it is therefore considered worthy of conservation for future generations, and given that Tunis, unlike many other Middle Eastern countries, already possesses institutions responsible for protecting the Medina as a whole, as well as ancient sites and monuments taken in isolation, I decided to investigate into how the business of protecting the Medina is conducted. I have examined the development of conservation and protective planning, notably over the last twenty five years since the creation of the Association pour la sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis (Asm), and have sought to evaluate the successes and failures of conservation planning over this period.

## NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

Prior to any examination of conservation planning in the Medina, it will be necessary to examine in some detail

- a) what the Medina of Tunis is, and how it evolved, and so
- b) why it merits its place as part of the world's heritage.

To undertake this research into the evolution of a historic Middle Eastern townscape, and the development of conservation planning for this townscape, I have consulted

- a) the works of historians, geographers and sociologists most concerned with the Islamic city, notably Le Tourneau, B.S. Hakim, and Jamel Akbar, as well as Lapidus, Hourani, Stern, and De Planhol.
- b) sources directly concerned with Tunis, notably the works of M. A. Ben Achour, Abdel Aziz Daouletli, Pierre Pennec and Lucette Valensi, as well as Brunschwig, Pellegrin, Ganiage and Despois,
- c) theses concerning Tunis and its planning problems, notably those of Abdel Kefi, Hamrouni, Signoles et al and Morched Chebbi,
- d) archival documents and plans made available by the Asm, the Inaa, the District de Tunis and the Cdtm,



e) interviews and discussion with architects, administrators, and planners directly concerned with the Medina and its development, notably MM A. Daouletli and Béji Ben Memi of the Inaa, Zoubeir Mouhli, Achraf Bahri, Sémia Yaiche of the Asm, and J. Abdel Kefi.

Through this research, I hope to have achieved a deeper understanding of the evolution of one particular Islamic influenced Mediterranean city, and of the development of planning for conservation in this specific Arab Islamic context.

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All photographs were taken by the present author in 1991

## NOTE ON ACRONYMS

A large number of acronyms for official institutions and land use plans are used in the text. Generally, when an institution is first mentioned its French title is given in full followed by the acronym. A full list of acronyms mentioned in the text will be found in Appendices and Glossaries VI.

The four institutions most often referred to by their acronyms are:

Agence de la réhabilitation et de la rénovation urbaine (Arru)

Association de la sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis (Asm)

Fonds national pour l'amélioration de l'habitat (Fnah)

Institut national de l'art et de l'archéologie (Inaa)

## THE TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC TERMS

The spelling of Arabic terms in the text follows the standard Roman letter transliteration in use at Tunis. This differs only slightly from the transliteration used in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition).

The chief differences are as follows:

Arabic Letter	Tunisian Translit	Translit. E of I
ج	J	Dj
ق	K	K
و	OU	W
و	OU	U
short vowel "fatha"	a or e, depending on the local pronunciation	A
short vowel "kesra"	e or i, depending on the local pronunciation	I

I have preferred to leave unmarked the Arabic emphatic consonants which are transcribed with a dot underneath in the Encyclopaedia of Islam system.

I have chosen to follow the standard Tunisian transcription as it follows most closely the pronunciation of Tunis, and avoids making unfamiliar terms of words instantly recognisable in their Tunisian Roman letter spellings.



Frontispiece

The Medina of Tunis circa 1968  
(Source: Asm archives)

The central Medina is in pale orange - note the empty area of some 15 ha of the Hafsia. To the North, in in red, is the Rbat (suburb) of Bab Souika, and to the South, in purple, the Rbat of Bab Jezira.

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## SECTION I

## MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN CITIES:

historical and architectural background of  
cities influenced by Islam

Tunis Medina was classified as part of the world heritage as it is one of the few Islamic cities to have followed a continuous line of development from the Islamic conquest in the seventh century AD to the present day, with only the limited destructions of the twentieth century, notably the tearing down of the ramparts, marking a sharp break in the Medina's physical development.

Before launching into an analysis of how the Medina is representative of a certain type of city - be it Arab-Islamic or Middle Eastern it would seem useful to review briefly the discussion about the nature of these traditional cities.

I.A. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOTION OF THE ISLAMIC CITY IN  
ORIENTALIST WRITINGS ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH  
AFRICA

Middle Eastern and North African cities have been generally viewed as "Islamic" since the late nineteenth century, but it should be borne in mind that they housed large Christian and Jewish populations, and in many cases only came to have largely Muslim populations from the eleventh century. The notion of the Islamic city was formulated by Orientalists who, considering Islam to be an overriding factor in the lives of the people of the Middle East, saw the structure and morphology of the



region's cities as reflecting the religion of Islam. For a whole series of Orientalist historians, beginning with Georges Marçais (1945), the city was essentially a place of contact and exchange, characterised by a major mosque, a market and public baths. Islam was seen to have fostered the growth of cities because the requirement for collective prayer, one of Islam's basic requirements, can only be accomplished in a pure space; the haram. Hence the vast courtyards of the great mosques at the centre of Islamic cities, spaces to assemble and pray in. Around the Great Mosque, or in close proximity, are located the souks, the closeness of a given souk to the mosque being determined, according to G. Marçais, by the nature and value of the merchandise.

Leading off the main axes crossing the city, smaller lanes and alleyways gave access to the residential areas with their courtyards open to the sky. The result was a dense cellular urban fabric. The interiors of the houses were very private: "L" shaped entrance passages made it impossible to see directly in, windows were small and high up, or else if of large dimensions, protected by elaborate grills and wooden screens. Verses 4 and 5 of "The inner apartments", Soura XLIX of the Koran, provide the clue to this insistence on the importance of family privacy in the Islamic city. The soura's meaning may be paraphrased as follows: "The interior of your house is a sanctuary; those who violate it by calling you while you are in it do not keep the respect which they owe to the interpreter of heaven. They should be patient and wait until you leave your house, decency commands it; but God is All Forgiving, All Compassionate".

After the family house, the next division of the Islamic city in the G. Marçais model is the quarter, often based on ethnic groups, religious sects or minorities. Each quarter would be able to isolate itself from the rest of the city in times of trouble by closing its gates.

However, there are problems with this model of the Islamic city, as most of the characteristics described above can be found in many pre-industrial cities.

Morphologically speaking, the inward opening house with its "L" shaped corridor can be found in pre-Islamic houses, so this form is probably a continuation of earlier building styles, re-emphasised by Islam's insistence on the separation of public/male private/female domains. The Marçais model ignores major Islamic cities in areas like the Yemen, where the tower house, not the courtyard house, is the dominant form in the built environment. And there are features of the model - public baths, citadels, and city walls for instance - which are found in cities outside the Islamic world.

The apparently haphazard pattern of the Islamic city's street network is no more or less haphazard than that of the mediaeval European city. Such irregular street layouts were meaningful for the inhabitants of any pre-industrial city, for these were towns which grew extremely slowly by modern standards, as a series of families and small groups built and made their distinct contribution to the life of the town; urban morphology was the outcome of many minor decisions by owners.

In Europe and the Middle East in mediaeval times, families and groups with common origins and interests tended to congregate in the same districts, arranging their environments to accord with their own particular activities. The concentration of similar crafts and trades in the same streets was a phenomenon present in mediaeval London, as street names show, not only in Islamic cities.

The Islamic city, like its European counterpart, can only be perceived as formless if compared, consciously or unconsciously, with a modern Western city. Until the Renaissance, streetscapes in both Europe and the Middle East were components of individual units that could normally be seen a few at a time and close at hand, a series of flat elevations changing as the observer moved along the street. But in Europe, the Renaissance discovery of perspective profoundly modified the streetscape; new interpretations of architectural proportion and scale, and of the use of space around buildings, emerged in treatises, and were put into practice by enthusiastic Italian architects under the influence of patron-princes, keen to underscore their newly acquired power in urban remodelling programmes. To reiterate the comparison between European and Middle Eastern cities in mediaeval times, the major religious buildings were well embedded in the fabric of the city in both cases: in Northern Europe, it was not until the nineteenth century that demolition revealed the magnificent carcasses of edifices such as Notre Dame de Paris and the Duomo di Milano.

In examining the logic behind the layout of any pre-capitalist city, ecological and technological factors have to be taken into account. In the case of the Middle East, narrow streets and

alleys provided shade in a hot climate for a population moving about mainly on foot, and were quite adequate to allow pack animals to pass in single file, there being little wheeled transport. In addition, the narrow streets also reduced the impact of the region's dust storms and hot summer winds. Space was not unnecessarily wasted in the public domain when it could be used for housing.

This is not to say that Islam had no influence on the development of the city. Brunschvig (1947), approaching the issue from a legal angle, explains the irregularity of Islamic cities through the Islamic concept of the family, the intimacy of which must be protected, and the liberal attitude towards private building initiatives: "La voie publique est mal défendue, on est indulgent envers qui accroît la propriété bâtie, fut-ce au détriment des places et des rues." (p154)

The Islamic cities are physically highly diverse, each city having its particularities due to the combination of a variety of geographical, topological, climatic, economic, political and historic factors. The cities of the Yemen, certainly Islamic, have tower houses with great emphasis on exterior decoration, far removed from Muslim precepts which warn against exterior show. In Djeddah, tall houses with machrabia, elaborate wooden lattice work enclosed balconies prevailed, while in Medina the urban fabric was composed of low courtyard houses with vaulted roofs known as ka'a. North African cities had no great public spaces, while Mamlouk Cairo and Damascus had parade grounds. However, despite the variety of building types and textures, street networks tend to be similar; main, though narrow streets

cross the city, while a variety of irregular alleys give access to residential areas.

Tunis represents this type of evolutive townscape very clearly. However, discussion of the interacting influences dominating the development and formation of the Medina will be delayed until the next section.

The question still remains as to why so many historians chose to follow each other in viewing the Islamic city as nothing more than anarchic in its layout. Costello (1977) tells us that "the residential areas were a jumble of twisting alleyways". Equally, for Creswell (1979), Basra, Koufa, and Fustat were characterised by "a chaotic labyrinth of lanes and blind alleys, of tents and huts alternating with waste ground". Early Muslim settlements were seen as growing "without real awareness of the formal elements of city planning" (Lassner 1970), and were contrasted with what was seen as the ordered layouts of Roman or Hellenistic cities (though ancient Rome itself was far from being built on an orthogonal plan).

So what explains the view of the Islamic city as anarchic? Essentially these views of the Islamic city reflect the prejudices of the writers' times. Until the mid-eighteenth century, when Europe began to outstrip the Islamic world on the technological level, Islam was seen as a major threat to Christendom. In order to explain the spread of Islam, Christian theology developed a theory to show that Muslim successes were the result of violence, lasciviousness and deceit (Turner, 1972). The theory survived the change in the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world, the themes of fanaticism

and lasciviousness remaining. Nineteenth century European literature portrayed the countries of the Middle East as inhabited by fanatic sensuous peoples - the region was the beginning of the Orient, a term which came to denote automatically harems, black eunuch slaves, incense, and aromatic gardens.

Tunis and its historic city was of course by no means ignored by the orientalist litterateur. A.A. Boddy (1885) is representative of the genre. Tunis was a city "which can scarcely be rivalled in its wickedness". As for its history, Boddy tells us that "Odd things have happened here in past days." We are told by the author of the "Etat des royaumes de Barbarie" (quoted by Mr Alexander Broadley), how Tatar Dey "enjoyed the rare distinction of being eaten by his displeased subjects. This was at the close of the XVII century. One wonders at their taste in eating a raw Tartar" (Boddy, 1985 p244).

The view that Middle Eastern cities grew in a picturesque disorder is part and parcel of this Orientalist view of the Middle East, a eurocentric outlook that views the rest of the world as something to be civilised according to the principles of Enlightenment rationality. Said's argument runs that the Orient is an idea with a history and a tradition, an imagery and a vocabulary which give it reality and presence in the West, and for the West. The West's increasingly strong position with regard to the Middle East in economic and military terms allowed Orientalist discourse to evolve, allowed the Orient to be orientalised according to a series of nineteenth century stereotypes. This Orientalism is of course never far from the

idea of Europe which defines a European "us" in relation to an Oriental "them". An essential trait of European culture, or rather of the form currently pervading, according to Said, is that it regards itself as superior to other cultures. Therefore, there is a hegemony of European ideas in the Orient, repeating the theme of European superiority over Oriental backwardness.

Thus, under the protecting umbrella of western cultural and political hegemony, there emerged, beginning in the eighteenth century, a view of the Orient based on a whole series of anthropological, linguistic, biological and historical studies, underpinned by the prevailing theories on human development, cultural personality, and national and religious characteristics, the whole underlaid by the doctrine of European superiority. For if a people could be characterised as lustful, decadent, brutal and irrational, then the logic of the matter meant that enlightened, advanced Europe had to bring order and civilisation to the unfortunate people in question. Thus Great Britain and France, despite their differences, came to see the Orient as a geographical entity over whose destiny they had a right. The Orient was a zone situated to the east of Europe, defined in relation to Europe, and to be developed by her science, erudition, intelligence and administration. And the Oriental was seen in a framework of biological determinism and moral-political disapproval, along with other marginal, "other" elements of Western society - delinquents, the insane, women, the poor. Member of a subject race, the Oriental was treated as a subject.

Thus the European states' appetite for more geographical space could be justified by a theory of the particular relationship existing between geography on the one hand, and the "civilised" western peoples on the other.

The works of the Orientalist savant when he describes the irrational jumble of the Middle Eastern city may be seen to have political significance. Domination is justified in the eyes of the dominator because his civilisation is perceived as superior and his science better. In the words of Tzvetan Todorov (preface to Said 1980), "...les autres nous sont inférieurs parce qu'on les juge, dans le meilleur des cas, par les critères qu'on s'applique à soi-même". The Other is portrayed as inferior, for "...ce qu'on lui a refusé avant tout c'est d'être différent: ni inférieur, ni (même) supérieur, mais autre justement".

But perhaps the interest in the Orient which manifested itself in painting, literature, and even music in the course of the XIXth century should be seen to be underpinned not just by the need to justify imperialist expansion, but also in the context of the wider socio-economic changes.

There was a general interest not only in the Orient of the Arab-Islamic countries, but also in the Far East and India: the early XIXth century saw further flowerings of "the Chinese taste" - see the Brighton Pavilion. But there was also interest in older indigenous styles of architecture; witness the XIIIth century purism of Viollet le Duc and the rise of Strawberry Hill Gothic. And on both sides of the Atlantic there was a taste for



the wilderness and the frontier, great landscapes of unexplored tracts of mountain and forest.

Nature and the picturesque in the arts, pastoral and exotic imagery, are perhaps a counterpoint to a work process increasingly urban and industrial. The interest which developed in the XIXth century in the colourful, the sensuous, the wild, the bizarre should be seen in this light, in the tension between the new materialism and necessary humanity. Orientalism, in part, may be seen as part of the response to the facts of production, part of the reaction to an increasingly alienating and degrading relation to nature in the workplace.

#### I.B ISLAMIC INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN URBAN FABRIC

If we reject the reduction of the Islamic city to unplanned spontaneous settlements, the question has to be posed as to what characteristics, if any, can be held to distinguish cities like the Medina of Tunis from Christian Mediterranean cities. Is there anything truly distinctive about a city which has evolved with a Muslim population? To what extent can one speak about an Islamic city? Or is there no such thing as the Islamic city, only cities inhabited by Muslims?

Cities are the products of many factors: terrain and climate, a technology of production and transportation, a system of social organisation and politico-legal and religious systems. Many of the Orientalist writings on the Middle Eastern city have focused

on the combinations of factors which have produced the region's cities.

However, there is clearly nothing specifically Islamic about the climate of the Middle East, which may be said to have favoured the development of the courtyard house, or the pre-industrial systems of transport and technology in the area. Nor is there anything particularly Islamic about the division of the city into a set of areas based on extended family, tribal, and/or ethnic divisions. The neighbourhood was just as much a building block of the mediaeval European city, with internal functions being dealt with on an ad hoc basis. Like the mediaeval Christian city, the mediaeval Middle Eastern city maximised defensible space.

In fact some commentators, notably Wirth (1982) go so far as to completely reject the concept of the Islamic city, precisely because almost every characteristic of these cities in the Middle East or North Africa existed in ancient civilisations. For Wirth, only the souk is original, little influenced by religion, and Islam is merely the "occupier" of urban systems rather than the architect. Djait (1986, p.193) summarises Wirth's view: "Il voudrait dégager la spécificité de la ville islamique pour arriver finalement à ne lui rien trouver d'islamique". The weakness of Wirth's reductionist analysis according to Djait lies in his blindness to the continuities and discontinuities of history, and a failure to perceive how Islam grew in its historic setting combining with elements already existing.

In sharp contrast to Wirth, Muslim scholar A.A. Ismail (1972) believes that not only are shape and layout of the Muslim house shaped by Islamic requirements, but that the low built house is customary because of Islamic injunctions against any display of pride, arrogance, or ostentation. Ismail goes as far as to say that Islamic beliefs encourage the use of perishable or fragile building materials to demonstrate the inconsequent nature of this world. How this squares with similar building techniques in the Christian parts of the Mediterranean and the Indian subcontinent is difficult to see.

Without going as far as Ismail, there is no doubt that Islam marked the cities of the Middle East, and not simply with physical elements like the Friday mosque, surrounded by the bazaars, with public baths close at hand, as in the Islamic city model according to William Marçais (1918).

Janet Abu Lughod (1987) sees the contribution of Islam in the genesis of a certain type of city as being threefold:

- \* Firstly, the juridical distinction between members of the umma (Islamic community), the dhimmi (protected peoples), and others, which led to the juridical and spatial distancing of neighbourhoods.
- \* Secondly, the segregation of the sexes which gave rise to particular systems of spatial organisation.
- \* Thirdly, the legal system, which did not impose general regulations over land use of various types in various places, but rather left the detailed adjudication of mutual rights and space to litigation between nigh parties.

With relation to the first point, it should be added that cities with a Muslim population and rulers maintained the differences between juridical classes through social as well as spatial distance, through the use of sumptuary and dress regulations. However, there were no hard and fast rules: in Morocco, the segregation of Jews only began in the nineteenth century, and segregation by religion and race was also found in many European cities.

The second and third points were of crucial importance, however, in creating the fabric of irregular streets and dead end alleys which is so much the hallmark of a traditional Middle Eastern city.

Akbar (1988) sees this pattern as arising from Islamic principles. Town expansion was basically at the instigation of inhabiting parties. Unoccupied land (mawat, literally "dead" land) could be revived and so acquired by the reviver. However, to avoid the blocking of access to revived land by subsequent acquirers, there arose the principle of the harim, "the zone prohibited to others", without which the revived land cannot function - in the event, paths of access left over from areas revived. These paths became harim if used extensively and could not be annexed to individual properties by virtue of the movement on them. It is not strange, then, that the streets of the Muslim city should be so irregular, given that they developed in a situation where rich parties, individually or collectively, shaped them with minimum state intervention.

The legal system gave primary importance to the pre-existing rights of individual and collective users of land and immoveable property. There was no concept of legal person. Underlying the system was the hadith "La darar wa la dirar" - "Neither injury nor return of injury" (Akbar 1988, p529). In terms of property law, this hadith was interpreted to mean that one could change one's environment provided that others were not harmed by the transformations. The local Muslim legal authorities were therefore free to evaluate the legality of individual actions. There were no municipal codes, each case being judged on its own merits, referring back to the principle "La darar wa la dirar".

There were no municipalities, the rights of the collectivity were of residual importance. In contrast to mediaeval Italy, for example, there was no city government integrating the various parts of the whole. As Clement Henry Moore (1970, p6) puts it: "What distinguishes the mediaeval European city from its Maghreb (North African) counterpart was not the level of learning or craftsmanship but rather the latter's fragmentation and heteronymy in contrast to the former's political community in which autonomous government could develop".

In the mediaeval Islamic city, according to Akbar (1988) most urban components were owned, controlled and used by the same people. The principle built elements were the dar or bayt (house), the jami' and the mesjid (mosque and oratory), the hammam (baths) and the souk or bazaar (market), along with fortifications and a citadel. Exterior space in these traditional cities may be broken down into four main elements; fina, streets, hima, and dead end streets (zanka in Tunis, derb in Morocco).

The *fina* was defined as the space in a street abutting a property, to be for the sole use of the street's residents. Provided the Prophet's injunctions against harming neighbours or passers-by were respected, the nigh parties might use the *fina* more or less as they liked.

Streets were regarded as belonging to all Muslims, and a public way was defined as a road in which the passers-by were countless (Ibn 'Abidin 1966 cited in Akbar 1988). Thus quieter streets in residential areas were not public ways, but rather followed the rulings obtained when agreements were arrived at between the different nigh parties. In major streets, the authorities made an effort to see that the public right of way was not obstructed. "Governors sporadically exercised a right of eminent domain, seizing properties which encroached on public spaces, removing nuisances and dangers, and widening the streets" (Lapidus 1967).

The basic rule governing the width of streets was simple: Streets were as narrow as they could be while allowing for transit of goods and persons. Viability was for ever in conflict with the needs for built space within the protecting walls of the city. Although there was no municipal means of control, the muhtasib, a sort of market inspector, could represent the community to prevent public misuse of the street. He had the right, like any other individual, to prevent individuals from adding elements which impinged too much on the thoroughfare. He could not, however, improve the aesthetic quality of the built environment. He had a duty to protect customers from sharp builders using poor materials, but he never intervened in their design.

Hima is land protected so it cannot be appropriated by individuals, but rather will remain in the hands of the community. Pasture lands, sources of building materials, and forage were owned and controlled by the users.

Finally, the dead end street, was regarded by almost all the legal schools as being privately owned by the residents of the street. A resident could make a change which if not opposed was assumed to have been accepted. Non-objection was assumed to be tacit agreement, and in cases of dispute, collective agreement between the residing parties would have to be reached.

What is striking about the non-built space in the Islamic city is that the majority of spaces were owned, controlled and used by the same people. As in the case of mediaeval European towns, public space was not commonly created by authority, but rather public areas and the *fina* remained in balance, changing as the demands and nature of the community changed.

The strict segregation of the sexes found in many Muslim populated cities is not explicitly enjoined in Islam. It probably results from the fusion of pre-Islamic Arabian practice, where women, especially vulnerable in inter-tribal raiding, were highly protected, with the Koran's emphasis on the avoidance of sexual temptation (see the Koran, especially Soura XXIV, *En-Nour*). In any case, gender separation and the resultant division of labour in Islamic cities created a set of architectural and spatial imperatives that had a limited set of solutions given the climatic conditions and the materials available. Hence the development of the courtyard house in its varied local forms, and the elaborate tower houses of Sana'a and

Djedda, and the Ottoman konyak house, a timber framed structure without courtyard but with large machrabia (wooden lattice work) windows on upper floors.

I would propose a fourth important characteristic of the Islamic city: the distinction between pure and impure space. Although the Muslim can perform his prayers on any clean patch of ground, there is a requirement for the faithful to assemble in a clean space for the Friday sermon prayers. The fact that many Islamic cities were founded by conquering armies who had to be assembled for Friday prayers meant that cities like Kairouan, Fustat, Koufa and Basra originally had at their centres large open enclosures for this purpose. The hammam or bath house where the believer can perform his ritual ablutions is the logical extension in the built environment of the need to be ritually clean.

The emphasis on pure interior space was not without its architectural consequences. Access to interior space was to be protected, hence building tended to have no inherent axial quality; access to the living quarters of a house is often via a passage en chicane, the entrance to a mosque is at right angles to the kibla, the wall alcove or niche indicating the direction of Mecca. The outside appearance of a building was of less importance than the interior, hence the elaboration of a rich repertory of designs for the decoration of interior walls. "The multitude of decorative treatments of surface in Islamic architecture....goes hand in hand with the non-directional plan" (Grubbe 1978).



The Middle Eastern city is not easy to define. It is easier to say what is not distinctive about it. Like all types of cities, it was the product of many forces, and each city evolves in a process in accordance with particular combinations of forces. There is no doubt that Islam was a great force in shaping the Middle Eastern city - and that Islam remains a great force in these cities, perhaps because of the diversity of elements that compose the Islamic base and the lack of institutional and personal demand for strict application of these elements.

The traditional Islamic cities of the Middle East and North Africa, like Sana'a, Fes or Tunis, all cities considered as worthy of being preserved for posterity, are pre-industrial cities with a morphology heavily marked by a culture and religion emphasising gender separation and pure/impure space, and a system of legally shared responsibility with regard to shared space.

#### I.C. PRE-INDUSTRIAL CITIES TRANSFORMED: THE RENAISSANCE AND THE ISLAMIC INFLUENCED CITY

If compared to the European city as it developed after the fifteenth century, the Islamic influenced city shows none of the innovations and transformations brought about by the Renaissance. Mediaeval Christian and Islamic cities resembled each other in that they were closely packed aggregations of houses within a defensive circle of walls, with irregular streets leading away from a centre of religious and commercial activity to the periphery. There would be a citadel, home of the ruler.

The Italian Renaissance transformed the city, as a new hierarchical order of human activities evolved, separating the liberal professions from the manual arts, the directive from the executive. The new difference between the idea originating class and the "implementers" meant that it became possible to project an entire city (Argan, 1969). Thus treatises of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were full of ideal cities, planned ex-novo on geometrical criteria. Symmetry and proportion were the crucial concepts, applied first to individual buildings, subsequently to whole urban restructuring operations, for it was impossible not to see the need for a proportional relationships between the buildings - and a proportional composition of buildings is also a perspective composition.

The great novelty of the Renaissance concept of urban space was that perspective, the law of human vision, came to be considered as the constructive rule of space, the principle by which buildings were to be distributed within the overall layout of the city. Thus architects strove to secure sympathetic relationships between the length and breadth of a piazza and the buildings around it. The unit of conception was the whole street or square, not the individual building, and of course this had a profound influence modifying the layout of the city. Coupled with this was a new concept of the city as a setting for human history - the stage on which human lives were acted out.

A new discourse was developed by the likes of Alberti who rediscovered Vitruvius, a late Roman theorist of architecture and urban planning. After a millenium during which intellectual life had centred on God, and above all, the Devil, the rereading

of Vitruvius had a revolutionary impact: by modifying represented space, by manipulating images of built space, it became possible to modify the real space inhabited by societies seeking to create conditions for their happiness. Hence there arose an extraordinary passion for carefully conceived plans as a precondition to any intervention in the city.

The basic idea was that the city should conform to an aesthetic ideal. Alberti distinguished sensual pleasure (*voluptas*) from comfort and convenience (*comoditas*), and gave them the same importance. The city was to obey the rules of geometry and symmetry, to present the city's monuments in perspective, and display discipline through architectural conformity.

Although the mediaeval city, Christian or Islamic, occasionally offered views of monuments, this was generally the result of the way the city had evolved. In mediaeval times, geometry had served to divide up plots of land - it was a means, not an aid to achieving aesthetic pleasure.

Architectural conformity was the most difficult maxim of Renaissance planning to realise, and the best examples were the royal squares of XVII and XVIIIth century France.

Opportunities to build and rebuild cities were not lacking in the XV, XVI and XVIIth centuries. Systematic use of cannons meant that fortifications had to be reconceived and fortress cities established (Delumeau 1967, Bornecque 1984).

Existing cities were modified, with their monuments, the sites of great historic events - for instance the Coliseum at Rome -

at the heart of the new urban schemes, manifesting the humanist values of Renaissance society. And since monuments needed to be viewed, and tended also to be bigger than other buildings, a new and larger scale resulted, with the new wider streets making possible a huge increase in urban traffic, both horseback and wheeled. Perspective, as a theoretical construction of space, came to be the primary regulator of the urban web in the Italian Renaissance.

Perhaps the best definition of the Renaissance concept of urban space follows Descartes' formula: "L'urbanisme classique est...celui qui porte la marque de la raison et de la volonté humaine" (Lavedan et.al. 1982).

The new forms of the townscape arising from the Renaissance concept had no equivalent in the Islamic world. Although, in the case of North Africa, there was exchange between the two sides of the Mediterranean in terms of furniture and ceramic and decorative techniques, the traditional North African cities never followed the humanist tradition which played such a crucial role in the development of the European city. For this to have happened there would have had to have been a major cultural shift and the development of an urban culture exalting man and his superiority over nature and his power of reason.

This did not occur, and so the Middle Eastern and North African cities which have survived to the present untouched by major demolitions are cities having many morphological characteristics in common with the pre-Renaissance European city. The Medina of Tunis is one of the best preserved of this kind of city.

## SECTION II

## THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDINA OF TUNIS

Before moving on to discuss how the system of conservation management evolved and works for the Medina of Tunis, it would seem essential to discuss how and why the Medina evolved, and what the essential physical components and morphology of the townscape are today.

Following Vadrine (1979): "It is necessary to re-examine the history of the city's development not out of mere intellectual curiosity, but also to rediscover the logic of the city. Knowing the dates between which such and such a ruler held sway, or the years in which such and such a warlord passed through, is of little interest. Rather the step by step physical history of the city, which mirrors both the constrictions of the site and its inhabitants' lives, is to be followed".

Hence this section will trace not only the physical evolution of the built environment, but also the broad socio-economic and political trends underlying that evolution.

Thus the particular value of the Medina as physical testimony of a particular way of living space and time will become more apparent. A further aim of this section is therefore to show how the Medina townscape exemplifies the characteristics of a Middle Eastern Islamic city.

## II.A. THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF A TOWNSCAPE

### II.A.i. Early history

Like any other human settlement, Tunis was founded as its site could satisfy the basic human need for food and water, defence and easy communication with other settlements.

The central Medina occupies the lower east facing slopes of a hill lying between a wide salt flat, the Sebket es-Sedjoui, to the west and a brackish lake, the Buheira, to the east. More distant to the north lie the Sebket Ariana and the Djebel Ahmar. The highest point of the hill was occupied by a citadel from at least Hafsids times, and there were defensive outposts to the west on the hills of the Rabta area, and to the south.

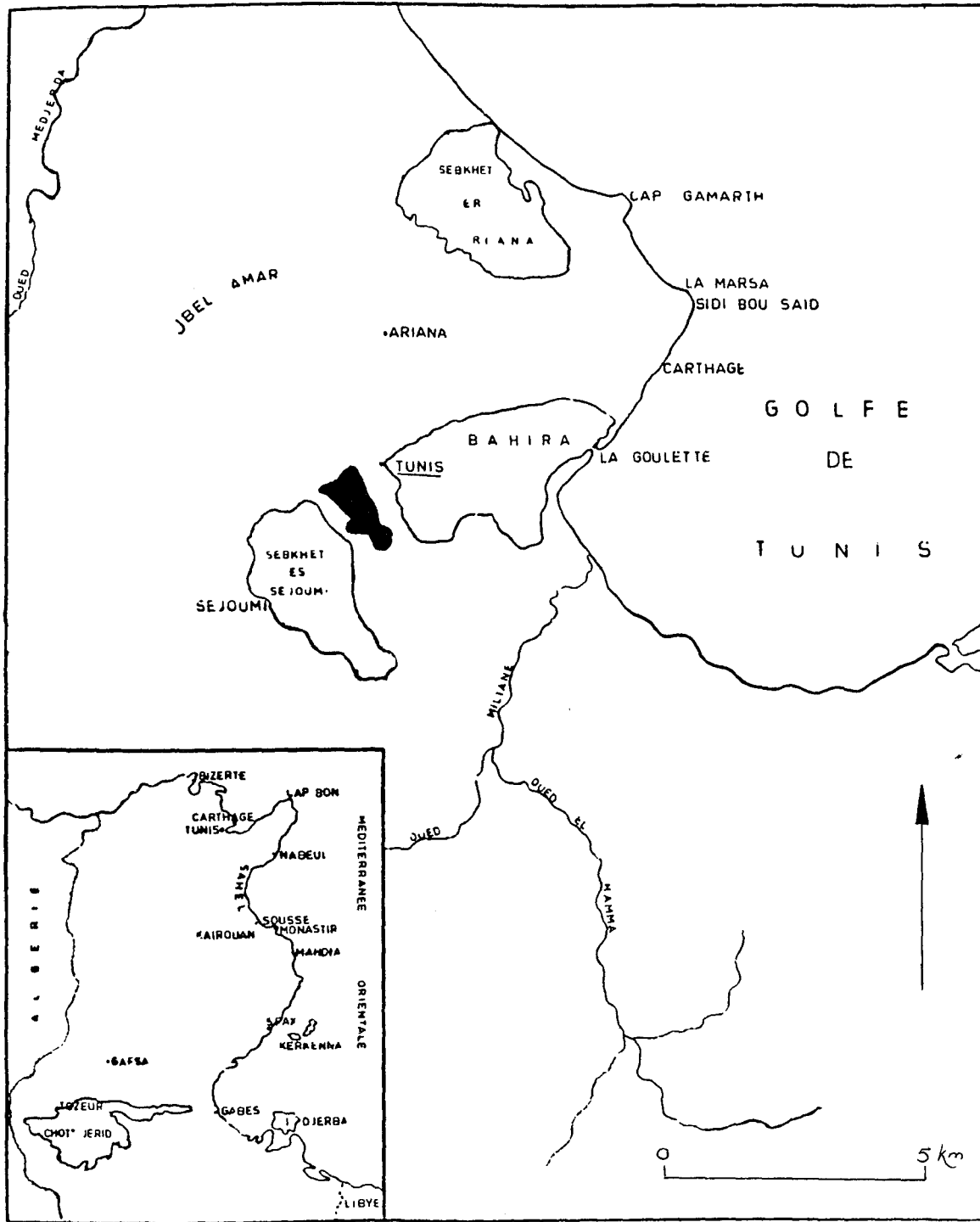
Taken in the wider context of the north eastern Maghreb, that is to say the area which had been the Roman province of Africa and was to become the modern state of Tunisia, Tunis was ideally situated to control the most fertile areas of Cap Bon, and the Mornag plain, and could extend its influence down into the Sahel. Weak governments could survive by controlling this compact territory with easy internal lines of communication.

Tunis was an ideal site for a capital having a safe port and at the same time being no more than two or three days ride from the strong points of Sousse, Kairouan, and Le Kef. Those groups whose wealth could fill the government coffers - sedentary olive cultivators, goat and sheep herders - could be easily protected within the "Tunisian core area" from raiding nomads.

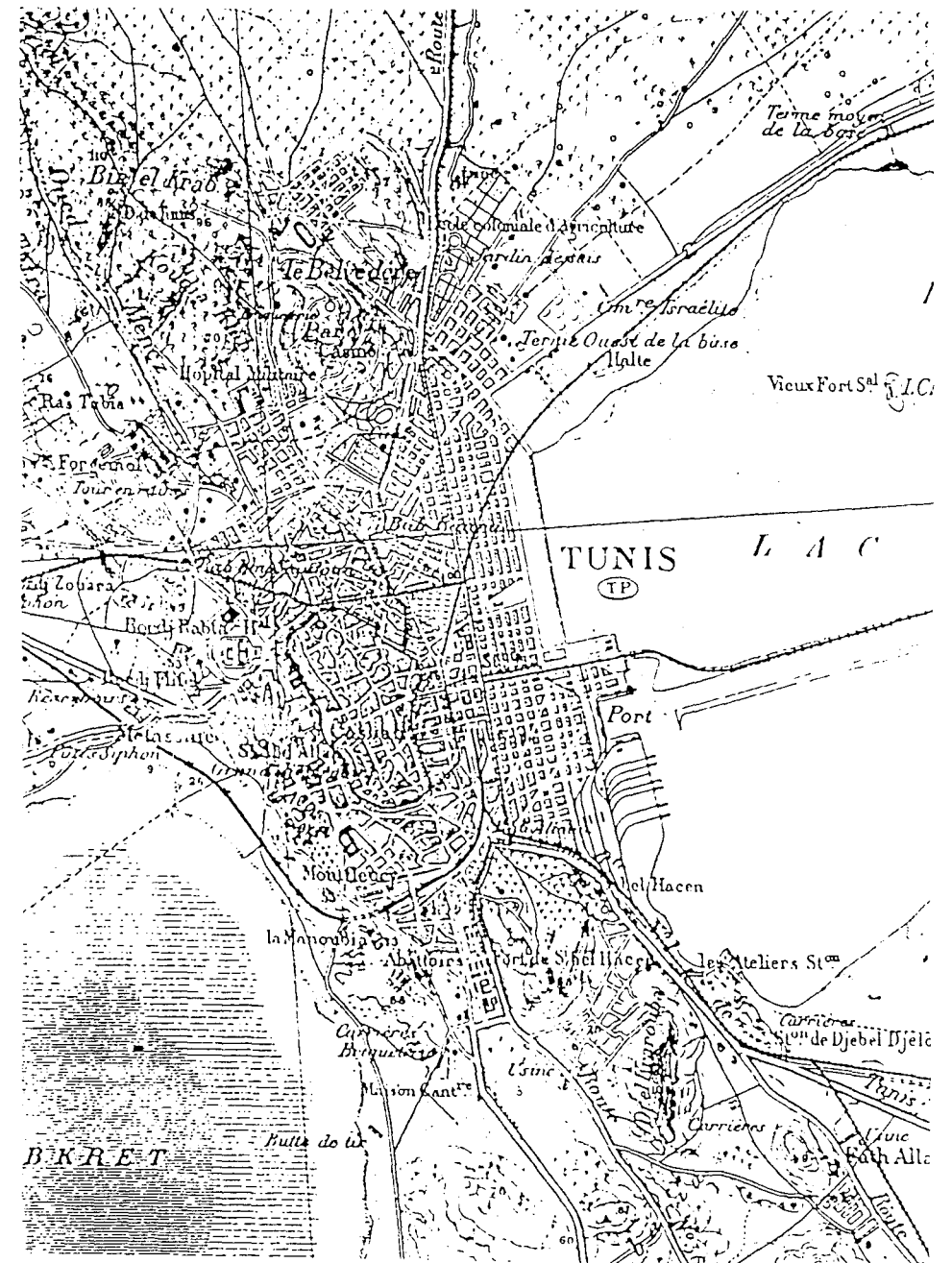
To the advantages of a reasonable defensive site and good communications with a controllable hinterland may be added the fact that the water table is sufficiently close to the surface and supplied by abundant winter rains for it to be possible for every house to have its own well. Fertile farmlands to the south (Mornaguia), the west (La Manouba), and the north (La Soukra) supplied the city with its needs in food. When the Arabs arrived there also existed abundant supplies of building materials in the form of the ruins of Carthage. (See map 1.)

The first Arab invaders in the late seventh century AD came by land. A nomad people with no skill in the arts of seafaring in the early days of their empire, it was natural for them to prefer to establish their first strong points in the interior. Hence the founding of Kairouan by Okba ibn Nafi' in 670 AD on a vast semi-arid plain, well out of reach of the enemy Byzantine fleets. Tunis was not founded until 698 by Hassan ibn No'man, probably as it became possible to exploit Coptic savoir faire in seafaring matters. Hence the viability of Tunis as a marine arsenal, unlikely to be successfully attacked from the sea, to underpin the Arabs' new dominance in the central Mediterranean (Julien 1961).

It is highly probable that the new city grew on a site divided into lots by the Roman cadaster, possibly around the core of an ancient settlement called Thunes. Research by Lapidus (1973) demonstrates that the invading Arabs were more likely to move into already established cities or to set up encampments next to them than to found new cities, and this would square with the existence of a pre-Islamic Thunes.



Map 1 (a): Geographical location of the Medina of Tunis, between the Sebhet Es-Eejoumi (salt flats) to the west, and the Bahira (lake) to the east. The black shaded area shows the extent of the Medina and faubourgs in about 1850. The inset map shows the location of Tunis in the north-east of the modern Tunisian state.



Map 1 (b): Part of the 1928 Chevaux plan of Tunis. The geometrical layout of the colonial city can be clearly distinguished from the pre-industrial urban fabric of the Medina and faubourgs. To the North the first garden suburbs can be seen.



The core of the Medina was probably shaped by the layout of Thunes, and it is possible that the irregular streets and polygons of the blocks of the Medina's residential areas follow the tracks and field divisions of Roman times when the area was settled by ex-army farmer colonists.

Archaeological soundings by Gauckler at the beginning of the century next to the minaret of the central Zitouna Mosque revealed traces of Roman or earlier settlement, as did similar work at the Hafsia, the Kasbah and the Ksar mosque. With this evidence in mind, Béji Ben Memmi, architectural historian at the Institut national d'art et archéologie (Inaa), section Conservation de la Medina, believes that there was a large pre-Islamic settlement on the site of the Medina (interview, June 1991).

Tunis had a fairly chequered history in the first four centuries of its existence. The Great Mosque was expanded and rebuilt several times: Lezine (1926), estimated the population of the city at 9000, based on the 864 extension of the Zitouna. There was a general increase in prosperity in the ninth and tenth centuries brought about by what Daouletli (1981) calls the Arab peace in the Mediterranean, and the expansion of trade with the islands and Christian states. In 864, on the orders of the Abbasid caliph, work began on the cupola which surmounts the kibla of the Zitouna mosque to this day (Lezine 1926). The souks were probably first formally organised at this time, and under Ziyedet Allah III, the walls reconstructed and strengthened.

Use was made of a wide variety of construction techniques - unfired brick, baked brick, and ashlar - and the Roman ruins were drawn upon freely. Decoration continued to employ motifs such as rosettes and vine leaves common in the Christian period prior to the Islamic invasion of the 670s.

Under the Aghlabids, in the IXth century, a number of palaces surrounded by gardens were built outside the walls, notably to the north of the central Medina. Daouletli (1981) cites the historian El-Bakri for his description of the new fortress palace built outside the walls on the western edge of the Medina, and considers it to have been near La Rabta. Amadeo (1970) disagrees and considers that the Aghlabids moved the seat of government from Kairouan to a fortress-palace on the same site as the modern Kasbah.

In 909 the Aghlabids were dethroned by the Fatimids, who preferred to make Mahdia, further down the coast, their strong point. Bloody struggles opposed Fatimid Chiites and more orthodox Malekites (q.v. appendix II): the walls of the city were severely damaged, and houses and souks pillaged. The reconstruction of the city was supervised by the dynamic Mehrez Ibn Khalaf, an almost legendary figure who organised the rebuilding of the ramparts, created Bab Souika, the "little souk", and allowed the Jews to settle within the walls in a quarter of their own, the Hara. Revered in his lifetime, he became Sidi Mehrez, his tomb still a place of pilgrimage.

From the mid-XIth to the mid-XIIth century Tunis was ruled by the Khorassanids. The 1050s brought the invasion of the Beni Hilal, and the countryside was devastated. A feeling of

insecurity continued throughout the Khorassanid period: the town closed in on itself to become a sort of fortress citadel. The ruler's residence was moved intra muros to form a new quarter specially created for the dynasty. Tunis flourished commercially at this time, controlling with Sicily the 140 km wide sea corridor between the western and eastern halves of the Mediterranean. Relations developed with the Italian trading republics as well as with Marseilles and certain Spanish entrepôt ports.

By the middle of the XIIth century, despite - or maybe because of nomad incursions, Tunis was a well-peopled, walled city containing gardens and orchards and linked to the sea by a canal. Around the city, small communities were developing among the market gardens and orchards.

Hence Tunis was able to become capital of the Almohad (q.v. appendix II) empire around 1150, Mahdia and Kairouan having been too seriously damaged by the Norman and Hilalian invasions respectively. The Almohads strengthened the ramparts and moved the seat of power back to a fortified palace outside the walls, returning the city to the people.

## II.A.ii The Hafsid Period

In the words of Abdel Aziz Daouletli (1976) "The Hafsid period is the most remarkable, the most essential period in the Medina's history. Essential because the Medina expanded to the limits it was to keep until the appearance of new quarters in the XIXth century. It was in the Hafsid times that the basic morphology of the Medina as we know it today, its architectural structures and its basic system of socio-spatial functioning appeared".

After the collapse of Almohad rule in the Maghreb, three dynasties filled the power vacuum: the Merinids at Fez, the Zayyanids at Tlemcen, and the Hafsids at Tunis.

