



**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL**

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Influence of the El Atik Masjed

On the Architecture of the Plans of the Setif Masjeds (Alegria)

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Abstract: Considered as one of the rare works of the architecture of the Muslim cult that has come down to us from the French colonial legacy, the first masjed of Sétif, El Atik, is characterized by a particular architecture and urban situation. The first related to a concern for French military engineers to build economically; and the second for evidence of the constant security, in a hostile environment. It is thus that its interior and exterior spaces aimed at a symbolism that has become a place of ideological importance, to combine propaganda and demagoguery. Moreover, this masjed has left in its wake architectural plan that will mark in a significant way, during the post-colonial and contemporary period, the typology of the plans of the masjeds in Setif. Thanks to the use of a complementary prayer space in the form of “Mezzanine” upstairs; the experience gained contributed to the transformation of the “Saint Monica” Church into the “Ibn Badis” Masjed in 1970. El Atik Masjed, conceived as a means of propaganda by the French administration, has become a space for experimentation and innovation, and is recognized a century and a half later as a reference scheme.

Keywords: El Atik Masjed - French Colonial Legacy - Plan Architecture - Arab Bureau - Archive of the French Colonial Time - Iconography - Typology of masjeds in Setif - Mezzanine.

1. Introduction

It is in Setif that we will first place ourselves, in spirit and in intention, to address you. A place quite close to the center of our concerns¹. A place that has already served our reflection on the process of constitution of the colonial and Algerian city that is the current Setif. In our work, we are interested in the first decade of French architecture in Algeria. We realized that there is an important architectural legacy of this French presence in Algeria; “It is especially visual in our daily life, since it occupies

(1) Impact du phénomène d'échange & d'interaction en architecture : le projet architectural, urbanistique et artistique de l'expansion coloniale française en Algérie depuis le XIX^{ème} siècle. (Mahdadi N/ Eddine thesis work, Setif Ferhat Abass University, 2014).

a large part of the landscape of our cities” (Oulebsir, N, 2004).

Among the key establishments in Setif, which are part of this relatively well-maintained landscape², there is the “El Atik” masjed. From there, our intention fell on this first masjed, which was born under the reign of the second French republic. Its construction dates back to 1845, as shown on the commemorative plaque above its main entrance³.

(2) We quote as an indication (hotel of finance, former headquarters of the District, the first building of the Post office, etc.).

(3) The inscription testifies to the recognition of the «King of France», contrary to what this type of religious establishment should usually carry in our culture as the name of a sage, a personality in the history of the Islam, a distinguished scholar, a charitable person, etc.

We will try to find out: why and how the “colonial”⁴ project was shaped in a highly symbolic structure like the masjed; and how it was put in place in the urban setting of 1845; and, finally, what was the impact of this masjed project on its successors. From this concern arose this research, which we sought to understand better, through the mass of information from the archive and the iconographic production. Moreover, we have introduced in our “architectural study”, a comparative / typological” approach, which relies on the observation and analysis of the complementary space (mezzanine), on some planimetric samples of masjeds in Sétif. Proceeding in this manner, the model will be given a general character which offers the best illustration of our hypothesis, that we will try along this work to give it a scholarly explanation. Therefore, we will have to deal with the following hypotheses: the situation of the masjed in the urban weft, the origin of the scheme of the plan of the masjed, the reference of the minaret and, finally, the influence of the scheme and its plan on the majority of masjeds in Setif. In this reflection on the study of the first masjed of Sétif, we wanted to reveal the fundamental interest of the colonial project, in its act of “triumph, reign and found” « triompher, régner et fonder » (Dumézul, G, 1999); to consolidate conquest and ensure its success. Space became a strategic issue, but also a place for experimentation and innovation.

2. Historical Context

2.1 In which the El Atik Masjed was born:

In 1842, the prosperity, security and wealth of this country led the conquering French military administration to invest in Sétif. “We said that the origin of Setif as a place of residence is probably due to its sources, which do not change substantially in volume throughout the year. It was at all times a place of exchange between the products of the plain, those of the mountains and the small desert (Djerid) and later, between those of Europe and the Sahara. The Romans found Sétif existing as agricultural and commercial city” (Nodier, C, 1844).

Later, in 1845, a kind of confidence in the future that was established, justified by the opening of the road

(4) We call «colonial»: this French architectural and artistic production during the period of the 19th and 20th century in Algeria, linked to a painful event history, that we cannot forget, but that we must at the same time dispassion for the look more serenely as a teaching.



Figure 1. View of the submerged part of the minaret
Source : Authors

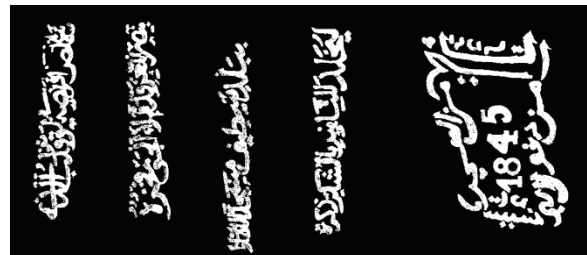


Figure 2. Commemorative plaque above the entrance to the masjed, 1845. Source : Authors

that put Setif (an area of the interior of the country) in communication with Bougie (a region port of the littoral), led to the Conquest of the territory and important economic boom⁵. It is in view of this potential that the Minister of War has ordered a study of a project of extension of the city, which is preparing for the installation of 250 families with the aim of exploiting agricultural and commercial resources of this region (Rozet, C-A, & Carette, A-E-H, 1850). At the same time, proceed to the relocation of certain

(5) A means of communication for the movement of military troops and their equipment, and at the same time, it will return to the port of Bougie its former importance which will serve as an outlet for all commodities of the fertile plains of Setif, Medjena and Hodna.

military establishments (inside the military fort) to the south and southeast parts of the city with the intention to put in place the new alignment plan.

