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# CASTRUM 6

MAISONS ET ESPACES DOMESTIQUES DANS LE MONDE  
MÉDITERRANÉEN AU MOYEN ÂGE

sous la direction d'André BAZZANA et Étienne HUBERT

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## SOCIAL RELATIONS AND DOMESTIC SPACE IN THE MAGHREB

The relationship between domestic space and the society which occupies it has been the subject of much discussion in the last decade<sup>1</sup>. For us, as for most of those writing on the subject, the fundamental work remains that of Pierre Bourdieu on the Kabylie house<sup>2</sup>. Here, the central focus is the relation between the house and its ideological and symbolic correlates. For Bourdieu, the house is not only created by the society, but insofar as it is the framework in which children learn the rules by which society is structured, it also creates the society.

Bourdieu's study has given rise to others, dealing with villages in the Aures, the Mزاب, and to a lesser extent the Saharan Atlas and Southern Tunisia. While not all these works explicitly link ideology and social organization to material culture, the connections are there to find. However, there has as yet been no research on what characteristics these houses have in common, if any. The first part of this paper is an attempt to define the organizational characteristics of Berber houses, both in the past and through recent ethnography. The domestic spaces can then be related to the relationship between men and women in the society. The second part of the paper is more hazardous: here, interaction of this model with that of contemporary Arab houses is examined. This gives us various ways of looking at the effect of the hegemonic cultural model on the indigenous form, showing both the 'Arabization' of the Berber house, and, in some instances, the 'Berberization' of the Arab house. Both parts of the study require some fairly massive simplifications, as do all distillations of types from the infinite details of the real world. It is of course a very archaeological reaction, to wish to read more meaning into buildings than the simple description of their doors and windows, construction techniques and floor plans. Close examination of Berber history leaves little basis for extrapolating from the present to elucidate the past; at best we can use the physical remains to imagine what Berber society might have been like. The built environment is

<sup>1</sup> I am particularly grateful to Patrice Cressier for his comments on this paper, and for providing me with the documentation on Moroccan architecture which I would not otherwise have found. For the main lines of British and American research see R. Blanton, *Houses and households: a comparative study*, London, 1994; R. Samson (ed.), *The Social Archaeology of Houses*, Edinburgh, 1990; B. Hillier and J. Hanson, *The social logic of space*, Cambridge; A. Rapoport,

*The meaning of the built environment: a non-verbal communication approach*, Beverley Hills, 1982; H. Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, Knoxville, 1975. The first section of this paper was published in M. Brett and E. Fentress, *The Berbers*, Oxford, 1996, p. 235-243.

<sup>2</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, with trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*, Geneva-Paris, 1972; *Le sens pratique*, Paris, 1980.

embedded in the culture, but we cannot deduce the whole from the part<sup>3</sup>. It can only be hoped that the material remains can bear the interpretive weight placed on them.

#### THE BERBER MODEL

Village houses in the Roman period have hardly been studied at all. Indeed, the only buildings we do know are isolated houses, which were the standard rural habitat in much of Libya and southern Numidia. These take the form of one or more 2-3 roomed buildings, on the edges of a large, stone-walled corral<sup>4</sup>. One excavated example from Tripolitania had a series of three rooms, of which only the first communicated with the exterior by a door, thus ensuring the increasing privacy of the second and third rooms<sup>5</sup>. This emphasis on privacy is characteristic of all North African housing at all times: windows are generally absent on the ground floor, and rare in upper storeys when these exist. The fortified farmhouse characteristic of the late Roman pre-desert takes this principle to an extreme: a single door led in to an inner courtyard, above which rose two or three storeys of room<sup>6</sup>. The rooms gave onto the courtyard via narrow windows or wooden balconies, but the external walls were innocent of any other apertures. Of course, this was also a response to environmental constraints: the heavy walls insulated the internal rooms, and the reduction of light was probably beneficial throughout most of the year. All of these farmhouses had various dependencies – pressing rooms, stables, and barns, which remained quite separate from the main building. This type seems to be independent of those discussed below, and enjoyed an extremely long life on the northern fringes of the Sahara, surviving to this day in the oases of the Oued Djedi and in the ksour and ighrem of the southern Atlas in Morocco. As the name ksar implies, the type is more closely related to considerations of defense (both against the environment and against raiding neighbours) and of power than the type under discussion here.

Other houses of the Roman period show a different, but still rather standard plan. In the northern foothills of the Aurès, survey revealed a number of sites with four wings around a very large court (fig. 1)<sup>7</sup>. Three of the wings seemed to be devoted to subsidiary buildings such as stables, while the wing opposite the gate contained one very large room, with, perhaps, two subsidiary flanking rooms. Pottery suggested a date for these structures in the fourth and fifth centuries, dates which coincide with the numerous mosaics representing Roman villas of a similar plan in North Africa<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> A. Rapoport, «Systems of activities and systems of settings», in S. Kent (ed.), *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*, Cambridge 1990, whose pessimistic view is far more plausible than that of Kent in the same volume, who holds that «it should be ... possible to predict the sociopolitical organization of a group by knowing its architecture and the use of space» (p. 7). Apart from the theoretical difficulties here, one is staggered by the sheer impossibility of knowing more than a fraction of the uses that a space was put to from its archaeological remains.

