

**Ornate Visions of Knowledge and Power:
Formation of Marinid Madrasas in Maghrib al-Aqsā**

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The dissemination of knowledge in Islam – the *hadīth* or the traditions related to the conduct of the Prophet, juridical or doctrinal opinions, and histories – operates on the principle of *isnād* or authoritative chain of transmission, where successive generations receive knowledge on the impeccable authority of a string of transmitters. Drawing obliquely on the concept of *isnād* and transforming it a little, I invoke here an analogous chain of generousities that have been extended to me, and the debts that I have accumulated from many benefactors over the course of my graduate studies, and while working on this dissertation.

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Glossary of Terms

adab: studies pertaining to literature, poetry, history, and rhetoric

amīr: prince, nobleman, also a governor of a province

amīr al-mūminīn: commander of the faithful, title of the Caliphs

amīr al-muslimīn: commander of the Muslims, a modest title in comparison to *amīr al-mūminīn*; a title used amongst others by the Almoravids and the Marinids to avoid a claim to the caliphal title

anzā: carved wooden screen replicating the *mihṛāb* along its axial nave to give a sense of the direction of the *qiblā*

bāb: door, portal

barakā: spiritual power which emanates from a holy person or an object, and which is a source of blessing

dār: residence, dwelling, mansion

faqīh: specialist in *fiqh* or Islamic religious law and jurisprudence

fiqh: science of Islamic religious law and jurisprudence

funduq: inn or warehouse

habūs: pious foundation, a term used in the Maghrib in preference to *waqf*

hadīth: traditions referring to actions and sayings of the Prophet, verified through a chain of recognized transmitters

halqā: a circle; a study-circle of students monitored by an *ustādh* (teacher)

hammām: public bath

hawālah: a periodically updated register enlisting the endowed properties for a *waqf* foundation

īwān: vaulted hall walled on three sides with one end entirely open

jāmi': Friday Mosque

jihād: “struggle” or “holy war” in defense of Islam

kā'bah: the holy sanctuary in Mecca

khalwā: private enclosure or sanctuary; used here for the Marinid dynastic precinct in the ancient site of the Chella in Rabat, which nearly exclusively is comprised of dynastic funerary edifices

khān: lodging place for travelers or merchants

khānqāh: residential Sufi hospice, often with an additional funerary function

khatīb: preacher; deliverer of sermons at Friday prayers

kufic: style of writing and calligraphy characterized by angular shapes

kulliye: foundation comprising multiple buildings centered on a mosque but with a strong bent towards education and welfare; typically Ottoman

lambrequin arch: arch with pendant forms when seen in profile

madrasa: theological seminary or religious college, which in the Maghrib was usually state-sponsored

madhab: each of the orthodox schools of Islamic law or jurisprudence

maghrib al-aqsā: literally, the furthest west; a term employed by early Arab geographers for western North Africa

mālikī: one of the four schools of Islamic law and jurisprudence founded by Mālik b. Anas in the 8th-century in Medina, and recognized as orthodox by Sunni Muslims; its influence was near-total in North Africa and Andalusia

marabout: common Maghribi title for a popularly venerated Muslim saint or holy man

māristān: infirmary

mashhadā: gravestone or a plaque, often ornately embellished

mashrabiyyāh: geometrically interlaced wooden screen work

masjid: mosque; usually without a *minbar*

mawlid: the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad; its celebration was an innovation promoted by the Marinids in wake of the *sharīfs*' new resurgence to prominence

medina: old part of a city (literally 'city')

mihrāb: arch or arcuated niche, flat or concave, which indicates the direction of Mecca

minbar: pulpit, to be found in mosques used for Friday prayer

mujāhid: holy warrior; one who undertakes *jihād* in the name of Islam

mukhtasar: an “abridgement.” Standardized abridged texts were frequently used to facilitate instruction in the fields of grammar, theology and law. Were used profusely in the standardization process in the Marinid madrasas

muqarnas: a stalactite or honeycomb-like decorative device consisting of numerous niches and niche fragments; used primarily in domes and vaults, arches, and above all in the transitional zones between vaults and their supports

mu'tazili: adherent to the doctrine of *mu'tazilism*, a theological school credited with the creation of rationalistic speculation in Islam

qādī: judge appointed by the ruler, generally in matters of civil law with particular reference to religious injunctions

qiblā: direction of prayer, i.e. to the Black Stone in the *kā'bah* in Mecca

ribāt: fortified religious outpost on the Muslim frontier, also acted as a caravanserai, and frequently provided religious education as well as Sufi training

rihlā: travel, travel account

riwāq: portico or cloisters around a courtyard

sābāt: covered/vaulted entrance comprised of an ornate kiosk

sahn: courtyard

sahrīj: pool

shahīd: martyr

sharīf: descendant of the Prophet

shī'ia: follower of Shī'ism, one of the two major branches of Islam which upholds the legitimacy of the Prophet's son-in-law, 'Alī, as the rightful caliph

sūfi: a Muslim mystic, practitioner of Sufism or Islamic mysticism

sunni: the major branch of Islam, equated with orthodoxy

sūq: covered market

ulemā: religious scholars, clergy, clerics, learned class

ustādh: teacher, professor

vizier: from Arabic *wazīr*; minister

waqf: pious endowment; land or property charitably endowed in perpetuity for the benefit of a religious institution, and yielding an income; called *habūs* in the Maghrib

waqfiyyāh: legally attested deed of the endowment

zāwiyāh: equivalent to a *khānqāh*; residential Sufi hospice, also discharging a teaching
and at times funerary function

zellij: colored mosaic tile-work, usually laid in complex geometric patterns

Introduction: Charting the Terrain of Marinid Madrasas

When your Lord said to the angels: 'I am placing on the earth one that shall rule as My Deputy,' they replied: 'Will You put there one that will do evil and shed blood, when we have for so long sung Your praises and sanctified Your name?' He said: 'I know what you do not know.'

— Qur'ān 2:30-31 (Sūrat al-Baqarah)¹

For this project centered on the visual meaning of the madrasas or theological seminaries, commissioned by the Marinid sovereigns in Fez and other centres of Maghrib al-Aqsā (western North Africa) during the 13th-14th centuries, it seems apt to proceed by citing the above verse from the Qur'ān, for here, the willful mirroring of knowledge and power is already in effect. The Almighty *knows* what the angels do not; it is in knowledge that the supreme authority resides. Knowledge, which is cloaked from others, which others are not privy to, and which belongs solely to the province of the Almighty, becomes the wellspring of operations incomprehensible to others: the all-encompassing, majestic power of the Almighty is an expression of His unbound knowledge.

Resident in this primal Qur'ānic fusion of knowledge and power, however, is the subtext of how Islam, in its most formative conceptualization, identifies with the processes and effects of knowledge. Knowledge exists as a corollary to power, and thus there is already an authoritarian political edge to it. Rooted in the Qur'ānic recounting of the celestial exchange between God and the angels, the Islamic approach to the

¹ *The Koran*, translated with notes by N. J. Dawood (Penguin Books, 1974), 336.

correspondences between knowledge and power, and its avowal of their intertwined nature, becomes amply manifest.

In a singular way, it is this primal theme centered on the relationship of knowledge and power that has pervaded the formation of madrasas, the key institutions of learning, which have historically constituted a singular presence on the Islamic social and cultural horizon. Along with their function as educational institutions, nearly-exclusively of religious sciences, the political imperatives at work in the madrasas' constitution, for promulgating an explicit state-ideology, or for creating a cadre of functionaries and religious elite loyal to the state, abundantly substantiate the mediations of knowledge and power in their conception. The impulses behind the formation of these institutions have routinely emerged from the power-aspirations of their patrons. And it is in resonance with this dynamic of the madrasa's genesis that a specter of analogous themes of knowledge, power, and political legitimacy will recurrently permeate this dissertation exploring the visual formation of the madrasas commissioned by the Marinids (1269-1465) in Maghrib al-Aqsā (western North Africa), primarily in the city of Fez.

Even in its formative days in the 10th-century, the genesis of the madrasa as an independent institution in the eastern Islamic lands, most prolifically in the region of Khurāsān in northeastern Iran, was marked by religious imperatives cloaked in the mantle of political authority and state-formation. Especially, the madrasas, which originated under the auspices of the great Seljūq vizier, Nizām ul-Mulk (1018-1092), are reputed to have been created with an aim to prepare functionaries ardently loyal to the state who could consequently be employed for various administrative purposes throughout the

Seljūq domains. With such impulses informing its initial development in the east, the institution of the madrasa very rapidly became a canonical presence across the vast tracts of Islamic lands ranging from Central Asia to Anatolia, Syria and Egypt; more pertinently, it rooted itself as an architectural and structural entity informed by its distinctive regional and societal conditions.

With such swift dissemination of the madrasa in Islamdom,² its relatively late incidence in the Islamic west is quite intriguing. Before the advent of the Marinids to political hegemony in the 13th-14th centuries, there is no clear evidence of madrasa building activity in the Maghrib,³ and here, more so than the issue of the late emergence of the madrasa in Maghrib al-Aqsā, the central query that emerges is: what prompted the Marinids to create and propagate these institutions of learning in such a concerted manner? The plausible explanations in this regard lie in the social and cultural conditions coinciding with the formation of Marinid statehood, and I shall dwell on those conditions more expansively in the course of the dissertation. But for now, it must be recognized that the emergence of madrasas under the Marinids also reflects the composite transactions taking place in the historiographical landscape connecting 13th-14th century

² Islamdom: a term coined by the historian Marshall Hodgson to designate “the society in which the Muslims and their faith are recognized as prevalent and socially dominant in one sense or the other—a society in which...non-Muslims have always formed an integral, if subordinate, element as have Jews in Christendom.” See Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1 (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 58.

³ Chroniclers have mentioned in passing the commissioning of madrasas by the Almohāds (1146-1269) who preceded the Marinids in Maghrib al-Aqsā, but for the lack of any material evidence, it can at best only be a conjecture. Although the first datable madrasa in the Maghrib was established in 1249 by the Hafsiids (1228-1574) in Tunis, the most prolific and systematic commissioning of madrasas was undertaken by the Marinids, and for all purposes, they come across as the most ardent promulgators of this institution in the Islamic west. It can thus safely be asserted that it is under the Marinids that the madrasa, as an institution as well as an architectural type, firmly rooted its presence in the Maghrib, and became a vital component of the Maghribi architectural expression.

Maghrib al-Aqsā with the broader Mediterranean rim on the one hand and the eastern Islamic domains on the other.

As regards the historiographical treatment of medieval Maghrib, nearly all the standard works by colonial historians – Henri Terrasse’s, *Histoire du Maroc des Origines à l’établissement du Protectorat Français* (1949-50), and Charles André Julien’s, *Histoire de L’Afrique du Nord* (1961), stand out among others⁴ – are frequently marred by an Orientalist tenor where:

North African history was no longer perceived as “un cercle vicieux” but was, rather, heading towards “progress,” which meant the progress of western civilization... Following the glorious days of Rome, a long night of Arab and Islamic domination started in the seventh century and continued until the nineteenth, when the French intervened to free North Africa from its long nightmare and allow it once again to resume the greatness of its Roman past.⁵

Of course, this conception of Maghribi history has subsequently been subjected to revisionist nuances in the works of Moroccan historians,⁶ who have engaged the Maghribi past by concentrating on microhistory, by studying the society at the levels of its composite operations to discover its internal dynamics which made the specific historical formations in premodern Maghrib al-Aqsā possible. A parallel notion of

⁴ But of course, the great value of the corpus of history produced during the colonial period, apart from the works mentioned here, for instance, the works of scholars such as E. Lévi-Provençal, and Jacques Berque, and periodicals such as *Archives Marocaines* and *Hespéris*, cannot be overestimated.

⁵ Mohamed El Mansour, “Moroccan Historiography since Independence,” in *The Maghrib in Question: Essays in History and Historiography*, edited by Michel Le Gall & Kenneth Perkins (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1997), 110.

⁶ The most influential among them are Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretative Essay*, translated by Ralph Mannheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), and Mohamed Kably, *Société, pouvoir et religion au Maroc à la fin du Moyen-Âge (XIVe-XVe siècle)* (Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986).

internal dynamics, as it informs the social, cultural and religious imperatives of 13th-14th century Maghrib, impels the historical formation of the Marinid milieu, which, on one distinctive, tangible level, finds expression in the prolific founding of madrasas, as self-sufficient institutional as well as architectural entities.

Seven madrasas out of the nine commissioned by the Marinids in Fez are extant today. Other extant Marinid madrasas outside Fez comprise Sultān Abū'l-Hassan's madrasa at Salé (1342), the madrasa al-Jadīdah (1345), erroneously known as the Bou 'Ināniā, in Meknès, and the ruined madrasa (c.1350) contained within the Marinid dynastic necropolis of the Chella in Rabat. As for the Marinid commissioning of these institutions in Fez, the madrasa, al-Saffārīn (1271), the madrasa al-Sahrīj (1321-23) with its annex, the Sbāyīn, the madrasa al-'Attārīn (1323-25), and the madrasa Misbāhiyyāh (1346) are all clustered in the immediate proximity to the two great mosques, the Qarawiyyīn and the Andalusīyyīn, both datable to c.10th-century. The madrasa, Dār al-Makhzan, constructed in 1320, is completely subsumed within the precincts of the royal palace in Fès Jadīd, the new city that the Marinids created contiguous to Fās al-Bālī or old Fez. The final madrasa commissioned by the Marinids, the Bou 'Ināniā (1350-55), deviates from the locative pattern of being in proximity of a major mosque, probably due to the fact that it was conceived to incorporate the functions of a Jāmī' or a congregational mosque. In addition, contemporary chronicles mention two other madrasas, the Labbādīn, probably an oeuvre of Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb (d.1286) and the madrasa al-Wādi sponsored by Sultān Abū'l-Hassan (d.1351); however, no material

remains from these madrasas survive for us to assess them along with other Marinid madrasas.⁷

It is the context of these madrasas' concentration in Fez that warrants a mention of Fez itself, which was the focus of the Marinids' architectural patronage. Probably due to Fez's role as the capital of the Marinid Empire, the state's resources were invested more emphatically in its embellishment. In addition, Fez, as an urban centre, has displayed a sustained level of continuity since its establishment by the Idrīsids in the 8th-9th centuries.⁸ Instead of interventions in its original fabric, sections have been added on to it with passage of time. For instance, the two major quarters of old Fez, the Qarawiyyin and the Andalusian,⁹ were encompassed within common city walls during the Almoravid epoch (1073-1146), and later, the Marinids, when they selected Fez as their capital, built a new settlement, *Fās al-Jadīd* (new Fez) outside the older walled city (*Fās al-Bālī*) where they housed their administrative and military apparatus, while the older town retained its economic and religious functions. As recently as the beginning of the 20th-century, the French expanded Fez by building a new city contiguous with *Fās al-Jadīd*. Thus, the urban layout of Fez has displayed an additive continuity; its various sections have offered themselves as unique models shaped by the forces of the time-frame of their origins, where the impact of proliferate structures such as the Marinid madrasas, is registered very effectively. In this light, it becomes relevant to privilege Fez

⁷ A later structure, the madrasa al-Sharrāfīn, constructed by the Alawite ruler, Moulay Rashid, in the 1670, occupies the site of the earlier Labbādīn madrasa. As for madrasa al-Wādī, it was razed and converted to a mosque during the Alawite times.

⁸ For the historical evolution of Fez, refer among others, E. Lévi-Provençal, "La Fondation de Fès," *Annales de l'Institut d'études Orientales* IV (1938): 25-53.

⁹ The two quarters, divided by the river, Wād Fez, which cut through the old city, were named after the migrant communities which had settled there from Qairawān and Andalusia respectively.

over other centres in engaging with the formation of the madrasas that were founded under the Marinids.

To revert to Marinid madrasas, what identifies them as distinctive architectural entities within the larger fold of Islamic art and architecture is their structural and visual configuration expressed through registers of intricate ornamentation on their interior court façades. Their rich visual idiom – the relatively intimate scale, the treatment of surfaces with a decorative complexity bordering on *horror vacui* – significantly departs from the building typologies of the madrasas elsewhere in the Islamic world.

And it is this visuality of the Marind madrasas that I address in the final fourth chapter of the dissertation. In surveying the configurations of these madrasas and exploring their visual meaning, however, I do not seek to focus on the description of their architectural and decorative schema. Many earlier works with a descriptive tenor have done it admirably, in a meticulously detailed manner, and their value for fresh forays into the meaning of these structures is immense.¹⁰ While some description is unavoidable, my aim here is to foreground synthetically the composite visual characteristics that bind these Marinid structures together, thus imparting them a distinct visual identity which stems from the internal imperatives of their formation. In revisiting the madrasas thus, this chapter places them in the context of the larger Marinid patronage of art and architecture. Along with a consideration of their spatial, decorative and inscriptional schema, it seeks to understand these madrasas' architectural organization as a visual archive, a visual

¹⁰ Apart from early works of scholars such as Alfred Bel, George Marçais, and Henri Terrasse, the most recent work that exclusively centers on Marinid madrasas is Ahmed Saleh Ettahiri, "Les Madrasas marinides de Fès: études d'histoire et d'archéologie monumentales," Doctorat nouveau régime: Art et archéologie islamiques (Paris: Université IV, 1996).

lexicon geared for transmission and dissemination through the art of memory. Further, it demonstrates that the correspondences between the functions and the visuality of these madrasas can be understood as a symptom of the power-knowledge nexus involving the Marinid state patronage.

The above issues related to the visuality of the Marinid madrasas, however, stem from the more encompassing social and cultural processes of the Marinid milieu, and the third chapter of the dissertation sets the ground for progressing towards these madrasas' visual constitution by first situating their prolific emergence as independent built forms in the cultural and political aspirations of the Marinid sovereignty. It delves into the formation of Marinid statehood to see how the specific conditions that influenced this formation, especially the relationship of the burgeoning Marinid hegemony with the powerful religious elite of Fez, bears upon the creation of these madrasas as alternate sites of Marinid authority, as instruments for espousing the Marinid overtures for legitimacy. Related to the issue of state-control are the workings of the *waqf* or charitable endowment in whose circle all the madrasas were inscribed. The chapter consequently touches upon the economy of *waqf* and water as it relates to the state-sponsored character of these madrasas' foundation. Finally, this chapter very briefly points to the correlation of the madrasas with the morphological constitution of Fez to posit them as nodes of cohesion which aid in articulating and imparting a tacit organization to the maze-like contours of the city.

But the framework of the forces at play in the emergence of the Marinid madrasas in 13th-14th century Maghrib al-Aqsā comes from the wide-ranging historical genesis of

the madrasa in Islamdom which the second chapter outlines. This chapter traces a historical trajectory of the propagation of the madrasa in Islam by weaving into its fold the composite imperatives behind its dissemination, and eventually tracks its relatively late arrival in the Maghrib and Andalusia.

This straightforward exposition of the madrasa's historical evolution in Islamic cultures, however, materializes from my first chapter focusing on the relatively unusual presence of a madrasa in the Marinid *khalwā* or the dynastic necropolis which forms a part of the ancient site of the Chella near Rabat. In unraveling the strands of this madrasa's curious presence in a royal dynastic necropolis, I suggest that the Marinids aligned themselves with the consecrated aura of this ancient site, thus appropriating its significations in the act of establishing their material presence on the site. In such a formulation, the terrain of the Chella can be understood as archiving exalted memories and knowledge, consequently justifying the presence of an institution of learning within its fold.

