

Ancient City of Dellys: A Historical and Archaeological Study

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Abstract:

Dellys, a Carthaginian city, has a rich history dating back to the 2nd century BCE. Initially established as a Phoenician port, it later became a Roman colony called "Rusuccurus," renowned as the oldest maritime city. Today, the city retains numerous remnants from its Roman era, including ancient walls and the Sidi Sosan springs. After the Almoravids' conquest of Al-Andalus, the Hammadids gained control, and Al-Mu'izz ibn Sumadhi settled in the region in 1088 CE. Dellys witnessed successive rule by various Arab tribes, each leaving its unique imprint. However, in 1837 CE, the city fell under French occupation until it achieved independence in 1962 CE. Now a popular tourist destination, Dellys attracts both local and foreign visitors who explore its ancient Casbah, surpassing even the Casbah of Algiers in age. Decorated fountains, balconies, minarets, Quranic schools, and lighthouses adorn the city, testaments to its vibrant maritime economy.

Keywords: Defensive Walls; Lighthouse; Citadel; Towers; Mausoleums; Port.

1. INTRODUCTION

Algeria, for the Phoenicians, served as a link between their distant stations. The Atlantic Ocean to the south and their markets for gold and tin in the north, as well as the consumption and redistribution centers in Carthage. The sea was the main trade route for Phoenician commerce. Therefore, their sailors needed settled centers, even if for a short period, to replenish supplies and fresh water. Over time, with the consent of the Berbers, the Phoenicians established ports every forty kilometers along the North African coast, which later became Carthaginian stations. They utilized the Algerian coasts, including the city of Dellys, as a permanent settlement for the Phoenicians. Phoenician sailors brought their families, leading to harmonious coexistence between them and the inhabitants of North Africa in general, and Dellys in particular. The generosity, amiability, and celebration of the locals in Dellys allowed for economic interactions between the two sides. This strengthened social, cultural, and religious ties. The mixing and blending of local and Phoenician elements led to the emergence of a Punic civilization, influenced by both the Phoenician Levantine culture and the local Libyan culture. The Berbers, who previously relied on agriculture and herding for their economy, began manufacturing and trading clothes, jewelry, iron and bronze tools, wool, leather, fish, oil, and grain, as well as sculptures.

With this, the Berbers opened up to the outside world. The Phoenicians would choose elevated coastal areas, forming heads or islands that were protected from the winds. The names of these cities would begin with the word "Rus," meaning head, such as RusCicar (Skikda), RusGounia (Siga), and RusouCourou (Dellys), which we will shed light on for its enchanting beauty and strategic location. This city, which was inhabited by prehistoric humans, left behind traces of their presence, including stones and bones from their handicraft industries. Many civilizations, including the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, left their mark on Dellys, with their ports, funeral and votive stelae, sculptures, and coins. The Roman and Vandal periods also left fortifications in the city, including defensive towers and walls, as well as some funeral and votive stelae and coins. The Christian Donatist era saw their presence in Dellys, and Andalusians fleeing from

Spanish occupation sought refuge there, bringing their customs, traditions, and industries, including distilling flower water, preparing delicious dishes, and clothing dyeing, among other activities. They also spread their refined culture of literature, music, and songs. Dellys experienced Spanish invasion, like other Algerian cities, but was only liberated by the Ottomans, who entered and coexisted with its people, leaving material evidence such as the citadel, shrines, and Quranic schools. However, the weakening of the Ottoman state led to its fall into the hands of French colonialists, who also left their mark on the city by changing its road layout, separating the upper and lower citadel, and making other changes to its historical landmarks. To study the history and heritage of the city of Dellys, we must address the following issues: What is the strategic and historical importance that makes this city attract such a massive influx of visitors and colonizers? What are the tangible material evidence of this presence? Did foreign migration leave its mark on the city's layout? In this article, we will answer these questions by delving into a historical and architectural study of the city, utilizing archaeological evidence of this presence. We will also highlight the significance of Dellys' location in the Algerian economy. For such topics, it is important to follow the historical method, including the chronological sequencing of events, descriptive approach, describing landmarks, referencing archaeological artifacts, and using an analytical method to analyze the study's results.