<sup>4</sup> There are a number of examples of these in R. Rebuffat, «Les fermiers du désert», *L'Africa romana*, V, p. 33-68.

<sup>5</sup> G. Barker *et al.*, «UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey 6: Investigations of a Romano-Libyan Farm», *Libyan Studies*, 15, 1984, p. 1-44.

<sup>6</sup> D. Buck, J. Burns and D. Mattingly, «Archaeological sites of the Bir Scedua Basin: Settlements and Cemeteries», *Libyan Studies*, 14, 1983, p. 39-68.

<sup>7</sup> The 1991 survey, a pilot project with a view to a more intensive study of the region, was carried out by the Agence Nationale des Antiquités: I acted as a UNESCO consultant.

<sup>8</sup> N. Duval, «L'iconographie des villas africaines et la vie rurale dans l'Afrique de l'Antiquité tardive», *Histoire et archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord: actes du III<sup>e</sup> Colloque international réuni dans le cadre du 110<sup>e</sup>*

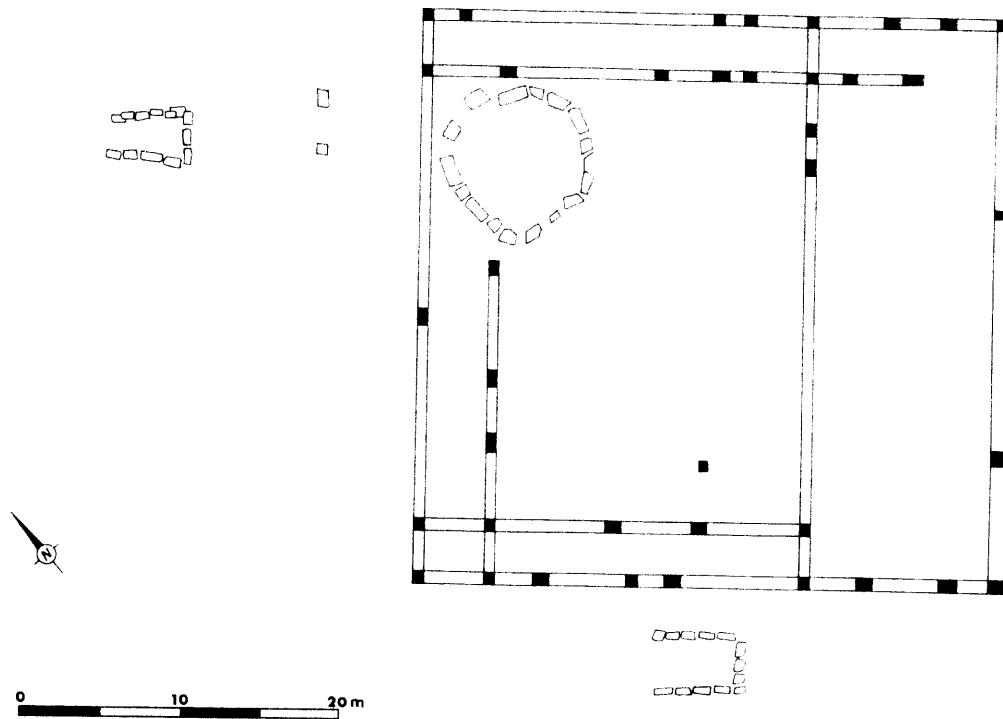


Fig. 1 – Plan of house in the northern foothills of the Belezma mountains, Algeria. The circular tomb is a later feature.

We have even less evidence for Berber houses in the medieval period. The only excavated example of an early medieval rural settlement comes from Spain. In Valencia, the castle, or *bisn*, of Uxo shows a number of extremely simple dwellings, one or two-room houses clustered but not touching, and backed against the hillside where possible. In front, a terraced open space took over the functions of a courtyard (fig. 2). That this was a Berber settlement is, of course, only an hypothesis, but the difference between these houses and contemporary, twelfth/thirteenth century Arab buildings on urban sites is striking<sup>9</sup>.

Modern Berber houses, while far more complex, maintain the dominance of one room over all the other spaces of the house, and all the subsidiary spaces are clustered within the same four walls. In the houses of Kabylia analyzed by Bourdieu all family activities take place in the main room, and the only subsidiary spaces are a loft, for storage and sleeping quarters for some family members, and the stables which adjoin the main room below the loft (fig. 3, 1)<sup>10</sup>. This space is carefully articulated by activities – weaving, food preparation, sleeping – but this articulation is expressed by relatively few articles of furniture – the loom, the hearth and a single bench against the wall used for sleeping by the head of the household.

*Congrès national des sociétés savantes, Montpellier, 1-15 avril 1985*, Paris, 1986, p. 163-176.

<sup>9</sup> A. Bazzana, P. Cressier and P. Guichard, *Les châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus. Histoire et archéologie des bisn du Sud-Est de l'Espagne*, Madrid, 1988, p. 200f.