The XIIIth century up to 1270 and the XIVth century were the high points of Hafsid rule: stability and prosperity were accompanied by population growth and a corresponding expansion of the city. By the XIIIth century, the two faubourgs were almost as big as the central Medina. In 1361, Ibn al-Sammar estimated the city at 7000 hearths. In the XIVth century the two faubourgs were walled in and the Medina, excluding the fortified-palace complex, reached some 203 ha, according to Lezine (1971). The Zitouna mosque was enlarged, the Roman aqueduct which had carried water from Zaghouan to Carthage, restored and new city gates and towers added.

It was under the Hafsids that important features were added to the built fabric of the city in the form of social and educational infrastructure. The appearance of the kuttab (Koran) school, and the medersa (theological college), as well as the building of hammams (Turkish baths) crucial to ritual purity, and eight new Friday or sermon mosques is an indication not only of the

population increase and that Tunis had overtaken Kairouan in importance intellectually, but also that Islam was assuming new importance in the life of the city.

Under the Hafsids, Islam became an ideology to be used in supporting political authority, not a means of transforming society. Islam under the Almoravids and the Almohads (q.v. glossary II) had provided the force to incorporate families and clans into a disciplined tribal unit "to synthesize the identity of its constituent parts long enough to create an empire" (Moore, 1976). But these empires lasted only as long as the patrimonial founder clan maintained cohesion - easily lost through city living.

Merinid, Zayyanid, and Hafsid rulers recognised the importance of Malekite Islam as a sustaining force. Viewing themselves as heirs to Almohad politico-religious authority, the Hafsids came to use Malekite theologians as leaders of public opinion.

Under Sultans Abou-'Abbas (1370-1394) and Abou Faris (1394-1434) the Almohad character of the Hafsid regime began to fade, and its Malekite Ifrikkiyan nature became more marked.

The Malekite ascendancy meant greater identification of the ruling family with Malekite urban leadership. By the early 1300s, Malekites held all the main religious offices in the Hafsid state. From 1355 to 1401 Mohamed Ibn 'Arafa held the imamate of the Zitouna mosque; dominating the religious thought of the day, he contributed to the recognition of 'uraf, local customs, as having normative legal validity when it did not contradict with the charia, the body of law regulating Muslim life.

The consolidation of religious consciousness, notably under Sultan Abou Bakr (1317-1346), was because rulers felt that their interests lay in promoting the religiosity of Muslim jurists to curtail the centrifugal political force of the cult of saints. It meant that important resources were devoted to founding Malekite educational establishments.

The first medersas were founded through donations made by Sultan Abou Zakaria (1228-1240) and his wife, mother of Sultan el-Mustansir (1249-1277). Although originally intended as centres for the study of the Almohad doctrine, the medersas of Tunis, like those of Fez, soon mutated to provide from the XIVth century onwards instruction in Islamic law.

There is also some evidence that the religious brotherhoods were becoming established under the Hafsids. Jean Léon L'African (1556, new trans. publ. 1981) recounts how the mad were venerated at Tunis, to the point that the king had a "monastère" built and endowed for a certain madman, Sidi Dahi - obviously a reference to the foundation of a zaouia.

At the same time as the Hafsid dynasty came increasingly to rely on Islamic legal norms for legitimation, it became increasingly reliant on maritime commerce as a source of revenue, and on liberated slaves and Andalusian immigrants for its administration.

European influence grew in the early XIIIth century: in 1231 a treaty was signed with Venice; 1246 saw an Aragonese ambassador in Tunis, in 1253 the Aragonese opened a fondouk, the Tunisian equivalent of the caravanserai. In 1250 the Dominicans founded their Studium arabicum. The Frankish quarter at Bab Bahar was at

its beginnings, and a maritime arsenal, a great five vaulted building, was built on the eastern side of the city just outside this gate.

### II.A.iii The Spanish Occupation

After the death of Amir Abou Othman (1435-1488) the Hafsid dynasty, troubled by internal strife, could no longer contain the incursions of the nomads or the rise to power of the Barbarossa brothers. In 1534 Kheireddine Barbarossa expelled the Hafsid sultan and occupied the fortress, strengthening its ramparts. The Sultan turned to the emperor Charles V who removed Barbarossa in 1535.

However, after the emperor's victory, newly freed Christian slaves pillaged and sacked the city. The sultan was reinstalled on his throne, but quickly overturned. The city was retaken by the Spaniards, and then almost immediately taken back again, this time definitively, by the Turks under the command of Sinan Pacha in 1574.

The Spanish occupation is important to us today because the earliest pictorial representations of Tunis, in the form of engravings, date from this period, and give us a fair idea of how the city looked in the XVIth century.

A print entitled "La terra di Tunisi" drawn up by Augustin de Venise in 1535 and reproduced by B. Zatteri in 1566 (PAP/RAC May, 1988) shows very clearly the citadel, the walls, and the royal palaces of Bardo, Ras al-Tabia and La Mescia, as well as showing clearly the geographic location of the city on the Buheira, access to the sea being protected by a fort at La Goulette. The commentary to this map tells us that the ramparts were insufficient to keep out marauding nomads, and that the livestock market took place on an open space between the city and the



mosque. The port situated at ruined Carthage was unused and filled in.

Tunis, according to Leo Belgicus (1535, print from the Bardo Museum reproduced in Daouletli 1976) on the other hand shows a well-walled city with numerous watch towers and the arsenal with its five vaulted galleries.

The Spanish occupation was also important in that it witnessed the execution of Tunis' first and only Renaissance-style planning operations: the Nova Arx, and the fortifications of La Goulette, constructed by Charles V and Phillip II. The Nova Arx was built on the ruins of the Hafsid arsenal, probably near the site of the modern cathedral. Like the double-ringed strong point of La Goulette, it was built according to the most up-to-date military technology of the day. The Nova Arx has long since disappeared, but the fortress of La Goulette remains, as well as the smaller Spanish fort of Chikli, built on the remains of a Hafsid summer palace on an island in the Buheira.

When the Ottomans took control of Tunis in 1574, the urban landscape was one of devastation. The city had been sacked three times: much reconstruction work needed to be done.

II.A.iv The XVII and XVIIIth centuries: the heyday of the Medina and the development of Beldi culture.

The pachalik established by the Turks in Tunisia was not to colonise the country; rather it was a military government owing allegiance to Istanbul, serving the strategic needs of the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman Government) by giving it a base close to the crucial straits between Sicily and North Africa.

A chaotic period in the 1590s in which rebellious Janissaries forced the Istanbul nominated Pacha to invest one of their officers or dey with authority over Tunis and the troops, was followed by a period of stability under Othman Dey (1598-1610) and Youssef Dey (1598-1637) who maintained themselves in power by curbing the Janissaries with the help of local zouaoua troops; a group of renegades filled the highest political positions. (Abun-Nasr 1975)

For political support, the deys came increasingly to rely on two military commanders - the head of the naval forces, or kaptan, and the head of the annual tax collecting expeditions and tribal administration, or bey. The history of the seventeenth century is dominated by the growth of the power of the latter at the expense of the deys, which was eventually to lead to the establishment of a hereditary monarchy.

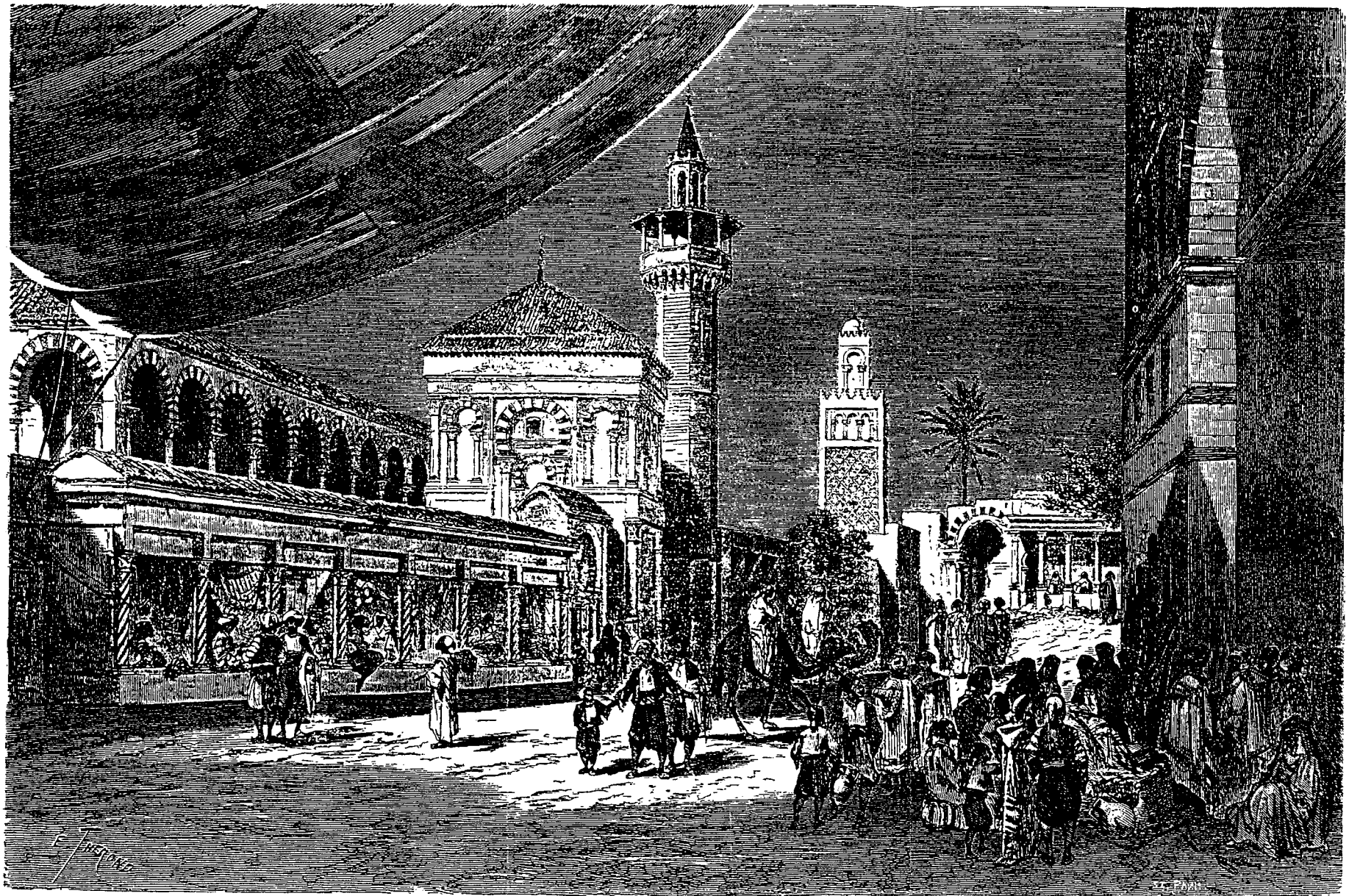
The Ottoman pachalik's strategic aims were largely exceeded, as the deys, and subsequently the Mouradite beys, brought the rest of the Tunisian core area and the Sahel under their authority,

building up a tax base and an army attached to the beylicate, and balancing piracy with foreign trade.

Unsettled though the political life of Tunisia was during the seventeenth century, the period was one of prosperity - thanks to trade and piracy, and also to the arrival of large numbers of skilled Andalusian immigrants. The city's new found wealth was reflected in the amount of public works and private construction.

The newly arrived Turkish elite of Tunis sought to make their mark on the religious life of the city by the establishment of a medersa of the Hanefite (q.v. Appendix II) rite of Islam favoured by the Ottomans, and the construction of Mosques with characteristic octagonal minarets: those of Youssef Dey and Hamouda Pacha (1654) marking the Turkish presence in the upper part of the central Medina, on a rise above the Zitouna Mosque (see Plate 1). 1675 saw the completion of the most striking of the new mosques, that of M'hamed Bey. Modelled on Hagia Sophia at Istanbul, it is the only mosque in the city to have two prayer halls, one above the other. Popularly known as the Mosque of Sidi Mehrez from its proximity to the zaouia of that saint, its great white dome still dominates the northern part of the Medina (see Plate 2).

In addition to the new religious buildings, repair works were carried out on the aqueducts bringing water to the city, and new public drinking fountains (asbila) and conveniences for performing ritual ablutions (midhat) provided. The slave market known as the Berka was remodelled with covered galleries, and also reflecting the importance of the slave trade in the city's economy, there



Un bazar, à Tunis. — Dessin de Therond d'après une aquarelle de M. Amable Crapelet

Plate 1: an 1859 view of the mosque of Yousef Dey. Note the octagonal minaret, an architectural feature brought to Tunis by the Ottomans, which contrasts sharply with the earlier square minaret of the Kasbah mosque, founded in Hafsid times.

(Source: Crapelet 1859)

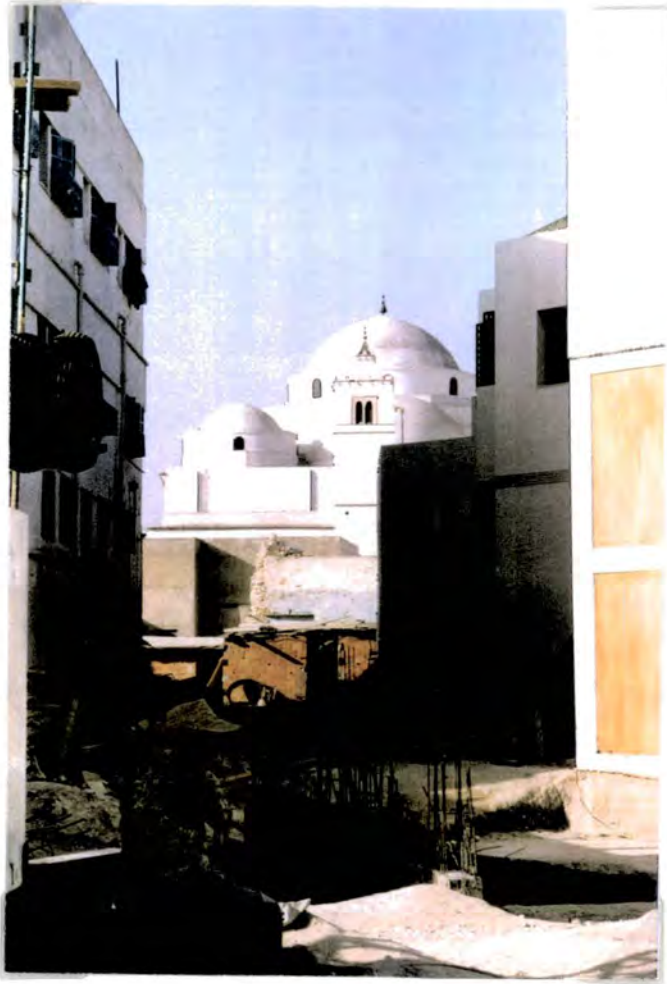


Plate 2: view of the mosque of M'hamed Bey, often referred to as the mosque of Sidi Mehrez from its proximity to the zaouia of that saint. Photo taken during urban renewal works at Bab Souika, Jan 1991

were at least nine bagnios, state prisons in which the slaves were shut up at night.

The new Turkish and Andalusian immigrants favoured the higher ground towards the western edge of the Medina, the former showing a marked preference for the areas to the north west of the central area. To this day, the street names attest the presence of the new politico-military elite: rue du Pacha, rue de l'Agha, rue du Divan, rue de la Kasbah (from the Turkish kasabe, small town) leading to the ex-Hafsid fortress complex now known as the Kasbah on the highest ground above the city.

Other, poorer, Andalusian immigrants favoured the faubourg nord, where they created their own quarter, known as houmat el-Andalus. The Jewish quarter expanded, and some of the enslaved Christians, brought to the city through corsair activity, renounced their religion to become Muslim and intermarry with the local population.

Population growth in the XVII and XVIIIth centuries was probably offset by political problems, especially in the turbulent XVIIth century, and the plague. Although Tunis was spared the epidemics that devastated much of the Middle East in the XVIIIth century, in 1784 the plague reappeared with a vengeance, (Sebag 1965). Sebag goes on to argue that the subsequent epidemics resulted in the stabilisation of the population to the extent that the number of inhabitants in 1820, when the last epidemic struck, was the same as it had been in 1620.

Important changes took place in the XVIIIth century. After the power struggles among the military of the early XVIIIth century, the principle of gerontocratic succession was established in 1756. The bey, increasingly regarded as an indigenous ruler, and his government moved well outside the Medina to a new palace complex at the Bardo, a former royal estate of the Hafsids, (Arnoulet 1977), also used by XVIIIth century rulers. The isolation of the court from the city families, the beldia, was to have important political consequences, in terms of Tunis' failure to evolve an indigenous municipal government.

The Husseinite beys improved the outlying fortifications of the city: around 1735 the fort of Sidi Bel Hassan was completed, along with other smaller bastions to the north and west. Hamouda Pacha (1782-1816) added further to the fortifications, and had a second wall built by the Dutch engineer Hombert, so as to include the two faubourgs. The Kasbah by the end of the XVIIIth century was a sort of extension of these fortifications, protected by a double wall on its outlying flanks.

Within the walls there lived an increasingly diverse and, under the rule of Hamouda Pacha, with the European powers occupied with the Napoleonic wars, an increasingly prosperous population. The city was cosmopolitan, nationalities from all over the Mediterranean being represented, with a majority of Sardinians, Sicilians, and Maltese among the European population. In 1785 there were at least forty French. No foreigner was as yet allowed to own property, even the Fondouk des Français being rented by the consul from the bey.

The closer commercial relationships with Europe were reflected in the decorative styles favoured by the Tunisoise bourgeoisie: abundant use of ceramic tiles, gilded Venetian mirrors, opaline vases and rose water sprinklers from Italy and Bohemia; the wooden ceilings were increasingly elaborately painted, and marble marquetry work made its appearance, notably in the mausolea of the beys and of Hamouda Pacha. As Marçais (1927 p.119) puts it: "L'emploi de la main d'oeuvre italienne, qui s'affirme dans les monuments de la seconde moitié du XVIII siècle, rend perceptible un fait historique plus général: l'ouverture de plus en plus large du pays aux influences extérieures, la fréquence multipliée des rapports avec l'Europe".

Despite increasing foreign influence in the decoration and furnishings, domestic architecture continued to follow principles of spatial organisation which rigorously respected Islamic requirements for family privacy. And it is from the XVIII and early XIXth centuries that there date some of the Medina's finest palaces still extant today, notably the Dar Lasram and Dar Ben Abdullah, the best descriptions of which are in the work of Jacques Revault (1971, 1984).

The beldi families, successful in commerce and agriculture under the stable Husseinite rule, were able to extend their city residences by acquiring adjacent properties and embellishing them in the Italianate fashions of the day. But safely ensconced in the security of his dar on the rue des Andalous, the beldi patriarch did not seek to gain wider influence in the affairs of state, or even in improving conditions in the city.



Tunis was not to develop any form of city wide government until the municipal council of the mid-XIXth century set up largely at the instigation of the consuls. Rather the city was divided into quarters, and sub-quarters; each zanka had its own gate, as did the souks, and could be closed off at night. Each quarter was represented by a mharrik, probably selected with the agreement of the notables of the quarter. But the beldia had a profound mistrust of the beylical government, resident outside the city and liable to make rapacious tax demands and seize property. More important units of self-government were groups such as the craft guilds, the religious brotherhoods, and ethnic groupings - but they were not concerned with the wider interests of the urban community. The beldia, the Tunisoise notables among whose ranks were merchants and ulema, religious scholars and legal specialists, as well as poorer Muslim families may have shared the same religio-moral code and values, but they rarely acted as a political unit. It is perhaps significant that in 1705 the Tunisoise notables, faced with a power vacuum, invited a military man, Hussein Ben Ali, to take control.

And the ruling group, as in earlier times, continued to occupy a palace complex removed from the city, as was the case in other Islamic cities. Only their burial place was within the walls at the new mausoleum complex of Tourbet el-Bey.

Where works of public utility were carried out - the construction of fountains, Ali Pacha's fesquia (large reservoirs) of about 1740 - the works were conducted to emphasise the piety of the ruler in question.

To return to the physical fabric of the city, by the end of the XVIIIth century the Medina of Tunis was a dense urban fabric of one and two storey constructions; the roofscape of white washed terraces was varied by minarets and the green tiled domes of the tourbet-s. Practically all constructions, whatever their function - religious (mosques, oratories and zaouia-s), funerary (tourbet), educational (medersas), or domestic habitation, - were constructed around courtyards, the chief source of light and air in buildings with many party walls and few windows in an effort to maximise privacy. As building space within the walls ran out, that characteristic feature of Tunisoise urbanism, the sabat became more prevalent: it was permitted by the jurists of the city to build over the public right of way, provided beasts of burden could still pass - hence the narrow streets of the Medina often become vaulted passageways, further living space and very often kuttab-s (Koran schools for children) being provided in the new rooms above (see Plate 3).

In the narrow unpaved lanes of the Medina, it was impossible to tell from the whitewashed walls where one property ended and another began. Some of Jean Léon l'Africain's (1981) comments of some two centuries earlier still held good, however:

"Chacun cherche à faire de l'entrée de sa maison plus belle et plus décorative que le reste parce que c'est là que se tiennent le plus souvent les gens quand ils conversent avec leurs amis ou quand ils ont des questions à régler avec leurs serviteurs" (p.384) (see Plate 4).

The doorways had become more elaborate in the course of the XVIIIth century, and it is probable that with increasing security after 1750, the first wooden enclosed balconies with their lattice work barmakle window grills made their appearance - called ganeria in Tunisois dialect (see Plate 5). Their name, a deformation of the Italian galeria, is an indication of the cosmopolitan influences at work in the Medina - influences that were to become ever more marked in the next century.

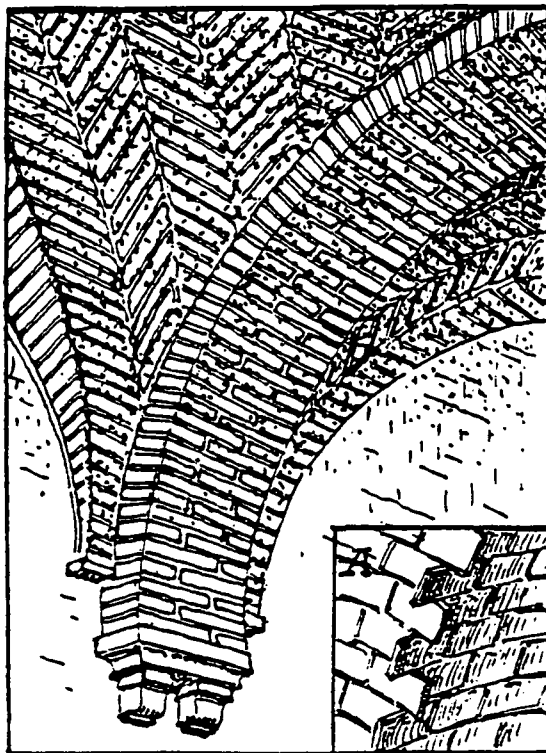


FIG. 275. Tunis. Construction de voûtes en briques couvrant les rues.

Fig 1: Typical brick vaulting used in the construction of a *sabat* (rooms over the street). Source: Marçais 1954



Plate 3: a zanka, a narrow alley in the Medina, partly covered by extensions to the houses either side constructed over the street.



Plate 4: an elaborate entrance doorway, in this case that of Dar Cherif at Sidi Bou Said. Similar doorways are found all over the Medina.



Plate 5: a GANERIA, the Tunisian covered balcony. The wooden superstructure could be very elaborate, including lattice work wooden shutters and coloured glass in some of the windows.

## II.B THE XIX AND XX CENTURIES: RAPID POLITICO-ECONOMIC CHANGE AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS ON SOCIETY AND THE TOWNSCAPE

The changes in the physical fabric of the Medina of the XIXth and early XXth centuries clearly reflect the politico-economic transformations of the period.

It would seem necessary then to discuss these transformations in general terms before moving on to relate them to the townscape first in the period 1880-1881, then in boom years of the foundation of modern Tunis (1881-1914) and finally in the period 1914-1956.

My chief sources here are Abdel Kefi (1986 and 1989), Anderson (1987) Ben Achour (1989), Ganiage (1968) as well as contemporary observers such as Fellisier (1853) and Dureau de la Malle (1838).

The aim is to give a clear picture of the townscape as it evolved in the hundred and fifty years prior to the independence of the modern Tunisian state - the townscape which broadly speaking still exists today and is the object of interest of the various bodies - notably the Asm, the Arru, and the Inaa, concerned with protective planning and the conservation of the built heritage.

This section falls into four main subsections:

- i. the pre-colonial economy under pressure
- ii. the XIXth century Medina in the traveller's eye
- iii. politico-economic change and the townscape 1800-1881
- iv. the rise of the Ville-basse - the Medina marginalised  
1881-1986

### II.B.i. The pre-colonial economy under pressure

Pre-colonial Tunis, like other Middle Eastern cities, was involved in extensive relationships with the surrounding countryside necessary for survival of both city people and villagers. In the XVIIIth century agriculture and basic crafts were the mainstays of the pre-colonial economy, along with increasing international trade and piracy, although the latter was steadily declining in importance.

The basis of the beldi fortunes which constructed the palaces and residences of the Medina was a combination of trade and land. Unlike the fortunes of the mamlouks, (high officers of state), swollen by beylical gifts and the fruits of political office, beldi fortunes survived down the generations. The beldia, apart from a couple of exceptions, were not involved in the fitting out of ships for piracy. For the most part, and in the absence of reliable statistics, "il semble très probable que la richesse beldie reposât davantage sur le négoce que sur la fabrication", (Ben Achour 1989, p262). The richest families were those involved in both the manufacture and sale of de-luxe products, silks, perfumes, saddlery, and the chéchia (felt hats) (see Plate 6), as well as their export.

Involvement with production and trade was not regarded as incompatible with status in the fields of learning and jurisprudence. Pennec (1964) reviews the main features of the pre-colonial mode of production. Based on the use of simple tools and human energy, the techniques in use in the early XIXth century were basically those of the XIVth century, although the arrival of Andalusian refugees in the XVth and XVIth centuries



had brought about modifications. Each craft was governed by a hierarchical division of labour; the sani' or apprentice at the bottom, could become a kalfa or companion, and eventually, if he reached the required level of craftsmanship, a muallim, or master of his trade. Each craft was headed by an amine, responsible for maintaining standards.

Most crafts were extremely small scale, one man enterprises, although some large scale enterprises, notably tanning and dyeing, did exist. Production was sold directly to a mixed urban and rural clientele by the artisan himself. Wholesale concerned only a few products, notably the chéchia - a small felt cap, an essential item of male headgear as the turban was wound around it, and the sefsari, a woman's coverall wrap. The direct sale system also meant that finance and labour capital were small and inseparable.

All crafts had highly specific locations within the city, high value de-luxe goods being sold in the covered souks around the central Zitouna mosque (see Plate 7), whilst polluting activities needing more space and water (dyeing, tanning, pottery kilns) were located on the edge of the city. Agricultural produce was sold in weekly markets in space outside the walls. The operating principle behind the separation of economic activity and residential use was of course the preservation of the intimacy of family life, as specified in Islam (see Plates 8 and 9).

But the prosperity of Tunis was also highly dependant on agriculture. Most land held by the beldi families was within a radius of 100 km of the capital, notably in the Mornag plain, and comprised olive groves, cereal growing hanachir (lands) and



6(a) Newly dyed chéchias are placed on pot moulds before going into a special drying cabinet. Workshop near Dar Lasram, north-central Medina



6(b) Chéchias for sale outside a shop on the Rue Sidi Ben Arous.



Plate 7: Early XXth century postcard showing  
the vaulted Souk des Etoffes on the western  
edge of the Zitouna mosque

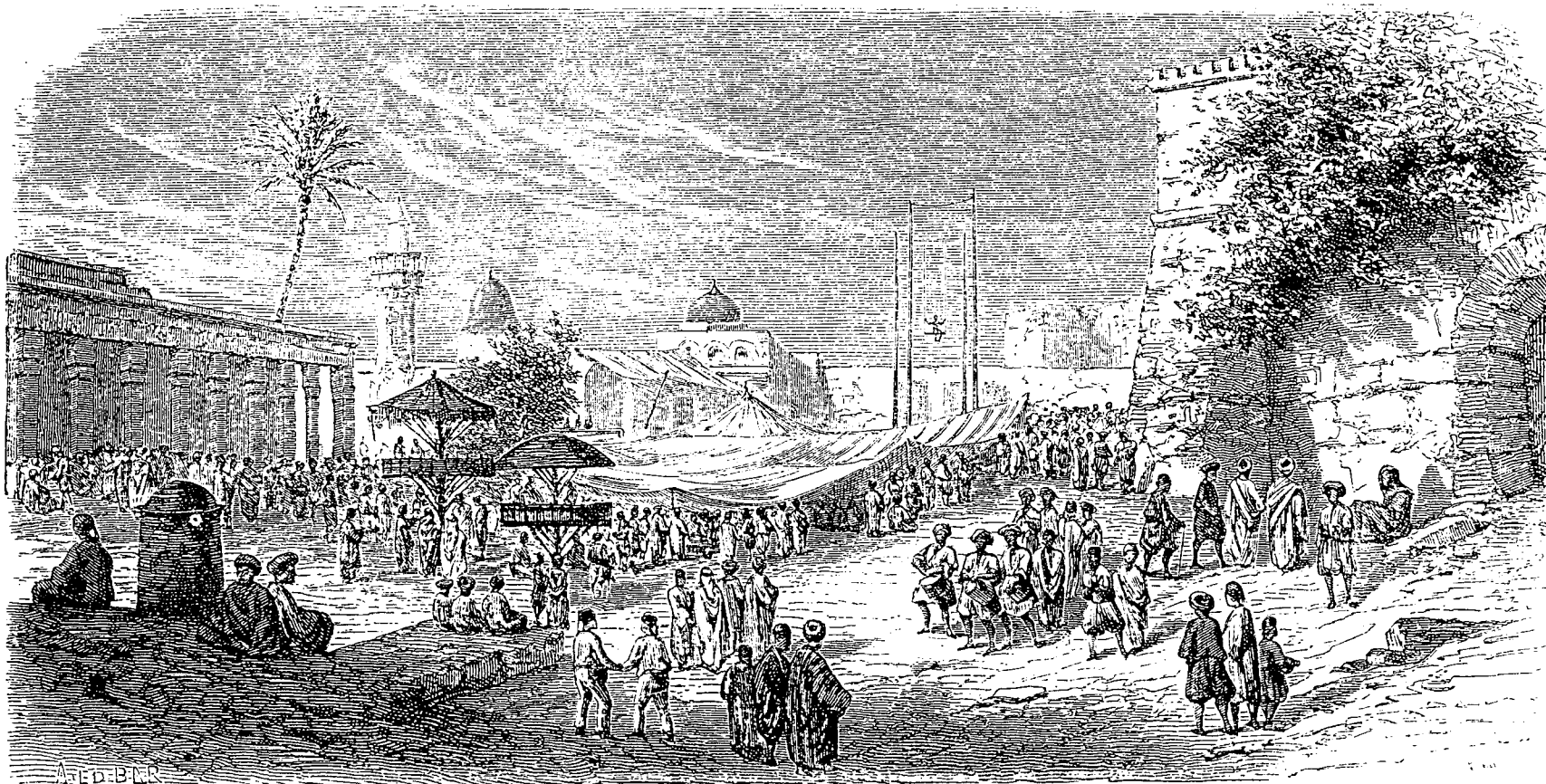


Un bazar, à Tunis. — Dessin de A. de Bur d'après une aquarelle de M. Amable Crapelet.

Plate 8: Engraving of the entrance to the Souk Es-Serragine, the saddle makers souk. The noise and bustle of the main public routes across the Medina was in marked contrast to the peace and quiet of the lanes in the residential areas. (Source: Crapelet 1859)

## Les fêtes.

On ne connaîtrait qu'à moitié les Tunisiens si on n'avait pas eu l'occasion d'assister à l'une de leurs fêtes.



Fête du Baïram sur la place de la Kasbah. — Dessin de A. de Bar d'après une aquarelle de M. Amable Crapelet.

Plate 9: A public festival at the Kasbah. There were no large spaces within the walls of the Medina to accommodate this kind of event. Large markets of agricultural produce and beasts were also held outside the walls. (Source: Crapelet 1859).

orchards (sanya), farmed under the khammesat share cropping system, and held in the form of habous endowments, an Islamic system of land entailment (see Appendix 3). Produce was taken to the city by caravan and stored in the granaries and makhazin (sing. makhzen: storeroom) of the beldi residences.

In the Medina itself, the great families such as the Lasrams, the Ben Ayyed and the Djelloulis would hold huge residences including several patios. In addition, houses and shops for rent were a key part of any beldi inheritance. Highly appreciated was property in the Jewish quarter; rented out to families of artisans, the income from these properties covered the running expenses of the beldi household. The richest families held a wider range of property in the Medina, including cafés, ovens, mills, olive presses, and hammams.

The chief characteristic of these family properties is their fragmentation. Lucette Valensi (1977), cited by Ben Achour (1989) reveals how, in the case of El Alia, near Bizerte, the lands of city notables were held in the same way as the villagers' lands: "C'est à dire que l'éparpillement et la multiplicité des parcelles sont la règle." Ben Achour gives as an example of a highly fragmented Tunisian inheritance the mukhallaf (inventory of deceased's property) of the Cheikh Bach Katib Muhammad Lasram, of 1861, comprising numerous properties at Tunis, its suburbs, Beja, in the Sahel and at Tozeur: more than 73 different properties, widely scattered, with the Medina properties concentrated in the Hafsia for rent to Jews and Christians. The prosperity of pre-colonial Tunis thus depended heavily on land, city property and commerce. The balance of

these elements in the traditional economy was to come under severe pressure in the early XIXth century.

With peace in the Mediterranean following the end of the Napoleonic wars, and the increasing vitality of European manufacturing industry with the development of more sophisticated financial and industrial techniques, plus improved shipping, it was inevitable that the Middle East would find itself the object of European interest as a market. Throughout the early 1800s, Tunis was the scene of rivalry between the consuls of France, England and eventually Italy. By 1860 these three countries accounted for 92% of Tunisia's foreign trade (Ganiage 1968).

Genoese and Marseillais markantiya (merchants) exported olive oil, dates, wool and skins, and imported sugar, coffee, silks, wools, candles and a variety of hardware goods, as well as jewels, perfumes and de-luxe articles for the court.

The expansion of Tunisian craft production, in the face of a wave of imported manufactured goods was impossible, largely due to the rigidity of the mode of production: entry to a craft, what Pennec (1964) refers to as a corps de métier, was restricted, and only very small numbers of workers were employed by each muallim; production was to satisfy demand, not to be stocked; perhaps most significantly, there was no investment capital. The corporation system emphasised quality, mutual help between members, and fidelity to ancestral techniques. Craftsmanship was extremely specialised, and there was what Ben Achour (1989 p293) calls "un sens aigu du travail bien fait", a strong sense of good craftsmanship.

The fall in demand for local products - worsened by the severe difficulties faced by one of the main markets for these products, the villagers and nomads of the interior (see below), meant that the craftsmen soon ran into financial difficulties, accumulating debts with European creditors. The difficulties of the tujjar, the Tunisois merchants, in the face of European competition were as severe as those of the artisans, with whom there were many similarities: merchants as well tended to be highly specialised, and to work alone, perhaps with a couple of assistants; and credit was not organised - loans were only available at outrageous rates from foreign lenders, 30-40% p.a.

The premises underlying the methods of operation of the tajir and the sani' differed fundamentally from those of the Genoese and Marseillais merchants now in Tunis. The Muslim merchant was proud of his ability to combine his piety with skill in business. The merchants would journey on the pilgrimage to the holy places and earn himself the title of haji. There was no wild chase after profits: istikfa', sufficiency, not greed, was the leitmotiv. But with the onset of European competition, istikfa' came to seem more like laziness and a lack of ambition.

The Beys were of course only too aware of the growing European influence in their dominions, and inspired by the example of reforms in the Ottoman Empire, and those undertaken by Mohammed 'Ali in Egypt, Ahmed Bey (1837-1855) began an extensive programme of modernisation. The previously sufficient revenues of the kingdom proved to be totally inadequate for the task, and under the two succeeding beys, Mohammed (1855-1859) and Sadok (1859-1882) the disorder in the state finances grew.



However, nothing was done to try to prevent the entry of European products on the Tunisian market, while the government's monetary policy was nothing if not disastrous. The copper currency introduced in 1825 by Husayn Bey (1825-1835) helped to drive out gold and silver currency, and the result was a sharp decline in the value of the piastre. The situation worsened under Sadok who in 1866 had to impose copper currency by force: the Tunisian merchants were ruined, whilst the Europeans and consular proteges, who were outside beylical authority, continued to demand payment in hard currency (Ben Achour 1989, p295).

The 1860s was a hard decade for the native inhabitants of the Medina, and the hardest blow to the Tunisois economy was perhaps that struck by the mahalla, tax collecting expedition, of Zarrouk in 1864, which left village and rural populations in the interior ruined, rich and poor alike. The pauperisation of these traditional clients of the Tunisois craftsmen and merchants had a direct effect on the prosperity of the Medina.

Eventually, the chaos in the state finances was of such proportions that in 1869 the treasury came under international control. After the arrival of Theodor Roustan as French consul in 1874, French investors found an increasingly favourable climate in Tunisia. Eventually, in 1882, with the acquiescence of the major European powers (bar Italy) France moved in to declare a protectorate, under the pretext that her Algerian interests were threatened by marauding Khroumirie tribesmen.

The rise in power and influence of the European communities, and the pressure on trade and handcraft production, part of the traditional underpinning of beldi prosperity, were of course

reflected in changes in the built fabric of the Medina, the subject of many a traveller's account in the XIXth century. The other major pillars of beldi prosperity, land and city property, were to come under attack in the last years of the XIXth century, as the French strengthened their hold on the country.

### II.B.ii. The XIXth century Medina in the traveller's eye

European travellers of the XIXth century tended to emphasise the "irrationnel et absurde" character of the Medina, as well as the feeling of "effroi labrythinique" which it inspired them with (Chebbi 1977). The picture they gave was strictly less than complimentary.

Dureau de la Malle (1838 cited in Arnoulet 1977) published a narrative of his travels in North Africa which include a description of the capital of the Regency of Tunis. He noted that the whitewashed houses of the city "offrent dans le lointain un ensemble très agréable et très pittoresque". But he found, like later travellers that the streets were narrow and muddy. Of the various irregularly shaped public piazzas within the walls, none was embellished with an edifice meriting the attention of the visitor. A sharper observer would perhaps have sought the reasons behind the lack of monumental building in the predominantly Muslim city. Dureau de la Malle did, however, comment on the variety and the elegance of the mosques.

Pellissier (1853), a member of the French scientific mission which visited Algeria and Tunisia in the late 1830s described the Medina in less than glowing terms:

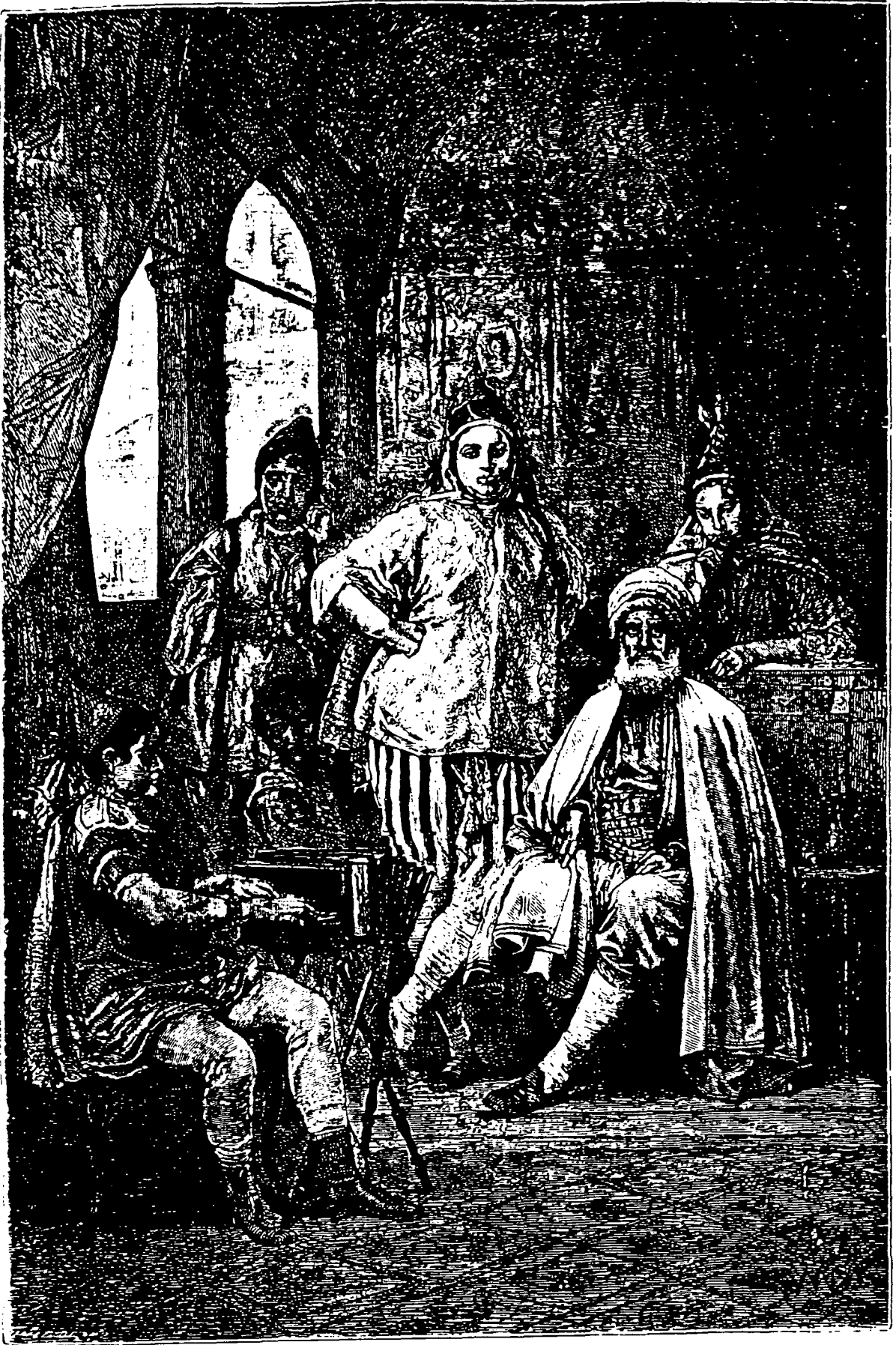
"Rien n'est plus hideux que l'intérieur de cette grande ville ou tout respire la misère, la malpropreté et le délabrement."

He did, however, appreciate the souks and certain of the mosques, but was obviously no aesthete: singled out for special mention was the new barracks, "qui est vraiment magnifique".

The dirt and poverty of the Medina were commented upon by almost all XIXth century travellers, but this view of the city as foul and muddy could be in part due to the nature of the areas accessible to the European visitor. As Ganiage (1969, p.136) puts it: "A défaut de pouvoir pénétrer dans les intérieurs musulmans, les Étrangers de passage se rebattaient sur une visite de la hara et le spectacle de quelque noce juive." (See Plate 10.)

For if the hara, the Jewish quarter, was the most picturesque area, with the bright costumes of the Jewesses, it was also the poorest and most insalubrious area. Despite the lifting of various restrictions on the Jewish population by Mohamed Bey in October 1857, "la masse des Israélites indigènes restait encore un prolétariat famélique vivant toujours dans la crainte" (Ganiage 1968, p.137).

The Medina as portrayed by the XIXth century travellers was thus, despite its oriental picture, a place of dirt, ignorance and disease, which was to contrast unfavourably with the clean and "logically" organised European city soon to grow up on its eastern flank.



