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CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN.  
INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC FACTORS FOR A DISPARITY IN  
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SHORES

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN. INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC FACTORS FOR A DISPARITY IN CLASSIFICATION BETWEEN THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN SHORES

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## ABSTRACT

The notion of heritage protection, which in the 19th century was given the task of protecting endangered sites and monuments by focusing on their contribution to identity, history and science, no longer has the same role today, given that the economic contribution made by the development and tourism of heritage has become the driving force behind the heritage protection process. It is in this context that an abuse of heritage (Monumental, as described by Régis Debray in his book 1999) [1] has emerged in Western societies. This (heritage factory, as described by Nathalie Heinich in her book 2010) [2] has led to heritage inflation, raising a number of issues in terms of management, maintenance and enhancement.

This is perhaps the reason why the number of Italian cultural sites listed as world heritage exceeds the total number of cultural sites listed in the 8 countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The aim of this study is to

- Comparative study on the state of classification of cultural heritage between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.
- Synchronic study identifying the probable reasons for this disparity.
- Case study (French colonial heritage in Algeria), explaining the impact of perception on the recognition of a heritage and, moreover, on its enhancement.

1. Debray. R. (1999). « L'abus monumental ». Edition Fayard, 464 p

2. Heinich. N. (2009). « La fabrique du patrimoine, de la cathédrale à la petite cuillère ». Maison des sciences de l'homme. Collection Ethnologie de la France. 286 p

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## KEYWORDS

UNESCO, Urban Heritage, Classification, Perception, Recognition, Enhancement

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## Introduction

Once confined to the academic, technical, literary and artistic spheres and used by a restricted circle of specialists, the notion of heritage has gradually crossed these disciplinary boundaries to become an object of public debate, according to the seminal work of Choay (1992)<sup>1</sup> in 'L'Allégorie du patrimoine', which analyses this epistemological mutation of heritage representations.

The importance of this notion derives from its inescapable and undeniable integration into the social and economic life of populations, particularly those who benefit from the direct use of this heritage in the creation of wealth. This explains the late but accelerated interest in everything to do with heritage.

Nevertheless, the degree of interest accorded to urban heritage differs according to the country or region to which it belongs, with the heritage bulimia that characterises the European region turning into heritage anorexia in other regions such as Africa and the Arab world.

A number of factors can affect this heritage process, including whether or not this heritage is recognised as representative of the identity of a nation, or even of humanity. This recognition is the result of a perception that is the product of multiple influences.

## 1. Contrasting heritage around the Mediterranean

To dwell on the importance of heritage in general, and urban heritage in particular, would seem to be a prolix and endless exercise, suffice it to say that more than 70% of today's world heritage cultural sites are located in urban areas, according to UNESCO.

What's more, of the 1,326 world heritage sites inscribed by UNESCO up to 2024 and spread across 168 countries, 291 sites, or 22% of the world's heritage, are located in the 21 countries bordering the Mediterranean basin. And 5 of the 20 States parties to the 1972 Convention with the largest number of sites in 2024 are Mediterranean (Italy, France, Spain, Turkey and Greece).

A figure that does not reflect the rich natural and cultural heritage of this region, the cradle of several human civilisations: Anatolian, Aterian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Cretan, Greek, Roman, Andalusian, etc. The figures speak for themselves, with unequal geographical distribution between the north and south of the Mediterranean shore. How many world-famous sites are not on the Universal Heritage List?

- 12 sites have been on Syria's Tentative List since 1999, including the village of Maaloula, with its ancient troglodyte dwellings, its convents and its churches of the holy martyrs Sergius and Bacchus, well known in Christian tradition, the last village to speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus. Submitted on 8 June 1999.

- 9 sites have been on Lebanon's Tentative List since 1996, including Saida, one of the 3 largest cities of the Phoenician civilisation, and one of the oldest cities in the world with a 6800-year history.

- 12 sites are on Palestine's Tentative List, including the city of Nablus, home to the well of the prophet Jacob and the tomb of the prophet Joseph, inscribed in 2012.