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, *op. cit.* in note 2; R. Basagana and A. Sayad, *Habitat traditionnel et structures familiales en Kabylie*, Mémoire du C.R.A.P.E. 23 (1984), Algiers; A. Bernard, *Enquête sur l'habitat rural des indigènes de l'Algérie*, Algiers, 1921.

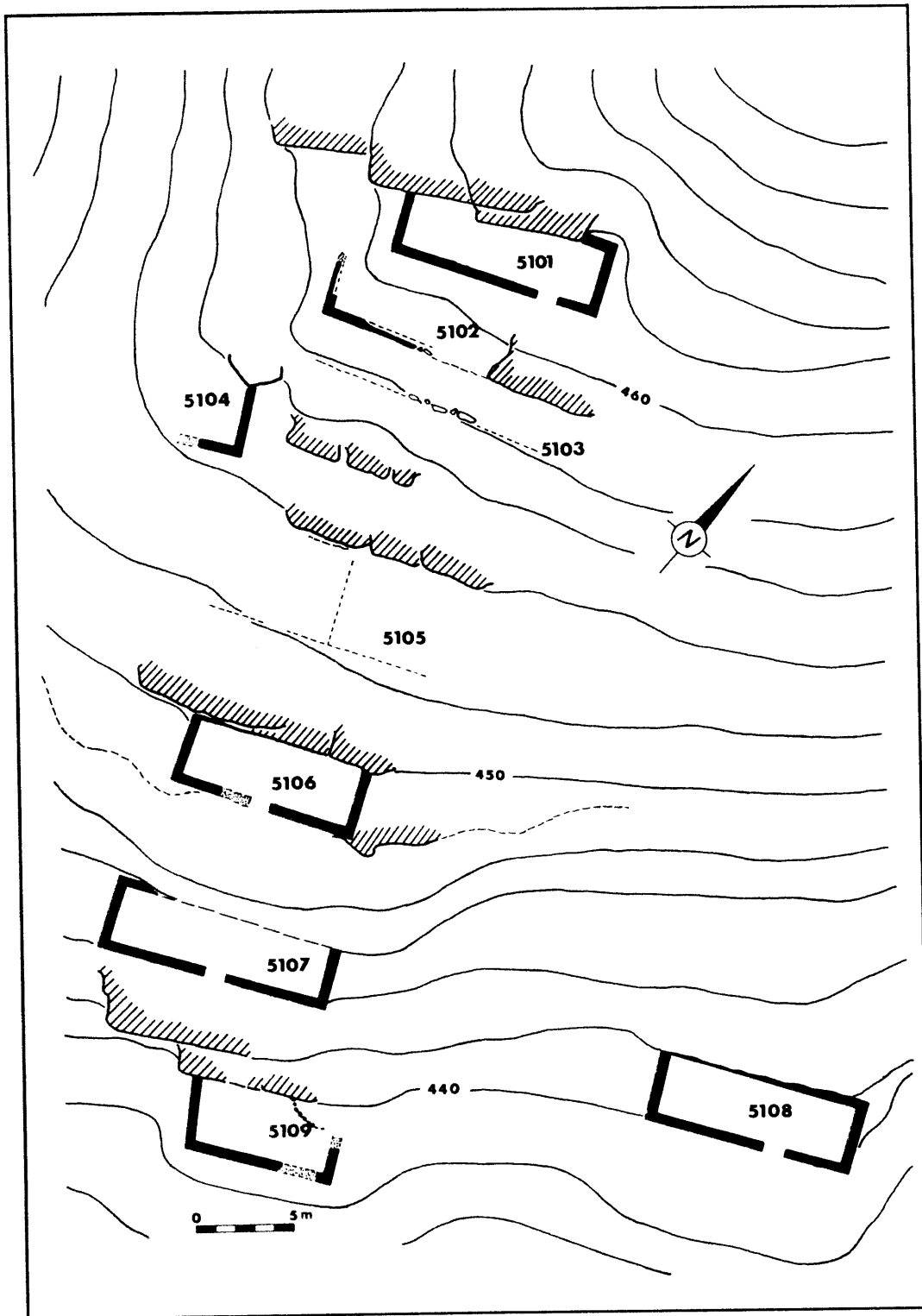


Fig. 2 – Medieval houses from a Berber village at Uxò in south-eastern Spain (from A. Bazzana, P. Cressier and P. Guichard, *Les châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus*, Madrid, 1988).

