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Adding a Layer. Functioning Muslim Shrines at Archaeological Sites in Northwestern Morocco

Summary

Archaeologists working in Northwestern Morocco (former Roman province of Mauritania Tingitania) were often struck by the ubiquitous association of pre-Islamic archaeological sites and Muslim shrines. Although several studies have been devoted to maraboutism as a form of popular piety in Morocco, Muslim shrines found at archaeological sites were rarely if ever studied in connection to their archaeological context. This research 1) revisits saints and sainthood in Morocco, and more importantly, 2) examines six case studies in Northwestern Morocco (Lixus, Zilil, Thamusida, Chella, Banasa and Hajar al-Nasr) in order to shed light on how the active devotional layer, i.e. the shrines, relates spatially and architecturally to the archaeological remains beneath and around them.

Keywords: Cult of saints; popular piety; Muslim shrines; hagiography; oral tradition.

Archäologen, die im nordwestlichen Marokko (der einstigen römischen Provinz Mauretania Tingitania) arbeiten, überrascht die häufige Verbindung von präislamischen archäologischen Stätten mit muslimischen Heiligtümern (Schreinen). Zwar befassen sich einige Untersuchungen mit dem Marabutismus, einer Ausprägung der Volksfrömmigkeit in Marokko, doch wurden muslimische Schreine nur selten vor dem Hintergrund ihres archäologischen Kontextes untersucht. Der Beitrag befasst sich erstens mit Heiligen und Heiligtümern in Marokko und widmet sich dabei zweitens sechs Fallstudien in Nordwest-Marokko (Lixus, Zilil, Thamusida, Chella, Banasa und Hajar al-Nasr) mit dem Ziel zu beleuchten, wie sich die gegenwärtige kultische Nutzungsphase, d. h. die Schreine, sich räumlich und architektonisch auf die sie umgebenden und unter ihnen liegenden archäologischen Überreste beziehen.

Keywords: Heiligenverehrung; Volksfrömmigkeit; muslimische Schreine; Hagiographie; mündliche Überlieferung.

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I Introduction

While conducting field surveys in the countryside of northwestern Morocco, archaeologists have often been struck by the ubiquitous association of archaeological sites and Muslim shrines. Although many studies have been written on *maraboutism* (the veneration of 'saints' or hagiolatry) as a form of Moroccan popular piety,¹ the relationship between shrines and archaeological sites is poorly understood. Moroccan archaeological literature has just recently begun to investigate this phenomenon.² It is our contention that the association of Muslim shrines and archaeological sites in northwestern Morocco is not accidental; the construction of these shrines by local populations indicates an attempt on their part to tame these unfamiliar and potentially threatening elements of the landscape.

Shrines, especially the domed *qubba*, are an important component of Morocco's landscape. Several studies have already established the connection of such shrines to other significant elements of topography. In rural areas they are associated with trees and groves, rocks and caves, hilltops, springs, and estuaries. In urban settings they can mark city gates or sites of manufacturing or trades. These religious structures are therefore not simply part of the landscape; they have helped to create it. They structure the landscape in so far as they relate to settlement patterns, land use, transportation routes, toponymy and other elements of human topography. In the cases of interest to this study, the shrines are associated in some way to archaeological remains and they provide additional insight into how topographical elements are 'marked' for use by communities.

This is a case study of the historic re-use of archaeological sites after their 'abandonment.' It appears that sites are rarely if ever truly abandoned.³ In Morocco, colonial period archaeologists deliberately focused on pre-Islamic (mostly Roman) occupation at archaeological sites at the expense of later Islamic ones as if these sites ceased to have

1 Westermarck 1926, Westermarck 1935; Lévi-Provençal 1953; Dermenghem 1954; Alberich 1954; Doutté 1984; Calasso 1992; Cornell 1998.

2 Siraj 1995, 439–461.

3 Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 19.

any scientific significance beyond the Roman withdrawal in 285 CE. Post-Roman layers were often considered ‘parasitical’ by early 20th century archaeologists and simply removed without further study.⁴ The archaeological site of Volubilis (medieval *Walīla*) continued to thrive well beyond 285 CE. A. Akerraz identified two main phases of post-Roman occupation.⁵ The first phase extends from 285 CE to the sixth century CE. The second phase began with the building of the late city-wall (‘enceinte tardive’) enclosing the northern section of the city and ends with the arrival of Idris I. The Idrisid occupation of the site is attested by the finding of several Idrisid dirhams, the earliest of which is dated to 789–790 CE.⁶

Six archaeological sites were chosen for investigation: the Chella complex in Rabat (ar-Ribāt), Thamusida north-east of Kenitra (Qunaiṭira), Banasa on the Oued Sebou (Wād Sibū) near Souk-el-Arba (sūq al-arba‘a), Hajar al-Nasr (Ḥajar an-Naṣr) in the Jbala (Jbāla), Lixus north of Larache (al-‘Arā’ish), and Zilil north-east of Asila (Aṣīla) (Fig. 1).

Thamusida, Banasa, Lixus and Zilil are ancient (Phoenician/Punic/Roman) sites, Chella is a Roman site with a significant medieval (Marinid) layer, and Ḥajar al-Nasr is an entirely early medieval (Idrissid) site. This list is hardly exhaustive. There are very few archaeological sites of any significance without an active Muslim shrine of one type or another associated to them. Two such sites: Tamuda (upstream from modern-day Tetouan [Tiṭwān]), and the megalith cromlech at M’soura (Mizūra), were visited. Even in these cases however, the absence of a shrine may be a recent development; it is possible that early 20th century archaeologists removed shrines located on top of the layers they were investigating. A thorough investigation of the published data from these excavations would be necessary to determine their prior state. One major site, consisting of Volubilis and Moulay Idriss Zerhoun (Mūlay Idrīs Zarhūn), though initially considered, was not investigated. The size and complexity of the site, despite the abundance of published studies of it, would necessitate a complete study of its own.

The purpose of the field investigation, conducted in the spring of 2002, was to establish the relationships between the archaeological remains, considered to be more-or-less ‘inert’, and the ‘active’ devotional layer. While these relationships are complex and multifaceted, this study will limit itself to a discussion of their spatial and architectural configurations in the landscape. Each site is assessed in order to determine how the active shrine relates to the archaeological remains. How do the shrines relate to the layout and original functions of the archaeological layer? What do the written record and local traditions about the shrine have to say about the archaeological remains? How was construction material from the archaeological remains reemployed in the shrine, if at all?

4 Penetier 2002, 147.

5 Akerraz 1985, 185–191.

6 Akerraz 1998, 299; Eustache 1970–1971, 162–169.



Fig. 1 Map of Northwestern Morocco locating sites discussed in study.

Beyond the standard review of the literature for each site (archaeological reports, where they exist), we consulted large-scale maps (1:50 000 and 1:25 000), both current and archival. Our primary purpose was to determine if any kind of Muslim shrine appeared to be associated with the site. We then made at least two field investigations of each site, plotting, photographing and describing the various types of shrines observed. We also interviewed the curators of the sites (whether official or otherwise) and, for the larger shrines, the individual responsible for the shrine about the history of its use and the types of pious activities which occur there. When we present these data in the second section of this paper we start with the least complex of these sites, Lixus, and build up to sites like Banasa and Chella which exhibit more complex linkages between the archaeological and the devotional layers.

2 'Saints' in Moroccan Islam

While it is generally admitted that the veneration of saints, along with animistic cults, may have been well ingrained in pre-Islamic Berber societies, the proliferation of saint's shrines in Morocco is a phenomenon that began during the Marinid period, in the 13th century.⁷ 'Saints,' in the Christian acceptance of the term, do not exist in Islam; Sunni doctrine recognizes no holy persons apart from the prophets and messengers of God mentioned in the Qur'ân. Yet Muslim societies, like others, have produced pious individuals (*ṣâlih*), ascetics (*faqîr*) who have renounced worldly pursuits, 'friends' of God (*walî*), and mystics otherwise known as 'Sufis'.⁸ These 'saints' can range in type from the most erudite theosophists, like Suhrawardî and Ibn 'Arabî, to ecstatic 'lovers' of God, to illiterate, impoverished, isolated hermits.

Colonial-era ethnographic studies of shrines in Morocco set up a distinction between erudite, urban Sufi 'saints' (the 'Saints of the Learned,' of the '*ulamâ*') on the one hand and 'popular' rural cult-figures (the 'Saints of the Commoners,' al-'*amma* or ad-dahmâ') on the other.⁹ The first category is represented by well-known Sufi mystics and founders of brotherhoods such as Mûlây 'Abd al-Salâm b. Mashîsh in the Jbala, Imâm Muḥammad b. Sulaymân al-Jazûlî (Marrakech/Marrākush) and Sîdî Muḥammad b. 'Îsâ (Meknes/Miknās), and by highly venerated patron saints of capitals and/or regions, such as Mûlây Idrîs (Idrîs II the patron saint of Fez [Fās]) and Mûlây Ibrâhîm in the Haouz (Iqlîm al-Ḥauz). The second category of saint is represented by local, often obscure, rural holy men or women whose tombs are scattered all over the countryside. Their shrines are the loci of the 'unorthodox' types of 'popular' practices, such as animal sacrifice and

7 Berque 1982.

8 *Sûfî*, one who wears *sûf*, or wool, an 'ascetic' or 'mystic'; Cornell 1998.

9 Dermenghem 1954.

annual pilgrimage. Whereas the shrines of the learned tend to be well-endowed urban institutions, and for that reason well documented, the shrines of the commoners tend to be rural, patronized and sometimes managed by illiterate people. Their historiography is often an amalgam of oral accounts, myths and legends which contain standardized hagiographic elements. We know very little about the saints buried in most rural shrines and may even be led to doubt the historical existence of individuals purported to be buried in some of them. This is the case of the many little shrines all over Morocco named for *Sîdî al-Makhfî* ('the Hidden Lord,' which recurs in association with archaeological sites),¹⁰ *Sîdî Masâ' al-Khayr* ('my Lord Good Evening'), *Sîdî Qâdî al-Ḥāja* ('My lord who fulfills the vows'), and *Lālla Raḥma* ('Lady Mercy').

Yet, the dichotomy between the scholarly (orthodox) and the popular (unorthodox) hardly explains the complexity of the phenomenon. The tombs of some very erudite scholars have developed into quite 'popular' types of shrines; the tomb of the scholar and copyist *Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Ashir al-Anṣarî* (d. 1362 CE) in Salé (Salā) for instance became specialized in the treatment of mental disorder, whereas another Slawi scholar, *Sîdî 'Abdallāh b. Ḥasûn* (d. 1604 CE), became the patron saint of sailors. Moreover, the same 'popular' practices characterize both types of shrines; prayers (*du'ā'*) are recited, animals are sacrificed, all-night vigils are held, supplications for intercession are uttered, candles are lit, ribbons are tied to the iron-work, etc. Furthermore, the types of annual gatherings ('visits' or *ziyāra*, seasonal pilgrimages or *mawsim [feast]*), complete with gifts and offerings, which occur at shrines,¹¹ do not correlate to the scholarly/commoner dichotomy.

In *Realm of the Saint* (1998), Vincent Cornell offers a more nuanced typology of 'saints' in Morocco:

- The most appropriate Arabic term for such individuals is *walî* ('friend' of God, one who is 'close' to God, who has both befriended Him and been befriended by Him). Whereas the attribution of saintliness in Christianity is top-down, the saint being declared such by an ecclesiastical authority, in Sunni Islam it is bottom-up. The saintliness of an individual, his or her 'closeness' to God, is recognized by peers (other scholars) or else by the local population.
- The first condition of this status is level of piety. The term *ṣāliḥ* or *ṣālah* designates a pious individual, typically someone who was absorbed in supererogatory prayer, fasting, Qur'anic recitation and 'remembrance' (*dhikr*) of God. Such individuals adhered scrupulously to proper Islamic precepts, related to acceptable sources of food for example, and were likely to seek a measure of isolation from society and

10 See Siraj 1995, 456–459.

11 Reysoo 1991.

worldly pursuits. People would nonetheless seek out a *ṣāliḥ* for help with a personal matter, or to settle a dispute. Such help, often manifest in the form of a *karâma* (pl. *karâmât* in Arabic, ‘marvel of a saint’) of one type or another, could continue after the death of the *ṣāliḥ*, with the tomb replacing the living individual as link to the numinous.