Juif et femmes juives, à Tunis. — Dessin de D. Naillard, d'après des photographies de M. Catalanotti.

Plate 10: A Jewish family at home

(Source: Craplet 1859)

### II.B.iii Politico-economic change and the townscape 1800-1881

At the beginning of the XIXth century Tunis was a basically Muslim city with a significant Jewish minority, inhabiting a dense urban fabric of courtyard houses. Religio-educational buildings - mosques, zaouias, medersas - followed the courtyard model, albeit on a larger scale.

In the early XIXth century changes were to be made in the urban fabric by two notably successful groups: the Italian and Maltese immigrants, and to a much lesser extent, politically successful makhzen families, that is to say mamlouk and indigenous families holding high office at court.

The southern European migrants came, some attracted by commercial possibilities, others bringing new skills which the Muslim population did not possess. They tended to settle in the lower Eastern Medina, close to the Bab Bhar in the vicinity of the fondouks, their consulates which had been there for some centuries. The new settlers constructed in the Italian style within the ramparts along what was eventually to be named rue de la Commission. The Gnecco family, installed there in 1815, was sufficiently well established by 1837 to play host to Garibaldi and a group of Italian exiles. Large Genoese style balasat, elaborate apartment buildings, went up, housing bazaars of imported merchandise on the ground floor (see Plate 11).

Certain makhzen and mamlouk families did well and marked their success at court with the construction of extensive residences in the Medina, annexing adjoining parcels of land. In the north western part of the central Medina, Dar Mohammed Khaznadar and

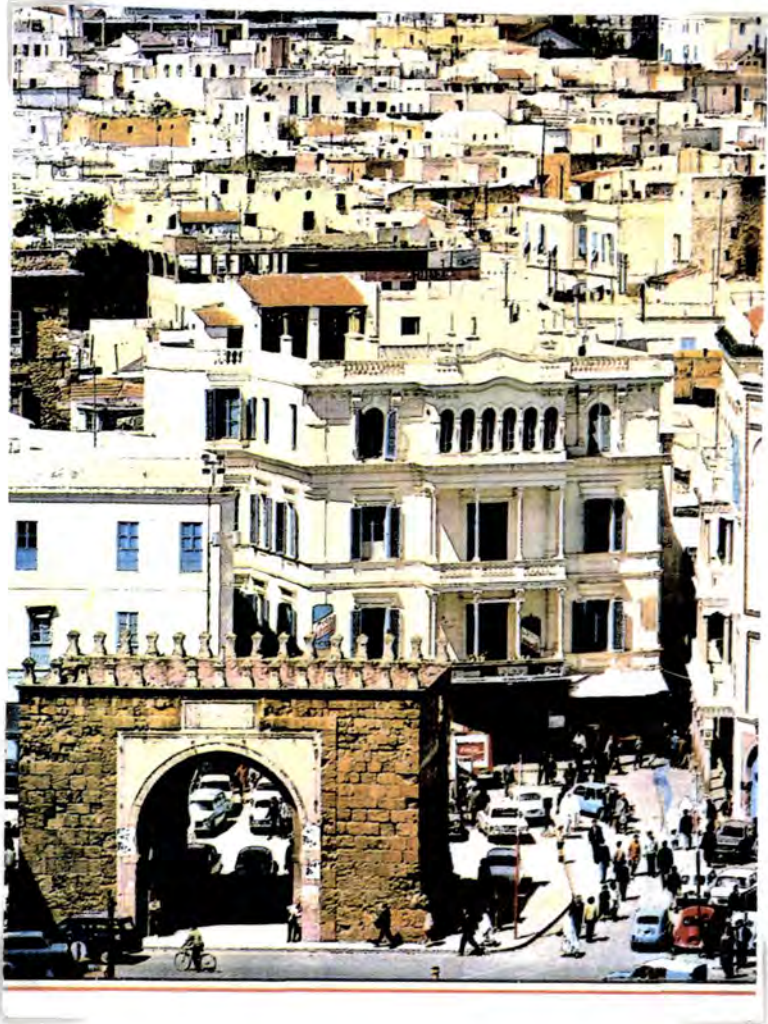


Plate 11: Postcard (circa 1960?), showing the Porte de France and a Genoese style merchant building just behind. The Medina rises up towards the Kasbah area in the background.

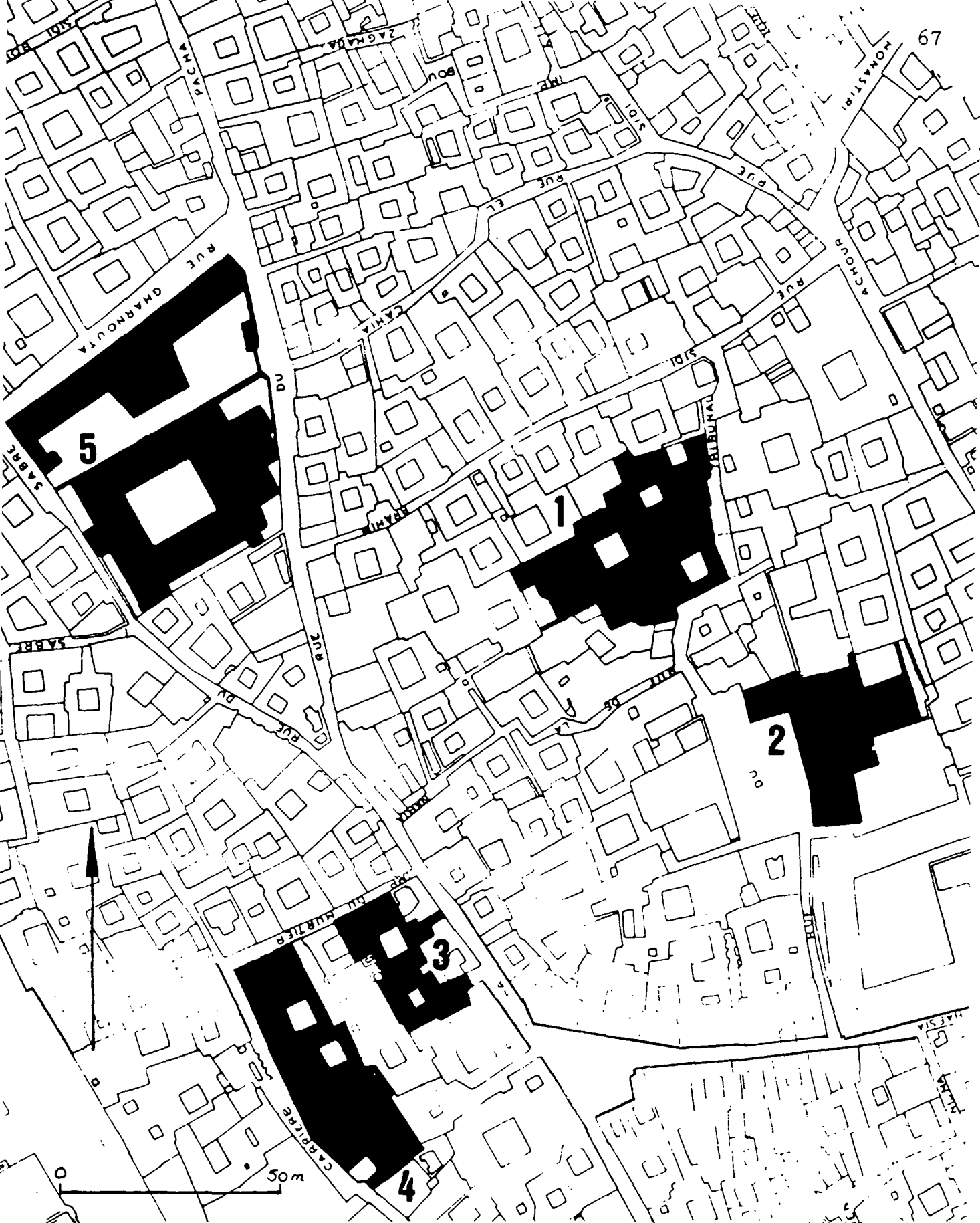
Dar el-Pacha, belong to this category, whilst at Bab Djedid, the Ben Ayed constructed an immense residence with many Italianate features (see Plans 2, a and b). However, for the most part the Mamlouks preferred to build outside the Medina, preferring to live nearer the Beylical palace complex at the Bardo or at La Marsa.

The Jewish population was confined until the reform of Mohammed Bey in October 1857 to living in an unsalubrious ghetto, the hara. By virtue of the reform they now gained the right to live outside the hara and acquire and own land. The Yahoud el-Grana, the Jews of Tuscan origin who had emigrated to Tunis in the late XVIIth century, were quick to capitalise on this advantage, and many pressed the European consuls for nationality. If most of the Jews were still living in poverty, elements of the Grana Jews were to be involved in the expansion of Tunis outside the eastern walls. Accustomed to European ways by years of trade, they began to move out into what was to become the Ville basse.

Within the walls, the increasingly numerous Christian and Jewish elements of the population became confident enough to move out of their quarters and their expansion in the Medina is well documented by Ben Achour (1989, pp78-80) from a detailed study of the Archives g n rales tunisiennes and the Journal officiel of the day. Muslim inhabitants were increasingly disturbed by the "infidel invasion", with the Municipal council going as far as to build a wall to restrict access to the houma (quarter) of Sidi el-Morjani and the still Muslim Maktar area; the move of a Jewish family into the aristocratic place Ramadhane Bey provoked protests from the inhabitants and the Municipal council.







Map 2 (b): Ministerial residences in the north-west central Medina. From top to bottom, moving clockwise

- (1) Dar Lasram, late XVIIIth century
- (2) Palais Kheireddine c.1860
- (3) Dar Bou Attour
- (4) Dar Mhammad Khaznadar
- (5) Dar El-Pacha,

Residences 2, 4, and 5 were all occupied by vizirs.

However, the non-Muslim expansion into the Medina was not simply the result of high rents in the Hara and the Quartier franc and rising European power - Muslim property owners were happy to rent at a higher price to Jewish and Christian tenants, and eventually, as the economic situation worsened, especially after the 1864 insurrection, to sell to them.

Evidently, the non-Muslims made numerous alterations to their dwellings, opening new windows and doors onto the alleys, just as much a challenge to the original social order as were the new markanti buildings in the lower Medina, the balasat like the four storey Cardoso residence at the very entrance to rue de la Zitouna.

In the new conditions, it was obviously unnecessary to continue the practice of closing the city gates at night, and this was stopped in 1861. As of this date the two faubourgs began to spread outside their fortifications, whilst a new European quarter grew up between the eastern walls and the lake.

The markantiyaa were quick to acquire habous land around the Medina via the enzel system (see Appendix III), a highly profitable operation: the land freed from habous servitude in exchange for a fixed enzel rent could be used for speculative building or held back for future construction. In any case, the enzel rent was usually very low, as it was payable in copper currency, which the markantiyya could acquire cheaply in high quantities with hard currency.

In 1856 work had begun on a grand new French consulate - this was the era of confidence and expansion under the Second Empire. The

consul was installed there in 1861, the year in which the restored aqueduct of Hadrian began to bring drinking water to Tunis from over 100 km away. With vastly improved water supplies, European building activity could take off. Twenty years later, modern buildings ran on either side of an avenue leading from the small square in front of Bab Bhar - then known as the Porte espangole to the European community - to the French consulate some 400 metres away (see Plate 12). From that point a dusty road led to the small port: the scene was set for a huge expansion of the city, full of consequences for the Medina.

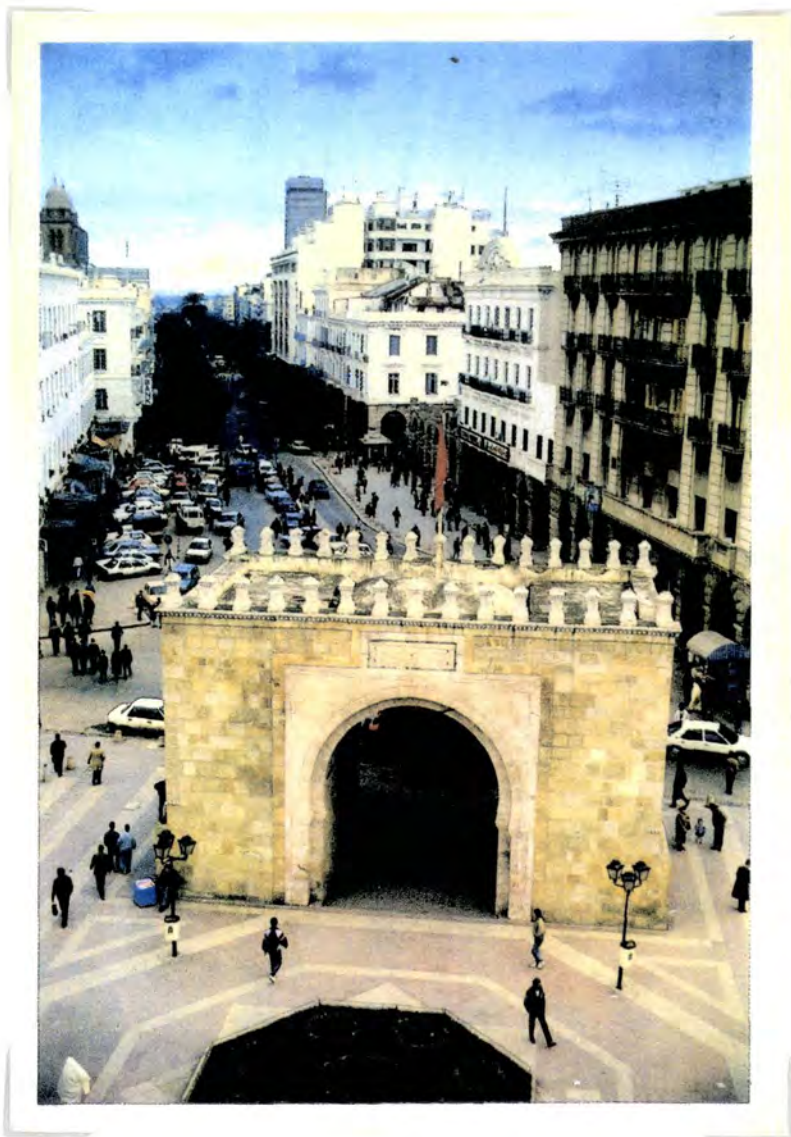


Plate 12: Postcard view of the Porte de France  
and the Villeneuve taken from inside the Medina

II.B.iv The rise of the Ville-basse - the Medina marginalised:  
1881-1956.

Tunis was transformed in the decades between 1881 and the First World War. The Medina lost its primacy, and the new Tunis was to be a dual city, the Muslim core with its dense street network standing in sharp contrast to the new European city laid out on a gridiron pattern on land reclaimed from the lake.

The question arises as to why the new protectorate authorities should have opted for an extension to the small European quarter next to the Porte espagnole, instead of a more salubrious site nearer the sea, at the Port of La Goulette, for example. Arnoulet (1977) tentatively advances three main reasons:

\* Firstly, the bey wanted no port or building at Carthage, fearing that the seaside palace would have to be destroyed to make room for new docks.

\* Secondly, the Italian company Florio Rubattino had acquired the T.G.M. railway from the English. Evidently this railway would stand to lose a lot of money and its raison d'être should the Medina site be marginalised by the construction of a new city at Carthage or on the Gulf. Friction with the large Italian community was to be avoided at all costs.

\* Finally, Italian markantiyya interests controlled the site between the lake and what are today the avenues de Paris et de Carthage. The Italian rubbish collection concessionaries realised that there was money to be made on land reclaimed with rubbish infill. Eventually the Fasciotti family, heirs of the

original remblayeurs (landfill contractors) were able to sell the reclaimed land off at 50 to 80 francs per square metre, fabulous prices for the period.

So European Tunis first grew up on reclaimed land between the Belvedere hill and the rocky outcrop of Sidi Bel Hassen. There was further growth on the western side as well, however. Military installations appeared at the Kasbah, whilst administrative services were developed closer to Dar el-Bey. In 1875, the College Sadiki moved into splendid new premises in the neo-Moorish style, complete with mock minarets and a dome. This style, which grafted decorative elements from traditional architecture on to modern buildings was to find favour for the buildings of the new administrative zone constructed along the Boulevard Bab Benat which ran along the line of part of the demolished western city wall.

Tunis grew rapidly: the city which in 1858 covered a mere 92 ha, surrounded by a wall of 3700m, had grown to cover some 305 ha by 1884, with 105 km of streets; by 1895, the city covered 6000 ha (Arnoulet 1977). Over the same period the population grew from some 80,000 inhabitants at mid-century to 179,237 (Ganiage 1967, Arnoulet 1977).

The consequences of such an expansion, as far as the Medina was concerned, were most visible in terms of the demolition of most of the city walls. By 1890, there remained very little of the original fortifications, bar a few of the city gates. Bab Souika and Bab el-Fellah disappeared completely, while the Porte espagnole was renamed Porte de France. The physical distinction between the old quarters of Tunis and the new city was effaced as

a series of Italian style apartment buildings were constructed along the ring boulevard which had taken the place of the city walls.

The physical changes in the capital of the Régence, as the Kingdom of Tunis was called, were not limited to the demolition of the walls. The non-Muslims now ran the city through the Municipal council, the Medina benefited from improved municipal services: sewers were put in, the streets paved, lit and labelled with bilingual plaques. Italian style construction proceeded apace (see Plate 13).

The socio-economic composition of the lower Medina changed with the growth of the Ville basse: the wealthy merchants, such as the Gnecco family, moved to the modern city, whilst the lower Medina became home to a population of more humble origin, immigrant Italian families and men sending money back to their family in Italy. The lower parts of the Medina became a sort of geographical buffer zone between the expanding European city and the Tunisoise zones of the upper Medina.

The transfer and development of commercial activity was almost exclusively in the new city, only craft type production being left behind. Thus the lower Medina became increasingly lower income in character, without housing exclusively any particular nationality. Poor Italians, Maltese, French, Jewish and Muslim families were able to live together side by side, perhaps because the various communities shared similar attitudes to primitive medicine, superstitions, religion and the family (Russell 1977).





Plate 13: Italian style buildings in the lower  
Medina, Rue Sidi Ali Azouz, June 1991.

The Protectorate had severe consequences for the beldi families of the Upper Medina. The economic bases of beldi life, already under pressure in the early XIXth century, were severely shaken in the first four decades of French rule. The best analysis of the changes and their effects on the beldiyya is undoubtedly that of the Tunisian historian Abdel Aziz Ben Achour in his 1989 work Catégories de la société tunisoise dans la deuxième moitié du XIXème siècle. What follows is largely drawn from his analysis, for the last decades of the XIXth century. Larif-Beatrix (1988) and Sebag (1951) were important for their analysis of the effects of the changing agricultural system in the XXth century, and De Montety (1942) for his discussion of the old families in the changing conditions. The late XIXth century marked the beginning of the end for many of the great family fortunes, what Ben Achour refers to as "l'effondrement général des fortunes musulmanes". For the destruction of economically powerful social groups was an essential element in ensuring the foreign domination of the country.

Initially land was not under pressure, but as the need to strengthen the French presence became more apparent, a number of changes to the legal system were made to facilitate the acquisition of land by the colons, the French settlers.

In principle, land held under habous tenure was inalienable, although this was tempered by a variety of practices permitted by Islamic law, notably enzel and mu'awada, which had been in use well before 1881 (see Appendix III).

During the 1880s the land ownership system was modified: an 1885 law, inspired by the British Torrens Act, introduced land registration, and it became possible, thanks to a series of decrees, to constitute an enzel by auction. The new system was to render "great services to the general spread of colonisation, notably that of the French" (Sfar 1908, cited in Ben Achour 1989). However, the system still appeared unsatisfactory to many: lets on habous land for cultivation were limited to three years, and the enzel payment was felt to be a threat forever hanging over the colonist. However, a decree of 31 January 1898 allowed habous land lets to run to ten years, subsequently renewable for up to thirty years with a rent increase of 20%. And in 1905, the enzel system was modified yet again by decree: an enzel could be bought out in twenty instalments and the land constituted private property (Ben Achour 1989 p 348).

That the enzel rent was fixed was serious enough in times of rising prices and new temptations. More seriously, an enzel could be seized to pay off a loan. Muslim families were particularly prone to debt in the closing decades of the XIXth century (see below), and in dire need of money to pay off loans taken out with foreign creditors, the heads of Tunisois families would make over enzel rents to pay off loans in instalments.

If the beldi beneficiaries of a habous property preferred to reconstitute it as enzel, this was often due to lack of capital to do otherwise. Government policy was to encourage French agriculture: credit was not available to the Tunisois, who came to prefer to receive an enzel rent than to exploit their land directly.

If habous land was under pressure, so was land held as private property (melk). Like habous inheritances, inherited melk property comprised highly dispersed land and buildings. The dividing up of inheritances accentuated this dispersal, and the pattern was essentially one of division and reassembly, as richer members of a family bought out minority share holders. A piece of property rarely remained in a particular family's hands for any length of time: the maison a driba, in the upper Medina, studied by Henia (1984) passed through no less than twenty families from its first recorded owner in the XVIIth century to 1853, when it was acquired by the Khalsi family. Ben Achour (1989, p275) cites the example, by no means exceptional, of Muhammad Ben Hamida Bach Hamba el-Sfayhi's estate which comprised a mixture of some thirty rural and urban properties on his death sometime in the 1890s: he held half shares in seven of these properties, third shares in two, a quarter in another, and nine kirat-s (twenty-fourths) in another; 20 properties belonged to him in their entirety.

The extremely dispersed nature of a Tunisian family inheritance was a factor behind the increased indebtedness of the beldia: it was too easy, in times of rising prices, to pawn a shop or an orchard to tide the family over a year when trade or the harvest was poor, and there had been extra family expenses. The availability of credit, and the phenomenon of tamaddun, a taste for expensive imported articles, made a shaky financial situation catastrophic.

The fashion for European elegance and luxury was at first most widespread among the Makhzen families and at court. Later it reached the beldia, and Ben Dhiyaf (Ithaf V p85) speaks of debts

run up with European shopkeepers as contributing to the ruin of the Djellouli, Rassa', El-Ghammed, and Asfourî families amongst others.

Usury had been practised in various forms since before the Protectorate. After 1881, it took on new dimensions, as creditors now had vastly improved chances of recuperating their loans. In pre-Protectorate times the Bey had often intervened in debt cases, and repayments were postponed, to the point that the foreign creditors went bankrupt as well. In 1883 a French court of first instance was set up, and all escape routes for debtors were cut off: their property could be seized and sold under the court's authority.

The great makhzen fortunes were the first to go, to be followed by the dissolution of beldi buildings and domains held as private property (melk). The importance of habous land thus increased, and it is not surprising to see families such as the Khalsi constituting habous in 1878 to safeguard their property and land (Henia 1985).

Certain families were able to weather the crisis, thanks to habous. But beldi society no longer controlled the economy as in the old days, and a prosperous living could no longer be founded on property rents and extensive agriculture. Perhaps the highly fragmented nature of both habous and melk property explains how land never came to be conceived of in terms of estates to be efficiently exploited. Rather land holding were considered as une épargne, a form of saving (Ben Achour p272). This structural concept of the beldi land holdings, coupled with the various natural catastrophes of the late XIXth century, and the

fragmentation guaranteed by Muslim inheritance laws, made beldi land holdings extremely vulnerable as the French offensive on land got under way.

A significant boost to French agriculture came with the decree of 8 February 1892: all land which was not held registered with title deeds was declared terre domaniale, property of the state.

The Protectorate authorities could then proceed to allot the land thus seized to colonists for a symbolic sum. Most of the land thus taken over was part of the former beylical eminent domain (Larif-Beatrix 1988).

Colonial policy favoured the acquisition of large estates: in 1908 just 68 Europeans owned over half the 811,000 ha owned by colons. By 1914 a mere 100 citizens held two thirds of the total 787,000 ha owned by the French in Tunisia (Roberts 1929). Large capital reserves tided these owners over difficult periods, whilst mechanisation reduced costs and the need for manual labour. The traditional methods of cultivating the habous lands came to appear increasingly anachronistic, and a rural proletariat made its appearance.

This new proletariat had no chance but to look to the newly industrialising cities for work, and Tunis offered by far the widest variety of occupations - but unfortunately had little housing available in the Tunisian quarters.

Colonial agricultural policy, and the expansion of the European quarters of the cities were to have clearly visible effects on

the traditional social order and the built fabric of the old quarters, as will become apparent.

The population of the Medina, which remained constant at some 110,000 from 1881 to 1936 jumped to 171,126 by 1956. The population density rose to 584 inhabitants per hectare (figures cited in Sebag 1951). With such an influx, living standards fell, and the Tunisois bourgeois element of the population increasingly sought housing in the European city or in the Muslim lotissements (housing estates) of El-Omrane, which in the words of Jacques Berque (1967) "offered correct monotony instead of the splendour of the palaces; communal and public life instead of the isolation of family life".

But this family life was already changing in the twenties and thirties: the upper floors of many a grande demeure were divided up into autonomous apartments to suit the smaller households, while the rooms off the main patio might be rented out to poorer families - the case of Dar Djellouli, cited by Ben Achour (1989, p65), the main dar became an oukala with rooms rented out to poor Italian families as of 1922, with disastrous results for the fine decor of ceramic tiles and carved stucco.

With the improvements in public transport, and the introduction of the automobile, cadet branches of beldi families would settle permanently in the summer residences: many of the Djelloulis settled in Rades, for example.

The improvement of part of the urban Muslim population, the weak financial position of many of the beldi families, and the increasing numbers of poor European and rural migrants could only

have severe consequences for the Medina's built fabric. Many estates passed into the hands of foreigners, and as Ben Achour (1989, p80) points out, from 1883 onwards, the Journal Officiel is full of announcements concerning the sale of confiscated Muslim properties. The foreigners rebuilt in the Italian style, and the built fabric of the Medina became progressively more heterogeneous. In the early XXth century, the neo-mauresque or arabisant style became popular, drawing on North African architecture for inspiration (see Plates 14 and 15).

Those families who kept their property, but in conditions of increasing poverty, found it increasingly difficult to maintain their homes. The number of ruined buildings in the Medina had reached such a point in 1885 that the Municipality considered that there was a menace to public health and morality; a bye-law was issued ordering owners of ruins and rough ground to wall off their property within a month (J.O.T. 1885, p729 cited in Ben Achour 1989). Tunis may have been picturesque to the European tourist, but her picturesqueness was tainted by dereliction: weeds grew on the roof terraces, the facades went unwhitewashed, unmaintained, and the streets were often foul.

Certain areas of the upper Medina, the Tourbet el-Bey area, the zone around the rue du Facha managed to maintain their urbane character, and, despite the rapidly changing conditions, certain families did prosper under the Protectorate, as de Montety (1939) points out: "Si cette ruine n'a pas ete totale, c'est dans l'institution du habous, demeure solide malgre la legislation de 1889 que (la beldia) a trouve la sauvegarde des debris de son patrimoine."





Plate 14: Late XIXth/early XXth century house on the Rue Sidi Riahi. Note the Art nouveau style motifs. Photo taken June 1991.



Plate 15: Turn of the century building in the style arabisant at Bab Souika. Photo taken January 1991

But deteriorating conditions in the countryside and the pull factor of the ever-expanding modern Tunis attracted rural migrants to the capital where they settle in gourbivilles (self-built slum settlements) in the outlying areas, or crowded into the Medina.

Figures for 1946, given by Sebag (1951) demonstrate the extent of the overcrowding: 61% of all residential property in the Medina could be classified as overcrowded. Basically only 23% of Medina inhabitants were decently housed and the situation was little better in the other main medinas (see following table).

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD OCCUPYING ACCOMMODATION CONSIDERED:

	Roomy	Adequate	Inadequate	Overcrowded
Tunis Medina	3	20	16	61
Sfax	6	16	21	57
Kairouan	2	8	19	71

(after Sebag 1951, figures from 1946 census).

The Medina, the historic core of Tunis, was by the 1940s fast becoming a low grade housing zone. If a tiny minority of the *beldi* élite had left for the suburbs, the vast majority of the Muslim population continued to live in the Medina, which nevertheless continued to be, as traditionally, home to ethnic and above all major religious minorities. The Muslim population had however risen from 65,000 inhabitants in 1881 to 127,000 in 1956 (figures cited in Abdel Kefi 1989 p100), that is to say doubled for the same area. By the time Tunisian independence was achieved in 1956, the Medina was little more than a Muslim ghetto in a city whose rôle was simply to ensure passively, in the words of Pierre Signoles (1980) "l'articulation de l'économie française

et de ses enclaves situés en territoire tunisien". Tunis was a mere "trait d'union" in the relationship between metropolitan France and the economic life of her Tunisian protectorate. The city was racially and socially segregated, the social inequalities glaring, and it was these injustices that the rising nationalist forces were later to seek to remedy.

The new secular nationalist current was born of new social and political behaviour which rejected the traditional religious order, the home of which was the Medina. As Abdel Kefi (1989, p102) puts it: "The (Medina's) loss of its political role by substitution, and of its economic rôle through competition was certainly serious; but it was the dislocation of the traditional religious order that was to be decisive for the Medina." Hence the attitude of the post independence regime to the traditional urban fabric was a radical one.

II.C. 1956-1966: INDEPENDENCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE  
SOCIETY AND TOWNSCAPE OF THE MEDINA

Tunisian independence in 1956 and the declaration of the Republic a year later brought about rapid societal change which inevitably affected the social composition of the Medina's population and hence had consequences for the built fabric of the old city.

The new President, Habib Bourguiba, moved straight away to reduce the foreign presence as well as to weaken the religious establishment and the beldia absentee landlord class, who had formed part of the constituency of Ben Youssef, Bourguiba's arch rival in the last years of the struggle for independence. At the same time, moves were made to help the least fortunate sections of the population.

The first to feel the draught created by the economic changes inaugurated by the new Tunisian republic were the poorer foreign nationals, especially Italians, Maltese with British nationality, and Jews, some Tunisian, some French, who occupied large swathes of the eastern lower Medina adjacent to the Ville basse.

Tunisia's economic programme took on political overtones on November 5th, 1959 when a policy of Tunisification was announced. In January, all taxi licenses held by foreigners had been suspended, affecting 300 Italian families. Now employers were to be prohibited from hiring or "conserving in their service" a foreigner who did not possess a work permit. The pass was valid for one year, and then withdrawn. Later on in November 1959 the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs announced that henceforth certain categories of employment - including unskilled labour,

were to be reserved for Tunisian nationals. As the new preferential policies took effect, unemployment rose drastically among unskilled Italians and Maltese (Russel 1977).

The foreign communities, of which the 66,000 Italians were the most numerous, were dependent for their existence on the new Tunisian leadership with its nationalist susceptibilities. The foreign communities lost the right to transmit their citizenship to their children, as well as to form the business and fraternal associations of their choice. Faced with stiff competition for jobs from the Tunisians, the only option for the foreign communities was emigration. By 1969 only 10,000 Italians remained in Tunisia. By 1966, only 5% of the Medina's population was of foreign or Jewish origin; in 1956 this figure had been 50% (Asm/Sebag 1970).

The effect of the foreign communities' departure on the lower Medina was spectacular. Large families of poor rural migrants moved in as the French, Italians and Maltese moved out. With the poorer socio-economic profile of the area, property was no longer maintained as before. The ownership situation became confused, as not all foreigners were able to sell before leaving, hence they left their property in the hands of gérants immobiliers, estate management agents, who were less concerned with maintenance than the original owners. Many of these properties became multi-occupancy dwellings, or oukala-s in Tunisian Arabic. Lower Medina courtyard houses, built to house two or three close knit Italian families, were packed with unrelated poor Arab Tunisian families, often of rural origin, and much of the area's housing is still seriously overcrowded in this way.

The aristocratic Tunisois quarters of the upper Medina were to undergo similar transformations. First hit were a small number of Tunisois families who it was felt had collaborated too closely with the colonial authorities: These families were officially declared to be in national disgrace, and had their "illegally" acquired fortunes confiscated.

Of more serious consequences for the beldi families and the religious establishments of which they were the mainstay was the abolition of habous. Within six months of independence, public habous had been abolished by decree (31 May 1956), thus depriving mosques and zaouias of their independent financial base. The charia law courts were integrated into the national French-based legal system, and the Zitouna school of theology reduced to the level of a mere department of the new University of Tunis.

Mosques and zaouias were turned over to the Ministry of Public Works, the latter suffering a variety of fates. In extreme cases, they were razed, like Sidi Bechir, which was replaced by an apartment complex and moved to Djellaz (Johnson 1979). Other zaouias were maintained because they were viewed as part of a mosque complex - for example the zaouia of Sidi Mehrez; Sidi Bel Hassan was maintained as a mosque by the Office of Religious Affairs.

The religious brotherhoods to which the zaouias had been home, were heavily discouraged by the new regime as centres of superstition and backwardness. Like the medersas (the theology school/student hostels), their original raison d'être had disappeared, and many became home to rural families seeking a

foothold in the capital. Without the regular habous income for their maintenance, most quickly deteriorated.

The abolition of public habous set off alarm bells in the great houses of the Medina. Private habous were abolished by decree on 27th September 1957, and although they were not absorbed into the public domain, the habous lands were felt to be at risk by their beldi owners who began to sell their properties, a trend that would continue into the 1960s (Anderson 1987). The liquidation of the remaining habous tenures was the final blow to the traditional beldi way of life, the economic basis of which had been in difficulties since the late XIXth century. The selling off of the habous lands was dramatic: Kassal (1979 pp.538-40) gives a figure of 80% of the habous property in one northern region sold, in most cases on concessionary terms, to local landlords. The significance of this shift is emphasised by the fact that over a fifth of all agricultural land in Tunisia was held in habous tenure at the time of independence (Kassal 1979).

The beldia's loss of control of traditional revenue sources was accompanied by a speeding up in the shift of social attitudes which had already begun in the last years of the Protectorate. The new generation, many of whom had been educated in France, no longer wanted to live in the old patriarchal residences on the rue des Andalous or the rue du Pacha: they wanted more comfort, bathrooms, somewhere to park the car, easy access to good schools for their children and their jobs, and with the departure of the French in the early sixties, there was a glut of desirable villas and apartments on the market, some of it in top-notch residential areas such as the Belvédère, the Cité Jardin, and Mutuelleville.



At the same time, the quality of life in the Medina was declining. The ease with which tenants could be found for property in the Medina encouraged the beldia either to sell up the family residence, often to merchants of Djerban origin, or to move out, appointing an agent, often one of the new tenants, to supervise the renting of the house, room by room, to rural families. The possibility of cheaply renting a room in a house with a large communal space meant that the Medina was attracting the poorest families with the most precarious revenues.

By 1968, according to an Asm study cited in Signoles et al (1980), 26% of the houses in the central Medina were occupied as oukala-s, that is to say in multi occupancy, housing four or more unrelated families, and this 26% of the housing stock was home to more than 56% of the households (figures cited in Signoles et al 1980, p.29).

Obviously the beldi way of life was incompatible with that of the new rural migrants. The departure of beldi families, which had started timidly about 1960, grew to an exodus between 1963 and 1970: the Lasrams left the residence they had occupied since the XVIIIth century, too numerous for a building they no longer had the resources to maintain; the imam of the Great Mosque, Abdel Kebir Cherif finally left to live in the Bardo.

Not all beldi families moved out. In many cases - Dar Cherif, Dar Hedri, Dar Ben Memmi, Dar Romdhane Bey, Dar Bel Khoudja, etc, - a few members of the family remained, giving rise to a residential pattern of acute overcrowding contrasted with large almost empty properties.

The socio-economic transformations of course had a direct effect on the built fabric. The walls were no longer whitewashed and maintained as before, the alleys which had been private space became part of public domain, and transformations to windows and doors were made without consideration for the traditional architectonic typology. The new population did not always understand the need for the regular cleaning and whitewashing of the rooftop terraces, made of earth packed on wooden joists, in which weeds could easily get a hold, subsequently destroying the whole roof.

The consequences of the new mode of inhabiting the traditional houses were most serious for courtyards and interiors. Courtyard arcades and galleries were often walled-up to provide a greater degree of privacy for the new tenants and their families. Corners of former living rooms were turned into mini-kitchens. In certain cases, to maximise the return from the property, ceramic tiles, marble slabs and columns and pieces of decorative masonry were stripped out and sold before the dwelling was turned over to multi-occupancy. The materials obtained in this way would then be sold on, often to decorate new villas under construction in the northern suburbs.

The built fabric of the Medina thus entered a steep decline in the mid-sixties. Owners milked their properties for maximum short term gain, turning parts of the Medina into what Vennière (1977, cited in Tayachi 1988) has referred to as veritable "casernes locatives" (rent barracks). There was little investment: tenants were too poor to make major repairs, and landlords were not about to spend money on property which at any moment might be demolished in a project sponsored by the Presidency to modernise the

capital. The sixties were a low point for the traditional townscape, a period of demolition and decay, and what new construction there was - new schools, children's club and youth centre (1965) and market (1967-68) at the Hafsia were in no way connected with the urban morphology of the Medina.

Basically, by 1967 the Medina was in full decline: it had long lost its function as a setting for important economic activity; with independence it lost its socio-cultural significance for Tunisoise society, itself undergoing great change. The Beldia were uninterested for the most part in the historic urban tissue, and the new elite felt the need to break with the past to create a more secular present, which amongst other things meant the neglect and marginalisation of the physical presence of the past.

But the State was to push the demolitions too far, and in 1967 public reaction to them brought about the creation of a municipal commission to examine the Medina's future.

## SECTION III

## PLANNING FOR THE BUILT HERITAGE: The case for Tunis-Medina

## A. THE CONCEPT OF CONSERVATION AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

III.A.i From the Nineteenth century to 1956: the classical antiquities emphasised

The concepts of historic monument, of archaeological site and of landscape appeared in Europe towards the end of the XVIIIth century. The industrial revolution in Britain from about 1780 to 1860, and the new built environment it created, gave further impulse to XVIIIth century leaning towards the antique and the picturesque. The key concept to develop in the early 1800s was that of historic monument, which appeared for the first time in France in 1789. For Choay, in the introduction to Riegl (1984, p11) the historic monument is "une invention specifiquement occidentale", brought about by the rise of a historicist culture, by the need to link the patriotic feeling of a Europe of revolutionary movements with a physical presence symbolising the new nationalist conscience. Thus as the physical vestiges of the past gained importance in popular consciousness, and new learned societies appeared reflecting and supporting that consciousness, governments took action, creating legislation and institutions for the preservation of the built and natural heritage in the name of aesthetic, cultural and scientific aims.

The concepts of historic monument and natural beauty, to be protected and preserved for future generations, spread throughout

the world with the expansion of European empires and influence under the impulse of capitalism.

Tunis, once integrated into the French colonial system in 1881, was no exception: a decree of 7 November 1882 placed "les objets d'art et d'antiquité, les statues, fragments de colonnes, etc.....sous surveillance du gouvernement beylical."

From this it is clear that the new colonial authorities were primarily interested in the remains of the classical and Byzantine periods, the Arab conquest having taken place circa 670 A.D.

This emphasis on the classical past is comprehensible when one recalls that the French in North Africa saw themselves as the successors to the Romans, re-establishing by their enterprise and organisation, the cities that had flourished there in antique times.

At the Paris Exposition universelle of 1867, Algeria was represented by ancient remains, Roman elements from Timgad and Cherchell, as well as Numidian pieces such as the Tombeau de la Chrétienne from Cherchell.

Throughout the French occupation of the Maghreb, the theme of renewing the Roman imperial past was constantly reiterated:

"Ici, en Afrique du nord, nous retrouvons partout la trace de Rome: ce qui prouve bien que nous sommes à notre place, c'est à dire au premier rang de la civilisation." (Delyautey, lettre préface à Ricard 1924).

As the engineers built roads out into the countryside and the settlers extended cultivation, they constantly came upon remains of earlier civilisations.

Gaudiani (1910, p67), reviewing the legislative and administrative impact of the Protectorate in Tunisia, was keen to stress the continuity between Roman and modern city life and government: "Héritiers directs des Romains, dont ils continuent l'oeuvre civilisatrice, les Français se préoccupèrent, dès le début du Protectorat, de confier à des assemblées locales l'administration des centres les plus importants."

To prove and emphasise the link with antique times, when "les villes de la Tunisie étaient nombreuses et florissantes", it was necessary to explore and excavate the archaeological sites, and subsequently "assurer la conservation et la protection des richesses artistiques et scientifiques de toute nature (Gaudiani 1910, p61). Hence the legislation of 1882, quickly followed by the creation of a Services des antiquités, beaux arts, et monuments historiques (Saa) on 8 March 1885, followed by further legislation on 7 March 1886, stipulating that monuments of "un sérieux intérêt du point de vue historique ou artistique" were to be listed.

The Service des antiquités by decree of 17 August 1896, having been simply an inspectorate of historic remains attached to the Tunisian central administration, became a full scale department, and whilst remaining under the Bey, it was to continue to receive subsidies from the French budget, the sole department of the Tunisian administration in this position (Gaudiani 1910).

The personnel of the Service des antiquites comprised a director, an inspector, an architect, and the editor of the Department's journal Notes et documents. The Alaoui (Bardo) museum came under the Saa.

In 1891, an immense, methodical survey of the archaeological sites and historical monuments of the Regency was launched. The results appeared in two fascicules, the first, Les temples paiens published in 1889 and dedicated to the resident general, M. Rene Millet, thanks to whose (financial) help the project was concluded.

The point of departure of the survey was the Service des antiquites' collection of more than 4,000 photographs of the main sites: the most visually interesting were included in the 1898 book. To these photos were added plans, cross sections, sketches and even artists' impressions of the monument as it was, as well as descriptive texts for each site and monument.

Cagnet and Gauckler, the main movers behind the survey, felt that they were laying the groundwork for "une serie de travaux que d'autres, architectes ou erudits, meneront a bonne fin plus tard" (Cagnet et al 1898, p1x). Monuments historiques de la Tunisie was a collective work, the cumulation of more than twenty years of archaeology in Tunisia, testifying to "la continuite de l'effort scientifique exerce sur la terre tunisienne devenue terre francaise (ibid, 1898).

The following year the second fascicule of Monuments historiques appeared, dedicated to the mosque of Sidi Okba' at Kairouan (Gauckler et al, 1898). An immensely detailed work, it included,

besides the history of the mosque, a bibliography and detailed graphic survey, as well as a photographic survey, one of the first of its kind for Islamic religious architecture, made by M. Sadoux, inspector of the Service des antiquites.

Further publications which appeared in the early 1900s included a book devoted to the most important objects in the Musee Alaoui, a study in nine fascicules of Roman hydraulic works, and a fascicule on the Punic necropolis at Bordj-Djedid, Carthage (1909).

It must have been very rewarding to be an archaeologist in Tunis in the early 1900s: the findings of the excavations, notably in terms of mosaics, and the results of reconstitution of the Roman buildings were spectacular. By 1912, the Service des antiquites had cleared much of the site at Dougga and repaired the main buildings. El Djem's amphitheatre had been consolidated whilst at Sbeitla, the three main temples were being restored. Important works were equally under way at Carthage, Bulla Regia, Sousse, Oudna, Tabarca, Haidra, Mactar, Thuna and Hadjeb el-Aioun. Co-operating with the Service in these enterprises were the army (le corps militaire d'occupation), the municipalities and learned societies, as well as private individuals: at Utique, the museum was set up through the efforts of M. le comte de Chabannes La Palice (Lambert, 1912).

In 1899, the collections of Arab objects d'art at the Alaoui Museum were opened to the public. The process of assembling the collection had begun during the early days of the Protectorate. In 1913, the Muslim art section was expanded and housed in a wing of the palace complex adjacent to the harem (Marcais 1937).



Represented in the Alaoui collections was the art of IXth century Kairouan, the golden age of that city under Aghlabid rule, in the form of fragments of carved woodwork, ceramics, coins, and a fine collection of hand worked Koran bindings.