Commencing the dissertation with this peculiar architectural concurrence, I feel, sets the terrain for questioning the fundamental motivations that informed the evolution of the madrasa as an institution as well as a built form in Islam. In an idiosyncratic way, thus, this 'odd' madrasa – it is the last in the chronology of madrasas commissioned by the Marinids – and its relatively remarkable circumstances of being a part of a dynastic necropolis provide an attractive framework to offset it against the evolutionary paradigm of the more 'normative' madrasas, so prolifically commissioned by the Marinids during the first half of the 14th-century, especially in their capital city of Fez. With this in mind, I

proceed to the first chapter to eventually make a composite assessment of the ornate visions of knowledge and power that the Marinids invested in the madrasas they introduced in the social and cultural landscape of 13th-14th century Maghrib al-Aqsā.

Chapter 1: Palimpsests of Dust and Knowledge in the Marinid Chella

1.1: Introducing the Chella: Layers, Remains

The sprawling ruins of the Chella complex in Rabat offer many avenues of visual contemplation for a contemporary visitor.¹¹ Located contiguous to the river, Bou Reg Reg, which flows into the Atlantic a short distance away from the site, and nestled amidst a spread of leafy verdant foliage, this ancient site—enclosed within the 14th-century fortifications and ramparts—descends down to the estuary of the Bou Reg Reg in a well-formed gradient from its principal entranceway flanked by two ornamentally embellished bastions (fig.1.1). Secured within these fortification walls, which were erected under the Marinid Sultan, Abū'l-Hassan (r.1331-1348), the myriad assemblages of the Chella house a notable range of material or architectural remains. In this capacity as a group of remains—formulated out of a palette which sequentially incorporates, among other vestiges, remains of the late Roman period, the Marinid *khalwā* (precinct defining the Marinid dynastic necropolis), and a number of mausoleums of the *marabouts* (popularly venerated holy men)—the Chella can be understood as a veritable palimpsest of diverse material impulses. In a figurative sense, the Chella harbors a trajectory of historical successions reflected in the organization of its physical remains; in a chronological framework, it bespeaks a coexistence of various historical layers that successively appropriated the site and left their mark on its terrain as architectural as well as material realities.

¹¹ Rabat: the capital of present-day Morocco. The Chella complex (*Shallah* in Arabic) is located on the outskirts of the central city at an approximate distance of 300 meters from Bāb al- Zaer, in very close proximity to the royal palace.

Even today, these coexisting layers in the Chella are experienced in a very corporeal sense, that is, in form of distinct material remains. For the purpose of this study, in charting out a historical terrain which will eventually pave way to depart from the Chella, and make academic forays into exploring the visual meaning of the madrasas commissioned by the Marinids in the 13th and 14th centuries, the implications of these sequential layers of historical remains will be instructive. In conjunction with laying out the themes and objectives of this dissertation, this chapter focuses on the madrasa in the precincts of the Marinid *khalwā* (consecrated precinct) of the Chella. Contemplating the forces behind the odd presence of an institution of learning in a royal necropolis,¹² I hope, will open up avenues for undertaking a study of the more normative madrasas commissioned by the Marinids at Fez and elsewhere in Maghrib al-Aqsā or regions comprising western North Africa.

The principal approach to the Chella complex is through a monumental portal on the north-western face of its rampart walls (fig.1.2). A decorative inscriptional band at the head of the frame, within which the entranceway surmounted by a poly-lobed arch is contained, mentions 738/1339 as the year of its construction.¹³ The ensemble of the elaborate portal itself—with its exterior and interior arched gateways, the decorative scheme of its vegetal and floral motifs carved in stone—is arresting for its elegant

¹² The Marinids (1269-1465), for all purposes, appropriated sizable portions of the site as a dynastic necropolis. It is within the larger precincts of the Marinid *khalwā* that the premier nobility of the Marinid ruling house was interred.

¹³ Henri Basset and E. Lévi-Provençal, “Chella: une nécropole mérinide,” *Hespéris* 2, 1st-4th Trimestres (1922): 31.

architectural expression (fig.1.3).¹⁴ Inspiring more curiosity are the two bastions/ towers flanking the entrance-way on the exterior; they display an intriguing and original complexity of form. Rising as massive pentagonal pilasters in stone abutting to the fortification wall, these towers, aided by a transitional zone of corbelling comprised of stalactite *muqarnas* elements, transform into quadrangular platforms at the top with square-based merlons on their edges (fig.1.4). As with the arched entranceway embellished with carved decorative motifs, the bases of the platforms, too, exhibit a similar decorative play on their surfaces.

The terrain enclosed within the fortifications of the Chella abounds in the material remains of the principal epochs that intermittently occupied and embellished it over years. Needless to say, a substantial quantity of the architectural repertoire in the Chella, known from the texts of contemporary chroniclers, has not survived the ravages of time.¹⁵ For instance, there is barely any evidence of remains from the time of the Idrīssids (c.9th-10th centuries) or a little later when the Chella entered the occupation of the Banu Ifrān of the Zenātā tribal faction. Uthmān Uthmān Ismāīl, based on the excavations which he carried out in the Chella in the 1960s, mentions the unearthing of some fragments of early graves, probably of Idrīssid or Zenātā provenance.¹⁶ In material terms, however, two or

¹⁴ Basset and Lévi-Provençal provide a detailed description of the architectural and the ornamental scheme of the monumental portal of the Chella. See; Basset and Lévi-Provençal, “Chella: une nécropole mérinide,” 53-80.

¹⁵ This is true in case of all the major occupiers who left their mark on the terrain of the Chella: the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Banu Ifrān of the Zenata tribal faction who formed a short-lived confederate before the advent of the Al-Murābitūn (Almoravids) in the 11th century, and especially the Marinids who were among the first to infuse the Chella with a new vitality.

¹⁶ Though Ismāīl claims to have identified a couple of Idrīssid and Zenātā remains in the Chella—for instance, the tomb of Amīr Abī al- Kamāl Tamīm al-Ifrānī (from Banu Ifrān) — none of them survive in a cohesive form. See; Uthmān Uthmān Ismāīl, *Tārīkh al- ‘Imārāh al-Islāmiyyāh wa al-funūn al-Tatabīqīyāh bi al-Maghrib al- ‘Aqsā*, vol. 1 (Rabat: Matbu’ā al-Ma’ārif al-Jadīdah, 1992), 300.

three random examples of such remains are neither satisfactory for us to recreate a cohesive scenario of the Chella of the times nor do they help us to understand clearly the nature of material continuities of the site. The only – but important – archaeological substantiation we have is about the layers of the Chella itself, and the site’s role in harboring tangible or intangible elements from successive historical epochs.

1.2: Chella: the Marinid Context

To confine ourselves to the Marinid context, many of Abū’l-Hassan al-Marīnī’s 14th-century constructions, which formed parts of, or extensions to, the rampart walls, are no longer extant or have been transformed beyond recognition. For instance, Basset and Lévi-Provençal describe a structure annexed to the ramparts adjacent to the grand portal, which, based on the physical features of its remains, has been identified variously as a madrasa, a granary, and a *fundūq* (inn or caravanserai).¹⁷ By all counts, it seems more likely that it was a place for lodging, destined for pilgrims who came from far to offer their supplications at the sanctuary where the Marinid princes were interred. Concurrently, it also must have housed the clerics in charge of upholding the celebration of this ‘Marinid cult.’¹⁸ The use of the term ‘Marinid cult’ will become unambiguous later when this study explores the Marinid involvement with the Chella in light of their

¹⁷ Basset and Lévi-Provençal, “Chella: une nécropole mérinide,” 83-84.

¹⁸ This structure, formulated around a series of chambers and a court – the “hôtellerie,” as Basset and Lévi-Provençal call it, was also ascribed as a hospital by Leo Africanus, who, writing in the 16th-century, says that the [Marinid] founder of the Chella constructed here a ‘very beautiful hospital.’ See; Johannes Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, Translated by John Pory (London, 1600), 114. However, its placement next to the rampart walls as well as the architectural organization of its spaces seal the possibility of it being a *funduq* commissioned in the reign of Abū’l-Hassan al-Marīnī, or his successor, Abū ‘Inān Fāris, that is, during the time when the splendor of the Chella necropolis and the influence of the regal Marinid family exercised a grand aura of fidelity around the sanctuary. See; Basset and Lévi-Provençal, “Chella: une nécropole mérinide,” 83-84.

exploitation of the pious connotations of the site. In addition to the ‘hôtellerie,’ what one encounters today, as one gradually progresses down from the principal portal (*bāb*) in the rampart-walls into the lush green vegetation of the site, are material indications of plinths, a small *forum*, a bath and a temple strewn among scattered stones, all from the late Roman period (c. 135 A.D.) when the Chella flourished under the name of Sala Colonia (fig.1.5). Contiguous to the Roman remains on the south is the Marinid *khalwā*—an ensemble of ruins contained within its own walled precinct. These comprise the remains of a mosque attributed to the first Marinid Sultan, Abu Yūsuf Yā’qūb (d. 1286), traces of a couple of sepulchers abutted to the mosque, remains of Sultan Abū’l-Hassan’s mausoleum, and the remains of an extensive madrasa with a well-preserved square-based minaret (drg. 1.1).

The Marinid *khalwā* – the enclosure housing the Marinid sacred as well as funerary constructions – is demarcated by the remains of its own precinct wall; some of its portions are still intact. Immediately adjacent to the Roman remains on the south-east, an arched opening framed by poly-lobed cusped crenellations in the precinct-wall forms the entrance to the *khalwā* (fig.1.6); it gives access to a rectangular court or a *sahn* with evidence of a number of graves (fig.1.7). This, in turn, leads to the remains of an oratory—presumably the mosque commissioned by Abu Yūsuf Yā’qūb around 1280 – with three transversal naves parallel to the qiblā wall and a perpendicular nave running from the oratory-entrance to the *mīhrāb* (fig.1.8). Attached to the south-eastern corner of the mosque are remains of a square-based minaret (fig.1.9), while a stepped water tank, probably for ablutions, stands contiguous to it at the southwestern precinct-wall of the

khalwā. Ruined plinths at the back of the *qiblā* wall indicate the presence of the remains of three sepulchers; these were organized as ancillary chambers forming a part of the mosque-oratory. Further southeast, across from the remains of the sepulchers behind the mosque, are the ruins of the mausoleum where Sultān Abū'l-Hassan al-Marīni, his wife, Shams ud-Doha, and his daughter (Sultān Abū 'Inān's sister) are interred (fig.1.10). Here, in the intermittent remains of Abū'l-Hassan's mausoleum, it is still possible to discern the structural as well as ornamental articulations that graced the 14th-century ensemble of constructions in the Marinid *khalwā* (fig.1.11). The northeastern flank of this entire group of remains within the *khalwā* precincts comprises the ruins of a chamber which forms an ancillary space to the remains of the madrasa.¹⁹ Alternately, the madrasa is also approached through a portal in the *sahn*, which, opening up to a transitional space akin to the chamber mentioned above, leads down through a series of steps into the courtyard of the madrasa.

The remains of the madrasa demonstrate that it adhered to well-codified modes of space-making for Islamic institutional structures. Basset and Lévi-Provençal, owing to a lack of extensive excavation of the site at the time during the early years of the 20th - century (fig.1.12), and due to the ubiquitous presence of the minaret, identified the madrasa as the mosque of Abū'l-Hassan. However, the planar organization of the remains of the structure, and especially the division of the oratory, reifies its identity as a madrasa

¹⁹ Basset and Lévi-Provençal, following a textual description of the 16th-century Leo Africanus, conjecture the remains of this chamber to be the funerary chamber for the Marinid royals. A couple of marble steles (related to Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb as well as Shams ud-Dohā) unearthed from this particular site also serve to strengthen this opinion. However, for lack of any clear archeological or textual evidence pertaining to the function of this space, the purpose of this ancillary chamber remains unclear. See, Basset and Lévi-Provençal, "Chella: une nécropole mérinide," 283-85.

(or possibly, also a *zāwiyah*) built contemporaneously with most structures in the Marinid Chella. As Georges Marçais indicates in his brief description of the Marinid *khalwā*:²⁰

La division tripartite de cet oratoire et son carré médian trouveront leur analogue dans les médersas. La cour avec son bassin, ses galeries, la grande salle du Nord et les galeries qui l'encadrent apparentent également cette partie de la *khalwa* aux collèges de même époque que nous étudierons plus loin.²¹

[The tripartite division of this oratory and its central square find their analogue in the madrasas. The court with its basin, its galleries, the grand chamber to the north and the aisles which flank it, make this part of the *khalwā* resemble the colleges (madrasas) of the same epoch that we shall study presently].

The representative spatial components of the structure are organized around a large central courtyard and an imposing pool (*sahrīj*) at its center (fig.1.13). A prayer-hall with remains of an ornate *mihṛāb*, and a chamber probably used as a study-hall flank the courtyard on either lateral face. The two longitudinal faces of the courtyard are marked by a row of cells, presumably living quarters for the students who inhabited the place (fig.1.14). The afore-mentioned square minaret abutting the chamber, on the northern edge of the structure, rounds up the ensemble of the madrasa (fig.1.15).

1.3: Approaching the *Khalwā*: Some Inquiries

To open up the decisive space of queries for this dissertation project which explores the visual dynamic of the madrasas commissioned under the Marinids, it is the

²⁰ Georges Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne et Sicile* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1954), 283.

²¹ Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident*, 283.

phenomenon of this odd incorporation of a madrasa in the dynastic necropolis (*khalwā*) of the Chella, and the resounding implications of this phenomenon for other “normative” Marinid madrasas that I seek to address. To this end, I will revisit the madrasa of the Chella to deeply probe into the nature of its “unexpected” presence in the Marinid Chella. In the larger Islamic context, there is nothing out of order for a madrasa to be a part of an extensive ensemble comprising a mosque, funerary structures, a hospice, an educational institution, a hospital, a soup kitchen and so on. The grand social endowments of the 14th-century Mamlūk Cairo, contemporaneous with the Marinids in Maghrib al-Aqṣā – for instance, the endowments of Sultan Qalāwūn and Nasir al-Din Muhammad – are a case in the point. In the social realm of Islamic structures, this concept later finds its articulate expression in the Ottoman *kulliye*, the Suleymāniye (16th-century), and the Yeni Valide (16th-17th-centuries) in Istānbul being the most magnificent examples among them. However, to the extent that the precedent for such social institutions – anything akin to a *kulliye* – is not in evidence in the Maghrib before or after the Marinid epoch, the presence of the madrasa in the Marinid Chella constitutes an *event*. The reasons for this event beg a closer scrutiny, a closer consideration of the physical and visual realities of this madrasa as a product of the political, cultural, religious and intellectual aspirations of the Marinid milieu.

In the framework of the Marinid madrasas then, the immediate concerns that the madrasa of the Chella brings to the fore are all inscribed in the exalted nature of the site, the appropriation and the concurrent utilization of the sacral quality of the site by the Marinids. What intentions could be at play in making the madrasa an integral part of the

dynastic necropolis? What inferences can we draw regarding the relationship of this site to the material remains of the institution of knowledge-production that it harbors?

Through this relationship, what understanding can we formulate about the production of a desired dynastic discourse which allows us to cast a wider net on the vicarious Marinid involvement in activities of knowledge-production, which, in turn, allows us to open up the space for glimpses into the formations of Marinid patronage and their cultural-religious interactions, thus establishing an analogue with a programmatic proliferation of state-sponsored madrasas in the urban milieu of 14th-century Morocco?

1.4: Chella: Historical Trajectories

Equipped with this cache of queries regarding the material organization of the Marinid Chella, especially the madrasa, it will be fruitful to revert to the Chella on terms of its charged existence as a many-layered site, deriving its valorizations from the historical mists of distant past. At various points in time, and at least since the period when the Phoenician maritime trading activities were in force, the Chella seems to have served as a prime settlement. Extensive Roman architectural remains, as well as artifacts recovered from the site – among them, a base of a capital, columns of a triumphal arch, and several fragments with inscriptions – attest to its considerable importance during the early centuries of the Christian era.²² Along with Volubilis and Lixus, both important outposts of the Roman Empire in the western-most extremities of North Africa, it held a visible position in the Roman province of Mauritanie Tangitaine. The reasons for the

²² Jacques Caillé, *La Ville de Rabat jusqu'au Protectorat Français: Histoire et Archéologie*. Vol. 1.(Paris: Vanoest, Éditions d'Art et Histoire, 1949), 35.

intermittent privilege that the Chella has enjoyed are many. Primarily, its proximity to the rich valley of Bou Reg Reg, and its strategic geographical location, close to the junction where the river merges into the Atlantic, make it an ideal place as a trading or a military outpost, for engaging in warfare or resisting attacks for prolonged periods of time. Sustained habitation here is also facilitated by the ready availability of fresh water fed by the springs in the site with subterranean connections to the estuary of the Bou Reg Reg. It is thus intriguing that a consistent, abiding interest in the Chella does not seem to have emerged until the Marinid involvement with the site in the last two decades of the 13th-century.

Even though intermittent, the enduring nature of Chella's occupation further becomes clear from early references to it in Arab sources. One of the earliest mentions of the Chella appears around the time of Idrīss-I's arrival in Maghrib al-Aqsā in c.788, when, after establishing his dominion over Volubilis and its neighboring regions, "he was put at the head of an immense army composed principally from among the Zenātā, Ourābā, Sanhājā and Houārā, and proceeded to make forays into the regions of Tamesnā" and seized the "ville of Chella."²³ But it seems that even before this conquest, the Chella had been ravaged by depredations of the Berber tribal factions. After the death of Idrīss-II (d.213/ 828-29), the Chella along with a few other settlements in the region was entrusted to his son, 'Isā, and attained remarkable importance until its capture by Mūsā ibn Abī al-

²³ Idrīss-I: a descendant of the prophet, Muhammad through his grandson al-Hasan. Fleeing the persecution of the Abbāsids, he sought refuge and eventually established himself in the Maghrib al-'Aqsā, founding the dynastic ruling house of the Idrīssids, based at the then newly established city of Fez. For the reference to Chella, see Ibn Abi Zar' al-Fāsi, Abu'l-Hasan 'Alī, *Rawd al-Qirtās: Histoire des souverains du Maghreb et annales de la ville de Fès*, translated by Auguste Beaumier (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1860. Reprint, 1999), 26; hereafter referred to as *Rawd al-Qirtās*.

Āfiā in 317/ 929.²⁴ Thus, after attaining substantial importance under the Idrissids (9th-10th centuries), the Chella again fell into relative decline at the hands of the Barghawāta and other Berber tribal factions.²⁵ Also, amidst all this, the Banu Ifrān of the city of Salé across the Bou Reg Reg, under the guise of conducting holy war (*jihād*) against the Berber heretics, were perpetually engaging the Barghawāta to drive them from what they considered their ancestral territories. Thus, the Chella, becoming the locus from where *jihād* was undertaken, came to fulfill the function of a *ribāt*²⁶ from which the orthodox Muslims took offense against the heretical Berber tribes. The geographer and chronicler, Ibn Hawqal, writing in the 11th-century, relates that two *ribāts* were constructed in the region of Bou Reg Reg, one in Salé, and the other around the Chella.²⁷ His account is remarkable for the fact that it foregrounds the geographical presence of the Chella along with the *jihādi* intrigues which defined its presence:

Sur la fleuve égalment on voit la vieille ville de Salé, qui remonte à la plus haute antiquité: elle est en ruines; les habitants se groupent dans des couvents qui entourent la ville. Le nombre des défenseurs de la foi qui se réunissent en ce point se monte à cent mille hommes, plus ou moins, suivant les circonstances. Leur couvents sont destines à la lutte contre les Barghawata, une tribu berbère qui vit sur le bord de l'Océan...²⁸

²⁴ Uthmān Uthmān Ismāīl, *Tārīkh Shallāh al-Islāmiyyāh* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Thaqāfā, 1975), 160.