- A second condition of closeness to God, one closely related to piety, is level of religious expertise. Mastery of the religious sciences, which required mastery of many textual sources, has always been highly valued in Muslim societies. Certain scholars, *‘ālim* (pl. *‘ulāmā’*), were recognized in their day as exemplifying the epitome of exoteric knowledge. This was the case of Sîdî ‘Abdallâh b. Ḥasûn (d. 1604 CE) in Salé and of Abû l-Hasan ‘Alî ibn Ḥirzihim (Sidi Harâzim, d. after 1164 CE) in Fez. After their deaths, their tombs continued to transmit their legacy and enable collective memory. These tombs would be patronized by the urban elite, and then by State (the makhzan, the monarchic State in Morocco) as they were seen as symbols of religious legitimacy.
- Yet other intellectuals were acknowledged for their esoteric learning. These were the Sufis properly speaking, sheikhs like Abû ‘Abdallâh Muḥammad Amghar (d. c. 1090) of Ribât Tit-n-Fitr (Ribât Tīṭ-n-fīṭr), Abû Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Maghribî (aka Sîdî Bū Ṣāliḥ, d. 1234) of Safi (Āsfi), and Sîdî Muḥammad b. Sulaymân al-Jazûlî (d. 1465), one of the ‘seven saints’ of Marrakech. The legacies of such saints as these, has been perpetuated through the centuries to our own time by the Sufi institutions (*ṭarîqa*, *ṭâ’ifa*) they established. Their tombs have thus evolved into major Sufi shrines. The erudite saints, be they jurists or mystics (or both), are known to us through hagiographies (biographies of saints, or *manâqib* such as that of Ibn al-Zayyât al-Tâdilî)¹² and other documentary sources. The shrines themselves are also well documented (treatises and literary works, missives and correspondence, but also legal deeds, *waqf* (pious) donations, officialized genealogies, etc.).
- Another important category of saint in Morocco is the *sharîf* (pl. *shurafâ’*), a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through ‘Alî and Fâṭima. The special ‘noble’ status of *shurafâ’* is acknowledged across the Muslim world, but in Morocco, where the title ‘Mûlây’ is reserved for them, it has acquired a unique position. Three of the Muslim dynasties of Morocco: the Idrissids (Adâriṣsa) (789–985 CE), the Sa’adians (Sa’diyyun) (1524–1627) and the ‘Alawis (‘Alawiyyun) (since 1660), have claimed sharifian descent. Of the three, it is the Idrissid lineage which accounts

12 Ibn al-Zayyât al-Tâdilî 1995.

for most of the venerated *shurafā'*. Some, such as Mūlāy Idrīs I on Mount Zerhoun (Zarhūn) and Mūlāy Idrīs II, patron saint of Fez, are venerated for their national political stature. Others, such as Sīdī Qāsim b. Idrīs II (sea-side shrine of Sidi Kacem near Tangier [Ṭanja]) are remembered as *ṣāliḥs* (*ṣawāliḥ*). Many others, such as Sīdī Mazwār (died c. 864 CE), ʿAbd al-Salām b. Mashīsh (1163–1228) and Mūlāy ʿAbdallāh Sharīf of Wazzân (1596–1678) were important Sufi masters.

- A final category of ‘saint’ is the warrior, *murābiṭ* or *ghāzī*. Pious or erudite, prince or pauper, certain men acquired saintly status by fighting for the faith. This strand of saintliness first manifested itself along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts in the 10th century CE, when a network of *rubuṭ* (sg. *ribāṭ*), or ‘forts,’ were built. The tradition was revived in the 15th and 16th centuries to combat the Portuguese occupation of ports and coastal areas. Saints of this type include Sīdī al-Ayyāshī (d. 1641) of Salé, the Ghaylān sheikhs of Asilah, as well as the aforementioned Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad Amghār and Sīdī Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Jazūlī.

This typology of saints in Morocco is not mutually exclusive. An individual can become a saint by any combination of criteria. Moreover, the original rationale for the saintliness of an individual can be superseded by later accretions of saintly traditions and practices. Also, whatever the origins of Morocco’s myriad of saints, and whatever the rationale for the saintly status accorded them, the vocabulary of this spiritual landscape was largely in place by the end of the Marinid era (end of the 15th century CE).

3 ‘Shrines’ in Moroccan Islam

Just as the Christian concept of ‘saint’ must be qualified when applied to Muslim contexts, so too does the concept of ‘shrine’ require qualification. Functionally, Muslim shrines should be qualified as ‘para-religious’ in the Islamic context. In Islam, prayer (*ṣalāt*) is conducted in mosques, or indeed in any clean place, and only three places on earth: Mecca (Makka), Madina (Madīna) and Jerusalem (al-Quds), are recognized as sacred in the founding texts of the religion. None of the canonical obligations of Islam require recourse to the tombs of ‘saintly’ individuals, or to the kinds of activities that habitually take place there (animal sacrifice, burning of incense, lighting of candles and tying of ribbons). These places are designated as ‘Muslim’ only in so far as Muslims created them and continue to use them. Similar practices on the European side of the Mediterranean qualify as ‘Catholic’ because they are associated with a multitude of oftentimes obscure Catholic saints. South of the Sahara such practices are classified as

‘animist’ or ‘traditional’ and are conducted in shrines associated with places like groves, caves, trees, springs, etc.

Not only do the shrines in these different traditions share certain practices (animal sacrifice, candle and incense burning, offerings of gifts, etc.) they share a common understanding of relations with a complex spiritual world, a world inhabited by non-human entities who intervene in human affairs. In the Muslim world such spiritual entities are subsumed under the designation *jinn* (related to ‘genie’ in English). *Jinn*, both a singular and a collective noun, are mentioned in several Qur’anic verses. They are creatures of “fire”¹³, as opposed to humans who are creatures of clay and to angels who are of light. According to popular Moroccan traditions, there are male *jinn* and female *jinn*, Muslim *jinn*, Jewish *jinn* and unbelieving *jinn*. There are good *jinn* and bad *jinn*. *Jinn* inhabit the world and may manifest themselves in any number of ways. *Jinn* can also interfere in human affairs, sometimes in very dangerous ways. Illness, and especially mental illness, is often believed to be the result of such interference. People can become ‘possessed’ by a *jinn*, they are *majnûn*, while madness, dementia or insanity is called *junûn*.

Jinn are directly relevant to our study for two reasons. First, *jinn* are believed to inhabit special types of places: caves, springs, trees, groves, and any abandoned place, such as ruins, and hence their relevance to archaeological sites. Secondly, many popular religious practices have as objective to initiate some dialogue with the *jinn*. As illness is construed as a manifestation of the displeasure of a *jinn*, people seek to free themselves from this ‘possession,’ hence recourse to shrines specialized in treating *jinn*-related disorders. This is the case in particular of the shrine of Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn at the Banasa site. In fact, many of the most ‘popular’ practices at shrines have as much to do with the realm of the *jinn* as they do with the saints purported to be buried there.

In Morocco, Muslim shrines go by a variety of Arabic designations. In French literature since the Protectorate period they have come to be subsumed under the general designation *marabout* – a term often used in English as well – derived from *ribât* (or fortified monastery).¹⁴ In French, the term applies equally to shrines and to saintly individuals, living and dead. The term does however have negative connotation, akin to ‘charlatan,’ and is not accurate. E. Westermarck proposed a useful typology of shrines based on their Arabic designations and determined according to physical appearance rather than function or practices.¹⁵

- The *zâwiya* (pl. *zawāyā*) is the largest and most important type of shrine, both in terms of physical structure and institutional organization. While at the origin of

13 Qur’an: Chapter 55:15.

15 Westermarck 1926.

14 Lévi-Provençal 1953.

many *zawāyā* there may be the tomb of a founding saint, in the Maghreb the term (Arabic for ‘corner,’ used for a Sufi ‘lodge’)¹⁶ designates a shrine affiliated to a specific Sufi institution (a *ṭarīqa*). For example, the Wazzāniya Ṭarīqa is headquartered in the town of Wazzân (or Ouezzane), where the ‘mother’ *zâwiya* containing the founder’s tomb is located. In addition, there are Wazzânî *zawāyā* located in cities across Morocco where local disciples and affiliates of the *ṭarīqa* meet, worship, teach, etc. Physically, a *zâwiya* can be a complex of buildings, including: a mausoleum, a mosque or prayer space, a cemetery, ablution and washing facilities, a hostel, a Qur’anic school, residences for *ṭarīqa* officials, etc. A *zawīya* is a spiritual center, serving as a prayer hall and recitation space for a particular Sufi group and helping to perpetuate the spiritual legacy of its founder. It can serve as hostel or ‘retreat’ (*khalwa*) for visitors. One of the sites under study, Sîdî Mazwâr at Ḥajar an-Naṣr, seems to fall into this category. Some *zawāyā* have played important social, economic and political roles historically.¹⁷ Other *zawāyā* cater to the health and welfare needs of the local population, treating mental illness for instance, or infertility problems. The *zâwiya* of Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn at Banasa, is a fully functioning *zâwiya* of this sort. A second site, Sîdî ‘Umar al-Masnâwî at Chella, was certainly equally as active in the past, but not anymore. In all cases a *zâwiya* will have some apparatus or personnel, a *shaykh* or a *muqaddam*, to administer it. These administrations were recognized and highly regarded by the *Makhzan* (the Moroccan state).¹⁸

- A *dārîḥ* (pl. *ḍarā’iḥ*) is a mausoleum. It is often a cubic whitewashed structure covered by a *qubba* (‘dome; *dārîḥ* and *qubba* (pl. *qibāb*) are used interchangeably).¹⁹ The building materials and techniques depend on the local resources and building traditions: masonry walls and brick-and-mortar dome are most common. Inside the *dārîḥ* there is usually a rectangular catafalque marking the saint’s grave. The cenotaph will be hidden beneath a green cloth and sometimes fenced off by a metal or wooden enclosure. The *dārîḥ* of Sîdî ‘Alî ibn Aḥmad at Tamusida is perhaps a typical example of this type of shrine. *Ḍarā’iḥ* are often found in cemeteries where they are surrounded by graves and lesser *ḍarā’iḥ*. Banasa has two structures of this kind but they are largely ruined now. Major *ḍarā’iḥ* may be covered with a pyramidal roof of glazed green tiles. Like *zawāyā*, important *ḍarā’iḥ* are likely to have ancillary structures, like a mosque, a hostel and ablution and washing facilities attached to

16 Elsewhere in the Muslim world this institution might be called a *khānaqa* (in the Arab East and Iran), a *tekke* (Turkey) or a *durga* (Indian Subcontinent).

17 Mouhtadi 1999.

18 See description of the Sultan’s visit to Chella, Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 421.

19 There are saints who objected to having a roof over their graves, “when a roof has been built they have made it fall down.” The best example in this regard is the sanctuary of Mûlây ‘Abd al-Salâm b. Mashîsh on Jabal ‘Alam: Westermarck 1926, 54; Zouanat 1998.

them. From a purely practical point of view, the small *ḍarā'ih* and *qibāb* which dot the landscape are useful reference points for archaeologists conducting field surveys because (1) they are easily recognisable, and (2) their location is usually plotted on topographic maps. Many *qibāb* are located on hilltops, possibly because they were meant to be seen from afar and from all directions.