The traditional house in the Aures is more elaborately articulated, but the central room, or *igorfat n-ilmas* still predominates<sup>11</sup>. Again, the house is a self-contained unit, housing the nuclear family and all its livestock and possessions. The two or three storeys of these houses are stepped back against the hillside, with terraces on the roofs. In contrast to the traditional Arab houses, courtyards are rare, and subsidiary to the main building. The lowest storey generally houses animals, along with storage for wood, fodder, and farming equipment; On the first storey is found the main room, with, on mezzanine levels, further storage rooms. On the final storey, if it exists, are found drying rooms for perishable substances such as fruit and grain, and above these a terrace. Entrances for humans and for beasts are separate. Immediately inside the former is found a vestibule, or *sqiffa*. This is a transitional space, more public than the rest of the house, and cooler on hot days. Here the women of the neighbourhood may gather to use a hand mill to grind their grain, or to gossip. A guest room, if one exists, would give onto this space, which thus serves as a kind of buffer zone between the outside world and the inner room. The central room itself is a vast space of up to 50 m<sup>2</sup> on the first storey, with the roof supported on tall pillars. It is lit by small, high windows and some skylights in the roof. Within it, the hearth is the most important area, often defined by a raised semi-circular step in the corner of the room opposite the door. A second raised area is that of the loom. As in Kabylia, this is always placed along the wall opposite the door, or the 'wall of light'. Weaving is the women's activity which carries the greatest symbolic importance, signifying both the prosperity of a house whose flocks have produced sufficient wool to mount the loom, and the skill and application of the women in it. Cooking and weaving are thus the primary activities which take place within the space : in comparison, sleeping and storage entirely secondary, occupying spaces which are either temporary (bedding is stored during the day) or inferior (the darkest corners).

Similar plans are also visible in the Ibadite communities of the Anti-Atlas, where the houses closely resemble those of the Aures, although sleeping rooms are partitioned off from the central space. It appears again in a highly simplified form in the typical house inside ksour along the oued Moulouya in Morocco, where the ground floor is reserved for animals and storage, and the first storey consists of a single large room with, perhaps, a bedroom annexed<sup>12</sup>. In the mountains of the central Rif, the living quarters again lie on the first floor, over the stables. Here the central room is flanked by two bedrooms, and a high attic can be used for grain storage (fig. 3, 2).

Most splendid of all is the central room in the houses of Ghadames. This is found on the first floor, above the stables, and is regularly very high, lit, like the houses of the Mزاب, from a central grill, and beautifully decorated with geometric patterns on a white ground. The kitchen is removed to the roof, and the central room is thus reserved for weaving and eating (fig. 3, 3)<sup>13</sup>. Here, the height of the central room is particularly stressed, and the addition of the space on the roof gives three floors, with intermediate spaces for storage and sleeping. Although this house, in the centre of the oasis town, is particularly tall, it will be noted that all of the examples so far have had at least two

<sup>11</sup> D. Jemma-Gouzon, *Villages de l'Aurès : archives de pierres*, Paris, p. 120f.

<sup>12</sup> M. Ben el Khadir and A. Lahbabi, *Architectures régionales, un parcours à travers le nord marocain*, Rabat, 1989, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> J. Martin Evans, «The Traditional house in the Oasis of Ghadames», *Libyan Studies*, 7, 1975-1976, p. 31-40.