²⁵ Abū Ubayd ‘Abd-Allāh al-Bakri, *Description de l’Afrique Septentrionale* (extracts from *Kitāb Masālik wa Mamālik*), translated by William MacGuckin Baron de Slane (Paris: Librairie d’Amerique e d’Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, 1965), 175; Also see, Caillé, *La Ville de Rabat*, 37-45.

²⁶ Ribāt: a structure with fortress-like architectural characteristics. Ribāts functioned as defensive structures, or as outposts for conducting warfare or undertaking *jihād*. Concurrently, they functioned as spaces where learning/ teaching activities took place, and where Sufi warrior saints were lodged. Finally, along with fulfilling all these functions, they occasionally served as caravanserais for travelers or traders.

²⁷ Abu’l-Qāsim Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb Surat al-Ard* translated as *Configuration de la Terre* by J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet (Paris: Éditions G. P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1964), 78, hereafter referred to as *Sūrat al-Ard*.

²⁸ Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard*, 78.

[On the same river, one can view the ancient city of Salé (Chella) which goes back to great antiquity: it is in ruins; the inhabitants assemble in the hospices (ribāts?) which encircle this site. The number of defendants of faith who congregate on this site comes to more or less a hundred thousand men, depending on the circumstances. Their hospices are destined for combat against the Barghawata, a Berber tribe inhabiting the other side of the Ocean (river?)...]

However, the *ribāt* amidst the ruins of Roman Chella, where a great number of combatants came to gather, could not have been anything but a camp, utilized momentarily, for the purposes of such *jihādi* excursions.

Under the al-Murābitūn or Almoravids (c.1073-1130), a puritanical dynasty which rose to power from the Sanhāja Berber faction, we have no indication at our disposal which permits us to formulate precise inferences about the role played by the Chella. In all probability, however, the Chella suffered significant ruination due to the fierce battles in which the Almoravids engaged with the tribal confederations to the south of Bou Reg Reg.²⁹ By the time when the al-Muwāhidūn, that is, the Almohāds (c.1130-1269) consolidated their authority over larger dominions of Maghrib al-Aqsā in the third decade of the 12th-century, and the founded the city of Ribāt al-Fath (Rabat), the Chella was inhabited but ruined. According to the geographer, al-Idrīsī, who flourished around c.1154 under the patronage of Roger II of Sicily, the remains of its edifices were encircled by the pasturages and fields that belonged to the inhabitants of the new city.³⁰

²⁹ al-Bakri, *Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, 281.

³⁰“Châla, la ville ancienne, est maintenant inhabitée; on y voit seulement quelques restes d'edifices et de temples de proportions colossales, entourés de pâturages et de champs qui appartiennent aux habitants de la ville nouvelle.” Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad Al-Idrīsī, *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne (extracts*

During this period then (11th-12th centuries), we see a semi-sedentary occupation of the Chella. The ruins of Chella and its environs, on the margins of Ribāt al-Fath, probably acted as an annexe or a cantonment for sporadic reunion and camping of various contingents of soldiers.³¹ It is with the political advent of the Marinids after the disintegration of the Almohād empire in the later part of the 13th-century that the history of the Chella is enduringly allied with the new dynasty, to the point that one cannot speak of the Chella without invoking the Marinid Sultāns associated with it.

1.5: *Barakā* and Revered Energies: Marinid Interventions in the Chella

In alignment with the above chroniclers' accounts which trace the vicissitudes of the Chella over a historical continuum, it will be worthwhile to pause over the insistent motif that binds these texts: the abiding air of the undertakings of *jihād*, a sustained activity of congregating for holy excursions against Berber heretics or others outside the fold of Islam. The attendant implication, or rather hope, of this act is that for the *mujāhid*, his deed – the act of waging holy war in the name of Islam – would place him in a sanctified proximity to God as a divine recompense. As a result, in his sacrifice, he would attain a hallowed station, a station to be venerated. The Chella thus, in this particular context of *jihād*, as a site from where such holy wars were waged in the region, and in its role as a *ribāt*, begins to absorb in its architectural being all the exalted associations of a space charged with a sacred force. This revered charge of the site attains additional magnitude due to the fact that the Chella's earth was, as a consequence of the *jihāds* that

from Kitāb Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtirāq al-āfāq), translated by R. Dozy & M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1866), 83.

³¹ Edmond Pauty, *Le Site de Chella: à Travers les Âges* (Rabat: École du Livre, 1944), 24.

were undertaken from its space, a coveted terrain for receiving the mortal remains of the *mujāhidīn* (martyrs).³²

This consciousness of the revered energy of the Chella, I propose, served as the primary impulse for the Marinids to appropriate the site with all its many-layered historical associations. Designated as a dynastic necropolis by the first Marinid Sultān, Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb (r.1258-1286), the 'sacred' earth of the Chella was now associated with long-standing memories and souvenirs of *jihād* and defense of Islamic lands. In fact, an investiture of these sacrosanct associations seems to have been deftly effected through the transfer of that revered energy (present in the site due to its associations with the interred holy *mujāhidīn*) to the Marinid royal family by virtue of an identical process of interment in the sacred earth of the Chella: the Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb conferred a new destiny on this ancient site when he interred in these ruined precincts the mortal remains of his spouse, Omm al-Izz (d.683/ 1284), the first member of the Marinid ruling house to be committed to the earth of the Chella.³³ As regards the tangible expression of this act, Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb 'inaugurated' the royal necropolis, so to speak, by construction of a mosque whose enclosure subsumed Omm al-Izz's burial-spot. Soon, in 685/ 1286, Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb, himself, was tendered to the earth of the Chella, close to his spouse within the demarcated precinct of the *khalwā*, when after his death, his mortal remains were moved to the Chella from Algeciras in Andalusia. The *khalwā* was soon endowed with the structures that were briefly inventoried above: a mosque, and sepulchers housing the

³² Basset and Lévi-Provençal, "Chella: une nécropole mérinide," 13.

³³ Ahmed ben Khālid al-Nāsirī al-Salāwī, *Kitāb al-Istiqsā li akhbār duwāl al-Maghrib al-Aqsā*; section on Marinids translated by Ismaël Hamet, *Archives Marocaines* 33 (1934): 97, 146; hereafter referred to as *Kitāb al-Istiqsā*. Also see, Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 320, and Pauty, *Le Site de Chella*, 25.

mortal remains of the grand sultans of the Marinid house who relentlessly undertook *jihāds* for upholding the faith, and “did not cease to renew their holy war against the Christians of Spain.”³⁴

As for the structures in the *khalwā* themselves, there has been some ambiguity regarding their precise formation. Sedra, in his unpublished study on the Chella, refers to three different stages of construction activity in the Marinid *khalwā*; it is during the third stage (probably around c.1350) that the arrangement of the necropolis was established in a definitive manner when the madrasa, its two ancillary chambers, and some funerary cupolas were interposed into the physical configuration of the *khalwā*.³⁵ By common consensus, based on textual references, there seems to be no building activity in the Chella by the Marinids prior to the construction of the first mosque commissioned by Abū Yūsuf Yā’qūb within the precincts designated as the Marinid *khalwā*. Apparently, the Sultan, who was a fervent combatant on behalf of the faith, wished to seek repose in a space consecrated to the sepulcher of the *mujāhidīn*. This aspiration was evidently consummated in establishing a new dynastic necropolis on the locus in the precincts of the Chella where a *ribāt* might have stood earlier.³⁶ However, no evidence, archaeological or textual, is forthcoming for us to arrive at a precise date for the

³⁴ Moulay Driss Sedra, "La Nécropole de Chella, étude historique et archéologique de deux monuments: la mosquée et la madrasa." *Memoire de fin d'etudes de 2eme cycle* (Institut National de les Sciences d'Archéologie et du Patrimoine, 1997-98), 12; unpublished. As regards the interment of Marinid Sultāns in the *khalwā* of the Chella, beginning with Abū Yūsuf Yā’qūb, the early Marinid Sultāns –Abū Yā’qūb Yūsuf (d.1307), Abū Saīd Uthmān (d.1331), and finally, Abu’l-Hassan ‘Alī (d. 1351/52) among them – were interred in the precincts of the *khalwā*. The final resting places of the later rulers of the Marinid house (Abū ‘Inān Fāris onwards) were confined to the environs of their capital, Fez.

³⁵ Sedra, "La Nécropole de Chella," 58.

³⁶ Sedra, "La Nécropole de Chella," 59, referring to Michel Terrasse’s brief description of the ‘mosque of Chella’ in his unpublished dissertation, *L’Architecture hispano-maghrébine et la naissance d’un nouvel art marocain à l’âge des Mérinides*, Thesis Doctorat d’etat (Paris IX, 1979).

mosque's construction.³⁷ Contemporary sources do not impart any information about the commissions of Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's successors. A little later, the *khatīb* and the chronicler, Ibn Marzūq, in his *Musnad al-Sahih*, eulogizing Sultan Abū'l-Hassan al-Marīnī's life and sovereignty, enumerates the sovereign's architectural prolificacy, and informs us that the Sultan "had constructed in the Chella that which would arrest the admiring attention of the spectator."³⁸ Even so, a want of clear testimony in the textual sources about Abū'l-Hassan's architectural commissions in the Chella, and the data revealed by the material conditions of the Marinid precinct, indicate that the Sultan's oeuvre was limited to renovating and expanding earlier structures – expansion and additions to the prayer hall of Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's mosque, construction of a small minaret abutting it (fig.1.16), and an enlargement of the precinct walls of the necropolis to accommodate new constructions – which noticeably led to a transformation in the structural arrangement of the *khalwā*.³⁹ Unfortunately today, the architectural features of the mosque, and the sepulchers, that is, of nearly the entire *khalwā*, are significantly obscured or ruined. It is thus exigent to determine conclusively the stylistic expression of their architectural or ornamental scheme; only, certain elements in the courtyard of the madrasa with surviving patterns of *zellīj* mosaic work, and the still intact south-eastern wall of Abū'l-Hassan's sepulcher with its exquisitely carved interlaced geometric

³⁷ Contemporary as well as subsequent chroniclers inform us that it is in this "mosque of the Chella" that Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb and his spouse, Omm el-Izz were interred. See, Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 297; Ahmed ibn al-Qādi al-Miknāsi, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibās fī dhikr man halla min al-a'lām madīnat Fās*, Vol. 2 (Rabat: Dār al-Mansūr, 1974), 558; al-Nāsirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqsā*, 109. Taking into account, Abū Yūsuf's sojourns in the territory of Ribāt al-Fath during the end of 675/ 1276-77 in order to undertake his second jihādi expedition in Andalusia, we can conjecture the construction of the first mosque in the Chella around the same time. Sedra, "La Nécropole de Chella," 59.

³⁸ E. Lévi-Provençal, "Un nouveau texte d'histoire mérinide: le Musnad d'ibn Marzūk," *Hespéris* 5 (1925): 63.

³⁹ Sedra, "La Nécropole de Chella," 59-60.

formations, star-burst patterns, registers of lozenge motifs, and inscriptional bands in *kufic* as well as cursive styles (fig.1.17), proffer some idea about the way in which the visual program of the structures in the *khalwā* might have been originally envisioned.

But still, this architectural constitution of the funerary monuments in the *khalwā* harbors the Marinid impulse to appropriate the site with all its many-layered historical associations. Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's bid to invoke *barakā* (holy grace) through an instinctive association with the sepulcher of the *mujāhidīn*, and subsequently, Abū'l-Hassan's conceiving of the Chella as a *ribāt*, as he signifies in the foundation inscription of its monumental portal erected in 739/ 1339, by referring to the Chella as "ribāt-béni," comes across as a move to revive the ancient souvenirs of the site which had always been tied up with the sacrosanct air of struggle against the enemies of the faith. Through additive architectural interventions in the necropolis of the Chella, Abū'l-Hassan sought to honor the memory of his ancestors who were grand combatants in the cause of faith, and the title "ribāt-béni" that the Chella officially carries substantiates its conception as a fortress dedicated to consecrated activities.⁴⁰

Thus, in the Marinid act of appropriating the revered energy of the Chella, and in this energy's embodiment in the ensemble of material presence on the site, it is possible to recognize the Marinid dynastic aspirations realized through a construction of 'pious associations' with the consecrated aura of the Chella – associations drawn from the memories of the site's harboring of ancient glory-laden epochs, and its being a locus of consecrated *jihādi* activities against heretics and Christian kingdoms of Spain. In linking the physicality of the site with 'higher' purposes of Islam, there is a construction of an

⁴⁰ Sedra, "La Nécropole de Chella," 12-13.

unwitting sacrosanct aura around the *khalwā* on the part of the Marinids. It is this association, this proclivity for plugging into the aura of the site and its holy grace (*barakā*) that becomes analogous with the material-architectural realities that shape the physical as well as metaphorical constitution of the Marinid Chella. The entire building program of the Marinid *khalwā*, with its mosque, sepulchers, and madrasa, bespeaks a certain selectivity of what the *khalwā* includes or excludes in its ensemble. In what it includes – predominantly, funerary structures – the sacred associations and the sustenance of a sanctified aura are very apparent; the necropolis plays its pious role to perfection. It is almost as if the *barakā* emanating from the site dictates the architectural activity on its premises, and conversely, the *barakā* is captured, sustained and enhanced by fixating it in the physicality of the architectural components of the *khalwā*. The Marinid *khalwā*, as a clearly marked out precinct with all the connotations of exclusivity and dynastic possession, serves as a source from which dynastic (and other) *barakā* can be drawn. In an oblique manner, the formations of a Marinid ‘cult’ mentioned earlier are already in place; yet again, we invoke the palimpsest-like nature of the Chella – layers of memorabilia from antiquity, memories and remains of holy wars and related activities on a historical panorama – which becomes an instrument in assigning a certain revered character to the site. This attitude is reflected amply in the sanctimoniously premeditated way in which successive Marinid rulers engage with the Chella; it is exemplified by their visits to the Chella in order to offer supplications, and to be in the exalted proximity of their ancestors. To give just one example, the chronicler, al-Umari, tells us of Sultān Abū Saīd Uthmān (r.1310-1331) undertaking special journeys in order to visit the tombs of his

ancestors in the Chella.⁴¹ To the extent that such visits and supplications at their ancestors' tombs attained a ritualistic tenor with Marinid rulers, it showcases their symbolic alignment with the consecrated aura of the site, thus appropriating its significations by various acts, one of them being the act of instituting their material presence in the architectural program of the funerary precinct in the Chella.

1.6: Pristine Intensities: Appropriation of Artifacts

It is not only in the partaking of Chella's sacrosanct aura, in the construction of a bond with its consecrated earth, and in the appropriation of its virtuous air by intervening in the physicality of the Chella that the Marinids articulate associative relationships. The drawing of *barakā* extends to mining the antiquated layers of the site, connecting with the greatness of bygone epochs, where such relationships are promulgated tangibly through the recycling of material artifacts (appropriated as spolia). By plugging into the alleged 'immaculate' intensities of earlier relics, the reuse of artifacts constitutes a move of symbolically claiming authority over the conduits that nourish the historical continuities of the site.

Nowhere is such appropriation of the power of earlier historical essences in the Chella more manifest than in a well-preserved funerary artifact which originally dates to the Roman presence in the Chella, the gravestone (*mashhada*) of the Marinid Sultān, Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf (r.1286-1307), who was interred in the *khalwā* of the Chella after his

⁴¹ Ibn Fadl Allah al-Umari, *Masālik al-Absār fī Mamālik al-Amsār*, translated and annotated with an introduction by Gaudefroy Demombynes (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1927), 219.

assassination in 706/ 1307.⁴² Now preserved at the Musée Archéologique in Rabat, this marble stele (fig.1.18) was unearthed in the Chella in 1881.⁴³ Remarkably, one principal face of this funerary stele carries an inscription in Latin, dedicated to the Roman governor of Betica (a Roman province of Southern Spain), A. Caecina Tacitus, of the 3rd or 4th century CE while the other face displays the Arabic inscription in carved relief dedicated to Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf. Clearly, the Marinid reuse of the stele is evident here. One of the finest artifacts preserved from late medieval North Africa, the composition of the stele, comprising a blind cusped arch on columns and a delicate arabesque scroll and shells in spandrels, is typical of gravestones current in North Africa and Spain by the 11th century.⁴⁴ The cursive inscription on this face of the stele refers to the martyred Sultān as the just ruler, the warrior for religion, the martyr, the prince of believers, and the defender of the faith; all the standard epithets which formulate the image that these rulers wanted to project are present here. These epithets, even when they are used within the sphere of a normative formula for the gravestones of sovereigns, reveal a vicarious preoccupation with pious undertakings in the name of Islam – *jihāds*, defense of religion, and martyrdom which confers a consecration – that sustain the sanctified aura of the site.

Erzini informs us that such stelae were intended to stand upright at the head or foot of the grave (*mqabriyya*), or were embedded in walls of the sepulchers.⁴⁵ In the

⁴² Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf was assassinated by one of his eunuch slaves in his palace in Tlemcen. See, Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 308.

⁴³ This finely sculpted marble stele measures 81 x 51 x 14 centimeters, and is currently on display at the archaeological museum in Rabat with the inventory no. 89-5-2-4.

⁴⁴ Nadia Erzini, "Gravestone (mashhada) of the Marinid Sultan Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf," in *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, edited by Tom Phillips (Munich & New York: Prestel Verlag, 1996), 559. Also see the entry by Catherine Cambazard-Amahan and Elarbi Erbaty in the exhibition catalogue of Musée du Petit Palais, *De l'Empire Romain aux Villes Impériales: 6000 ans d'art au Maroc*, 208.

⁴⁵ Erzini, "Gravestone," 559.

event that this gravestone of Sultan Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf was placed upright at his tomb, the Latin inscription on its other face, and by association, the Roman provenance of the stele, would have been equally conspicuous to the visitors. Thus, for the Marinids, apart from the significance of the *khalwā* as a reservoir of *barakā*, the Roman and other layers of the site, too, provide the needed associative relationships of grandeur and devoutness. The appropriation and reuse of a Roman stele as a royal Marinid gravestone is pregnant with such ascriptions. On the one hand, from a plain perspective, the act of using the Roman stele is nothing more than recycling of available material resources on the site for one's own purposes. On the other hand, on a level of interpretative probing into the phenomenon, a symbolic act of appropriating the alleged essences of a particular epoch, gaining authority over it and making it one's own through inscribing one's mark on the material relic of that particular epoch, could be understood to be in consequence.

1.7: *Khalwā*: Madrasa in a Dynastic Necropolis?