2. Geographical and Historical Overview of the City

2.1 Geographic Location

The pearl of the sea, Dellys, is located in the northern coastal region of the Boumerdes province, approximately 105 kilometers away from the capital. It is bordered to the east by the historic municipality of Tiguzirt and Taqsebt, with the Mizrana Forest separating them. To the south, there are mountain ranges and beautiful fertile hills. To the west, there is Mount Bubarak, which rises to an elevation of 570 meters, and the Sibaou Valley. To the southeast, there is the Bouarbi Forest and Mount Asouaf, reaching an elevation of 371 meters. To the north lies the Mediterranean Sea, and Dellys is renowned for its port, protected from marine currents. It is centrally located between the cities of Algiers and Béjaïa, with the famous Sibaou

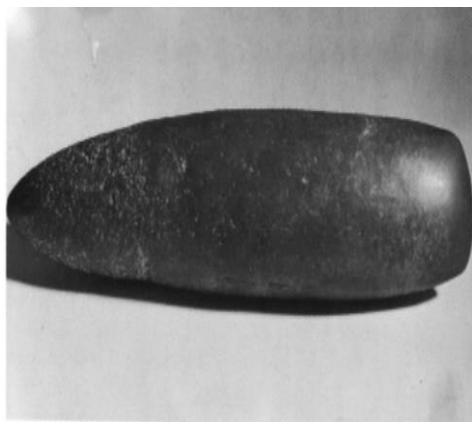
Valley flowing into the Kabylie region.¹

2.2 Historical Overview of the City of Dellys

2.2.1 Prehistoric Period

Due to its strategic location, fertile soil, and proximity to river estuaries, Dellys became a settlement for primitive humans who established dwellings on the banks of rivers and their estuaries. Various prehistoric industries have been discovered in Dellys, including Chalcolithic industries, Ataric industries, Iberomaurusian industries, pottery, and jewelry. In the area of Taqdamt in Dellys, a large and well-crafted handmade axe was found, which researcher LaPorte describes as the largest axe ever found in Morocco. Refer to image number 1².

Figure 1 : Handmade Axe
(Prehistoric Period)



Source : J.-P. Laporte, "Dellys,"
BerberEncyclopedia

"Kahf Al-Zawiya" was also discovered, located east of Dellys in the Marcon area of the Aïn Taya municipality in Dellys. It preserves for us mural art similar to what was found at the Tassili site, as well as poorly preserved mural drawings, inscriptions, and images of animals dating back to the Holocene period, with faded reddish colors tending towards purple. Please refer to Image 2³, alongside some tombs of the Dolmen type.⁴

2.2.2 Phoenician Period

1- AmerShaabani, *The Final Breaths of Little Andalusia*, Delos, Al-Manhal, 2013, p. 21.

2- J.-P. Laporte, « Dellys », *Encyclopédie berbère* n°15, 1995 p 2255-2261

3- ChaïdSaoudiYasmina and OubrahamDjouhar - Markoun (Afir-Dellys), a rock wall with paintings and engravings to be included in the national heritage. Proceedings of an international symposium entitled "Dellys, a city of heritage," organized by the Cultural and Artistic Association of Casbah de Dellys under the scientific direction of Professor YassminaChaïdSaoudi, 2/7/2017, p.10.

4- J.-P. Laporte, *Dellys*, *ibid*, p. 2.

Dellys entered history through the hands of the Phoenicians, who established a harbor there for trade with other regions. It was named "Rusuccurou," although researchers have different opinions about its origin. Marcel Marçais mentions that its origin is Berber (Rous-Skkourt), which means "the head of the bay" because the word

"Sekkourt" in Berber refers to a bay⁵. On the other hand, researcher Nicholas Cagayon mentions that its origin is Punic, and it is mentioned in Greek and Latin texts. It was also mentioned in the Latin book⁶ "Bellum Africanum" under the name "Oppidum Ascurum."⁷

The port of Dellys is located 100 km from the city of Algiers, and its location was wisely chosen by the Phoenicians. It is protected from marine currents by Cape El-Tarf (which we will discuss later), shielding it from the north and northwest winds. The plateau on which the citadel was built protects it from western winds and the adjacent highlands that extend in a spiral towards the sea, protecting it from southwest and south winds⁸. Refer to image number 3 for further details.

Figure 2: Rock paintings from the Macron site in Dellys dating back to prehistoric times



Source : Chaïd Saoudi Yasmina et Oubraham Djouhar

5- Mercier (G), the Ancient Toponymy of Minor Africa, According To Bcth1918, P110.

