



---

## THE POLICY OF FRANCE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE (Algiers model)

KALTOUM MEIDANE  
University of Algiers 2  
kal.meid06@gmail.com

Received: 24/ 01/ 2023

Accepted: 06/ 02/ 2023

### **Abstract:**

This article addresses the history of the city of Algeria in the Ottoman era and the destiny that came to it after it was subjected to French occupation, which destroyed its structure and enslaved its people.

We also address its geographical space and features that have been demolished as well as the colonial planning that has transformed the Islamic city into a European city.

**Keywords:** Intervention; city; Destroying; Demolition; French occupation.



## **INTRODUCTION**

We will try in this intervention, shed light on the history of Algeria in the Ottoman period and the fate of, after it came under brutal occupation and destruction of its people enslaved, that of French colonialism in 1830. It is this history for the city, the beginning of its decline, and extended recession, and obscure landmarks.

- How was the Algiers or "Casbah" before the French occupation?
- What is the fate of the urban heritage of the Islamic Ottoman Empire and after colonization?
- Which Urban type was built after 1830?

Questions we will try to answer on them in this intervention.

### **1- Algiers before the French occupation:**

Algiers is one of the most important cities of Algeria, not for being the capital of Algeria, but also for the role it played during the periods of history.

This city was built by "Bologhin Ibn Ziri" in 349 AH / 960 AD, at the request of his father, "Ziri Ibn Manad," with other cities, As "Miliana" and "Medea”



<sup>1</sup> on the ruins of an ancient city Phoenician Roman, and on the land of the tribe "Beni Mezghena". It was called in the Phoenician Roman "Icosuim" which means the bird.

However, the name "Algiers" means a group of islands<sup>2</sup>, that was in front of the port of Algiers, as the world's geographic "Bakri" pronounced: "Dzair", this noun is still famous on its habitants : "Dzirya"<sup>3</sup>.

Europeans have deliberately distorted the name followed lately by the French. Spanish for example called it "argel", Italians named it "Algieri" and the British and the Dutch called it "Algiers". On the hole the French gave it the name of "Alger".

Even with the large difference, these names mean "Algiers". There is still an old document Cartographic which belongs to 1275 AD, named, "Aldjazair", archived in the Italian city of Genoa.

Algiers, took its political and civilizational dimension since it was taken by the Ottoman as the capital of "Ayala", until the date of the crash on 5 July 1830. On that date, were destroyed its landmarks and its Islamic ruins, and was built on its ruins a European stranger city, in shape and geometries<sup>4</sup>, differs from the original's urban city, which was derived from the depth of historical authenticity, like most Arab cities which became a subsidiary of the Ottoman government.

The city of Algeria in the Ottoman period was well organized, contrary to the opinion of some Europeans, who

## **The Policy of France in the Destruction of the Ottoman Heritage (Algiers model)**

---

believed that some Arab cities are in lack of the administrative organization<sup>5</sup>. And remained so organization until its occupation in 1830. The urban composition, and their houses are identical, and their roofs overlooking the sea<sup>6</sup>, and its markets the center of negotiations and public authority. As there were many of the mosques and shrines and domes<sup>7</sup>, and devised to a lower city which was the part that was inhabited by princes, and rulers, and sea's captains, and rich, also the consuls. This part was demolished and turned into a yard wide range of military parades. And upper trachea or "mountain" where the "House of Sultan" and "Palace of the Dey," inhabited by people with different trades<sup>8</sup>, and this part was not covered by the demolition.

Homes adjacent to each other, and be able to move from one house to another through their roofs, narrow roads, ending corridors and exits and entrances forbidden to pass by, only traffic from well-known.

Casbah failure are numerous and residencies with various tasks, such as "Palace Albardo" surrounded by numerous gardens, as well as "Dar Aziza" located Steering the lower of the city and an interview of a mosque called "Ketchaoua," and "Hassan pasha's palace," and "Palace of El Jeneina," which the Algerian call "Old house of sultan", Center for political decisions until 1817, before moving to the upper trachea.. Casbah contains five doors, which are: "Bab Jdid", "Bab Azzun", "Bab El Oued," "Bab Al Bahr", Bab el-Dzira" and called the door of Jihad, all were closed at the sunset and opened on the sun rise, Casbah also contains 12200 homes of different sizes, with large courtyards



called "middle house", and seven large barrackments for the military force, Sixty-Moorish coffee In addition of 13 large mosques, a 109 small mosques, 32 Chapels, and 12 Zaouia<sup>9</sup>, sits on an area of more than 50 hectares, but when the city was destroyed by the French occupation it has shrunk to 18 hectares<sup>10</sup>.