Funerary art was present in the form of a large collection of richly decorated tombstones from the Selsela cemetery next to the Kasbah.

Ceramics, carpets, fabrics and costumes were all included: irreplaceable Kairouan carpets as well as klim, mergoum, and Harakta bedouin carpets; among the costumes, both the more sober Muslim and brightly coloured Jewish traditional dress, "qui faisaient naguère d'une promenade à travers les villes tunisiennes une fête pour les yeux" (ibid 1937). Marçais concludes his chapter on the Arab art collection with works that leave no doubt as to the main area of the Museum's interest:

"Ainsi le musée du Bardo, si riche d'enseignement pour l'archéologue de l'antiquité et du moyen âge, fixe pour l'artiste l'image d'un passé qui fut charmant" (ibid 1937). The Arab past is seen as a colourful and charming inspiration for the artist.

Classical archaeology was to remain well ahead, the main focus of interest as regards the physical presence of the past for most of the Protectorate. As Marçais put it in his preface to the 1927 re-edition of H. Saladin's Manuel d'art musulman, "l'archéologie musulmane fait figure de Cendrillon". Monographs such as Gauckler's (1898) on Sidi Okba and the publication of the findings of General de Beylie's excavations at the Kala'a des Beni Hammad were the exception. It was impossible for the

non-Muslim scholar to enter a mosque, bar that of Kairouan. In the works of Marcais (1926), this particular convention "dont il ne m'appartient pas d'apprécier l'opportunité politique...est à coup sur aussi prejudiciable à la conservation des monuments eux-mêmes, qu'à l'avancement de nos études." It was left to him to hope that the facilities and opportunities open to European scholars at Cairo and Istanbul would become available at Tunis.

The importance of classical remains was reinforced by the legislation of 8 January 1920 which established that all antiquities of periods prior to the Arab conquest were State property. The Protectorate authorities thus gave legal backing to their archaeological interests.

However, buildings of cultural importance of the Islamic period were listed under the Protectorate. The Kouba (Pleasure Pavilion) du Belvédère was listed in 19 March 1894. There followed three principal decrees which listed the main religious buildings and military structures of the Medina:

- \* 13 March 1912, listing the nine main mosques, as well as four tourbets, five zaouias, and two medersas near the Great Mosque,
- \* 25 January 1922, listing three important residences, four tourbets, three medersas, six zaouias, two barracks, a hammam, a midha and the Fondouk des Français,
- \* 16 November 1928, listing Dar el-Bey, six more zaouias, two mosques, two tourbets, a barracks, the Midha du Belvedere, the city wall at Bab Jedid, the colonnade of the Souk des Etoffes, the Borj de la Rabta, and the Hafsia/Ben Nejma Gate.

The main focus of listing for the Medina was therefore military, funerary and religious buildings. Few examples of domestic architecture were listed, not because it was considered inferior, but for the simple reason that the palaces of the Medina were highly private residences - it was not until the mid-fifties that Jacques Revault was able to gain access to the residences surveyed in his great four volume survey of Tunisoise domestic architecture, Palais et Demeures de la Medina de Tunis (1967, 1971 and 1984).

And in any case, the great residences of the Medina, impossible for the tourist to visit, were maintained by the still resident *beldi* families with funds from *habous* property, and thus passed down from one generation to the next.

Under the Protectorate, the main emphasis of the Service des antiquitiés was to remain the classical heritage, and considerable efforts were exerted: by 1912, 650 monuments had been listed (Lambert 1912). Certainly works were carried out on certain sites of importance to the Arab period: the walls of the Rabat of Monastir were consolidated in the early 1900s, the walls of Sfax and the gates and sections of the walls of Tunis restored after World War II; a major survey of the Rabat of Sousse was published by Lezine in 1956. Nevertheless, Punic and classical archaeology was the main field of interest and this was to continue to be the case in the post-Independence period.



III.A.ii Early regulations and planning for the Arab built habitat  
1858-1954

Early planning controls for the Medina were basically police type hygiene measures, designed in an attempt to clean up the streets of a densely populated city lacking sewers, where pack animals constantly fouled the public right of way (see Plate 8). It was thus an extremely odorous city, a fact frequently remarked on by travellers: "L'air est vicié, par les exhalaisons infectes qui s'élèvent des bords du lac et des égouts ou se rendent les immondices d'une cité immense." (Dureau de la Malle cited in Arnoulet 1977.)

Thus one of the first actions of the Municipalité de Tunis, created by Mohamed Bey on 30 August 1858, was to begin paving the streets, put in pavements, and establish a rubbish collection service. An increase in the duty on spirits from 3% to 10% enabled the Municipality to begin constructing stone sewers in 1859. But the sewage problem remained serious and in 1873 Sadok Bey, under consular pressure, set up an international committee composed of representatives of each of the national groups present in Tunis. The committee drew up municipal hygiene regulations, to be implemented by a special police, the Kaouia, and had the seven open sewers which poured the city's waste into the Buheira covered over.

But finance was always a problem for the new municipality. Originally fixed at 245,800 francs p.a., the revenues going into the municipal coffers were raised initially by the caroube (rent) tax and later by taxes levied on bricks, plaster and whitewash.



The 1862 restoration of the Zaghouan aqueduct brought in a further 15,000 francs p.a. in water rates.

However, Sadok Bey, bankrupt, took over the municipal sources of revenue, and it wasn't until 1870 that the international financial commission (established 1868) fixed the revenue at 164,400 francs p.a., chiefly from municipal habous property ceded as enzel and taxes on vehicles and street cleaning - a small sum to run the services of a city of 85,000 people. The decades after the imposition of the Protectorate in 1881 saw the rapid expansion of the Villeneuve, and with it the introduction of French-type institutions and legislation for planning urban growth and regulating construction.

The Municipality of Tunis was reorganised by the decree of 31 October 1883, and the terms by which it was to regulate the life of the capital were laid down in the decree of 1 April 1885, largely modelled on the French municipal law of 6 April 1884. But the substance of this law, the granting of wide powers to the communes, was removed for Tunisia; according to Gaudiani (1910, p.67), this was because of varied components in the political, economic, and administrative life of the country, as well as the considerable subsidies accorded by central government, and the loan guaranteed by it. The result was that Tunisian members of Municipal Councils were nominated by the Protectorate authorities.

The Tunisian municipal council system as developed under the French was "strongly oriented to the housekeeping functions of the community", as Ashford (1967) puts it. With respect to the Medina, this meant the application of bye-laws, approved by the Prime Minister, to ensure public health and salubrity. The

president of the Municipality, as chief of the Municipal police was thus required to ensure security and freedom of movement on public rights of way, by giving permits for parking and to various street vendors; on the advice of the public works engineer, he was to award building permits on traffic free streets, and decide the façade line on other streets.

Basically then, a whole panoply of regulations which had evolved in a European urban context were now applicable to the accretive urban fabric of the Medina.

In terms of city wide planning for the future, the Medina was initially left alone, and the Villeneuve expanded according to the plans prepared by the Direction générale des travaux publics, the public works department created on 3 September 1882 to create the infrastructure necessary for a modern capital (Hamrouni 1990).

The Loi Cornudet of 14 March 1919 provided for the drawing up of plans for the aménagement (layout and embellishment) and expansion of cities. This brought about the first mass production of plans in French history - 273 were declared to be of public utility - and a plan for Tunis was to be prepared along the lines of the 1919 decree by the architect Victor Valensi, in which the Medina figured in a new role. (Langumier, 1988, Hamrouni, 1990).

If for the Arab Muslim the Medina was a built environment of cultural significance, evolved under the influence of religion and tradition, it was regarded by many Europeans like Valensi as an exotic city of winding narrow streets and high walled palaces. As such it was to be preserved, and this was to be done through the conservation decrees of 3.3.1920 and 13.3.1921, situated in the

general framework of the 1920 Valensi plan for Tunis which singled out the Medina for special treatment.

According to the Valensi plan, the Medina was "un joyau assimilable pour le pays à un fonds de commerce qu'il faut se garder d'amoindrir et qui fait la renommée de Tunis. C'est elle qui rend notre cité comparable à toutes les villes orientales du bassin de la Méditerranée et qui attire les touristes et les artistes. Aussi il importe qu'elle reste ce qu'elle est. N'y touchons qu'avec la plus grande prudence" (Valensi, V 1920 cited in Beguin 1983).

Valensi's project for the beautification of the city of Tunis was not taken up by the Municipality, apart from the proposals for conserving the Medina as a whole, which led to the promulgation of the 1920 and 1921 decrees dividing the Medina into preservation zones and zones governed by the municipal street regulations. A further decree of 12.8.1923 laid down that any physical changes to be made to a residence "habitée bourgeoisement", required prior municipal permission.

The decrees laid down that any repairs must reproduce exactly the original building. New constructions had to be in keeping with the style of the Medina; the same materials, height, etc. Even paint was subject to authorisation. The decrees were to be applied for the municipality via a special "Commission des souks". The secretary general of the government, the director of public works and the Service des antiquities were legally responsible for the application of these decrees.

In the event, the rigorous decrees of 1920 and 1921 were extremely difficult to apply, and gave rise to a multitude of conflicts between the Service des antiquitiés and the people of the Medina, who had their own rhythm of carrying out maintenance works, in accordance with the seasons and religious festivals: houses were whitewashed inside and out in time for Ramadham, while repairs and minor improvements took place after the harvest, when people were in funds as the country people came to the city to buy clothes, jewellery and implements.

All sorts of conflicts arose in the attempt to enforce these decrees, and the tension between inhabitants and the Service des antiquitiés became ever more acute as nationalist pressure rose.

The attitude of the Municipal authorities to the Medina in the Twenties and Thirties is referred to by Abdel Kefi (1989) as "une approche culturaliste". The lower Medina, subject to municipal regulations was the preserve of the poorer elements of the Italian, Maltese, and Jewish communities. The upper Medina, the habitat of the Arab Muslim community, was to be preserved in the name of a Western aesthetic sensibility - and also to avoid treading on Muslim toes.

Later planning for the Medina continued the culturalistic approach. The 1954 Berlangier plan lumped the Medina, the growing goubivilles (shantytowns) of the periphery, and the Muslim suburban villa area of El-Omrane together in the same zone.



III.A.iii The early Bourguiba years: plans for destruction, and reaction to them.

The post-Independence period witnessed a wave of destruction of the historic built habitat. Buildings and monuments of all periods suffered including even vernacular architecture in the South. Medenine lost almost all its traditional granaries - some twenty five courtyards of ghorfas disappeared, and Monastir lost most of its medina as it adjusted to a new role as birthplace of the nation's president.

Buildings and monuments relating to the Husseinite dynasty suffered in particular. Vice-Premier Bahi Ladgham, a former primary school teacher from the Sahel, was responsible for major public works and the restoration of mosques. The possessions of the beylical family, property and land as well as moveable possessions, were confiscated without any inventory being made. The Kasr El-Said was acquired by Mohammed Masmoudi, a high level member of the ruling party, while other palaces were simply demolished, notably Kasr et-Tej at La Marsa, Dar el-Bey at Le Kef, and various fountains at La Marsa and La Manouba bearing inscriptions commemorating the piety and generosity of various Husseinite beys.

For the new leader of the country, Habib Bourguiba, and his party, were building their power base, and this necessarily meant the destruction of the monarchy - abolished on 25 July 1957, when Bourguiba was proclaimed President of the Republic, and, pending a constitution, assumed all beylical executive and legislative powers - as well as the removal of physical reminders of the Husseinite dynasty's presence. And a discourse was developed by

which Tunisia's fall under French domination was blamed on the decadent beys and their court.

The new Bourguibist state was nationalist and secular in character, and its adherents wanted to eradicate glaring social inequalities, extend educational and employment opportunities, "liberate" women, and modernise the country. In such an ideological climate, the medinas, the physical presence of a way of life now perceived as backward and oppressive, could hardly expect preservationist treatment.

Monastir, Bourguiba's home town, came in for full scale remodelling. A small Medina with a fort on the Sahel coast, it was to receive a Presidential palace, new municipal buildings and tourist hotels; half a cemetery was to be moved to make room for the grand esplanade leading to the new Presidential mausoleum, and new avenues of arcaded apartment blocks were run across the historic old town. The Ribat of Harthama, Monastir's fort, once contiguous with the fabric of the Medina, was isolated by a wide avenue and a parking lot.

Tunis as well saw its share of démolitions expéditives (Banque mondiale 1989), mainly conducted by the Ministry of Public Works under Ahmed Nouredine. The western exterior walls of the Medina, from Bab Aleoua, via Bab Sidi Kacem and to Bab Sidi Abdullah were demolished, as was the Kasbah barracks along with a Spanish fort and the walls of the faubourg nord. Bab Saadoun was demolished only to be reassembled in the middle of a roundabout a few dozen metres from its original site.

The fabric of the Medina was affected, too. The Tunisoise families moved out, and as the post-Independence government intensified its efforts to rid the capital of the gourbivilles, squatter settlements on the periphery, the rural poor moved in, with all that that entailed in terms of change of use for the physical fabric of the Medina. Deqourbification (rural housing improvement), not urban rehabilitation, was the order of the day, and it would seem that Bourguiba held a special provincial's grudge against the Tunisoise bourgeoisie, which formerly had supplied Cheikh Thaalabi's original Destour Party with so many of its cadres (Larif-Béatrix 1988, p.282). Hence no qualms were felt about making sweeping changes to the environment whence they sprang, especially as many Tunisoise families had worked with the French.

As the Destour party took over the administrative structures left to it by the Protectorate, interest grew in re-thinking the layout of the capital to make it worthy of Bourguiba's modern nation state. The Medina was particularly concerned, being the object of a number of projets de percée, schemes to drive wide avenues into the old city, making it more accessible to the motor car.

The history of the various projects for Tunis is particularly well documented in Abdel Kefi (1989), from which most of the information in the following five paragraphs is drawn.

The first plan, drawn up by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing under the direction of the architect Michael Kosmin, ran a 45m wide boulevard through the heart of the Medina linking the Porte de France to the Kasbah. New ministries were to be constructed on the site of the Kasbah barracks. From the 1935

Chevaux plan came the idea of a "rationalised" street system with three north-south avenues running across the Medina.

In November 1959 an international competition was launched by the Secretariat of Public Works and Housing for the planning of new street layout in the Medina. 54 projects were submitted, but the jury awarded no first prize. Two years later, in March 1961, a conference was organised to discuss the city's future: many of the big international names in architecture and planning took part, but no decision was reached.

Italian planners were increasingly employed in Tunisia in the early sixties, (Hamrouni 1990) and in April 1962, Quaroni and De Carlo submitted the Plan directeur du Grand Tunis to the authorities. Within this plan the Medina was zoned into two main areas: residential zones to be restored and residential zones to be reorganised and remodelled. A major new avenue was to be cut across the eastern part of the Medina, parallel to rue Djazira and rue Mongi Slim, with two link roads running east to west via Bab Souika and Bab Jedid respectively.

In 1964 the Quaroni-De Carlo team put forward the Pact, Plan d'aménagement de la commune de Tunis, a new version of their Plan directeur but of wider scope. The "archaeological values" of the Medina were to be recognised and conserved, and the two faubourgs renovated. The 1964 Quaroni-De Carlo Pact did not provide for any consultation of the municipalities concerned by the new schemes: no opposition was expected. The North-South avenue was started in 1964 with Setph demolishing buildings to widen the rue Sidi el-Bechir in the Faubourg sud. The demolitions were unpopular and

sparked off demonstrations which had to be repressed by police intervention.

The new Bourguibist state had grand designs for Tunis. Perhaps Bourguiba imagined himself as a sort of latter day Louis Napoleon, emancipating Tunis from oppressive physical constraints. But the remodelling of central Paris, carefully underpinned by financial arrangements profitable to central government, was the outcome of deeply rooted socio-economic imperatives. To drive a boulevard across the Medina was more to satisfy a caprice of a leader who compared his achievements in creating the modern Tunisian state with those of an earlier North African hero, the Numidian King Jugurtha (Larif-Béatrix 1988).

In the event, the demolitions were halted to avoid a popular uprising, and Hassib Ben Ammar, the Destour party member and scion of a great beldi family, who had become governor-mayor of Tunis in 1963 took the situation in hand. In 1967 a municipal commission was created to examine the future of the Medina in the light of new ideas about the rehabilitation and renovation of historic urban areas which were beginning to win favour, notably in Bologna and the French cities.

### III.A.iv The Asm philosophy: a global approach

The concept of conserving the built heritage as it originally arose was restricted to the simple preservation of monuments without taking into account their surroundings.

It was realised however that the context was important: in the U.K., the 1931 Ancient Monuments Act authorised local authorities to set up preservation schemes to protect the areas surrounding ancient monuments, and the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act authorised local authorities to set up, at their discretion, schemes to protect groups of buildings other than ancient monuments (Fawcett 1976); the French system of monuments classés, which created a zone protégée for a circle of 1km in diameter around a listed building, had long given the authorities negative planning control of virtually the entire French urban architectural heritage (Kennet 1972).

In Tunisia, the mission of the Inaa, the Institut national d'art et archéologie, fully established by the decree of 2 April 1966, is to safeguard and enhance the archaeological heritage, as well as to establish an inventory of listed monuments and sites, and to ensure the listing of further ones. By the terms of this decree the Inaa is also to "contrôler les aménagements urbains et ruraux et de veiller à l'inscription sur le cahier des charges des mesures propres à la sauvegarde des monuments et des sites".

In the 1960s when the Inaa was set up, the move was towards the protection of sites and ensembles urbains: the Loi Malraux of 1962 introduced the concept of secteur sauvegardé (conservation area), while in the U.K. the 1967 Civic Amenities Act instructed local

authorities to make and constantly revise a list of areas of architectural and historic interest to be preserved and enhanced by strict development control.

In Tunis, in the mid-sixties, following the series of redevelopment proposals for the Medina, and the demolition at Sidi el Bechir for a new avenue, people realised that the Medina as a whole was threatened. It was in this context that the Association de sauvegarde de la Medina (Asm) was created, with the object of "working for the protection of traditional urban ensembles, historic monuments, and all objects appertaining to the cultural heritage, as well as to conduct any action which may ensure the preservation and enhancement of the Medina" (Asm 1967).

A multinational, pluridisciplinary team of architects, planners, sociologists, geographers, historians and economists was quickly set up to establish a clear picture of the Medina in human as well as architectural and urbanistic terms.

Studies were produced on the history and growth of Tunis (Amadéo 1970, El-Kefi 1968), the morphology of the Medina (Berardi 1969), on architectural typology (Cantelli, 1969), as well as a demographic, sociological, and economic survey, detailing the origin, family structure, employment and revenues of the Medina's new inhabitants.

The series of studies carried out between 1967 and 1973 emphasised the importance of Tunis as one of the last examples of a homogeneous Islamic city, and were to create a stir especially among those concerned with the preservation of historic cities in

the Arab world, where, for the most part, interest was still centred on the protection of monuments.

Arising from the Asm view that the whole of the urban fabric was important, was a realisation that the safeguarding of the Medina did not mean its muséification; rather the essential elements of the fabric of the Medina were to be maintained, whilst allowing "une évolution nécessaire", directed and monitored by planning regulation (Asm/Bahri Meddeb 1989).

Starting in the early 1970s, the Asm was to prepare rehabilitation schemes bearing in mind the two basic principles that the Medina should be preserved as physical witness of a cultural past, and that the quality of life in the old city should be improved (PAF/RAC 1988).

This meant that any intervention in the Medina would have to respect the traditional form of its domestic architecture, the house built round a courtyard, as well as its low homogeneous volumes. It was also felt essential to conserve the street hierarchy, the difference between the commercial axes and the quiet streets serving residential areas, and maintain the essentially pedestrian character of the Medina's streets.

This was the philosophy which governed the Asm's reactions in the Medina, in its capacity as planning office for the Tunis municipality, whether acting as maître d'oeuvre for urban renovation projects or processing applications to build.

This consideration for the old city as a whole was very much the approach which became widely accepted by conservationists in the



late 1960s in Europe. As a commentary on the Loi Malreaux observed: "it can happen sometimes that the architectural value of the houses examined is weak or debatable, but it is in their ensemble that the irreplaceable harmony of these quarters resides" (Apur 1970).

To ensure the conservation of the traditional built fabric, the Asm proposed a variety of lines of approach, including:

- \* the improvement of the built environment by rehabilitation
- \* the restoration of historic buildings and their re-utilisation with different functions
- \* the safeguard of the most valuable historic buildings through special legislation and listing
- \* the use of financial incentives to help private individuals develop and enhance the built heritage, rather than penalise them
- \* a policy of revitalising traditional Medina crafts (Asm 1974).

Basically, in the Asm view as developed in the early seventies, the protection of the Medina was conceived as a "politique d'ensemble", to be effected by the co-ordination of the different levels of action by a supervisory body, an office de mise en valeur.

III.A.v The 1980s: a growing official and public awareness of the Medina

The Office de mise en valeur for the Medina proposed by the Projet Tunis-Carthage was never actually set up, and the late 1970s were a period of little official activity in the Medina. The first stage of the Hafsia renovation project, the projet pilote was completed in 1978, but there was no sequel to the refunctionalising of Dar Lasram, the ministerial palace converted into a headquarters for the Asm.

Then in 1980, the local election brought some new faces to the municipal council: Zakaria Ben Mustapha, a beldi, became mayor, and Abdel Aziz Daouletli, a historian of the Hafsid period and a friend of the new mayor, head of the Inaa's Medina conservation department, became vice president of the Asm, an office he was to hold at the same time as being head of the arrondissement of Bab Bhar, which covers the central Medina.

The accession to positions of responsibility of people concerned with the Medina as an historic city was coupled with a change in official discourse. By the late 1970s, it was becoming apparent to officials of the ruling Psd party that its nationalist, secular, modernising line no longer appealed to the crowds as it had in the fifties and sixties.

In 1980 Mohamed Mzali, a great proponent of the arabisation of teaching in schools, became prime minister, and as part of the effort to renew the Psd's appeal, a new line quickly became apparent in official discourse. Whereas the watchwords had previously been the struggle against underdevelopment, emphasis

was now on the cultural and "civilisational" message of Islam. The new discourse should be viewed as part of an effort to marginalise the Left: constant references to the renewal of "les valeurs arabo-musulmanes" were calculated to give the Psd the moral higher ground.

Following Paul Vieille (1984) this change in official discourse may be viewed in the context of Tunisia considered as a peripheral state, which, confronted with the difficulties of promoting development renounces its modernising pretensions and begins to emphasise a return to authenticity.

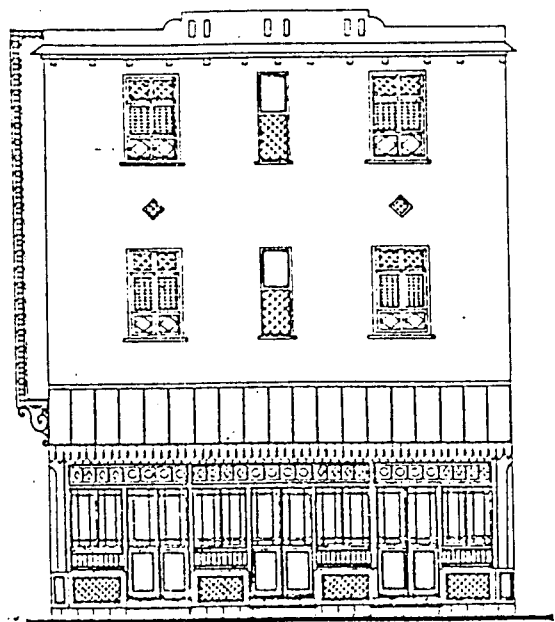
This return to the traditional meant new interest in the Medina, and with Abdel Aziz Daouletli, a man of some political weight in the Psd, as its vice-president, the Asm was able to relaunch the Hafsia urban renovation project. The Planning and Architecture Department, created in 1968, was brought back to life with a dozen architects, the Works Department became increasingly active in the rehabilitation of historic buildings for various ministries and the governorate, as well as private individuals (Asm 1990, p18-19); in 1985 a Social Sciences Department was set up to handle non-operational studies, to conduct surveys to revise socio-economic and demographic data.

During the 1980s the Asm became increasingly recognised as the authority on planning matters concerning the Medina. Its participation in the work of the committees preparing housing policy for the 6th and 7th five year development plans was instrumental in getting policy oriented towards rehabilitation and renovation in historic areas. The 6th plan, 1986-1990, breaking with the previous housing policy emphasis on

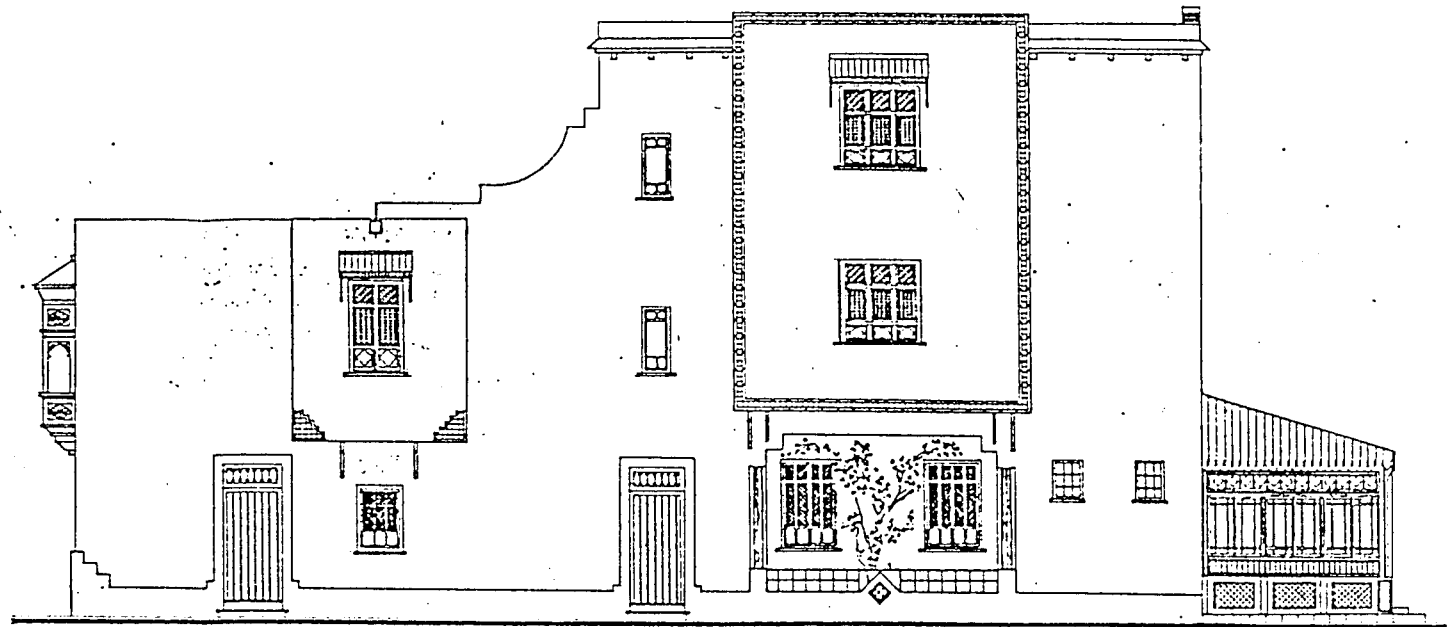
degourbification, the improvement and replacement of primitive rural housing, recognised the need to rehabilitate the existing built environment, be it quartiers spontanés on the periphery or slums in historic city cores. The Arru, created in 1985 was to be the Asm's partner in renovation and rehabilitation in the Medina.

The Hafsia and Bab Souika operations were thus executed to plans respecting the traditional cachet of the Medina. New avenues across the old city were off the agenda, and in new building the return to authenticity was to mean a reworking of the style arabisant first conceptualised in Tunisia by R. Guy (1905) (see Plates 16, a and b and 17).

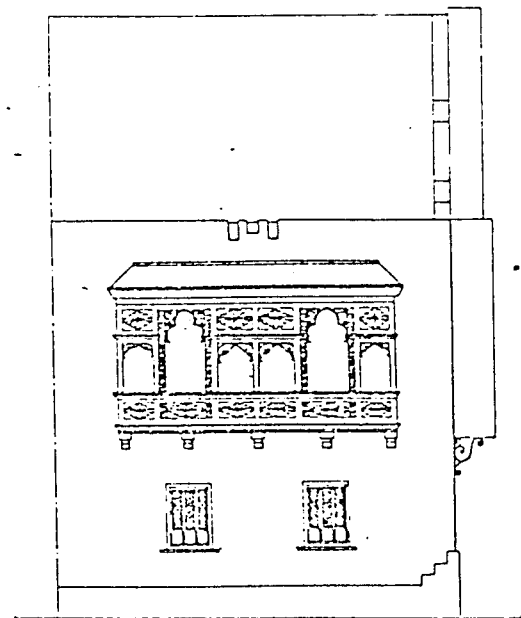
Frequent press articles about the Medina maintained public interest. The progress of the Bab Souika operation was frequently in the news, as were the oukala-s (multi-occupancy dwellings). Also important in raising public awareness of the historic city was the Festival de la Medina (see Plate 18). Launched in 1984 by the Asm, the aim of the festival was to revitalise the old Ramadhan traditions of the Medina as a place of culture and entertainment. An Association de la festival de la Medina was set up to organise the programme of events, with a budget subsidised in part by the Asm. By 1990 the success of the Festival was such that the venues used for concerts and performances, such as the courtyards of Dar Lasram and the various medersas were becoming inadequate to cope with the audiences. So in 1990 the Asm looked at the possibility of constructing a small 300-seat open air theatre in the Medina on the site of the demolished, municipally owned Oukala des chaouachis. There is no doubt that the Festival, through the



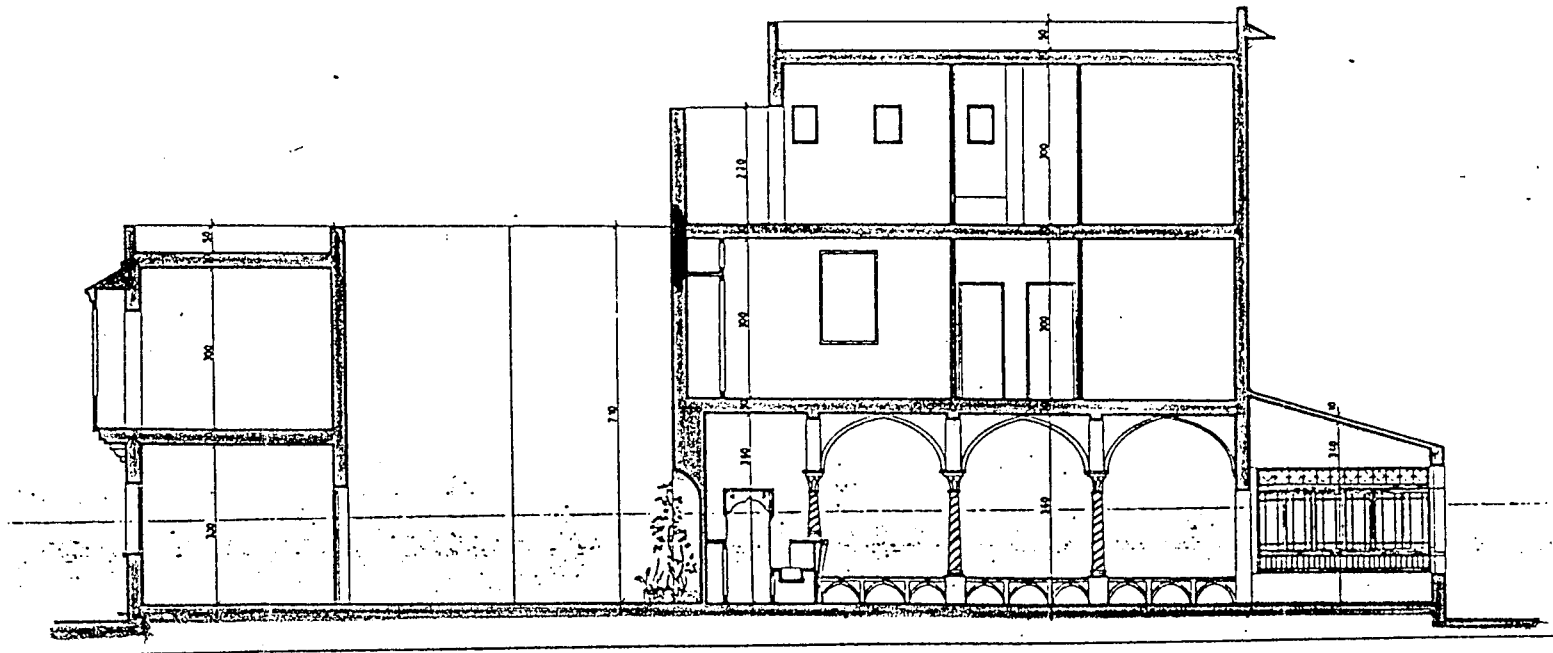
FAÇADE SUR RUE SIDI BOU HADID  
ECHELLE: 1/50



FAÇADE SUR RUE SIDI MERDOUN  
ECHELLE: 1/50



FAÇADE SUR RUE DES NEGRESSES  
ECHELLE: 1/50



COUPE A.A.  
ECHELLE: 1/50

Plate 16 a: Facades and cross-section of a 1991 cafe in the Hafsia urban renewal area (architect: Zoubeir Mouhli of the Asm). The elaborate wooden balcony, lattice work windows, and the extension of the ground floor with a wooden 'conservatory' type construction hark back to the architecture of the early 1900s.

The actual interior of the cafe, with its pastiche Hafsid columns and DUKKANA (raised masonry seating areas to be covered with rush mats) recalls the traditional Tunisian cafes such as the Cafe des Nattes at Sidi Bou Said and the Cafe M'rabet in the central Medina. Cafes with this traditional ambiance came back into vogue in the late 1980s.

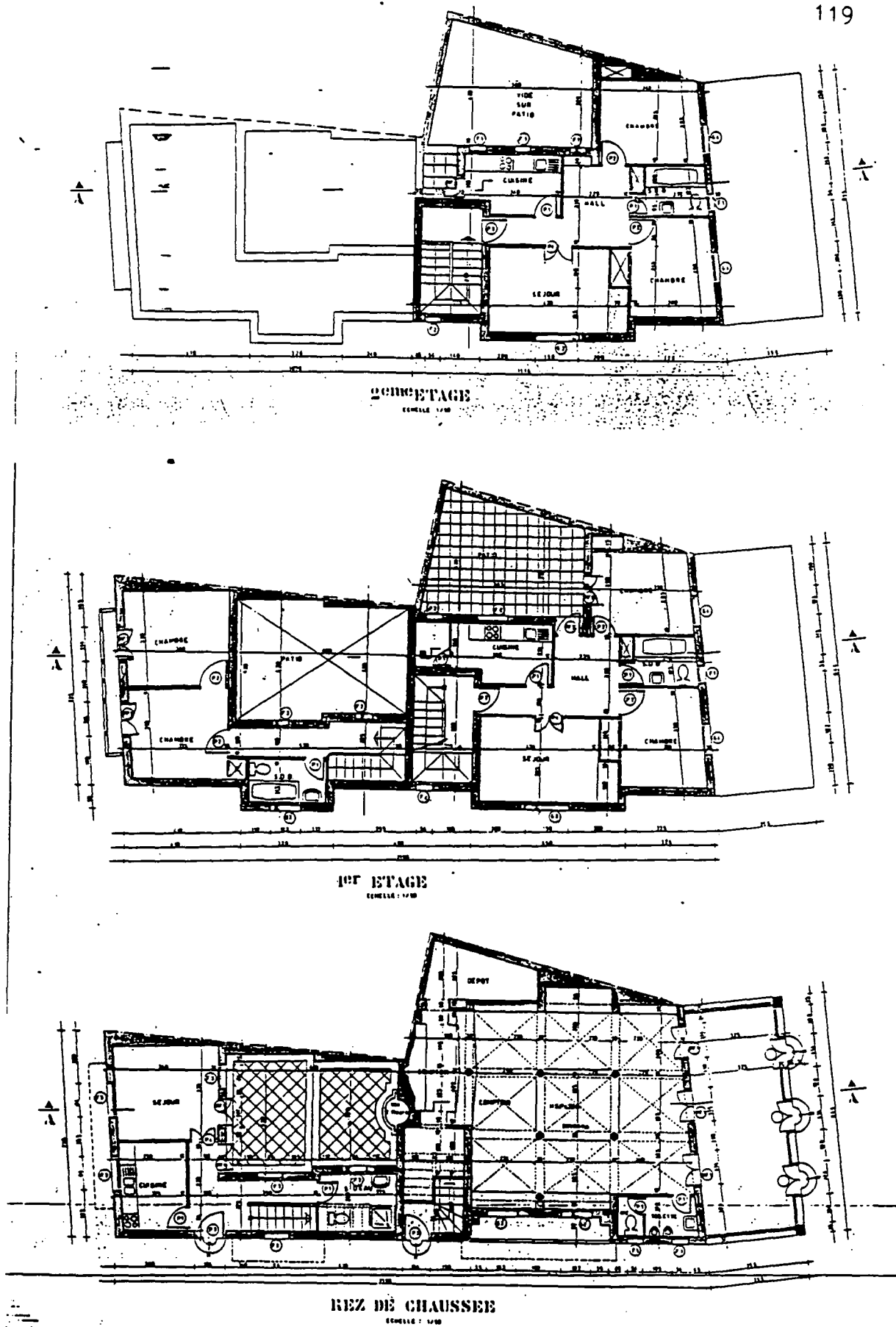


Plate 16 b: Floor plans of the 1991 Hafsia cafe. The cafe occupies the ground floor, an apartment the first + second floors.



Plate 17: The new post office at Bab Souika, completed May 1987

## FESTIVAL DE LA MEDINA

# Au cœur de la fête

**S**IX ans déjà que le Festival de la Médina a vu le jour grâce à l'initiative d'une petite mais très dynamique équipe. Au fil des années, la contribution à son extension de la part de la Municipalité de la capitale et du département de la culture, alla grandissant. Aujourd'hui, cet événement, clou des soirées ramadanesques et débordant de la période du mois sacré puisqu'il s'étale sur quelques dix semaines, est incontestablement devenu la fête de la Médina.

Trois objectifs principaux animent le festival de la Médina: combler le vide creusé par le manque de loisirs en intéressant un large public, féru de veillées, au patrimoine culturel et artistique; fournir aux artistes et aux hommes de la culture des lieux privilégiés pour se rencontrer et présenter leurs créations, enfin, exploiter, aux fins de sa réhabilitation et de son rayonnement, un haut lieu historique de notre civilisation.

En effet, près d'une quinzaine d'espaces d'élection sont actuellement ouverts à toutes sortes de manifestations, Dar Lasram, le Club Tahar Haddad, Al-Archouria, Dar Ben Abdallah, Dar Ahmetkefi, différentes Zanzias, d'anciennes medersas restaurées...

Parallèlement à son rôle d'animateur des soirées ramadanesques, le Festival de la Médina fait également office de facteur de

liaison entre le public et notre répertoire liturgique et religieux, notamment par le biais de spectacles de "Issaouias", "Tijarnias", "Azzouzas", "Soulamias", "Kharja", séances de Fidaoui, etc.

En tout et grosso-modo, 55 spectacles s'étaleront sur 28 soirées, la dominante musicale et locale prévalant, soit sur les places publiques comme à Bab-Souika soit dans les lieux cités.

Aux côtés de nos meilleures troupes, El Fen El Arabi, la Rachidia, l'ensemble musical de la ville de Tunis et de nos grands artistes, Lotfi Bouchnak, Noureddine El Béji, Anouar Braham, Mohamed Zine El Abdine, des ensembles, des comédiens, des musiciens étrangers viennent témoigner de l'ouverture de notre monde culturel et artistique et asseoir la Tunisie dans son rôle de plaque tournante internationale des Arts et des Lettres.

Englobant la quasi totalité des activités artistico-culturelles, le Festival de la Médina donne une large part au théâtre avec les nombreuses présentations de la troupe de théâtre de la ville de Tunis qui fait revivre la tradition du Fidaoui et de la troupe de Pantomime polonaise.

Côté chant et musique, le public est également comblé puisqu'il a le loisir d'assister aux spectacles donnés par des latino-américains, Alca-Palca, par les groupes français "Mélusine" et "Liza" ainsi que par l'ensemble musical de la ville de Tunis, notamment dans le programme "Rabab".

Varié, fécond, dense, les épithètes ne manquent pas pour qualifier cet événement qui, pour ne plus être original, n'en conserve pas moins toutes ses spécificités.

MONCEF BELKADI

Plate 18: Au coeur de la fête, newspaper article from

Le Renouveau, 18/4/1989, about the Festival de la Medina



range of concerts programmed, has contributed to the "rediscovery" of the Medina. Inspired by the success of the Festival, an annual children's Medina carnival was launched in 1990. The same year also saw the first meeting of the Association of Tunisian Historic Towns at Dar Lasram. 1989 was a year in which culture was increasingly on the agenda. The World Bank undertook a case study of Tunisia in the framework of a proposed programme for environmental protection in the Mediterranean basin. The Asm proposed a series of operations to be included in an eventual World Bank financed plan of action, ranging from the enhancement of the Bab el-Assal/Bab el-Khadhra wall to a study of cultural tourism in the Medina and a pilot operation in this field. The proposals were forwarded by the Ministere du plan to the World Bank.

The 8th Development Plan was under preparation in 1989, and the issue of the built heritage was of sufficient importance for a special Medina committee to be set up, with four working groups:

- \* general planning, dealing with the problems of the existing development control system, and the possible establishment of a true conservation area plan,

- \* social problems, looking at social housing policy for the Medina, the possibility of creating a special fund for property rehabilitation, and solutions to the rent freeze problem, as well as the problems of the young unemployed, the handicapped, and the aged in the Medina,

\* economic planning.

\* infrastructure and facilities.

The final report comprised a financial evaluation of the working parties' proposals.

The 1980s was a decade in which the Medina became the focus of a range of state financed initiatives ranging from the restoration of historic monuments to major reconstruction and renewal operations. But it was also a decade in which private sector activity, notably in the field of wholesale and retail, but also in private housing rehabilitation, took off. The 1990 Asm report on the decade "Pour la promotion de la Medina" recognised that the aim of renewing the interest in the Medina first aroused in the early 1970s had been achieved. But the limits of "actions pragmatiques" were becoming apparent, and future operations would be better conducted in the framework of a conservation area plan for the whole Medina and the faubourgs (Asm 1990,p93).

### III.B. THE CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE MEDINA: LEGISLATION AND PLANNING SINCE 1856

#### III.B.i Development of a legal and institutional framework for the protection of the Medina and its monuments

The current set of legal and institutional arrangements for the protection of the Medina has developed since the first protective legislation of 1882. This section will review the main features of the protective legislation as it evolved (III.B.i.a.), before moving on to outline the institutions concerned with urban conservation and their rôles (III.B.i.b.).

##### III.B.i.a. The legal situation

The earliest conservation legislation dates from the late XIXth century, namely the beylical decrees of 7 November 1882, complemented by the decree of 7 March 1886, relative to listing and archaeological digs.

The decree of 1886 stipulated that immeubles (non-moveable property) of real interest from a historic or artistic point of view were to be listed. In the case of non-State property, listing was to be preceded by an enquiry. Once listed, and bearing a "listed" plaque, the building could only be demolished by decree. Any alteration works had to be declared to the Director of the Service des antiquités, who could have the works monitored, and stop them if he considered them harmful to the historic or artistic character of the monument. The Director

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could also have works, judged necessary for the conservation of the monument, carried out. Any owner opposing the works could be penalised as could any person having destroyed, demolished, mutilated or otherwise degraded a listed building, under article 257 of the French penal code, relative to the destruction of public monuments. Similar penalties, fines or even imprisonment were applicable to persons obtaining material from the destruction, whole or partial, of a listed building.