6- This book refers to the Corpus Caesarianum. Its content discusses the campaigns of Caesar against his republican enemies within the African provinces.

7- Nicolas Carayon, Phoenician and Punic Ports. Geomorphology and Infrastructures, doctoral thesis in Ancient Sciences - Archaeology supervised by Professor Thierry Petit, Volume I, 2008, p185.

8- J.-P. Laporte, Dellys, *ibid*, p. 2.

Figure 3:The port of Dellys, as captured by the satellite imagery of Google Earth



Source: Made by researchers based on Google Earth imagery

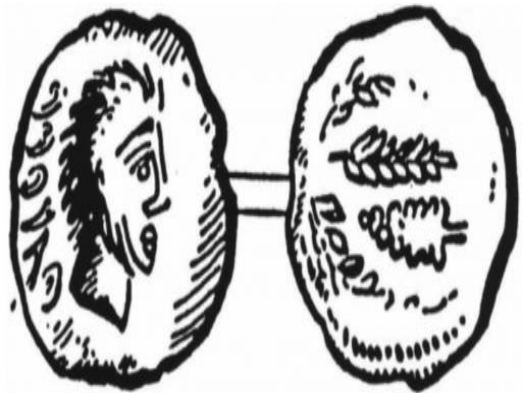
inscriptions dedicated to the Phoenician goddess Tanit¹¹. These steles have triangular fronts, which is an older form of steles, and they bear Neo-Punic inscriptions. The first two steles represent the deities Tanit and BaalHammon, symbolized by the sun disc and crescent, which are among the most famous deities of the Punic period. The third funerary inscription is dedicated to the Phoenician god Baal and was inscribed by a person named Amat Baal, meaning "servant of Baal," as a dedication to her buried father¹². Please refer to image number 5.

2.2.3 Roman period

The region has also preserved a number of historical artifacts from this period, including a gold coin minted in Carthage that dates back to the ancient city of Dellys, Rusuccurou, which bears the Punic or Libyan-Punic letters for the city's name, SKOBB or RSK⁹. Please refer to image number 4.

The image number 5¹⁰ shows funerary steles dating back to the first and second centuries BCE, bearing

Figure 4: shows a gold coin that may bear the ancient name of the city, "Rusuccurou"



Source:J.-P. Laporte, "Dellys," Berber Encyclopedia

9- ChaidSaoudi, *ibid*, P 45.

10- J.-P. Laporte, *ibid*, p 04.

11- Nicolas Carayon, *ibid*, P186.

12- Dussaud R, Neo-Punic inscription found in Dellys. *Archaeological Bulletin* 1917, p430.

Figure 5:Neo-Punic funerary inscriptions



Source:J.-P. Laporte, "Dellys," Berber Encyclopedia

During the Roman period, Dellys became a Roman colony and was annexed to the Imperial Kingdom of Mauretania. In the year 44 CE, during the reign of Emperor Claudius, the historian Pliny mentioned in his list of municipalities that Rusuccurum attained this status, as written in Latin:

"Rusuccurum Civitae Honoratum A Claudio." As explained by

researcher Laporte, Rome honored the colonies that were under its governance and supported them in its wars, granting them this status. This was the case for Rusuccurus, whose inhabitants were granted the freedom to govern their internal affairs without any pressure from the Roman Empire¹³. This stability was also due to the sturdy fortifications built by the Roman Empire around the city at that time, including defensive walls encircling the entire city and robust towers. Many of these physical remains have now disappeared, but they were reconstructed on the ruins left by the Roman and Byzantine presence in the region. Please refer to images 6 and 7.

Figure6 and 7: Part of the defensive wall that surrounds the city of Dellys and remnants of one of its towers



13- J.-P. Laporte, The Municipal Statue of Rusuccuru, 1992, pp 422-424.