Bearing in mind all the metaphorical associations of the *khalwā* explored earlier – the effectual deployment of *barakā*, the notion of the consecrated earth of the Chella, the transfer of sacrosanct energies to the Marinids effected by virtue of their interment in the *khalwā*, a cult of piety emergent around the Marinid ancestry, a codification of such associations in the material realities of the *khalwā*, and an acquisition of the revered essences of the great historical continuum by appropriating earlier relics/ artifacts of the site – as tools for probing further into the architectural presences in the Marinid enclosure, we revert to the madrasa of the Marinid *khalwā* to explore its vicissitudes, and

unravel the strands of the presence of an institution of learning in a dynastic necropolis. The concern here is to speculate upon the possible motivations of the Marinid patron in situating the madrasa in the architectural scheme of funerary *khalwā*.

Relying on inferences from the archaeological or inscriptional data available to them, earlier historians and archaeologists who studied the Marinid Chella conferred erroneous identities upon the madrasa. Basset and Lévi-Provençal, based on the state of vestiges visible during their involvement with the Chella in the early 20th century, and especially due to the presence of the square-based minaret covered with geometric registers of colored tiles (fig.1.19), classified the remains as the mosque of Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb.⁴⁶ Others such as Jules Borély and Uthmān Uthmān Ismā'īl affirmed that the edifice in question was a *zāwiyāh* commissioned by Sultan Abū Sa'īd Uthmān, as attested by a band of cursive inscription in excised *zellīj*-work, currently located in the southwestern wall at the entrance to the courtyard of the structure (fig.1.20).⁴⁷ This inscriptional band, however, is clearly a 20th-century fabrication of the French protectorate period, a figment of reckless restoration. At least three observations ascertain that this inscription is a modern interpolation: first, the visual/ decorative idiom of the inscription, with its crude, hurriedly assembled calligraphic characters, places it completely out of sync with the established Marinid calligraphic idiom in *Kufic* or cursive letters. Secondly, the Marinid foundational inscriptions are predominantly set in the wall of the prayer-hall, nearly always in a rectangular plaque, as is evident from several Marinid endowments of the 14th century. Further, these inscriptions inevitably

⁴⁶ Basset and Lévi-Provençal, "Chella: une nécropole mérinide," 258.

⁴⁷ See, Ismā'īl, *Tārīkh Shallah al-Islāmiyyāh*, chapter on the Marinid period.

include an enumeration of properties endowed (*habūs*) for that particular structure. The absence of such an inscriptional format in the case of this edifice in the Chella, thus, is utterly dissonant with normative Marinid practices. Finally, and most importantly, the text of this inscription makes the fatal error of referring to Abū Saīd Uthmān (d.1331) as *amīr al-mūminīn* (commander of the faithful), whereas several sources of the time firmly establish that the Marinid sovereigns were content with the modest title of *amīr al-muslimīn* (commander of Muslims) until Sultan Abū ‘Inān Fāris (r.1348/51-1358) took the title of *amīr al-mūminīn*.⁴⁸ In line with this evidence then, earlier hypotheses about this structure being Abū Yūsuf Yā’qūb’s mosque or a *zāwiyāh* commissioned by Abū Saīd Uthmān hold no ground.

As for the affirmation that the structure under discussion is a madrasa, the undeniable substantiation comes to us from a 14th-century textual source, a travel chronicle by Ibn al-Hājj al-Numayri, Sultan Abū ‘Inān Fāris’s principal secretary and keeper of the royal seal. In his chronicle, he mentions the commissioning of a madrasa by Sultan Abū ‘Inān – of vast dimensions, grandiose, sturdy, well-organized, and adorned with ornate *zellij* – within the precincts of the Marinid necropolis.⁴⁹ He had visited the Chella in the company of the Sultan, at the time of the latter’s military campaign in Ifrīqiya in 758/1357; during the sojourn, Abū ‘Inān’s companions derived great joy in visiting the madrasa that he had ordained in the immediate proximity of the mausoleum

⁴⁸ For a study of titles taken up by the sovereigns of the Islamic west – especially, the Marinids, the Zayyanids, and the Hafids – based on an examination of documents and numismatic material, see Max van Bercham, “Titres Califens d’Occident: à propos de quelques monnaies mérinides et ziyānides,” *Journal Asiatique* (March-April, 1907): 245-335.

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Hājj al-Numayri, *Fayd al-Ubāb wa idhāfat qadāh al-ādāb fī harkat al-sāidah ilā Qasantināh wa al-Zāb* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 94, 199. Hereafter referred to as *Fayd al-Ubāb*.

of his father, Abū'l-Hassan (d.752/ 1351).⁵⁰ In light of this attestation by a contemporary source, it becomes clear that the madrasa was interpolated into the structural fabric of the *khawā* during the final phase of the Marinid building activity in the Chella.

Further, the architectural constitution of the ruined edifice itself reveals great similitude with the well-established spatial and visual characteristics of the madrasas commissioned under Marinid sovereignty. As in other madrasas, the generic architectural scheme here, too, is predicated on a central courtyard (*sahn*). A series of steps adjoining the ancillary space on the western edge of the edifice lead to the vast courtyard, which was once articulated by rows of marble columns,⁵¹ thus forming two long colonnades on either longitudinal side of the court (fig.1.21). The colonnades, in turn, are flanked by the remains of a series of cells, which presumably functioned as lodging-spaces for students. The northwestern ends of both the rows of the cells display vestiges of staircases made out of brick; evidently, they provided access to the cells on the upper storey (fig.1.22). A rectangular pool (*sahrīj*) with two circular collection basins on its two edges constitutes the central dominant element of the court (fig.1.23). With this ensemble in place, the two lateral sides of the court comprise a sizable prayer hall on the south eastern face, and an anterior chamber (probably a study hall) on the opposite north western face. The remains of the rectangular prayer hall unequivocally demonstrate that it was conceived as a significant constituent of the madrasa. Divided into three large bays by two arches on either side – four in all – supported by heavy brick colonnades (fig.1.24), the central bay

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Hājj, *Fayd al-Ubāb*, 199.

⁵¹ The use of marble columns, once again, brings up the issue of recycling of Roman spolia on the site. In the case of the columns in the court of the madrasa, however, owing to their relatively slender dimensions as well as the consistency of their form, one is led to infer that they were freshly employed for the structure.

of the prayer hall, square in plan, was in all likelihood surmounted by a pyramidal roof.⁵² The *mihṛāb* of the prayer hall (fig.1.25) is accentuated by virtue of its projection at the back of the *qiblā* wall, which forms the south eastern face of the madrasa. As regards the rectangular anterior chamber on the north-west face (fig.1.26), it is difficult to make any precise suppositions about its function. A singular feature of the entire architectural organization, however, is constituted in the presence of a well-preserved minaret, which stands adjacent to the anterior chamber on its flank on the north. The minaret is square at its base, with remains of lozenge patterns formed in stonework, and geometrically ornamented tile work in turquoise, white, and black *zellīj* (fig.1.27). In its structural form as well as its decorative scheme, thus, it broadly submits to the set idiom of minaret construction in Maghrib al-Aqsā and Andalusia.

The visual character of the Chella madrasa, as shaped by the spatial as well as elemental components identified above, is clearly in accord with Sultan Abū ‘Inān’s other commissions; one may cite the instance of the Bou ‘Inānia madrasa (752/ 1351) at Fez, which includes a full-fledged mosque (which also functioned as a *Jāmi*’) and a minaret in its architectural scheme. As for the ornamental scheme of the Chella madrasa, the only indications about its expression come from the surviving remains of the decorative geometric *zellīj*-work (fig.1.28) and a couple of patches of the stucco patterns on the inner wall of the *mihṛāb* as well as the prayer hall (fig.1.29). But these remains safely allow us to infer that the decorative scheme of the Chella madrasa, too, conformed to the prevalent ornamental conventions of Marinid structures – conventions formulated out of

⁵² Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident*, 283.

on an intricate play of geometric, cursive or vegetal motifs in colored tile-work, ornamental stucco-work, and exquisite artisanship in carved wood.

1.8: Madrasa in *Khalwā*: Some More on Consecrated Aura

In foregrounding the physicality of the madrasa in the context of its presence in the *khalwā*, thus, we invoke again the principal meditations that permeate the thematic inquiries of this chapter. To quickly reiterate them, we may recall that, apart from the consecrated charge of the Chella as a burial ground for holy martyrs, other historical layers and artifacts of the site (such as Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf's gravestone of Roman provenance), too, provide appropriate associations to the Marinids for accentuating their hegemonic presence. This is realized through a tangible appropriation of the site itself, thereby shaping the consecrated aura of the site into a dynastic aura: a Marinid reverence for their ancestors buried in the *khalwā*, and an alleged partaking of *barakā* immanent from such acts, illustrates sufficiently the Marinid maneuvers in expressing their legitimate authority, supposedly conferred by religious or sacrosanct associations.

The shaping of the consecrated aura of the Chella is also borne out in the way in which its environs were imagined and expressed. Ibn al-Hājj, in his travel-chronicle, mentions that around the same year (c.1357) when he halted at the Chella during his campaign in Ifrīqiya, Abū 'Inān ordained the transfer of the mortal remains of his sister from Fez to the Marinid dynastic precinct. She was reinterred in the sepulcher in the *khalwā*, next to the graves of her father, Abū'l Hassan, and his spouse, Shams al-Doha.⁵³ Yet again, in this act, it is possible to discern a sensibility which privileges an immediate

⁵³ Ibn al-Hājj, *Fayd al-Ubāb*, 203.

proximity to the sacred earth as well as revered presences; the pious charge of the site – one which consistently draws the Marinids to the aura of their interred ancestors – is still operative here. Also, in mentioning the Chella, and especially, the Marinid *khalwā* with its verdant leafy gardens, Ibn al-Hājj repeatedly refers to it as *rawd al-jannāh* or the garden of paradise.⁵⁴ In his *Musnad*, Ibn Marzūq too refers to the Chella as a site reputed for its *barakā*.⁵⁵ On the one hand, such hyperbolic descriptions can be categorized as nothing more than established tropes employed in chronicles that border on hagiographies, especially the ones produced under royal patronage. On the other hand, however, they could be read as idealized versions of the sacrosanct visual realities that were attendant in the funerary structures of the Marinid *khalwā*. In any event, Ibn al-Hājj as well as Ibn Marzūq’s references suggest that a particular consecrated paradisiacal imagery of the Chella was already consolidated by the mid 14th-century, when the Sultan, Abū ‘Inān Fāris, commissioned the madrasa in the Chella.

This consecrated spirit of the Chella gets fortified further during the subsequent centuries; in fact, it has survived into our own times. According to the chronicler, poet, and former Nasrid vizier, Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khatīb, who spent a considerable number of years during the later part of the 14th-century in exile in the Marinid domains, the Chella was in pure splendor at the time.⁵⁶ He informs us that he returned there on several occasions during his visits to Salé in 760/ 1360, in order to seek divine aid and refuge in

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Hājj, *Fayd al-Ubāb*, 206.

⁵⁵ Ibn Marzūq, *al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Hasan fī Ma’āsir Mawlānā Abū ‘l-Hasan* translated as *El Musnad: Hechos Memorables de Abū ‘l-Hasan, Sultan de los Benimerines* by María Jesus Viguera (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1977), 108.

⁵⁶ Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khatīb from his *Raqam al-Hulāl fī Nazm al-Duwāl*, quoted in Sedra, “La Nécropole de Chella,” 13.

close proximity of the tombs of the Marinid Sultans.⁵⁷ Even when the Chella subsequently fell into ruination following its pillage in the 15th century,⁵⁸ the veneration of the righteous, interred in the earth of the Chella, consistently sustained its consecrated aura. Also, during the same epoch, the revered associations of the Chella became formalized with the presence of the tombs of *marabouts* (saints) within its precincts (fig.1.30). In keeping with the heightened force of saint-worship with popular mystical undertones, the sacred charge of the site became public; it now formed the focus of revered associations for the inhabitants of the region.⁵⁹ As recently as the early 20th century, there is evidence of grave-tending, joyful gatherings, and acts of revered worship held at the Chella (fig.1.31). All in all, the purpose of this brief outline of later Chella is to underscore the consistent motif of consecration and sacredness that pervades it.

1.9: Institution of Learning in a Dynastic Necropolis: Motivations

In the context of the revered energies of the site, a thread of conjectures, analogous to the ones made above regarding the Marinid interventions in the Chella,

⁵⁷ A. Charpentier from his *La Madrasa-Zawiya de Chella (Maroc)*, quoted in Sedra, “La Nécropole de Chella,” 13. Basset and Lévi-Provençal point out in this regard that Ibn al-Khatīb’s repeated sojourns to the necropolis of the reigning dynasty in Morocco may have been prompted by his desire to gain favorable attention of the Marinid Sultan, Abū Sālim, and to obtain a restitution of his good offices in Andalusia through the intercession of the sovereign. See, Basset and Lévi-Provençal, “Chella: une nécropole mérinide,” 23.

⁵⁸ The reputed 15th century jurist, al-Wānsharīsī, records the discords and disarrays during the decline of the Marinid power in the mid-15th century, when Ahmad al-Lihyāni, one of the actors in the power struggle, seized the necropolis of the Chella, pillaged it, and carried away its precious objects including the copies of the Qur’ān which had been consecrated for the *khalwā*. The ruination of the Chella became definitive after this event. Basset and Lévi-Provençal, “Chella: une nécropole mérinide,” 27.

⁵⁹ Among the studies on the marabouts and saints of the Chella undertaken during the French protectorate period, one may refer to Basset and Lévi-Provençal, “Chella: une nécropole mérinide,” who, in the later part of their study, devote a number of pages to the legends and cults associated with the Chella. Pauty in his *La Site de Chella*, too, talks about the popular acts of worship and reverence at the tombs of saints, especially the patron saints of the Chella (and also of Rabat) such as Sidi Yāhya and others. In this regard, also see, Louis Mercier, “Notes sur Rabat et Chella” *Archives Marocaines* V (1905), 147-156.

ought to be invoked in exploring the presence of the madrasa – an institution of learning – in the Marinid dynastic necropolis. In addressing this phenomenon, yet again, the play of *barakā* and the sacrosanct aura of the *khalwā* are accentuated. The madrasa, by virtue of its placement contiguous to the funerary chapels, falls within the proximate field of their effects (rendered more acute by Marinid royalty interred in its precincts); it is almost as if, in interpolating the madrasa in the reassuring space of revered presences, it is effectually replenished with the holy energies purportedly harbored in the site. The knowledge-practices enacted and disseminated from the physical space of the madrasa, thus, attain a special gravity by the *barakā* of the hallowed surroundings that is refracted into their range. The palimpsest-like nature of the Chella, and the revered associations it offers due to this nature, is the metaphorical field in whose enclosure the presence of the madrasa finds substantiation if not a customary locative context. As there are layers of historical continuities in the earth of the Chella, there are concurrent layers of accumulated knowledge in its dust – knowledge of historical continuities, events, holy interments and consecrated associations. In other words, layers of material realities here can be thought of as analogues to layers of accumulated events and knowledge in the remains of the Chella. And it is within this bearing of the earth of Chella as a knowledge-repository that the *raison d'être* of the madrasa lies. In the act of retaining the memories of sacrosanct activities and revered energies within its fold, the earth of the Chella *archives* knowledge, consequently setting the stage for justifying the presence of an institution of learning within its domains. Conversely, it is the embodiment of memories and knowledge in the architectural physicality of the madrasa and their resultant

dissemination through such an institution of learning that possibly explains this peculiar architectural concurrence. What better consolidation for the archived knowledge in the earth of the Chella than for it to be encrypted in an edifice which formally institutionalizes practices of knowledge, and disseminates them?

It would be opportune to point out here that the above reflections go hand in hand with some other factors that might have encouraged the presence of the madrasa in the *khalwā*. As mentioned earlier, in the context of social institutions in late medieval Islamic cultures, it is nothing out of the ordinary for a madrasa to be an integral part of a complex architectural ensemble. However, there are no examples of such comprehensive social institutions in Maghrib al-Aqsā comparable to the endowed complexes of contemporary Mamlūk Cairo. As regards the madrasa in the Chella, it is very likely that the motivation for conceiving it as a part of a larger ensemble may have been a consequence of heightened contacts and diplomatic exchanges with the Mamlūk state of Egypt, especially during the reigns of Sultan Abū'l-Hassan and his successor, Abū 'Inān Fāris in the first half of the 14th century. Various chroniclers have documented extensive political as well as cultural exchanges between the Marinid and Mamlūk courts, and this underscores an exchange of cultural ideas along with material artifacts as well.⁶⁰ Overriding the injunctions of the Māliki *madhab* (school of jurisprudence),⁶¹ which was reinstated in

⁶⁰ For instance, Ibn Khaldūn, in the section on Marinids in his *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, furnishes an inventory of precious artifacts and copies of the Qur'ān sent by Abū'l-Hassan to the Mamlūk sovereign on a couple of occasions. The volumes of the Qur'ān handwritten by the Marinid monarch were intended to be endowed for the holy mosques of Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem, all parts of Mamlūk domains at the time. For a detailed exposition of relations between the Marinids and the Mamlūks, see Marius Canard, "Les relations entre les mérinides et les mamlouks au XIV siècle" *Annales de l'Institut des Études Orientales* 5 (1939-41): 41-81.

⁶¹ The imperatives of the Māliki *madhab* prohibit the endower to have any direct relationship with or control over his or her endowment. Consequently, attaching tombs of the patron with the endowed

Maghrib al-Aqsā with the advent of the Marinids, the conception of the madrasa as a part of the *khalwā* seems to be an adaptation of the notion of such *kulliye* (endowed social complexes), well-established, especially in Mamlūk Egypt.

1.10: From the Chella Madrasa to other Marinid Madrasas

In line with these reflections then, the presence of a madrasa in the Marinid *khalwā* is not out of place in the sense that the body of knowledge produced and disseminated in its fold is allegedly touched by the invisible hand of *barakā* supposedly emanating from the exalted paradisiacal potency of the site. And to the extent that the sacred *barakā*, in substantial measure, is negotiated through the Marinid constructions of piety, it would not be amiss to speculate that the knowledge practices in the madrasa, too, may have had an unstated exclusivity stamped on to them – in producing and disseminating a body of knowledge/ information designed to uphold the Marinid power-aspirations. Thus, a salient way in engaging with the Marinid madrasas would be to map the dynamic of Marinid construction of authority through the premises of hallowed alliances with piety and knowledge, effectively expressed in their material and architectural preoccupations such as madrasas. In this regard, questions about the role of the Chella madrasa still abound: was it constructed to cater exclusively to the Marinid elite for creating an echelon of ruling bureaucracy? Could we think of the Chella madrasa as a private institution of learning for the privileged nobility of the *Banū Marīn*? In the conflation of the sacrosanct essences engulfing the madrasa with such issues related to

structures is proscribed by Māliki law. George Makdisi dwells on such issues in his study on the institutions of learning in Islam. I will treat these issues more expansively in relation to Marinid madrasas in subsequent chapters.

the political authority of the Marinids, it is thus possible to determine the fundamental role that the Marinid madrasas were charged to carry out – activities of learning, teaching, and dissemination of knowledge that drive an ideological apparatus conducive to an effective promulgation of Marinid authority. And this is a line of thought that will reappear frequently in the subsequent chapters.