All of this located architectural heritage in the city, has made many foreign travelers, writers, and visitors, recognize the important managerial role which was played by the city, which is exceeded in some European cities organized at that time<sup>11</sup>.

## **2- Algiers during the occupation (demolitions, destruction, confiscation)**

In this section we will try to address the geographical space of the city, identify the physical features after the occupation, and the fact of being demolished and vandalised, which produced a European city.

Algiers passed by two periods:

1 - Stage of invasion and occupation and the destruction and obliteration of landmarks, where the French occupation created a space for the construction of the new European city depending on the original one.

2 - Stage of rupture history, lived after the occupation of Algiers, when it had to cohabitate with a strange pattern, controlled denier, brought with its Western civilization, turning it

## The Policy of France in the Destruction of the Ottoman Heritage (Algiers model)

---

violently and slowly to a new city benefited from the European element instead of the Muslim element. The latter were trapped in narrow spaces and marginalized. It also sought the French occupation to establish a policy of exclusion of Algerian society and empty the city out of its original inhabitant, whose number was still, thirty thousand people after the occupation. After that it left them only ten thousand, to build this monument colonial cemented a new political and economical system, strange to the population of Algiers. This new system would not have been achieved without exclusion and containment of the discharge and then a new way in mess and quick, which leads to negative results.

Looting of the French city after it fell, and after a desperate resistance by the population, destroying the city and property taken from their owners under the guise of public interest <sup>12</sup>. The demolition and destruction didn't stop, only with the beginning of the twentieth century <sup>13</sup>. Note that the demolitions were intended, occupier was looking at spaces to build a European city with a background of colonial urban forms that still exist to this day.

The occupation has destroyed many neighborhoods, where the number of homes seized by the occupier five thousand houses and issued more than three thousand, and destroyed nine hundred homes. Also religious institutions such as mosques and shrines and domes and even cemeteries didn't make it from destruction and effacement, and turned, to military and administrative interests, and to stables and cathedrals. And the



objective behind that is to eliminate the role of religious and cultural cohesion of the Algerian society, as well as achieving its objectives in the forefront of colonial Christianization and neglect<sup>14</sup>.

Before 1830, there was 176 religious institutions in Algiers, only 47 institutions survived after this date, and the same thing for the other institutions in the different cities of Algeria<sup>15</sup>.

#### A - Examples of some mosques of Algiers:

- Ketchaoua mosque: and its foundation dates back to the year 1612, expanded by Hassan Pasha in 1794 and located at the bottom of the city which "Duc de Rovigo "changed into a church in 1844.

- Esseyda mosque: built in 1560 AD, repaired by "Mohammed Pasha" between 1765-1766 m. In 1832, General "Clauzel" ordered its demolition, and built a military hospital instead<sup>16</sup>.

- Ali Betchine mosque: built in 1622, then turned to a Pharmacy in 1843 then to a church.

- Great Mosque: the oldest and largest mosque in Algiers built in 1097 AD, built by ", Yucef ibn Tachfin," when the city surrounded to the Almoravid state in 1082 AD, Andalusian architecture with nature, turned to a military barrack.

## The Policy of France in the Destruction of the Ottoman Heritage (Algiers model)

---

- The new mosque: built in 1660 AD, after the occupation turned into a store and then Rented for the properties. This followed the demolition and begin the occupation authorities to build a number of cathedrals<sup>17</sup>.

Also the occupation destroyed Algerian and Turkish cemeteries, and use the bones of the dead for commercial purposes, and move some of them to France. The construction materials have been stolen by the Europeans, such as: brick, marble and slate<sup>18</sup>, while not tampering with the graves of Jewish occupation<sup>19</sup>, note that the Treaty of surrender on 5 July 1830 AD, between the commander of French army "Marechal De Bourmon" and "Dey Hussein," states to respect the Islamic religion and the freedom to practice it<sup>20</sup>.

Zaouayas that were in Algiers, had imposed strict censorship and permanent, and was most of sheikhs and imams denied. Among them "Zaouyet Sidi Sid", "Zaouyet Ketchaoua," and "zaouyet Janissaries," and "zaouyet Sidi Ammar Altenesee," and "zaouyet Chakhton" and "zaouyet Great Mosque" and the others turned into a military barracks, French schools and pharmacies, and accessories for the French army, and the same determination for the South and west zaouya of Algeria. However the colonial administration, considered them as a threat to stability in Algeria, and a factor to cause disobedience and rebellion against it<sup>21</sup>.