Source: From the Directorate of Culture of Boumerdès Province, 2007

And it is mentioned by travelers who visited the area that it was built on the ruins of the ancient wall, pre-dating the Roman presence. The purpose of these walls was to fortify the city, and they opened onto several gates. Dr. Shaw points out some of its remnants in the western and southeastern directions, stating, "...In the western direction, there is

Figure 8: Neo-Punic funerary inscriptions



Source: Delamare, Adolphe H

a part of the ancient wall... The southeastern coastline has remnants of a broad wall that may have extended to the sea, forming a barrier."¹⁴ It opens onto three gates: Bab Al-Bahr (Gate of the Sea), as shown in Image 8, in the eastern direction, Bab Al-Lajnah (Gate of the Orchards)¹⁵, and Bab Al-Jiyad in the southern direction.¹⁶

They also left us other evidence, such as a furnace made of red bricks that belongs to a Roman bathhouse owned by one of the wealthy Romans. It was discovered in 2007 after soil slides exposed it. The Directorate of Culture of Boumerdès Province included it as part of the cultural heritage of the region¹⁷. Refer to Images 9-10.

Figure9 and 10: depict remains of a furnace from a Roman bath that was discovered in the city of Dellys.

14- SHAW, D., Voyage in the Regency of Algiers, 2nd edition, Bouslma Editions, Tunis, 1980, p. 60.

15- Delamare, Adolphe H, Scientific Exploration of Algeria during the years 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, and 1845: Archaeology. National Printing Office. Paris, 1850, P 01.

16- ROBIN, N., Note on the Military and Administrative Organization of the Turks in Grande Kabylie, in REV. afr., N17, Paris, 1873, p. 245.

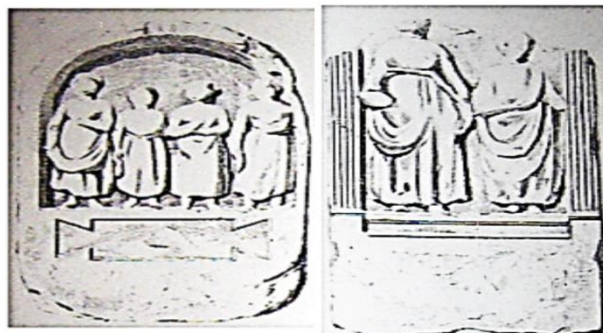
17- Regarding the inventory of cultural properties for the Directorate of Culture in Boumerdès Province, in order to include them in the additional inventory list for the year 2008-2009 (in which you worked as an annex to the preservation).



Source: Directorate of Culture

In the area, funerary and votive stelae were found that depict the entire family, including the father and mother in the first stele. They are portrayed on the decorated threshold of a temple, with two Corinthian columns. One of the columns bears an offering to the deity, indicating that it is a votive stele. As for the children, they are depicted in the second stele, gathered together inside a sarcophagus, each in their own position. Regarding their attire, they all wear the Roman toga, a long and fine fabric draped over their bodies, with one end held in their hand. This type of attire was worn only by the wealthy. The second stele also features a space for an inscription at the bottom, indicating that it is a funerary stele. Please refer to images number 11 and 12.¹⁸

Figure 11 and 12: are two monuments that date back to the Roman period



The region was known to be a

refuge for the Donatist Christians¹⁹, who settled and left many material evidences, such as a coffin carved with the seven miracles of Jesus, as shown in image number 13. There are also oil lamps,

Source: Delamare, Adolphe H depicted in image number 14, adorned with the symbol of the cross and the Latin letter "P," which are symbols of the Christian religion. There are also a few remnants of Latin inscriptions.

18- Delamare, Adolphe H, *ibid*, p 01.

19- J.-P. Laporte, *Encyclopédie*, *ibid*, p 04.

2.2.4 Islamic Period

In the 7th century, when Islam entered the Maghreb region, the existing tribes responded to it due to its spirit of tolerance, faith, purity, eloquence, and literature. After

Figure 13: Christian coffin depicting the seven miracles of Jesus



the rule of the Aghlabids in Kairouan between 800 CE and 910 CE, the Zirid Kingdom emerged in central Maghreb, which included the ports of Algiers and Dellys, with Ashir as its capital (currently in the province of Médéa)²⁰. However, the city soon experienced political and sectarian conflicts, which eventually led to its stability under the Fatimid influence, followed by the Hammadids (1014-1153 CE). During this period, Dellys was established as an Islamic Andalusian principality by the governor of Al-Andalus, Mu'izz al-Dawla ibn Sumadih, who fled from the Murabitun when they took control of Al-Andalus. The city became a gateway for Andalusian migrations, especially

Source: National Public Museum

Figure 14: Christian oil lamp



Source: Directorate of Culture

after the fall of Granada in 1492 CE.