- 34 sites are on Egypt's Tentative List, 13 in 1994 and 16 in 2003, including the historic districts and monuments of the city of Rachid, where the famous Rosetta Stone was discovered, and the city of Alexandria.

- 16 sites are on Tunisia's Tentative List, including the Medina of Sfax, the most representative and best-preserved example in the entire Mediterranean basin of Arab-Islamic town planning as it was defined in its early days.

- 6 sites are on Algeria's Tentative List, including the town of Oued Souf, known as the town of 1000 domes, with its vernacular architecture unique in the Sahara.

In total, and until 2024, UNESCO has classified (51) cultural sites representing the 8 Arab countries around the Mediterranean, which is slightly less than the number of classified cultural sites held by Italy alone (54). These (51) classified cultural sites represent the quarter (1/4), of the number of classified cultural sites in the countries of the Northern bank of the Mediterranean.

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<sup>1</sup> Choay, F. (1992). « *L'Allégorie du patrimoine* ». Seuil.

Table 1. Classification of cultural, natural and mixed sites in the Mediterranean (by country)

Country	Listed sites			Total	Tentative list sites			Total
	Cultural	Natural	Mixed		Cultural	Natural	Mixed	
Italy	54	6	-	60	20	8	3	31
France	44	7	2	53	22	5	7	34
Spain	44	4	2	50	26	1	3	30
Turkey	19	-	2	21	75	3	4	82
Greece	17	-	2	19	7	2	4	13
Croatia	8	2	-	10	12	2	1	15
Slovenia	3	2	-	5	4	-	-	4
Bosnia	3	2	-	5	3	2	4	9
Montenegro	3	1	-	4	4	2	-	6
Albania	2	2	-	4	3	-	1	4
Malta	3	-	-	3	5	2	-	7
Cyprus	3	-	-	3	4	5	2	11
Monaco	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Total North shore</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>247</b>
Tunisia	8	1	-	9	10	3	3	16
Morocco	9	-	-	9	9	4	-	13
Egypt	6	1	-	7	24	7	3	34
Algeria	6	-	1	7	5	-	1	6
Syria	6	-	-	6	12	-	-	12
Lebanon	6	-	-	6	9	1	-	10
Palestine	5	-	-	5	10	2	-	12
Libya	5	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
<b>Total South shore</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>103</b>

*Source : Personal processing of UNESCO 2024 data*

## 2. Reasons for this disparity between North and South

Several reasons have been given to explain this divergence between the North and South of the Mediterranean rim:

### A. Listed properties are more often 'at risk', for a variety of reasons, including

- Global warming,
- Uncontrolled urban development,
- Uncontrolled development of agriculture,
- Armed conflicts.

On the list of World Heritage in Danger for 2024, 56 cultural and natural sites are recorded, with a preponderance of cultural sites (41). 24 of these 41 cultural sites are located in the Arab world region, which represents 58% of the total number of endangered cultural sites in the world. 7 Arab countries are affected by this problem, 5 of which are Mediterranean, accounting for more than 70% of endangered cultural sites in the Arab world region and 40% of endangered cultural sites in the world.

Of the 17 endangered cultural sites in the Arab countries of the Mediterranean, 14 are threatened by war in Palestine and civil war in Libya and Syria. The other 3 are suffering from lack of maintenance (Lebanon) or uncontrolled agricultural development (Egypt). On the other hand, there are only 3 sites in the European region, in Austria, Romania and Serbia.