The decree of 7 March 1886 also laid down strict regulations concerning objets d'art, inscriptions, and excavation and discoveries: important ruins could not be touched without authorisation from the Saa (Gaudiani 1910).

Thus Tunisia had a legal framework relative to the listing of historic monuments a year before a French national preservation law specified that alterations could not be made to any listed building without the authorisation of the minister of fine arts. This law was applicable only to publicly owned buildings - no privately owned building could be classified without the consent of the owner (Evenson 1979).

Further decrees were to regulate the built heritage, notably those of 8 January 1920, concerning pre-Arab conquest antiquities, notably their ownership, conservation, and the sale of ancient objects, and the decree of 17 September 1953, relative to the protection of sites. This last decree defined a site as "an ensemble of objects or an object of which the appearance, from a view point, a series of view points, or a zone of view points, is of aesthetic, historic, legendary, picturesque or

scientific interest" (author's translation); the decree also laid down the protection of site by the listing procedure.

The most significant recent legislation is the law 86-35 of 9 May 1986, which repeals the preceding decrees, laying down that "archaeological property, historic monuments, and natural or urban sites situated in towns or rural areas" are to be protected, "with the aim of safeguarding the beauty of these landscapes inherited from the generations which have lived in this country".

This recent legislation has come under criticism from academic lawyers, notably Sana Ben Achour (1986) and Hfidha Chkir and Fethi Jemaa in a series of reports prepared in 1989 for the Ministry of Public Works and the United Nations Development Plan.

The first problem with the 1986 law lies in its definition of the heritage to be protected: a distinction is made between bien archeologique and monument historique, without there being any difference in the type of protection accorded by the law.

Secondly, the category of bien archéologique, items at least a century old produced or constructed by man, as well as items of historic or prehistoric importance, includes, due to a special clause, "works less than a century old, but which are important because they commemorate a national event, or one of value by virtue of their connection with a national event". Chkir and Jomaa (1989 p.9) see in this an attempt to ensure that the history of the Mouvement national which brought the ruling party to power in 1956, does not pass into oblivion. As they put it, "Cette disposition a-t-elle été prise pour satisfaire des

ambitions politiques ou pour protéger des monuments historiques des crises et dissensions politiques?"

The 1986 law, if generous in its definition of archaeological property, is highly restrictive in its definition of safeguard. This is to be achieved by "the restoration to their original appearance of those parts (of the monument) in a state of decay, by consolidation, renovation and maintenance, and above all by respecting their integrity". No mention is made of the steps which normally precede consolidation and renovation works, namely the creation of an inventory of monuments and sites, their listing, and their protection in town planning documents via their being located on plans and mentioned in the regulations. Nor is any mention made of their development and exploitation for commerce and tourism.

With regard to sites, the 1986 law establishes two categories of site: urban and natural. Their listing is to be by decree, no longer by ministerial circular, as was the case under the 1953 decree, according to the same procedure as archaeological property. There is no mention of more recent concepts like sites of scientific interest.

With regard to enforcing the protection of the national heritage, the 1986 law represents a step backwards. Those responsible for the protection of the national heritage are, in cases of infringement, required to inform their superiors by a report and to contact the police or national guard who will take the necessary steps. Under the terms of the 8 January 1920 decree, relating to pre-Arab conquest ruins and antiquities, agents of

the Saa were considered as officers of the judiciary police in matters concerning the application of the decree.

A new confusion was introduced into Tunisian legislation for the built heritage by law No. 88-44 of 19 May 1988, relating to cultural property, and moveable and immoveable archaeological property. By the terms of this decree, sites were to be considered in the new category of cultural property, defined as public property and private property of public utility, to be inventoried in a special register. A higher consultative council for the safeguard of cultural property was to be created under the aegis of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

Tunis thus possesses an extremely summary and rather confining body of legislation for the protection of her built heritage. Recent legislation has not improved protection: according to art.43 of the 1986 law "all previous dispositions contrary to the present law are repealed." Thus the decrees of 1882, 1886, 8 January 1920 and 1953 still have force of law, the rest of the previous legislation having been repealed by the 1986 law.

The 1974 Asm proposal for a decree creating a conservation area for the Medina has been ignored, and there is no trace of measures inciting the private owner to restore his historic monument. Fuller discussion of some of the problems arising due to the lacunae in protective legislation follows in section III.C.iii. Suffice to say for the moment that existing legislation merely penalises those who fail to respect the built heritage, without any framework of incentives helping those who might wish to enhance and develop it.

### III.B.i.b. The institutional situation

Until independence in 1956, responsibility for the protection of listed monuments lay with the Service des antiquities et des arts, whose attributes were subsequently taken over by the Institut national d'art et archeologie (Inaa), created in 1957.

Since then a series of institutions concerned with the historic city centres have been created, which fall into three main categories:

1) directly concerned with the conservation of the historic monuments of the Medina, and their promotion:

- Institut national d'art et archéologie (Inaa)
- Organisation nationale de tourisme tunisien (Ontt)
- Agence nationale pour l'exploitation du patrimoine (Anep)

2) principally concerned with the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and urban renovation operations:

- Association de sauvegarde de la Medina (Asm)
- Agence de réhabilitation et de renovation urbaine (Arru)

3) concerned with the financing of urban rehabilitation operations:

- Caisse national d'épargne logement (Cnel), now transformed into a Banque de l'habitat
- Fonds national pour l'amélioration de l'habitat (Fnah)



4) concerned with the built heritage in planning terms:

- (Direction de l'aménagement du territoire et de l'aménagement régionale (Datar)

- the municipalities

(At present, these bodies have played only a minor rôle and so will not be discussed.)

#### 1) CONSERVATION AND PROMOTION OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS AND SITES

##### THE INAA

Created by decree on 30 March 1957, the Inaa was only formally organised nine years later. The decree of 2 April 1966 laid down that the Inaa was a public establishment, under the aegis of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, financially autonomous, whose mission was to:

- safeguard and enhance the national archaeological heritage
- establish an inventory of listed monuments and sites, and ensure the listing of further monuments and sites
- monitor urban and rural development, and to ensure that clauses relative to the safeguard of monuments and sites are included in the contract documents (of new projects)
- carry out and monitor restoration operations
- promote research into the archaeological heritage
- the Inaa is also responsible for vernacular arts and local traditions and museums.

The Inaa originally had four main departments:

- Centre for Archaeological and Historical Research
- Department of Historic Monuments and Archaeological sites
- Department of Archaeological and Historical Museums
- Centre for Vernacular arts and Local Traditions

These were substantially re-organised by a series of eight decrees between February 1982 and December 1983, a reorganisation which was not without significance for the Medina.

Four new semi-autonomous centres d'études were created, for

- . Phoenician and Punic civilisation and Libyic antiquities
- . Classical civilisation and Roman and Byzantine antiquities
- . Islamic civilisation and arts
- . The history of the National Movement.

The Centre for Archaeological and Historical Research became a technical sub-department as did the Museum Department, both under the director.

The Department of Historic Monuments and Archaeological Sites became a sub department of the Centre for Classical Civilisation (Banque mondiale June 1989).

Unfortunately, serious anomalies resulted from this reorganisation with regard to the built heritage of the XIIth century onwards. The research area of the Centre for Islamic civilisation and arts was confined to the period from the Arab conquest to 1159. Thus the Hafsid period (1159-1574), the Spanish occupation, the Turkish, Mouradite, and the Husseinite periods are outside the centre's field of competence. For Tunis-Medina, however, there already existed the sub-department Conservation de la Medina at Tourbet el-Bey. A new department

was set up, Conservation de la Grande Mosquée de la Zitouna et des monuments religieux et a caractère historique de la ville de Tunis. Conservation and restoration activity for the Medina was thus divided between two departments, while for the country as a whole, the majority of the built heritage from the Islamic past was ignored.

The World Bank report of 1989 sees the 1982-83 reorganisation as having serious consequences for the effectiveness of the Inaa: the creation of four independent research centres, each with departmental rank, and the fall of the research department to the level of sub-department mean that the Inaa has become a "confederation of diverse scientific interests, each closed off in a historic period", and without the resources to ensure that the monuments in its remit are maintained; research is the main interest of the centres, and the Department of Historic Monuments and Archaeological Sites, once responsible for the overall protection, maintenance, restoration and enhancement of sites and monuments, is now merely a subdepartment of the Centre for Classical Civilisation (Banque mondiale 1989).

#### THE ONTT AND THE ANEP

Equally concerned by the built cultural heritage are the national tourist board - the Ontt, and the Anep, a sort of heritage promotion agency.

Within the Ontt, and among those concerned with tourism more generally, it has been realised that sun, sea and sand are no longer enough to attract the tourist. The "product" must be diversified, and in the early 1980s the Ontt set up a Site Protection Service within its Investment Promotion Department.

This service finances operations planned with the Inaa, and monitors their progress from the technical angle. In the course of the 6th five year plan, the Ontt allotted 667,000 dinars to the enhancement of the cultural heritage. As far as the Medina is concerned, it was responsible, along with the Anep, for the creation in 1989-90 of a signposted tourist city walk in the Medina.

Like the Inaa, under the aegis of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Anep, the national agency for the exploitation of the heritage, created in 1986, is the most recent institution with interest in the built heritage. The role of this new agency is:

- \* the enhancement of the exploitation of the archaeological and historic heritage
- \* the promotion and development of cultural tourism (see Plate 39).

The term "enhancement" (Fr. mise en valeur) is not defined. The 1989 World Bank report, however, gives details of the role of the agency as set out at its creation in the mixed commission's report (no reference given). The Anep is to undertake

- \* the restoration, conservation and equipment of sites and monuments
- \* the safeguard of the medinas
- \* the refurbishment of existing museums, the creation of new museums, site museums, and a National Centre for Islamic Arts (World Bank 1989).

Obviously, the future work of the Anep is liable to be of great importance for the Medina of Tunis. But there may be

difficulties, given that the roles of the Anep, the Inaa, and the Ontt would seem to overlap considerably, notably in the technical area of the restoration of historic monuments. Co-ordinating the work of the three bodies will be of crucial importance.

## 2) REHABILITATION AND RENOVATION OPERATIONS

### THE ASM

The Asm, the Association de sauvegarde de la Medina, created in 1968 was the first of a whole series of associations set up in towns and cities across Tunisia with a view to protecting the built and natural heritage. From 1975 onwards, new associations were set up for Bizerte, El Jem, Gafsa, Hammamet, Kairouan, Le Kef, Sfax and Sousse, as well as the tiny village of Douiret in the South.

The Asm Tunis was founded as a result of the fears for the future of the historic centre aroused by the demolitions in the Sidi el Bechir area. The original municipal commission for the safeguard of the Medina, set up in 1967, was transformed into an association in accordance with the wishes of Hassib Ben Ammar, the beldi mayor-governor of Tunis at the time. It was felt that an association with responsibility for its own budget would be a more flexible instrument, capable of more efficient intervention in the historic city. The idea was that the people of the Medina and of the wider city would become involved, and that through the work of the association political decision makers would become more aware of the Medina. An association, it was felt, would be better able to work with international organisations concerned with the conservation and safeguard of historic cities.

To carry out its task of protecting the Medina, the Asm was structured into a number of departments, including a planning and architecture office and a human sciences department. Eventually in 1969, the UNESCO was called in by the Asm to participate in the preparation of a project for the safeguard and enhancement of

the Medina of Tunis (Asm et al 1974). The operations undertaken by the Asm within the framework of the Projet Tunis-Carthage, notably the restoration of Dar Lasram, a ministerial residence of the XVIIIth century, the colonnaded arcades of Souk el-Trouk, and the Café M'rabet, may be seen as impinging on the Inaa's domain, but were carried out with the tacit agreement of the Inaa, although without its effective participation. The Inaa, barely established at the time, was probably in no position to intervene, either materially or technically.

The first major urban renovation programme was undertaken by the Asm and the Snit in the Hafsia between 1973 and 1978. After a lull in activity in the late seventies, the Asm resumed operations under the presidency of Abdel Aziz Daouletli in the eighties. The Agha Khan prize was awarded to sector one of the Hafsia in 1983, and a further Agha Khan prize followed in 1989 for the Ecole Sidi el-Alaoui. The Asm was active in:

- \* urban renovation and rehabilitation on behalf of the Municipality as well as private individuals (see section III.C.i).
- \* planning, notably the drawing up of the Pact-Medina zoning regulations
- \* development control, through the processing of building permission applications, and commercial use (sulouhiat el-mahall) certificates
- \* rehabilitation of historic buildings, notably the Palais Abdallia at La Marsa, the Zaouia of Sidi Bel Hassen, and even work on private houses in the Medina.

However, in contrast to the activity of the atelier d'architecture et d'urbanisme, the human science department, created in 1985 to bring socio-economic and demographic survey data up to date, has not been very active.

Clearly, the Asm is not a standard association of private individuals with a common purpose, a matter discussed by Bechir Tekkari (1983), and the 1989 World Bank report on the Tunisian heritage.

According to the 7 November 1959 law, an association ordinaire has a governing committee elected by a general meeting of the members, and only possesses or administers "such property as is strictly necessary for achieving the association's proposed aims" (art.8).

The Asm, according to its statute, in contrast has an unelected honorary committee presided over by the Minister of the Interior, and comprising institutional as well as individual members, notably the communes of Tunis governorate. Members of the committee by right include representatives of the Inaa, the Ontt, and various ministries, whilst others are simply nominated by the President of the Asm, always the Mayor of Tunis.

With regard to "such property as is strictly necessary", the Asm conducting building and refurbishment operations and functioning as maître d'oeuvre délégué for the Municipality, is probably exceeding its remit.



The Asm's rather special make-up, including a number of political heavyweights, explains its success in assuming the role of public institution ensuring the safeguard and enhancement of the Medina. As Tekkani (1983) puts it: "L'Asm est en réalité le principal aménageur de la Medina de Tunis et de ses faubourgs. Elle réunit de facto les attributs de bureau d'études, de l'aménageur, et même de l'entrepreneur et du promoteur". (p.361)

### THE ARRU

The Arru, Agence de réhabilitation et de renovation urbaine, is a national agency, created by the law of 1 August 1981 to carry out works to improve urban living conditions in certain quarters, in accordance with the area's P.a.d. (detailed local land use plan). (Ben Achour in Arru 1990)

To intervene wherever necessary in the Republic, the Arru has the status of a semi-public EPCIC (public enterprise of industrial and commercial character) - thus in management terms it is more flexible than the state administration, and its employees are better paid. In addition, it was awarded powers of expropriation and pre-emption, to enable it to acquire land more quickly.

With these powers, it was hoped that the Arru would be able to carry out urban rehabilitation and renovation operations more rapidly and more effectively than under the system which functioned for the first and second urban projects in the seventies, under which the central administration, through its Unité centrale de projets (UCP) identified projects and set them up, and the municipalities prepared, carried out and ran operations.

With resources, both human and material, concentrated at the Arru, it was felt that experience and competence could be built up in a single institution at the service of all the municipalities.

At the level of project identification, the State entrusts the Arru with the identification of municipalities in need of help, and of course the components of a project, the financing, and the definition of criteria for eligibility for selection. (Bellalouona et al in Arru 1990).

Thus the State continues to be the real developer, the real maître d'ouvrage in the system, delegating its rôle to the Arru, while the municipalities, due to their lack of technical competence, are on the sidelines, their rôle being the creation of a Pif (périmètre d'intervention foncière, property expropriation area) within which the Arru intervenes respecting the Pad, detailed land use plan, drawn up either by a municipality or by the Arru at the municipality's request.

In the case of the Medina of Tunis, matters were slightly different, given that the Municipality already had an agency capable and experienced in technical intervention in the form of the Asm. The respective rôles of the Asm and the Arru in the Hafsia renovation and rehabilitation will be discussed in detail in section IIII.C.i.

Suffice to summarise for the moment that in the Hafsia project responsibility for the different phases was as follows:

\* Identification of project

- confided to the Asm by the central projects unit UCP of the Interior Ministry

\* Pre-project outline studies

- Arru responsible

\* Pre-project detail studies

- Arru responsible, working closely with the Asm

\* Implementation and calls to tender

- Arru responsible, programming and co-ordinating intervention of public utility companies (gas and electricity (Steg), water (Sonede), sewage (Onas))
- Asm architect monitors construction.

### 3) FINANCING OF URBAN REHABILITATION OPERATIONS

#### THE CNEL AND THE FNAH

Two bodies are chiefly responsible for the financing of housing rehabilitation, namely:

- \* Caisse nationale d'épargne logement (Cnel), a sort of state run building society and
- \* Fonds national d'amélioration de l'habitat (Fnah), a national housing improvement fund.

The Cnel, established in 1973 is a public agency of financial and commercial character, its role being "to encourage house building

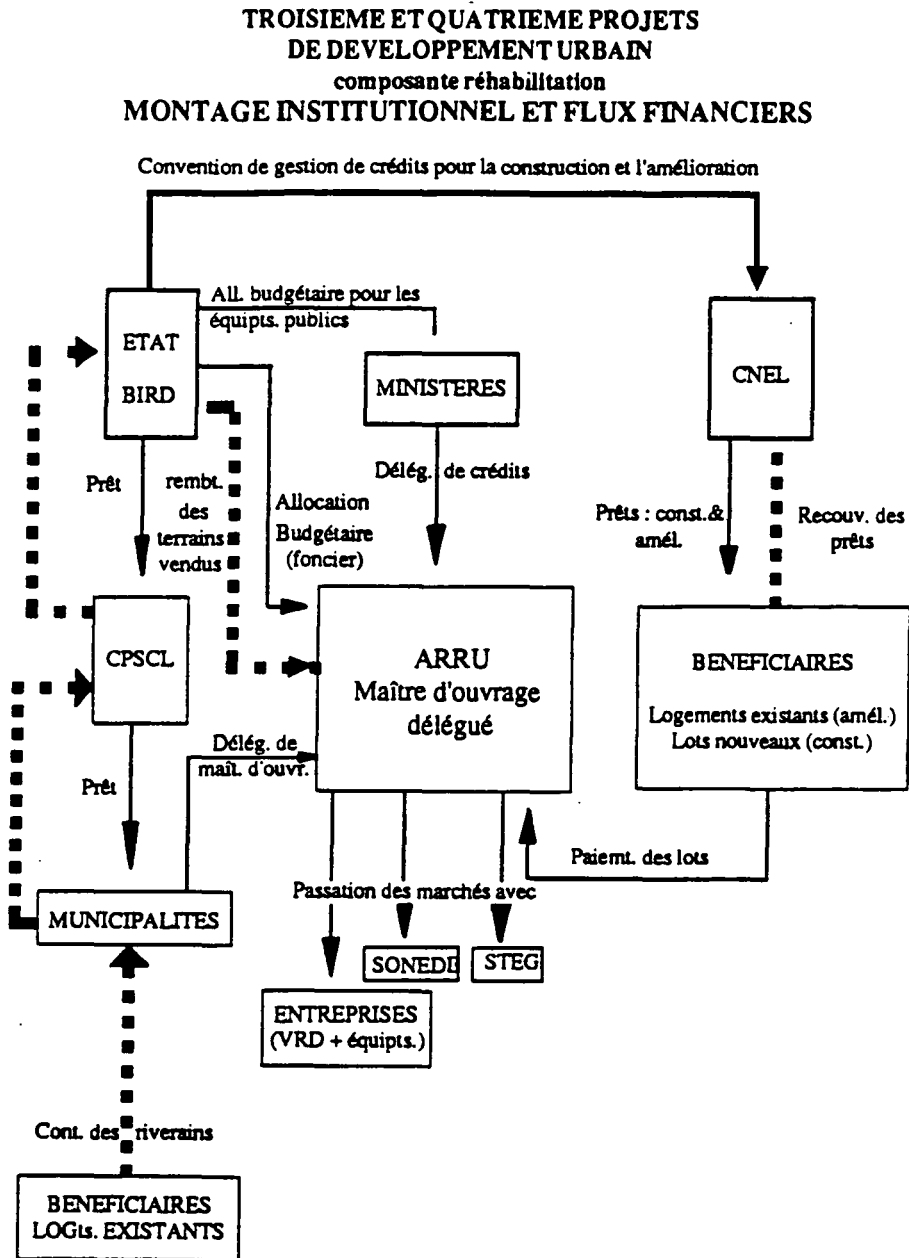
and improve the housing situation, through a savings bank system by which low interest loans are awarded to savers." Unfortunately the Cnel system as it stood was totally unadapted for improving housing conditions in the Medina: loans could only be made "pour l'acquisition de logements neufs construits par des promoteurs immobiliers agréés" (art.4 of law 7 May 1973 cited in Tekkari 1983 p.369); most Medina property is held in indivison by a family of heirs, with tenants too poor to make any improvements.

With the Fnah the situation is hardly better. Created in 1956 by decree, the rôle of the Fnah was to facilitate the carrying out of all kinds of work with a view to improving housing conditions. This was to be financed by loans and subsidies coming from a fund created by the levying of 3%-6% from the rent paid in buildings of which at least half of the surface area is used for professional administrative or housing purposes. Unfortunately the Fnah can only make loans to the property owners who ask for them. And as explained in Section III.8.iii, landlords of decaying property in the Medina tend to be the least motivated to improve conditions, as rent can rarely be increased, the tenants being protected by the rent freeze law of 18 February 1976. And, given that much property in the Medina is held in indivision, there is a problem if some co-owners do not wish to take a loan to improve the property.

To solve the problem, the Fnah's activities were extended in 1966 to include the financing of the national housing company's (Snit) estates (Tekkari 1983).

FINANCING URBAN REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES

Within the framework of the third and fourth urban plans in the 1980s, the financial flows in urban rehabilitation and renovation operations like the Hafsia were as in the diagram:



Institutions and financial flows in the Third and Fourth Urban Projects: urban rehabilitation. Note the central role of the Arru (Urban rehabilitation agency).

Solid lines indicate payments, dotted lines indicate the repayment of loans.

Source: Arru (1990) La maîtrise d'ouvrage urbain, actes de séminaire international de Tunis 15-17 novembre 1988.

With reference to the diagram on the previous page, the Cnel played a crucial role in financing operations in the Medina. New housing was pre-financed by the Cnel, which ran the Hafsia Housing Upgrading Fund as well.

This account was eventually extended to include the whole Medina, and by early 1992 104 households had benefited from loans totalling 529 991 Dt. The granting of the loans was managed by the Arru. There were problems in 1990 to 1991 when the Fnah stopped contributions to the fund, perhaps because those interested in taking out loans were mainly owner occupiers, and the Fnah is mainly concerned with owners renting their property.

The World Bank, (under its French acronym Bird in the diagram), was also crucial to the 1980s urban renewal operations in the Medina: the Vrd (installation of roads/services) was financed by the bank, as was 50% of the Housing Upgrading Fund. It remains to be seen if the World Bank will participate in the latest large scale renewal operation in the Medina, the Oukala Operation (see Section III.C.iii.)

### III.B.ii Town planning and urban conservation

#### \* LAND USE PLANS

Prior to the creation of the Asm in 1968, and in fact right up to 1985, when new land use regulations were adopted in the form of the Plan d'aménagement de la commune de Tunis (Pact) (more of which later), the Medina was regulated by the zoning laid down in the decree of 22 July 1954.

This decree, as previously mentioned (III.A.iii), considered that only the central souk areas were worthy of special consideration.

The work undertaken by the Asm between 1967 and 1973 led to the appearance of a series of eight reports in 1974, entitled Sauvegarde et mise en valeur de la Medina de Tunis (Asm 1974), which included amongst the recommendations for the future of the Medina specific planning measures: the Medina was to become a secteur sauvegardé - a conservation area - rather like those then appearing in France due to the Loi Malraux (4 August 1962); the text of a proposed decree creating the Medina secteur sauvegarde was included in the report.

Unfortunately no action was taken by the authorities, and plans for the Medina were to wait until 1980 and the preparation of the Plan d'aménagement de la commune de Tunis - le Pact, a land use plan equivalent to the French P.o.s. in the hierarchy of plans as laid down by the Tunisian Code de l'urbanisme of 15 August 1979.

The Pact was to be drawn up jointly by the Municipality, the District (a sort of regional planning authority set up as a

precondition for a World Bank loan in the early seventies) and the D.a.t. (Direction de l'aménagement du territoire) of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

It was quite clear at the time that special arrangements would have to be made for the Medina, and the Asm was officially designated to draw up planning regulations for the Medina. Given the lack of any special conservation area plan and regulations, the Pact (Medina) was drawn up by the Asm with a view to filling this lacuna.

According to a decree, (80-733) of 28 May 1980, a Plan d'aménagement urbain is to be drawn up according to a formula which specifies that any Plan must include:

- \* graphic documents and a report including demographic and economic details, and justification of the plan's compatibility with the city's long term structure plan - plan directeur urbain, Pdu.
- \* planning regulations:
  - general land use regulations
  - particular regulations relative to zoning.

The general land use regulations were to be accompanied by a zoning plan.

However, land use zones as applied to the modern city were clearly not applicable to the Medina with its dense fabric of low patio houses with many party walls served by a web of narrow streets.

The Asm's solution for the Pact Medina was to draw up an elaborate system of zones specific to the Medina which considered



as zones not only the residential blocks of patio houses (zones UAZ) but also the street web which structures and surrounds the old city (zones UAR).

Planning regulations were then drawn up specific to each of the eleven zones of the Medina. For certain zones they are extremely restrictive, notably for the traditional residential areas and their alleys (UAZ1), the area of ministries built under the Protectorate (UAZ3), and the pedestrian covered souks (UAR1) and the main pedestrian axes (UAR2).

Other areas, basically fringe areas, which have already lost their homogeneous traditional character are subject to more flexible regulations.

Residential areas in an advanced state of dereliction were listed as a separate zone (UAZ2). The idea was that at a later date they would be the object of urban renovation and rehabilitation operations, to be implemented via the combination of:

- \* a Pif (périmètre d'intervention foncière) - property expropriation area
- \* and a Pad (plan d'aménagement de détail) - a detailed reconstruction plan respecting the traditional volumes of the Medina.

\* PLANNING PERMISSION: the permis de bâtir

Changes in the built fabric are thus regulated by the granting of permis de bâtir (building permission) to projects which conform to the regulations of whichever Fact-Medina zone the property to be transformed happens to be in. Although the permis de bâtir

fall squarely within the Asm's remit, the system is not without its problems.

At the administrative level, the permis de bâtir for the Medina are processed in three different arrondissements, namely Bab Souika, the Medina centrale, and Sidi Bechir, which do not correspond precisely to the area covered by the historic city.

Not all changes to the built fabric need full planning permission. The replacement of a floor can be done without: a letter detailing the works, presented by the owner at the arrondissement, is forwarded to the Asm which gives the go ahead - although sometimes plans are requested.

More significant works - reconstruction, the addition of a floor, alterations to the façade require the constitution of a technical file comprising, among other things:

- . certificate of ownership
- . proof that municipal taxes have been paid
- . plans of the location of the property, and its existing state and proposed changes.

The arrondissement, having checked the papers, sends an agent to check the property and fill in a special enquiry form:

The file is then sent to the Asm, who send an architect to double check the details on the planning enquiry form. Next, the file goes before an Inaa/Asm commission, and then the proposed alterations are approved/refused, signed by the vice-president of the Asm, and sent back to the arrondissement.

Finally the file comes before the permis de bâtir commission at the Municipality, which includes an Asm member, for final approval/refusal, before being returned to the arrondissement.

Usually the Municipal commission's decision corresponds with that of the Asm, although the former has been known to reject an Asm approved project.

There are a number of significant problems which face the planners and architects trying to ensure that this planning permission process gives results corresponding with the decisions taken:

1. Works under way prior to planning permission being granted

Very often owners begin work on their property without even starting the process of requesting planning permission. Asm personnel sometimes discover, in the course of the enquiries, that works are already being undertaken: they may criticise the work being undertaken, make suggestions, explain the process of getting planning permission and even make threats to have works stopped; they may explain that the works will get planning permission if suitable plans are presented.

2. Non-execution of approved plans

Owners often present a file which fulfils all the requirements of the planning regulations, but with the intention of building differently once the file has been stamped and approved.

### 3. Compulsory architect prepared plans

In the mid-eighties it became compulsory for all building projects to be drawn up by a qualified architect. This regulation was recognised by the Municipality in October 1990. However, it was not enough to change the existing system under which drawing technicians had prepared most plans for alterations: the technicians simply resorted to the expedient of drawing up plans under the aegis of architects prepared to sell the use of their professional stamp.

### 4 Non-participation of the Inaa

The Inaa, in principle a body with great interest in transformations to the historic built fabric, sends no representatives to the permis de bâtir commission.

Two questions arise from the above expose of the difficulties in the planning permission process:

- 1 How are infringements dealt with?
- 2 How can property owners' seeming unwillingness to follow the process be explained?

To deal with infringements first, if the works undertaken do not correspond to the approved plans, Asm personnel or municipal agents notify the municipal Service des infractions, who stop the works. The owner must then present a file in which he sets out his real intentions. Eventually, if changes are not made, the municipal police can demolish constructions which breach the regulations.

This part of the process is beset by problems. How can building in line with the Pact-Medina planning regulations be ensured when

- \* people for the most part are unwilling to conform to the regulations

- \* there are only seven poorly paid municipal agents to check what is being built.

On occasions, works which had been stopped, because they were at variance with the regulations, remained standing because the permis de démolir had not been granted.

And even where the Asm has provided technical assistance in the preparation of suitable plans, the problem of follow up means that even these plans may not be executed. An example of such a case may be found to the left of the fine entrance to Dar Othman: where there should have been a simple whitewashed facade with simple wrought iron window grills, there is an elaborate arcaded construction with large wood shuttered windows and ox-blood roof tiles, completely at variance with the Medina's architecture (see section III.C.iv). There are several reasons as to why people ignore the permis de bâtir process or build contrary to it:

1. There is a general lack of information about planning permission and how to get it. People do not know that there exists a procedure - and in any case the procedure is not defined in the Pact, where it is simply stated that a technical file is to be presented to obtain planning permission. Also the declaration of taxes paid tends to put people off, as Tekkari notes (1983 p320).

2. The regulations do not suit many people, as it imposes a lot of constraints. The average owner seeks to increase the covered

floor space of his property to the maximum: this means reducing the size of the patio and wall thickness, large windows, three floors (the regulations allow for one), and balconies - all contrary to the typology of the Medina's traditional architecture. In aesthetic terms, the owner will propose the use of unsuitable materials: aluminium for windows and mass-produced tiles on the facade.

Finally, plans are often produced with the clear intention of using part of the property for commercial activity, when the property is situated in a UAZ residential zone. For property in commercial use offers a high rate of return and fewer problems with tenants and raising rents.

\* THE PACT - MEDINA AND THE FRENCH PSMV (PLAN DE SAUVEGARDE ET DE MISE EN VALEUR - conservation area plan)

The PACT-Medina was drawn up by the Asm to fill the need for suitable regulations to govern the old city. Like a PSMV, the PACT-Medina was drawn up by architects. However it was never examined by a local commission for conservation areas, as is every PSMV (Comete 1990, p.73). Nor does it go as far as a PSMV to indicate buildings to be protected and those to be demolished. The lack of participation of the Inaa, the body which might be expected to put forward views on the development of the Medina, is clearly felt.

Although the PACT-Medina of 1985 provides a regulatory framework for changes to the historic built fabric, it provides no long term view of the rôle of the Medina in the Grand Tunis area.

III.B.iii      The law of property ownership and rental, and its  
implications for urban conservation

Perhaps one of the most important factors underlying the decay of housing stock in the Medina has been, and still is, the system of property ownership. Many of the historic houses of the Medina are owned by extended family groups. Due to Muslim inheritance laws, which strictly specify the part shares (kirat) due to each member of an extended family, a house can be divided among many owners. The property is said to be owned in indivision.

As many of the beldi families have lost their links with the Medina, and the patriarchal family system has largely disappeared, the practice has been to let the property via an agent. Other properties are occupied by de facto tenants. The majority of the tenants living in the Medina residences of the former great families are of the economically weakest sectors of the population, and therefore unwilling to undertake repair work at their expense; nor are members of the family willing to pay for repairs, and so the net result is slow decay.

\* Property held in indivision

No statistics exist as regards the percentages of houses deemed to be of historic interest (Revault 1967, 1971) and held in indivision, but it is probably considerable. There is no doubt that there are historic city residences in indivision and in good condition - the examples of Dar Naifer, Dar Beiram, Dar Belkadhi and Dar Romdhane Bey spring to mind. However, historic houses in indivision and unoccupied are at risk: the Grand Salon of Dar Mohsen, often referred to as "le plus beau salon de l'Afrique",

was destroyed with much irreplaceable furniture and hangings by fire in 1987: Dar Chérif, untenanted apart from a caretaker, remains at risk, and could suffer the same fate as Dar Kastalli, robbed by burglars who came in over the terraces and took the best antiques.

\* Rented property and attendant problems

As a result of the mobility of the population in the years after independence, a high percentage of houses in the Medina are rented rather than owner occupied, and there are a large number of dwellings in multi occupancy. According to the 1985 Arru report on the ouksalas in the central Medina, 80% of the multi occupancy dwellings were in need of some form of rehabilitation, and 20% in need of total renovation.

The poor state of rented housing in the Medina may be surprising in view of the fact that the Code des obligations et des contrats (COC) defines exactly the responsibilities of the owner and the tenant regarding upkeep, repairs and heavy maintenance work to rented property. It distinguishes between two types of repair work:

- \* minor repairs: to be carried out at the tenant's expense, notably to tiles, doors and the like.
- \* major repairs: made necessary by the age of the building or by force majeure, or due to building faults or the owner.

In effect, maintenance and repair works necessitated by the age of the building are the sole responsibility of the owner. However, for this legal obligation to be enforced, sanctions



would need to exist, where this obligation is violated.

Tunisian law is silent on this matter, for there is no legal penalty on landlords for failing to carry out maintenance and repair works. When an owner refuses to carry out the necessary repairs, the tenant "may be authorised by legal authority to carry out the works himself and deduct the costs incurred from the rent." (COC, art.742, alinéa 2). In other words, the only sanction on the owner of a decaying building is that the tenant may spend the rent on maintenance work.

This, however, is an unlikely eventuality, given the low incomes of the majority of the Medina's households. According to Asm figures published in 1974, 48.5% of heads of households in the Medina were unemployed or else working as unskilled labourers or street hawkers; the annual income of these households was a mere 234 DT. Given that rents in the Medina are generally low, it would seem unlikely that this population would be able to deduct the high costs of building operations from the rent, even if they were able to afford the initial outlay.

Therefore, many a landlord simply waits for his ageing property to reach the point of no return, using the rents to pay off his low interest government loan on the new villa.

\* Buildings on the verge of collapse (Immeubles menaçant ruine)

However, there are other regulations which have an effect on the quality of rented housing. As the majority of Medina housing was built before 1970, tenants benefit from the fact that they cannot be dislodged unless the building is on the verge of ruin, in

which case the owner may repossess his property. There is no legislation in Tunisia specifically dealing with buildings on the point of ruin. Regulations relative to this point are to be found in a number of documents (Tekkari 1983), notably:

- the Town Planning Code
- the loi municipale of 14 May 1975
- the law of 18 February 1976, relative to owners and tenants of property rented for domestic use, professional purposes and public administrative uses.

The Town Planning Code of 1979 concerns only exceptional cases, those of buildings in the areas assigned to road and open spaces in a Pau or a Fad. Article 14 obliges the owner to obtain an authorisation for repairs and enables him "to require the local authority to expropriate the building if it is recognised by legal authority as being on the verge of collapse".

The loi municipale concerns a wider range of cases, enabling the mayor to order by decree the demolition or the repair of the buildings on the point of collapse. (art.74). The law of 18/2/1976 regarding landlords and tenants inspired by French legislation of 1948, was created out of social concern. Because of the severe housing crisis, it was decided that tenants of all categories, including those occupying professional and administration premises, should have the right to stay put, with rents of property destined exclusively or almost exclusively for residential use to be allowed to rise by no more than 5% p.a. This piece of legislation concerned buildings constructed before 1/1/1970, and rented before 1976.

If a landlord wishes to avoid huge repair bills, and feels he has no further use for the building in question, he may wait for the property to deteriorate to the point of no return, then invoke article 4 of the law of 18/2/1976 whereby "les locataires de locaux ayant fait l'objet, soit d'une interdiction d'habiter, soit d'une mesure prescrivant la réparation ou la démolition de l'immeuble menaçant ruine" may no longer remain in residence.

According to Takkari (1983), a number of factors push landlords to opt for demolition:

Firstly, there is great pressure for premises in the city centres, alternative poles of centrality still being in their infancy in Tunisia's cities and towns. Property owners, by demolishing old buildings and redeveloping the sites, can make healthy profits. In the Medina, new buildings can have two floors, according to the Pact regulation and with special permission, three. A demolished single storey patio house can easily become a small apartment block.

Secondly, by the terms of the 18/2/1976 law, landlords are not obliged to give priority to former tenants to rent in the new building constructed as a result of demolition. This has led landlords to construct buildings suitable for letting as offices of commercial/professional premises on demolition sites. In principle such change of use is forbidden by article 22 of the 18/2/1976 law, but to no avail. Change of use remains largely uncontrolled as witnessed by surveys (Asm 1982 p.4). The Ministry of Public Works is authorised by article 22 to permit change of use, but this ministry's authorisation would seem to be the general rule.

Finally, although new construction under 4/2/1976 law requires planning permission, demolition does not. In any case, demolition is often carried out under a clause in the ministerial order applying the 4/2/1976 law which allows maintenance work, including the construction of new floors, to be carried out without official permission.

### Conclusion

Thus at the root of the deterioration of the built fabric of the Medina is the relationship between landlord and tenant as laid down in the 18/2/1976 law, which creates, in the words of Sana Ben Achour (1986), a feeling of insecurity due to the weakness of the legal link between owner and building. This link is further weakened by the complex ownership system, and the result for the historic houses is a lack of the careful maintenance they so badly need.

With regard to the 1976 law, the Asm proposed in 1981 that the legislation be modified for housing in the historic core: rents for upgraded housing were to be allowed to rise (Asm 1990). The 1976 law was to be recast by the Ministry of Public Works in 1990, and the Asm's proposals were to be examined once more.

### III.B.iv Economic activities in the Medina and their regulation.

The traditional economic activities of the Medina were organised into what Pennec (1964) refers to as "corps de métiers" (roughly equivalent to craft guilds) organised under the authority of an amin. 1990 witnessed an attempt to relaunch traditional crafts under a "restored" system of "corps de métiers". However, the structure of artisanal production and economic activity in the Medina has changed drastically, notably over the two decades up to 1990.

Unfortunately, no attempt has been made to study and analyse the nature of economic activities in the Medina and their importance in the wider urban context since the Asm studies of the early seventies. Binous (1988) enumerates the new service activities moving into the traditional covered souks, and mentions the vitality of the retail sector. Thus due to the paucity of the documentation, this section is based largely on interviews conducted with Asm and Inaa staff, as well as shopkeepers and artisans, plus photographic evidence.

Economic activity changed radically in the sixties. As banks and travel agencies moved into property on the avenue Bourguiba in the Villeneuve, retailers located there were finding times hard: local industry was as yet unable to replace previously imported merchandise. In the Medina, the beldi clientele of the tailors and belghadjia (traditional shoe makers) was dwindling, and fewer and fewer people needed new tack for their horses. On the rue Zarkoun, the antique dealers' businesses expanded rapidly, selling off the furniture of the departing European population. And in the Hafsia, the second hand clothes businesses, the

friperie (see Plate 19), boomed as the dealers moved off the terrains vagues of the Hafsia into a Bulgarian reconstructed souk el-Hout.

From the mid-seventies, the Medina's importance as a space for economic activity increased spectacularly:

- \* small scale manufacturing, notably of shoes and clothes, as well as of furniture for the local market, is now present in almost all quarters of the old city; 1979 saw the first furniture workshop on the aristocratic residential rue du Facha; today there are numerous carpenters, as well as jewellers and flag manufacturers
- \* similarly there has been a vast expansion of retail activity
  - of small scale "commerces de première nécessité" in all quarters
  - of boutiques retailing modern manufactured goods, notably clothes on the rue de la Kasbah, as well as china, glass and electrical goods on adjoining streets, complementing the already existent Souk el-Grana and Souk Sidi Mehrez
  - of boutiques and stands selling imported clothing, shoes, electrical and miscellaneous goods on the rue des Glacières.

The expansion of retail activity may be explained by the huge increase in the population of Greater Tunis, the lack of provision for shopping in the outlying quartiers spontanés and new housing areas, the high rents for commercial property in the Villeneuve, as well as the easy accessibility of the Medina to all by public transport. And to date, no shopping area has emerged in the capital - with the possible exception of the Cite



Plate 19: View of the Friperie, the second hand clothes market of the Hafsia, with new apartment building in the background. Photo taken June 1991.

Jamil, El Menzah - to rival the combination of the Villeneuve/Medina area for shopping.

The expansion of small scale manufacturing in the Medina closely linked to the growth of retail, has been favoured by a number of factors, amongst them:

- \* The availability (at a low rent) of a varied range of premises for manufacturing: the houses of the Medina had extensive storerooms and stables, ideal for conversion into ateliers. The availability of space also means that a manufacturer can expand or contract according to his needs. And on fine days, activity can expand into the street: metal souvenir sellers can set up their tables and furniture can be varnished outside (see Plate 20).
- \* the location of the Medina means that finished goods can be quickly transported to the shops of the Villeneuve or the souks; it also means that it is accessible to the workforce (I have found no evidence that most employees in small scale manufacture inhabit the Medina).

How then has the expansion of economic activity been regulated, and how does this fit with the zoning regulations as laid down by the Pact-Medina?

- \* many of the small commercial enterprises in the residential areas are set up under a proviso in the Pact regulations which specifies that on certain streets a commerce de première nécessité may be opened there, although the zone is residential: one commercial premises not larger than 60 cubic metres is allowed per parcel.



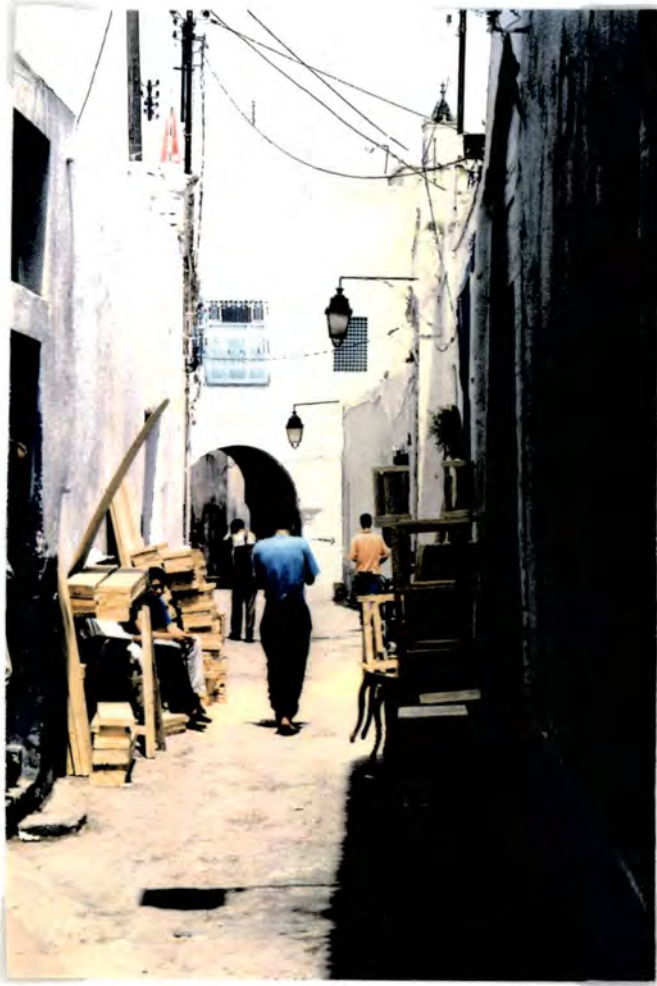


Plate 20: Carpenters move their work out into the street from cramped workshops. Rue Sidi Riahi, June 1991.