2.2.4.1 Al-Muwahhid Period (1179-1269 CE)

During this period, the city became part of the Almohad state. However, in the mid-13th century, it witnessed fluctuations and rivalries between the dynasties that emerged after the fall of the Almohad dynasty. These dynasties included the Hafsids state, the Marinid dynasty, and the Zayyanid dynasty²¹. Additionally, the city

was subjected to Spanish aggression in the year 1400 CE. Subsequently, it became part of the Kingdom of the Ziyenids after the expulsion of the

20- ChaidSaoudi, *ibid*, P 70.

21- Ben Naaman, *The City of Dellys (Dellyss): A Historical and Archaeological Study during the Ottoman Era*, Dar Al-Amal, 2011, p. 31.

Spanish garrison. The Ziyenids controlled both the cities of Algiers and Dellys. In the early 16th century, the Spanish managed to regain control of the city after seizing Algiers, Béjaïa, and the fort of Algiers in 1510 CE. Then came the Ottoman period (1517-1844 CE), during which the Turkish leaders Baba Aruj and Hayreddin Barbarossa were able to recapture the city from the Spanish in 1517 CE, following the recapture of Béjaïa, Algiers, and Oran. After the administrative division of the Regency of Algiers into the Eastern Province and the Western Province, Dellys became the administrative headquarters of the Eastern Province, while Algiers became the administrative headquarters of the Western Province. Later, during the reign of Hassan Pasha ibn Khair ad-Din Pasha, the Regency of Algiers was redivided into four beyliks (provinces): Darsultan (with its capital in Algiers), Beylik of the East (Constantine), Beylik of the West (Oran), and Beylik of Titteri (Médéa). During this period, the city was under the jurisdiction of the Darsultan Province.

The city experienced political stability during this period, resulting in urban expansion, particularly in the upper section of the casbah²². However, in the mid-19th century, it came under French occupation during Marshal Bugeaud's campaign against the Flissa tribe in 1844 CE.

2.2.4.2 Islamic Period Archaeological Sites in the City of Dellys

The succession of Mamluks and historical events in the Dellys region left behind important ruins and buildings, including:

A. Civil Architecture

❖ Ancient Citadel of Dellys:

It is the nucleus of the ancient city of Dellys (see Image 13), beautifully built by the Ottomans. It features narrow alleys and was constructed on the ruins of the Roman city. It served as an Andalusian Islamic emirate during the Hammadiyya period in the 12th century. By the 16th century, it became a single fortress until the arrival of French colonization, during which the national road 24 was built, dividing the lower and upper parts of the citadel. It is worth mentioning that Dellys served as a refuge for Muslims from Al-Andalus who played a significant role in its development, contributing to its

22- Saoudi-Chaid, *ibid*, pp70-85.

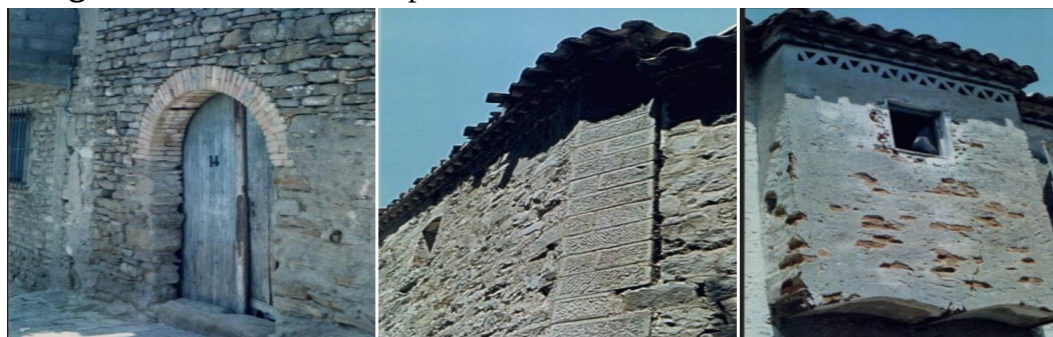
rich Islamic civilization in terms of knowledge, architecture, and various traditional industries. They also spread the Arabic language among the Berber population. The citadel of Dellys contains several historical landmarks.