Table 2. Cultural sites at risk in the Arab countries

Country	No. of sites at risk	Date of registration	Name of site	Cause
Syria	6	2013	Ancient city of Aleppo	Civil war
		2013	Ancient city of Bosra	Civil war
		2013	Ancient city of Damascus	Civil war
		2013	Ancient villages of the North	Civil war
		2013	Qal'at SalahEddine	Civil war
		2013	Palmyra site	Civil war
Libya	5	2016	Archéo site of Cyrène	Civil war
		2016	Archéo site of Leptis Magna	Civil war
		2016	Archéo site of Sabratha	Civil war
		2016	City of Ghadamès	Civil war
		2016	Rock art of Tadrart Acacus	Civil war
Palestine	4	1982	Old city of Jerusalem	Incontrolled urbanisation and lack of maintenance
		2017	Old city of Al Khalil	Conflit
		2014	Battir, land of olives and vines	Colonisation
		2024	Tell Umm Amer, Monastery of St Hilarion	Conflit
Yemen	4	2000	historic land of Zabid	Lack of maintenance
		2023	High places of the ancient kingdom of Saba	Civil war
		2015	Old city of Sana'a	Civil war
		2015	Shibam	Civil war
Iraq	3	2003	Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat)	Threat of being swallowed up by the waters of a dam project.
		2015	Hatra	Civil war
		2007	City of Samarra	Civil war
Egypt	1	2001	Abu Mena	Uncontrolled development of agriculture and rising water table.
Lebanon	1	2023	Int Rachid Karami fair - Tripoli	Lack of maintenance

*Source : Personal processing of UNESCO 2024 data*

### B. The predominant importance given to architectural and historical heritage

Returning to Table N° 1, we can see that 86% of the sites listed in the countries of Mediterranean Europe and 94% of the sites listed in the Arab Mediterranean countries are cultural, which confirms the importance given to architectural and historical heritage, and consolidates the idea of the phenomenon of galloping patrimonialisation which has invaded Europe in particular with 203 cultural sites, compared with the countries on the southern shore (only 51 Sites). But how can we explain this craze for heritage in Europe, but not in the Arab countries ?

Table 3. Number of sites proposed for the Tentative List (by country and by year)

Italy	12 in 2006	1 in 2008	1 in 2016	2 in 2017	1 in 2019	4 in 2021	2 in 2023	1 in 2024								
France	5 in 1996	15 in 2002	2 in 2014	2 in 2017	1 in 2018	3 in 2000	2 in 2020	1 in 2021	2 in 2022	1 in 2024						
Spain	1 in 1996	4 in 1998	1 in 2002	1 in 2004	6 in 2007	1 in 2009	2 in 2012	1 in 2013	1 in 2014	1 in 2015	2 in 2016	2 in 2017	2 in 2018	3 in 2019	1 in 2021	1 in 2022
Turkey	1 in 1994	13 in 2000	3 in 2009	2 in 2011	10 in 2012	3 in 2013	12 in 2014	10 in 2015	10 in 2016	3 in 2017	6 in 2018	1 in 2019	6 in 2020	2 in 2021		
Greece	13 in 2014															
Croatia	9 in 2005	5 in 2007	1 in 2020													
Slovenia	1 in 1994	1 in 2000	1 in 2015	1 in 2016												
Bosnia	1 in 1997	1 in 2006	4 in 2007	1 in 2017	1 in 2018	1 in 2019										
Montenegro	4 in 2010	2 in 2018														
Albania	2 in 1996	1 in 2014	1 in 2017													
Malta	7 in 1998															
Cyprus	8 in 2002	1 in 2004	1 in 2015	1 in 2016												
Monaco	1 in 2017															
Tunisia	4 in 2008	5 in 2012	2 in 2016	1 in 2017	1 in 2020	2 in 2021	1 in 2024									
Morocco	6 in 1995	4 in 1998	1 in 1999	1 in 2011	1 in 2013	1 in 2016										
Egypt	13 in 1994	1 in 2002	16 in 2003	1 in 2008	1 in 2010	1 in 2015	1 in 2021									
Algeria	6 in 2002															
Syria	11 in 1999	1 in 2011														
Lebanon	9 in 1996															
Palestine	8 in 2012	1 in 2013	1 in 2015	1 in 2020												
Libya	None															

**Source :** Personal processing of UNESCO 2024 data

31 years separate the year of the oldest classification on the Tentative Lists of Mediterranean countries (1994) from the current year (2024), during which :

- 71% of the sites proposed for inclusion on the Tentative List of Mediterranean countries belong to countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean,
- 13 years in which no sites (cultural or natural) were proposed for inclusion on the tentative lists of the Arab Mediterranean countries. Only 4 years for the countries of Mediterranean Europe.
- Turkey has played a leading role in Europe's numerical superiority in terms of sites included on the Tentative Lists. With a total of 65 sites proposed in 11 consecutive years (2011 and 2021).
- Spain contributed to this European supremacy, with 14 sites proposed in 8 consecutive years (2012-2019).
- These same two countries (Spain and Turkey) have had sites on their Tentative List for the greatest number of years. Respectively (16 and 14 years)
- Only Egypt and Tunisia have 7 years of sites on their Tentative List, but not in succession.