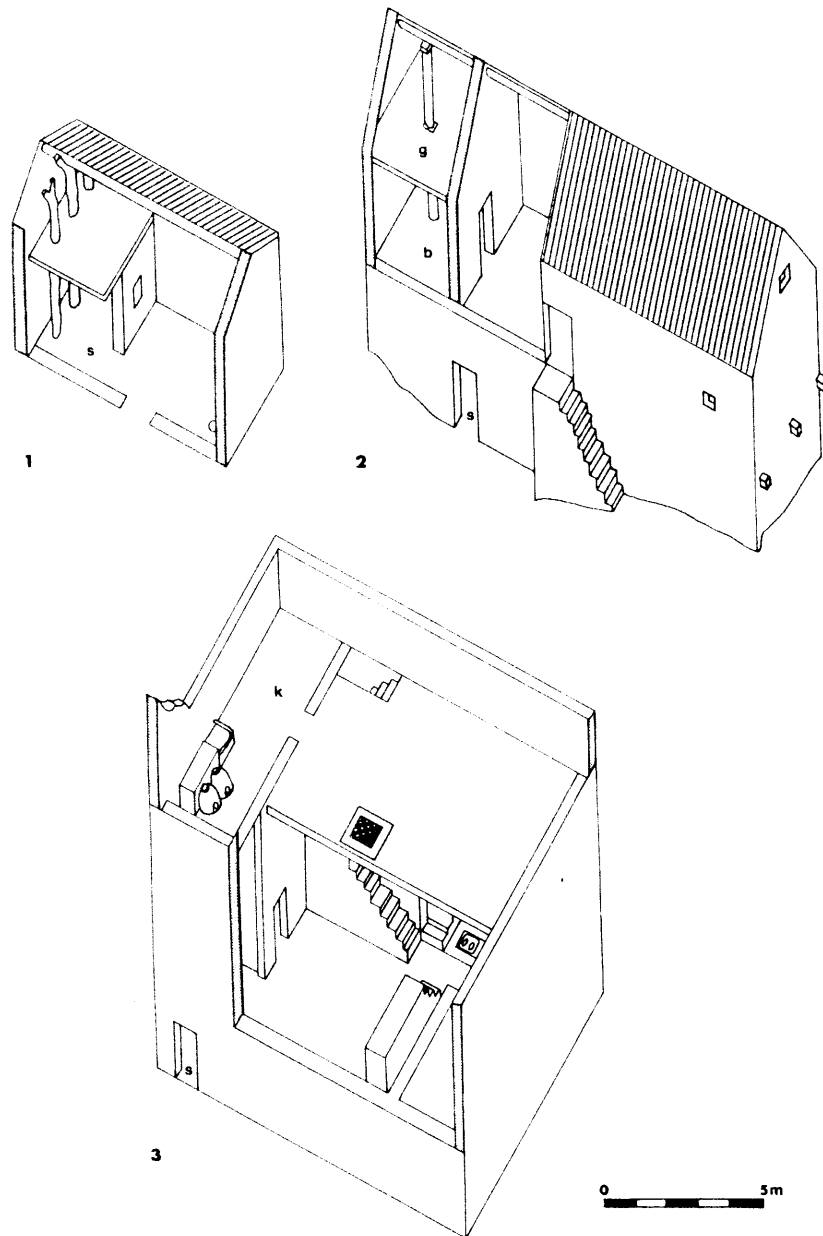


Fig. 3 – Berber houses in 1. Kabylia, 2. the Moroccan Rif and 3. Ghadames in Lybia.

storeys. In all these examples the living space has been in some sense integrated with lodging for animals, both protecting the domestic livestock and making use of the heat they provide during the winter.

The centralized, largely female space is also a constant in Berber architecture, although the external aspect of a house varies widely. Bourdieu's study of the Kabylie house underlines the symbolic and ritual significance of these arrangements, a significance which could never be deduced from the empty or ruined remains of the house itself. Each



division of the room has its own rituals, according to a balanced division between dry and damp, light and dark, high and low – divisions which reflect a division of the world into male and female spaces. The rites which take place in the house are carried out almost entirely by women : just as they are the principal users of the space, so they also control its magic<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, men leave the house in the early morning and pass the day elsewhere, returning only to eat and sleep. While their presumptive power over the women's activities is absolute, their effective power within the house is very small indeed. The dominance of the central room thus signifies the dominance of women within the household.

The Berber household is effectively ruled by the wife or mother of the eldest male. Considered the 'pillar' of the house, it is she who is entirely responsible for the household economy and the behaviour of the younger women living with her daughters and daughters-in-law. Monogamy, which is general in Berber areas in spite of legal and religious customs in Algeria permitting four wives, reinforces the unity of the household. In his autobiographic novel, *Le fils du pauvre*, Mouloud Feraoun describes the organization of his household like this :

...It was my grandmother who was in charge of our subsistence. She alone could open and close the ikoufan [the storage jars]. She had her own way of moving each of these –, her secrets for lifting and replacing its cover; imperceptible clues could put her on the alert. Her daughters-in-law knew what was forbidden. The loft was her domain, she alone had access to it. She would climb up for a ration of figs, to fill a seive with barley or to measure out oil and fat. She had her own measures, a personal arithmetic, a sure memory. Her vigilance could not be duped.

All the women prepared the meal, but once the couscous was cooked it was she who dished it out. She allowed only the meat to be cut by her eldest son : men's work. As we only bought this for festivals it was, in sum, my grandmother who nourished the family»<sup>15</sup>.

#### THE ARAB MODEL.

The importance of this reservation of the house for women's activities becomes evident when we contrast it to the traditional Arab house, whose structure is quite different, and which can be demonstrated to have derived from eastern prototypes<sup>16</sup>. Normally, it consists of a large courtyard off which open a series of long, narrow rooms, whose width is determined by the length of available timber, for there seems to be no possibility of a gabled roof<sup>17</sup>. The subsidiary rooms are in effect dependencies of the courtyard, whose dominance over the rest of the building is the principal characteristic of Arab houses. Rather than being enclosed by the building, or adjoining it on the outside, the courtyard seems to contain the rooms. Their relatively equal size, and the fact that

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu, *op. cit.* in note 2, *passim*; Jemma Gouzon, *op. cit.* in note 10, p. 136f.

<sup>15</sup> M. Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 1959 (1990), p. 29, translation EBF.

<sup>16</sup> E. Fentress, «The house of the Prophet : African Islamic housing», *Archeologia medievalis*, 14, 1987, p. 47-68.

<sup>17</sup> This alone would distinguish the type from any late Roman building, and is a clear example of the technological de-skilling which the adoption of the house type implies.

they communicate only with the courtyard rather than from one to another, emphasize this dominance of the central space. Even those activities which take place within the rooms can be kept under surveillance from the courtyard. As in the Berber house, access to the courtyard is limited by the single right-angled entrance, which serves as a visual screen, as well as a space where men might sit and chat. This highly restricted bayonet entrance is counterbalanced by the relative ease of entrance into the other rooms around it: even the storage rooms, tucked away up stairs in the Aurés or Ghadames, are easily accessible. All activity in the house can be controlled from the courtyard, and the separate cells do not communicate with each other. The highly centralized structure of the Arab house, with equal cells surrounding the central space, appears to reflect the structure of the family within it. The patriarchal Islamic family, controlled to a large extent by a single individual, corresponds closely to this pattern: the other individuals – wives and children – who comprise the family are relatively equal to each other, but entirely subordinate to the male head of the household.