❖ Houses of the Citadel

The houses of the citadel are characterized by simplicity in their interior and exterior appearance. From the outside, their walls are almost solid, except for a few narrow windows, small openings, and some water basins supported by olive tree trunks, which reach a height of approximately 3 meters. These basins

serve as a balcony, but they are covered except for their upper part, which is adorned with beautiful decorations, aiming to provide ventilation and bring light into the courtyard or room. We also find the main door, known as the "dar" door, which distinguishes it from the other doors. It has a rectangular shape or is crowned with a wooden arch adorned with geometric patterns. The door is made of wood and is opened with a sturdy lock²³. Generally, the door has a height of 1.55 meters and a width of 1.10 meters. See images 14, 15, and 16.

Figure 14, 15, and 16: Depict various exteriors of houses in the citadel

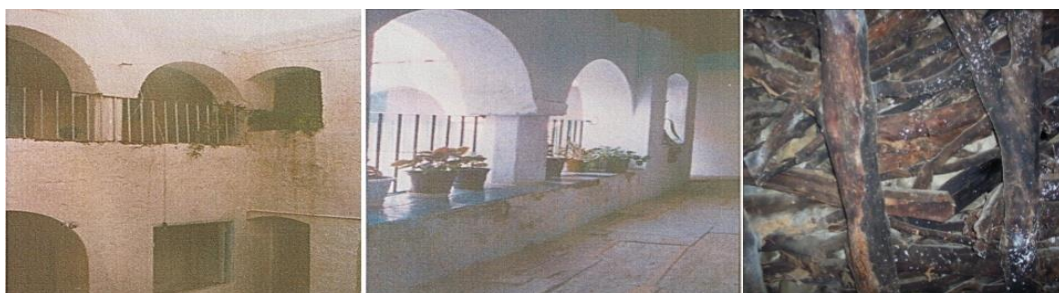


Source: From the Directorate of Culture of Boumerdes Province

23- Cheriguen, F. Algerian Toponymy of Inhabited Places (Compound Names) Epigraphy Edition, Algiers, 1993, p. 40.

The first thing that greets us is the veranda, also known as "Satwan." It is a place where guests are received, with a length of up to 4.95m and a width of 3.87m. It contains stone benches used for resting and gathering with friends. As we move forward, we find the courtyard or the house's central square. It has a square shape surrounded by rooms and corridors. These rooms are distributed on two floors, the ground floor and the upper floor. Typically, there are two staircases on the eastern side. One leads to the upper floor's southern gallery, while the other leads to the upper floor's northern gallery of the dwelling. They were made of stone. As for the floors of the houses, they were made of red clay bricks. The roof was made of interlaced olive branches. See images number 17, 18, and 19.

Figure 17, 18, and 19: show the interior facade of a two-story house in the Dellys Kasbah. The floor is tiled with red clay bricks, and the roof is made of interlaced olive branches.



Source: From the Directorate of Culture of Boumerdes Province

B. Religious Architecture

The mausoleums and Quranic schools in the ancient city of Dellys were one of the influential centers and schools for teaching the Quran. They played a significant role in preserving the national identity and teaching the Arabic language through the recitation of the Holy Quran. They also contributed to the preservation of the Algerian identity during the colonial period.

❖ Tomb of Sidi El Harfi

It is worth mentioning that the original location of the tomb of Sidi El Harfi was in the upper kasbah. However, it was later moved by the French to the lower kasbah in 1844 as part of their construction work to widen

National Road 24, which passed adjacent to the tomb²⁴. According to the oral tradition of some ancient residents of Dellys, the grave was relocated to its current position, where a Quranic school was established. This means that the

Figure 20:Interior of the Shrine of Sidi El Harfi



grave predates the existing building of the tomb of Sidi El Harfi. As for the identity and lineage of this righteous saint, we do not have any information available to include in his biography, other than what is found in the national archives.²⁵

The internal description of the shrine is as follows: Upon entering the shrine through a narrow corridor, on the right side, we find the ablution area equipped with two

toilets, a washbasin, and a well. On the left side, in the underground floor, there is a spacious room accessed through another corridor. In the middle of this room, there is a pillar **Source:**Saoudi-Chaid adorned with a Corinthian-style crown. In the left corner, we find the coffin of the righteous saint Sidi El Harfi, made of colored wood in red and green (see image number 5). Opposite this, there is the mihrab (prayer niche) decorated with ceramic tiles. As for the first floor, we reach it through a wooden staircase, and it houses the pulpit, which has balustrades and overlooks the lower hall (see image number 20).²⁶

The manuscript mentions the name of Al-Hajj Al-Alamah Ali El Harfi, not Muhammad El Harfi. Here, we were unable to determine whether this name refers to one person, or if the first name is a title, or

Figure 21:an inscription bearing the name of Sidi El Harfi



Source:Saoudi-Chaid

24- Saoudi-Chaid, *ibid*, p 102.