Table 4. Comparison of the number of sites proposed for the Tentative List (By year and by region)

Year	Mediterranean European countries	Mediterranean Arab countries	Total
1994	15	13	28
1995	0	6	6
1996	8	9	17
1997	1	0	1
1998	11	4	15
1999	0	12	12
2000	14	0	14
2001	0	0	0
2002	24	7	31
2003	0	16	16
2004	2	0	2
2005	9	0	9
2006	13	0	13
2007	15	0	15
2008	1	5	6
2009	4	0	4
2010	4	1	5
2011	2	2	4
2012	12	13	25
2013	4	2	6
2014	29	0	29
2015	13	2	15
2016	15	3	18
2017	12	1	13
2018	12	0	12
2019	6	0	6
2020	9	2	11
2021	8	3	11
2022	3	0	3
2023	2	0	2
2024	2	1	3
Total	250	102	352

Source : Personal processing of UNESCO 2024 data

### C. The inability to compile a nomination file

Some researchers, such as Lasse Steiner and Bruno S. Frey, University of Zurich, (2011)<sup>1</sup>, have noted that countries in the South are less able to compile nomination files than developed countries, particularly those in Europe. They have also noted a clear correlation between gross national product and the number of properties inscribed in 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Steiner. L. And Frey. B. S. (2011). Université de Zurich « Imbalance of worlh heritage list : Did the UNESCO stratrgy work ? »

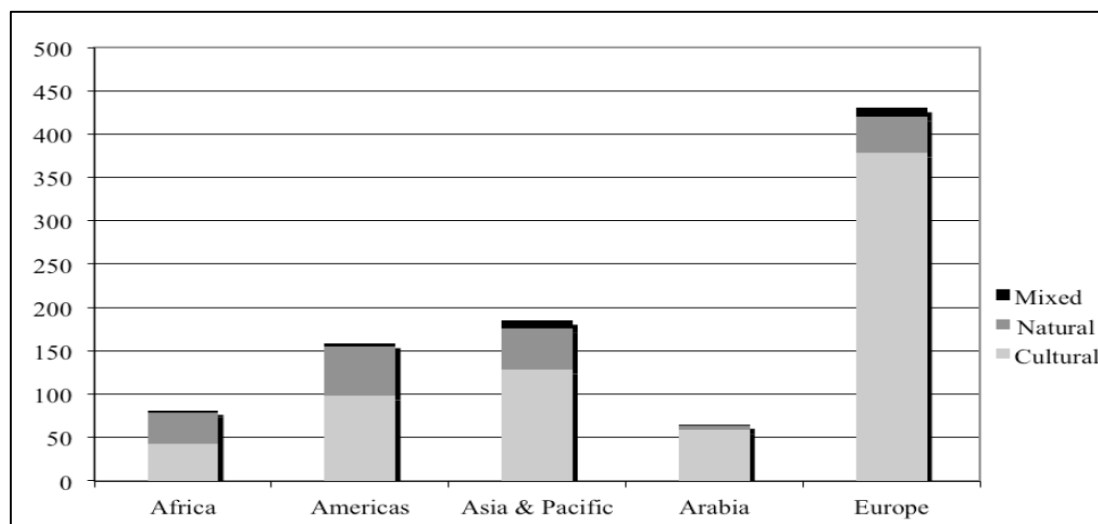


Fig. 1. Distribution of World Heritage by type and by continent

Source: Tim Cunningham,

«Giza to the Galapagos : A critique of the current UNESCO world heritage system and how to fix it»,  
Vermont Law review 2017

#### D. Favouritism in favour of the developed countries that monopolise UNESCO's power

Others, such as Tim Cunningham of Roger Williams University (2017)<sup>1</sup>, have gone further and attributed this imbalance in the heritage list to UNESCO and the distribution of the 21 members. Most of the members of the World Heritage Committee come from developed countries and tend to favour their country of origin, in a context of increasing politicisation of world heritage and financial issues linked to tourism.