- \* From the permis de bâtir application, it is usually quite clear that the owner intends to open some sort of commerce; once works have been completed, the owner must obtain a certificate of suitability for commercial activity (sulouhiyat el-mahall) from the arrondissement.
- \* The sulouhiyat el-mahall is granted after enquiries by the Asm and the municipal hygiene service, which pass on the file, in the form of a lettre de voirie to the municipal commission concerned.

The problem with this system is that there is a lack of precision as to what constitutes a "commerce de première nécessité" - is it simply a corner grocer's, or can it include a hairdresser's, a stationer's, a pâtisserie etc? And is every residential block of the Medina to have its commerce, no matter what the size of the block?

There is continuous pressure for permission to open further shops in the residential areas, and this suits the representatives of the governor in the Medina - the mutamids-s and the umda-s, as jobs are created.

To move on to the regulation of manufacturing activity, it appeared, from my enquiries, fairly simple to open a small workshop, provided the neighbours didn't object. It was sufficient to pay for a certificate called the patinda (in dialect) at the local offices of the Ministry of Finance, for the atelier to be legal.

At the Asm's instigation, a certificate allowing the installation of an electrical current off which machines can be run has been

introduced, but new machinery appears able to run off the 220v current now available all over the Medina.

In short, economic activity in the Medina is flourishing, barely regulated by the system as it stands. The consequence of this activity for the built fabric are dealt with in Section III.C.v.

III.C.i. Rehabilitation and renovation: the major integrated urban renewal project described and assessed

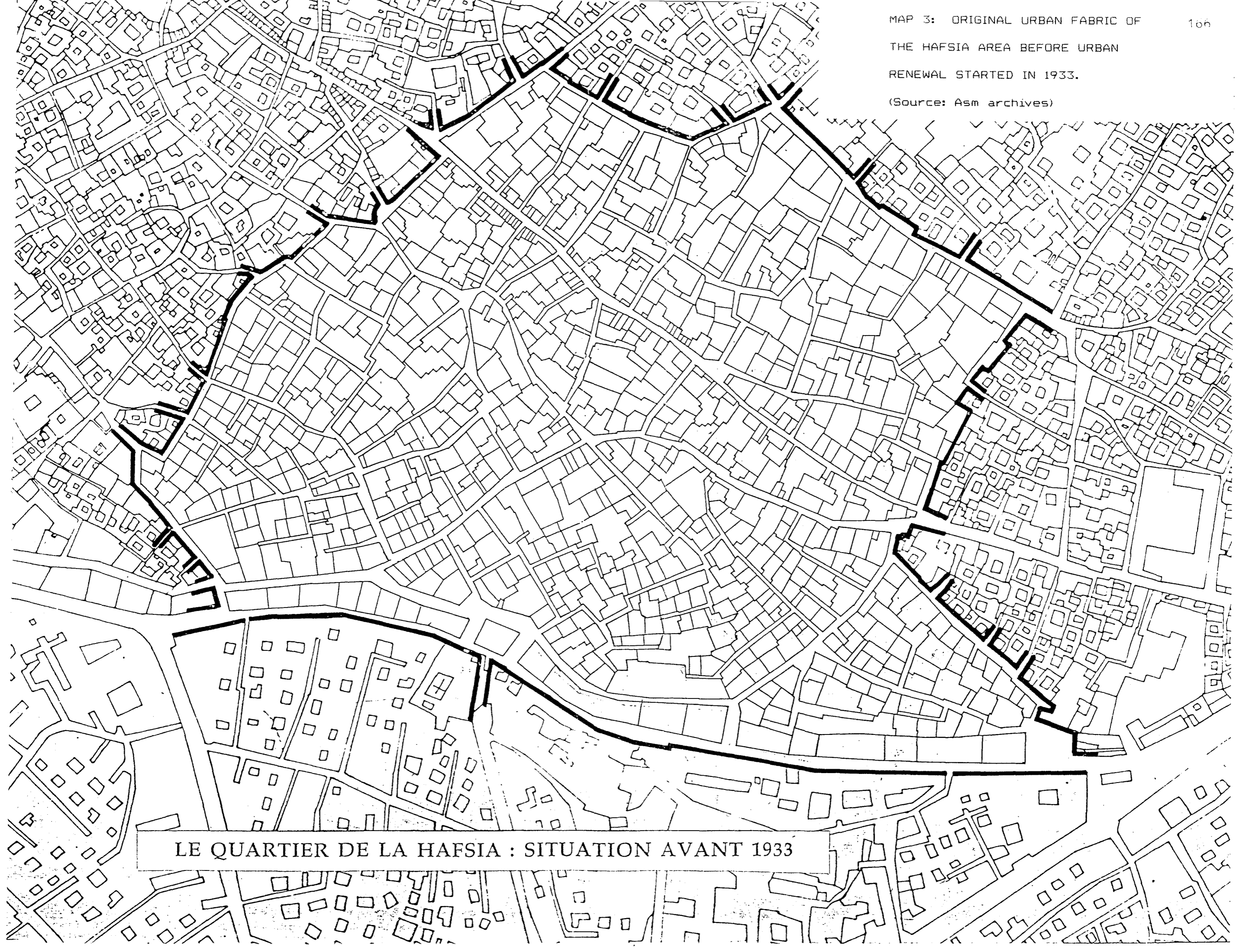
Urban restructuring and renewal, in terms of the Medina, may be described as the process of clearing up land ownership ambiguities (Fr: assainissement foncier), reconstitution of the street network, repair/installation of services, site preparation, the rehabilitation of any historic buildings to be preserved, and the construction of new buildings.

The seventies saw little action in the field of urban renewal because there was no public body able to deal with the question of land ownership - the Snit, the national housing company, did begin operations in the Hafsia.

1981 saw the creation of a national urban renewal and rehabilitation agency, the Arru, with powers of expropriation and the power to plan, implement, and commercialise property development schemes within specified land intervention area (Pif - périmètre d'intervention foncière). The Arru was thus to play a major role in urban renewal in the eighties.

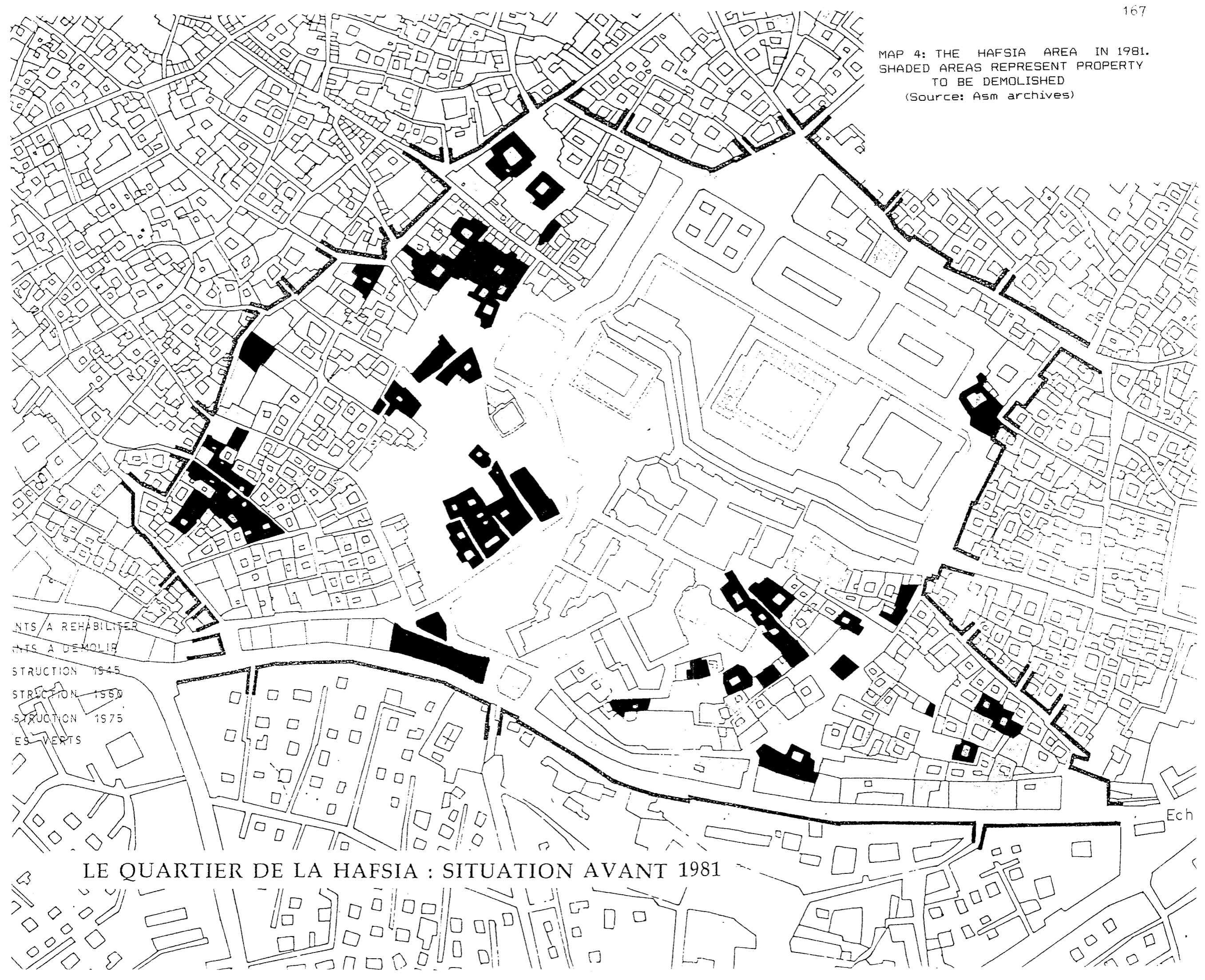
The Medina witnessed two major urban renewal operations during the eighties: the culmination of the renewal of the Hafsia area (see Plans 3, 4 and 5), begun in the early seventies, and the Bab Souika project, of a rather different nature and scale, which changed a traffic congested street situated between the central Medina and the Faubourg nord into a wide pedestrian piazza, with twin road tunnels underneath solving the traffic problem.

(Source: Asm archives)



LE QUARTIER DE LA HAFSIA : SITUATION AVANT 1933





MAP 4: THE HAFSIA AREA IN 1981.  
SHADED AREAS REPRESENT PROPERTY  
TO BE DEMOLISHED  
(Source: Asm archives)



LE QUARTIER DE LA HAFSIA : SITUATION AVANT 1981

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MAP 5: THE ASM PREPARED HAFSIA URBAN RENEWAL PLAN OF 1981

-  IN GOOD CONDITION
-  GREEN SPACES
-  FOR REHABILITATION/UPGRADING
-  REBUILDING



CONSTRUCTION  
 REHABILITATION  
 BÂTIMENTS EN BON ETAT  
 ESPACES VERTS

Ech:1/2001

**PLAN D'AMENAGEMENT: Plan de restructuration 1981**

a) The Development of the Hafsia

The renewal of the Hafsia area occupied the Asm and the Arru for much of the eighties, and the final sector will only be completed sometime in 1991. Basically the reconstituted architecture and planning department of the Asm has worked on the Hafsia, initially for the Ministry of Housing, and subsequently for the Arru, drawing up first feasibility studies, and detailed implementation drawings.

The area now known as the Hafsia was formerly the Jewish quarter of the Medina, the Hara, and insalubrious area occupying low lying ground on the eastern edge of the central Medina. As the Jewish population prospered under the French, there was a movement out of the Medina into the Villeneuve. The thirties witnessed demolitions of slum housing and the construction of the Dr. Cassar buildings, three low rise blocks of flats to rehouse some of the poorest elements of the Jewish population, financed by the Municipality.

Further renewal plans had been prepared and discussed by the Municipality and its department of works in the early fifties, but because of the outward migration of the Jewish population, the problem was no longer urgent. The Municipality undertook further demolition works in 1958 and 1961-62, and the area was broadly speaking waste ground surrounded by slum housing, the former partly occupied by a used clothes market. In 1965, the Ministry of Education put up two schools with Unesco funding, and the Municipality built a Children's club and a Youth Centre. In 1967/1968 a new precinct was built to rehouse the Hafsia fruit and



vegetable market, but it was quickly taken over by the friperie, an imported second hand clothes market.

#### Hafsia Renewal: Stage 1, The seventies

Unsurprisingly, then, the Hafsia was the object of some of the first Asm socio-economic surveys, which showed that 27% of the inhabitants of the Hafsia area were squatting, that 62% of the inhabitants frequently changed their place of residence, and that 80% of the inhabitants of the areas to be demolished had annual revenues of under 60 DT (Asm/Chabbi, Guislain 1973).

The Hafsia area was clearly a blight on the face of the Medina, a priority area to be renewed if the old city was to be more than a slum quarter of the capital.

In January 1970, the Asm and Unesco joined forces in the framework of the Projet Tunis/Carthage. Asm architect Arno Heinz, Mit trained Tunisian architect Wassim Ben Mahmoud, and planner Jellal Abdel Kefi were commissioned to draw up a pilot scheme for urban renewal in the Hafsia. Thus housing and commercial premises were to be built on 20,000 square metres of Hafsia site: the barrel vaulted souk linking Souk el-Grana and Souk Sidi Mehrez was reconstructed, and for the 9 566 square metres of floor space of the housing part of the project, the Asm view favouring an adapted version of the patio house was to prevail over the Snit's preference for low rise apartment buildings (Abdel Kefi 1989, p190-3). The new patio houses allowed for movement around the courtyard under cover. There was a mix of one and two storey housing, with all ground floor accommodation having patio access, and all first floors having terraces. All new homes had

electricity, / running water and were joined to the sewage lines. All had small service courtyards/terraces for laundry (Asm/Unesco/Snit October 1974). Privacy was maintained by the orientation of the houses. Motor vehicle access was restricted (see Plate 21).

The Hafsia operation of the period 1974-1978 despite its success in introducing the principle of renovation of historic urban areas to Tunisia, was less successful in providing for the housing needs of the Medina's population.

Snit Hafsia housing turned out to be far too expensive for low income groups. The new homes were available only to households earning 70 DT per month or more. In 1962, 75% of the population had a revenue of less than 50 dinars per annum. (Secrétariat de l'Etat 1976, p103.) By way of example Snit housing in the Tunis area ranged from 8000 to 14000 DT per unit: Snit Hafsia housing was among the more expensive property. Hence the new owners were not from the most needy people of the Medina: barely 7% were from the quarter.

The fact that the new houses were logements évolutifs allowed owners to build on to increase their floor area in order to rent off part of the property.

Snit housing at the Hafsia was thus a good buy - for those who could afford it, despite the fact that not all aspects of the project (provision for parking, tree planting) were executed.

The 1980s Hafsia renewal programme was to run on rather different lines, however, and was socially more sensitive.



Plate 21: Street scene in the first phase of the Hafsia urban renewal area. Note the covered alleyway (sabab). Photo taken June 1991.

## Hafsia Renewal: Stage 2, 1981 to 1991

The municipal council which came into office in 1980 came back to the idea of an integrated urban renewal project for the Hafsia, and for once the Municipality and the Ministry of Housing were in agreement: the outline concept plans were therefore included in the Third Urban Project under negotiation with the World Bank for financial assistance. The objectives of what was to be the second stage of the Hafsia operation, as laid down by the Asm, were for the rehabilitation costs of the Sidi el Baiane and Sidi Younes areas, situated just to the north of the Hafsia, to be recovered by the construction of middle range housing units in the Hafsia, each family being guaranteed a minimum living area of 40 square metres (Ministère de l'Habitat et al 1981).

From 1981 therefore, the Asm worked on the Hafsia in a World Bank financed project, the aim being to reverse the decay of the Medina by creating an attractive new housing/commercial area at the heart of the city.

The basic socio-economic aims were:

- \* to clear up irregularities in ownership
- \* to reduce the overcrowding of existing housing and rehabilitate, as long as this was cheaper than building from scratch
- \* allow rents to rise in line with the occupiers' means
- \* rehouse in the same area those families affected by housing rehabilitation measures
- \* renew basic infrastructure
- \* install necessary facilities like a dispensary, baths, playgroup etc.

In architectural terms the aims were to:

- \* ensure continuity between the renewal areas and the ancient built fabric by limiting the height and volume of new constructions (see Plate 22)
- \* reinterpret the traditional patio house, and reincorporate the traditional architectonic elements of Tunisois building, such as wooden latticed window grills and the covered passageway, into the renewal areas (Asm 1990) (see Plate 23).

The various aspects of the programme which eventually ran to four main phases were distributed as follows:

- \* Concept plans and blueprints were the province of the Asm's architecture and planning office.
- \* The Arru dealt with the areas of expropriation, rehousing and demolition, as well as constructing new housing and facilities in accordance with the Asm plans.
- \* Private promoters were allowed to build according to Asm concept plans and designs; private architects and the Asm's planning and architecture office prepared detailed blueprints.

The four main phases were:

1. The construction of Arru housing on the rue Drogman/rue Errakah/rue de la Verrerie, comprising
  - \* a first batch of 40 homes on a new lot (finished May 1986)
  - \* a second batch of 57 homes at Sidi Baiane, on modified existing lots (finished April 1987).
2. Interstitial Arru housing in Sidi Younès/Sidi Baiane area, built on tiny lots unlikely to be redeveloped by private



Plate 22: Low volume new buildings on the Rue de la Hafsia conceived by Asm architect Zoubeir Mouhli and built by the Arru. Function: commercial premises on the ground floor, apartments above.

Photo taken June 1991.



Plate 23: Sabat-s (covered streets) in the Hafsia urban renewal area in June 1991.

developers because of their size, comprising two batches respectively of 55 and 51 homes

3. Sprols housing in the form of
  - \* a three floor building of 29 apartments (completed April 1988)
  - \* a block of studio flats (completed September 1990)
4. Arru facilities and private developed buildings, mainly on the rue de la Hafsia/boulevard Bab Cartagena (Arru 1990) (see Plates 16 and 22).

In social terms the second stage of the Hafsia operation was more sensitively handled than the first.

Of the Arru housing, 70% of the new property was to be available to people with Cnel savings accounts, "les Cnélistes", to use the local term, and 30% was to be for rehousing local people. As things turned out, 50% of the new housing went to local people, 20% of whom were Cnélistes from the Medina (information from interviews with Arru personnel, June 1991).

The process of allocating the new housing and rehousing those whose homes were demolished was handled by the Services sociaux of the Arru. Special files were opened on each household, and the heads of households were interviewed by a special commission, comprising the Governor's local representatives, the délégué (moatamid) and his deputies, the umda-s (local quarter chiefs), and representatives from the Asm, the Arru, the Municipality and the Ministry of Housing. The Commission proposed a number of options to the households:

- \* for those with no stable source of income, an eviction compensation equivalent to a few months' rent; many of these



tenants moved on to cheap housing elsewhere in the Medina, whilst others were rehoused outside the Medina in basic housing in areas like Tadhamen on the periphery.

- \* for tenants who, thanks to a stable job, pay Social Security (Cnss) contributions, Sprols rented housing was an option.
- \* for better off tenants, who had been paying Cnel contributions for at least seven years, (officially four years), Snit housing was available under a sale/rent procedure.
- \* In cases of private ownership, the property was first valued by experts from the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Justice. The owner could then aspire to new property in the Hafsia:
  - if the new property offered was worth more than the old, a Cnel loan was available to make up the difference, monthly repayments in no case being more than 40% of monthly income
  - if the new property was worth less than the old, then the owner received a cheque to the value of the difference
  - it was also possible to take a cheque to the value of the original property, although only one owner took this option.

The principle of small scale private rehabilitation was introduced into the Hafsia project, operations being financed by a special account made up of funds from the Fnah (National Housing Improvement Fund), the World Bank, and a surcharge on housing and commercial premises constructed by private developers. The scheme was run by the Cnel, and introduced the principle of cross-subsidy (Fr. péréquation) to Tunisian urban renewal operations. However,

the scheme proved problematic, and will be discussed more fully in section III.c.iv.

#### Assessment of the Hafsia operation

The new built fabric of the Hafsia quarter is basically the product of the Asm architecture and planning office. It could serve as a prototype for other integrated renewal projects in the Medina. The design work has been particularly successful in recreating the human dimension of the Medina's traditional housing on a site which could have been much more profitably developed with low rise blocks of flats, the sort of renovation originally favoured by the municipal works department.

Unfortunately, there have been no sequels to the Hafsia, although the Asm has prepared concept plans for a number of other quarters, notably the Kherba and Maakal Ezzaim. It should be said, however, that no other site of this size and in such a state of decay existed in Tunisia's old cities: the Hafsia Pad covered 14% of the area of the central Medina.

Apart from the architectural aspect, which won the Asm international recognition, the 1973 Project Hafsia winning the Prix Agha Khan de l'Architecture in 1983, the Hafsia operation is notable in that it represents the coming of age of the Asm: despite the Asm's legal status as a mere association, the Asm, via its increasing prestige as a technical specialist in planning matters concerning the Medina, was able to impose its view as to the nature of the the renewal/rehabilitation operations possible in the Medina. Rehabilitation and renewal with respect to the

traditional urban fabric has come to be viewed as something both possible and desirable.

Another of the merits of the Hafsia operation is that it takes into account the socio-economic nature of the area, proposing solutions via legal and financial adjustments. But it is in this last area that the Hafsia operation has been least successful. The main obstacle to effective rehabilitation would appear to be the rent freeze (see II.B.iii), and despite a variety of Asm/Arru proposals, the government seems unwilling to act.

For at stake is the nature of the Hafsia quarter: is it to remain a quarter housing some of the capital's poorest citizens, or is it to be the first phase of an overall upgrading of the Medina? A clearer vision of the future of the Medina as a quarter of the capital will have to emerge before adjustments are made to legislation.

The Hafsia has shaken off its image of a blighted area. However, Asm planners feel that a decision will have to be taken regarding the adjoining red light area, which survives as a factor preventing higher income residents returning (see Plate 24).

Perhaps the operation was so largely successful in that it was carried out in small stages over a long period, and so didn't arouse public opposition, as only small numbers of people were affected at any one time. However, as can be seen from Plates 25 a, b and c, it was a large scale operation.

The other major urban renewal operation, the Projet Bab Souika, was rather different in this respect.



Plate 24: The wall separating the Quartier réservé (red light district) of Abdallah Guèche from the upgraded residential areas of the Hafsia.

Plates 25 a,b, and c: Three plates giving a 360 degree panorama of the Medina from the roof terrace of one of the new buildings in the Hafsia urban renewal scheme. (Photos taken June 1991)

Plate 25 (a): View of the Hafsia area and the Medina looking south-east to south-west. In the left foreground are the roof terraces of new traditional style courtyard housing. To the right on the skyline can be seen the minarets of the Zitouna mosque and the Hamouda Pacha mosque.

Plate 25 (b): View of the Hafsia and the Medina looking west to north. To the left are the Docteur Cassar buildings built to rehouse the Jewish population in the 1930s. Right of centre is the Hagia Sophia style mosque which dominates the quarter of Sidi Mehrez. Centre foreground is the Friperie and the reconstructed barrel vaulted souk. To the right is an area of new and upgraded low volume housing.

Plate 25 (c): View of the Hafsia and the Medina looking north-east to south-east. The foreground is occupied by the buildings of the last phase of the Hafsia urban renewal project. To the far right is the tower block Hotel Meridien and the twin bell towers of the cathedral.



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b) Bab Souika: the evolution of a presidential project

Bab Souika occupies a key position between the northern end of the central Medina and the faubourg nord, and is of strategic importance, in terms of East-West movement across the capital, as well as of cultural importance.

In terms of culture, the Bab Souika area, site of the zaouia (shrine) of Tunis' patron saint, Sidi Mehrez, was renowned as the heart of popular festivities during the holy month of Ramadhan. For the Neo-Destour party, the quarter came to represent the spirit of popular resistance to the French colonial authorities.

President Habib Bourguiba had long wished to leave his mark on the capital, and by the early eighties his imagination had been fired by the idea of a renewed and embellished Bab Souika which would celebrate him in his role as the Supreme Combattant, the founder of the modern Tunisian state.

The renewal of Bab Souika was to stand for the submission of the area to the President, for if the area had caused the French problems, it caused Bourghiba problems as well. In effect, the renewal of Bab Souika may be taken as symbolising the Bourghibist state's attempt to master all spheres of political and social action not under its control. Although the area was by no means the most derelict of the Medina, it was the site of spectacular traffic problems: by 1982, more than 28 000 vehicles a day, plus two hundred buses, were using the narrow Place Bab Souika on their way across the capital (Asm 1990, p41, statistics assembled by Transitec).

Starting in 1983, a major urban renewal scheme was launched, in accordance with the President's wishes. No costs were to be spared, for this was a prestige operation which the President had been considering since the early seventies, when the area's major mosque, Sidi Mehrez, had been renovated at the President's behest.

The basic aims of the operation were:

- \* the resolution of the traffic congestion problems
- \* the creation of a central square or esplanade
- \* the construction of socio-cultural facilities lacking in the area
- \* the rehabilitation/restoration of the major historic monuments of the quarter, principally the Sahib et-Tabaa mosque and the Sidi Mehrez mosque

It was also seen as essential to:

- \* maintain and if possible enhance existing housing capacity
- \* rehabilitate slum housing in the area
- \* ensure that all businesses and shops disturbed during the works were re-established
- \* maintain the character of the area

The project was drawn up in 1983/84 by the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, with the Asm, quarter representative (usually Neo-Destour party local branch members), and the Dat (Direction d'aménagement du territoire) being consulted. As it turned out, the Asm played the role of consultant architect planners in the project.

The consultation of local representatives was essential if the demolitions were not to spark off some sort of popular uprising. Local people felt that the changes were unnecessary and would destroy the spirit of the area. Therefore the minister of Housing and Public Works, Mohamed Sayyah, supervised operations closely, attending weekly progress meetings between 1983 and 1987, and using the Neo-Destour party's network of branches to inform people of arrangements being made, and by so doing gain acceptance for the project.

As far as the Asm was concerned, there was conflict with Olivier Clement Cacoub, architecte conseil de la Présidence, over the scale of the demolitions, and the extent to which rehabilitation was to be preferred to renovation. The scheme eventually agreed upon solved the traffic problem with two tunnels running under the Place Bab Souika, and envisaged an elaborate building programme after extensive demolitions.

Works will probably be completed sometime in 1991, and the resulting transformed Place Bab Souika reflects the compromise arrived at between, on the one hand, the presidential architect's desire for a modern spacious esplanade which would emphasise the two key historic buildings of the quarter, and the Asm's insistence on an integrated project which would respect the particularities of the quarter and would represent more than architectural surgery (see Plates 17, 26a and 26b).

As it turned out, the Asm was able to play a crucial co-ordinating role in the development of the project, notably in terms of design. The Asm was able to ensure that the buildings around the new pedestrian square were limited to two storeys. The Ministry



Plate 26 a: Bab Souika urban renewal area - view of the modernist arcades conceived by architect T. Bou Slama, not a believer in reworkings of the style arabisant. The mosque of M'hamed Bey is in the background.



Plate 26 b: Bab Souika urban renewal area - view through the arcades on the Sidi Mehrez side of the square, looking towards a turn of the century style apartment block.

having decided that the design of new buildings and the socio-cultural infrastructure should be distributed among fifteen teams of Tunisian architects, the Asm was assigned the job of co-ordinating the work of these diverse teams. During a seminar held in July 1985, Asm architects, the fifteen teams, and Ministry representatives agreed the details of the design brief for the new constructions, including general volumes, dimensions of windows and doors, balconies and galleries. During the design phase the Asm was to provide advice to certain of the teams, for instance on the design of the new monumental stone gateway to the Souk Sidi Mehrez, (see Plate 27) part of tranche 6 of the project. During the construction phase, Asm representatives participated in site meetings.

In terms of finance, the renewal of Bab Souika was costly. Estimated costs in 1984 were 20 000 000 DT; by 1990 the cost of the operations as defined in the spring of 1987 had risen to 41 150 000 DT (Asm 1990, p48-9). The tunnels were the costliest item on the budget: originally estimated at 8 500 000 DT, the cost rose to 13 400 000 DT, largely due to interest charges. There were vast increases in costs in two other areas: expropriation and compensation, and new buildings put up by the Snit.

Total expropriation and compensation costs rose from a projected 2,800,000 DT in 1984 to 8,100,000 DT in 1990, almost tripling. This was due in part to an increased area being demolished - partly due to pressure from local people because of the generous compensation paid, and in part because monthly compensation payments to businesses and shops were continued for longer than originally foreseen because of operational delays. The cost of new Snit buildings rose from a projected 3,200,000 DT for 11,000



Plate 27: New "monumental" gateway at Bab Souika, forming the new entrance to the Souk Sidi Mehrez. Pastiche Hafsids columns link the new gate to the area's past.

square metres of floor space in 1984, to 15,000,000 DT for almost three times as much floor space, comprising 300 shops, 57 housing units, and 45 offices. This increase is partly to be explained by the use of high quality materials in the new buildings.

In 1991, with the operation almost completed, the battle was to ensure that the new Place Bab Souika remained a pedestrian area, and that an excess of respect for the wishes of the businesses in the area did not lead to the Place being turned into a giant car park/taxi station. By late 1990, the Asm/Abdel Kefi design consultancy's proposals for the "aménagement" of the Place were being implemented with the construction of fountains and onion domed kiosks in keeping with the reinterpretation of the style arabisant present in much of the area's new architecture (see Plates 17 and 28). Traffic access had been limited by a series of rather unsightly concrete bollards, but the proposed stone paving had yet to be laid, giving rise to fears at the Asm that the Ministry of Works might limit costs by keeping the temporary tarmac surface, abandoning the notion of improving the "amenity" of the area (Asm 1990 p51).

Perhaps the most striking feature of the operation is the way in which an urban renewal operation seems to have been accomplished without embourgeoisement and the scattering of the area's original population. This concern for the social fabric would seem to be a recurrent theme in renewal operations of the Medina, and was one of the main concerns of the Hafsia operation. Undoubtedly, amenity and infrastructure are much improved (see Plate 29).





Plate 28: Bab Souika urban renewal area: apartment buildings on the Rue Bab Benat by T. Ben Miled and M. Ridane in a reworking of the style arabisant.



Plate 29: Bab Souika urban renewal area: garden next to the Zaouia of Sidi Mehrez by the Abdel Kefi consultancy.

c) Perspectives for the future urban renewal initiatives in the Medina and Faubourqs

Despite the success of the Hafsia renewal scheme, there has been no follow-up, with the exception of the vastly expensive Bab Souika renewal operation, which was massively subsidised.

Possibly this is due to:

- \* the unwillingness of private developers to move into the field of urban rehabilitation, preferring to remain with the known quantities of the development of vacant land acquired at low prices
- \* private developers being unaware of the success of the Hafsia operation, that it is possible to develop in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Asm for development of the Medina, and still make a profit
- \* the complexity and time scale of the renewal programmes implemented so far, and the need for Arru intervention, plus the massive public subsidising of the Bab Souika programme, which may have given the impression that renewal operations in the Medina are best left to the State.

A number of solutions to these problems (Asm 1990) include:

- \* promotion of the idea of rehabilitation in the private sector
- \* the implementation of small scale renewal programmes, to cost around 2 to 3 million DT for implementation over 3 to 4 years.

The increasing cost and declining availability of vacant land near the centre of the capital may well make the Medina an attractive proposition to developers. The Kherba site, in the eastern part

of the central Medina, for which the Asm prepared detailed blueprints, concept drawings and estimates of costs back in 1983, was examined by various private and public developers, but all found the requirements of the Asm plan too constraining, in that they limited the scale of redevelopment and therefore the potential profitability of a renewal programme. This may yet change.

III.C.ii Historic buildings: new uses for old structures -  
an unrealistic policy?

Few countries can afford the luxury of restoring historic buildings for aesthetic goals alone, and Tunisia is no exception to this rule. The active conservation of the built heritage as evolved in Europe depends heavily on the re-utilisation of the built heritage for socio-cultural and tourist activities, respecting at the same time the morphological and typological particularities of the buildings and areas in question.

In the Medina buildings have been reused in this way since the XIXth century. Dar Hussein palace built by Yousef Sahib et-Tabaa, a favourite minister of Hamouda Pacha (1792-1814), was reutilised under Mohamed Bey (1855-1859) as the seat of the municipal council. In the first decades after the proclamation of the Protectorate, as the avenues of the Ville Nouvelle took shape, General Forgemol and the French military command moved into the Dar Hussein, and a number of private residences, as well as some of the barracks, took on new functions. Hamouda Pacha's barracks in the Souk el-Attarine was taken over by the Bibliothèque publique and the Direction des antiquités, while the barracks on rue Sidi Ali Azouz and rue de l'Eglise were taken over respectively by the Société française de bienfaisance and the Habous administration. Among the large palaces, the Palais Kheireddine, an enlargement of the old Hafsia Palace, housed the Tribunal for a time at the beginning of the Protectorate, later becoming a store and then a school, while the Palais Khaznadar became the Jewish hospital.

A number of the small palaces aroused the interest of French civil servants working in the fields of culture and education. Dar Othman Dey was restored through the initiative of Louis Poinssot, director of the Service des antiquités et des arts, and housed an ethnographic museum from 1936 to 1956. From 1924 to 1933, Dar el-Mestiri housed the Institut des arts et des métiers. It subsequently provided office and exhibition space for the Office des arts tunisiens, then under the Direction de l'instruction publique, before becoming a regional centre of the OAT. Both Dar el-Mestiri and Dar Othman today belong to the Ministry of Culture: The former is largely ruined (see section III.C.iv), the latter has been under restoration by the Inaa since 1985.

Dar Ben Abdallah has had a similar history. Acquired by the painter Albert Aublet in 1905, it came under the control of the Oat in 1941, under the direction of Jacques Revault. In 1964 it passed to the Ministry of Culture, and has been converted into the Centre des arts et traditions populaires. The rooms off the skifa and the main patio today house a museum which presents the main aspects of life in a beldi household through scenes with waxwork models and a rich collection of everyday objects and clothes.

The re-utilisation of historic buildings, adapting them for new functions if need be, but always respecting the specifications of the Medina's morphology, is one of the basic tenets of the Asm philosophy of operating in the historic built fabric.

One of the three major sections of the Asm/Inaa/Unesco report of 1974, provided for two major pilot projects, one of which was the

rehabilitation of an historic building to house the headquarters of the Asm and a cultural centre/gallery area. Dar Lasram, a fine palace of the late XVIIIth century, acquired by the municipality in 1968, was selected. The works lasted two years, the restoration/transformation being completed in 1972. The palace today houses offices in the rooms off the main patio and patio of the dar dhiouf, kitchen and printshop space off the service patio, as well as design and drawing studios above the old stables and storerooms, now home to the Tahar Haddad cultural centre.

It is interesting to note that the costs of restoring the Dar Lasram were substantially lower than acquiring a brand new building; the rehabilitation cost, 65000 DT for a new floor area of 1939 square metres, the cost per metre being 34 DT/square metre; at the time, the cost of Snit high quality housing was 50 DT/square metre, and 80-90 DT/square metre for state built projects (Abdel Kefi 1989, notes to ch.3).

But the successful conversion of Dar Lasram has remained the exception rather than the rule. Binous (1988, appendix VII) provides an interesting inventory of 41 restored/reaffected historic buildings - 20 palaces, 9 medersa-s, 4 zaouia-s, 1 tourbet, 3 barracks, 3 churches and the Divan.

The vast majority of these buildings are in government hands, either local or national: 8 are municipal property, 12 come under the Ministry of Culture, and 2 under the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Governorate jointly. The remainder come under diverse ministries or the ruling party. Four only are in private hands, all transformations from residential uses.

These figures serve to emphasise the lack of private initiative in the re-affectation of historic buildings in the Medina. When one recalls the hundred and fifty or so palaces and town houses studied as being of historic interest by Revault (1971), the insignificance of privately funded re-affectation becomes clear. The Asm itself in the 1970 report identifies 670 buildings of historic value in the Medina (Asm 1990). Only two major palaces in private hands may today be visited: Dar Bouderbala, housing an art gallery, and Dar Jeld, housing a de luxe restaurant. Listed buildings in private hands occasionally make news when a particularly insensitive alteration is discovered (see Plate 30).

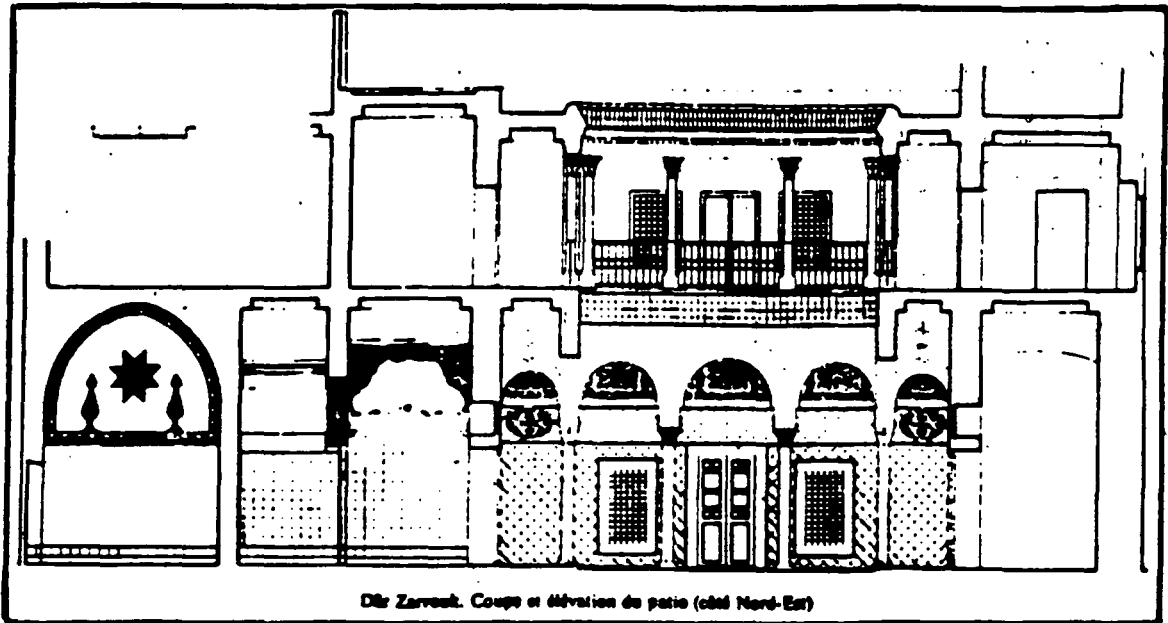
To turn to the re-affectation of the government owned property on the Binous inventory, the situation is hardly brighter. On the list of palaces, four of the re-affectations are still a long way from being complete: Works started in 1985 in Dar Othman were still not complete in December 1990, and had not started in the cases of the Palais Khaznadar; work on the Palais Kheireddine had stopped for financial reasons, and Dar el-Haddad was proceeding slowly. If the re-affectation of the most valuable palaces is part of official policy, it is nevertheless severely hampered by financial problems.

Perhaps the most successful re-affectations have been those of the former religious colleges or medersas. Since 1980, the Asm has carried out restoration work in four medersas:

- \* the Mouradia (1981) financed by the Governorate, now houses a craft training centre for the Ministry of Social Affairs
- \* the Achouria (1983) financed by the Asm, houses the headquarters of a range of cultural associations for the Ministry of Culture



# Peut-on encore sauver le Dar Zarrouk ?



*Le Dar Zarrouk a été étudié avec beaucoup d'attention par Jacques Reyant : « Palais et demeures de Tunis XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle ».*

Rue des Juges, au cœur de la Médina, un ballet incessant de camionnettes continue de nuit comme de jour.

L'A.S.M. alertée a fait constat. L'INAA est informé, le maire de Tunis a débuté une procédure... Et pourtant...

Bientôt, ce qui fut l'ancien palais de la famille Zarrouk, superbe demeure datant du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, ne sera plus qu'une carcasse battue par les vents, et menaçant ruine.

Que faut-il faire pour que s'arrête ce vandalisme lucratif qui démantibule ces demeures chargées d'histoire pour n'en laisser que de vides coquilles.

C'est ainsi qu'a disparu Dar Cheikh el Médina en 1970 et Dar Lakhoua en 1988. C'est ainsi que disparaîtra, si on ne fait rien pour arrêter les choses, au cœur de la Médina, patrimoine mondial, une de ses plus belles demeures.

Il s'agit de l'une des grandes demeures composant l'ancien palais de la famille Zarrouk.

C'est de cette demeure que s'est enfui Larbi Zarrouk en 1881, déguisé en femme pour échapper à la garde beylicale.

On se souvient, en effet, que ce personnage historique, contemporain de Khéreddine, vice-président de la municipalité de Tunis, directeur des habous, et directeur du collège Sediki, dut finalement s'enfuir et s'exiler à cause de son désaccord avec le bey

sur la signature du traité du Bardo, instituant le Protectorat.

Le procédé utilisé est devenu classique hélas, et menace gravement la Médina dans son ensemble : une promesse de vente est signée avec un commerçant revendeur d'éléments architecturaux traditionnels.

Ce commerçant, en quelques semaines, dépouille la maison de tout son décor : carreaux de marbre, colonnes, encadrements de portes et de fenêtres, bois sculptés et peints, étagères, carreaux de faïence, etc. qui sont vendus sur place, comme une récolte d'olives ou d'oranges. Après cette opération de décorticage, ne subsiste plus que la carcasse sans valeur de la maison, qui va peu à peu s'effondrer.

A Dar Zarrouk, certains panneaux de faïence sont uniques dans leur composition.

Arrêtera-t-on le massacre ? Le processus de dépouillement a commencé au mois d'octobre. N'est-il pas déjà trop tard ? Et n'est-il pas stupéfiant de voir notre patrimoine bâti bradé de cette façon sans recours possible, et cela au moment même où l'on soumettait à Tunis un programme d'action national sur l'environnement aux bailleurs de fond ?

L'A.S.M., la municipalité et surtout l'INAA dont le rôle est de protéger notre mémoire de pierre, partie intégrante de notre patrimoine culturel, ont-ils les moyens de leur action ? Ou doivent-ils se contenter de vœux pieux ?

*La Presse 25-12-90*

ALYA

Plate 30: Newspaper article from La Presse de Tunisie dated 25/12/1990 dealing with the destruction of fine residences in the Medina: the case of Dar Zarrouk, a listed building.

- \* the Slimania (1982/83) financed by the Inaa, houses the head offices of a number of medical associations
- \* the Chammaïa (1985/86) financed by the Governorate and the Asm, has a similar function to the Mouradia.

A further medersa (Bir Lahjar) is in the process of being reaffected. The medersas, notably the Slimania and the Achouria, have played a key role in the Festival of the Medina which takes place in Ramadhan every year. Their large courtyards are ideal for musical and theatrical performances.

The Asm remains convinced of the importance of the reaffectedation of monuments. In the words of the 1990 Asm report, historical buildings are to be brought back into the modern economy "en les réaffectant à des usages compatibles avec leur typologie et leur morphologie, et en leur trouvant des tuteurs et des parrains susceptibles de prendre en charge leur restauration" (p.67).

Herein lies the problem, perhaps. Whereas a city like Paris has been able to acquire and reaffected a number of the historic hôtels particuliers in the Marais area, and encourage non-governmental organisations and large companies to establish their prestige headquarters in the area, Tunis is a long way from seeing a similar movement. Although a number of foreign governments have worked in partnership with the Inaa on restoration projects, notably Spain for the Zaouia Sidi Kacem and Germany for Dar Othman, and interest has been expressed by the French for the restoration of the Palais Kheireddine to house an academic centre for the study of the historic cities of the Maghreb, there has been only one case to date of a Tunisian company sponsoring the

restoration of an historic monument - the Union International de Banque's funding of the 1986 Asm/Inaa work on the Forte de France.