- *Ḥawsh* (enclosure) – Smaller in size than the *qubba*, a *ḥawsh* refers to a small roofless shrine consisting of an enclosing wall of masonry, sometimes whitewashed. The *ḥawsh* is perceived as marking a grave, whether an actual individual is buried there or not, and is often surrounded by other graves. There is a good example of a *ḥawsh* at Lixus (Sîdî Ghazzal).
- *Ḥawîta* (diminutive of *ḥā'it*, wall) – Like the *ḥawsh* but smaller, a *ḥawîta* consists of a low-walled enclosure, sometimes simply a ring of whitewashed stones, around a saint's 'grave.'
- *Karkûr* – The smallest of shrines, a *karkûr* designates a heap of stones in Maghribî colloquial Arabic. *Karkûrs* are made on various occasions and for various reasons, but usually in order to address some entity in the spiritual world. Typically, candles will be lit at a *karkûr* and elements of clothing may be left at them. Contrary to the types listed above, the *karkûr* does not usually mark a grave, though it might be found in or near graveyards. It is often surrounded by vegetation, bushes and trees, and is not very visible in the landscape. We are concerned here especially with cases where building material is taken from an archaeological structure and 'sanctified' in this way. Sanctification is achieved by giving a saint's name to the stones, as indicated by the prefixes *sîdî* or *lâlla*. The use of whitewash is also an indication of sanctification. There are examples of *karkûrs* in and around the site of Zilil.
- Ribbon trees – Always designated as feminine, as in 'Lâlla 'Aîsha' or 'Lâlla Raḥma,' 'ribbon trees' and bushes are singled out as places of worship for women especially. Ribbon trees are not shrines in their own right; they are always associated to one of the shrine types listed above. Women address their supplications to God, or to a saint, at these trees. Their supplications often relate to fertility or marital issues, or else to the health and welfare of family members. Part of the practice requires that candles be lit and that ribbons cut from personal items of clothing be tied to the tree's branches. Ribbon trees tend to be secluded from view, hidden in a ravine or within a grove. They are also mobile. If a given ribbon tree dies or is cut down (by the men who manage the shrines and who often take a dim view of ribbon trees and the activities that occur at them), women will select a new one somewhere and resume their practices. There are ribbon trees at nearly all the sites studied here.

Two other types of shrines are relevant to contemporary Morocco mostly because of the impact they have had on toponymy:

- A *ribât* (pl. *rubuṭ*) originally referred to as a fort erected to protect an exposed border. Numerous *rubuṭ* were set up along Morocco's Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, and at the mouths of rivers especially, in the 9th century. These *rubuṭ* constituted small communities of volunteer fighters and some later developed into full-fledged Sufi institutions. They survive today mostly in toponymy. For instance, the name of the capital of Morocco derives from just such a settlement. The Franco-Arabic term 'marabout' (discussed above) and the Almoravid (*al-Murâbiṭûn*) dynasty also derive from this term.
- A *khalwa* (pl. *khalawât*) is a spiritual retreat. Many Sufis have felt the need to isolate themselves from worldly concerns and distractions and have settled in appropriately isolated places. Ironically, some of these *khalawât* later developed into shrines and thus have attracted people and activities. The toponym 'Khalwa' (or 'Khaloua' in common French transliteration) appears at many of the sites discussed below.

While these structures are listed here as separate entities, shrines in Morocco are often composed of a variety of such elements. Shrines come in clusters, rarely do they stand alone. Each element at a complex site will have a special function or meaning. In some cases there is clear architectural and hagiographic hierarchy between the shrines that compose a religious site. In other cases the various elements may lay several kilometers apart yet their relations to each other will be known to the local population. As a rule-of-thumb, the presence of whitewash on stones, on pieces of masonry, or at the base of shrubs and trees, is usually a good indication that these elements have religious status. Whitewash acts as a marker of 'sanctity' of a shrine. As it washes away easily, the presence of fresh whitewash is an indication that the shrine is still in use.

The upkeep and running of shrines in Morocco is in the hands of an apparatus of permanent custodians – who are usually direct descendants of the saint. Even a small *darîh* in a cemetery will have a custodian, a *muqaddam* or a *murîd*, who is responsible for its upkeep. Larger shrine complexes, and especially *zawāyā* with attached schools, hostels, etc., will be home to an entire institution.

Attitude towards such shrines vary across the Muslim world, and across Moroccan society as well. Generally speaking, the Moroccan religious authorities tolerate the types of 'popular' devotional activities which take place at shrines so long as they do not appear too 'extreme' (self flagellation and mortification for example are proscribed), or as long as the more 'extreme' practices are done discretely. Some shrines, such as those of Mūlāy Idrīs I and Mūlāy Idrīs II, have benefited consistently from royal patronage since the

Thirteenth Century. On the other hand, many other shrines, and especially the generic types of *darā'ih* one finds in rural cemeteries, are losing their demographic and social base. Younger generations of Moroccans practice Islam differently from their parents and grandparents. There is also a 'religiosity of scale' at work. Smaller, less celebrated shrines lose their attractiveness as larger, better endowed, or more media savvy shrines expand their 'clientele.'

4 Sacred places in Islam

Today, shrines, especially the domed *qubba*, constitute one of the main characteristics of the rural Moroccan landscape. Several studies have already established the connection of such shrines to other significant elements of topography: trees, groves, waterfalls, caves, hilltops, springs, cliffs, city gates, etc.²⁰ These religious structures are therefore not simply part of a given landscape; they have helped to create it. They structure the landscape in so far as they relate to settlement patterns, land use, transportation routes, toponymy and other elements of human topography. In the cases of interest to this study, Muslim saints' shrines are associated in some way to archaeological remains. These cases can provide insight into how such places are 'marked' for use by a community.

Places are human creations. People, individually and in groups, act in and across spaces. These actions: social, economic, political, ideological, artistic etc. generate specific 'places'. Places are individually configured out of the abstract matrix of space through human agency. People give them names (toponymy); they have stories (history) attached to them. Religion can be an important part of this process. Religion provides a worldview, a conceptual or ideational framework through which places become related to each other, and connected to an ultimate, overarching, reality. Each religion has developed its own 'codes', i.e., a vocabulary of signs and symbols to express these relationships. In the case of Islam, the code is rooted in the Qur'ān, the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (the *sunna*) and the historiography of the Rightly Guided Caliphs' period. These are considered the most legitimate 'roots' of Islamic religious practice. The landscapes created by Muslim societies will ultimately be read and interpreted by Muslims accordingly.

'Sacredness' in the Muslim worldview is global in scope and possesses a definite center. The Ka'ba in Mecca is the center of the world, the *qibla* (the direction towards the Ka'ba) of life on earth. Muslims the world over face it in prayer. By focusing these prayers, the Ka'ba connects the world to God. This basic structure of sacred geography

20 Dermenghem 1954, 135–151; Calasso 1992.

is complemented by the mosque of the Prophet in Medina and *al-Haram ash-Sharîf* (Temple Mount) in Jerusalem (the first *qibla* with its Al-Aqsa Mosque (*al-Aqṣā*) and Dome of the Rock).²¹ These constitute the three ‘sacred’ (*ḥaram*) places of Islam. The Arabic root *ḥ.r.m* conveys the concept of ‘restricted’ or ‘forbidden,’ as well as ‘sacred’. *Ḥaram* and the related terms *ḥarîm*, *ḥurm* and *ḥurma* all designate ‘inviolable’ space. Though only the three holy cities mentioned above are universally recognized as *ḥaram*, many places in the Muslim world have *ḥurm* status; these are areas directly contiguous to shrines, where animals may not be killed, where plants are allowed to grow freely,²² where men can find refuge from persecution, where lands and goods are not taxed. This is the case for example of the famous *ḥurm* around the shrine of Mûlây ‘Abd al-Salâm ibn Mashîsh on Jabal ‘Alam which also extends to the *zâwiya* of Sîdî Mazwâr at Ḥajar an-Naṣr.²³ In the case of major urban *zawāyā*, such as that of Mûlây Idrîs in Fez,²⁴ the *ḥurm* will comprise an entire neighborhood, with soup kitchens, bath houses, hostels, shops, etc. surrounding the religious edifice and delimited by clear spatial markers – in this case wooden beams across the street. The *ḥurm* of rural shrines might be marked by small piles of whitewashed stones (*karkûr*).

E. Dermenghem argues that many of the rural shrines of the Maghrib are in fact pre-Islamic shrines that have been “assimilated” into Islam by the erection of a *qubba*.²⁵ This would explain the importance of natural elements such as trees, rocks, springs, caves and ponds to the configuration of these places. The *qubba* of the ‘saint,’ real or imagined, and the *ḥurm* it creates around itself thus become mechanisms for the continuity of popular religious practices within an increasingly Muslim social and intellectual context. This opens up interesting questions in the case of the six archaeological sites under investigation here. What were the religious practices at these sites before the creation of the shrines? Do these shrines confer Islamic legitimacy to otherwise non-Islamic practices? In the absence of documentary evidence, without reliable oral traditions dating back to period of origin, and being unable to conduct archaeological excavation within the ‘protected’ areas of the *ḥurm*, these questions must remain unanswered.

21 It is from this Rock that the Prophet made his ascension (*mi‘râj*) to God’s presence (Qur’an: Chapter 17:1).

22 For a discussion of plant types growing at Muslim shrines, see Mikesell 1961, 107–110.

23 Zouanat 1998, 171.

24 Le Tourneau 1949, 601.

25 Dermenghem 1954, 34.

5 Case studies: A preliminary analysis

Unless otherwise indicated, all archaeological site descriptions in this paper are synthesized from S. Ennahid's previous work on the *Political Economy and Settlement Systems of Medieval Northern Morocco*.²⁶

5.1 Lixus

Lixus (medieval Tushummush) is one of the most important Roman-period sites in Morocco (Fig. 2). Archaeological evidence suggests that Lixus was abandoned in the beginning of the fifth century CE.²⁷ The site was reoccupied during the Islamic period. It was mentioned – as Tushummush – in several medieval Arabic texts.

Archaeological evidence for the Islamic period at the site is represented by a mosque, a house with a central courtyard, and a number of water management facilities. The mosque is located within the boundaries of the reduced city (*'la ville réduite'*) in what is known as 'the quarter of the temples'. Michel Ponsich argued that this structure was originally a Christian basilica before it was converted into a mosque.²⁸ A. Akerraz and M. Euzennat attributed this structure to the Islamic period.²⁹ The Islamic-period house at Lixus is built against the later city-wall within the reduced city.³⁰ It has a central courtyard with portico and a basin in the middle. A series of rooms with plastered walls open into the courtyard. This house is equipped with a private bath (*ḥamâm*) with its own small cistern. N. El-Khatib-Boujibar's work (1992) on the water management system at the city identified several water facilities dating to the Islamic period. This includes a well and two cisterns.³¹ The presence of a mosque with three naves (300 m²) suggests that there was a relatively sizeable population at the site. It is most likely that medieval Tushummush was confined within the reduced Roman city since all the Islamic-period archaeological evidence was found there.³²

There is a *ḥawsh* at the northern extremity of the Roman city, very near the highest point of the site (88 or 89 m). According to the curator of Lixus, this part of the site had served as cemetery following the retraction of the city.³³ The *ḥawsh* is designated by the name *Sîdî Ghazzal* and consists of a rectangular pit (ca. 1.25 x 2 m) lined with reddish-brown baked brick (possibly Roman period, re-used) topped with dry-stones. The pit is surrounded by a low perimeter wall of irregular dry-stone (ca. 9 x 9 m), the *qibla* end of which is semicircular. The orientation of the *ḥawsh* is identical to that of the mosque.

26 Ennahid 2002, 97–109.

27 Akerraz 1992, 383–384.

28 Ponsich 1981, 113–114.

29 Akerraz 1992, 382–383; Euzennat 1974, 175–181.

30 Ponsich 1981, 126–127, fig. 36.

31 El-Khatib-Boujibar 1992, 306, 310.

32 For more detail on Tushummush, see Ennahid 2002, 102–103.

33 Mr. H. Hassini, the curator, was interviewed on site on 19 March 2002.



Fig. 2 Plan of Lixus archaeological site.