The reflections in the preceding pages of this chapter on the singular presence of a madrasa in the Marinid *khalwā* of the Chella demonstrate abundantly that its architectural as well as functional contexts are so irrevocably shaped by myriad historical, social and political forces at play in the 14th-century Maghrib al-Aqsā. This ‘odd’ madrasa – it is the last in the chronology of madrasas commissioned by the Marinids – and its relatively remarkable circumstances of being a part of a dynastic necropolis provide an attractive framework to offset it against the evolutionary paradigm of the more ‘normative’ madrasas so prolifically commissioned by the Marinids during the first half of the 14th century, especially in their capital city of Fez. The core aspiration of this study therefore, in the context of these madrasas, will hopefully be registered in exploring the matrix of forces that invests such artistic production with a set of social and cultural meanings. With the Chella madrasa and its remarkable circumstances in mind, thus, this dissertation will proceed to the central subject of its study: an inquiry into the visual meaning of the Marinid madrasas in Fez and elsewhere within the fold of their social, cultural and political contexts. In achieving this at a formative level, the study leads us to trace a genealogy of the forms and the wider context of the madrasa, and the ways in which it was shaped as an institution as well as a built form since its inception in

Islamic social and cultural sphere. To this end, the following chapter attempts to succinctly trace the development of the madrasa as an institution as well as a built form, while trying to understand this development in relation to the correspondences it makes with, and departures it makes from the objects of this dissertation, namely the madrasas commissioned during the Marinid period.

Chapter 2: Madrasa in the Larger Islamic Sphere: Causes and Effects

2.1: Naissance: Eastern Lands of Islam and the Madrasa

The forays into the Chella madrasa in the preceding pages should alert us to the governing impulses that irrevocably conflate the realms of knowledge-production, power-imbued religiosity, and its socio-cultural manifestations in Islamicate polities. That which becomes centrally manifest in reading the underlying configurations of the Chella madrasa can be traced back to the nascent outlines of the madrasa in general, to its formative days as an institution as well as a built form. It brings into focus the realization that, in all its historical underpinnings, knowledge-production in Islamic cultures predominantly developed and operated within the domains of religious associations; it situated its effectiveness in becoming a facet of the exalted authority that stemmed from the revered influence of those religious associations.

Islamic theological-jurisprudential sensibilities, and acts of knowledge-production, have mirrored each other to the extent that we can barely speak of ‘secular’ knowledge – science, philosophy, and medicine and so on – without the colossal, steadfast shadow of Islamic religious sensibility hovering over it. The *adab* branches of knowledge too, that is, studies pertaining to grammar, literature, poetry, history and so on, were subordinated to the study of law. But conversely, an intermittent presence of “secular” branches of study – *adab*, sciences, and especially, medicine – in the early madrasa serves to usher the understanding of the functions of the madrasa into a different arena: this presence bespeaks of a complexity in the layout of knowledge practices in

Islamicate cultures which usurps the confines of the religious and the secular.⁶² But to the extent that we can identify the madrasa as an over-arching system of Islamic educational practices, a particular conception of knowledge and its propagation subsumed within a religious system can be discerned at the very formative stages of educational practices in Islam. For all purposes, what formed the part of the curriculum in the madrasa was a sublimated face of doctrines which were ultimately predicated on Qur’anic exegesis; even when allegedly dealing with subjects such as medicine and astronomy, its understanding could be nothing but as an academic corpus of social and cultural modes which eventually belonged to the operative domains rooted in the Qur’ān, *fiqh* and *hadīth*.

The above being said, information about the earliest consolidation of educational activities and knowledge-practices in Islamicate cultures, to the extent that such information can be gleaned from early historical sources, is veiled in considerable ambiguity, as is veiled the nature and evolution of the physical spaces where these activities were conducted. One reality, nevertheless, manifests itself with firm certitude: the mosque, be it a local *masjid* or a congregational *Jāmi’*, formed the primary locus of the earliest educational activities in Islam. In the spatial-architectural framework of such early mosques then, the requirements of a physical space for conducting educational activities – learning, teaching, and its transmission – could be attended to in a couple of

⁶² Evidently, *māristāns* (hospitals) acted as primary locations for the study and teaching of medicine. However, the study of medicine or *tibb* occasionally formed a part of the madrasas’ curriculum. Roy Mottahedeh, thus, says in regard to the variable content of the curriculum in the madrasas of different regions: “The place of medicine in the *madrasah* is symptomatic of the variable content of Islamic education; generally accepted as part of the curriculum in India and Turkey, medicine was generally rejected in the *madrasahs* of the Middle East.” See; Roy Mottahedeh, “The Transmission of Learning: The Role of the Islamic Northeast” in *Madrasa: la transmission du savoir dans le monde musulman*, eds. Nicole Grandin & Marc Gaborieau (Paris: Ed. Arguments, 1997), 64.

ways. For one, the study circle or the *halqā*, which constituted the principal physical unit comprising the *ustādh* (teacher) and his students, was a supple entity; various such *halqās*, depending on their size based on the nature of the subject that they were engaged in,⁶³ could be accommodated within the core space – probably the courtyard, the *riwāq* (cloistered arcade surrounding the court) and even the prayer hall – of the *Jāmi'* or the *masjid*. In this respect, the mosque extended its function, and subsumed within itself the nascent institutionalization of learning. Secondly, the teacher's modest lodgings, often a room in the *Jāmi'* or the *masjid* itself, or a dwelling adjacent to the mosque, satisfied the need for congregating the students for study. These spaces – we may, at a conceptual level, call them *proto-madrasas* – seem to have fulfilled the spatial needs for the steadily-consolidating knowledge/ educational practices and their transmission in early Islamdom during the formative stages of the institutional as well as structural evolution of madrasas, roughly two and a half centuries after the death of the Prophet in 632.

Bearing in mind the above nature of educational spaces in early Islamic societies, it seems reasonably acceptable that these spaces – especially, the *masjid* itself – incorporated residential accommodation for students in their burgeoning structures, prompting a continuing modification of form, and consequently culminating into a discernable built identity as a madrasa. A dominant hypothesis in currency along these lines, the one pertaining to the decisive consolidation of the madrasa as an institution as well as a built form, advocates its formation out of a systematic amalgamation of the

⁶³ The size of a particular *halqā*, or study circle, was governed by the specific subject taught in it. For instance, a *halqā* where *hadīth* was dictated was generally speaking larger than the one which dealt with, say, grammar. In addition, the reputation and popularity of a given professor also acted as a factor in determining the size of the *halqā*. See; George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 18.

masjid and the *khān* (inn).⁶⁴ The *khān*, serving as a hotel or an inn, also acted as a warehouse and a commercial centre for trading. More pertinent to our interest, *khāns*, founded (akin to *masjids*) as *waqf* properties, consistently served as dormitories for the out-of-town students engaged in learning activities at a *masjid*. An innate outcome of such arrangements appears to have been the emergence of the *masjid-khān* complexes. These were *masjids* with adjacent *khāns* to house students, and as a whole they made up a cohesive unit that catered to the developing spatial needs of education and knowledge-production in Islam. The madrasa thus, in its identifiable form, was a product of couple of evolutionary stages: from the *halqas* in *masjids* and elsewhere, to *masjid-khān* complex, to its separate identity as a madrasa forged out a development of all its preceding phases.⁶⁵

Concurrent with the developmental vicissitudes of the madrasa, nevertheless, the scenario of early educational practices ought to be reconstructed on the basis of relative spatial fluidity; a teacher could teach in a mosque or his home, or somewhere else. Evidently, reputed *ustādhs* catered to many *halqās*; their mobility characterized the

⁶⁴ George Makdisi, with his seminal work on the history of Islamic educational systems and institutions, is the primary proponent of this view. For exhaustive studies pertaining to Islamic schools of law and jurisprudence, Islamic educational and knowledge practices, and its cognate institutions, especially madrasas, one may refer to Makdisi's many publications. Apart from his *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), also see; "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, no. 1 (1961): 1-56; *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); "Madrasa and University in the Middle Ages," *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970): 255-264, and so on.

⁶⁵ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 27. In regard to the *masjid-khān* complex, however, Roy Mottahedeh interprets a critical passage in Ibn Jawzī (d. 597/1200) to simply state that three thousand mosques and caravanserais (*khāns*) were created or rebuilt in his [the patron, Badr b. Hasanawaih's] territories. For Mottahedeh, there is no indication here that they were *masjid-khān* complexes. "I am not acquainted with any reference that proves that these thousands of mosques were teaching institutions, or that the caravansarays mentioned were attached to them." Mottahedeh, "Transmission of Learning," 66.

nature of educational practices of the day.⁶⁶ Prior to the formation of the madrasa, this suggests an absence of any network or hierarchy of systemized architectural spaces for the purposes of learning. It, however, does not reflect an absence of systemized education practices before the madrasa made its appearance as a fully-formed institutional and architectural entity. This is an issue that needs to be voiced out in face of customary notions about the madrasa as a homogeneous institution where the comparative heterogeneity of educational institutions/ practices antedating or concomitant with the madrasa has been inferred to mean that there was no system of learning outside its confines.⁶⁷ Otherwise too, the discourse pertaining to knowledge-practices in Islamic cultures has been subjugated to the apparently riddle-laden emergence of the madrasa, especially the Nizāmiyyā madrasas (11th century) in Baghdād and other centers of Seljūq dominions.⁶⁸

In delineating the development of institutions of learning in Islamic cultures, the tendency amongst scholars dealing with the history of education in Islamic cultures has been to assign a central role to the political machinations of the Seljūq vizier, Nizām al-Mulk (1018-1092), as they were brought to fruition by him in the act of patronizing and promulgation of Nizāmiyyā madrasas. Granted, there may be value to such readings for

⁶⁶ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 17-18.

⁶⁷ "...ample data exists to prove that systemized education existed long before the madrasa made its appearance in Baghdad." See Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 48.

⁶⁸ Regarding the apparently sudden emergence of the madrasa, its subsequent rapid spread to the rest of the Islamic world, its purported association with the grand political designs of the Seljuq vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, Bulliet says: "Some of these and related questions have been answered; some have not. Not all of the answers proposed will stand up under careful scrutiny. Most popular, and the least sustainable, of the theories advanced is that the madrasa was a kind of a Sunni college designed to produce "orthodox" bureaucrats for a Seljuq crusade against Shi'ism, dubbed "The Sunni Revival." More sober examination of the relevant sources has established that in Baghdad, at least, the madrasa was first and foremost a college of Islamic law and not in any sense an organ of government." Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 47-48.

the fact that the Nizāmiyyās embody the emergence of the earliest institutionalized structures exclusively devoted to the proliferation of Islamic knowledge-practices, an issue which we shall visit again at a later juncture. There has been, nevertheless, persuasive demonstration of the fact that some of the earliest references to the madrasa as a social institution, dating from the 4th/ 10th century, come from the recorded lineal histories and activities of the powerful aristocratic families of Nishapur in the eastern Iranian region of Khurāsān.⁶⁹ In this regard, the history of the madrasa can be traced back at least to one and a half centuries before the official Seljūq appropriation of the institution. In all probability, however, these early madrasas, even when fully endowed with *awqāf* (sing. *waqf*), were quite remote from being fully evolved public buildings.⁷⁰

2.2: The Role of Khurāsān and Nishapur

As Bulliet has shown in his study on the aristocratic families of Nishapur, the patronage of these madrasas on part of the ruling elite was often motivated by rivalry between the followers of two different *madhabs*, in the case of 10th – 11th century eastern Iran, the renowned strife between the ‘*ulemā*’ of the Hanafī and the Shāfī persuasion.⁷¹ One instance of the momentum for such patronage – instructive for comprehending the dissemination of the madrasa – is provided by the vicarious modes of authoritarian measures taken by the ruling elite during the sovereignty of Sultān Mahmūd of Ghaznā

⁶⁹Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

⁷⁰Robert Hillenbrand “Madrasa III: Architecture,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam* 5, 2nd edition (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 1136.

⁷¹Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 70. The two out of the four fundamental schools of Islamic law and jurisprudence, the Hanafī and the Shāfī, take their name after their founders; respectively, Numān ibn Thābit Abū Hanīfā (80AH/699-148AH/765), and Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfī (150AH/ 767-204AH/820).

(r. 387AH/997 – 421AH/1030). Mahmūd himself predominantly courted the Hanafīs as his instrument for maintaining his authority in Khurāsān. This courting was apparently an act of counter-measure against his Sīmījūrīd rivals who, among other reprehensible operations, had supported the Shāfīs by building a madrasa for the popular Ash’ari theologian, Ibn Fūrak. To further reinforce this association with the rivals of the Shāfīs, once when the Sīmījūrīd hostilities had been countered, Mahmūd’s brother, Nasr, who was his governor in Nishapur, commissioned a madrasa for the reputed Hanafī leader, Abū al-‘Alā Sa’īd.⁷²

These intrigues of authority and power, as they relate to the development of the institution of the madrasa, herald further intricacies owing to the interventions of asceticism, pietism, and Sufism in the socio-cultural landscape of 10th-11th century Khurāsān. It appears that the two ascetic missionary movements, the Karrāmiyyā and the Malāmatiyyā, which attained quite an acute intensity in eastern Iran in the 10th and 11th centuries, had inevitable interactions – predominantly in form of severe altercation – with the Hanafī and the Shāfī patriciate and the ruling elite. This, however, had nearly no negative impact on the emerging patterns of knowledge-practices, whose nurturing and dissemination was encouraged by all the rival factions for their own ideological motives. In fact, the adherents of the Karrāmiyyā sect are known to have built both *khānqāhs* and madrasas in considerable numbers.⁷³ The Hanafīs, the Shāfīs, and others may have been in bitter conflict with each other, but such conflict usually was confined to one or the

⁷² Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 70-71. However, factional strife is may not be a sufficient reason for the proliferate advent of madrasas in the northeastern Islamic world. The region had developed strong traditions of learning (especially in the area of *hadīth* studies) from 8th century which also need to be taken into account. See, Mottahedeh, “Transmission of Learning,” 67.

⁷³ Hillenbrand, “Madrasa III: Architecture,” 1136.

other's political ideas and affiliations. Otherwise, a mutual respect between the contending factions existed as far as knowledge, intelligence, and integrity in legal and educational matters was concerned. In a somewhat different context, but touching upon the issue at hand, Bulliet contends equitably: "This clear separation between law and scholarship on the one hand and politics on the other must also be invoked to explain the apparent respect accorded to various Karrāmī leaders in their capacity as scholars. Education was simply too important to the continued existence of the patriciate to become an object of political wrangling."⁷⁴

The point is, in the socio-cultural milieu of 10th-11th century eastern Islamdom, we often see a consistent overlap of established boundaries: a residence in a diffuse doctrinal realm, of an adherence to a particular traditionalist school of law as well Sufi practices at the same time. Many prominent Hanafīs and Shāfīs showed evidence of inclination towards mysticism. For instance, indicating a virtual dissolution of such polarities as orthodox and mystical, Christopher Melchert, says in his work on the Sufis of Nishapur: "Abū Alī al-Thaqafī was a Shāfī'ī, though, and most Nishapuri Sufis after him were likewise associated with the Shāfī'ī school"⁷⁵ This evaluation is extended as a consequence of his view that "Shāfī'ism absorbed local traditionalism because it was more efficient, and that the Sufis of Nishapur became identified with the Shāfī'ī school because it was successor to earlier, vaguer traditionist scholarship."⁷⁶ By attending to the implications of such doctrinal nebulosity for the social-cultural modes of the milieu under discussion, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that in its institutional evolution as

⁷⁴ Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 54.

⁷⁵ Christopher Melchert, "Sufis and Competing Movements in Nishapur," *Iran* 39 (2001): 243.

⁷⁶ Melchert, "Sufis and Competing Movements," 243.

well as its educational practices, the early madrasa was anything but a product of monolithic impulses; in its formation and its functions, it expressed a matrix of operational modes imparted to it by the doctrinal charge of the orthodox schools of Islamic law as well as more diffuse ascetic, mystical, and Sufi movements in Islamdom.

Following a quick summary of the discussion thus far, and in relation to the early development of the madrasa, two implications stand out with optimal clarity: firstly, an inordinate focus on a deceptive Baghdad-centered reawakening of traditionalism (in matters of consolidated formation of *fiqh*, *hadīth* and other studies), resulting into the emergence of the institution of the madrasa under the exclusive auspices of Nizām al-Mulk, offers nothing but a paradigm that is faithful to “view from the center;” it is an approach that needs to be cast anew in light of the formative role of the eastern lands of Islam in the naissance of the madrasa. In fact, many practices, beliefs and institutions canonical to the formation of a uniform identity of Islam are rooted in the urban Muslim communities of 11th-century Khurāsān, “communities that evolved from local consolidation of societal edges rather than from a centralized religious tradition or authority symbolized by the Caliphate.”⁷⁷

Secondly, from its formative days, the madrasa was conceived to evolve as a material locus for manipulating political authority. As is clear from the purport of the contemporary intrigues between the two principal *madhabs*, it is through the instrument of the madrasa and the religious/ doctrinal authority that it condensed in the corpus of its practices of teaching Islamic law and jurisprudence that the competing ruling elites asserted their political will. In pursuing the meanings embedded in the operative domains

⁷⁷ Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 146.

of the madrasa, the above-mentioned theme, that is, the inextricable intermingling of authority with knowledge and educational practices in Islam shall be significant for an exploration of the madrasas' manifest architectural formulation.

2.3: Genesis of the Madrasa: Dominant Paradigm

Even when the formative outlines of the madrasa as an institution seem to be a consequence of diverse intersecting impulses – of learning practices, law, jurisprudence, spirituality, mysticism, power, political authority, and so on – the dominant hypotheses, that is, the ones which have prevailed with a steadfast contention, and have influenced the academic understanding of these institutions, foreground the phenomenon of ‘Sunni revival’ to explicate their proliferate dissemination.⁷⁸ Max van Berchem, to whose early insights the scholarship on Islamic institutions owes a great debt, primarily sees the consolidated emergence of the madrasa in light of the Sunni revivalist bid to eliminate the influence (as well as political authority) of “heretical” and “insidious” Shi’ism, especially the proliferate activities of the Ismāīlīs going back to their affiliations to the Cairo-based Fatimids (969-1171).⁷⁹ Berchem essentially sees the madrasa distinguished as “private” and “political;” it is primarily ‘a place of study in general’ before it gradually acquires a clearer form as an express edifice. In his analysis, the 11th century is seen as a turning

⁷⁸ The emergence of the institution of the madrasa in correspondence with the notion of “Sunni revival,” however, needs a more nuanced reading. Even at the most primary level, the madrasa was not exclusively a Sunni institution. There is evidence of six Shi’ite madrasas built in Iran during the Seljūq period, some of them under royal patronage; clearly, the scenario of the spread of madrasas demands a much more composite explanatory paradigm. On problematizing the role of revived Sunnism in the dissemination of the madrasa (and the Shi’ite role in the madrasa), see, Bulliet, *View from the Edge*, 147-149.