III.C.iii Rehabilitating a decaying housing stock:  
achievements and perspectives

In the framework of the major urban restructuration operations, the Medina witnessed state funded and encouraged urban rehabilitation in the 1980s. This was paralleled by increased spending on property improvement and extension by private owners.

The first plans for the rehabilitation of private property were drawn up in 1985 by the Asm as part of the Hafsia Project. These improvements were to be financed by a special fund with money coming from various sources (the World Bank, the Fnah, and a special surcharge foncière payable on housing and commercial premises constructed in the Hafsia Pif by private developers (Abdel Kefi 1989 p[196]). Similar rehabilitation in the framework of the Bab Souika project was to be financed by a special Fnah fund.

However, the rehabilitation of private property was slow to take off, due to the delays in the setting up of an agreement between the Arru and the Municipality on the one hand, and the Cnel which was to run the special fund, on the other (Asm 1990, p32). Subsequently there were problems because of the nature of the loan available, which at 5000 DT maximum was far too low. In addition, the criteria for eligibility for loans were too strict: the owner's contribution was 20%, 45 was the age limit for eligibility, guarantors were required in case of decease, etc.

In 1987, the two loan procedures for the Hafsia and Bab Souika/Halfaouine were merged, to be run by the Cnel, since transformed into the Banque de l'Habitat, under a tripartite Asm/Arru/Cnel

agreement. The Asm was responsible for the technical side, drawing up plans, the Arru handled the administrative side, and monitored work progress, and the Cnel made loans of up to 7000 DT repayable over 15 years at 7% interest. The loan was payable in two instalments, subject to progress in the work undertaken. Owner contribution remained at 20%.

Initially demand for these home rehabilitation loans was low, as they were limited to the urban restructuration areas of the Hafsia and Bab Souika. However, it soon became apparent that there was a demand for them in the rest of the Medina as enquiries came flooding in. Thus the loan eligibility area was extended, after permission had been granted by the World Bank, to include the whole central Medina in 1988, and the two faubourgs in 1989.

Between 22/1/87 and 30/1/90, the Asm drew up 157 sets of plans for loan applications, comprising a plan of the existing dwelling and the projected improvements, a 2 page description, and cost estimates. Of these 157 plans, 72 were in the central Medina, 62 in the Faubourg nord, and 23 in the Faubourg sud. Of the 72 central Medina plans, only 21 were in the Hafsia area drawn up in 1987-88 (Asm 1990 p37). Most plans were drawn up for small patio houses of 30 square metres to 150 square metres.

Of these 157 applicants, 59, roughly 35%, were eventually offered a loan. The others were not able to fulfil Cnel criteria, or in many cases withdrew their applications. As of mid-1990, 20m of the 59 had completed works, thus receiving both loan instalments, at a cost of some 150 000 DT. Average loans were 7500 DT, flexibility to cover rising costs being allowed (Asm 1990 p37).

Also during the late 1980s the Municipality took the decision to rehabilitate some of its overcrowded housing stock in the Medina. The process was started in the framework of the Hafsia project. In 1987-1988 detailed plans were drawn up by a joint Asm/Arru architectural team for the rehabilitation of municipal housing. The detailed plans were presented in the form of calls to tender. Local private building enterprises were then invited to make bids, and in March 1987 works were already under way on a tender awarded to a private contractor for the rehabilitation of five properties. Two were finished by August 1988. Total cost was 75000 DT for 2389 square metres of floor, i.e. 32 DT per square metre of floor, not far off the original pre-project estimate of 25 DT per square metre (figures cited in Binous 1988 p72).

The process proved problematic, however. Private contractors, new to this type of work, tended to make unrealistic offers. Their lack of experience meant that Asm/Arru architects had to double up as site foremen. In addition, the cost of surveys, and the drawing up of the plans and file, plus works monitoring was heavy on the Asm/Arru architects' time. In the case of private rehabilitation, the Asm and the Arru were heavily underremunerated: the agreement with the Cnel provided for them to receive respectively a mere 2.5% of the cost of the work, i.e. 175 DT for a 7000 DT to cover the cost of the plans. In the case of both municipal and private property, finance is provided by the same Cnel-run fund.

As the system stands at present, rehabilitation works are undertaken by owner occupiers of small properties in the Medina; the current value of loans is just about sufficient to cover small scale rehabilitation. In the case of rented-out property, owners

are not interested in the loans available under the Asm/Arru/Cnel agreement, as, due to the rent freeze under the 17 February 1976 law, money invested in improving property will benefit sitting tenants, as there is no chance of raising rents. The owners of the oukala-s, the overcrowded slum housing of the Medina are unlikely to invest for the benefit of their tenants, many of whom are among the poorest members of Tunisian society. In addition, many owners have their properties run for them in absentio, by property companies, who are reluctant to make repairs.

The problem of the oukala-s, defined by the Asm as any dwelling housing four or more unrelated households, is still unresolved. Dwellings in the Medina comprising 2921 households (some 15 000 people)(figures given in Asm 1989) are today (1990) classified as being in this form of multi-occupancy. 85% of oukala inhabitants are tenants, 10% are de facto occupiers, and 5% owner occupiers. Average monthly rents in 1989 were 18 DT, for an average habitable area of 29 square metres. In addition to the 531 "family" oukala-s, there were 46 oukala-s occupied by 2950 single people.

By way of illustration, there is still even a state owned historic monument which, despite being restored and officially opened by a minister in 1986, remains in multi-occupancy (see Plate 34).

Conditions in the oukala-s are poor, as the statistics collated in the October 1985 Arru report reveal from a sampling of 100 oukala-s:

- 50% of households have one room
- 59% of households pay between 10 DT and 30 DT monthly rent, of whom 20% have one room

The majority of households have no purpose built cooking area, and use shared toilet facilities. Electricity is available everywhere, but drinking water taps are shared. 22% of households have no running water.

Damp, and the problems caused by it, was the most severe physical problem in the oukala-s, worsened by

- . condensation/lack of air caused by the construction of extra floors in previously high ceilinged rooms
- . the antique sewer/drinking water system, plus badly installed new piping
- . antique/badly fitted guttering
- . the installation of new sewers and other works often weakens the walls.

The damp leads to the decay of the horizontal structures by rust, in the case of metal beams, and the rotting of traditional wooden joists where they fit into the walls. A rising water table, at one metre or less from the surface, accentuated by the fact that the traditional cisterns under the patios and wells are no longer in use, means that water rises by capillarity in the walls.

The situation is not as desperate, in terms of the physical fabric of the buildings, as the human overcrowding, as the following table reveals. Only 32 out of 235 oukala-s (13.6%) in the central Medina need demolition. The vast majority can be rehabilitated, according to the 1987 Arru report.



## STATE OF THE OUKALA-S IN THE CENTRAL MEDINA

	QUANTITY	OWNERSHIP		FAMILIES TO BE REHOUSED
		PUBLIC	PRIVATE	
FOR URGENT				
DEMOLITION	15	4*	11	89
FOR LATER				
DEMOLITION	17	5	12	146
REHABILITATION	198	4**	194	409
RESTORATION	5	4+	1	20
TOTAL	235	17	218	664

Source: Arru 1987 p4

\* 2 oukala-s dealt with in framework of Hafsia project.

\*\* 3 oukala-s to be rehabilitated in Hafsia project.

+ 2 municipally owned oukala-s.

Parallel to the Arru/Asm/Municipality surveys of the oukala-s of 1986-87, the Snit undertook surveys in the faubourgs of oukala-s and khreb-s (dwellings in ruinous condition). A three point oukala improvement programme was drawn up, concerning:

- \* the renovation of 18 oukala-s on the point of collapse
- \* the rehabilitation of 6 municipally owned oukala-s (2 historic monuments, 3 in the Hafsia Pif)
- \* the rehabilitation of 18 selected privately owned oukala-s

Funding was to be via a combination of state/World Bank/FDVA (Fonds de developpement des villes arabes)/sale by rent scheme run by the Onel/Snit, and the aim was to give every family a minimum of 40 square metres per household (2 rooms, kitchen area, toilet facilities).

The rehabilitation and renovation of the oukala-s is the biggest challenge facing institutions operating in the Medina today, and is likely to be the object of a major Medina housing upgrading programme launched by President Ben Ali in December 1990 following a visit to two privately owned oukala-s in the Medina.

Any programme to improve conditions will need solid funding and a high level of expertise. The diagnosis of the problems of any given Medina building is difficult to evaluate given the prevalence of party walls and the unpredictable underground conditions. The time lag between diagnostic survey and operations makes estimating the cost of works difficult, and there is a wide variety in oukala typology: the range includes the original oukala-s (hostels for people temporarily in Tunis), patio houses and Italian style courtyard houses in multi-occupancy, and zaouias, medersas, and even former stables never intended for family occupation (see Plates 31-33 and Plans 6 and 7).

Given the scale of the multi-occupancy and the shortage of funds, it is difficult to see how the situation will evolve, especially with regard to the buildings of historic and aesthetic interest inhabited as oukala-s. Loans may be available for small scale rehabilitation of owner occupied housing, but the restoration of larger buildings of architectural value, with all that restoration



Plate 31: The Oukala (Multi Occupancy) housing problem. Outside view of a decaying oukala on the Rue des Limonadiers. Ownership problems seemed to be at the heart of the problem for this building. In January 1991 the building was recommended for demolition.



Plate 32: A fine doorway on the Impasse El Cachekh

(See also Map 6.b. p215)



Plate 33: The ruins behind the doorway on the Impasse

El Cachekh (photographs taken January 1991)



Map 5 (a): The Oukala problem. Map showing multi-occupancy housing earmarked for demolition in the framework of the 1991 Oukala initiative. Note the prevalence of oukalas on the point of ruin (Imr - immeubles menaçant ruine), central Medina, south of the Hafsia. The north western central Medina is in relatively better condition. (Source Asm archives, Dec 1991)



Map 6 (b): The Dukala problem. Dukalas in the south-east central Medina visited by the author in January 1991. The heavy shading indicates dukalas recommended for demolition by the Asm team surveying multi-occupancy dwellings. Note the existence of large sites of ruins (in red). The problem will be to find private promoters interested in redeveloping these small sites in line with the existing urban fabric.



entails in terms of specialised craftsmanship is very difficult as things stand.

At the risk of speculating wildly, the problem of multi-occupancy may be alleviated by the increased availability of housing in the quartiers spontanés (rough self-built housing areas) on the periphery. The population of the Medina is falling, and there is evidence that it is being increasingly perceived as both a desirable place to live and a sound area for investment in commercial premises. The problems arising from this increasing dynamism in private housing improvement and commercial activity will be discussed in the next two sections.



III.C.iv Practicalities of safeguarding the historic and aesthetic values:

- \* listed buildings
- \* character, restoration and repairs

The Medina contains 670 historic "monuments" according to the inventory drawn up between 1968 and 1970 by the Asm (Asm/Binous, Yaiche, 1989). These monuments are of course especially meaningful because of their setting in the dense built fabric of the Medina. Many of the monuments are listed, and in many cases in State ownership, while new development and alterations to the urban fabric are regulated by the Municipality/Asm planning permission system.

However, the protection of a monument's historic and aesthetic value is by no means assured at present, and new development, even if it respects the height and volume regulations, may still be at variance with the aesthetic of the Medina.

Listed buildings are without doubt almost as vulnerable to alterations which destroy their historic value as are unlisted buildings. The "restoration" of Sidi Mehrez (1968-1973), carried out by the Religious Buildings office of the Presidency, described in some detail in Abdel Kefi (1989 p207-208) is a case in point: the original fine ceramic tiles of the interior walls were replaced by a marble facing, despite criticism from the Inaa. Secular buildings are less fortunate.

Dar Haddad is one of only three palaces to retain a XVIth/XVIIth century style courtyard without ceramic tiles or nakch hadid (carved stucco), despite being listed and in public ownership.

The roof terraces and ceilings had to partially collapse for the Inaa to get Unesco money to save the building. In May 1983, in an interview with Jellal Abdel Kefi (1986, vol IV), Bechir Ben Slama, minister of Cultural affairs (Jan 1981 to June 1986) declared that Dar Haddad could be considered as saved, and would soon be fulfilling "new cultural functions". In June 1991, the building was still closed to the public.

Other listed buildings to suffer unfortunate fates include:

- \* Dar Mstiri, property of the Ministry of Cultural affairs, which deteriorated seriously in the 1980s. The ceilings largely collapsed in 1991.
- \* Zaouia Sidi Abdel Kader, rue du Divan, supposedly completely restored, but still in multi-occupancy in 1991 (see Plate 34).
- \* Zaouia Sidi Abdel Kader, rue du Foie, demolished in the framework of the Bab Souika/Halfaouine project.
- \* Zaouia Sidi Chiha, going the same way as Dar Mstiri.

The listing procedure as it stands is basically a dead letter. Of the 58 listed buildings in the Medina and faubourgs listed under the Protectorate, 36 were buildings with a religious function, the upkeep of which was provided for by habous. The consultative committee set up in March 1920 by the Saa (Tekkari 1983) to give expert advice on the listing protection, conservation and enhancement of sites was not continued after independence. The first monument listed since 1956 was the Palais d'Erlanger at Sidi Ben Said in 1989.



Plate 34: The multi-occupancy housing problem: some of the inhabitants of the Zaouia Sidi Abd El-Kader, Rue du Divan in June 1991. The marble plaque states that restoration works were completed in 1986.

However, the consultative listing committee was set up again in 1987. In 1988 the Asm prepared files of historic and technical details to serve as a basis for the listing of some twenty buildings in the Medina, including eleven noble residences. The commission had not acted on this by 1991. In the resigned words of the Asm report of 1990, the listing procedure "a du moins le mérite d'attirer l'attention sur le monument concerné".

At a wider level, the protection of the aesthetic and historic quality of the Medina is highly problematic. The townscape is very diverse. The lower Medina includes small Italian apartment houses, ornate XIXth century Genoese palazzi as well as later three and four storey immeubles (apartment buildings). In the upper Medina there are mosques and medersas surrounded by covered souks; north and south of this central area is the dense fabric of one storey Tunisian patio houses. In the faubourgs, notably the Faubourg nord, the built fabric is mainly one storey, though there are immeubles as well.

The facades of the Medina's buildings range from the simple whitewashed house frontage to the reworkings of the arabisant style. There is the classic frontage of the Tunisoise grande demeure: a great doorway with an elaborate stone carved surround, a blue painted qaneria style covered balcony with wooden lattice work or louvre shutters, and elsewhere on the facade one or more smaller windows with characteristic "s" shaped wrought ironwork window grills. And there are standard XIXth century Italianate house facades, one storey with shuttered windows around a narrow door. And there are 1960s dispensaries and administrative buildings.

Interiors are no less diverse, but except in the cases of the three or so visitable palaces, rarely seen by tourist or locals outside the family circle. As previously mentioned (II.C) many of the richest interiors have been stripped of their decorative tiles and marble, sold by "specialised dealers" to feature in new villas in the suburbs.

Increasingly, private owners are investing in improving their property in the Medina, as the rising number of planning permission application shows:

CENTRAL MEDINA & FAUBOURGS

PLANNING PERMISSION APPLICATIONS 1986-1988

	LETTRE DE VOIRIE (permission for small scale works requested)	PERMIS DE BATIR (Permission for major works requested)
1986	178	231
1987	199	211
1988	149	268

SOURCE: Binous (1988 p77) from figures in the Registre des permis de construire, Asm archives

The difficulties of controlling what is actually built were discussed in III.B.ii. Quite often a simple lettre de voirie is assumed to be enough to cover total or partial rebuilding or the addition of another floor.

Although the Asm has offered help since 1985 to people seeking technical assistance (survey and drawing up of plans), the system is not finely tuned enough to ensure monitoring of the aesthetic aspect of alterations. New construction is often quite crudely executed, and represents a departure from the styles already present. Large exterior balconies are not unknown and "special exceptions" to the two floors maximum height rule laid down in the Pact for the central residential zones mean that a simple patio house can be transformed into a three storey building, totally altering the character of an area.

New trends in facings and exterior ornamentation at variance with the aspect of the Medina's streets as it had existed since the 1950s, were becoming apparent in the late 1980s. There was a trend towards abandoning the traditional whitewashing of facades in favour of a rough Tyrolean crépi surfacing, in a variety of shades of brown (see Plates 35 and 36), the assumption being that this needed less maintenance; in fact the brown crepi tends to flake off in large unsightly plaques, with time. Another trend was towards facing the frontages of certain shops with bathroom tiles, and the doors of private houses began to sport strips of similar tiles as a surround. Large illuminated signs have made an appearance on many of the shops in the new buildings at Bab Souika. In certain areas where the damage to a historic building is so obvious that it reaches the press, something of the original aesthetic value can be rescued in extremis.



Plate 35: Aesthetic issues: multi coloured renderings take the place of traditional whitewash on the facades the buildings of the Medina, in this case on the Rue Sidi Ali Ben Diaf, January 1991.

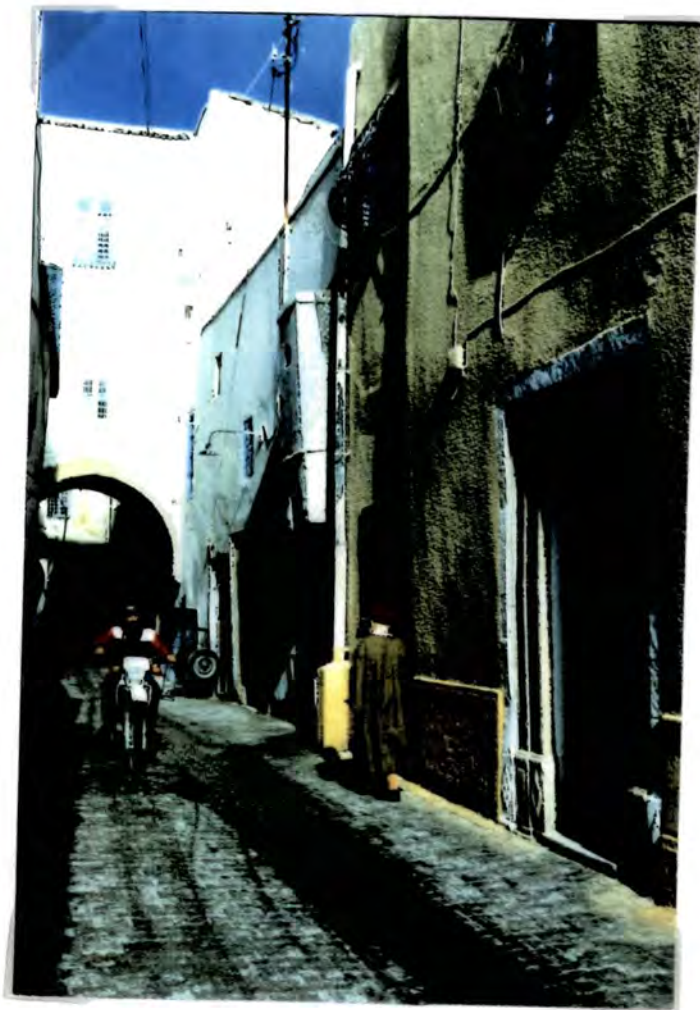


Plate 36: Aesthetic issues: "Tyrolean" rendering on the facades of houses on the Rue Tourbet El-Bey replaces the whitewash formerly used everywhere in Tunis la Blanche.



Such was the case of Dar Lakhoua, a XIXth century residence with a particularly fine carved stone door frame and a patio with slender white marble columns. The house was sold in 1988 to a wholesale clothing and textile dealer of Douiri (southern) origin, who began works under the pretext of strengthening floors. As there was no permis de démolir, the new owner felt entitled to strip the house of ziss (ceramic tiles) and marble before demolishing the interior, which severely endangered an abutting construction overarching the street. Due to the location of Dar Lakhoua, at the intersection of the rue de Pacha, and the rue de la Hafsia close to the Asm's headquarters, the works were noticed and stopped, basically by a policy of intimidation: the Asm persuaded the mayor to go and see the damage, and there were articles in the press. Following this high level intervention, the owner felt constrained to sign an agreement to work with the Asm, and pay for the costs of strengthening the weakened sabat and putting the stone door frame back. The problem remains that in this particular case the new facade was executed with numerous additional windows, with inappropriate use of garmoud glazed tiles above them, plus crudely installed p.v.c. drainpipes. The case of Dar Lakhoua is by no means exceptional, and is a good illustration of the difficulty of monitoring housing upgrading so that aesthetic and historic value is maintained. Where the historic building is less obviously sited, works can proceed for much longer unnoticed, as in the recent case of Dar Zarrouk (see Plate 30).

In order for the aesthetic and historic value of the townscape to be protected, there needs to be a clear idea of what aesthetic is being protected, so that guidance can be provided to builders as to the sort of transformations and architectonic

elements that are acceptable in extensions and alterations. Whose aesthetic values are to prevail ultimately? The preference of Asm architects for the traditional whitewashed walls will only be "enforceable", and I use the adjective with caution, if whitewashed walls are perceived as more desirable by the population than the now fashionable brown crepi rendering. Crepi is perceived as modern, along with exterior bathroom tile decoration, large smoked glass windows with aluminium frames, open balconies and perspex illuminated box signs. In the inter-war period, the application of strict conservation area regulations for the Medina (laid down by the decrees of 3/3/1920 and 13/9/1931) gave rise to a multitude of conflicts between the administration and the Medina's inhabitants (Abdel Kefi 1988 p78).

A certain respect for the character of the townscape can be enforced but necessitates strong intervention from above, as in the case of Dar Lakhoua and more recently (June 1991) in the case of the Assurances Maghrebia giant sign placed on top of one of the new buildings on the south side of Bab Souika. These were removed by order of the head of the Bab Bhar arrondissement, Abdel Aziz Daouletli, within whose area Bab Souika falls.

At present, given the lack of enforceable conservation area type development guidelines, personal intervention of the sort detailed above can prevent the most excessive alterations and losses. But this is a double edged sword: destruction of highly popular historic buildings can proceed, if the politicians are unwilling to act, witness the demolition for site redevelopment

of the Palmarium/Hotel Tunisia Palace in 1989/90, when Ahmed Belkhodja was mayor.

### III.C.v Economic pressures

"Just as it is often thought that the historic city is nothing more than a mass of decaying buildings clustered round a few famous monuments, so there is a tendency to imagine that commercial life (in the Medina) is merely a market for the sub-proletariat seconded by a bazaar for tourists in a hurry" (Asm/Inaa/Unesco Pnud 1974).

The 1974 Projet Tunis/Carthage report goes on to demonstrate the economic dynamism of the Medina in the wider Tunis urban area: with some 3000 shops, the Medina in 1973 accounted for a quarter of the commercial turnover of Greater Tunis, a vitality due to the rise in sheer numbers of consumers on the one hand, and the appearance of the tourist trade on the other. In the face of the new demands, the report concluded that the traditional crafts, at one time perceived as threatened, would not disappear, but would remain important. Craft production should be favoured by state guaranteed low interest loans, subsidies, and temporary tax relief, the report concluded, thus eventually producing higher tax returns, jobs and a tripling in the growth of craft activity; these particular recommendations (made on the basis of state help to tourism and industry) were never applied.

However, commercial activity has boomed in the Medina, and the tertiary sector dominates today. The commercial vitality is borne out by the rising number of sulouhiat el-mahall certificates issued. This is a document delivered by the municipal arrondissement office, after Asm approval, certifying that a premises is suitable for commercial use, or may be used for a different commercial activity.

## "PERMISSION FOR COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY"

## CERTIFICATES ISSUED

	CENTRAL	FAUBOURG	FAUBOURG	TOTAL
1986	75	75	45	195
1987	47	95	37	179
1988	73	80	33	186
AREA				
TOTALS	195	250	115	560
(1986-88)				

SOURCE: Asm archives Registre des permis de construire cited in Binous 1988

In all 569 sulouhiat el-mahall certificates were issued between 1986 and 1988. In addition, due to the availability of a variety of premises in former stables and large converted skifa-s, mainly small enterprises, notably small scale shoe and garment manufacturers and carpenters were operating without permission although many paid the patinda to the Ministry of Finance. Periodically the Municipality ran campaigns to try to ensure that all premises were registered, but this is problematic where there are frequent changes of tenant and activity as businesses expand and move on.

There is no study available on the nature and extent of new manufacturing in the Medina in the 1980s. Suffice to say that

the range of activities is extremely varied. From enquiries I made in carpentry workshops in 1990, it seemed that high quality hand carved furniture was being produced for a city wide market; apprentices and master carpenters lived both in the Medina and elsewhere. Likewise in the case of adolescents employed in shoe manufacture, there was no specific area from which employees came. The attraction of the Medina location for shoe manufacture was proximity to sale points in the Ville neuve and the Medina's commercial streets, in addition to the availability of premises.

The range of manufacturing activities in the Medina is encapsulated at Dar Beiram Turki, a XVIIth century residence in the lower Medina, now owned by a Djerban businessman. Ceramic tile manufacture (painting and firing) takes place in rooms on either side of the entrance passage. Going anticlockwise round the courtyard, Dar Beiram Turki houses a shoe workshop, a carpentry/gilding workshop, an antique storeroom and office, and space for storing and cleaning the owner's beehives. On the first floor there is living accommodation and an atelier de confection, garment manufacture workshop. The owner keeps his dilapidated 1950s Citroen in the middle of the patio.

Food manufacture is also present in the central Medina. The superman chocolate "factory", situated in premises just opposite Dar Ben Abdallah, moved to the Charguia industrial zone in 1990. Other activities in this area include cheese and milk product preparation. Although there is as yet no quantitative data available on manufacturing activity throughout the historic core area, the new range of commercial activities in the main traditional souks is documented by an Asm survey conducted in

1987, which covered the tight network of covered traditional souks around the Great Mosque, the busy commercial streets Djemaa Ez-Zitouna (rue de la Kasba), Souk el-Grana, and Souk Sidi Mehrez, and the peripheral dyers' and tanners' souks and Souk Djedid in the Faubourg nord.

The aim of the survey was to assemble data regarding the extent to which the 37 main souks were still primarily functioning with their original activity. This information was important for the application of the 12 July 1986 Act (Loi 86/61) which aimed to encourage traditional crafts and artisanal activity by re-establishing the office of amin (traditional title of the head of a craft corporation) and ensuring that only the appropriate specialised activity was carried out in each souk.

The law laid down that a new professional council for each craft would "promote craft activity, as well as safeguard the traditional architectural and urbanistic appearance of the souks and their specialisation". The speciality and the limits of each souk were to be laid down by order of the president of the relevant local council, in accordance with the legislation in force (Law 86/61 cited in Asm/Binous October 1988).

The survey would thus provide the Mayor with information on which to base its decisions:

NUMBER OF SOUKS STILL LARGELY DEVOTED TO THEIR ORIGINAL  
ECONOMIC ORIGINAL ACTIVITY

<u>% original activity</u>	<u>Number of Souks</u>
Original activity vanished	9
1 to 20	6
21 to 40	7
Above 40	9
No original Speciality	6
<u>Total no. of souks</u>	37

SOURCE: Medina de Tunis: enquête sur les souks Tunis: Asm April  
1987

The survey revealed that in 9 souks, 33% of the total, the original activity was still represented in more than 40% of the premises. The Asm recommendation was that these souks should designate an amin, and that the original activity should be



favoured by a special regime fiscal, encouraging the departure of extraneous activities.

The 1987 Asm souk survey also reveals the main commercial activities in the souks today:

TYPE OF MERCHANDISE	NUMBER OF SHOPS	PERCENTAGE
Jewellers	413	18.54
Tourist Souvenirs	319	14.32
Clothing	313	14.05
Storage Premises	218	9.78
Textiles	173	7.76
Footwear	140	6.28
Antiques & Furniture	107	4.80
Electric Goods	98	4.4
Perfumes	75	3.36
Second hand Clothes	51	2.29
Copper	42	1.88
Various	183	8.21
TOTAL	2227	100.00

SOURCE: Medina de Tunis: Enquête sur les souks Tunis Asm 1987  
cited in Asm/Binous Oct. 1988.

Jewellers' shops, tourist souvenirs, clothing, shoes and textiles account for 61% of all premises. A further 10% of premises in the main souks are storage space in all probability containing stock for the clothing and textile shops.

An analysis of the 97 premises, in the "various" category located in the central souks reveals the increasing presence of service activities, including 22 restaurants, 11 cafes, 5 banks and a variety of other businesses, including video clubs, driving schools and a ladies' hairdressers in the former blacksmith's souk. The increasing number of restaurants is explained by the number of civil servants working close by in the Kasbah area, obliged by the increasing distance commuted, to lunch near to work.

The file assembled for each souk in the 1987 survey contained plans based on the 1/250 survey of the Medina of 1968-1970, and information on landlords, tenants and the nature of the activity, as well as the number of employees. Unfortunately no complementary survey has yet been made investigating the organisation and financial basis of the different sectors, their suppliers and clientele.

The commercial vitality of the Medina, due in part to its location at the heart of the agglomeration, well served by public transport, and in part due to the availability of premises for economic activity, has effects on the built fabric, not all of them negative. Lock-up shops and storage areas have to be clean and dry, and so improvement works are undertaken. The most spectacular upgrading of this nature has been in the rue de Glaciers/rue Zarkoun area, where the unused ground floor space of the Italian style XIXth century buildings has been transformed into chic boutiques selling imported clothes and electrical goods.

Actual manufacturing can have harmful effects for the built fabric. The machine tools, essentially lathes, used to finish shoe soles and various wood and metal items often create vibrations which over time cause fissures in the walls and ceilings of old Medina houses. The noise pollution is serious, and trucks and handcarts jam the streets to bring in raw materials (see Plates 37 and 38). Basically, the spread of small workshops in the formerly exclusively residential zones of the Medina induces problems from a persistent juxtaposition of incompatible types of activity. The negative spillover effects help reduce the value of property, and compromise the functioning of the residential areas.

The 1989 Asm document Bilans et perspectives recognised the problem, and proposed that:

- \* a list detailing polluting activities in the Medina be drawn up, with a view to having them moved out at a later date
- \* the establishment of new enterprises be more strictly monitored through
  - a stricter application of the zone regulations
  - tighter control of the sulouhiat el-mahall certificate
  - a policy encouraging the establishment of services and cultural premises such as art galleries and libraries.

That the Medina is an area of economic importance is in no doubt; space for commercial use is in high demand, witness the high prices paid for land in the Hafsia sold by the Arru in 1991 to private developers:



Plate 37: Economic life: pick-up trucks jam the streets near the Caserne Sidi Ali Azouz, off-loading materials for the Medina's many small workshops and transporting out their production. Photo taken June 1991.



Plate 38: Economic life: hand carts are used to transport materials and goods in the streets of the Medina too narrow for pick-up trucks. Souk El-Ouzar, June 1991.

- \* for a 1470 square metre site, to be developed according to Asm plans executed by the Arru or a private contractor, a price of 368,676 DT was paid at auction, i.e. 228 DT per square metre. The development will include a small underground car park, offices and shops.
- \* for a 316 square metre site, to be developed similarly as a hammam, 84,119 DT was paid, 343 DT per square metre, the price of a 1930s villa in a coastal suburb.

The question arises as to the future growth of commercial activity. The re-establishment of the amin's office is more of a gesture to restore some of the souks' formal prestige than a structured policy for the control and development of the Medina's manufacturing sector: by 1990 only the amin, of the chaouachia had been installed. The expansion of commercial activity has in part destroyed the quality of life in residential areas, exploded the traditionally structured localisation of crafts, and given the Medina central importance in the urban area. At present, the economic dynamism is more or less monitored by the granting of municipal permits, but there is no long term view of how this dynamism should develop. If, as the Asm recommended in the 1990 report, a conservation area is declared and an appropriate set of development guidelines drawn up, the challenge will be to somehow channel the Medina's economic dynamism so that it flows with the aims of the conservation area plan.

## SECTION IV

CONCLUSION: The Medina of Tunis, an historic urban fabric surviving despite conservation legislation and urban regeneration policies?

The Medina of Tunis merited listing as part of the Unesco defined world heritage in 1981. The dense fabric of courtyard houses, zaouias and religious buildings spreading out around the central souk network remains intact, and the XIXth century European style buildings in the lower Medina have not fallen prey to speculative building.

Tunis remains a remarkably well preserved pre-industrial, pre-modern city for a variety of reasons. The Medina was to move in the course of the late XIXth/early XXth century from being a basically Muslim city regulated by Islam and tradition, to the status of a city housing a multi-national, multi-confessional population. Although most of the eastern walls were demolished, new building within the Medina was not large scale redevelopment. Colonial investment in property was to be on reclaimed land and, after 1914, on ex-habous land in the immediate vicinity of the Medina.

The last quarter of the XIXth century was a time of crisis for the beldia families: the bases of their wealth, trade and land regulated by religious law, were adversely affected by Europe's expanding economy, whilst in 1881 control of the Medina passed to the Protectorate, although via local notables. The Medina came to be perceived as a stronghold of Muslim tradition, a Muslim

ghetto within an expanding modern city, its morphology (and salubrity) in sharp contrast to the rectilinear streets of the Ville nouvelle.

The Protectorate authorities' attitude in the early XXth century was to promote the conservation of the character of Muslim space by "servitudes d'aspect", tight aesthetic regulations: the exotic city of tourist imagination was to be preserved, the Muslim area of the city was to be respected. In the lower Medina, an insanitary area of poverty and slum conditions, only the Jewish quarter was to be the object of an urban renovation operation. In the post-independence period, the population of the Medina changed radically: the beldi, Christian and Jewish families moved out to be replaced by a population of rural origin. The built fabric, deprived of habous revenue for maintenance costs, began to decline more steeply. For the the new Bourguibist republic, the Medina's physical decay was a symbol of the decadence of the traditional society which had brought Tunis under the colonial yoke.

As such, the remaining parts of the walls were demolished, the Medina was to be the object of a number of projets de percée: the traditional city was to be renovated, integrated into the wider city in a series of projects put forward in the late 1950s/early 1960s.

However, there was such opposition and protest when works started at Sidi el-Bechir in the early 1960s for the authorities to think again. The demolition was stopped, and there was enough enthusiasm, local and international, and a governor-mayor of sufficient political weight to get the Asm off the ground, and to



establish the notions of integrated renovation projects, and housing rehabilitation for the historic city. These were concepts which were very much part of the Hafsia project of the 1980s.

The Medina's population may have changed drastically since 1956, the old economic basis of *beldi* life destroyed, but a new role has evolved compatible with the traditional urban morphology: besides functioning as an important housing area, with much low rent accommodation and much upgrading activity among small property owner occupiers, the Medina is now of city-wide importance as a retail area. There are large numbers of jobs in vending, warehousing, and service activities, some related to the tourist sector, as well as in small scale manufacturing. If new shops and storage space mean more activity in formerly exclusively residential areas, they also mean investment in the structures converted to housing these activities.

For the moment planners are more or less able to control property upgrading and commercial activity in the Medina through the granting of municipal permits, which in the case of the *permis de bâtir* impose design criteria and restrictions. But this can be conceived of as little more than an administrative task. Major strategic decisions, such as the launch of a major urban remodelling project like Bab Souika/Halfaouine, or the *oukala* improvement initiative started in December 1990, are left to the politicians.

Given this background, and an increased awareness, public and private, of the Medina as representing the wider city's past, a number of governmental agencies were successful in the 1980s in implementing large scale rehabilitation, renovation, and

restructuring projects which, at the time of writing (June 1991) would seem to have banished the uncertainty which hung over the Medina's future, and made it a more desirable place to invest.

If the conservation of the volumes of Medina building and the street network seems assured by the planning regulations as administered at present, the safeguard of the traditional aesthetic values, both the streetscape in terms of colours, renderings, and architectonic elements, and of the great residences, seems more problematic. The tight Islamic inheritance laws and changing social attitudes, plus a legislative framework which does nothing to encourage private owners to maintain a building of historic and artistic value, have lead to many of these residences falling into ruin. However, the same inheritance laws have made plot assembly for speculative building impossible in the Medina.

The Medina at the beginning of the 1990s had become a quarter of commercial importance, housing some 8% of the population of Greater Tunis. However, despite the significance of the Medina, spatially and symbolically, at the heart of the capital, it is striking that there as yet exists no long term plan for the future of the historic core, and that many of the Asm's recommendations, starting with those of the 1974 Project Tunis/Carthage reports, have remained a dead letter: the 1990 Asm report contains many such proposals, for instance for modifying rental control legislation, establishing a demolition permit, and controlling advertising in the Medina; like many of the Pads (detailed land use plans) these proposals have still to be adopted by the Municipality.

The Medina, despite the proposals of architects and planners, has not become a conservation area, whilst the problem of multi-occupancy housing remains largely unsolved.

With an eye to future research, I would argue that these issues, the Medina as heritage, and as an area of poor housing, are closely linked. The Medina has not developed, thankfully perhaps, along the lines of a European style conservation area, because a number of the factors which make for a successful western heritage city under late capitalism are not present.

With reference to Urry's discussion (1990, p117-118) of strategies for enhancing the tourist potential of the English city of Lancaster, Tunis has the required attractive, well preserved, historic buildings. But many of these are not "used in ways consistent with tourism" (ibid) and others are difficult to find. In addition, according to the Lancaster report, a building must stand for something historically. For the tourist on a half day visit, as well as for most Tunisians, the Medina still means little more than the souks, with (for the former) a perfunctory history of the Zitouna mosque thrown in by a freelance guide.

There is little local demand for the Medina to exist as the object of a tourist gaze: the western fascination with visiting historic sites, seen by Lowenthal (1985, ch.4) as arising from the cult of nostalgia which sprang up in the XVIIth century has not (yet) reached the wider Tunisian public. There are signs that things are changing however.

Urry (1990, p113) regards as crucial in the development of tourist areas the activities of local conservation groups, and the organising role of the local state. In Europe, the latter invests in tourism as it is perceived to be an important job creator, whilst associations of concerned residents fight to protect the character of their locality from the projects of developers and government planners. Their underlying rationale, the protection of the value of positional goods (property) tends to result in an area becoming more attractive to the tourists. In the case of the Medina of Tunis, a large part of the housing stock is overcrowded and occupied by low income tenants. Character is the least of their worries. For others, with a part share in a Tunisian residence, their property cannot be easily sold.

Unlike the renovated hôtels particuliers of the Marais and the Faubourg St Germain, residential space in the Medina does not represent status and prestige like a consumer artefact.

Local and national government have more pressing problems, notably in the vast new satellite towns to the west of the capital. Life in the Medina, familiar territory with strategically placed Rcd (the ruling party) offices, is perceived by government as moving along in a more or less satisfactory way: the souks draw the tourists, the retail sector is booming, development is more or less regulated and there is the bonus that a component of a renovation operation wins an Agha Khan prize now and again.

The question is how to explain the marginalisation of technical actors, and the lack of long term vision. When initiatives are taken, it tends to be as a reaction to outside pressures, witness the Bab Souika scheme, major urban remodelling in accordance with President Bourguiba's wishes, although the Asm had demonstrated in the early 1970s that small scale rehabilitation was possible; the 1990-91 oukala initiative, again the result of presidential interest, may perhaps best be viewed not as an attempt to "solve" the problem of slum housing, but rather as an operation launched to demonstrate that government was interested in the poorest sectors of society, in short a policy device legitimating the Government.

I would tentatively put forward that the state's failure to make use of planning agencies as well staffed and organised as the District, founded in 1977, and the Asm, despite the quality of their services, lies with the nature of the Tunisian state and its relation with society.

Following Bell and Leiden (1979) cited in Larif Béatrix (1988, p290) the failure of development can be basically attributed to the permanence and persistence of the patriarchal nature of the Tunisian state and its policies. Patriarchal regimes may modernise, but they fail to accept the consequences, notably mass participation and wider access to decision-making.

The Tunisian post-independence regime is neo-patriarchal according to Larif Béatrix (ibid). Modernising reforms were introduced with a dangerous tool, traditional authority. The Bourguibist state's secular project was implemented with techniques ranging from a "simple renouement avec certaines

anciennes pratiques beylicales, jusqu'au renforcement outrancier du centralisme" (ibid, p148).

In a political climate of a neo-patriarchal nature, I would tentatively suggest that it is difficult for technical agencies to elaborate appropriate long term strategies to urban issues, as well as to problems in other fields. In conservation management for the traditional city, housing upgrading, and indeed urban planning as a whole, the root of the problem may well be that planners are trying to operate using techniques and models imported mainly from France, where technical services and local government work in close co-operation. It may be difficult to get institutions, regulations and techniques evolved in a very different European power context to work in Tunisia. A deep examination of this issue would seem a promising direction for future research.

## APPENDICES AND GLOSSARIES

The spelling of Arabic terms in the glossaries follows the standard Roman letter transliteration in use at Tunis. This differs only slightly from the transliteration used in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition).

The chief differences are as follows:

Arabic Letter	Tunisian Translit	Translit. E of I
ج	J	Dj
ق	K	K
و	OU	W
و	OU	U
short vowel "fatha"	a or e. depending on the local pronunciation	A
short vowel "kesra"	e or i. depending on the local pronunciation	I

I have preferred to leave unmarked the Arabic emphatic consonants which are transcribed with a dot underneath in the Encyclopaedia of Islam system.

I have chosen to follow the standard Tunisian transcription as it follows most closely the pronunciation of Tunis, and avoids making unfamiliar terms of words instantly recognisable in their Tunisian Roman letter spellings.

## APPENDICES AND GLOSSARIES

- I Glossary of Arabic terminology for the house and the city in use at Tunis
- II Glossary of historical and political terms
- III Notes on habous terminology and a chronology of the abolition of habous
- IV Tunisian legislation for the conservation of the built cultural heritage
- V Development of Tunisian urban planning legislation and land use plans relevant to the Medina
- VI Acronyms for the main official bodies and land use plans mentioned in the text
- VII Reaffected historic buildings in the Medina of Tunis
- VIII Urban renovation costs: the Hafsia and Bab Souika/Halfaouine operations
- IX Description of Tunis from the Lambert Illustrated Dictionary of 1912

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



## APPENDIX I

Glossary of Tunisois Arabic terminology for  
the house and the city

- NB Spelling follows the standard transliteration into Latin letters as used in Tunisia
- BARMAKLE wooden lattice work found in windows
- BATHA open space, sometimes used for markets
- BAYT (pl.BUYOUT) room
- BAYT EL MOUNA storeroom, pantry
- BORJ bastion, watch tower
- DAMS vault
- DAR house
- DOUIRIYA service area of the DAR, comprising kitchens, servants' quarters, etc
- DRIBA main entrance hall of a DAR (q.v.), the head of an important family would conduct business in the DRIBA. See also SKIFA
- FONDOUK caravanserai, merchants' trading base; each European nation represented at Tunis had its FONDOUK
- GANNARIYA loggia; balcony closed in by an often highly decorative wooden structure, with BARMAKLE (q.v.) type window grills
- HAMMAM Turkish bath
- HARA the Jewish quarter in the lower eastern part of the city now referred to as the Hafsia
- JAMI' Friday prayer mosque
- JAMI' EZ ZITOUNA the great mosque at the heart of the Medina
- KADHDHAL limestone used for patio slabs
- KASBAH from the Turkish 'kasabe', small town; at Tunis the word signifies the fortress area on the western side of the Medina.