25- According to Bennamen, who obtained this information from the madrasa.

26- Kardine, S. (2015). "Sidi El Harfi Shrine in the City of Dellys: A Descriptive and Analytical Study." *Journal*, Volume 13, Issue 2, p. 230.

if the two individuals are different. The researcher, Dr. Shayid, adds in her book that Sidi El Harfi may have been a Hanafi judge. It was not only the identity of this righteous person that caused confusion for us, but also the year 1313 mentioned in the inscription above the main entrance of the shrine (see image number 21). If we assume that this year is in the Hijri calendar, as is customary in Islamic funerary inscriptions, it corresponds to the Gregorian year 1895-1896. However, we cannot consider it as the year of establishment of this shrine because it is present in the plan dating back to 1845, which is much older than this date. Here, the researcher Shayid suggests in her book that its establishment year may be 1313 in the Gregorian calendar, which would mean that the establishment of this shrine came after the shrine of Sidi Moussa, which was located in the upper Kasbah during the medieval period. This remains a hypothesis.²⁷

The content of the inscription is as follows: "This is the maqam (shrine) of the righteous saint and the sincere pole, Muhammad Sidi El Harfi. We mention Allah with his utmost goal, 1313."

❖ The Grand Mosque

Figure 22:The Grand Mosque



Source:Saoudi-Chaid

The city contains only one main mosque located in the southeast side of the city. General Bugeaud describes it in his memoirs as follows: "Upon entering from the eastern side, we find on the right a slightly spacious mosque composed of eight tiles, and the arches support a thatched roof topped with red tiles. Its minaret is built with carved stones taken from Roman ruins and is also at risk of collapse." This description encompasses

the mosque before it was demolished by the French colonizers and military facilities were built in its place and surroundings in 1847. By relying on the available information from 1844, it can be said that the roof of the Sanmi Mosque was divided into two or three

27- National Archives, AhkamChariaa, Box 126/127, No. 107/32, Year 1234/1819.

sections, as its width was too large to be covered by a single-section thatched roof. As for the minaret, it had a square shape and its general appearance resembled the minaret that still exists in the mosque built in 1847. Its square shape makes it similar to most minarets that have been traditionally constructed in the Islamic Maghreb since the appearance of the minaret of the Great Mosque of Kairouan in Tunisia²⁸. See image number 22.

C. Economic Architecture

❖ Ancient Lighthouses of Dellys

The researcher Xavier Casanova mentions that Dellys is a maritime city, and its development has always been linked to the sea, from the Phoenicians' settlement to the present day²⁹. This means that the sea has been the beating heart of the city. This led its inhabitants to attach great importance to its lighthouses, which served as their sole guide to safeguarding its port

Figure 23:Sidi Al-Majni Lighthouse



Source: Directorate of Culture

from external dangers and protecting its merchant ships at sea. The city of Dellys had three strategic maritime points in the past, which played a crucial role in monitoring its eastern and western shores and the area in between. These lighthouses served as the only guide for commercial ships coming from all directions to its port, using their illuminations to navigate the sea.

❖ Damagh Sidi Al-Majni Lighthouse

This lighthouse is located below the Lower Acropolis, near the Mezab neighborhood or the European quarter. It leans against the western wall of the acropolis and has a circular shape with a diameter of 3.20 meters and a height of 3 meters. It is reached through a steeply sloping road, surrounded by an external spiral staircase that wraps around its body in a counterclockwise direction, leading us to its top. The concept of supporting

28- Kardine, S, *ibid*, p. 222.

29- Xavier Casanova, *manual for the rehabilitation of the city of Dellys* - 2010

the lighthouse with a spiral staircase that revolves around it originated from ancient civilizations such as the Babylonians and Assyrians, as seen in their ziggurats. This idea was later adopted by Muslim engineers, as observed in the Samarra Mosque. The presence of this type of external staircase is not surprising in the region of Dellys, where its Phoenician founders interacted extensively with the Babylonians and Assyrians. See image number 23.