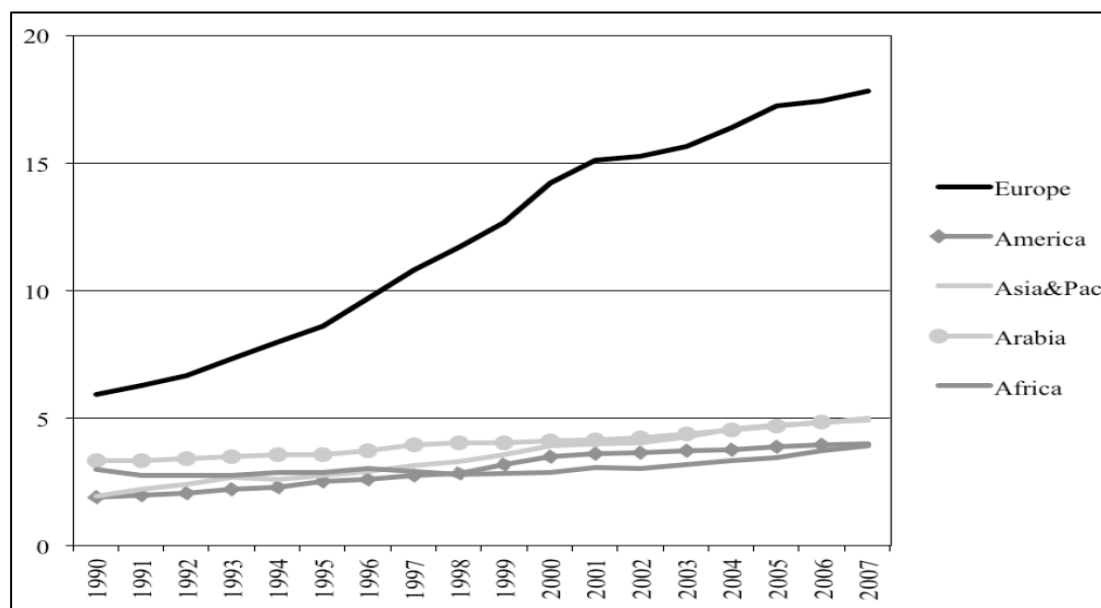


Fig. 2. Change in the number of classified sites by region (1990-2007)

Source : Tim Cunningham,

«Giza to the Galapagos : A critique of the current UNESCO world heritage system and how to fix it»,  
Vermont Law review 2017

20 of the 47 World Heritage Committees were held in Europe, half of them in France, at UNESCO headquarters to be precise, and only 3 committees were held in countries south of the Mediterranean.

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham. T. (2017). « Giza to the Galapagos : A critique of the current UNESCO world heritage system and how to fix it ». Vermont Law review



Table 5. Breakdown of the locations where the 47 World Heritage Committees were held, by continent

Europe	Asia	North America	South America	Africa	Australia
47 Bulgaria 2025	46 India 2024	32 Canada 2008	34 Brasil 2010	29 South Africa 2005	31 N. Zealand 2007
41 Poland 2017	45 S. Arabia 2023	20 Mexico 1996	17 Colombia 1993	23 Morocco 1999	24 Australia 2000
40 Turkey 2016	44 China 2021	16 USA 1992	12 Brasil 1988	15 Tunisia 1991	05 Australia 1981
39 Germany 2015	43 Azerbaïdjan 2019	14 Canada 1990	08 Argentina 1984	03 Egypt 1979	
35 France 2011	42 Bahreïn 2018	02 USA 1978			
33 Spain 2009	38 Qatar 2014				
30 Lithuania 2006	37 Cambodia 2013				
27 France 2003	36 Russia 2012				
26 Hungary 2002	28 China 2004				
25 Finland 2001	22 Japan 1998				
21 Italy 1997	18 Thailand 1994				
19 Germany 1995					
13 France 1989					
11 France 1987					
10 France 1986					
09 France 1985					
07 Italy 1983					
06 France 1982					
04 France 1980					
01 France 1977					