The Coranic schools and Madrassas received, other than demolition, and around some of the storage warehouses of supplies, and, examples of this are:



- School Mosque Seyda: demolished in 1830.
- Khir eddine school: demolished in 1831<sup>22</sup>.

And what remains of the schools continued to perform its tasks under license from the Department of educational occupation, and subjected to strict censorship, which disrupted its social, cultural and religious role.

The Awqaf of Algeria, were considered by the occupation as the biggest obstacles that have hampered the colonial policy, note that this moratorium was before the occupation an administrative staff and a cost effective, without jeopardizing the transformation and social relations between the Algerians. Therefore, the occupation authorities have to stop the liquidation of property, and seized as a barrier to expansion in the country. It issued in the first weeks of occupation, a series of resolutions and decrees providing for immunity stripped Waqf property, so as to facilitate inclusion in the scope of doing business and real estate exchange, and thus possessed of the Europeans. And was leading the way is to use violence and force, aimed at the wall so the agreement between "Dey Hussein" and French General "Marechal De Bourmon" which provided for the respect for private property and freedom of religion of Islam.

When set up General "Clauzel" General Commander of the French army in Algeria, more than anyone else interested in the question of doing a complete inventory of the property, and see the property situation in Algeria, so he can grab it. Already

## The Policy of France in the Destruction of the Ottoman Heritage (Algiers model)

---

and do not pass the three months of inventory property in Algeria, until he confiscated it<sup>23</sup>.

wich are:

1 - Albaellk property (the state) and more than five thousand ownership in Algiers alone, including military barracks and public buildings and palaces of rulers.

2 - Private property: it is real estate and property of individuals present and absent.

3 – Property and endowments of private endowments and are intended to mosques, cemeteries, zaouaya , domes, and the public includes endowments and house endowments, and souboul el Kheirat<sup>24</sup> . The latters are all included to the "Domaine" or real property transferred to state-owned and subject to the orders of general law. Also incomes are at the disposal of the French administration, the owners without compensation and without maintenance, but not later than the occupation in the destruction of many of them and convert them to public facilities.

About property of the Turkish families who lived in the city of Algiers, which has been confiscated, the decision was issued on September 8th, 1830, just two months after the fall of Algiers, said that Turks stripped of their property, and transferred to the French state property, including property of "Dey Hussein" which are: seven houses , seven shops, a land in"Staouali" and an other in the city. Also property of Beys and the difference Janissaries, and all its institutions "to Mecca and



Medina"<sup>25</sup>. Note that the acquisition of property endowments, is accompanied by looting theft, and break into the property, which were left by their owners, and became subsequently stable for the longevity of immigrants from "Spain", "Malta", "Germany", and "Italy"<sup>26</sup>. This has given the decision on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1830 m, three days for the owners native memorization and documents evidence of ownership or it will be confiscated. What is strange about the matter is that this decision also included absentees who had left the city after its fall<sup>27</sup>.

The decree of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1830 m, has authorized the Europeans the right to own endowments (Awkaf), and placed under the supervision of the Director-General for the benefit of public property or manage "Domaine." And resulted in this policy, that has turned many of the Waqf property to churches and medical centers and departments stores, including what has been closed, and then wrecking under false pretenses, was the expansion of roads and the establishment of squares<sup>28</sup>.

Also raised the Act of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1844, and immunity on the Wakf of real estate transactions, allowing the Europeans to capture much of the land endowment, which account for half of agricultural land. While the, imposition of a decree July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1846, the landowners of Algerians to prove title, and only turn into state ownership, then ownership of the settlers<sup>29</sup>.

On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1848, a decree was issued, buildings, mosques, shrines, zaouaya, and all Islamic buildings, were put

## **The Policy of France in the Destruction of the Ottoman Heritage (Algiers model)**

---

under the management of property of the French state, meaning for the inclusion of Waqf property under the management of the French state, or "domaine"<sup>30</sup>. And by the year 1863, the ambitions of state extended property to benefit all rural endowments, and originally, belonging to the local zaouaya<sup>31</sup>.

We conclude from this, that the above decisions, were designed in its entirety for the confiscation of all that would save money for Islamic institutions, aimed at disrupting the performance of religious and cultural, while the delayed management of the occupation in the allocation of part of the revenues, to support the association missionary, which dispatched to Algeria, to contribute to the project of religious evangelist.