“Setif began to emerge from its ruins. In 1842, the 61st of the line, who had spent two winters in tents, finished a first barracks [...]. The 19th Léger arrived in Sétif in October 1842 to replace the 61st of the line, and successively raised two other barracks, to house the men who were still in tents. Housing for the superior commander; a beautiful hospital; a powder magazine; an ox park with slaughterhouse; stables and a cavalry district; a military prison; a prison for indigenous hostages; a fodder shop; a camp store; an Arab office; a chapel for Catholic worship; a masjed ; a fondouk; all this was gradually created. The wall, flanked by towers and bastions, ended in 1847 “ (Féraud, L-C, 1871).

Like any founding city, a total pre-design was made within boundaries built on the ramparts. This project essentially deals with: fixing voids, squares, streets and reserving the location for equipment and housing. The voids value the equipment according to their situation, and the streets being hierarchical by their size and by the architectural rules that control the construction of its edges. As a small metropolitan city of that time, Setif saw its new urban center taking shape, characterized by wide and straight paths, holding places axes, where the plan whose regular pattern was punctuated with a place at the crossroads of the streets. The newly designed square was intended to serve as a gathering place for military parades and festivities for civilian families who came to settle; “This form of sociability is opposed to a city life where the masjed, the souk and the Moorish cafe, spaces of encounter and masculine sociability marked the public space” (Carlier, O, 1990).

3. Urban & Architectural Study of El Atik Masjed

3.1. Urban Study of the Masjed

This setting, worthy of a typical European town, led to the prosperity of the city and that of its inhabitants. We see the first masjed of the city, François Beguin quotes on this subject: “among the reasons that must undoubtedly be there invoked (speaking of the visible symptoms of this

protective style) to explain the change of attitude in France, there is first of all an awareness of the political danger resulting from the annihilation of a social framework tied up around ancestral forms of housing, places and urban customs” (Beguin, F, 1983).



Figure 3. Aerial view of the masjed and the gate of Algiers to the west. Source : The photograph Neurdein (ND Phot)

we will say that the colonial administration is making efforts to dissuade the natives and put them in trust.

This first Masjed, projected near one of the largest Arab markets in the region and along one of the two main axes of the city “Decumanus”⁶ (connecting the gate of Algiers to that of Constantine), is therefore privileged and at the same time, taken in the tuning fork of the military control apparatus.

Laurent Charles Féraud⁷ quotes: “It is still at its market, which stands regularly at the gate of the city, one of the largest in Algeria that the Berbers of the mountain and the Arabs of the plain, since the coastline to the Ziban, meet to exchange their products. We can estimate at eight or ten thousand souls the population which meets there every Sunday of the months of August, September and October and which sells there, in great quantity, wheat, barley, fruits, oil, soap, honey, wax, leathers, wool, dyestuffs, carobs, salt, cattle, pack animals, and horses. “ (Feraud, L-C, 1871-1872). Moreover, “In the colonial act, the question of security will always have been a constant, an obvious one considering the unknown

(6) A Decumanus is a path oriented from East to West, in a city, a camp or a Roman colony.

(7) Laurent-Charles Féraud born February 5, 1829 in Nice and died December 19, 1888 in Morocco, is a French Arabist. Involved as an interpreter in the military colonization of Algeria then diplomat, he is considered as an important historical reference of the Constantine. From the chronology of his biography (El-Wafi, M, 1977).

military officers informed about all situations (security, statistics, social, etc.) of the country. Mr. Melchior Joseph Eugène Daumas⁹ (politician & military) writes: “This institution aims to ensure the lasting pacification of the tribes by a just and regular administration, as to prepare the way for our colonization, our trade, by maintaining of public security, the protection of all legitimate interests and the increase of the well-being of the natives” (Yacono, X, 1953)¹⁰.

All these milestones attest to the imprint of the service of the military engineers in the implementation of the first establishment of the Moslem religion. It has been provided with all the physical means for its defense; but also to guarantee its domination over its immediate environment: control and census of the movements operating in its field of action: “In such a context, it is hardly surprising that the achievements of this period are revealed the queues of an economy policy more often than those of a real creative impulse ...” (Burth-Levetto, S, 1996). A desire for respect and tolerance seems to be displayed in the domineering, to ensure a commercial and safe interest with the rest of the population. There was, therefore, a major preoccupation to gain a confidence in the Arab, to make their administration easier and to create “interests” favorable to its domination.

Moreover, this attitude remained valid only for some monuments of the Arab cult, the colonial administration considered their assumption in charge as useless considering the state of dilapidated found and the important budget, which they cause for their conservation and maintenance¹¹. As the example of the parts of

(9) Melchior Joseph Eugène Daumas: Was a French military, writer and politician born on October 4, 1803 in Delémont (Switzerland) and died in Camblanes on April 29, 1871 (Wikipedia, 2017).

(10) This is what a note, emanating from the direction of Arab affairs on July 8, 1847 in Algiers, quotes: «The arretes, were all written in the same spirit, with the same thought that wanted to provide the commanding general officers provinces of Algeria, the means to be exactly informed on the situation of the Arab country, to know the state of the public mind, to collect the elements of statistics, to monitor the indigenous leaders invested by us, and to make the tribes appreciate the benevolence of the French authorities towards them », CAOM F80/1676.