Both the pit and enclosing wall are whitewashed. The space between the pit and the wall shows evidence of paving (large round pebbles). The area in the doorway shows evidence of recent digging – possibly by treasure seekers.³⁴ Candles have been burnt in the surrounding brush. According to Ḥassinī, people from Larache and neighboring

34 The search for gold caches at or in the proximity of archaeological sites, Muslim shrines and cemeteries has been a curious occupation conducted by a group of people known as *swāsa* (from *Sūs*, a region in southern Morocco). These are local *faqīhs* (reciters of the Qurʾān) who engage in witchcraft, geomancy, and exorcism. Using some sort of geomantic

or talismanic writings, they roam the countryside in search of hidden treasures. Leo Africanus (1956) has provided an account of such practices in medieval times by ‘Elcanesin’ or *al Kanāzīn*, from *kānz*, Arabic for treasure (Africanus 1956, 216–220, 225–226). For more details, see Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 391–399 and Westermarck 1926, 289–290.

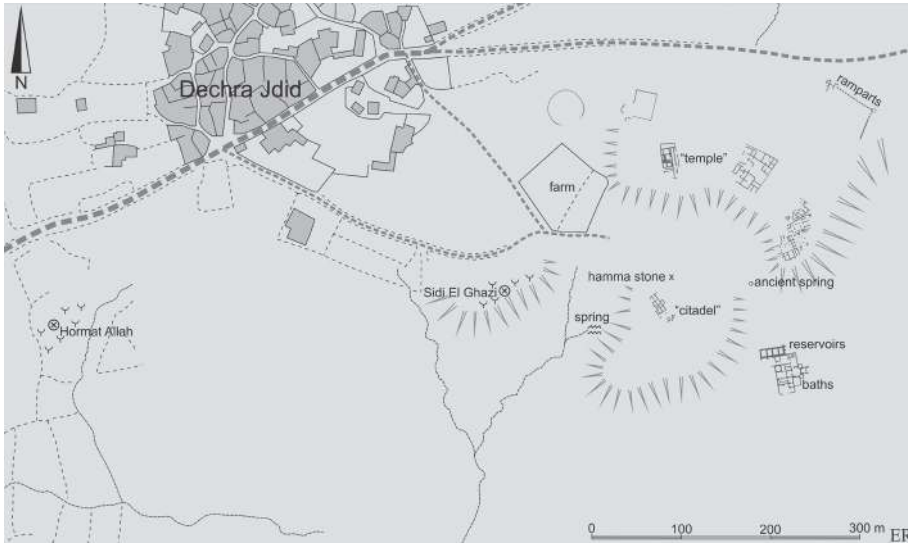


Fig. 3 Plan of Zilil archaeological site.

villages visit Sîdî Ghazzal, usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sîdî Ghazzal is reputed to ‘cure’ headaches, but people will seek his aid for a number of other ailments as well.

A 1912 topographic map of Larache shows the symbol of a qubba on the site of Lixus marked as ‘Chemnich Lixus (R.R. [ruines romaines?])’ with no saint name; symbols of several other qubbas and marabouts are visible within a 10 kms radius of the site.³⁵

5.2 Zilil (Dchar Jdid / Dashar aj-jadîd)

Archaeological evidence found at the Roman site of Dchar Jdid confirmed that this latter was in fact the Roman site of *Colonia Iulia Constantia Zilil*, founded by Augustus between 33 and 27 BCE.³⁶ Six pedestals were discovered at the site in 1986; the toponym of the site was inscribed on five of them.³⁷

The current Islamic ‘layer’ of this archaeological site is very scattered (Figs. 3–4). There are three shrine elements (the ‘Ĥamma’ stone, Sîdî agh-Ghâzî, Ĥurmat Allâh) on or near the Roman ruins, some Roman-period cut stones at the *zâwîya* of Sîdî Aĥmad Tardânî in the village of Khaloua (Khalwa) (1.7 km northwest of the site), and others at the cemetery of Lâlla Raĥma (2.5 km to the west of Zilil).

35 Source: Map *Larache, Maroc au 200.000^e Feuille No. III (Ouest)*, Bureau Topographique des T.M.O., Décembre 1912, Inventory number 317719. Map consulted at

the Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc, BNRM on Jan. 26, 2011.

36 M. Lenoir 1993, 507.

37 M. Lenoir 1993, 509. For more recent literature on Zilil, see E. Lenoir 2005.

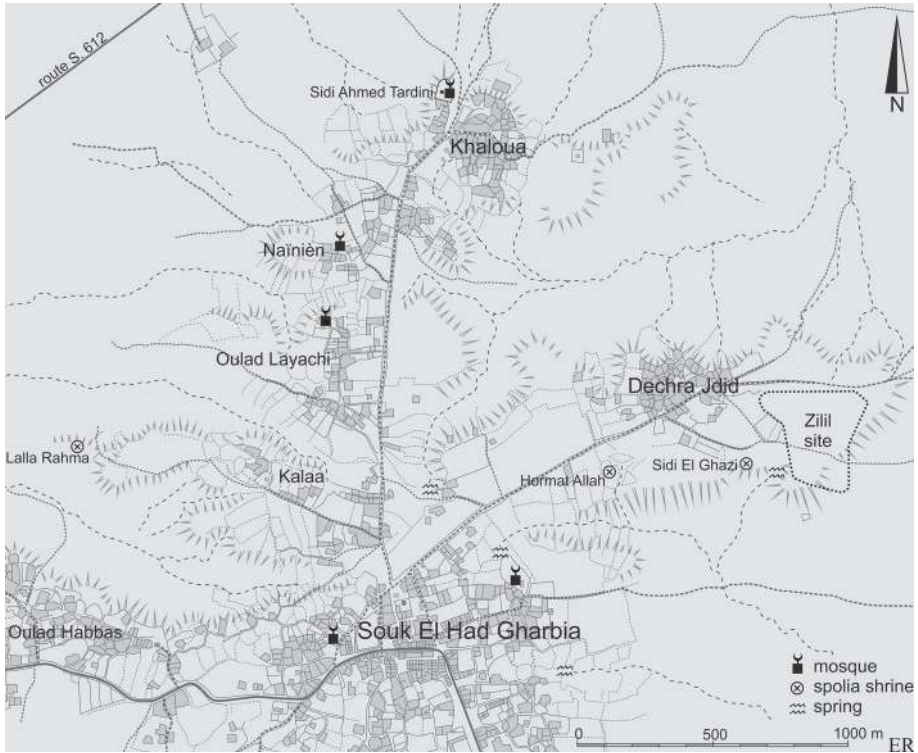


Fig. 4 Map of Zilil area.

The ‘Ḥamma’ stone is a piece of Roman masonry (stone-and-mortar) which protrudes from the ground in the middle of what is now a farmer’s wheat field.³⁸ The masonry may possibly have been part of the foundations of a Roman building, as it resembles part of an arch. According to Ahmed Kadi Wahabi (Aḥmād Qāḍī al-Wahabī), the guardian of the Zilil site, the Ḥamma stone, whose name was not explained, was ‘visited’ occasionally by the local population.³⁹ It was mostly of use for treating illness in children. Candles would be burnt and ribbons left at the site. Money could also be left. There were no burials associated with the site, and visits could occur at any time; there was no special day of the week for this. In December 1984 the Ḥamma stone was broken open, probably by treasure seekers. This act amounted to the desecration of the stone. When we visited the site in March 2002 the stone lay in large fragments. There was no trace of whitewash or of candles, ribbons, etc; once the *baraka* (God’s grace) had left the stone, the place was abandoned.

38 See Siraj 1995, 440–441 for details. See also Westermarck 1926, 364–365.

39 Ahmed Kadi Wahabi (Aḥmād Qāḍī al-Wahabī) was interviewed on site on 21 March 2002.

Just west of the Zilil site, on a slope which faces it across a shallow ravine, is the shrine of *Sîdî agh-Ghâzî*. This shrine consists of two masonry graves separated by a clump of short doum-palms surrounding an olive tree. The shrine is surrounded by a cemetery which is no longer in use. We were unable to find out anything about this shrine apart from its name.

About 200 m further west is the shrine of *Ḥurmat Allâh* (or ‘Sanctuary of God’), there was some discussion as to which of the titles, ‘*Sîdî*’ or ‘*Lâlla*’, was appropriate for *Ḥurmat Allâh*. *Ḥurmat Allâh* occurs near an outcrop of Roman-period concrete and masonry. The outcrop occurs at the surface and is mostly lichen-covered. The shrine itself consists of thicket of short trees, including olive and doum-palms, at whose roots is a section of stone column. The column section and other large stones in the composition are not whitewashed. The shrine is visited by people who suffer from back pain. The *Ḥurmat Allâh* site also includes a well (no longer in use) and two cemeteries: a children’s cemetery directly behind the thicket and closer to the masonry outcrop, and a cemetery for adults off to the side. We were informed that the children’s cemetery is still being used.

1.7 km north-west of Zilil, in the neighboring village of Khaloua, is the *zâwîya* of *Sîdî Aḥmad Tardânî*. This *zâwîya* is not directly associated with the Zilil site, or the shrines connected with it. It does however harbor within its precinct two cut stones of probable archaeological origin: a large rectangular piece of cut sandstone, and a large millstone. The *zâwîya* consists of a *ḍarih* with a *qubba* and a separate mosque with a minaret. These whitewashed buildings are set within a grove of fig trees at the summit of a narrow spur (90 m wide), with a spectacular view northwards, to the valley of the Hachef River. The grove also contains a well and three whitewashed graves. According to the custodian of the *zâwîya*, the large rectangular piece of cut sandstone was found when the mosque was built; it now serves as a garden bench overlooking the western precipice. Large cut stones were commonly used in Roman Zilil, as in other Roman-period sites, but have not been used much in architecture since then. This stone was probably removed from the Zilil site sometime in the past and brought to Khaloua for some purpose. Possibly, it may have been used for some building where the mosque now stands. The second archaeological feature at this site is a large millstone with a square hole at its summit for the wooden peg. Such millstones are common at Roman sites; they are larger than those currently in use by rural households but smaller than those used in traditional commercial mills. Most probably this stone too was removed from the Zilil site and brought to Khaloua. Contrary to the cut sandstone piece, the millstone continues to have some religious status. It lies at the foot of one of the garden graves and, like the other structures around it, is whitewashed.

Finally, 2.5 km west of Zilil is the shrine of Lālla Raḥma. Lālla Raḥma ('Lady of Mercy') is a cemetery. It occupies a low ridge (50 m wide) that juts westward from El Had Rharbia (al-ḥaṭ agh-gharbiya). The ridge in fact culminates in two different places, about 50 m apart, and these are where the shrines are located. The western-most summit is dominated by a large, old, olive tree enclosed by a low *ḥawsh* of dry-stone. There are traces of whitewash on the stones, but not on the tree trunk. The shrine is surrounded by graves. The eastern summit, which also has many graves, is forested. Hidden amongst the brush is a half-ruined circular stone structure which resembles a well. It is whitewashed. Ten meters from this structure is a set of rectangular cut stones (sandstone), similar to the one in the *zāwīya* of Sîdî Aḥmad Tardâni. Some of them are arranged horizontally, while another has been placed upright; they are all whitewashed. Other dry-stone *ḥawīta*, also partially whitewashed, complete the composition, along with a ribbon tree some 10 m away.

5.3 Thamusida⁴⁰

The site of Thamusida, north east of Kenitra, occupies a low embankment along the left bank of the Sebou River (Roman *aminis sububus magnificus et navigabilis*) (Fig. 5). The ruins today extend over an area of 15 hectares. Several archaeological field seasons were conducted at the site starting with the work of A. Ruhlman between 1932 and 1934. The most recent archaeological work at Thamusida was conducted between 1999 and 2007 by a team of archaeologists from the *Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine* (INSAP) in Rabat and the *Università degli Studi di Siena* in Italy.