⁷⁹ This eminent scholar had intentions of devoting a full-length exhaustive work to the history of the madrasa. See; Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum Arabicorum*, XIX (1894), 254-265. For a very concise summary, and discussion of Berchem’s ideas; see, Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 296-300.

point, when the madrasa acquires a public, political, and official character in contrast to its earlier private, independent and personal nature. The Seljūqs are seen here as the allies and upholders of the Sunni caliphate against the Shi'ites, and Nizām al-Mulk as the creator of the new official madrasa, an instrument of the political state.⁸⁰ Other scholars have radically modified Berchem's thesis, and understood the consolidated emergence of the institution of madrasa as the reaction of one Sunni orthodoxy against another, rather than an exclusive crusade against Shi'ism, for instance, "a new theological doctrine, Ash'arism fighting against an intransigent orthodoxy, Hanbalism, on the one hand, and Mu'tazili rationalism on the other."⁸¹

Such charged readings, however, have potential for constructing a slightly injudicious image of the nascent madrasa, for this social-educational establishment was never a state institution in the true sense of the word. As George Makdisi has shown in his extensive study of these institutions, its foundation, as a *waqf* or charitable trust, was as a private property placed in trust for public purpose.⁸² It was destined for the public, but solely according to the wishes of its individual founder; the conditions of its public character, which were stipulated by the founder, reigned immutable in its functioning. In

⁸⁰ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 300. For the impact of this so-called 'Sunni revival' against Shi'ism in the realm of art and architectural production, see Yasser Tabbaa, *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁸¹ Ignaz Goldziher, another pioneering scholar of Islam, has primarily propounded this position in explaining the emergence of the madrasa. See, Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 301. Some of Goldziher's ideas are developed in his influential *Muslim Studies*, trans. C. R. Barber & S. M. Stern, 2 vols. (London, 1971). Departing from these dominant views, Johannes Pederson, writing about the madrasa in an article published in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, essentially sees no difference between a mosque and a madrasa. Makdisi restates Pederson's assertion: "Since even older mosques contained living rooms which were frequently used by students, there is no difference in principle between the school and the ordinary mosque; only the schools were especially arranged for study and maintenance of students." See, Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 304. Also see; Johannes Pederson, "Some Aspects of the History of the Madrasah," *Islamic Culture* 3, no. 4 (1929): 525-537.

⁸² Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 300.

face of such arrangements, the distinction between the “public” and the “private,” character of the madrasa loses its edge. Its essential foundational character emerges as the one based entirely on private endowment where the endower had total control over its operations. It thus seems prudent to understand the development of the madrasa within the framework of its formulation on the basis of the law of the *waqf* or private endowment rather than as an exclusively state-sponsored institution. The pedagogical function of the madrasa remained the same as its predecessor, the *masjid*: the primary accent was always on the study of Islamic law and jurisprudence. At least in its rudimentary formulation thus, the madrasa was not conceived of as a stronghold against Shi’ite propaganda, Mu’tazilism or any other doctrinal movement.⁸³

But such an understanding of the genesis of the madrasa – as a tangible establishment of knowledge-practices shaped out of private endowment – raises intriguing possibilities as far as its patronage is concerned. Nearly always, the ‘private’ endower of the institution came from an exalted social and political hierarchy – a vizier or an aristocrat – with an unflagging attachment to the power structure of the state. Thus, even when successful mechanisms of delineating the madrasa as a privately endowed institution prevailed, the effective charter of its operation, the appointment of the *ustādhs*, and so on, could implicitly revert to the control of the state or the elite who made up the state. To that extent, the endowed character of the madrasa was always an instrument of political manipulation at the hands of the power-rubric of the state. Ample affirmation to this effect can be gleaned from the names, social/ political positions, and activities of many patrons – for instance, an influential and wealthy aristocrat, such as Badr b.

⁸³ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 300.

Hasanawaih⁸⁴ (fl. 10th-11th century) who was responsible for commissioning several *masjid-khāns* – involved in the development of early madrasas that have come down to us from the textual records with notices on educational activities during the period.⁸⁵ To pursue this line of thought further, a consideration of just one, vital example will suffice: issues related to the brisk shaping of the madrasa are adequately exemplified in the proliferate escalation of the Nizāmiyyā madrasas, and in the role played by the aforementioned Seljūq vizier, Nizām al-Mulk, in consolidating the formal as well as physical contours of this institution.

2.4: The Nizāmiyyā Phenomenon

In delineating the development of institutions of learning in Islamic cultures, the role of the Seljūq vizier, Nizām al-Mulk (1018-1092), signifies a veritable milestone. Born in 408 AH, Nizām al-Mulk progressed steadily in the service of the Seljūq Sultāns to eventually be the vizier of Alp Arslān in 455 AH. In this position, by virtue of the temporal powers vested in him by the Seljūq sovereign, who in turn, received his imperial endorsement from the waning but prestige-wise supreme agency of the Abbāsīd caliphate in Baghdād, he acted as the effective ruler of the Seljūq Empire. Apart from introducing many administrative improvements, most notably reforms in taxation, and authoring *Siyāsatnāmah*, a treatise on efficient rules of governance and statecraft, his foremost

⁸⁴ Among the wealthy and powerful philanthropists of the 10th-11th century, Badr b. Hasanawaih al-Kurdi holds the center-stage in the history of the institutions of learning in Islam. On the death of his father in 369/ 979, he was appointed as governor over several provinces in the Buwahaid domains, where he established a large number of *masjid-khān* complexes (three thousand, according to contemporary sources). His example should serve to highlight the relationship between political authority and the emergence of social-educational institutions such as the madrasa. Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 29-31.

⁸⁵ Refer to note 4 above for Mottahedeh's objection (on textual grounds) to the evidence for *masjid-khān* complexes.

claim to posterity lies in his resolute patronage of institutions of learning, specifically, the Nizāmiyyā madrasas which are irrevocably associated with his name. A little over two years of taking the reigns of the government, Nizām al-Mulk had commissioned the Nizāmiyyā madrasa in Baghdād in 455/1063, with more such establishments soon to flourish in the key urban centres of the empire, most notably, in Nishapur, Marv, and Tūs.

As fully-formed madrasas, the Nizāmiyyās exemplify an intriguing progression in the codification of institutions of learning in Islam. The formative institutionalization of knowledge practices discussed above – under the virtual control of the aristocracy or the patriciate – still presented indistinctness in systemization; there was still ambivalence in the thematic as well as physical contours of the institution. From the *halqās* that formed in places such as *masjids*, houses, libraries and elsewhere to the *masjid-khān* complexes, the trajectory of spaces that evolved still displayed an amorphous mutability.⁸⁶ It is in significant departure from this mutability, it is in inducing a shift towards a legible institutional codification that the Nizāmiyyās merit a canonic station in the history of the institutions of learning in Islam.

An appraisal of Nizām al-Mulk’s true motivations for being the prime catalyst in cultivating and propagating these institutions, at the best, can merely be effected on a conjectural ground. In this regard, taking into consideration the non-Baghdād-centered evolution of educational institutions and their politically-charged naissance discussed above, it would be secure to propose that Nizām al-Mulk was emulating/ building on

⁸⁶ The issues related to understanding the spatial character of the loci, where early educational activities took place, are further confounded due to the fact that no material remains of such spaces are extant. The chroniclers’ mention of these nascent institutions/ spaces is our only source for reconstructing their histories, operations, and potential spatial layouts.

earlier well-established precedents from Khurāsān. As Bulliet says, “Patronage through the building of the madrasas was not new with Nizām al-Mulk. The Simjūrīds had built a madrasa for Ibn Fūrak, and the Ghaznavids had built the Sa’idiya madrasa for Abū al-‘Alā Sa’id. These were undoubtedly the models Nizām al-Mulk had in mind when he commissioned the first Nizāmiyyā in Nishapur in 1058.”⁸⁷

Whatever earlier models or motivations might have prompted this dynamic vizier, the prime impetus for the proliferate initiation of the Nizāmiyyā institutions appears to be situated in the political climate within the Seljūq provinces, and the state’s tenuous relationship with the factional power structures of the local patriciates in the important cities of the empire. In a political framework of interpretation, it has been suggested that Nizām al-Mulk’s solution in curbing the power of the patrician families, and controlling them, was to make them dependent on the Seljūq state through the mediation of a prime (but not the only) instrument of knowledge production imbued with religious/ doctrinal authority.⁸⁸ The Nizāmiyyā madrasas were conceived as loci from where the governing modes of state bureaucracy, engulfed in Islamic religious authority, could be honed. These purely political motivations for the emergence of the Nizāmiyyās have also found its detractors who have asserted that the possibility of exclusively pious impulses on Nizām al-Mulk’s part in the promulgation of these institutions ought to be given adequate credence.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 73.

⁸⁸ Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 73.

⁸⁹ See, for instance; A. L. Tibawi, “Origin and Character of “al- madrasah”” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 25, no. 1/3 (1962): 233.

Then there is also the issue of the colossal expenditure involved in building these madrasas. A. L. Tibawi, expounding on the origins and nature of the madrasa, opines that expenditure on such grand scale suggests public rather than private support. “Nizām could not have grown so rich in less than two years in office to support a virtual system of higher education for the principal cities of the provinces of ‘Irāq and Khurāsān from his own purse. Only the gist of what seems to have been the endowment charter of the Nizāmiyyā of Baghdād survived in part, and this does not state that the money came from a private source.”⁹⁰ That being said, the most credible possibility in regard to the fiscal stability of the Nizāmiyyās might be to take into account the positive impetus of the income generated from the many *waqf* properties assigned to these madrasas. Whatever the case may be, to belabor the point once again, the motivations that lay at the core of the Seljūq vizier’s concerted moves to found these madrasas can merely be speculated. The only immutable information we have from the contemporary sources is that the Nizāmiyyās were rapidly established in most major cities under Seljūq control; especially famous was the one in Baghdad, and the other in Nishapur which antedated the Baghdad madrasa by five or six years.⁹¹

The Nizāmiyyā madrasas, however, differed significantly from their precursors. A radical stipulation attached to their functioning made them different from earlier institutions; it set them apart from their predecessors in the sense that the founder/ builder of these madrasas retained the power of appointment (of the *ustādhs* and others), thereby

⁹⁰ Tibawi, “Origin and Character,” 232.

⁹¹ Bulliet, *View from the Edge*, 147.

ascertaining his oblique control over their operations.⁹² In this role – especially since the Nizāmiyyās were direct protégés of the all- powerful vizier of the regime – the enmeshment of the state’s power structure with the activity of knowledge production becomes evident. By the requisites of its *waqf*, the Nizāmiyyās were personal endowments of their founder; however, their political utility for the state was not lost upon subsequent rulers. Consequently, viziers and other ruling elite increasingly established madrasas throughout Islamic territories, thus imparting new verve to the dissemination of these institutions.⁹³

Further, what brings the Nizāmiyyās to the center-stage of the institutions of learning in Islam is the lavish scale on which they were conceived. Their premeditated location in the major cities of the Seljūq realm, and their probable role as provincial centers encompassing a substantial regional sphere which engulfed smaller towns and villages, permits one to presuppose them as built structures of profuse scale and capacity. Their abundant proliferation within a short span within the Seljūq realm also leads to the assumption that some kind of operational as well as architectural blueprint had been devised for this purpose.⁹⁴ Apart from an ingrained spirit of a certain standardized codification of knowledge-practices, the sumptuousness and the imposing scale of their architectural configuration, which had consistently attained a recognizable visual makeup (as a building type), marks the turning point in the history of these institutions.

Unfortunately, none of the Nizāmiyyās have survived, and there is no way for us to make any definitive assessment regarding their architectural schema. The remains of

⁹² Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 73-74.

⁹³ Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 74-75.

⁹⁴ Hillenbrand, “Madrasa III: Architecture,” 1136.

the mud-brick structure at Khārgird, with its damaged inscription identifying it as a foundation of Nizām al-Mulk, are in much too advanced a state of ruin to provide us with any sense of structural or functional integrity. The structure's only extant feature is "a broad and deep *qiblā īwān* with at least one room of comparable depth flanking it on either side."⁹⁵ Certainly, this allows for a reconstruction of the structure with a spatial scheme based on a *īwān* plan accommodating a central courtyard. However, due to lack of clarity in regard to its overall architectural configuration, the issue of a definitive identification of this ruin as a madrasa remains unresolved. Not only for the Nizāmiyyās, but for pre-Mongol madrasas in general, the fact remains that "their organization, personnel, curricula and financial arrangements can be followed up in minute detail in the literary sources; but the all-important question for the student of architecture, namely the precise material form which they took, remains obscure."⁹⁶

In determining the material form of the Nizāmiyyās, a later structure, with impeccable typological attribution, offers us some clues; the visual scheme of the earliest extant Iranian building type unequivocally acknowledged as a madrasa, the Ilkhānid, Madrasa-e Imāmi (725/1325) of Isfahān (fig.2.1) is illuminating in this regard for a provisional reconstruction of the physical form of the early Seljūq madrasas. The compact constitution of Madrasa-e Imāmi (92m x 72m at its widest extent) follows the four *īwān* scheme in its general layout, with two stories of niched façades flanking each *īwān* behind which cells for student lodging are situated.⁹⁷ The inner courtyard remains

⁹⁵ Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 180.

⁹⁶Hillenbrand, "Madrasa III: Architecture," 1137.

⁹⁷Hillenbrand, "Madrasa III: Architecture," 1137.

the central binding feature of the entire spatial scheme. Bearing in mind the Seljūq predilection for the four-*īwān* configuration, as well as the need to accommodate substantial number of students in a residential capacity, it can be established with a high degree of certainty that the Nizāmiyyās were conceived on the premise of an identical spatial program as their Ilkhānid descendant.⁹⁸

Even in a broader framework delineating the architectural progression of madrasas in Islamic cultures, one could trace their basic components back to that of a generic mosque plan. Since its inception in the 7th century, the rudimentary elements of a mosque have comprised a central courtyard surrounded by a prayer-hall facing the *kā'bah*, and three aisles on the remaining sides.⁹⁹ Reduced thus, this form, to various degrees of complexities and modifications, provides the primary architectural visage to most, if not all, sacred buildings in Islam. The intention here is definitely not to espouse the understanding of the building typology of the madrasa in an essentialist, reductive paradigm. Needless to say, what brings into focus the singularity of these Islamic building types is the spectrum of their architectural inflections based on regional as well as other specificities. However, even among a range of spatial and architectural modulations, certain underlying commonalities prevail. And it is with those commonalities in mind, that one ought to approach the varied idioms of a building type. By this token, the madrasas as a building type – the Nizāmiyyās in our immediate context – can be understood as adhering to the generic spatial and componential scheme

⁹⁸ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 178.

⁹⁹ It hardly needs to be stated that mosques show many variations in planar typology due to regional influences or otherwise. However, a predominant number of mosques can be shown to follow the courtyard and aisle formula.

elaborated above, albeit with a radical modification in the sense that they integrate *īwāns* as defining elements into their architectural vocabulary.

This four-*īwān* scheme, especially as it refers to the Nizāmiyyās, has spawned problematic readings to the effect that such quadripartite division of the madrasas' space brought about by the cruciform axial placement of four *īwān* portals around the central court was, in all likelihood, meant to accommodate the functioning of the four prevailing schools of Islamic law and jurisprudence, the Hanafī, the Shā'fī, the Hanbalī, and the Mālikī. However, there are absolutely no grounds for such an interpretation. On the contrary, historical sources make it abundantly clear that all Nizāmiyyās were Shā'fī institutions, in alignment with their patron's adherence to the Shā'fī *madhhab*. As Bulliet elaborates: "All of Nizām al-Mulk's madrasas were Shāfī'ī institutions, but none of them was allowed to become a bastion of Shāfī'ī politics... When Shāfī'īs clashed with Hanafīs or Hanbalīs, Nizām al-Mulk refused to support them and tried to defuse the situation."¹⁰⁰ The operative thrust of early madrasas, thus, reveals considerably more complex doctrinal forces at work, rather than a simplistic functioning based on mere factional intrigues. When faced with a powerful vizier who patronized the Shāfī'īs with his Nizāmiyyās, but readily appointed Hanafīs to official posts, and gave his daughter in marriage to a Shi'ite aristocrat, one can situate the enduring motivations for the dissemination of these institutions of learning in a realm quite removed from the constricted notion of *madhhabi* dominance, or even "Sunni revival." The active emergence of the Nizāmiyyās acquires a little more intricate nuance, one whose

¹⁰⁰ Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, 74.

underpinnings may rest in the heterogeneous social, cultural, and political realities of the time.

Whether the Nizāmiyyās were truly responsible for the surge in the commissioning of madrasas by other powerful notables or prominent doctors of Islamic law, one cannot say with any certainty. What we know with firm certitude is that, a host of institutions of learning, devised on analogous doctrinal as well as organizational grounds in matters of their affiliation, *waqf* stipulations and so on, were in concurrent rise with the Nizāmiyyās. Simply to consider the case of Baghdād, twenty four madrasas, whose location, founders and beneficiaries are known, dominated the socio-cultural landscape of the city during the 11th and 12th centuries, a lot of them located on prime real estate along the banks of the Tigris.¹⁰¹ The network of patrons for these madrasas is diverse, ranging from royal women of the Seljūq family to prominent ‘*ulemā*,¹⁰² and thus, the sagacity of privileging the role of the Nizāmiyyās in the vigorous emergence of madrasas in Islamdom comes at a risk of being thrown into question. However, the irreversible forward thrust that Nizām al-Mulk’s policies imparted to recognizing – in fact, creating – the instrumentality of knowledge-production as a tool for state-control, is indisputable. To that extent, the Nizāmiyyās, along with the concurrent madrasa building activity that they spawned in the Seljūq as well as other later Islamic polities, exemplify a veritable interval in the historical progression of these institutions of learning.

2.5: Further Dissemination: Syria, Anatolia, Egypt

¹⁰¹ Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni ‘Ulama’ of Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 25.

¹⁰² Ephrat, *A Learned Society*, 25.

By the end of the 12th century, the image of the madrasa as an institution, but more pertinently, as an architectural form, seems to have been quite visibly engraved upon the contemporary literary, and popular, imagination. In addition to other sources, a most curious substantiation of this phenomenon comes from a highly provocative quarter, from a direct allusion to the madrasa in lewd pornographic versification. A single example, an exceptionally profane one at that, will serve to corroborate the above claim: a near-blasé attitude towards the profuse presence of madrasa (as an architectural presence) in the cultural landscape of 12th -century Islamdom can be adduced from its being raised to the station of a metaphoric trope in the ribald expression of a poet, Suzāni of Samarqand (fl. c.12th-century), when he sings praises of his penis. In his formulation, the female vulva is equated with a domed madrasa, while the penis becomes a lofty minaret rising to the skies.¹⁰³

Casting the hyperbole of the versifier's sexual-anatomical bragging aside, what is relevant for our purpose here is the conceiving of human sexual organs as credible architectural components of a madrasa: the dome, the minaret. This clearly proceeds to indicate that by the close of the 12th century, the visual vocabulary of the madrasa had been sufficiently codified into a recognizable idiom for anyone to supply an inventory of representative physical elements that defined a specific – and needless to say, eminently familiar – social institution in his or her immediate socio-cultural milieu.