- KCHUK word of Turkish origin giving kiosk and its equivalents in European languages; at Tunis a room at the top of the house, often serving as a study retreat for the master.
- KHANDAK open sewer at Tunis, covered over during the course of the XIXth century
- KUTTAB children's Koran school
- MAKHZEN large storage area. The root word for the English magazine, as in powder magazine.
- MEDERSA sort of college providing accomodation for students at the Zitouna Mosque
- MESJED local mosque, as opposed to JAMI', Friday prayer mosque
- NAHAJ street
- NAKCH HADIDA elaborately hand carved stucco; dense geometric motifs were favoured in the XVIIth/early XVIIIth centuries with later taste preferring Italianate floral motifs
- OUKALA at Tunis, originally a building providing temporary accomodation for single men; today a converted family residence in multi-occupancy, by the official definition housing four or more unrelated families
- OUST ED-DAR lit. the middle of the house; the courtyard.
- RBAT faubourg; there are two rbat-s or extensions of the Medina of Tunis, Bab Souika to the North and Bab Jezira to the South
- SABAT (pl. SABATAT) rooms constructed over a vault covering a street or ZANKA (blind alley). As land ran out intra muros, it was permitted to extend one's dwelling over the street, provided public access wasn't obstructed.
- SKIFA an entrance hall; in a noble residence a series of SKIFA-S lead off the DRIBA (qv); the higher the status of the family, the more SKIFA-S to pass through before the main patio is reached.
- SOUK market
- SOUK EL-ATTARINE the perfumers' souk, a covered street of small boutiques running for part its length along the northern wall of the Zitouna mosque.

TOURBET word derived from the Turkish 'turbe' signifying tomb; at Tunis a family mausoleum, usually with a green tiled dome

TOURBET EL-BEY the mausolea of the beys, the kings of Tunis, at the heart of the Medina. Today state owned.

ZANKA blind alley

ZAQUIA shrine of a saint, in the Medina often in the form of a courtyard building with the saint's remains in a room surmounted by a cupola; often referred to as a marabout in French.

ZELLIZ or ZLIZ polychrome tiles used to decorate interior walls

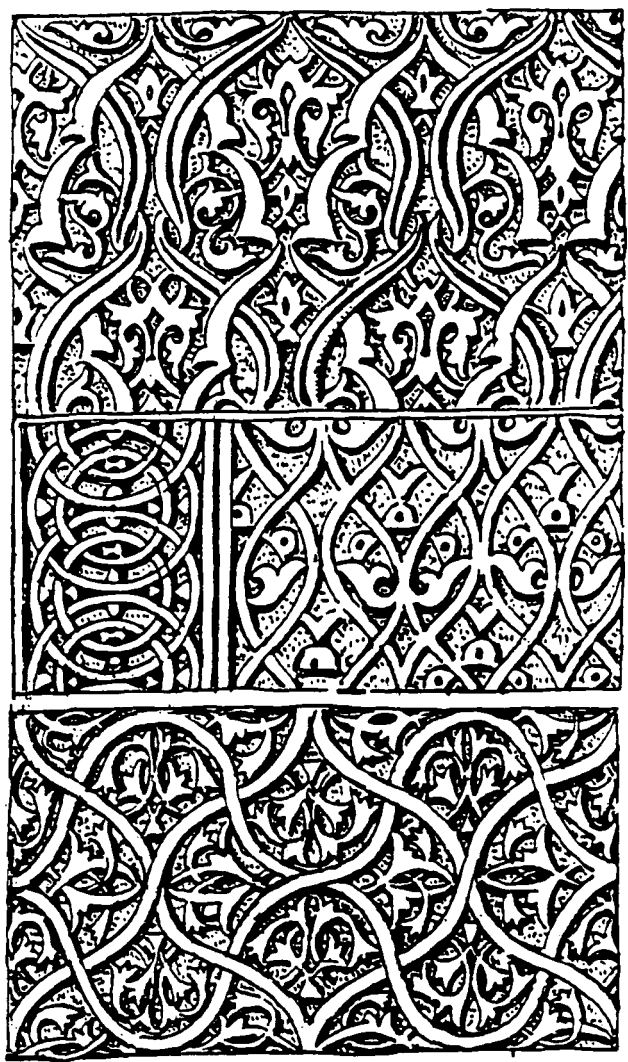


FIG. 286. Tunis. Qoubba de Sidi Qasim el-Jallil. Décor de plâtre.

Fig 2: Nakch Hadid, elaborate geometric and floral motifs carved into stucco: a typical decorative feature of the interior walls of Tunisois homes and public buildings. (Source: Marçais 1954)

## APPENDIX II

Glossary of Arabic and French Political,  
Historical and Economic Terms used in the text

- NB The majority of terms given here are Arabic or English versions of Arabic terms. French terms are marked as such.
- AGHLABID Tunisian dynasty which ruled from 800 AD to 909 AD. Overthrown by the FATIMIDS (q.v.)
- ALMOHAD a dynasty which ruled at Tunis from 1160 - 1229 AD. The Almohad movement was founded by a certain Ibn Tumart (d.1130), who, after studying in the Machrek, began to preach the uncompromising unity of the divine or TAWHID - hence his followers described themselves as MUWAHIDDIN, giving the term ALMOHAD. He made many converts among the Berber tribes and his successor, Abd el-Mu'min transformed an ideological movement into a dynastic state
- ALMORAVID a North African dynasty which like the later ALMOHAD (q.v.) dynasty had its beginnings in a religious reformist movement which sought to recreate a purified Islamic society. Ibn Yasin, the founder of the movement gathered round him a group of militant devotees who established themselves in RIBAT-s (fortified outposts from which to wage holy war) - hence the term ALMORAVID, a corruption of the Arabic MURABBITIN, the inhabitants of the RIBAT.
- AMENAGEMENT French urban planning term, covering the notions of planning, layout, and upgrading in an urban planning context.
- BELDI (pl. BELDIA) inhabitant of the Medina, a true TUNISOIS (q.v.)
- BEY a title existing from the time of the Ottoman occupation (1574); under Youssef Dey in the XVIIth century the BEY emerged as the chief tax collector; in the XVIIIth century the title came to be that of the hereditary rulers of Tunis
- BEYLERBEY provincial governor with the rank of pacha, nominated by the Divan (q.v.) and subsequently appointed by the Ottoman sultan
- BEYLICATE the Tunisian monarchy, hereditary from 1708 until its abolition in 1957

- BLED EL-MAKHZEN a Moroccan term denoting the lands inhabited by subservient tribes; the lands under the sultan's authority, as opposed to BLED ES-SIBA or the lands inhabited by dissident tribes on the periphery of the Moroccan state.
- CAID local representative of the Beylical government
- CHAOUACHI (pl. CHAOUACHIA) chechia (q.v.) maker
- CHARI'A a body of rules governing the life of a Muslim, in law, ethics and etiquette. The provisions of the CHAR'IA are worked out through the discipline of FIKH (q.v.), on the basis of the four main sources of legal authority (USOUL EL-FIKH), which in mainstream Sunni Islam comprise the KORAN, the HADITH (reports of the sayings or actions of the Prophet Mohamed), IJMA' (consensus among the community), and KIYAS (legal analogy)
- CHECHIA red felt cap manufactured at Tunis, the base of Muslim headgear around which a turban could be wrapped. Andalusian immigrants improved production techniques in the XVIIth century, and the CHECHIA came to be exported all over the Mediterranean and to parts of Africa.
- CHI'ITE of the CHI'A, the party of 'Ali, the Prophet's son in law; the general name given to those Muslims who held to the rights of 'Ali, whether recognised by the majority or not. The adjective also described groups and communities seeking political legitimacy by associating themselves with people descended from the Prophet's family. Among such groups were the FATIMID-s (q.v.).
- DEGOURBIFICATION policy of successive Bourguiba governments aimed at upgrading rural housing conditions
- DEY at Tunis, Turkish military officers who in the early days of the Ottoman rule (post 1574) elected one of their number to be the dey daouletli or state holder
- DHIMMI according to Islam, the 'peoples of the book', Arabic 'ahl el-kitab', the Jews and Christians to whom protection is to be afforded by a Muslim ruler
- DIVAN EL-ASKAR military council composed of the senior officers of the Janissary corps ruling Tunis in the late XVIth/early XVIIth century

- FARA'ID (sing. FARIDA)      distributive shares in an estate according to Islamic law. Soura IV, verse 12 ff lays down those entitled to a statutory portion in an estate
- FATIMID      a CHI'ITE (q.v.) dynasty first established at Kairouan (central Tunisia) in the early VIIIth century, and which went on to conquer Egypt in 969 AD; so called because they claimed descent from 'Ali and Fatima the Prophet's son in law and daughter
- FIKH      jurisprudence, the discipline of elucidating the CHARI'A, (q.v.); an expert in FIKH is referred to as a FAKIH (pl. FUKAHA)
- GOURBI      rural dwelling roughly constructed from branches and clay; now refers to shacks built for habitation in urban areas. See also DEGOURBIFICATION
- GOURBIVILLE      a French term describing an urban fringe area of occupant constructed housing
- HABOUS      French term derived from the Arabic habus. A Muslim legal device by which the owner of property, land or buildings can make this property inalienable, by assigning the property to benefit a religious foundation or a work of more general utility. The property may be assigned immediately or when any intermediate devolutaries - normally the family line - designated by the founder of the habous, have died out.
- HAFSID      a dynasty which ruled at Tunis from 1229 - 1574 AD. MALEKITE (q.v.) Islam was consolidated in this period.
- HANAFITE      apertaining to the Sunni system of FIKH (q.v.) ascribed to Abou Hanifa (699 - 767 AD). A rite of Islam or MADHHAB (q.v.) brought to Tunis by the Ottoman Turks in the late XVIth century. The Hanafite right had a more formalistic approach to the CHARI'A (q.v.), emphasizing the external conduct of the human actor and endorsing the use of legal stratagems to get around particular rules, such as the ban on lending at interest. The Hanafite school allowed a greater role for individual reasoning and judicial opinion. (See Ruthven 1984, p157)
- HARA      Jewish quarter in the lower eastern part of the city
- HENCHIR      agricultural landholding; any beldi (q.v.) fortune would include land in the rich agricultural areas of Mornag, La Manouba, and La Soukra
- HUSSEINITE      a dynasty which ruled at Tunis from 1708 - 1957 when the hereditary monarchy was abolished

- IFRIKIYA term referring to the eastern Maghreb, the former Roman province of Africa, approximately corresponding to the area of modern Tunisia.
- KADHI judge
- KHARROUBA/  
CAROUBE rent tax imposed in the XIXth century by the Municipal council
- KIRAT 1/24th share of a Muslim inheritance
- MADHHAB (pl. MADHAHIB) a system of FIKH (q.v.) or more generally the system followed by any religious group. There are four main MADHAHIB in mainstream, Sunni Islam: Hanbalite, Hanafite, Malikite, and Chafi'ite. MADHHAB is variously translated as rite, school and sect.
- MAHALLA military expedition by beylical forces to collect taxes from the tribes of the interior
- MAKHZEN the politico-administrative elite of XVIIIth and XIXth century Tunis; the highest offices were generally held by the MAMLOUK (q.v.) class.
- MALEKITE the dominant rite of Islam in the Maghreb, and in Spain until the Reconquista. Ascribed to Malik Bin Anas (699 - 795 AD), the MALEKITE legists took a more moralistic view of the law than the HANAFITES (q.v.), in which the intentions, good or bad, behind a person's actions were taken into account in determining their permissibility. (Ruthven 1984, p157).
- MAMLOUK lit. "owned"; the high ranking officers of the XVIIIth and XIXth century beylical court were originally imported Circassian slaves.
- MARABOUT French term corresponding to the Arabic OULI (q.v.), having the meanings of both holy man and his shrine
- MARKANTI (pl. MARKANTIYA) European merchant operating at Tunis in the XIXth century
- MISE EN VALEUR French term which when used in an urban planning context refers to the upgrading and enhancement of an area
- OULI holy man, often the founder of a ZAOUIA (q.v. appendix I)
- PERMIS DE BATIR French term meaning planning consent

- TAJIR (pl. TUJJAR) Tunisian merchant
- TAMADDUN the BELDI (q.v.) taste for imported luxury goods and extravagant living in the late XIXth/early XXth centuries
- TAUDIFICATION French term derived from 'taudis', hut or hovel, meaning a sharp decline in urban living conditions
- TUNISOIS French term in use from the late XIXth century, meaning an original inhabitant of Tunis, a BELDI (q.v.). A term formed on the analogy of Algerois, an inhabitant of Alger (English: Algiers)
- 'ULEMA (sing. 'ALIM) one learned in the religious and legal sciences of Islam
- YAHOUUD GRANA the Livorno Jews, the descendants of Andalusian Jews who after their expulsion from Spain were allowed to settle in Tuscany; the community thence settled in large numbers in Tunis in the early XIXth century.
- YAHOUUD TOUANSA the original Jewish community of Tunis
- ZIBLA a rubbish collection/street cleaning tax imposed by the Municipal council in the XIXth century



## APPENDIX III

Notes on the Habous land tenure system  
and a chronology of the decline and abolition  
of the Tunisian Habous system.

## I LAND HOLDING UNDER ISLAM

Under Muslim law land is classified as being either live (HAYY) or dead (MAYYIT).

Dead lands are wastelands belonging to nobody. Live lands are those areas under cultivation, which gives title to the land.

MELK lands held in private hands are subject to a tithe, the ACHOUR, equivalent to 1/10th of the annual produce, and are similar to private property.

ARCH or tribal lands were subject to a tribute, the KHARRAJ.

Throughout the Maghreb, there existed the land tenure system known as HABS (French: HABOUS), referred to as WAKF in the Machrek.

## II THE HABOUS TENURE SYSTEM

By Habs or Wakf is meant "a thing which, while retaining its substance, yields a usufruct, and of which the owner has surrendered his power of disposal, with the stipulation that the yield is used for permitted good purposes".

(Definition taken from Hoeffning's article on Wakf, Encyclopaedia of Islam, First Edition, p1096)

Habs really means a pious endowment or 'foundation' of certain incomes, commonly rents or land revenues, for the upkeep of a mosque, hospital or other similar institution.

However, as is explained below, the main aim of such endowments is to provide entailed and unconfiscatable income for one's descendants.

The term habs or wakf in fact refers to the legal process creating the endowment, (synonyms: TAHBIS, TASBIL or TAHRIM) MAWKOUF), but in everyday use came to refer to the endowment itself, properly called MAHBOUS, MUHABBAS, HABIS, or MAWKOUF.

De Montety (1927) defines habous as "a Muslim legal device by which the owner of a property, land or building, can make the property inalienable transferring its enjoyment to the benefit of a pious foundation or a work of a more general utility. This transfer may be made immediately or after any intermediate

beneficiaries, normally the family line, designated by the habis (founder of the habous), have died out." (Present author's translation).

In all cases, the purpose of the habous endowment must be a work pleasing to God (KURBA).

The beginnings of the institution of habous are discussed by Heffening (p1098), who feels that the origins are to be sought "in the strongly marked impulse to charitable deeds characteristic of Islam." In addition to this is the fact that the Arabs found in lands conquered from the Byzantine Empire foundations for the benefit of public facilities like churches, monasteries, orphanages, and poorhouses (piae causae), and may have adopted this form for the charitable practices enjoined by Islam.

These Byzantine endowments were inalienable, and managed by administratores under the supervision of bishops.

Likewise the management of a habous endowment was in the hands of an administrator, variously called NAZIR, KA'IM or MUTAWALLI, usually receiving a salary for his services. The KADI (judge) had a right to supervise, appointing (and dismissing where necessary) the administrator. The revenues were used primarily for the maintenance of the foundation's buildings, only the surplus going to the beneficiaries.

### III THE HABOUS TENURE SYSTEM IN TUNIS

In pre-colonial Tunis, the Hanafite kadi was the overseer of the habous system. The establishment of a habous was conducted by an ADIL and a CHAHID, officials who verified the ownership of the property and registered the owner's desire to make a habous endowment. Their report, once compiled and stamped with the kadi's seal of approval, was then submitted for beylical approval.

Two main forms of habous were in operation in pre-colonial Tunis:

WAKF KHAYRI or WAKF 'AM : property devoted to pious ends immediately or just after the founder's death.

WAKF AHLI or WAKF KHAS : property to be eventually devoted to pious ends, but in the meantime transferred to the founder's descendants; only those descendants belonging to the same genealogical level could have a share of the foundation's revenues.

Also important was WAKF MUCHTARAK : a habous set up to benefit a zaouia, for instance. Once the maintenance and running costs had been taken care of, the remaining funds were to benefit the descendants of the founding saint.

At Tunis, wakf khas was dominant. The Hanefite rite, of the school of Abou Yousef, a disciple of Abou Hanifa allowed the founder to benefit from the use of the habous property, as well as to go back on his decision. This was thus a very popular procedure, even among the Malekite community. As Ben Achour (1989) puts it, "sa souplesse convenait parfaitement a l'esprit citadin." (p337)

However, although the initial aim of setting up as habous all or part of a melk property was to appear righteous before the Deity, usage introduced variations of wakf khas which gave the legal intermediate beneficiaries more freedom to use the property in ways which suited them. The main procedures in use were ENZEL, KIRDAR, and MU'AWADA.

ENZEL, the ceding of then usufruct of a habous property in exchange for a fixed rent for a certain period.

KIRDAR, an operation by which the property was rented for a sum which varied with alterations in the value of the piece of ground. The tenant could not only bequeath the land, but had unrestricted rights on new buildings and plantations. The kirdar agreement only became void upon non-payment of rent.

MU'AWADA, (replacement), an operation subject to the authorisation of the Hanefite kadi, accordrd only after proceedings closely supervised by the latter. By mu'awada, a habous property ina poor state of repair could be sold off and replaced by land or property more beneficial to the habous foundation and its beneficiaries.

Under enzel and kirdar agreements, the rights to the usufruct (HUKOUK EL-MANAFI') change hands, not the thing (RAKABA) itself. The rakaba remains as habous, MUHABBAS. Hence the legal experts, who initially regarded these agreements in accordance with local customary law as unpermitted innovation, came eventually to tolerate them since the inalienability of the property remained intact.

Such subterfuges were permitted because the habous system, which lead to immense amounts of land being held under mortmain, was economically harmful: land was not used to its best advantage and deteriorated. Hence the granting of the various kinds of leases to arouse the personal interest of tenants and make for more efficient cultivation.

#### IV THE ABOLITION OF HABOUS IN ALGERIA

In the XIXth century, the habous system was seen by the French as an impediment to the expansion of agriculture in their colonial empire in North Africa. In Algeria the problem was tackled rather tactlessly: the 1830 decision that all public habous should pass into the French administration's hands aroused

particular protest on account of the endowments benefiting the holy cities.

Further reforms in Algeria altered the system:

- 1844 permanent rent declared redeemable
- 1858 the Algerian equivalent of enzel, the 'ANA' contract became a simple contract of sale in which the rent was regarded as interest on the purchase price.
- 1873 sale of habous was brought completely under French law, and all conditions contrary to it were abolished; in order not to arouse Muslim feelings, the institution of habous was left in existence as a means of circumventing Muslim inheritance law, although in a rather mutilated form.

#### V THE REFORM OF THE HABOUS SYSTEM IN TUNISIA

In Tunisia, reforms in the habous procedures were undertaken before the arrival of the French administration, which in any case had to proceed more cautiously as Tunis was a protectorate, not a colony.

Under Hammouda Pacha (1782 - 1814), the foundation of a habous had already become subject to a beylical authorisation. In the course of the XIXth century the system continued to be altered.

- 1858 The management of the Medina's public habous was entrusted to the newly created Tunis Municipal Council
- June 1860 The management of public habous in the area of the caïdat around the capital was also entrusted to the Municipality.
- March 1874 Kheireddine created a special habous commission, the Djemaïa des habous to centralise the management public habous.
- 1 July 1885 A new land law laid down that:
  - \* property could be registered (optional)
  - \* registration of enzel property was compulsory

This new land registration procedure had two drawbacks from the native Tunisian point of view:

- (i) many found it difficult to pay the registration fee
- (ii) even if they had the fee, the procedure was slow due to the complex investigation and adjudication which was part of the process

- 23 May 1886 colonists were allowed to rent land by enzel, which they did, often at nominal rents payable in copper currency.

- 8 February 1892 all land which belonged to people unable to show a title deed was declared land of the state domain, later to be cheaply sold off to the colonists at 10 FF a hectare.
- 23 December 1894 a decree laid down that the consent of the main part holders in a habous was sufficient to allow a private habous to be constituted as enzel.
- 31 January 1898 a decree laid down clearly that habous land, public or private, could be rented out.
- 13 November 1898 allowed the colonists to acquire public habous land cheaply
- 19 April 1903 the Djemaia was authorised to cede the olive groves in the Tunis area under enzel conditions; the decree suggested that building on the lands thus ceded under enzel could be encouraged, given the increased revenue that the Djemaia could hope to receive from the new buildings.
- 22 January 1905 the colonists were freed from the obligation to pay the enzel rent to the Djemaia or habous beneficiaries; any enzel could be bought out by the tenants for 20 annual payments, and an enzel lease could be transferred from one colonist to another.
- 17 July 1908 the Djemaia was brought under the supervision of a Conseil superieur des habous
- 14 July 1914 Municipal Council decisions were to be approved by the Prime Minister; its field of action was reduced to public hygiene and street regulations.
- 24 July 1914 under the aegis of a consultative committee under the Department of Agriculture, the legislation relative to the sale of domanial land was reorganised: the land was to be sold off in small lots. The Tunis area was particularly effected, and the rapid expansion of the city was now possible on the freed land.

The procedure followed to acquire habous land from the Djemaia in the 1881 - 1914 period was basically as follows:

- \* a written application had to be submitted to the head of the Djemaia. Once the transfer was approved, the char'ia courts' appointee would evaluate the land and submit its findings to the bey for approval.

- \* if the exchange was monetary, the habous land was auctioned, with the proceeds to be invested in new land which in turn became habous
- \* if the exchange was barter, the land newly acquired by the Djemaia became habous.

17 July 1926 a decree which was presented as an example of franco-native co-operation aimed to encourage the growth of a native small land holder class by defining the rights of small tenants.

However, as De Montety (1927) remarks, the original aim of enabling the fellah (native farmer) to acquire land was unsuccessful: the 1926 law brought onto the market large amounts of private habous land whose owners until then had resisted the temptation to sell. Eventually the protests of the beldi beneficiaries of these habous estates being dissolved brought about the abrogation of the decree by Marcel Peyroutin in 1934. But it was too late, many of the beneficiaries had lost almost everything.

## VI THE ABOLITION OF HABOUS IN TUNISIA

The habous system continued to function until after Tunisian independence in 1956. It was finally abolished by a series of decrees in the late fifties:

31 May 1956 abolition of public habous

27 Sept 1956 abolition of the Djemaia

18 July 1957 abolition of the mixed public/private habous system

The liquidation of the habous tenure system was presented by the new regime as a modernising measure. Beneficiaries of the habous system, which had survived the Protectorate thanks to the Djemaia which had ensured that many Muslim families did not become destitute, were unable to oppose the abolition of a supposedly archaic institution. The result was to hasten the decay of the historic urban fabric.

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## APPENDIX IV

Tunisian legislation for the protection of  
built cultural heritage

- 1 décret du 7 novembre 1882 - placing all objets d'art and antiquities, ruins and statues of antiquity under the surveillance of the Beylical government (JOT 25/1/1883)
- 2 décret du 7 mars 1886 - establishing a listing procedure for monuments, objets d'art, and antiquities and bringing them under administrative control; imposing servitudes on the owner of a historic monument. (JOT 11/3/86)
- 3 décret du 6 aout 1915\* - concerning the preservation of the traditional appearance of Sidi Bou Said
- 4 décret du 8 janvier 1920 - establishing that all pre-Arab conquest antiquities, known or undiscovered, are the property of the Tunisian state. (JOT 18/2/20)
- 5 décret du 3 mars 1920\* - defining a zone in the central Medina subject to servitude of appearance (zone des souks);  
- responsibility for the application of the regulations belongs to the Municipalité de Tunis
- 6 décret du 11 mars 1920 - creating a consultative committee on historic monuments
- 7 décret du 13 septembre 1921 - extending the zone in the central Medina subject to servitude of appearance
- 8 décret du 3 juin 1929 - forbidding the display of advertising on listed historic monuments and in protected sites and zones
- 9 décret du 17 septembre 1953 - concerning the protection of sites, widened the range of the listing procedure without reference to indemnities. Never applied. (JOT 22/9/53 p1690)
- 10 décret du 30 mars 1957 - creating the Institut national d'art et archeologie
- 11 décret du 2 avril 1966 - organising the INAA
- 12 visa no 2875 du 29 aout 1967 - creating the Association de sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis
- 13 loi 86-35 du 9 mai 1986 - concerning protection of archaeological remains, historic monuments, and urban and natural sites (JOT 9/5/86 p598)



- 14 loi 87-1114 du 22 aout 1987 - creating a consultative committee responsible for the listing of historic monuments (JOT 22/8/87 p1050)
- 15 loi 88-34 du 3 mai 1988 - regarding the conservation of mosques (JOT 3/5/88 p705)
- 16 loi 88-44 du 19 mai 1988 - regarding the protection of cultural property (JOT 19/5/88 p751)

NB decrees marked with an asterisk were abrogated by the decree of 17/9/ 1953.

## APPENDIX V

The development of Tunisian urban planning  
legislation relevant to the Medina

- 30/8/1858 Beylical decree creating the MAJLIS EL-BELDI, the Municipal Council, to regulate an increasingly crowded Medina and the new areas just beginning to grow up beyond the walls.
- 3/1/1889 Decree creating the Conseil central d'hygiène et de sante, later (1908) to become the municipal office via which the salubrity of buildings could be monitored.
- 24/11/1889 Decree permitting the Municipality to monitor changes and the growth of the urban fabric through the granting of the permis de bâtir, planning permission.
- 1889 A municipal project for the repair, improvement and extension of the sewer network; between 1881 and 1900 the Medina's sewers were improved.
- The same year also saw the drawing up of the Reglements de voirie de la ville de Tunis, dividing the city into two zones for the first time, urban and suburban. The urban zone was further subdivided into three quarters: European, Medina, and faubourgs.
- 1920 The Projet d'aménagement, d'embellissement, et d'extension de la ville de Tunis is drawn up by the architect Victor Valensi; the Medina is treated for the first time as an urban model superior to contemporary urban forms, and as such is to be preserved in its entirety (comme un tout indivisible) though not for the benefit of its inhabitants, but as a 'jewel' for tourists.
- 3/3/1920 Decree defining the central Medina as a special preservation area.
- 13/9/1921 Decree defining a further third of the Medina as a preservation area.
- 25/1/1929 Decree laying down the scope of a land use plan for the city of Tunis
- 19/2/1929 Decree providing for the Commune of Tunis to draw up a land use plan, defining the city limits and expansion areas.  
To do this the Municipality creates an Urban Planning Office.

- 27/3/1935 The Chevaux/Eloy Plan is approved, but minus the proposals for avenues across the Medina and the renovation of the Hara (Jewish quarter).
- 22/7/1943 Decrees making new building subject to the rules laid  
10/9/1943 down in the land use plans and architectural regulations.
- 1943-1945 Schema d'aménagement de la region de Tunis: a regional plan (never adopted), whose ideology was the continued separation of Muslim and European quarters. No proposals for urban regeneration projects in Muslim areas.
- 22/7/1954 Plan de zones de la commune de Tunis approved. The Muslim quarters (i.e. El-Omrane), the faubourgs and the gorbiville of Djebel Lahmar are lumped together in one zone, whilst the central Medina is divided into the souk zone and two renewal areas, El-Mektar and La Hara.
- 1960 Plan d'aménagement de la ville de Tunis
- 1962 Plan directeur du Grand Tunis, prepared by Italian planning consultants Quaroni-De Carlo. No mention of the difference between Medina and Modern city.
- 1964 Plan d'aménagement, 1ère phase, de la ville de Tunis, also prepared by Quaroni-De Carlo. The old city is mentioned: part of its population is to be moved to reduce density.
- The above plans of 1960, 1962, and 1964 never had any legal status.
- 1975 Schema directeur d'aménagement urbain
- 1977 Plan regional d'aménagement, a broad brush land use plan equivalent to a French Pdu (Plan directeur d'urbanisme) returned to the notion of separate development for the two distinct areas of central Tunis. The street network of the Medina was to be kept, heights respected by any new building. and the population density reduced.
- 1985 Plan d'aménagement de la commune de Tunis prepared by the District de Tunis urban planning office. The Asm was entrusted with the drawing up of the Pact for the Medina, which was divided into a number of zones. For areas in need of renewal, a Pad or detailed land use plan was created for municipal approval.

## APPENDIX VI

Acronyms of the main official bodies  
and urban land use plans mentioned in the text

- Afh Agence foncière de l'habitat, a public body responsible for preparing land for housing.
- Anep Agence nationale pour l'exploitation du patrimoine, responsible for the promotion of the national heritage.
- Arru Agence de réhabilitation et de rénovation urbaine, a public body executing urban upgrading operations for the communes and the State.
- Asm Association de sauvegarde de la Médina, not so much an association in the sense of a group of private individuals with a common interest, but rather a planning bureau for the Municipalité de Tunis, especially concerned with the Medina and its monuments and housing problems.
- Cnel Caisse nationale d'épargne logement, originally a state savings bank responsible for the construction and purchase of housing. Now transformed into a Banque de l'habitat, a sort of state building society.
- Cpscl Caisse des prêts et de soutien aux collectivités publiques locales, a public fund making loans to the local authorities.
- Dat Direction de l'aménagement et du territoire, the urban and regional planning department of the Ministry of Public Works.
- Fnah Fonds national pour l'amélioration de l'habitat, a state fund fed in part by a rent tax; set up to finance the upgrading of existing housing through loans and subsidies.
- Inaa Institut national d'art et d'archéologie, a research body under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for historic sites and buildings.
- Onas Office national de l'assainissement, the national sewage company, responsible for the creation and management of sewage lines.
- Ontt Office national de tourisme tunisien, the national tourist board.
- Pact Plan d'aménagement de la commune de Tunis, a broad brush land use plan for the Tunis area drawn up in 1985. Pact-Medina was prepared by the Asm (q.v.)
- Pad Plan d'aménagement de détail, a detailed land use plan for an urban renewal area.

- Pif Perimètre d'intervention foncière, a land and property expropriation area, later to be the object of a Pad (q.v.).
- Psd Parti socialiste destourien, the name of the Tunisian ruling party until 1988 when it became the Rcd (q.v.). Also known as the Neo-Destour Party.
- Rcd Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique, the name of the Tunisian ruling party as of February 1988.
- Saa Service des arts et des antiquités, a body created under the Protectorate and responsible for historic sites and buildings. The precursor of the Inaa (q.v.).
- Setph Secrétariat d'état aux travaux publics et de l'habitat, the department of the Ministry of Public Works responsible for the creation of housing.
- Snit Société nationale immobilière de Tunisie, a public establishment responsible for the creation of housing.
- Sonede Société nationale d'exploitation et de distribution d'eau, the Tunisian national water board.
- Steg Société tunisienne d'électricité et de gaz, a public body responsible for the creation and management of electricity and gads distribution networks.
- Ucp Unité central de projets (urbains), an urban planning unit attached to the Ministry of the Interior and responsible for co-ordination and follow-up of the Second Urban Development Project. Now under the Housing Ministry.

## APPENDIX VII

Reaffected historic buildings in the  
Medina of Tunis

This appendix deals with some of the most successful reutilisations of historic buildings in the Medina and the costs.

- 1981 Medersa Mouradiya, built 1673, converted to a handicraft training centre by the Governorate of Tunis. Works carried out by the Asm. Cost: 18 000 Dt
- 1983 Palais Sahib Ettabaa, built c.1820 at Halfaouine, upgraded by the Asm with funds from the Municipality and the Ministry of Public Works and Housing. Today houses a local Rcd party office and a library. Cost: 95 000 Dt
- 1983 Medersa Achouriya, built in the XVIIIth century and converted by the Asm into premises to house the head quarters of various national cultural organisations. Works funded by the Asm. Cost: 32 000 Dt
- 1986 Medersa Chammaia, the first medersa built in the Maghreb in 1249. Restored by the Asm for the Ministry of Social Affairs as a handicraft training centre. Works funded by the Governorate. Cost: 47 000 Dt
- 1986 Medersa Slimaniya, built in 1754. Reaffected along the same lines as the Achouriya as a headquarters for the various medical associations. Works were carried out by the Asm with Inaa funds. Cost: 28 000 Dt
- 1989 Dar Mourabi, converted to a youth hostel. Works conducted by the Asm for the Tunisian Youth Hostel Organisation with funds from various sources. Cost: 95 000 Dt
- 1990 Zaouia Sidi Ben Arous, founded in 1437 and altered in the XVIIth century. Works funded by the Presidency and carried out by the Asm to create premises suitable for a Koran reciting institution. Cost: 92 000 Dt
- 1990 Palais Khaznadar, constructed circa 1860 at Halfaouine. Currently the responsibility of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. It is proposed to turn it into a centre for the National Theatre. Estimated cost of works (1990) 250 000 Dt

Source: Asm/Ville de Tunis (1990) Projets et realisations 1980  
- 1990: Pour la promotion de la Medina Tunis: Asm

## APPENDIX VIII

Urban renewal costs: the Hafsia and  
Bab Souika/Halfaouine operations

## A The Hafsia Operation

Frais supportés par l'Etat (subventions)	Prévision 1983 (sur programme ARRU-ASM)	Actualisation 1990 (sur programme actualisé 89)
Dispensaire	pour mémoire	pour mémoire
Voirie primaire	150.000 DT	100.000 DT
Frais d'études	50.000 DT	50.000 DT
Frais supportés par la Municipalité :		
Fondouk de frippe	400.000 DT	200.000 DT
Jardin d'enfants		
Marché de frippes		
<b>Sous total frais non remboursables</b>	<b>600.000 DT</b>	<b>350.000 DT</b>
<b>Frais préfinancés, remboursables</b>		
Assainissement foncier (terrains, fonds de commerce, indemnité de relogement, démolitions) récupéré sur vente de terrains avec surcharge	1.450.000 DT	1.400.000 DT
Voirie secondaire (préfinancé par prêt de la CPSCCL) récupéré sur vente de terrains avec surcharge	1.000.000 DT	870.000 DT
Réhabilitation municipale sur compte spécial	250.000 DT (pour 7000 m <sup>2</sup> )	71.000 DT (pour 1200 m <sup>2</sup> environ)
réhabilitation privée sur compte spécial	1.000.000 DT (60.000 m <sup>2</sup> )	300.000 DT (8.000 m <sup>2</sup> dans le PIF Hafsia)
Constructions neuves « économiques » (préfinancement CNEL, construction ARRU)	1.600.000 DT (97 logements)	4.000.000 DT (250 logements)
Constructions neuves « promoteurs » (préfinancement CNEL, construction privée)	6.000.000 DT (293 logements)	3.000.000 DT (150 logements)
Commerces hôtels et bureaux	2.500.000 DT (12.000 m <sup>2</sup> )	3.000.000 DT (10.000 m <sup>2</sup> )
Frais de justice et frais financiers	—	230.000 DT
<b>Sous total frais remboursables</b>	<b>13.800.000 DT</b>	<b>12.641.000 DT</b>
<b>Total investissements</b>	<b>14.500.000 DT</b>	<b>Environ 13.000.000 DT</b>

## B The Bab Souika/Halfaouine Operation

FRAIS SUPPORTES PAR L'ETAT	PROJET 1984 (Estimations ASM. Ministère de l'Equipement)	REALISATION 1990 (Programme 1987, Parkings à étage non compris)
Assainissement foncier; indemnisations (Propriétaires et exploitants) et démolitions Tunnel et trémies	2.800.000 DT  (10.000 m' planchers)	8.100.000 DT  (20.000 m' planchers)
Equipements socio-collectifs	8.500.000 DT (sans frais financiers)	13.400.000 DT (y compris équipements de sécurité et intérêts bancaires)
Déplacements de réseaux et frais d'études Aménagement place (sol et mobilier urbain)	2.500.000 DT (20 équipements, 12.000 m')	2.100.000 DT (5 équipements : marché, école pri- maire, PTT) salle de sport et mesjed 6300 m <sup>2</sup> .
Sous total Etat	500.000 DT	1.100.000 DT
* 1000 MD-coût des PTT pris en charge par le Ministère des Télécommunications	1.500.000 DT	1.300.000 DT
<b>FRAIS REMBOURSABLES</b>	<b>Projet 1984</b>	<b>Réalisation 1990</b>
Constructions SNIT (boutiques, logements et bureaux)	3.200.000 DT (11.000 m' planchers)	15.000.000 DT (30.000 m' planchers 300 boutiques, 57 logements et 45 bureaux)
Restructuration et réhabilitation privée sur crédit FNAH	1.000.000 DT	50.000 DT (pas de demande de crédits à cause du blocage des loyers)
Sous total frais remboursables	4.200.000 DT	15.100.000 DT
<b>Total investissements</b>	<b>20.000.000 DT</b>	<b>41.150.000 DT</b>

Source: Asm/Ville de Tunis (1990) Projets et réalisations 1980 -  
1990 Pour la promotion de la Medina Tunis: Asm

## C Comparison of Costs (Medina &amp; Periphery Renewal Schemes)

The upgrading of the Ettadhamen/Douar Hicher (Hofret El Maach/Khalid Ibn Walid) self built housing area, part of the Third Urban Project, was conducted between 1985 and 1988 by the Arru on behalf of the District de Tunis.

The operation concerned a 50 ha area and some 1250 homes (8800 inhabitants), and was budgeted at 11 089 000 DT.

(Source: Presentation du District de Tunis (Non Dated document -  
1985?) Fiche de projet no. 18. Tunis)



## APPENDIX IX

Article from the Lambert  
Illustrated Dictionary  
(Tunis 1912)  
describing the Medina.

HIST. : Tunis est une ville aussi ancienne que Carthage. ou du moins elle existait à l'époque carthaginoise sous le nom de Tunès, mais elle est évidemment beaucoup moins célèbre que l'antique Carthage. Elle devint capitale de la Régence au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, remplaçant Kairouan. Saint Louis l'assiégea en 1270. Kheir ed Dine s'en empara en 1533, Charles-Quint en 1535. Elle fut reconquise définitivement par les Turcs en 1574. Elle dut subir en 1689 une invasion algérienne et fut occupée, sans résistance, par les troupes françaises en 1881.

DESCRIPTION : Nous empruntons à « la Tunisie Hivernale » cette vivante description de Tunis-la-Blanche, due à la plume alerte de M. J.-N. Gungl :

« A Tunis, l'attrait immédiat, impérieux, c'est la ville arabe. A partir de la Porte-de-France, grouillante et affairée, après les maisons européennes de l'avenue, les grands magasins, les cafés étincelants, le décor se transforme. De la minuscule place de la Bourse, où se coudoie la foule bigarrée des Tunisiens, des Marocains, des Juifs, portefaix à la marche rapide, marchands ambulants, enfants aux yeux profonds, bedouines aux oripeaux ensoleillés, passants hâtifs, avec, sur le seuil des boutiques, des commerçants attentifs, bifurquant et se dirigent vers la ville haute.

Bientôt, à ce cosmopolitisme multiple, succède un aspect nettement arabe. Plus de boutiques vitrées, plus de négociants engageants, plus de mélange entre les commerces divers, fraternellement confondus : ce sont les souks.

Un parfum doux et quasi religieux s'élève. Nous sommes dans le souk El-Attarine. Dans leurs petites boutiques,

de quelques mètres carrés, les parfumeurs siègent graves, presque hiératiques, au milieu des essences, des cierges, des sacs de henné et des aromates. Sur les bancs étroits placés devant leurs comptoirs pour la causerie autant que pour la vente, sont étendus des tapis de Kairouan aux couleurs éclatantes, ou des sacs à orge en poil de chameau aux nuances brunes et rudes. Nul appel, nulle sollicitation. Le marchand attend et son visage s'allume à peine d'un éclair d'attention lorsqu'un chaland s'approche pour quelque achat. Ces marchands du souk El-Attarine forment une sorte d'aristocratie commerciale qui a ses traditions et son orgueil aussi ; et la délicatesse de la marchandise imprime à tous ceux qui la détaillent une sorte de distinction discrète.

Plus loin, le souk El-Blat, souk des Menuisiers, déborde de meubles : lits de repos, étagères, râteliers d'armes, tables polygonales, chaises et fauteuils, tout dorés et peints de nuances vives, avec colonnettes minces, aux galeries ajourées, aux ornements géométriques d'un enchevêtrement régulier. Puis, c'est le souk des Balghas, savates de cuir jaune éclatant, de toutes tailles, que coupent, rognent, cousent et cambrent des cordonniers agiles, maniant avec dextérité un lourd polissoir de cuivre. Le souk de la Laine aligne ses boutiques, débordantes de couvertures de Gafsa aux bandes rouges, blanches, bleues, vertes, décorées de chameaux stylisés, alternant avec des losanges au contour compliqué ; des sacs à orge ourlés de pompons de laine, brodés de couleurs vives ; des tapis de Kairouan aux tons criards, d'autres de Syrie ou de Perse aux nuances effacées et harmonieuses, des foutahs, des soieries, la laine d'un blanc de crème des hawks, aux raies alternativement mates et luisantes, les burnous de neige, les cachabias rayées de marron. Le souk El-Trouk, où s'amoncellent les vêtements confectionnés, djebaas roses, vertes, mauve, bleu pâle, les ceintures aux damiers de soie multicolore, les serouels et ces amusants gilets à deux fins, qui n'ont ni dos ni face, et où baille, devant et derrière, la petite poche à montre ornée de broderies.

A la vie active des souks, le quartier El-Medina forme un contraste frappant. Les maisons blanches, hautes, abritent des Arabes riches, des fonctionnaires, des juges, des officiers. Un silence y règne, à peine troublé par le hennissement d'un cheval que panse sous un porche quelque ordonnance à la chéchia rouge. Les rues y sont en pente, dévalant de la Kasbah vers la Hara et Bab-Souika ; et cette déclivité y entretient un pavé toujours sec, un aspect de confortable impénétrable et mystérieux.

Bab-Souika, avec son marché en plein air, ses écoulements de fruits vermeils, de tomates, de légumes verts, d'oignons

violet, de pains à peine dorés par le feu du four. Une sorte de porche étroit et sombre où coule, ininterrompu, un flot de foule pressée entre les étals des bouchers : c'est la rue Halfaouine. D'abord couverte, en forme de souk, elle s'élargit ensuite à ciel ouvert; et c'est des boutiques de barbiers, toutes pimpantes avec leurs boiseries peintes, le cuivre poli de leurs plats, leurs panoplies de rasoirs, leurs bancs à tapis de nattes où le chaland livre son crâne aux doigts experts du praticien; les cafés, innombrables, débordant sur la chaussée, sous les ficus au feuillage épais, les boutiques des Djerbiens aux pyramides de citrons, de grenades; et aussi la place Halfaouine avec sa mosquée, dont la galerie, soutenue par de hardies colonnettes de pierres, domine l'espace planté d'arbres verts, autour d'une fontaine monumentale.

D'autres coins de la ville arabe mériteraient une description : Bab-Djedid et ses forges retentissantes; Bab-el-Fellah où, dans des ruelles à peine assez larges pour la charge d'un mulet, s'ouvrent des palais revêtus de faïences persanes, où les patios de marbre, entourés de galeries, sont entretenus dans une fraîcheur délicieuse par un bouquet d'arbres et des buissons de roses; le village troglodyte de Bab-el-Allouch; les cimetières arabes et juifs, etc. — et ce magnifique quartier du Tourbet-el-Bey, où le tombeau des souverains tunisiens dresse, au milieu de maisons silencieuses, ses coupoles recouvertes de tuiles vernissées. C'est au hasard de la flânerie qu'il faut parcourir le Tunis arabe, sans hâte, sans programme, presque sans itinéraire et sans guide; toujours à point nommé, lorsque le voyageur a cessé de s'orienter, surgit un agent ou un indigène un peu polyglotte, qui le remet dans la bonne voie et lui indique le chemin de la ville européenne. Quelques pas dans le dédale des rues arabes, et apparaît une ligne de tramways. Encore quelques minutes, et le touriste a regagné son hôtel. »

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