(11) This situation applies to a large number of mosques in the city of Tlemcen, chosen by the Historic Monuments Commission for its historical character, for the study of Arabic art. The architect Edmond Duthoit was attached to carry out this mission in 1872. (Oulebsir, N, 2004).

the great masjed of Tlemcen, this had to be sacrificed to make way for the new alignment of the city. Here is a passage from a report that the architect Edmond Duthoit wrote in 1875. He was in charge of the mission of recognition of the state of conservation of so-called “Arab” monuments, and decide on the priority restorations to undertake. “After having studied on the spot the planned or running works for the release of the Grand Masjed of Tlemcen, I think it is not surprising that complaints have been made by Muslims. The parts of this masjed that are affected by the layout of the new streets are in very bad condition and ready to fall on their own. They are, however, of little importance and offer no interest” (Duthoit, E, 1875).

In 1861, while Setif was in the process of transformation and development, it was going to be a “subject” for the soldier and amateur photographer, Gustave de Courcival¹². Passing through this region of the North East to South

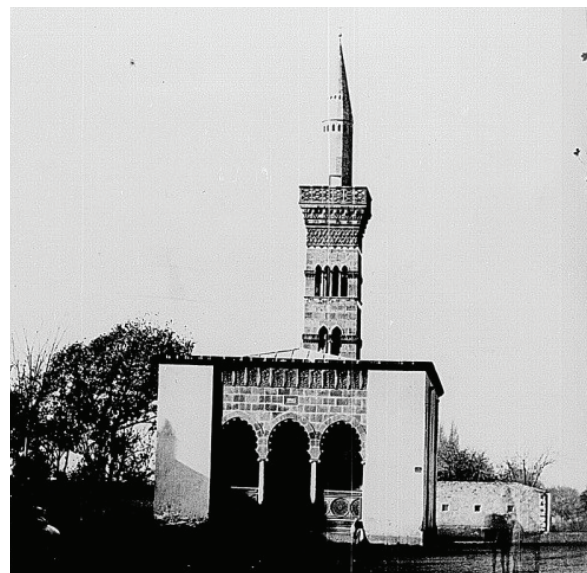


Figure 7. Photo by Gustave de Courcival 1861 (N ° 09), the East face of the masjed. Source : BNF EMG SG WE-25.

(12) Cavalry officer with the third regiment of chasseurs, the marquis Stellaye Baigneux de Courcival stays in Algeria from September 1861 to July 1865. Member of the expeditionary column of Souf in 1861 and 1862, he realizes at the beginning of his stay one of the first photographic reports on the north-east of Algeria, from Sétif to the Hodna and Aurès mountains, to the great Saharan oases of Souf and Touggourt. On his return to France, he became a member of the French Society of Photography in 1869 and the Geographical Society in 1872. His work consisted of about 150 pictures was exhibited at the International Congress of Geographic Sciences in Paris in 1875. In “Ils ont photographié Biskra”, Collection de la société de la géographie, Paris, (2016).

designation, and to record the traces of his trip, this passionate photographer, will deliver us extraordinary images of rare historical value on the masjed El Atik and its urban environment which was being constructed at a time when photography had become a tool used by the colonial administration to report on its progress, and to glorify its supremacy with a metropolitan public.

The first snapshot listed under view 09, representing the masjed with part of its perimeter around, and the second snapshot that of the Arab Bureau under view 11. These two shots recorded at the bottom of the geography society¹³, evoke at the photographer a way to domesticate this place, make it more familiar by the construction of images and moods to encourage the desire for travel. This iconography shows an immediate reading, which must show a reality that does not suggest a contradiction with the image that is being forged “the colonial project” at work: a pacified and prosperous country where the future is promising.

3.2 Architectural Study:

This masjed El Atik is distinguished by architectural features different from what we know of these cult institutions in the region since the advent of Islam in North Africa (Bourouiba, R, 1986).

It wasn't used until three years later that is to say around the year 1848, according to the inscriptions of mosaic inside, “... The masjed begun in 1845 was completed in 1848; a sum of 64,000 francs was spent there. The building contains on the ground floor a vestibule divided into three parts, one of which, the middle one, overlooks the entrance to the sanctuary; the one on the left contains a stairway leading to the stands intended for women, and the one on the right contains a basin with a tap designed to wash the bodies of the deceased. From the vestibule, we enter the masjed¹⁴ ... “. The use of certain terms such as the “sanctuary” to designate “the prayer room”, or as “the tribunes” to designate the extension of this prayer hall into “mezzanines”, confirms

(13) Captain Gustave De Courcival: 107 shots of Algeria in 1861-1862, Don of Captain Bernard in 1884, BnF, fonds de la Société de Géographie, (SGE SG WE-25).

(14) Centre des archives d'Outre-mer (CAOM), Aix-en-Provence, IN22.

the ambiguity of its schema in military engineering. This brief description mentioned in the project of alignment of the city of 1846, in the chapter “Masjed”, suggests the lack of tradition in the construction of this kind of establishment; intended for a population of which a major part of manners is still unknown to them at the beginning of conquest.

Initially, the execution work was carried out by a troop of soldiers attached to the engineers, before they were entrusted in the case of the civil villages to be created, the military convicts after 1840, then to the troops of soldiers out of service. However, progressively, the work was be carried out by workers recruited from newcomers or natives employed by contractors (Féraud, L-C, 1871).

3.3 A masjed in the Cliché of a Church:

Many authors have studied the relationship of the masjed with civilizations prior to that of Islam and especially the Greco-Roman and Byzantine civilizations. The hypotheses put forward on this subject concern both the formation of the architecture of the masjed, the origin of its different parts and the design and sources of inspiration of the decorative elements. Thus, we have found links between the organization of the prayer hall and that of the basilica, between the form of some minarets and those of the Byzantine bell-towers, between the gallery that precedes the prayer hall and the “narthex” of the churches, between the mihrab and the classic niche ... etc. The existence of influences and relations between civilizations which are manifested in architecture is generally accepted by all, so it is no longer to be demonstrated.