Such codification of the visual vocabulary of the madrasa in popular imagination is a binding testimony to the profuse presence of madrasas in the social and cultural

¹⁰³Suzāni's couplet is translated thus: "Before the dome of the cunt-madrasa/ Verily like a minaret, its head soars into air." See; *Suppressed Persian: An Anthology of Forbidden Literature*, translated with Notes and Introduction by Paul Sprachman (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1995), p. xxix.

landscape of the 12th-13th century Islamic lands. By the time that the Andalusian, Ibn Jubayr, in his *rihlā*, recounts his travels in Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and the Hijāz (Arabian Peninsula), which he undertook in the year 1183-84, and describes his visitations to a host of cities and towns, including Alexandria, Aleppo, Damascus, Dunaysar, and Baghdad, madrasas constitute a very vital presence in the social as well as urban landscape of his itinerary.¹⁰⁴ Just in Aleppo, he speaks of the presence of four to five madrasas, when he expounds on the general visual features of a Hanafi madrasa:

This school is one of the most ornamental we have seen, both in construction and its rare workmanship. One of the most graceful things we saw was the south side, filled with chambers and upper rooms, whose windows touched each other, and having along its length a pergola covered with grape bearing vines.¹⁰⁵

Apart from Ibn Jubayr's account, several other historical chronicles, and biographical compendiums with notices of various prominent *faqīhs* and *ulemā*, bring to the fore the central presence of the madrasa in the institutional context of the Islam. The proliferation of this educational institution and the extensive transmission of knowledge-practices during the period is explained in some measure by the long-standing interconnectedness of the Islamic lands (and non-Islamic polities as well) in the middle ages, and the concomitant exchange of social-cultural mores and institutions inscribed in seemingly uniform religious formations. In the broader context of the late middle ages, the pertinence of this interconnectedness is augmented forcefully in some dimensions of S.

¹⁰⁴ Though he does not identify them by names, madrasas consistently feature along with mosques and other structures in Ibn Jubayr's account, whenever he takes us through the significant monuments of a particular place that he visited. See; Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 33, 238, 250, 263.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Jubayr, *Travels*, 263.

D. Goitein's extensive study of the cultural and economic interactions in the medieval Mediterranean world, based on the wealth of Geniza documents uncovered from the storeroom of the Palestinian synagogue in Fustat. Deposited in the Geniza by Jewish traders operating around 10th -12th centuries, a plethora of deeds, commercial documents, business transactions, and personal letters related to the Jewish community reveal significant facets of the economic as well as the social history of the time, stretching at least from Andalusia to the Levant; they irrefutably reveal the inveterate fluidity of networks in the medieval Mediterranean world.¹⁰⁶ Business and family letters from the Geniza suggest that one of the prime factors responsible for this freedom of movement was the legal position and the general political climate of the states concerned. Even when the regions encompassed in the Mediterranean were split up into separate political units, frequently at odds with one another, people, goods, books and ideas travelled freely from one end of the basin to another and further. With a similar background in mind, thus, the wide dissemination of the institution of the madrasa in Islam and an analogous consolidation of its generic architectural vocabulary in popular imagination ought to be located in the interconnectedness of the regional matrix of Islamic polities stretching from Central Asia in the east to Andalusia in the west.

But to return back to the consolidated architectural vocabulary of the madrasa, there are some more encompassing implications. The dome and the minaret, as architectural components, were not exclusively designated for the madrasa. To the extent that they constituted the defining elements of the architectural vocabulary of Islamic

¹⁰⁶ S. D. Goitein, "The Unity of the Mediterranean World in the "Middle" Middle Ages," in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 296-307. Also see his, *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgement in One Volume* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

structures, the dome or the minaret had a generic connection with the architectural/ structural vocabulary of most, if not all, mosques, *ribāts*, *khānqāhs*, mausoleums, and other sacred structures. With this in mind, the composite architectural vocabulary in the popular imagination of the 12th-century and later Islamic social landscape articulates a memory which encompasses the more diverse architectural realities of its milieu. In the specific context of the madrasa, one may venture to deduce that this vocabulary refers equally to other structures in the madrasa's proximate field as it refers to the madrasa itself. In other words, this sensibility, where architectural elements such as domes and minarets are optimally codified in popular imagination, speaks of the way in which the madrasa, in its later development, was constituted as an institution as well as a built form. It signals the presence of the madrasa as increasingly a part of a larger endowed social complex—of a *kulliye*—with its ensemble of mosques, tombs, hospices, *māristāns* (infirmaries), soup kitchens, *hammāms* (baths) and so on. Of course, such endowed complexes find their fullest expression only later, particularly in the concerted institutional programs of the Mamlūks and the Ottomans. However, even earlier, in wake of the rise of the Zangids (1127-1181), the Ayyubids (1169-1260), the Rūmi Seljūqs of Anatolia (1077-1307), and later, the Mamlūks (1260-1517), an evolving progression towards the creation of such charitable endowments begins to attain an instrumentality in the social landscape of Islamdom.¹⁰⁷ The character of the madrasa thus, as an institution

¹⁰⁷ In this regard, an early representative example comes to us in form of an endowed hospital and an educational complex (referred to as a madrasa) established in Samarkand by the Qarakhanid ruler, Ibrahim ibn Nasr in May-June 1066. That fact that this ensemble was a larger complex—something that exceeds a mere madrasa—is clear from its pious endowment deed, and also from its diverse constituents which included “a law college, a mausoleum, a mosque, rooms for students, a courtyard, a garden, a library, and cells for seclusion.” Thus, the Samarqand madrasa offers an early instance of being a part of a larger charitable complex, and “can be regarded as a prototype for later medieval institutions of this type.” See;

as well as an architectural entity, begins to be circumscribed within the fold of this social field predicated on well-formulated manipulations of piety and charity; it reflects the workings of institutionalized charity and state sponsorship as political tools.

To give one instance among many, this relationship is well-articulated in a major Mamlūk ensemble of structures built immediately after the wane of the Marinid madrasa building activity in the Maghrib, in the endowed complex established by the Mamlūk Sultān, al-Nasir Hasan in Cairo, during his second reign between 1354 and 1361. The functions of this complex, inscribed in its *waqf* charter, unequivocally demonstrate their being the extensions of the social operations of piety and charity. In relation to al-Nasir Hasan's complex, Yaacov Lev, in his study on charitable institutions in medieval Islamic societies, states:

The pious endowment deed states that this *waqf*, meaning the complex itself, was to be a continuous charity whose bounties would last forever. The relation between the pious endowment and the complex was, of course, symbiotic, since the complex could not operate without the revenues derived from the pious endowment, and the act of endowment would become meaningless without the functions fulfilled by the complex.¹⁰⁸

The composite dynamic of the madrasa complex, its character as a pious endowment, its charitable functions, the generation of revenue, and its subterranean tentacles into

Yaacov Lev, *Charity, Endowments, and Charitable Institutions in Medieval Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 98-99.

¹⁰⁸ Lev, *Charity, Endowments, and Charitable Institutions*, 128. It is, however, beyond the scope of this discussion to go into a detailed exposition of the relationship between modes of charity, the operational nature of pious endowments, the production and transmission of knowledge, and the proliferation of the institution of madrasa in Mamlūk Egypt. For a detailed study on the subject, one may refer to Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

political mechanisms of the time, become quite apparent in this instance. To the extent that the social functions of charitable institutions and acts of piety/ charity reciprocally shape the contours of the politics of the patronage of Sultāns as well as the descending hierarchy of noblemen and *amīrs*, they operate on the pattern of emulation. Thus, we have a spate of charitable activity in the period where the founders of various *waqāf* invariably belong to the class of *amīrs* and lesser nobles.

Such dynamic is externalized, and expressed tangibly, in overt charitable acts that emerge around the physical locus of the *waqf* institution. Customarily, these acts come in various forms of almsgiving: distribution of food and money on festive occasions or otherwise. The occasion could be the opening of an important *waqf* institution, such as a madrasa—one occasion was the celebrations that took place at the opening of Sultān Barsabāy’s madrasa in 788/1386—when a banquet would be held with not only the elite but also the “poor” and the “weak” in profuse attendance.¹⁰⁹ Not all occasions were festive however. Acts of charity, as is to be expected, took on an immediacy in times of calamities; there were bountiful alms distributed at strategic locations (especially shrines) as recompense for prayers and benedictions in the name of a patron, to restore him to health or for a larger cause, for instance, for deliverance from plague such as the one which infested extensive regions of Islamic lands during the later part of the 14th-century.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55.

¹¹⁰ Sabra, in his study on poverty and charity in medieval Islam, especially in the Mamlūk realms, provides several examples of such charitable acts. For instance, many Sultāns and *amīrs*, from the time of al-Zāhir Baybars (1260-1277), treated their illness with alms; the *Amīr*, Karīm al-Dīn al-Kabīr, celebrated his restoration to health in 1320 by distributing extensive alms at the Madrasa al-Mansuriyya; and Sultān, al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (d.) led the mass demonstration of repentance (in May 1419) in the hope of deliverance

The purpose of dwelling on extensive acts of institutionalized piety, charity and state sponsorship in relation to endowed institutions here is to foreground the transforming functions of social economy in medieval Islam. It follows that these transforming social modes of charity and public good that are channelized in the operations of endowed complexes have an implicit effect on the spatial organization of the built form of these institutions. Such an effect, to speak of just one noticeable occurrence, is most audibly exemplified in the integration of a tomb or a mausoleum (nearly always of the patron) in an endowed social complex. To the extent that a manifestation of charity in relation to death and afterlife was registered in the heightened practice of tomb visitation where patrons as well as visitors, both, hoped for a benevolent recompense in afterlife, this burgeoning phenomenon attained a ritualistic tenor; inundated with implorations to the holy dead to intercede with God for the living “the cemeteries were sites of a vigorous social life among the living.”¹¹¹ As Sabra elaborates:

In view of the increased importance of tomb visitation, and therefore of the patronage of tombs as sites for distribution of charity, it is not surprising that founders began to locate their foundations next to their tombs. This practice can be dated back to the foundation established by Nūr al-Dīn Zanjī in Damascus in 567/1172, and likely has Seljuk precedents. The first example of a tomb being located in a waqf complex in Cairo was the tomb of al-Malik al-Sālih Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, whose tomb was built next to his madrasa by his widow Shajar al-

from the ravages of plague, and distributed food to mosques, sufi institutions, and even prisons. See; Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*, 55-57.

¹¹¹ Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*, 97.

Durr. Later Sultan al-Zāhir Baybars was buried next to his madrasa in Damascus as were his descendants.¹¹²

In wake of such institutional formation of the endowed complexes, which incorporated funerary structures, the aim of their spatial schema was to attract the maximum attention of visitors or passersby. In the spatial manipulation of the complex's architectural fabric, in locating the tomb at the *qiblā* side, the purpose was “to attract the prayers of the visitors or passersby for the founder and his or her family who would be buried in the tomb.”¹¹³ In this regard, it can be asserted that the tomb became the *raison d'être* for the entire endowed complex; clearly, such incorporation significantly reconfigured the architectural composition of the endowed institution as a whole as it reconfigured the physical elements of the individual but interlinked structures such as a madrasa in it.

A number of instances of such composite social institutions of the 12th and 13th century can be cited, although the aim here is not to furnish a descriptive inventory of the madrasas (or madrasas as parts of larger social institutions) that flourished profusely in Anatolia, Syria and Egypt. However, the formation of some of the most representative madrasas – the Syrian madrasas of the Zangid and Ayyūbid provenance, such as the madrasa Nūrīyā al-Kubrā (1167-68) and the madrasa al-Azīzīyāh (1196) in Damascus as well as the madrasa al-Zāhirīyā (1213) and the madrasa Ferdows (1235-36) in Aleppo, stand out – falls within the rubric of the charitable circles of patronage discussed above. As for the madrasas created under the Seljūqs of Anatolia, the Çifte Minareli madrasa

¹¹² Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*, 98.

¹¹³ Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*, 99. Here, Sabra draws on the conclusions reached by Christel Kessler in her study of the Mamluk tomb complexes. See, Christel Kessler, “Funerary Architecture Within the City,” in *Colloque Internationale sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1969).

(1253) in Erzurum, the Karatay madrasa (1252) and the Inçe Minareli madrasa (1258), and the Gök madrasa in Sivas (1271), may be cited as examples where an articulated architectural vocabulary, stemming from a response to regional imperatives, and based on modified spatial relationships between the courtyard, the oratory, and the patron's mausoleum, defines their distinctive visual character. In comparison, the Mamlūks of Egypt develop these architectural configurations into a full-fledged social ensemble. The Mamlūk madrasas emerge as components of a large social complex, forming a functional as well as structural relationship with other components of the ensemble, such as the mosque, and the mausoleum or the infirmary and the Qur'ānic school. The madrasas in the complexes of Sultān Qalāwūn (c.1288) and the Sultān al-Nāsir Muhammad (1303) abundantly attest to this trajectory of the madrasa's development.

Succinctly, the madrasa, as an institution and a built form, seems to have achieved its vital apogee with the so-called "Sunni revival" in the 12th and 13th centuries, where its dissemination in Syria, Anatolia and Egypt was instrumental in embedding its presence irrevocably in the institutional as well as social landscape of Islam.

2.6: Late Emergence: Madrasa in the Maghrib and Andalusia

In light of the sustained dynamic of institution formation in the social landscape of medieval Islamic cultures, it does seem a bit anomalous that these endowed institutions—more pertinently, the madrasa—did not come into their own in the Maghrib until the middle of the 13th century, when the Shammaya madrasa was established in Tunis in 647/1249 under the Hafsid sovereign, Abū Zakariyā. About a decade later, it

was followed by the Ma'ridiyya madrasa commissioned by his widow.¹¹⁴ None of these madrasas have survived, although Golvin, in his study on medieval madrasas, reconstructs the central-courtyard based planar configuration of these structures, where he establishes their typological relationship with contemporary domestic architecture in the Maghrib.¹¹⁵ In regard to the Maghrib and Andalusia, although we have scattered textual references to construction of madrasas before the 13th century, for instance, under the Almohād caliph, Yā'qūb al-Mansūr, during the 12th century, the evidence for their occurrence is shrouded in misty uncertainty,¹¹⁶ and the above-mentioned Hafsid establishments in Tunis seem to be the first securely dated madrasas in the Maghrib before the establishment of the Saffārīn madrasa (670/ 1271) at Fez under the Marinid Sultān, Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb (d.1286).

As for Andalusia, which encompassed several fragmented Islamic sovereignties after the disintegration of the [Spanish] Umayyāds who had first established their hegemony in the southern half of the Iberian Peninsula in the later half of the 8th century, the incidence of madrasas seems to have been nearly missing. Scholars, relying on a passage in the 14th-century chronicler Ibn Farhūn's compilation of biographical notices, *al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab*, recognize the premise that the institution of the madrasa may

¹¹⁴ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 239. Lucien Golvin, however, provides a different progression of Hafsid madrasas in Tunis. He dates the Shammaya madrasa to 627/1229, followed by the madrasa al-Tawfiqiyyā (c. 1250) built by the mother of the Hafsid caliph, al-Mustansir billāh, the Ma'ridiyya (683/1282), the Unqiyyā (741/ 1341), and the Usfūriyya (742/1342). See; Lucien Golvin, "Quelques Reflexions sur la fondation d'une Madrasa à Grenade en 750=1349," *Actas de XII Congreso de la Union Européenne d'arabistas et d'islamistas, Malaga 1984* (Madrid: Edition de l'Union européenne d'arabistas et d'islamistas, 1986), 305.

¹¹⁵ Lucien Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1995), 173-189.

¹¹⁶ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 237.

have had an early presence in Andalusia.¹¹⁷ Ibn Farhūn mentions the presence of a madrasa in Murcia—he might have been using the term ‘madrasa’ anachronistically—in relation to the tenure of an 11th century scholar who apparently taught in that institution. Later, the Nasrid vizier and scholar, Ibn al-Khatīb, in his *al-Ihātā fī Akhbār Gharnātā*, makes a note related to the existence of a madrasa in Malaga, constructed by a Sufī, Abū Abd Allāh al-Sāhilī (d.1353); according to Ibn al-Khatīb, it was the first work of its kind to be carried out in Muslim Spain.¹¹⁸ It has been pointed out that due to this madrasa’s mystical character, it is unlikely that courses in the science of *fiqh* were offered here, and this character probably explains its swift disappearance from the historiography of Malaga.¹¹⁹

Nonetheless, in the final assessment, for the want of corroborative information that substantiates the presence of these above foundations beyond doubt, the issue of the prevalence of the madrasa in Andalusia remains unresolved and the only secure evidence that we have regarding the occurrence of the madrasa in Andalusia pertains to the Yūsufiyyā madrasa at Granada, founded in 750/ 1349 by the Nasrid Sultān, Abū’l Hajjāj Yūsuf (r.1333-1354).¹²⁰ Unfortunately, this structure was largely destroyed during the 18th century, and all we have today in way of its physical remains is a partially restored

¹¹⁷ For instance, see George Makdisi, “The Madrasa in Spain: Some Remarks,” *Revue de l’Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 15-16, 2nd semestre (1973): 154-155.

¹¹⁸ Dario Cabanelas, “La Madraza Arabe de Granada y su suerte en época Cristiana,” *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 24 (1988): 35

¹¹⁹ Cabanelas, “La Madraza Arabe,” 36. Also see; Julio Samsó, *Las Ciencias de los Antiguos en al-Andalus* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992), 395.

¹²⁰ An inscription that has come down to us, and textual references to the madrasa, most prominently in Ibn al-Khatīb’s works, which mention the role of the Nasrid vizier, Ridwān in founding this madrasa, establish the date of its construction with clarity. Makdisi, “The Madrasa in Spain,” 153.

façade of the prayer hall with an ornate *mihrāb* (fig 2.2).¹²¹ With its intricately rich stucco-work comprised of ornamented vegetal as well as lozenge motifs, and its cupola on *muqarnas* squinches, this *mihrāb*-façade has nothing to differentiate it from the visual expression of its Marinid counterparts in Morocco. One may therefore suggest that to the extent that this Nasrid madrasa was not an isolated phenomenon, and was a vital stage in the process occurring on the western most fringes of the Islamic world at the time, it was a product of an exchange, a part of a cultural-intellectual process taking place on the other side of the strait of Gibraltar during the 13th- 14th centuries.¹²² This is a contention that the subsequent chapters will touch upon in relation to the features of the madrasas constructed under the Marinids in Maghrib al-Aqsā.

To return back to this late emergence of madrasas in the Islamic west, the notion of a gradual westward dissemination of the madrasa from its Khurāsānian origins seems valid enough; nonetheless, given the complexities of cultural interaction between various polities in the larger geo-political sphere of the medieval Islamic world, this linear explanation comes across as a bit facile. However, one possible factor that might have had a bearing on this late emergence of the madrasa (as an institution as well as a built form) in the Maghrib probably resides in the implications of the Mālikī *madhhab* of Islamic jurisprudence—preeminently influential in entire Maghrib and Andalusia—for the operations of the *waqf* as well as for the incumbencies related to the *waqf* upon its

¹²¹ Marianne Barrucand & Achim Bednorz, *Moorish Architecture in Andalusia* (Köln: Taschen, 2002), 214.