Archaeological evidence shows a Mauretianian (pre-Roman) occupation at the site, represented by traces of adobe dwellings ("des constructions en terre"), at around the mid 2nd century BCE. The finding of a Phoenician amphora (Type R1) pushes the earliest occupation at Thamusida to the 6th century BCE. The settlement continued to thrive until the Romans annexed it and launched a major urban program. Under the Flavians (69–96 CE), Thamusida became a Roman garrison town complete with a temple and a number of bath houses. The orthogonal layout of the city dates to the 2nd century CE when Thamusida became the largest garrison town in all Mauritania Tingitania, extending over an area of 2.25 hectares. Although the city was officially abandoned by the Roman garrison between 274 and 280 CE, several archaeological indications point to the occupation of the site subsequent to Roman withdrawal.⁴¹

40 The archaeological description of the site of Thamusida was synthesized from R. Arharbi, see Arharbi 2011.

41 Arharbi 2011, 63–66.

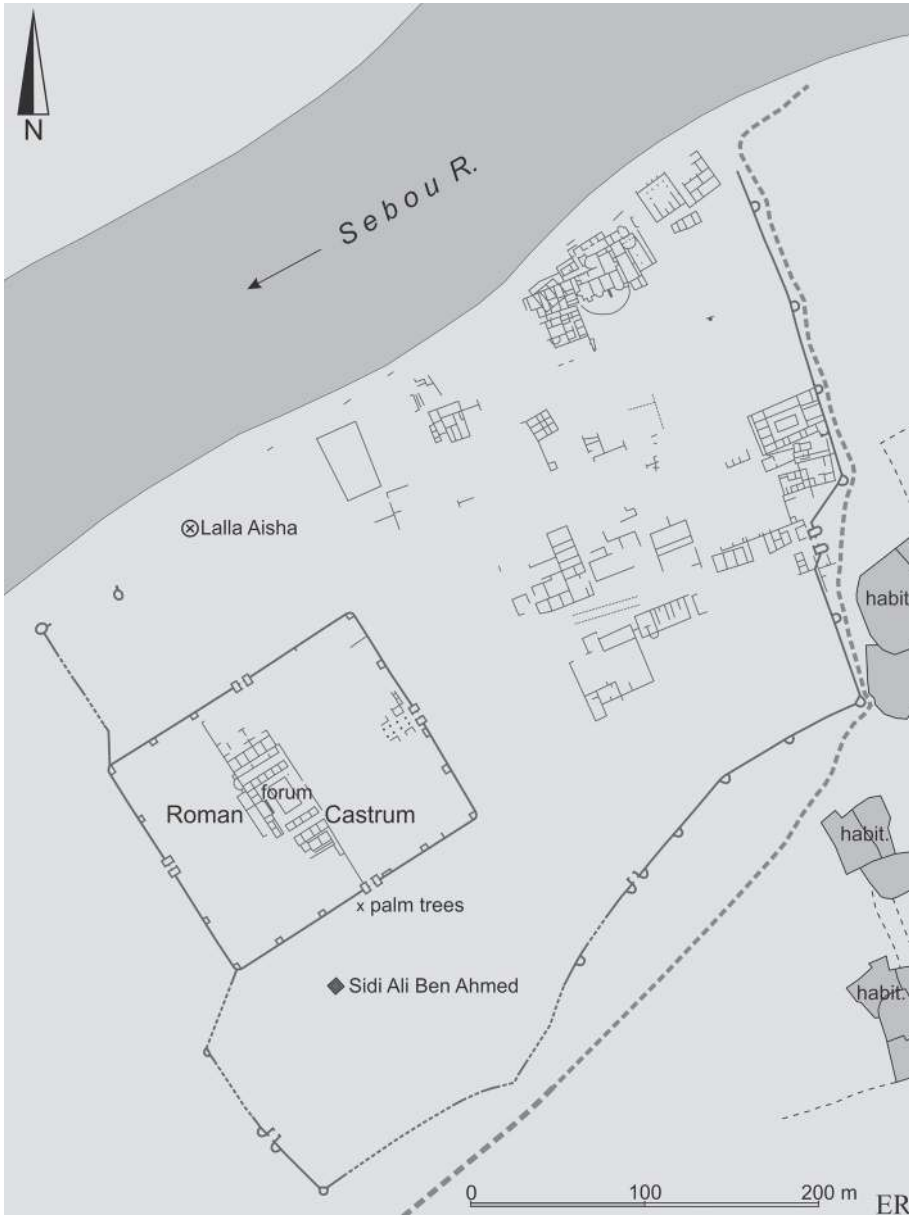


Fig. 5 Plan of Thamusida archaeological site.

The current Islamic 'layer' consists principally of the *ḍarīḥ* of Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmad.⁴² This mausoleum is perhaps a typical example of a rural *qubba*. It stands very near the highest point of the site (12 m alt.) to the south of the *castrum*, and is visible from every direction. Today it serves as a marker for those who are looking for the archaeological site of Thamusida, which otherwise has no vertical components. The *ḍarīḥ* is a white-washed, domed structure with a single door, painted green. Nothing is really known about Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmad. The *ḍarīḥ* has a custodian who looks after it and collects 'gifts' left by visitors, but it has no documentation. The custodian could only give imprecise information about the site and the *ḍarīḥ*. He did report that the shrine was originally a fig tree, that the tree became a *karkûr* or a *ḥawsh*, and that only later was the mausoleum built. Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmad may well be one of those 'generic' saints scattered around Moroccan rural landscapes. Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmad is visited on Wednesdays, mostly by women who wish to treat problems of infertility. It also has an annual *mausim*, in summer.

The shrine of Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmad is complemented by two ribbon trees. The first of these consists of a stand of three palm trees directly adjacent to the *ḍarīḥ*. The base of these trees shows evidence of much burning of candles and bits of cloth are left there. We were unable to determine if this shrine had a proper name. The second ribbon tree is a bush right on the river bank. The custodian informed us that it was called Lâlla 'Aisha. The bush is wrapped in long green banners, has many ribbons attached to its lower branches, and shows evidence of candle burning. The shrine is obviously used by women, but the custodian was very dismissive of 'women's things' and we were unable to obtain any additional information. He did however tell us that the shrine had moved; formerly, Lâlla 'Aisha had been located at another tree along the river bank, to the east.

There are no burials around Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmad. Rather, the shrine is related to two cemeteries some distance away: Sîdî Saba' Rijâl 4 km to the south-southwest, and Sîdî Bû Ma'iza 1.7 km directly south of the *ḍarīḥ* (Fig. 6).

Sîdî Saba' Rijâl ('My Lord of Seven Men') serves as cemetery for all the villages and hamlets in the immediate vicinity. It lies on a low hillock (13 m alt.) and is crowned by a small whitewashed *qubba*. The archaeological material found in this cemetery indicates that a settlement existed there in Roman times.⁴³ Today, the Rabat-Tangier highway runs right past it. The second cemetery, at Sîdî Bû Ma'iza, is more problematic. This is a children's cemetery. It consists of an almost perfectly conical hill some 200 m in diameter which culminates at 28 m. It lies in open country and has a commanding view of its surroundings, including of the *qubba* of Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmed. At the summit of the cone is a small concrete marker. The area immediately around it has been recently dug up, possibly by treasure seekers. The graves of small children, as well as discarded

42 The *qubba* of Sîdî 'Alî b. Aḥmad was identified by C. Tissot, see Tissot 1878, 280.

43 Siraj 1995, 452.

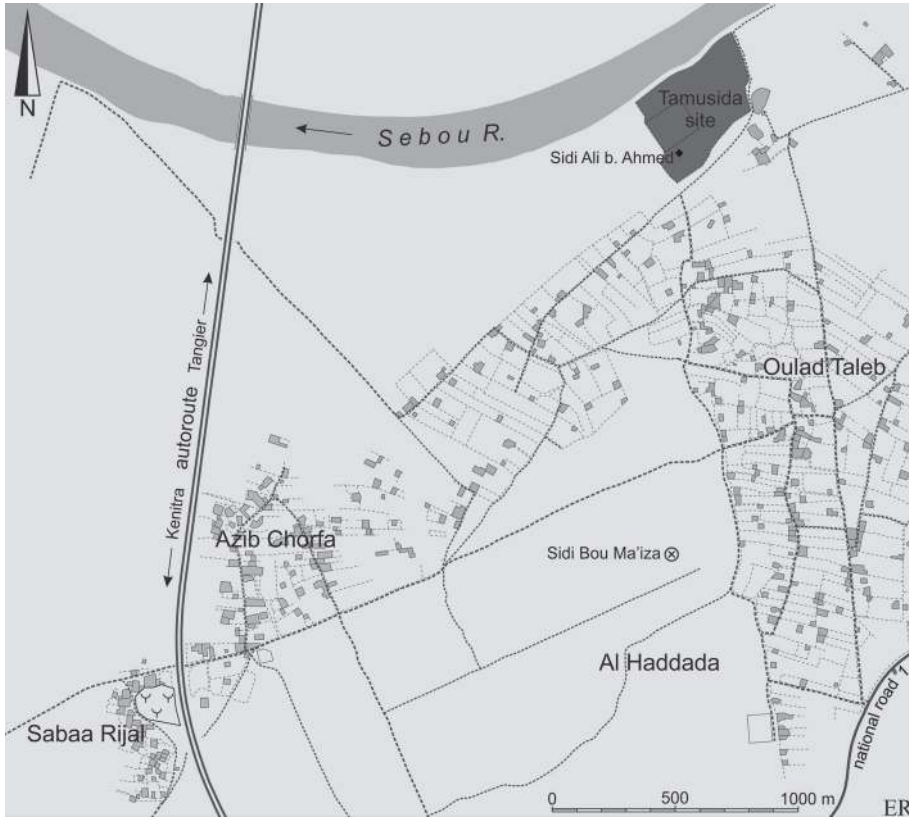


Fig. 6 Map of Thamusida area.

children’s clothing, occupy the slopes of the cone. Mr. Muḥammad ‘Alâm, the guardian of the Thamusida archaeological site, told us that children have been buried here since before he was born. There are also a lot of pottery shards and pieces of iron slag at the site. The area is known as ‘Azîb Ḥaddada, or Al-Ḥaddada, toponyms which relate to blacksmiths and iron-working. The custodian indicated to us that there was some kind of ordinal relationship between Sîdî Bû Ma‘îza and Sîdî ‘Alî b. Aḥmad, that somehow Sîdî Bû Ma‘îza was first, before Sîdî ‘Alî b. Aḥmad.