By observing the plan of alignment of the city of 1846, the masjed of modal dimension, formed the South-West angle of the place thus having a rather comfortable situation; we say “strategic”, to receive a careful architectural treatment, it was not the case. It was imprisoned in a simple parallelepipedic volume, topped with a tiled roof.

The schema that emerges is that of a “church-hall” without its transept, it is also on this cliché that will be built the parish church of Ain Arnat¹⁵ planned for the community of Swiss settlers of the

(15) A municipality at 7 km, north of Sétif.



Figure 8. El Atik masjed and the Arab office
Source : (Geneva company of the Swiss settlers of Setif), CAOM 3L23.

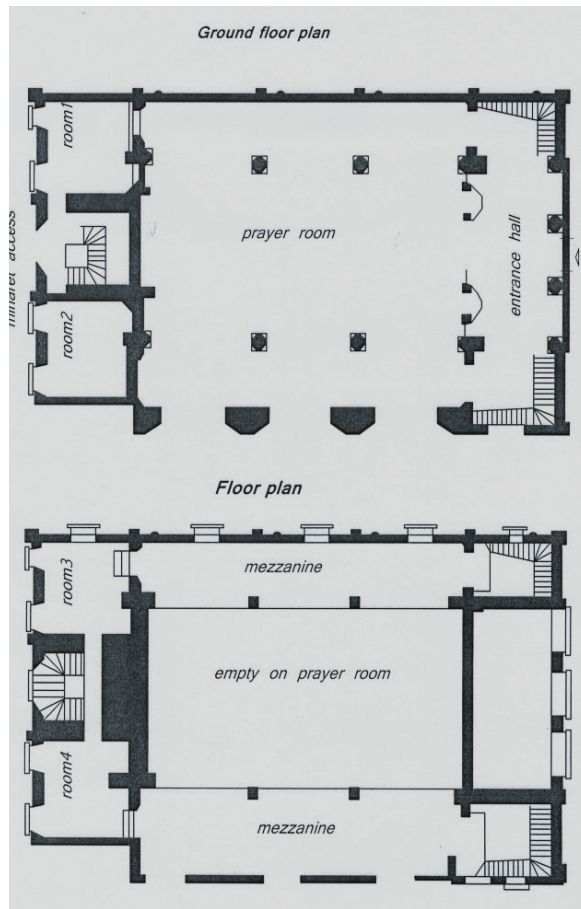


Figure 9. Ground floor plan and Floor (El Atik Mosque, Setif). Source : Authors

Geneva company¹⁶ in 1856 (CAOM 2N56 / 1), then the Saint-Monique church of Setif in 1867 (CAOM 2N79). This church plan with a “basilical” plan, develops in length, and often meets the needs of a small community, with limited financial means.

The minaret, and by analogy with the bell tower, is positioned at the back marking the axis of symmetry East / West of the work. Its entrance is oriented towards the square on the east side, towards which the growth of the city is looming.

At first glance, the masjed does not have a great artistic richness or an exceptional constructive technique, contrary to what one usually sees in masjeds that become famous and mark their time. We think (this is our hypothesis) that this artistic poverty, seems to be linked to a lack of tradition, supported by a conjuncture where the orientations of the ministry of the war are summed up to build “economically and rationally”¹⁷: “the rule of gold stated by the War Department can be summed up in one word: economy ... [...] in practice, departmental officials emphasize the convenience of buildings, recommending architects the utmost simplicity for their project” (Burth-Levetto, S, 1996).

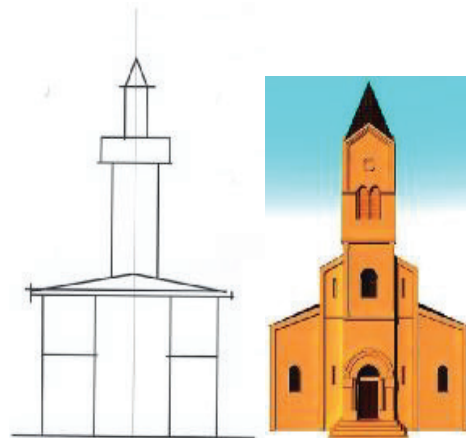


Figure 10. Similarity between the mocked El Atik and the Church-halle (Saint-Monique church of Setif in 1867)
Source : Authors

(16) The Geneva Company of the Swiss Colonies is a society of colonisation in Algeria in the region of Setif which was created by Swiss businessmen in 1853. Napoleon III who had stayed in exile in Switzerland and which had been helped by men of business conceded by a decree of August 26, 1853: 20 000 hectares of land in the region of Setif. (Wikipedia).

(17) These provisions go a few years later, lead to the many standards of construction in Algeria, until the establishment of the service of civil buildings around 1850. (CAOM 1N1) Aix-en-Provence.

The qualifiers that apply to its aesthetics are: sobriety, homogeneity, classicism, and clarity. We then asked the question about this particularity that made it famous in the region. It can be said without exaggeration that with this building a new architecture suddenly appears. A suddenness in the design, which has no intermediate stage at the moment when the city is being born from the ashes¹⁸.

The first highlight: the layout of the main entrance overlooking the square, will therefore force the study of military engineering to use a large vestibule at this entrance to circumvent the constraint of the orientation from the prayer hall, dictated by Mecca's position in the East "Kibla"¹⁹ the only "sacred" aspect in the cult space of a masjid²⁰. (Golvin, L, 1989).

The second highlight: on the ground floor, the two side arcaded²¹ sides participate in the space of the large prayer room. They will be arranged on the floor in "mezzanines", a way of gaining the surface relative to the important number of the Moslem population of this time²². Two staircases, arranged on both sides of the vestibule, serve them.