### **3- Urban colonial Planning of el-Djazair**

The urban planning developed by the French occupation, concerns the Islamic architectural heritage and the Ottoman in the city of el djazair, was based on a policy of destruction and "Europeaniser", according to the project which responds to a policy based on the glorification of the power of the occupier, and show its superiority<sup>32</sup>. This glorification appeared in geometric shapes and, interfaces in the streets<sup>33</sup>, such as what happened in the Lower City district first considered for the establishment of the Europeans.

Army was a priority, as it created a large public square to contain Corps soldiers called the "Government Square"<sup>34</sup>. This scene necessitated the demolition of 400 houses original to be



configured, and the justification for the occupation in that defense, and did not stop the demolition, but also covered other areas such as neighborhood west of the city "Bab azzoun"<sup>35</sup>, Lower the Casbah, which had a "Seyeda mosque", shops, tanners, leather makers, and commercial markets, note that this area was the most important gathering activities, and a center of decisions, and has the largest mosques and. "Palace of dey" (Jenina).

In 1846, the destruction of the wall of the city, that was 3200 m long, and penetrated five-door topped towers which were fortified to protect it from raids. Since the original town built at the foot of Mount called "Bouzareah," and the difficulty of terrain, took refuge to the expansion of this city of the European from the North West towards "Bab el oued" and south-east towards "Bab azzoun,"<sup>36</sup>, where the new European neighborhood appeared called "Michelet" and district "Telemly" and "Mustafa Pasha" and all of these neighborhoods was an extension of the city center the new European, which started from the neighborhood of marine Casbah lower towards the east, and contributed to the loss of the functional role of the ancient city "stalk" 36.

During the first decade of occupation, there were signs of the form of urban colonial that appear completely different to its original development, and noted that the process of reconstruction and construction in the beginning, lacked the scheme to create a comprehensive, thoughtful, and characterized the process nature of circumstantial and functional to meet the

## **The Policy of France in the Destruction of the Ottoman Heritage (Algiers model)**

---

needs of war and the military. The first clear outline for the expansion of European city, it is the one seen in 1846, and his engineer, "Guiauchain"<sup>37</sup> containing the Thruway and a group of neighborhoods such as "neighborhood Isly" and "St. Constantine" and "Street of the Empire." It is not over half a century of French occupation of Algeria, even beginning to take shape European city, which appeared at first glance that it had at the expense of the demolition of a large spent the rest of the walls and the old ramps and many neighborhoods. As the home of every three homes for the change in the original architecture and even its population area<sup>38</sup>, the Casbah became just a small neighborhood of the new European center of the city (38)

This considered a period of 1870-1930 AD, a period of creativity, innovation and creativity of engineering colonialism because of preparations for the centenary celebrations of the occupation of Algeria (1830-1930), emerged as the new architecture represented a break with the architecture of the nineteenth century, and the desire is to leave the hallmarks of the occupier all that done. Also the factors that helped the urbanization of the city, is the economic prosperity that brought viticulture, which was the most important source of capital<sup>39</sup>.

In an attempt to contain the original urban art of the city, the occupation built buildings with Islamic style, such as "Central Post" and "Palace Albardo" and "School of Fine Arts," is that this pattern of urban disappeared in turn after the thirties, to be replaced by nature of the Mediterranean that has prevailed until 1962 .



#### **4- Conclusion:**

The French colonization took from Algiers its capital, and a starting point to pass the plans within the continent of Africa, moreover, mess with the city in a barbarous manner that made its indigenous population , refuse to live with this intruder who desecrated their holy places and spent a significant portion of their city slowly and firmly.

This city, which ranked among the World Heritage by UNESCO in 1992, was getting old in a way that threatened its final demise. It had been through biting and demolition, however, it remained steadfast to defend its identity for historical authenticity.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Belhamisi (Moulay): "*City of Aldjzair Ages*", Journal of El-Assala , the number 2. 1972,p63

<sup>2</sup> Lectures on the assets available in Algeria-Leschi (louis): *les feuilletsd'Eldjazair*, vol1,imprimerieFantana,Lchaix,Alger,1910, pp.50-51.