*Source : Personal processing of UNESCO 2024 data*

If the controversy is already cumbersome, it has just been spiced up by other elements, citing just one example, Syria. Since 20 June 2013, in the wake of the civil war, Syria's listed sites, which are under serious threat, have been urgently placed on the list of World Heritage in Danger. But it should be noted that 11 of the 12 sites on the country's tentative list were awaiting classification 14 years before the outbreak of the war.

- But can we attribute this imbalance to the simple fact that a developed and dominant North discriminates against an underdeveloped and dominated South?

- Could it be a lack of cultural and natural sites that meet the requirements for UNESCO classification?

- Could it be an internal problem or problems in each country that are blocking the possibility of proposing a greater number of sites?

Taking the example of Turkey, a Mediterranean country which is part of Europe, but which is counted among the developing countries, this country has registered until 2024, (75) cultural sites on its tentative list. This is slightly less than what the 8 Arab Mediterranean countries together have registered on their respective tentative lists (79).

Another more striking example is Libya, which has not proposed a single cultural or natural site on its Tentative List. Palestine only ratified the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in December 2011. The first protected site was inscribed in 2012. On the same date, the country also submitted 12 sites to the Tentative List.

### 3. Example of Algeria

Although Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, was one of the first collectors of artefacts in history and one of the first restorers of ancient temples, the question of heritage has never arisen in the same way as it does today. For example, Algeria, which has been settled by several civilisations, has seen the heritage left on its land by one dominating power reused by another.

There are many examples of this,

- Tiddis and Thibilis, the two Numidian cities, were transformed by the Romans.
- Byzantine fortifications built from blocks of stone removed from the sites of Roman cities.

- The columns of the first mosques built in Algeria, removed from the sites of Byzantine and Roman fortifications (the Mosque of Mila is an example).

- The major changes that Algeria's medinas underwent during French colonisation.

However, many agree that the notion of heritage is a legacy of French colonisation. The same colonisation that :

- Mutilated entire towns in order to appropriate the newly conquered space and change its identity (hybrid houses in the original nuclei of Algerian towns);

- Gave greater importance to Roman heritage, in the quest for Algeria's Latin and Christian origins, but at the same time used materials from this same heritage in the construction of some military buildings. The Kasbah of Constantine, The fortifications of the Sétif military camp

- Introduced, as early as 1840, a concept of architectural heritage and methods for its enhancement and conservation (Amable Ravoisié)

- Did not recognise indigenous (Islamic) heritage until 42 years after the country was colonised (1872, Edmond Duthoit, study on the conservation of Arab monuments)

- Did not classify Algeria's historic monuments in an official list until 57 years after colonisation (1887), when the unfortunate number of monuments rose from 7 to 84 in 1900 and 292 in 1959. Most of them date from Roman times, but also from prehistoric times and Byzantine times.