The distribution of this simple type is extremely wide: in the twelfth century they are found from the Persian Gulf, at Siraf (fig. 4, 1)<sup>18</sup> to Spain, where examples are known from Almeria, Andalusia (fig. 4, 3), Toledo, Valencia and Granada<sup>19</sup>. In North Africa itself the earliest example is that excavated by Mahjoubi at Henchir Faouar, which a coin found under the pavement seems to date to the late seventh century (fig. 4, 2)<sup>20</sup>. The type is clearly seen in excavated examples from the late tenth and eleventh century at Sétif in Algeria (fig. 4, 4)<sup>21</sup>. It appears fully formed, and there are no transitional types which might suggest an indigenous development. Further, the type seems to be rather more primitive than the houses known from Fustat, as the elaborate *ilwan*, found in most Fustat houses, does not seem to have been normal in Algeria, and is only seen in later palaces<sup>22</sup>. In the cities, the primitive form develops into the familiar two or three storied patio dwellings, but in the countryside and on the periphery of the larger towns (as at Sétif) it retains its rural characteristics, and the central space is less a patio than a corral or courtyard.

<sup>18</sup> A number of very similar examples were excavated at Siraf: D. Whitehouse, preliminary reports in *Iran* VI, 1968, p. 1-22; VII, 1929, p. 36-62; VIII, 1970, p. 1-18; IX, 1971, p. 1-17; X, 1972, p. 63-87; XII, 1974, p. 1-30.

<sup>19</sup> All of these are published in the important collection edited by J. Lopez and A. Bazzana (eds.), *La maison hispano-musulmane: apports de l'archéologie*, Granada, 1990: J. Torro and J. Ivars, «La vivienda rural mudéjar y morisca en el sur del País Valenciano», p. 73-98; F. Castillo Galdeano and R. Martínez Madrid, «La vivienda hispanomusulmana en Bayyana-Pecina (Almeria)», p. 111-128; R. Izquierdo Benito, «La vivienda en la ciudad hispano-musulmana de Vascos (Toledo)», *Estudio arqueológico*, p. 129-146; J. Navarro Palazon, «La casa andalusí en Siyasa: ensayo para una clasificación tipológi-

ca», p. 177-198; M. Bertrand, P. Cressier, A. Malpica Cuello and G. Rosello-Bordoy, «La vivienda rural medieval de 'El Castillo' (Los Guajares, Granada)», p. 207-228; R. Puertas Tricas, «El barrio de viviendas de la Alcazaba de Malaga», p. 319-340. A typological analysis is provided by A. Bazzana, *Maisons rurales du Shark Al-Andalus. Essai de typologie*, p. 247-268.

<sup>20</sup> A. Mahjoubi, *Recherches d'histoire et d'archéologie à Henchir El-Faouar Tunisie: la cité de Belalitani Maiores*, Tunis, 1978. The coin was mentioned at a seminar at the École française de Rome in 1992.

<sup>21</sup> E. Fentress (ed.), *Fouilles de Sétif, 1977-1984*, *Bulletin d'archéologie algérienne*, suppl. 5, Algiers, 1991, p. 93f.

<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the bayonet entrance may be a North African development.