<sup>3</sup> Abou obeid el Bekri: *déscription de l'Afrique septentrionale*, maison Neuve, Paris, 1965, p 123; Dris (Nassima): ville mouvementée, espace publique, l'harmattan, 2002, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond (Andre), *the major Arab cities in the Ottoman era*, a translation of the spectrum Faraj, House thought for Studies and Publishing and Distribution, the first edition, Cairo, 1991, p. 91; Dris (N): Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 264.

<sup>8</sup> Devoulx (A): "*Les édifices religieux de l'ancien Alger*", typographie Bastide,Alger,1870,p119.

<sup>9</sup> Revue Africaine, vol 1, 1867, pp. 449-453.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond (Andre): Ibid, p 91.

<sup>11</sup> Dris (N): *op. cit.*, p 45.

<sup>12</sup> Bouaziz (Yahya): *colonial policy of publications during the Algerian People's Party from 1830 to 1954*, Office of University Publications, Algeria, 1995, p 76; Icheboudene (Larbi): *Histoire et capitale de destin national*, ed casbah.

<sup>13</sup> Alger, 1997, p. 45.



<sup>14</sup> Bouaziz (Yahya): *The situation of religious institutions in Algeria during the 19th and 20th centuries*, Journal of Culture, Issue 63, May - July 1981, Algeria, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Klein (H): *Feuillets d'Eldjazair, comité du vieil Alger*, T2, ed du tell, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> De Rovigo: Born in 1774 France, a general war was appointed Commander in Chief in Algeria 28/12/1831 knew his repression and crimes against Algerians and around the mosque, which is "Ketchaoua" to the church in 1844. See: Khoudja (H): *le miroir*, la bibliothèque Arabe, ed sindbad, Paris 1985, p157.

<sup>17</sup> Klein (H), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Bulletin municipal de la ville d'Alger, séance de 12 Juin 1899, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> Turin(Yvonne), *L'affrontement culturel de l'Algérie colonial (1830-1880)*, Alger 1983, p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Abu Qasim (Saadellah), *Historical Culture of Algeria*, vol5, ed el guerb el islamy, Bairut 1998, p. 56.

<sup>22</sup> Ageron (Ch, R), *Algerian Society in the Ideological and colonial laboratory*, P.u.f,Paris,1979, p. 120.

<sup>23</sup> Julien (Ch, A), *History of Algerian contemporary*, P.U.F, Paris 1964, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Saidouni (Nasr eddine), *Financial system of the Ottoman period, 1800-1830*,sned, Alger, 1979, pp. 139, 148.

<sup>25</sup> Bouaziz (Y), *Algeria's foreign relations with the countries of Europe and the Mamluks*, 1500-1830, Alger 1986, p. 136.

<sup>26</sup> El-Mili (M.M), *Algeria's history in the ancient and modern*, V3,Enahda, Bairut, 1964 , p.p. 307-317.

<sup>27</sup> Al İbrahimi (M.B), *Insights Eyes*, Alger 1971, p. 168.

## The Policy of France in the Destruction of the Ottoman Heritage (Algiers model)

---

- <sup>28</sup> Al Madani (A.T), *This is Algeria*, Quairo, 1959, p. 93.
- <sup>29</sup> Godin (F), *The tenure status of Algeria*, Paris, 1830, p. 203.
- <sup>30</sup> Devoulx (A), » *Les édifices religieux de l'ancien Alger*, In Revue Africaine : 1862-1870, Alger pp 47-48.
- <sup>31</sup> Aumerat (JF), *La propriété Urbaine et le bureau de bienfaisance musulman d'Alger*, in R.A, 1899, p. 88.
- <sup>32</sup> Kaddache (m), *La vie poiltique à Alger* (1919-1939), Sned Alger 1970, p. 9.
- <sup>33</sup> Jordi (JJ) et Planche (Louis), *Alger 1860-1939*, Collection mémoires, Paris 1999, p. 27.
- <sup>34</sup> Lespes (R), *L'Evolution des idées sur l'Urbanisme Algérois de 1830 A nos jours*,in revue Chantiers nord Africains,n3, mars 1933, p. 3.
- <sup>35</sup> Wilaya d'Alger, *Annuaire statistique*, 1996, p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup> Icheboudene (L),op.cit,p.176.
- <sup>37</sup> Deluz (JJ), *L'Urbanisme et l'Architecture d'Alger*, Ed Liège,Paris,Mardaga, 1988, p. 1.
- <sup>38</sup> Kaddache (M), *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- <sup>39</sup> Decloîtres (R), Reverdy (JC), *l'Algérie des bidonvilles*, ed: Mouton and Coe, Paris 1961, p. 40.