5.4 Ḥajar an-Naşr

Ḥajar an-Naşr (‘Eagle Rock’) is an Idrisid fortress located about 30 km southeast of Jbel Sîdî Ḥabîb (Jabal Sîdî Ḥabîb) (Fig. 7). The site sits above the modern village of Douar el-Ḥajar (Duwâr al-Ḥajar). It was mentioned in several medieval Arabic texts. Ḥajar an-

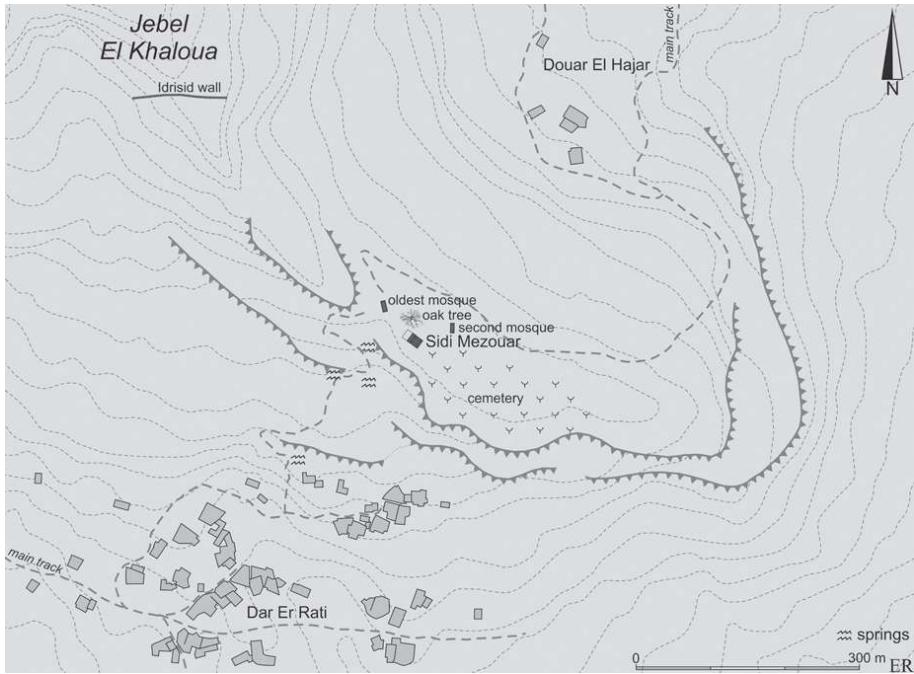


Fig. 7 Plan of Hajar an-Naşr archaeological site.

Naşr is located on a *mesa* of about 5 hectares and the site was first surveyed by a team of Moroccan, French and Spanish archaeologists.⁴⁴ Several archaeological features were found at Hajar an-Naşr including an enclosing wall and a large central complex (7.5 m by 19.5 m) arranged in the shape of the letter L. Although textual evidence points to the presence of water within Hajar an-Naşr, no storage facilities for food (silos) or water (cisterns) were found at the site.⁴⁵ The ceramic material found at Hajar an-Naşr date to the tenth century CE.⁴⁶

The site is today known for the *zâwiya* of Sîdî Mazwâr. It is located about 25 km south-west of the shrine of Mûlây ʿAbd al-Salâm b. Mashîsh, which is the most important shrine in the Jbala region and to which it is related. In spite of a number of discrepancies between the hagiography of Sîdî Mazwâr and Idrisid historiography, the former played an important role in the identification of Hajar an-Naşr. In fact, considering the remoteness of the site, it would have been almost impossible to identify it archaeologically if the local tradition has not kept a vivid memory of Sîdî Mazwâr.

44 For a detailed historical-archaeological description of the site, see Cressier et al. 1998.

45 Cressier et al. 1998 323–326, 331.

46 Cressier et al. 1998, 329, 332.

During our field survey the *muqaddam* of the *zâwîya*, Aḥmad al-Jamaîlî, was able to give valuable complementary information.⁴⁷

The hagiography of Aḥmad b. ʿAlî Ḥaydara b. Muḥammad b. Idrîs b. Idrîs, alias Sîdî Mazwâr, places this Idrisid prince in Ḥajar an-Naṣr well before the site was developed as a fortress by his cousins. Sîdî Mazwâr (died c. 864 CE) is reported to have come to the secluded site to seek refuge not from political or military turmoil, but for spiritual reasons. Ḥajar an-Naṣr was his *khalwa*, his spiritual ‘retreat’, and this legacy survives in the name of the mountain which dominates the site. If the hagiography is historically correct, the spiritual function of the site precedes its function as an urban center or fortress. The Idrisid princes who founded Ḥajar an-Naṣr were building on an existing Idrisid establishment, rather than starting out *ex nihilo*. Sîdî Mazwâr is reported to be the ancestor of nearly all the other Idrisid saints of the Jbala, including of Mûlây ʿAbd al-Salâm b. Mashîsh (died c. 1224 or 1227 CE).⁴⁸ Following its brief career as an Idrisid fortress, the site appears again in the historical record after the Battle of the Three Kings (1578 CE). In return for the support of the powerful Idrisid lineages of the Jbala, the Saʿdian Sultân Aḥmad al-Manṣûr officially recognized the *ḥurm* of both Sîdî Mazwâr at Ḥajar an-Naṣr and of Mûlây ʿAbd al-Salâm b. Mashîsh on Jabal al-ʿAlam.⁴⁹ We can surmise from this that the *zâwîya* of Sîdî Mazwâr was already an important shrine in the 16th century, on par with that of Mûlây ʿAbd al-Salâm b. Mashîsh. Ibn Mashîsh is still a major shrine in Morocco today, but Sîdî Mazwâr is hardly known beyond the Jbala.

The *zâwîya* of Sîdî Mazwâr (19th century CE?) and its dependencies occupy a narrow ridge. The *zâwîya* consists of a main burial chamber, surmounted by a large central dome and four smaller corner domes, preceded by an antechamber. The main chamber has a *mihṛâb* (pl. *maḥârib*). To the left of the entrance, outside the building, is a well constructed masonry *ḥawsh* purported to contain the grave of the founder of Ḥajar an-Naṣr; this could be either the Idrisid prince Ibrâhîm b. Muḥammad b. al-Qâsim b. Idrîs, or his son Muḥammad.

Two other buildings, both mosques with *maḥârib* (sg. *mihṛâb*), share the narrow ledge. The oldest mosque is a long narrow structure with an arched gallery along the outside of its *qibla* wall. It is in a state of disrepair but seems to get a fresh coat of white-wash every once in a while. The inside of the gallery is covered in graffiti of a decidedly profane nature, which is a very good indication that the building is no longer used for religious purposes. The second mosque stands lower down the slope. It has the same general physiognomy as the older one (long and narrow), but without the outer gallery. It has corrugated sheet-metal roofing and seems to be used as a stable for sheep and goats.

47 Aḥmad al-Jamaîlî was interviewed on site on 20 March and 25 May 2002.

48 ʿAbd al-Salâm b. Mashîsh b. Abû Bakr b. ʿAlî b. Ḥurma b. ʿÎsâ b. Salâm b. Mazwâr, according to Zouanat 1998, 27.

49 Cressier et al. 1998, 315.

The whitewash on its walls is nearly completely washed away. Interestingly, the *qiblas* of the three structures indicates a succession in time. The *qibla* of the oldest mosque faces almost due east; that of the second mosque faces a bit more south than the first, while the *qibla* of Sîdî Mazwâr's *darîh* faces almost perfectly south-east. This is in fact a reversal of the usual trend in the history of the *qibla* in Morocco. The *qiblas* of the earliest (Idrisid) mosques in Morocco faced almost due south. They were slowly re-oriented toward the south-east and then towards the east over a period of many centuries.⁵⁰ In the case of Sîdî Mazwâr the east-facing *qibla* was progressively re-oriented southward.

The central space between the three structures described above is dominated by a great oak tree. This space is used twice a year to accommodate the small crowd that attends the annual *mawāsîm* (sg. *Mawsîm feast day*): the *Mawlid al-Nabawî* (the Prophet Muammad's 'birthday' on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awal) and the *Ād al-Fitr* holiday which marks the end of Ramaḍân. Otherwise, visits to the shrine occur mostly on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. According to the *muqaddam*, Sîdî Mazwâr has no specific therapeutic abilities; pilgrims just visit his tomb for reasons of personal piety.

The remainder of the ridge consists of an active cemetery. Along the upper-most reaches, right up to the cliff-edge to the south, are a large number of dry-stone *aḥwāsh* (sg. *ḥawsh*), some of them quite large. None are whitewashed and there is no indication that any cultic or devotional activities occur there.

The southern cliff-edge, down to the hamlet of Er-Rati, constitutes the main route to the site. There are a number of springs along this steep path which are used for specific devotional purposes, according to P. Cressier et al.⁵¹ *Āin al-Ṭalaba* is used by students of the *zāwīya* for their ablutions. *Āin al-Kurûsh* is used to wash the entrails of sheep sacrificed during the *mawāsîm*. *Āin al-Baraka* is purported to cure skin ailments by washing, while the anonymous spring next to it cures fevers. There is also the *Āin Mûlây Aḥmad*, purported to be 'haunted' (*mashûra*).

There was no evidence of a ribbon tree attached to Sîdî Mazwâr, but we did not explore the entire site. Ribbon trees, or, more frequently, ribbon bushes, tend to be discreet places. Women who use them know where to find them. There is no need for them to 'stand out' in the landscape.

5.5 Chella

Chella (pronounced *Shâlla*), located just outside the ramparts of Rabat, is etymologically related to *Salâ* (Salé), Rabat's twin city across the Bou Regreg (Abū Raqrâq) river, and ultimately to *Sala Colonia*, the Roman colony on the site (Fig. 8). The site is complex in that it has both ancient (Roman) and Medieval (Marinid) archaeological layers, as

50 Bonine 1990.

51 Cressier et al. 1998, 330.

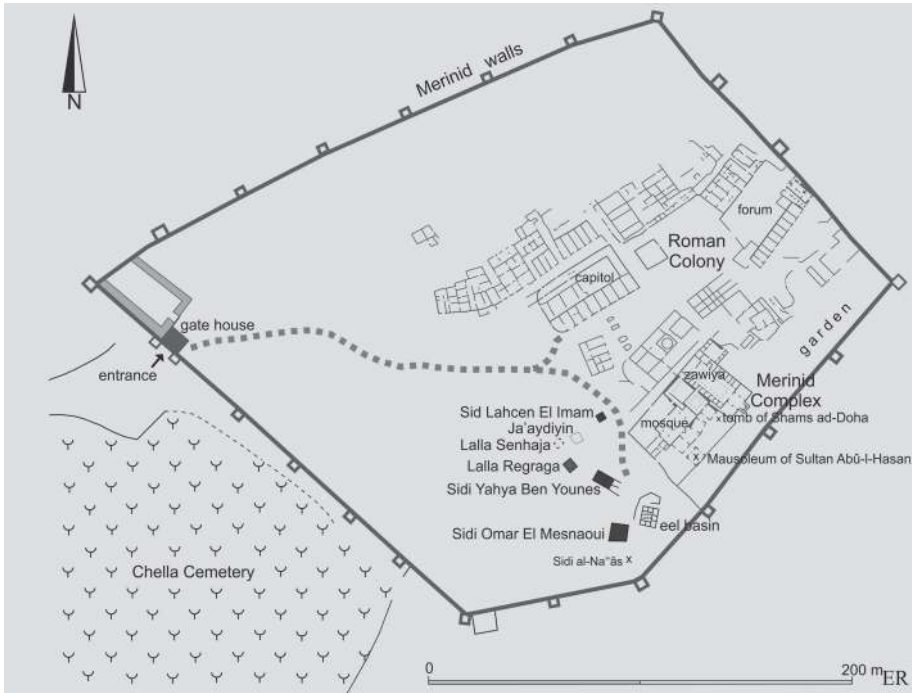


Fig. 8 Plan of Chella archaeological site.

well as the subsequent Islamic shrines. The site occupies the slope of a narrow spur on the left bank, or south-western side, of the Bou Regreg valley. It is well defined by a solid perimeter wall and most of it is planted with beautiful gardens. The gardens, shrines and ruins make Chella one of Rabat's most picturesque sites and a major tourist attraction.

The earliest archaeological evidence at the site points to *Sala* as a port of call for Phoenician ships in the 7th century BCE, then to a Mauretanian occupation between the 2nd to 1st centuries BCE. Following Roman annexation, *Sala* was designated as a *colonia* for retired soldiers. It was fortified in 144 CE and was provided with an orthogonal urban layout and a monumental complex in keeping with Roman classical tradition. The Bou Regreg River marked the southern limit of the province of Mauritania Tingitania, and of the Roman Empire in North Africa. The little territory lying south of the Bou Regreg Estuary where *Sala Colonia* was built was fortified with a ditch, or *fossatum*. Following the withdrawal of Roman administration the city declined in importance and a new port city, Salé, on the north bank of the estuary, came to replace it.