The third highlight: the architectural style of the minaret, some of which (the upper part is conical), recalls the primitive masjeds of "Brousse / or Bursa" in Turkey, probably an image that the military genius has encountered during the exploration of the territory as early as 1840²³. Moreover, and despite the ministerial recommendations, few buildings will ultimately

(18) The origin of the current Sétif, was made on the investment of traces of «Roman» era, at the time of the arrival of the troops of General Galbois on December 15, 1838. Appellation often used in conjunction with a term expressing an idea Creation (Rozet, C. A, & Carette, A-E-H, 1885).

(19) Materialized by the «Mihrab», the niche where the Imam who directs the prayer is placed in the direction of Mecca, according to a study that we conducted a few years ago, it is the only Quranic prescription, therefore obligatory in the world organization of the mosque space. In the El Atik mosque, there are two «mihrabs» in an Ogive opening arc, made of plaster, placed on either side of the main entrance of the prayer room, and later this access will be closed, to receive the unique mihrab in the form of a glass door and closed. (Papadhópoulos, A, 1989).

(20) Ibidem

(21) What we call «collateral», analogy made to the church.

(22) In this regard, Ch. Féraud quotes a population of 8,000 to 10,000 souls who frequented the market at the entrance to the city near the said mosque.

(23) Military and scientific expedition organized between 1840 and 1845, solicits scientists chosen from rigorous criteria and provided with precise instructions in order to carry out a methodical inventory of the country under different aspects.

address the "Moorish genre", often considered too expensive during these first decades of colonization²⁴.

The fourth highlight: the iconography of Gustave de Courcival of 1861 does not show the existence of the yard in the South, which would eventually become the outer space receiving the extension of the prayer room, known in the tradition of others Maghreb masjeds. This space "yard" vital to shelter the "ablutions", does not materialize physically, it is just a free space disposed to the south (alignment plan of 1846). This lack of tradition in the genius seems obvious, thinking that a simple "Laundry" could make use.

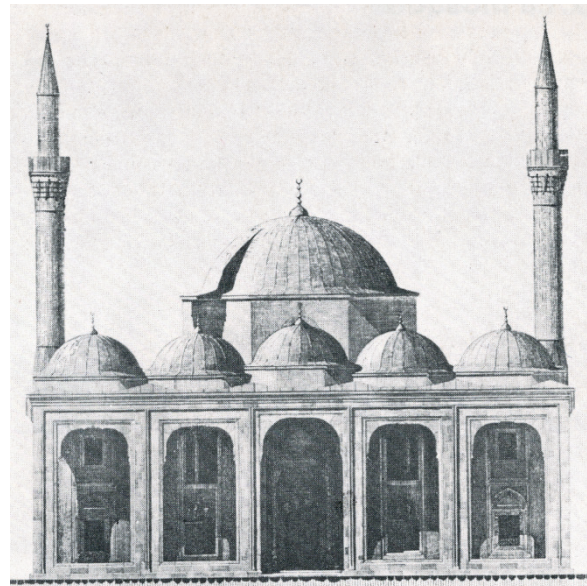


Figure 11. Mosque of Yildirim Bayazid in Brouse (Facade) (according to B. Unsal)

Source : Ulya Vogt-Göknil, Turquie ottomane, Office du livre, Fribourg 1965.

3.4 Minaret & Roof

Not dependent on any Qur'anic prescription on its location, the minaret is often laid out / or built where the Mouadhine has the greater possibility of being heard, and where the technical possibility is offered. He often takes care of a "religious" art like that, which marked the pre-colonial period in Algiers, Tlemcen or

(24) Revue du Monde Musulman & de La Méditerranée- RMMM-, "Figures de l'orientalisme en architecture", Aix-en-Provence, Ed- isud, N° 73/74, (1996), op-cit., p, 146.

Constantine. In the masjed “El Atik”, the expertise of the military genius, already put to test in the projects of religious buildings (church, chapel, etc.), will be the object of a conversion of the “bell tower”. This usually takes the front position on the facade above a porch and on the axis of symmetry of the building), in “minaret” at the rear of the building - leaving the front square in the vestibule to solve the problem of access to the prayer room.

The best-known forms of minarets in the Maghreb, particularly in Algeria, are: the square tower and the octagonal tower (R. Bourouiba 1986). The minaret of El Atik that rise to a height of 15 meters represents the most visible part of the work and is composed of three parts:

- A base on which rests the square section body where the 1.10 meter wide stairway is built and revolves around a 1.15 meter square central core, and has 27 steps.

- A Lantern: cylindrical in height 4.70 meters and 1.40 meters in diameter, surmounted by a crown (cone) capped with a ridge consisting of a metal rod threading a crescent and a star.

- A main tower: formed of three registers separated by a band of ceramics, we distinguish from bottom to top: (a) a first rectangular register dug out of two niches in broken arches. (b) A second smaller register formed of four arches on columns. (c) A third smaller cone-shaped register serving as a base for the platform; featuring a diamond-shaped decoration on all four sides.

The whole evokes the very first masjed of Burse (Turkey), in “its simplicity stripped and without charm”, and its “bare walls”²⁵. A sobriety that does not hide this rationality in its implementation, despite the light touches of decorations on its exterior.