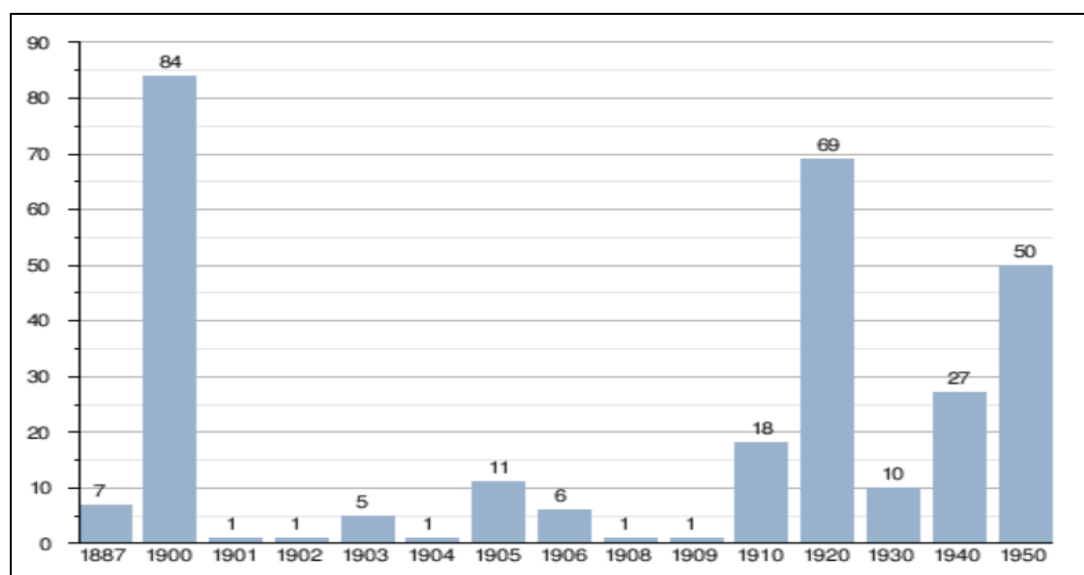


Fig. 3. Number of listed historic monuments in Algeria during the colonial period

Source : Nabila Oulebsir (2004), « Les usages du patrimoine : Monuments, musées et politique coloniale en Algérie, 1830-1930 », Paris, *Maison des sciences de l'homme*, 411 p.

What about independent Algeria, which only had two major heritage protection laws between 1967 and 1998 (31 years) of difference and indifference?

#### 4. French colonial heritage in Algeria

Between 1534, the first attempt to colonise new land in Canada, and 1980, the independence of the Vanuatu condominium, the surface area of the French colonial empire extended over 23,500,000 km<sup>2</sup>, spanning every continent and touching all five of the world's major climatic zones. Making it the second largest empire after the British Empire. With :

- Heterogeneous natural characteristics of the territories
- Heterogeneous ethnic characteristics of the colonised nations
- Different historical periods of colonisation,
- Different modes of exploitation or status attributed to these colonies.

Several modes of exploitation emerged,

- Slave colonies in the West Indies, such as Haiti

- Annexations of territories to metropolitan France, as in Canada, Algeria and French Guiana,
- Protectorates, as in Tunisia and Morocco
- Mandated territories, such as Lebanon and Syria.

All these factors eventually influenced the urban model established by the French colonial regime in its colonies. Because of its status as a settlement colony, Algeria's traditional urban model was turned upside down by the changes and mutilations made by the French military since the early years of colonisation. The aim was to erase the Arab-Muslim identity and confirm the country's Latin-Christian traditions. Unlike Tunisia and Morocco, which preserved their Médinas by separating the French colonial fabric from the traditional fabric, the Algerian Médinas lost much of their identity as a result of the interventions carried out by the colonial authorities :

- Demolition of a large part of the traditional buildings and replacement by neo-classical colonial style constructions;

- Hybridisation of certain traditional buildings, by transforming their facades into neo-classical style;
- Colonial quarters are strangling the traditional fabric, eliminating any possibility of future expansion.

It was with this in mind that colonial towns sprang up in Algeria, towns that were forbidden to the natives and that became spoils of war after independence. Towns with a different appearance and urban practices from the traditional Medina. Towns reinvested by a local population, towns perceived as practical by their new occupants, but not to the extent of adopting them as a national heritage.



*Photo 01. The construction of a street in the Kasbah underway 1856-1857.*

*Source : A. Hadjilah, "La ville et l'architecture européennes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans la Casbah d'Alger. Transformation et construction : entre liberté et idéal esthétique", ABE Journal [Online], 21 | 2023, Online since 07 July 2023, connection on 23 November 2024.*

### 5. Perception and recognition of colonial heritage

Despite this appreciation, many colonial buildings have been demolished in Algerian cities, such as the Casino municipal in Constantine (1970s), and others have been proposed for demolition, such as the regional theatre in the same city (1990s), for the simple reason that they are not recognised as representative of the moral values of Algerian society, either through their activity (gambling) or through their architecture (the statues and human faces on the front of the theatre).