The Islamic archaeological layer at Chella consists of an important mortuary complex established by the Marinids. H. Basset and E. Levi-Provençal wrote a seminal and

comprehensive study on the historiography, art history, archaeology, and architecture at Marinid Chella including a section on post-Marinid shrines (“Les Qoubba mérinides en dehors du sanctuaire”)⁵² and one on the “Légendes et Cultes.”⁵³ More recently, Shudūd has reviewed all relevant literature on the “mausoleums and marabouts at Chella” (“*al-adriḥā wa-l-qibāb fi-shalla*”) and produced an annotated transliteration of Muḥammad Abū Jandār’s *Al-ightibāt bi-tarājim A‘lām ar-Ribāt*, a biographical dictionary of eminent figures in Rabat including saints buried in Chella.⁵⁴

Sultān Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb (reigned 1258–1286) was the first Marinid sultan to invest in the ancient site, building a funerary mosque for his wife Umm al-‘Īzz in 1284.⁵⁵ Subsequent sultans continued to develop the site. Abū-l-Ḥassan (1331–1351) built a large complex, consisting of a mosque, a *zāwiya*, his own monumental *ḍarīḥ* (mausoleum) and that of his wife Shams ad-Dūha. He also completed the great perimeter wall, with its monumental gate, which still encloses the site today. The architecture of Abū-l-Ḥassan’s complex incorporates reused baked brick from the Roman layer, as well as white Carrara marble which the Marinids imported from Italy. Chella was the major necropolis of the dynasty; many important members of the Marinid court were buried there. This Marinid necropolis, and Abū-l-Ḥassan’s complex in particular, is now in ruins and thus qualifies as an archaeological site alongside Roman *Sala Colonia*. Yet, in subsequent centuries Chella continued to serve as cemetery, and there is still a large active cemetery directly adjacent to it, outside Abū-l-Ḥassan’s walls. There is thus continuity between the medieval archaeological occupation of the site and the more recent shrines.

This continuity is expressed at the spiritual or mythical level by two shrines within the ruined Marinid complex itself: the shrine to the ‘Black Sultan’ and to his ‘daughter’ Lālla Shalla. The shrine to the Black Sultan (as-Sultān ak-Kaḥal) is none other than Abū-l-Ḥassan’s mausoleum. Now roofless, the mausoleum has open arches on three sides. The *qibla* side is a solid masonry wall, elaborately decorated on its outside. On its inner surface is a niche in the stonework where candles were still being burnt in 2002.⁵⁶ Abū-l-Ḥassan’s marble tomb catafalque lies in the middle of the floor, yet popular tradition holds that this is the tomb of ‘Mūlāy Ya‘qūb’, a mythical Black Sultan. Basset and Lévi-Provençal also report that the tomb stone of Abū-l-Ḥassan’s wife, Shams ad-Dūha, is popularly believed to be that of an equally mythical ‘Lālla Shalla’, daughter of the Black Sultan.⁵⁷ Similar rituals used to occur at her gravesite as well.

The later Muslim shrines at Chella are grouped in a small area to the south and west of the Marinid complex and consist of a number of elements: *ḍarā’ih*, *aḥwāsh*, a

52 Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 312–315.

53 Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 385–422.

54 Shudūd 2011, 229–236 and Appendix 3: 139–149 respectively.

55 Chastel 1994, 219.

56 From more recent visits it appears that the practice of burning candles at this site has stopped.

57 Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 406. The marble stele of Shams ad-Dūha has been removed from her tomb.

karkûr and a pool. The principal shrine today is the *ḍarīḥ* of Sîdî ‘Umar al-Masnâwî. The Mausoleum chamber, beneath a *qubba*, contains two tombs and is preceded by an antechamber. It has a custodian who lives on-site and it is still visited today. Next to it is the *ḍarīḥ* of Sîdî Yâḥyâ b. Yûnus. This is an imposing mausoleum with a *qubba*. The main chamber contains two catafalques, while the antechamber contains four additional tombs, the most recent of which carries the date 1964 CE. Next to this in turn is a *ḍarīḥ* named Sîdî al-Ḥassan al-Imâm. It is a typical whitewashed cubical structure with a *qubba*.

Still more historically obscure are the two female saints associated to the funerary structures attributed to Lalla Ragra (Lâlla Raqrâqa) and Lalla Sanhaja (Lâlla Sanhâja).⁵⁸ Both these names refer to important Amazigh (Berber) tribes.⁵⁹ It is possible that all the male saints issuing from these tribes have been subsumed into a single female entity as it was argued by Basset and Lévi-Provençal.⁶⁰ Nestled among these female tomb structures is a stone *ḥawsh* named Ja‘aydiyîn which contains three or four stone-marked graves. Two other tombs listed by Basset and Lévi-Provençal: Sîdî aḏ-Zâḥir and Sîdî Bû Ma‘îza, which may lie further up the wooded slope were not seen by us during our survey.⁶¹

It is important to note here that the current custodian of these shrines was unable to give any information on the various saints, men and women, purported to be buried in these structures. Only the *ḍarīḥ* of Sîdî ‘Umar al-Masnâwî, with its attendant eel pool, is still a functioning shrine. The *ḍarīḥ* of Sîdî Yâḥyâ b. Yûnus, Lâlla Ragra and Sîdî Ḥassan al-Imâm are in good repair but do not seem to be loci of pious visits. The entire cemetery is overgrown and some of the trees are now quite mature; it is no longer an active cemetery. Moreover, a large colony of storks and egrets has made its home in the cemetery. The sound of chattering birds there is often deafening,⁶² yet it is somehow strangely in keeping with the mystical dimension of the place.

The *ḍarīḥ* of Sîdî ‘Umar al-Masnâwî, the only active one today, faces the eel pool, one of Chella’s most original features. The eel pool consists of a masonry basin with seven small lateral chambers. The construction dates from the Marinid period, though its original purpose is open question. It is built over a natural spring and has anywhere between 50 cm and 1 m of water in it at any time. Basset and Lévi-Provençal suggested

58 For a detailed architectural description, see Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 312–315.

59 The Ragra are a Berber tribe from the area around present-day Essaouira (aṣ-Ṣawîra). They famously have ‘seven saints’. The Sanhâja are a large Berber tribal confederation which produced the Almoravid dynasty in the 11th century CE.

60 Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 415–417. This transformation is facilitated by Arabic grammar. The collective designation of a group, in this case tribal designations, is identical to the female singular form.

61 Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 417.

62 One is reminded here of the Persian mystic Farîd ad-Dîn ‘Aṭṭâr’s *Mantiq at-tâ’ir* (‘The Conference of the Birds’), an allegorical work in which thirty birds assemble in an effort to reach God.

this was originally an ablution chamber.⁶³ This shrine is clearly related to issues of fertility. Women used to visit it for treatment; they would immerse themselves in the water and isolate themselves in the chambers. They would also feed hard-boiled eggs to the eels that live in the basin.⁶⁴ Today, according to the custodian, this is no longer done. The eel pool is now part of the Chella tourist circuit. The custodian will feed eggs to the eels while tourists leave coins in offering. There is evidence however that the shrine is still visited for devotional purposes as burnt candles can be seen at the site.

Contiguous to the *ḍarīḥ* of Sîdî ʿUmar al-Masnâwî was a shrine known as Sîdî an-Nuʿâs (‘My Lord of Sleep’). The shrine, as described by Basset and Lévi-Provençal,⁶⁵ consisted of a section of stone column used as a *karkûr*, and patronized by people with sleep disorders. Clearly, Sîdî an-Nuʿâs never existed as a person. The column section, no longer extant, was undoubtedly taken from either a Roman-period structure or from the Marinid necropolis. As in other popular shrines built around specific stones, the column piece was believed to be inhabited by a spirit, or *jinn*. The custodian of Sîdî ʿUmar al-Masnâwî showed us the spot where the shrine used to be, a small space hidden away between the bushes and trees at the back of a garden. There is nothing there now which would indicate the presence of Sîdî an-Nuʿâs.

5.6 Banasa⁶⁶

The site of Banasa occupies a low bluff on the left bank of the Sebou River (Roman *aminis sububus magnificus et navigabilis*) (Fig. 9). The first archaeological excavations at the site were conducted between 1933 and 1955 by R. Thouvenot and A. Luquet. The most recent ones were conducted by archaeologists Rachid Arharbi (*Institut National des Sciences de l’Archéologie et du Patrimoine*, INSAP) and Éliane Lenoir (UMR 8546, CNRS-ENS, Paris). The presence at Banasa of fragments of Phoenician amphorae, among other archaeological artifacts, points to the occupation of the site prior to the 5th century BCE. Mauretania was annexed to Roman administration between 33 and 27 BCE and became *Iulia Valentia Banasa*; a name that will change again, under Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE), to *Colonia Aurelia*.

The orthogonal layout of the central area of the site (‘quartier central’) dates probably to the first Roman contact. This area hosts an important monumental complex made of a temple, a forum, and a judiciary basilica. The macellum quarter (‘quartier du macellum’) boasts one of the largest houses in Banasa built around a peristyle and richly decorated with polychrome mosaics. As in Thamusia, several archaeological indications point to the occupation of Banasa subsequent to Roman withdrawal in 285

63 Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 399.

64 In 1922 Basset and Lévi-Provençal reported both sacred eels and sacred turtles inhabited the pool.

65 Basset and Lévi-Provençal 1922, 417–418.

66 The archaeological description of the site of Banasa was synthesized from Arharbi and Ramdani 2008.

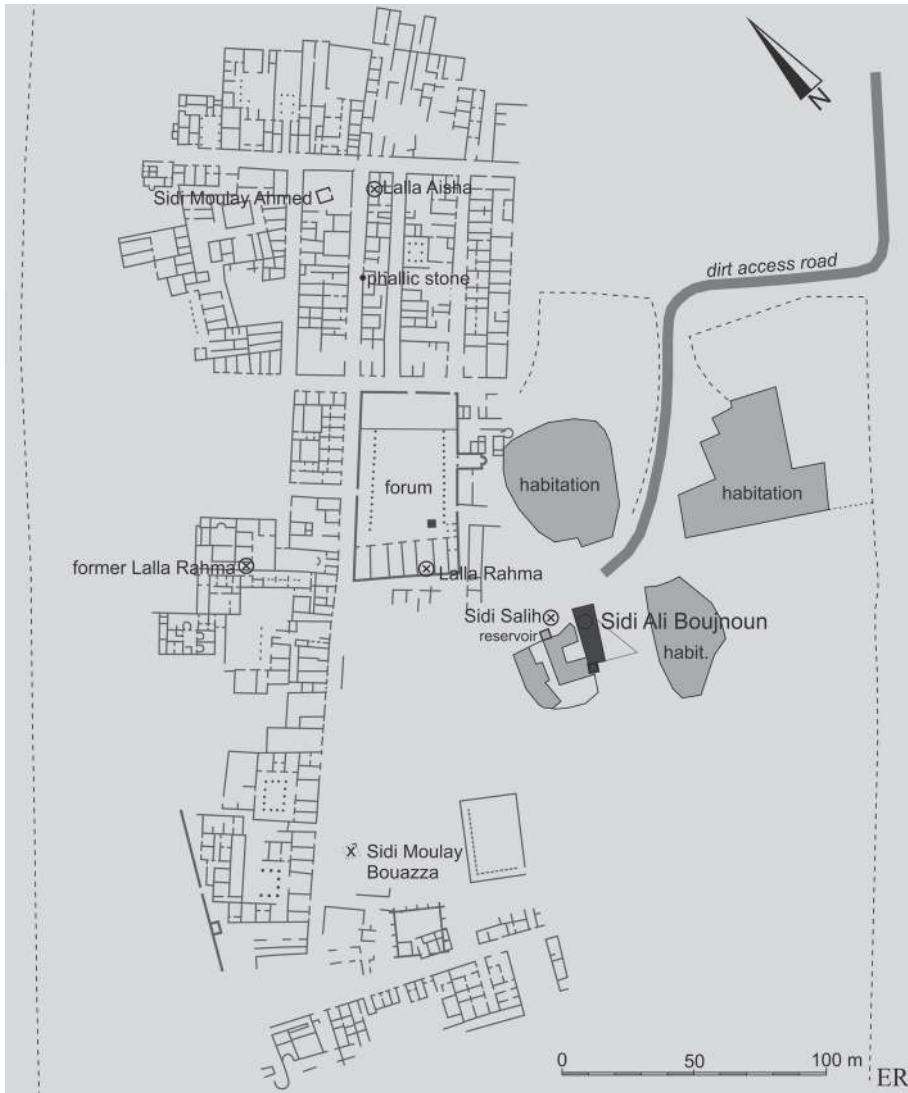


Fig. 9 Plan of Banasa archaeological site.