The prayer room usually surmounted by a dome or a flat roof. In the masjed “El Atik”, it is quickly replaced by a wooden closure, receiving a cover in mechanical tiles. This tile called “Marseille tile”, arrived in Philippeville (Skikda)

(25) Le Baron Joseph Von Hammer-Prugstall : Austrian diplomatist and orientalist. He is known as a translator of oriental literature and considered as one of the founders of the scientific study of the Ottoman Empire. Bibliographical notes year 1857. Notice bibliographique de M. Joseph baron de Hammer-Purgstall, Voyage de Constantinople à Brousse, Tübingen, 1818, (Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1852).

by boat as ballast of merchant ships from Marseille. Local artisans quickly learned to cover a large number of buildings with this indispensable product, given the climate of the region²⁶. From the inside, this space is covered with a false ceiling made of very simple strips of wood, assembled in star-shaped polygons or rosettes. The stone was immediately used for the construction of this sacred building given its abundance in the region, unlike wood and brick.

4. Influence of the “El Atik” Masjed on Reconversion of the Church St-Monique in Masjed (Ibn Badis)

The Ibn Badis masjed, which dates from the conversion of the Sainte-Monique Catholic Church in 1970, retains the different features of the latter, particularly its relationship to the urban (footprint, alignment, esplanade, directions access, etc.). The static ease of the prayer room did not upset the spatial dynamics of the church, which resulted in the staging of the raised nave. Representing the path of salvation that leads to the altar: a symbol of communion with “Christ”, insofar as the spatial unity has remained the same, and only the “mihrab” has taken the place of the apse. This influence between civilizations was already been reported (like the prayer hall of the masjed with that of the basilica) (Sauvaget, J, 1947).

The innovation comes from the reconversion of the two aisles (North & South) capped with a roof to a single slope, in two “mezzanines”, overlooking the great room, after substituting the floor for the roof (this way of ‘operate is inspired by the neighboring masjed of El Atik). The location of the bell tower on the main facade was replaced by a dome on the main entrance porch. Moreover, both sides of the West Transept had received the two new minarets. It must be acknowledged that the initial constructive measures had been exploited to make this conversion gesture successful.

The tiled roof was maintained for the cover of the large prayer room and its outbuildings. These are the main features that held us back.

(26) Region very known for the many snowfalls in the year (high plateaus Setifians, altitude 1330 meters).

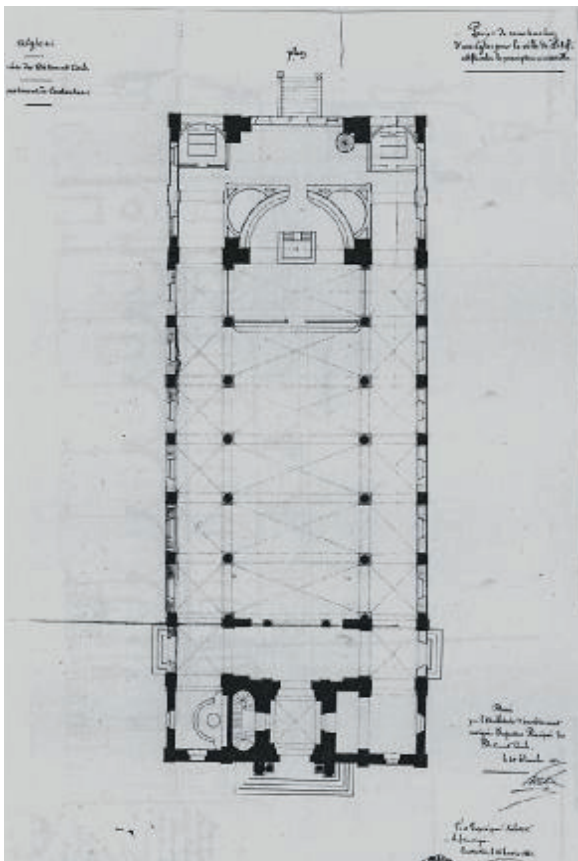
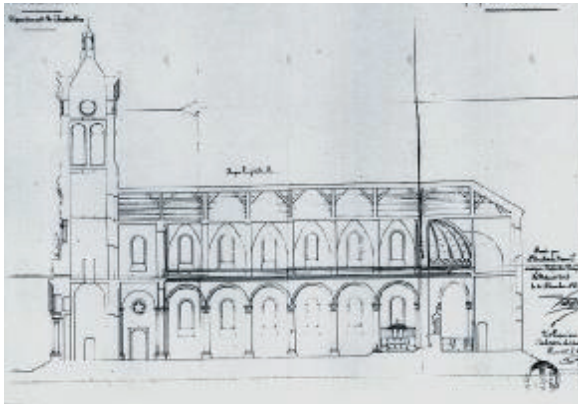


Figure 12. Ground floor plan and Longitudinal section of the St Monique church (1861). Source : CAOM 2N79

4.1 The important fact:

This metamorphosis of the church into a masjed carefully treated on the three sides: symbolic (architectural language), functional (use) and technical (adaptation), deserves to be reported. It was necessary to find in this work restored after the independence, the image and the use of a masjed. At that time, there is no masjed in

Sétif with a floor for prayer²⁷.

This innovation was not followed in a direct way, knowing that at that time (1970s) the construction of a masjed is not done every day. It was not until fifteen years later, with the socio-religious evolution and the emergence of neighborhood associations (whether a subdivision or a group of collective buildings), all claimed “their own masjed”. The phenomenon will take a phenomenal evolution, and the masjeds begin to grow like champignons (mushroom). It was from there that we saw this new” plan schema”²⁸ manifest.