*Photo 02. The Casino municipal de Constantine, demolished in 1974*

*Source : centre de documentation historique sur l'Algérie CDHA. Cie des arts photomécaniques. Cote : Fi – 919 MAR.*

The perception of city dwellers is different : they are torn between bitterness when talking about the demolished municipal casino and relief when talking about the proposal to demolish the theatre, which was not followed up. This same theatre was classified as a historic monument on the list of national cultural assets, by order of the Ministry of Culture, on 17 March 2010.



*Photo 03. The regional Théâtre of Constantine, classified as a historic monument in 2010*

*Source : Algeria Press Service (APS) 2017*



They show their attachment to these urban forms left behind by French colonisation, but without going so far as to recognise these buildings as representative of Algerian identity. Even if the Roman cities of Timgad and Djemila, recognised as national heritage and classified as world heritage, were not of Algerian design.

Recognising French colonial heritage as national heritage is seen as a form of legitimisation of a colonisation that left its mark on the land and on people's minds through bloodshed. Even if Algeria's other colonisers were no more lenient than France.

For example, the list of Algerian heritage sites classified by UNESCO and the sites proposed for inclusion on the country's tentative list do not contain a single building dating from the French colonial era. The same is true of countries such as Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon and Vietnam.

Sébastien Verney, (2017)<sup>1</sup> justifies the retreat of colonial urban space in Vietnamese cities, by:

- The rise of modern cities (CBDs) that are better adapted to the conditions of economic globalisation.
- The lack of interest shown by the Vietnamese authorities in renovating the dilapidated and unsuitable colonial heritage.
- The focus on pre-colonial heritage, which is more representative of national identity.

What about Algeria ?

Even though time and lack of maintenance erode part of this colossal colonial heritage every year, the expansion and development of Algerian cities has not reached these historic centres, where the traditional and the colonial mix. Urban renewal is not on the agenda in Algeria. Given that the Algerian city is not firmly rooted in the process of globalisation of the world economy.

This is why a number of operations to renovate colonial buildings in Algerian city centres have been underway for several years, operations that claim to be urban improvements rather than operations to safeguard colonial buildings.

Nevertheless, many colonial buildings have been classified as historic monuments on the list of national cultural assets, including the regional theatre in Constantine, the theatre in Skikda, the railway station and the municipality of Skikda, as well as the post office in Algiers and other buildings.

## Conclusions

Between heritage apathy in the South and heritage effervescence in the North, the gulf separating the two shores of the Mediterranean continues to widen, giving the impression that the countries of Mediterranean Europe are richer in terms of cultural heritage.

In reality, however, many of the world-renowned cultural sites on the southern shores of the Mediterranean are awaiting universal recognition of their priceless historical value. This nonchalant recognition is reflected in the slowness of the procedures for classifying these sites, which are often in danger and threatened in most cases by political and security unrest.

Not to mention the drastic conditions laid down by the institutions concerned, in this case UNESCO, for the classification of heritage proposed by member countries, conditions that are mostly in favour of developed countries. Nevertheless, some of the reasons for this are related to internal problems in the southern Mediterranean countries, problems of perception of this heritage and its recognition as representative of the country's national identity.

As in the case of Algeria, a land settled by several civilisations, each civilisation has sought to erase the traces of the civilisation that preceded it, in order to confirm and justify its presence on this land. The example of French colonisation is the most representative of this state of affairs, as it is the best documented and illustrated.

Once it left Algeria, the colossal urban heritage that France left behind became, under the authority of a new nation, a heritage that was reoccupied, reused, restored in some parts and demolished in others, but also a heritage that was never included either on Algeria's list of classified heritage sites, like Timgad and Djemila, the two Roman cities, or on the indicative list of sites proposed for classification. To this day, this heritage is seen as the spoils of war won by the Algerian people from a colonial power that wanted to erase its existence, and as a result it will never represent the Algerian identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Verney, S. (2017). « Spécificités et ambiguïtés du patrimoine colonial : l'exemple franco-vietnamien (1858-2014) ». *Ethnologies*, 39 (1), 155–165.

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