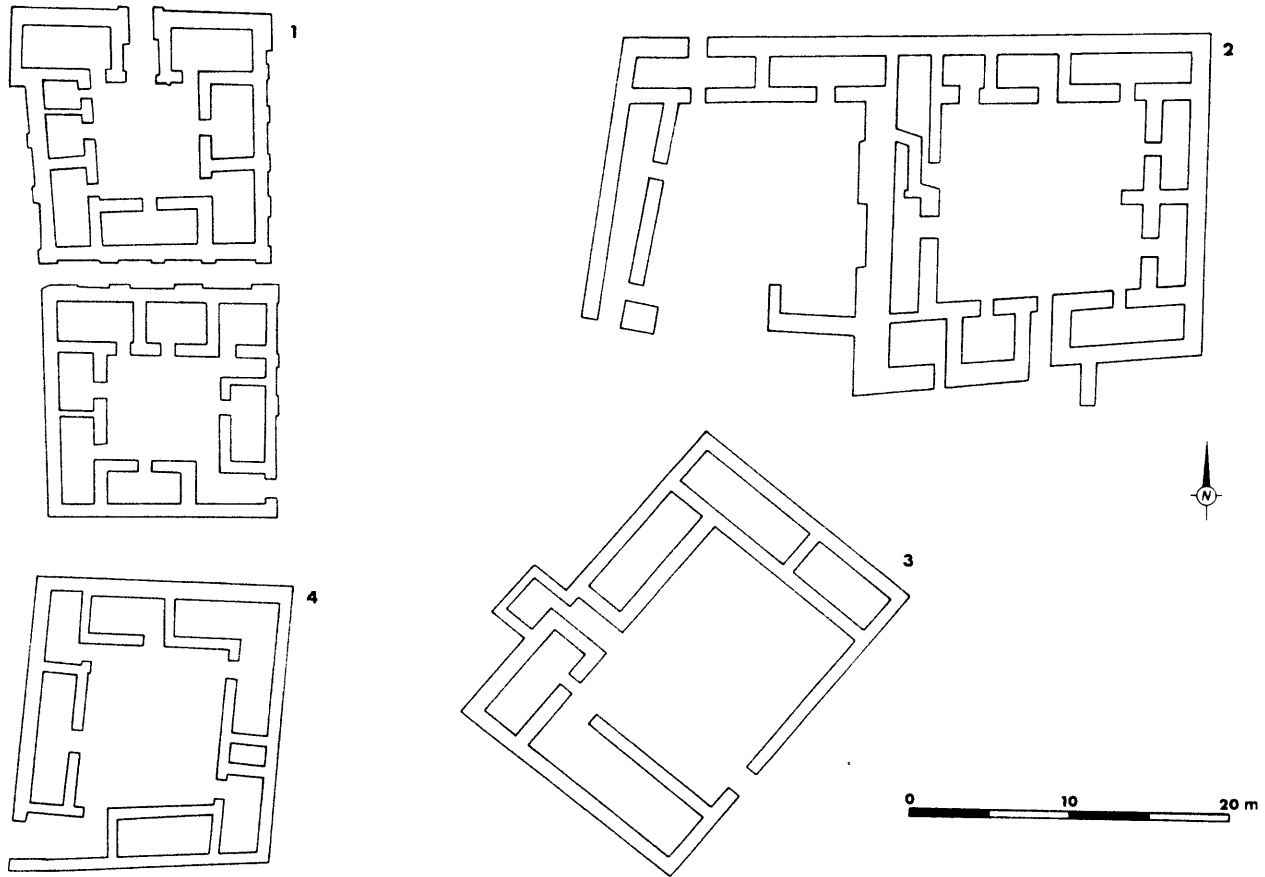


Fig. 4 – Arab houses at 1. Siraf, Iran, 2. Henchir Faouar, Tunisia, 3. Almeria, Spain and 4. Sétif, Algeria.

### INTERACTION

Berber-speaking communities have been described as islands in a sea of Arabic. It has been an implicit assumption so far that the areas which maintain their language intact will also have retained their culture. However, even this restrictive definition leaves out large areas of Berber-speakers who have adopted the Arab house without any modifications. This was probably true at Sétif. There, although the plans of the eleventh-century houses fit precisely into the 'Arab' type, evidence was found for a foundation ritual, the placing of a pot with a burning candle in the foundation trench, which is easily paralleled in modern Berber culture, and which suggests that the builders of the houses were not themselves Arabs<sup>23</sup>. It is especially true in the Rif, an area islamized early and thoroughly<sup>24</sup>. Significantly, however, in the eastern Rif the wings of the 'Arab' plan are covered by gable roofs, rather than by shed roofs, allowing for slightly wider flanking rooms, and the principle room is found on the second storey, above the stables (fig. 5).

<sup>23</sup> Fentress (ed.), *op. cit.* in note 21, p. 139, 282 : the purpose of the rite is to protect the house from lightning.

<sup>24</sup> For the houses of the Rif, D. Hart, *The Aith Waryaghyar of the Moroccan Rif*, Tucson, 1976; M. Ben el Khadir and A. Lahbabi, *op. cit.* in note 12.

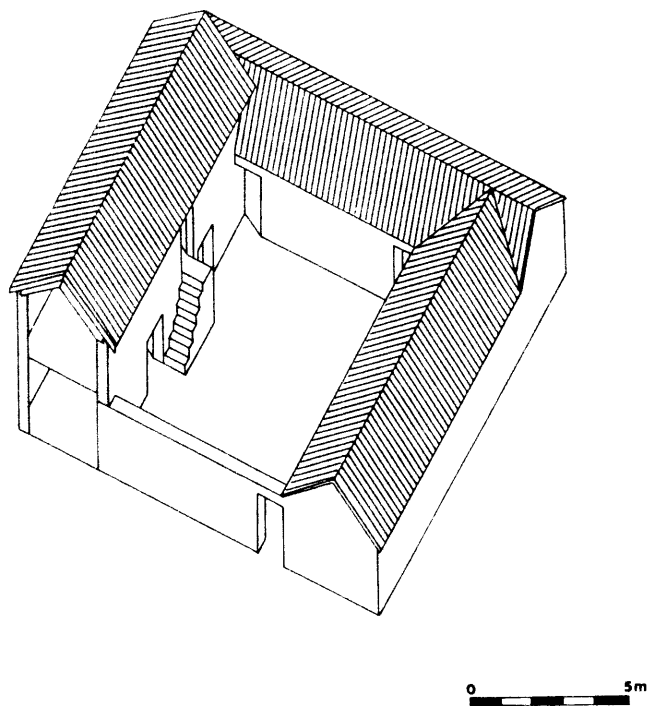


Fig. 5 – Berber houses from the eastern Rif. The ‘Arab’ plan has been modified by a gable roof, and a second storey.