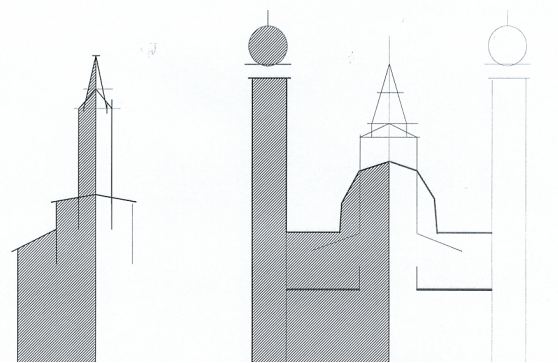


Figure 13. Transformation of the profil of the St Monique Church in profile of Ibn Badis masjed
Source : Authors

Starting from our observation on the study of several planimetric variants of masjeds in Setif, which can be extended to other cities, given the similarities they present with this city (social, urban, climatic, geographical similarities, etc.). We managed to weave a fairly clear portrait of its model, particularly on the “functional and technical” disposition of the prayer space. In conclusion, this extension of prayer space takes on the floor the appearance of two wings arranged in the form of parallel bands or in three wings in the form of a “U”, or an “L”, giving on the emptiness of the large prayer room on the ground floor. In this dynamic, the reference of the “type” plan of the masjed (contemporary) is that of the great masjed of the city, that of Ibn Badis.

(27) Only mosque of the time, after that of El Atik, called «Djamaa Aarab» located in the upper suburb of the station (langare).

(28) The prayer room, usually located on the ground floor, will have a vertical extension, in the form of «Mezzanines» in the form of parallel wings or in the shape of a «U» or «L» shape, overlooking the ground floor. - pavement.

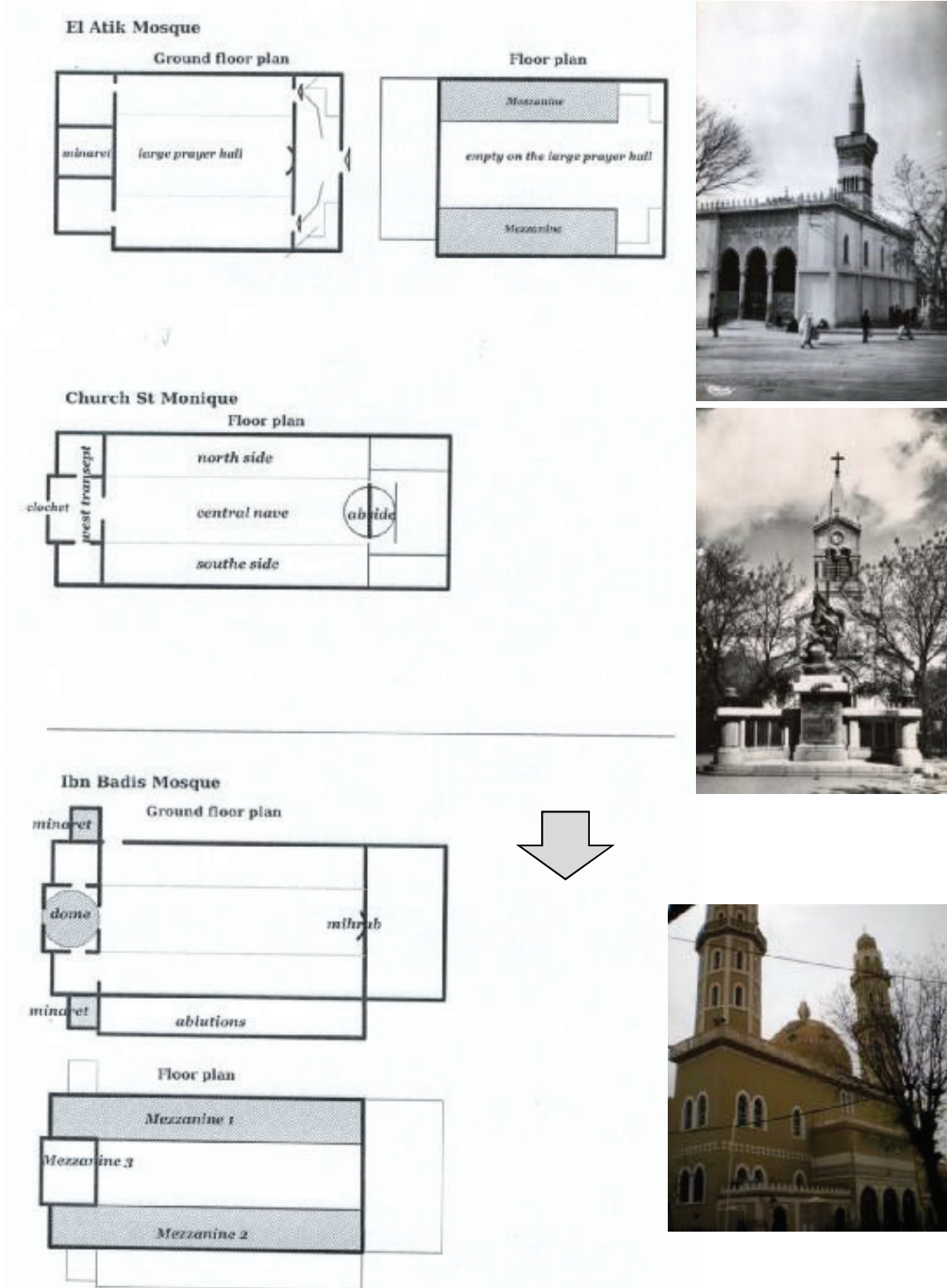


Figure 14. Influence of the architecture of the plan of the Mosque El Atik on the transformation of the Church St Monique into masjid Ibn Badis (1970). Source : Authors