CE; an occupation that extended probably until the 12th century CE as attested by recent findings of Islamic pottery.⁶⁷ The site is known today for the *zâwiya* of Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn, a major religious center in the largely rural Gharb region.

67 Arharbi and Ramdani 2008, 60–63.

Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn is a full-fledged *zâwîya*.⁶⁸ The *muqaddam* was able to produce two notarized acts retracing the genealogy of the *zâwîya*’s saint.⁶⁹ According to the *muqaddam*, Sîdî ‘Alî (‘Abû Junûn’ is his sobriquet), of the Khult tribe, came from Ksar El-Kebir (Qâsr al-Kabîr, 25 km north of Banasa, at the base of the Jbala) ‘300 years ago’ to teach Qur’ân to the people of the area. Ksar El-Kebir (Qâsr al-Kabîr, 25 km north of Banasa, at the base of the Jbala) is still the home of the saint’s descendants, and that is where the *zâwîya*’s original documents are kept. Sîdî ‘Alî had power over the *jinn*, and was especially competent in dealing with handicaps, psychological problems, and epilepsy (*ṣar‘* in Arabic).⁷⁰ He was especially adept at exercising control over ‘unbelieving’ (*kâfir*) *jinn*. This legacy is clearly expressed in his sobriquet, ‘Abû Junûn,’ which could be unpoetically translated as ‘Possessor/Controller of Jinn-induced Insanity.’ Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn liked to isolate himself in spiritual retreat, or *khalwa*. It is possible that he chose to inhabit the ruins of Banasa in order to isolate himself for this purpose. It is also possible that he chose to inhabit the ruins in order to better ‘control’ (*‘azîma*) the *jinn* who lived there. In any case, it appears that the saint was buried amidst the ruins of the Roman colony and his tomb is now at the center of a *zâwîya* complex.

What is certain is that the Banasa site developed into a Muslim cemetery. When the French began archaeological excavations at Banasa in 1933, the site was still actively used for burials by the populations of surrounding villages and the archaeologists had to relocate graves to get to the Roman level. Like many cemeteries in Morocco, the Banasa cemetery had a number of mausoleums: the *ḍarā’ih* of Sîdî Mûlây Aḥmad, of Sîdî Mûlây Bû ‘Azza, as well as that of Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn. While archaeologists were able to relocate most of the graves on the site, excavation was not conducted in the immediate vicinity of these three mausolea. As excavations progressed, the surface level of the Banasa site was lowered, and the three shrines now stick out above the surrounding landscape – though they seem to have been located on the higher ground in any case. Banasa is not much visited as an archaeological site. Its Roman monuments cannot compare to those at Volubilis or Lixus and it lacks the romantic charm of the Chella ruins. However, the *zâwîya* of Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn is very active and attracts many visitors from the Gharb region. Most visitors come for reasons related to mental health issues, as the *zâwîya* has built a reputation in this regard.

Today, the *zâwîya* of Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn consists of a *ḍarîh* with a conical roof over the tomb chamber. The chamber is surrounded on two sides by a wide triple-arched

68 The *qubba* of Sîdî ‘Alî Bû Junûn was identified by Tissot 1878, 277.

69 ‘Abd al-Salâm al-‘Agûbî was interviewed on site on 17–18 March and 23 May 2002. He provided the investigators with copies of these documents written

in traditional *maghribî zimâmi* script; they are being transcribed and translated.

70 For a list of saints in Morocco who rule over the *jinn*, see Westermarck 1926, 363–364.

gallery. There is a mosque with a stout minaret attached to the south side of the building. The entire complex, built in 1964, is whitewashed each year before the *mausim* (held in August or September), as are all the other active shrines connected to the site. Attached to the west side of the *zâwîya* is the home of the *muqaddam* and his family, one of three farmsteads on the site. Within this farmstead is a masonry water tower whose foundation consists of large cut stones most probably of Roman-period origin. Between this water tower and the *ḍarîḥ* is a small tree shrine called *Sîdî Şâliḥ* ('My Lord the Pious One'). The *muqaddam* explained that the tree marked the grave of *Sîdî Şâliḥ*, but was unable to tell us anything about this saintly figure. The base of the tree consists of a *karkûr* of whitewashed dry-stones. The shrine complex thus constituted dominates the rest of the Banasa site, which contains a number of active shrines amidst its archaeological remains.

Nothing could be found out about the two ruined *ḍarâ'ih* which still stand on the site. According to the *muqaddam*, *Sîdî Mûlây Aḥmad* and *Sîdî Mûlây Bû 'Azza* were originally more popular than *Sîdî 'Alî Bû Junûn*. Most of the graves in the cemetery were located around their *ḍarâ'ih*, an indication that people wanted to be buried in their vicinity. In their day, the *ḍarâ'ih* of *Sîdî Mûlây Aḥmad* and of *Sîdî Mûlây Bû 'Azza* were well constructed, of (probably reused Roman-era) baked brick, and were domed. The *ḍarîḥ* of *Sîdî 'Alî Bû Junûn*, on the other hand, was a mud and wattle *ḥawsh*, without a roof, until the present structure was built in 1964. Fate has now dictated a reversal of fortunes of sorts. The crumbling *ḍarîḥ* of *Sîdî Mûlây Aḥmad*, though it is regularly whitewashed, now stands roofless, while that of *Sîdî Mûlây Bû 'Azza* has all but disappeared. Only one corner of the structure is left standing today, but it too is whitewashed. Candles are still burnt at both shrines.

The ruins of Banasa also harbor a number of ribbon trees. *Lâlla 'Aîsha* is a large bush across the *cardo* (the main north-south thoroughfare of the Roman town) from the *ḍarîḥ* of *Sîdî Mûlây Aḥmad*. It is actively visited, probably by women who tie ribbons to its lower branches and leave bits of clothing. Like *Lâlla 'Aîsha* in Thamusida, this shrine may relate to issues of fertility. There is even the possibility that it may be related to the presence of phallic symbols on Roman-period stones found in the vicinity. Brothels were legitimate commercial establishments in Roman towns and cities. Their commercial signs often consisted of bas-relief stone depictions of phalluses placed at strategic intersections which 'pointed' the way to the brothel. Volubilis has a good specimen of such a phallic stone. The *cardo* of Banasa also has two specimens of these commercial signs, less than 50 m from the *Lâlla 'Aîsha* tree. That such 'phallic' stones might have served as catalyst for the development of a local fertility shrine is an interesting hypothesis, but it is not one that could be verified on site.

Banasa's other ribbon tree is named *Lâlla Raḥma* ('Lady Mercy'). This large fig tree is situated in one of the six axial temples of the forum (the fifth temple from the west). Like *Lâlla 'Aïsha*, *Lâlla Raḥma* has ribbons attached to its lower branches. We were informed by the *muqaddam* that this is the *current* *Lâlla Raḥma*. Formerly, *Lâlla Raḥma* was another, smaller, tree which still grows in the Roman *therme*, 40 m to the west. As with *Lâlla 'Aïsha* in Thamusida then, ribbon trees can 'relocate,' though the mechanism of how such a move is determined is not known to us. What can be safely assumed however is that all the ribbon trees at the Banasa site (and this excludes the *Sîdî Şâliḥ* tree which is not a ribbon tree, and which is 'male,' ribbon trees are always 'female') are relatively recent in their current manifestations. The site was excavated in the early 1930s; any ribbon trees present at that time would simply have been removed along with the rest of the surface vegetation. The current ribbon trees grow within the excavated ruins, and have thus grown up since that time. It is significant also that many of the ribbon trees are fig trees. Fig trees, like weeds, tend to grow in 'awkward' places, in gutters and crevices, in ruined and abandoned buildings, etc. They are therefore common 'pioneer' plants in freshly excavated areas.

6 Conclusion

What can we conclude from this field investigation? While each of the six sites shares some characteristics with the others, there is no single model of succession from abandoned or partially abandoned settlement to functioning shrine.

Many of the shrines incorporated older building materials. This is a common condition at archaeological sites; durable building materials such as cut stone and baked brick are sufficiently valuable to warrant reuse in subsequent structures. In some of the cases studied (the *ḥawsh* at Lixus, *Sîdî an-Nu'âs* in Chella and throughout Zilil especially), the older materials, cut stones especially, are not reused for construction but, rather, have been transformed into devotional objects, incorporated along with field stone, shrubs and trees into informal shrines and then whitewashed. There may even be the possibility that one particular type of cut stone only found at Roman sites, the phallic sign post, has been creatively put to new symbolic use as fertility agent. There is evidence for this at Banasa but it may also be the case at Thamusida and Chella, and possibly even at Zilil, as women's fertility issues are addressed at these shrines.

Where substantial built shrines exist, as in Thamusida and Banasa, they crown the highest elevations of the old settlements. This is in keeping with practice throughout Morocco, where rural shrines tend to be built on hilltops or on the crests of ridges so as to 'command' the surrounding landscape.

Some earlier scholars⁷¹ have argued that many of the rural shrines of the Maghrib are in fact the loci of pre-Islamic cults and that these have been ‘assimilated’ into Islam by the erection of a *qubba*. This is held to explain the importance of natural features such as trees, rocks, springs, caves and ponds to the configuration of these places. The *qubba* of the ‘saint’, real or imagined, and the *ḥurm*, or ‘sanctuary’, it creates around itself were thus mechanisms for the continuity of popular religious practices within an increasingly Muslim social and intellectual context. This opens up interesting questions in the case of the six archaeological sites investigated here. What were the religious practices at these sites before the creation of the shrines? Did the creation of these shrines confer Islamic legitimacy to otherwise non-Islamic practices? In the absence of documentary evidence, without reliable oral traditions dating back to period of origin, and being unable to conduct archaeological excavation within the ‘protected’ areas of the *ḥurm*, these questions must remain unanswered.

Two hypotheses nonetheless present themselves to us. The first hypothesis has to do with the activities of holy men or ascetics. Such people are known to intentionally isolate themselves from the mainstream activities of communities. This spiritual isolation, called *khalwah*, is central to Sufi practice and we find *khalawāt* associated with the sites of Zilil, Ḥajar an-Naṣr and Banasa. Ruined settlements can offer ideal retreats of this type as the ascetic holy man can easily find shelter in them. The second hypothesis relates to a widespread popular belief that abandoned places are the haunts of spirits, assimilated to the concept of *jinn* in Islamic contexts. *Jinn* may be good, bad, or indifferent but it is always advisable not to upset them or interfere in their lives. In the case where *jinn* have come to inhabit ruins, it is possible that the holy man will intentionally establish his *khalwah* there in order to subdue or ‘tame’ it. This seems to be the case in Banasa as the patron of that place, Sîdî ‘Alî, is ‘Bû Junûn’; meaning he has power over the *jinn* and the havoc they can wreak. Unfortunately, the current state of our knowledge of these sites, based on field observation, historic documentation and oral tradition, does not permit us to come to any kind of firm conclusion. To build on the preliminary results discussed above and advance our knowledge of the research questions at hand, we suggest that future investigations should involve more collaboration between archaeologists, geographers, social anthropologists, and historians.

71 Dermenghem 1954, 34.

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