2.5 Colonial Period:

This period witnessed several updates in the city plan of Dellys by the French, including the reorganization and expansion of its streets, such as the National Road No. 24, which separated the upper casbah from the lower casbah. They also constructed administrative facilities and a military hospital, not to mention the construction of lighthouses in the area, including the Ben Gouth Lighthouse and the Sidi Abdelkader Lighthouse³⁰.

2.5.1 Sidi Abdelkader Lighthouse

It is named as such because it was built on top of Mount Sidi Abdelkader and was also known as the Old Port, Ras El Jebanna, and Ras El Taref, names given to it by the local residents. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the northeast and west, and by the Christian cemetery to the south. To reach the lighthouse, one must take a staircase that starts from the port and passes through the Christian cemetery (see image number 24). The lighthouse was

Figure 24:Sidi Abdelkader Lighthouse



Source: Directorate of Culture constructed during the colonial period in 1947. The train used to pass underneath the Sidi Abdelkader Lighthouse since the colonial era (see image number 18), but it is no longer in service at present. The road to the lighthouse is characterized by its length, winding path, and its extension into the sea, forming a barrier against sea waves and westward winds. The presence of rocks beneath it further extends its reach into the sea, providing

30- Halles Fatima and Laroum Sarah, the lighthouses of Dellys, for the requalification of maritime heritage, master's thesis in architecture (architecture, city, and heritage), 2016-2017, p.33.

increased protection for ships.

2.5.2 Ben Gouth Lighthouse

Built in the Andalusian style, at first glance, it appears to be a minaret of a mosque, but it is actually a lighthouse named "BurjLafnar" or Ben Gouth Lighthouse. Some say it is named after its designer, Ben Gouth, who

Figure 25:Ben Gouth Lighthouse



constructed it during the French colonial period. Others believe that the name was given by Italian sailors, "Benganeto," and it means "all the elevated lands" located between the cities of Dellys and Jendouba. The lighthouse served as a guiding light for ships coming from all directions to the port of Dellys for a century. Its light was powerful and could be seen up to ninety-five kilometers across the sea.

The structure consists of a base and two floors. The interior of the building is adorned with marble, and the walls are made of onyx, a material derived from marble quarries³¹. See image number 19.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can deduce that the urban development of Dellys was centered around its ancient casbah, which serves as the nucleus of the city. This choice was successful in some aspects while deviating from others, making life inside the casbah challenging, as stated by Dr. Ben Naaman Ismail. However, its success lies in its moderate climate, influenced by the Mediterranean Sea, which is considered the most favorable climate for human settlement. Additionally, Dellys benefits from abundant water resources, with numerous wells and natural springs scattered both inside and outside the casbah.

On the other hand, there were certain conditions that were not favorable for Dellys. One of these conditions is its natural fortification,

31- Ben Naaman, *ibid*, p. 96.

which presents many obstacles, particularly on the side facing the open sea, where it is exposed to potential dangers. The other directions are mountainous, providing limited protection. This explains the construction of walls surrounding the casbah from these directions. However, these walls did not fulfill their purpose in certain historical periods due to their deterioration over time and lack of sufficient restoration and renovation.

Regarding the urban pattern of Dellys, it combines urban and rural characteristics, with most of its structures aligning with the prevailing traditions and customs of its inhabitants, who mostly come from neighboring villages. The city's buildings varied in their purpose, including defensive, civil, religious, and economic structures, which allowed the city to play a significant political and economic role throughout its historical stages. This made Dellys an attractive destination for various countries, both European and those from the Islamic Maghreb, resulting in frequent changes of ownership within relatively short periods of time due to its strategic location. Its significance was further enhanced during the Ottoman era when it hosted the headquarters of the Eastern Province under the leadership of Khair al-Din Barbarossa.

As for the evidence we relied upon, it confirmed the presence of foreign influences in the city and their impact on its architectural features. Moreover, these influences altered the city's layout, adding to its landmarks and constructing roads at the expense of some of its structures, such as National Road 24, which divided the upper and lower casbah and led to the demolition and closure of certain mountainous roads, such as the road to Sidi Abdelkader.

Finally, we hope that this article has done justice to the city of Dellys by narrating its story throughout the ages. We have addressed the issue at hand and introduced the reader to one of the most attractive cities for Andalusians, shedding light on a city that has been forgotten despite its historical, economic, cultural, and archaeological significance.

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