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Comparative technical, architectural and archaeological study of the various marinid medersas in the Maghreb

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Abstract

The Medersa's concept was born in the Maghreb with Merinid dynasty. The sovereign merinid gave great importance and value to knowledge and development of intellectual and political Muslim's life. In this work we will clarify the ingenuity of the constructors, the richness and the power of the merinid in time and space by establishing a comparative study dealing with the architectural, archaeological and technical aspect for a better Orientation of rehabilitation of such types of Muslim construction with regard to the preservation of architecture and the choice of building materials.

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1. Introduction

The medersa is an Arabic word which means place of study it's verb is Darasa to study and Mudarris means professor. The medersa is a place where the Islamic religion is mainly studied, the role of the medersas is to be a shelter for students without wealth, or foreigners come to learn, they are founded with a pious and charitable intention. The medersa is a monument typical of medieval art.

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Education in the medersa was financed by the state from the 10th century and it was equal to secondary studies and contemporary university studies, teachers were paid by the sultan or by a constituted Waqf, or recognized by the state.

To study the merinids' medersa we will first see the causes and interests that have pushed the merinids to give importance to the construction of the medersa second we will detail the architectural and technical aspect of the merinids' medersas also the medersa el Bouananiya in Fez, Morocco, The medersa of Chellah in Rabat in Morocco and Boumadyen one in Tlemcen in Algeria and finally we will conclude by some recommendations based on this studies.

2. History of the notion of medersas

The medersas spread in the near east between the middle of the 11th century and the middle of the 13th century with astonishing rapidity. Moreover, the introduction of this institution in the Maghreb returned to a very late period. The oldest Medersa is the Shammiya of Tunis, built by the ruler Hafside Abu Zakariyya in 1249. After the oldest medersa in the Maghreb archaeologically attested, it is that of Al Saffarin in Fez in 1271[1].

In fact, the beginning of the medersas in the Islamic Maghreb still leads a great divergence due to the absence of precise indications and historical sources. The researchers believe that Medersa was born with Almoravids and Almohads, others consider it a meridian adaptation of an institution that has already appeared in the countries of the Islamic Levant, where it has proved its effectiveness in the service of science, Religion and Power.

Researchers interested in this topic include: A. Tâzîi [2], G. Makdisi and J. Pederson [3], J. Léon [4], The historian of Abû al-Hassan, Ibn Marzûq[5].

3. Interests of building medersas

3.1. Religious cause

The merinid were interested on construction of the medersa through the time and space occupied by these last to spread the Islamic religion since the first verse of the Koran was "read", "Read in the name of your god". Science and the quest for knowledge occupied a large place in Islam, then teaching and learning became a duty and a right for believers and therefore the medersa was born according to this concept.

3.2. Political cause

In order to ensure the survival of the merinid dynasty and to deepen the power of the "sultan" governor [6], scholars and religious, faithful and pious conservatives assumed the role of entrenching and respecting the visions of governors and sultans by the influence they Had on the general public.

3.3. Cultural causes

All sultan or khalifa wishing to be known and eulogized through time, science and religious education in the first place and cultural knowledge were the bias to ensure that.

Therefore the medersa was the place of worship, diffusion of knowledge and constitution of the history of the dynasty.

4. Archaeological dating

The merinid medersas have developed mainly in Morocco with the exception of one that is located in Tlemcen, which is that of El Eubbad and which was built during the siege of the city by merinides. All these medersas were built in the first half of the 14th century as it shown in Table 1, with the exception of the first medersa of Al Saffarin of Fez which dates from the end of the 13th century.

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