5. Conclusion

It can be said without exaggeration that with the El Atik Masjed, an architecture suddenly appears: neither its comparison with the architectural style of the masjeds of the Maghreb of its time, nor its comparison with the techniques proper to the Christian Middle Ages, can give an explanation for this situation: The use of two lateral mezzanines, as complementary spaces under the same height of the great prayer hall, marks an important turning point, confirmed a century later by the reconversion of the ex-church Sainte-Monique to masjed of Ibn Badis in 1970 (this innovation is inspired by the use of “mezzanines as complementary space upstairs). If we have spoken of suddenness in design, it is because there is practically no intermediate stage announcing this new formula. The entrance, whose importance was very great in the public establishments of this symbolism, is reduced

here to a simple porch or vestibule which occupies the whole facade. The lack of ornamentation and the “nudity” of the masjed is replaced by a strategic urban situation in dialogue with its symbolic urban space (the place of the fountain). The quality of this sacred edifice derives from the perfection of the work and the balance of the proportions and not from a rich decoration, a kind of “rebirth”, where the motto was the adoption of a rationality and a rigor at the level of the plan. The French colonial administration, wanting to set up a masjed in the nascent urban setting of 1845, to dissuade and gain confidence among the Muslims, has succeeded in sketching a scheme that for a long time had remained the essential model of the plan architecture of masjeds in Setif. This masjed challenges us today as an architectural heritage and its preservation and preservation will always be our duty to remember.



Figure 15. Situation of the masjeds « Samples » in Setif. Source : Google map

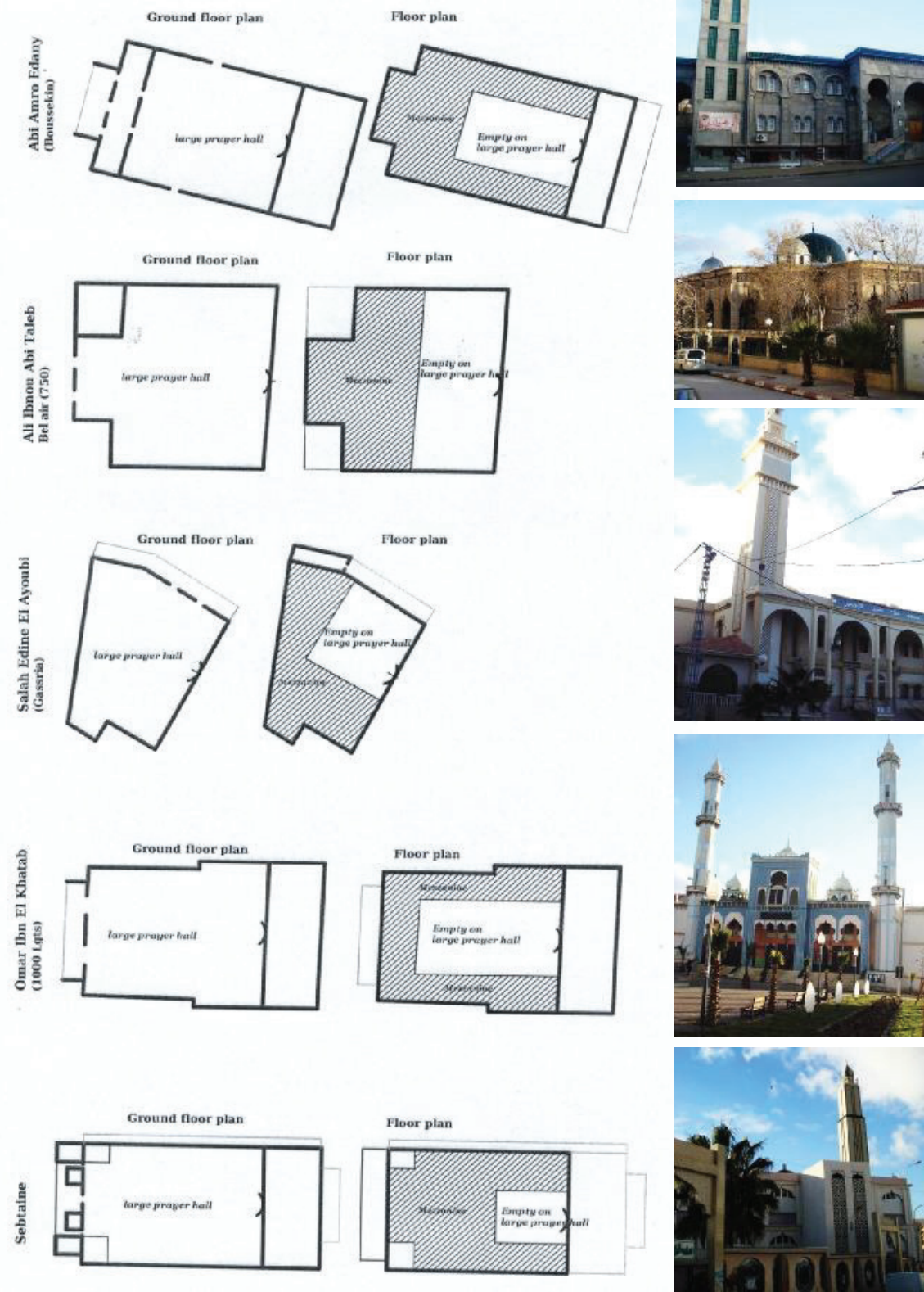


Figure 16. Essay typology of some masjeds in Setif: Impact of vertical extension space (Mezzanine) inspired by that of the first El Atik mosque. Source: Authors

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لذا سوف نرى كيف ظهر مشروع هذا المسجد بموقعه الخاص وطرافة أساليبه المعمارية وأهميته في دراسة صفحة من تاريخ مدينة سطيف. وكيف استعمل تصميم مخططه بطريقة مجدية أصبح «نموذجاً» اعتمد في الكثير من المساجد الحديثة كفضاء إضافي. وخاصة في تحويل كنيسة سانت مونيك إلى مسجد ابن باديس سنة ١٩٧٠.

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