Only in the high Rif, and the valley of Taghzout, does the ‘Arab’ plan completely disappear. Buildings there are two-storeyed, with stables at ground level, and an simple tripartite plan on the upper storey covered by a steeply sloping gable roof (fig. 3, 2)<sup>25</sup>.

In other areas the Arab plan is adapted to fit the needs of the Berber social structure. Our evidence for the early Ibadite community of Tihert suggests that the ‘Arab’ plan was generalized there<sup>26</sup>. This is exactly what we might expect when a group of converts build a new city according to the cultural model of their leaders. However, during the successive displacement of the Ibadites towards the Mzab the plan seems to have undergone a transformation. At Ghardaia, the *sqiffa* gives directly on to a large, gloomy, room lit only by a central light well covered by a grill. Off this room open storage spaces, and sometimes a separate kitchen, but in general the space is used much as in Kabylia and the Aures. On the first storey is found an arched portico, which takes over some of the functions of the main room during the winter. An elaborate apartment for guests may also exist upstairs, but this would, as usual, be reached only from the *sqiffa*<sup>27</sup>. By covering the courtyard, the space has been transformed into the dark, enclosed living-space characteristic of the mountain villages. Climatic considerations are clearly influential here,

<sup>25</sup> A. De Sierra, *Vivienda Marroquí*, (Cuadernos de Arquitectura Popular Marroquí II), Ceuta, 1960, fig. 20.

<sup>26</sup> P. Cadenat, «Recherches à Tihert-Tagdempt,

1958-1959», *Bulletin d'archéologie algérienne*, 7, 1977-1979, [1986], p. 393-421, fig. 1.

<sup>27</sup> M. Mercier, *La civilisation urbaine au Mzab*, Paris, 1922, p. 177f.

but it is striking that the Arab houses in the region of Biskra maintain the open courtyard. This same transformation is also visible in the eastern Rif, where the whole house is covered by a pyramidal roof, which allows the patio, transformed into a central room, to be higher than the surrounding space, and creates mezzanine levels for storage above the subsidiary rooms<sup>28</sup>. In both these cases the 'Berberization' seems to have taken place after the Arab type had been adopted by the population : it is thus not properly a transitional form, but a modification of an existing form.

A more clearly transitional form can be seen as the 'Arabization' of Berber houses. On the southern slopes of the little Kabylie farmhouses consist of two facing wings on either side of a courtyard. One serves the family, the other houses animals. Here the form, in which independent units are built against the courtyard wall, resembles that of the Arab type. but the single space used by the whole family remains firmly in the Berber tradition.

One could multiply the examples. Clearly the evidence could be placed quite effectively and convincingly on a continuum between the monocellular 'Berber' type with its enclosed centre and the concentric, pluricellular 'Arab' type with an open patio. Just as it is rare, in North Africa, that one can say that a individual is purely Arab or Berber, so the domestic architecture is seldom transparently one or the other. However, the coincidence of the monocellular covered interior with the berberophone areas of North African (it is not by chance that the best examples come from the Kabylie, the Aures, and the High Atlas) is significant. The evident similarities of the buildings, in spite of the great distances which separate them, seem to suggest that the Berber model was once far more common in North Africa, and that it was eliminated as Arab culture spread across the continent. With this spread came a certain technological loss, for one aspect of the transformation of domestic architecture after the conquest is the loss of the ability to cover a space wider than 2.5-3 metres, or the length of the available timber. The only traditional houses we have found which use carpentry to cover larger spaces have been in Berber areas. Rather than elaborate joints, they rely on post and beam construction, either resting the beams directly onto forked posts, as in the Kabylie house, or onto a pad resembling the capital of a column, as in the Mزاب and the Rif. This may seem a purely technical matter, but it exercises an enormous influence on the shape of the built environment.

The transformation of house types gives us a model for the spread of domestic architecture as part of the baggage brought in by a new hegemonic culture. In many ways this runs parallel to that of the spread of the conquerer's language : dominant in the cities, it spreads with more difficulty into the rural areas, where there is much less reason to adopt either the domestic space or the language of the conquerer. Just as an Arabic-speaker may be purely Berber, the inhabitant of a house with an 'Arab' plan may have purely Kabyle blood. The reverse is hardly likely, however, and if we find, on excavation, a rural house with a 'Berber' plan we can probably make an accurate guess as to the rest of the cultural affiliations of the household. Even the dimensions of the rooms should provide a clue<sup>29</sup>.

This point of view is, of course, blatantly 'diffusionist'. It is the sort of argument which went out of fashion in prehistoric circles after Gordon Childe, and is still likely to

<sup>28</sup> Ben el Khadir and Lahbabi, *op. cit.* in note 12, p. 73f.

<sup>29</sup> This consideration is evidently relevant elsewhere in the Islamic world as well.

raise eyebrows. However, in the case of North Africa we have a perfectly well-documented invasion, and a historical background against which to examine the acculturation of the conquered. If domestic space is one of the key elements in social relations, acculturation and a new set of social relations should be accompanied by the transformation of the built environment, while the new housing type will reinforce the new social relations. Whether or not this necessarily implies a transformation in the family structure remains to be tested by other, non-archaeological means.

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Gladis  ALD

Melvy

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