¹²² In this regard, the Granada madrasa's contemporaneous formation with the Marinid institutions in the 14th-century also points to a concurrent dynamic associated with the reinstatement of the Mālikī school of Islamic law and its relationship with the state-power. "The Mālikī school asserted itself strongly in the Nasrid kingdom, becoming a significant element of cohesion between the political power and the religious class, especially with the foundation of the Madrasa Yūsufiyya in Granada, named after Yūsuf I (750/1349)." See, M. Isabel Calero Secall, "Rulers and Qādīs: Their Relationship during the Nasrid Kingdom," *Islamic Law and Society* 7, no. 2 (2000): 237.

founder. Even when the stipulations of the *waqf* were generally the same for all Sunni *madhhabs*, they varied in their details, and such variation is noticeably registered in the direction taken by the development of Māliki *madhhab* and its institutions of learning. In other schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the founder of the *waqf* could be the sole administrator of his endowment for life, and could bequeath this privilege to his successors to the end of his line. However, as Makdisi states in relation to the Māliki law:

The Maliki madhab was predominant in Western Islam. Unlike the other Sunni schools of law, it did not allow waqf institutions to be controlled by their founders. The founder of a madrasa could not appoint himself as its trustee-administrator. It thus discouraged the founding of madrasas by private individuals, who frequently resorted to waqf in order to put their wealth out of the reach of confiscating sovereigns and immobilize the corpus for the benefit of their heir-descendants in perpetuity. As this was not possible under Maliki law, madrasas did not thrive in countries where Maliki law was predominant.¹²³

With such conditions to reckon with, it seems reasonable to think that the Māliki injunctions, which prohibited the founder/ patron from any gainful attachment to his/ her endowment, would be considerably detrimental to the enthusiasms of a patron willing to fund such endowments.

¹²³ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 238. According to Makdisi, the Māliki law, which prohibited the founder from constituting himself as the administrator of his own waqf was the prime factor in a reluctance towards the commissioning of madrasas. He says: "To my mind, this Maliki principle was a factor in decline of this school in Baghdad in the Middle Ages at the time when other schools were benefitting from the new madrasas as recruiting centres. This principle also explains why the Malikis, found chiefly in North Africa and Spain, never had any madrasas in Baghdad, nor are they known to have had anywhere else in Eastern Islam, except Syria. They were of rare occurrence in North Africa, including Egypt, and rarer still in Spain." Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 37-38.

More importantly for our purpose, it wouldn't be too farfetched to ruminate that such developmental vicissitudes of the madrasa in the Maghrib may have had a bearing on its morphological constitution. Even though quite oblique, just one example will suffice to illustrate this relationship between the madrasa's conceptual and physical configuration: the Māliki insistence on upholding the sanctity of the Qur'ān by not allowing its recitation in undesired places. We have it on the authority of a 13th century Māliki jurist, Ibn al-Hajj, that the Māliki school of law was ill-disposed towards the recitation of the Qur'ān on the market streets, thus extending the principle of safeguarding the purity of the Qur'ān to its oral form.¹²⁴ Such sanctions have their morphological/ architectural implications. At least for the Mamlūk madrasa complexes, there is evidence of special readers installed at the street-facing windows for the purpose of constant recitation of the Qur'ān, so that the passersby in the streets could partake of the *barakā* of the recitation. Reasonably enough, the articulation of the façades of those institutions, to some degree, stemmed from the need to establish a relationship with the exterior where the Qur'ānic recitation could be effectively disseminated. It is thus acceptable to assume that the architectural expression of the Mamluk structures was partly borne out by the way in which the paradigm of their functioning was constituted.

By contrast, under the Māliki preference, when the recitation of the Holy Book was not meant for streets and markets, a façade articulated through openings was in all probability immaterial to the architectural organization of the madrasa; a windowed

¹²⁴ This information comes from Ibn al-Hajj's *Kitāb al-Madkhal*. See, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Beyond the secular and the sacred: Qur'anic inscriptions in medieval Islamic art and material culture," in *Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions*, ed., Fehmida Suleman (London: Oxford University Press & Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2007), 43.

façade, reaching out to the exterior, would have no great consequence in the context. This is definitely not to imply that an accessibility from the street to the recitation of the Qur'ān was a governing impulse behind the architectural modulations endemic to the madrasa under the Māliki influence, but it does not take away from the fact that specific inflections of architectural expression do stem from a combination of functional factors, such as the one mentioned above. Indeed, in their over all spatial as well as material configuration, nearly all the extant Maghribi madrasas of the period—the most representative surviving constellation being the oeuvre of the Marinids—display a tendency of being subsumed entirely by the dense fabric of the urban topography, thereby forfeiting any architectural exteriority whatsoever. In addition, an abiding absence of tombs in the Maghribi madrasas—another outcome of the Māliki stipulation against the attachment of the founder with his/ her endowment in any way—leads to an architectural configuration quite removed from the endowed complexes elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Needless to say, a reflection on the above issues does not give any definitive insight into the late emergence of the madrasa in the Maghrib. As for the distinctive architectural features of the Maghribi madrasas—and the focus here is unequivocally on the extant Marinid madrasas, the subject of this entire study—a number of forces come together in shaping their distinctive typology. In the Maghrib, these foundations, established by the Marinids within a span of eight decades, are the only structures to have survived the ravages of time; thus they have a singular potential of offering us glimpses into the nature of this Islamic foundation as it gained a foothold in the Maghrib at an

institutional as well as structural/ architectural level. In this regard, the following chapter endeavors to make sustained excursions into the socio-cultural as well as geo-political formations of 13th -14th century Maghrib al-Aqsa, a milieu in which these Marinid madrasas emerged, and which directly or indirectly formed their visual/ architectural meanings.

Chapter 3: Formations: Rise of the Marinids, Fez, and the Madrasa

3.1: Madrasa as an Expression of Marinid State-Formation

A prime endeavor in tracing the composite evolution of the madrasa in the preceding pages was to put into a sequential framework the complexities and contradictions of its distinctive formation as an institution as well as a built form within the social field of Islam. As an enduring phenomenon in the processes of Islamic acculturation, one of the most salient features of the madrasa's incidence is its manifestation as a constituent of the Islamic social complex, an ensemble that configures diverse religious and social structures such as a mosque, a hospice, a soup kitchen, an infirmary, and frequently, the patron's tomb within its communal fold. Along with its immediate role as a locus of knowledge-production and educational activities, the web of relationships that the madrasa weaves with the more encompassing urban expression in Islam delineates adequately the contours of its consolidated institutional form.

In the context of the creation of these institutions by the Marinids in Maghrib al-Aqsā (western North Africa), the madrasa in the *khalwā* (Marinid dynastic precinct) of the Chella complex in Rabat most markedly embodies this phenomenon of institutionalization; it becomes a constituent of an interrelated constellation of structures. As we have seen, the very *raison d'être* of the madrasa's incidence in the Marinid necropolis of the Chella, to great efficacy, is inscribed in the impulse of its being a part of a larger social complex. Its location in the Marinid dynastic necropolis is best appreciated in the framework of the peculiar exigencies spawned by the Chella's sacred topography.

To that end, the madrasa in the *khalwā* of the Chella, by virtue of its existence in a dynastic funerary complex, stands solitary among the Marinid oeuvre of madrasas, partaking of a sensibility that most certainly materialized from a heightened exchange with the social and cultural practices of its contemporary counterparts in the eastern Islamic lands. Most pertinently, the incidence of this madrasa as a constituent of the group of structures that make up the Marinid dynastic ensemble in the Chella seems to cite the sensibility operational behind the multi-purpose foundations of Mamlūk Cairo.¹²⁵

The idea of the Chella madrasa partaking of the Mamluk social and cultural sensibilities is further made plausible by the fact that in comparison to other Marinid madrasas, the Chella madrasa, commissioned around 1350, belongs to the final chronological segment of the madrasa building activity on the part of the Marinids. Accordingly, it is the product of a time-frame where the influences stemming from the Marinid interactions with the Mamlūks would already have been in full force. At a variance, other madrasas commissioned by the Marinids in Fez and elsewhere chronologically precede this madrasa in the Chella (barring the Bou ‘Ināniā of Fez which is its contemporary), and they expressly seem to be inscribed in a sensibility endemic to the 14th-century Marinid milieu, as individual, intimately-scaled structures ensconced in

¹²⁵ The grand endowed social complexes patronized by the Mamlūks (1260-1517) have attracted concerted scholarly attention. Here, in the context of the Chella madrasa, its peculiar formation – peculiar in a North African context for the fact that there is a striking absence of such multi-purpose complexes in premodern Maghrib al-Aqsā – most plausibly seems to be a fruit of the heightened political, diplomatic and cultural exchanges between the Marinids and the Mamlūks beginning in the first half of the 14th-century. Clearly, this heightened interaction entailed a permeability of cultural ideas and mores, which, I argue, extended to the sensibilities of institution-formation. As a constituent of an ensemble, the Chella madrasa seems to be a part of the same sensibility consciously or unconsciously adopted by the Marinids. In this regard, for an exposition of the relationship between the Marinids and the Mamlūks, see Marius Canard, “Les Relations entre les Mérinides et les Mamelouks au XIV^e siècle,” *Annales de l'Institut des Etudes Orientales* 5 (1939-1941): 41-81.

the Maghribi cityscape, most pertinently that of Fez. Clearly, the emergence of these madrasas, predominantly commissioned in the Marinid capital of Fez, is grounded in the explicit imperatives of 14th-century Marinid socio-cultural formations. There is no manifest attempt here to conceive them as a part of an expansive social institution or a *kulliye*. The creation of these madrasas evidently sprouts from a different trajectory marked with regional Maghribi exigencies; it is situated in the formative workings of the social and political developments related to Marinid state-formation. The immutable association of the Marinids with the flowering of the madrasa in the Islamic west, thus, squarely places the question of these institutions' efflorescence within the realm of Marinid social-political imperatives. In this regard, the course of reflections in this chapter is not signified as much by the issue of the late emergence of madrasas in the Islamic west as it is by the query as to what prompted the Marinids to lavish such concerted attention on the creation and dissemination of these madrasas as independent built forms in Maghrib al-Aqsā.

In a substantial manner, the establishment of the madrasas in the Marinid realms seems to be a direct consequence of the processes informing Marinid state-formation and consolidation of their legitimacy, along with a concomitant course of acculturation. In this regard, the enduring question has always been whether the Marinids were sufficiently acculturated to Islamic norms to have utilized them in the acquisition of political hegemony.¹²⁶ The dominant scholarly opinion in relation to the advent of the Marinids has constantly belabored the fact that they, unlike their predecessors, the Almoravids or

¹²⁶ Maya Shatzmiller, *The Berbers and the Islamic State: The Marinid Experience in Pre-Protectorate Morocco* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), 45.

the Almohāds, did not rise to power on the wave of strong ideological or religious momentum. Historians were quick to point out that in absence of religious and ideological motives as governing factors, as was the case in the Almoravids' and the Almohads' rise to political hegemony before them, theirs [the Marinids] was a unique experience in the historical framework of premodern Maghrib.¹²⁷ Consequently, the Marinids' historiographical portrayal has been customarily marked by this line of thought; they are presented solely as a faction of nomadic Zenata Berbers who supplanted the power-vacuum that emerged in Maghrib al-Aqsā following the disintegration of the Almohād empire in the first half of the 13th-century.

3.2: Outlining the Marinid Hegemony in Maghrib al-Aqsā

As a confederation of nomadic Zenata Berbers who roved the regions between Figuiq and the basin of the Mulawiyya in south-eastern Morocco (see, map 1.1), the Banu Marīn or the Marinids first make their appearance on the historical panorama as occasional allies of the Almohāds during the final years of the 12th-century. In 1195, they associated with the victorious Almohād army in the battle of Alarcos in Spain, where their chief, Mayhyū, lost his life as a consequence of the wounds that he received in this battle.¹²⁸ But subsequently, with the progressive weakening of the Almohād hegemony, especially after the decisive Almohād defeat in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in Spain

¹²⁷ Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 45. For such earlier histories of premodern Maghrib, see among others, Henri Terrasse, *Histoire du Maroc des origines à l'établissement du protectorat français*, 2 vols. (Casablanca, 1949-1950), Roger Le Tourneau, *Fès avant le protectorat* (Casablanca: SMLE, 1949), and Charles André Julien, *History of North Africa: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco*, trans. John Petrie (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

¹²⁸ Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 103.

in 1212, the Marinids, as a distinctive political force, began to assert their authority in a resolute manner. Prevailing over intermittent setbacks in their campaigns against the Almohāds, and emerging from internal factional rivalries during one of which, a key figure of the Marinid lineage, ‘Abd al-Haq (Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā’qūb’s father), perished, the Marinids occupied north-eastern Morocco between 1214 and 1217. In the following years, they “succeeded in establishing their hegemony over the tribes of eastern Morocco, besides the towns of Taza, Fez, and Qasr al-Kabir.”¹²⁹ By 1248 they were in possession of Meknès, Fez and Salé, and with the fall of Marrakesh in 1269, their hegemony over Maghrib al-Aqsā was complete with nothing to prevent them from assuming the symbols and titles associated with royalty.

With this advent of the Marinids in mind, their portrayal by historians as nomadic pastoralists who eventually came to establish their dominion over western Maghrib needs a little more nuance. It is not very persuasive that a confederation of pastoral nomads, apparently without any cultural expediency, would suddenly mutate to urbane institution-builders upon their advent to political hegemony in the Maghrib. It does not seem very fruitful to attribute the rise of the Banu Marīn in Maghrib al-Aqsā – from their formative campaigns against the waning Almohād authority to their assumption of dynastic prerogatives under Abū Yūsuf Yā’qūb (d.1286) – to a disjunctive transformation from pastoralists to rulers. Undoubtedly, the circumstances of Marinid state-formation had more composite dimensions. Even in their character as a nomadic confederation, the impulses informing the processes of state-formation always suffused the Marinid sensibilities as a group, best evinced in their role as participants in the decisive battles

¹²⁹ Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, 103.

that informed the dynamic of state-formation in 12th-13th century Maghrib al-Aqsā. As the historian Abdallah Laroui has put it:

The colonial historians attach great importance to the fact that they [Marinids] were nomadic, but in reality it was as mercenaries and not as nomads that they played a role in the disintegration of the [Almohād] empire; the significant fact was their position in the army and not their original mode of life... It was the illegitimacy with which the Almohad authority was tainted that made the mercenaries aspire to fill a power vacuum that they themselves had not created.¹³⁰

But intertwined with this trajectory of the Marinids' rise to political hegemony in Maghrib al-Aqsā, it is the simultaneous process of acculturation, consciously wrapped in the mantle of religiosity, which is appropriately instructive for the purpose of understanding the Marinid overtures for legitimacy, with ensuing implications for institution-formation under their patronage. As early as 1195, when the forbearer of future Marinid sovereigns, Mayhyū, led the Banū Marīn alongside the Almohāds in the battle in Andalusia, the whole enterprise was framed in the rhetoric of pious religiosity, a *jihād* or a holy war. Upon his death from the wounds that he received in the battle, Mayhyū was canonized as a *shahīd* or a martyr. Clearly, a casting of these events in the mold of Islamic devoutness suggests that responsiveness to the power of religiosity was already in currency among the Marinids for the purposes of their political and hegemonic exigencies.

¹³⁰ Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretative Essay*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 195.

This trend is further made overt in the holy aura built around Mayhyū's son, 'Abd al-Haq (d.1217), the father of Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb who essentially consolidated the Marinid authority over Maghrib al-Aqṣā. Early chroniclers weave a cloak of holiness around 'Abd al-Haq;¹³¹ more importantly, he possessed the power of the *barakā* or holy grace, and:

He grew under the influence of the sunna and the religion, and spent his life carrying out daily exercises in piety and devotion...He could pronounce the *baraka*, his shirt and pants were used in all quarters of the Zanāta people, in order to facilitate birth...when he began to fast he would not stop...he ate only permitted foods...among the Marinids he was considered to be a scholar of repute and a ruler whom everyone obeyed and recognized. They executed his orders, fulfilled his commands and conducted all their actions according to his opinions.¹³²

The above narrative of the holy aura built around 'Abd al-Haq's persona offers us a significant insight into the impulses functioning behind the formations of Marinid statehood. Rather than operating from a want of ideological or religious motivations, the rise of the Marinids to political hegemony seems to be assuredly entrenched in the intercessions of religious sanctity. In fact, it is references to a lineage cloaked in piety,

¹³¹ To a large extent, however, this aura of holiness around 'Abd al-Haq seems to be a construct of the historians of the Marinid epoch. "Pour des historiographes tels que Ibn Abi Zar', Al Jaznai, et Ibn Al Ahmar, bons courtisans acquis à la cause mérinide, il s'agira d'abord de construire aux mérinides un Saint aux pouvoirs thaumaturgiques miraculeux. Ensuite, Ibn Abi Zar' particulièrement travaillera à montrer le processus par lequel la baraka mérinide va se transformer en pouvoir politique, comme pour accomplir un destin, une mission d'essence divine." See, Abdessamad Dialmy, "Les Femmes Marocaines: Enjeu Mérinide, Une Bataille de Rites," in *Pour Une Histoire des Femmes au Maroc*, ed. Mohamed Monkachi (Kenitra: Publications de la Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, 2001), 94.

¹³² Excerpts from the anonymous 14th-century chronicle, *al-Dhakhīrāh al-Sanīyyāh fī Tārīkh al-Dawlāh al-Marīnīyyāh*, quoted in Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 49. Also see, Ahmed Khaneboubi, *Les Premiers Sultans Mérinides (1269-1331): Histoire Politique et Sociale* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1987), 38.

and invocations of their forbearer's supernatural powers of *barakā* that 'Abd al-Haq's descendents would summon in their advances to gain an endorsement of legitimate sovereignty, one that was cast as a corrective in face of the Almohād social and moral transgressions committed towards the *raiyyāh* or the Islamic community. Thus when 'Abd al-Haq's immediate successor addressed an assembly of Marinid chiefs in order to rally them for the conquest of the Maghrib, the mechanics of religion as an authorizing tool were well in place, and his terminology mirrored the processes of Islamic acculturation. He pointed to the Almohād negligence of duty towards the Islamic community; this apathy, he exhorted, was an affront to religious law, needed to be chastised, and consequently it was incumbent upon the Marinids to take up the mission of conquest to further the well-being and salvation of the Muslims in the Maghrib.¹³³ Of course, as Shatzmiller has pointed out, this recognition of the legitimizing power of religion, and a concomitant acquisition of a terminology couched in the discourse of Islamic sanctimoniousness on the part of the Marinids was probably a result of their heightened interactions in the urban arena of Maghrib al-Aqsā, especially with the *Mālikī ulemā* (clergy) of the old and illustrious Islamic loci such as Fez.¹³⁴

It is thus within the framework of the dynamic outlined above – the dynamic of a normative Islamic sense of mission and legitimacy to achieve a coherent, powerful political body – that the formation of Marinid statehood has to be appreciated. It is the very process of this acculturation that makes the Marinid advent on the historical panorama of Maghrib al-Aqsā possible. It is a process of state-formation informed by the

¹³³ Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 50.

¹³⁴ Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 52.

Marinid relationship with the urban religious elite, especially the *ulemā* (religious legal scholars) of Fez, where the *ulemā* often acted as intermediaries between the burgeoning Marinid state and the urban populace. Its fall side was that it inevitably brought the Marinid state in conflict with the clout that the *ulemā* wielded in shaping the power-equations in the urban landscape of Maghrib al-Aqsā. And it is these composite political articulations between the Marinids and the religious elite of Fez that, in a steadfast manner, seem to have sparked the fires of institutionalization in the form of the creation of madrasas, the novel power-bases devoted to the Marinid state, geared to dissipate and absorb the *ulemā*'s influence into the Marinid hegemonic structure.

3.3: Conditions Prompting the Genesis of the Marinid Madrasa

The unfavorable, convoluted relationship between the Marinid state and the powerful *ulemā* of Fez is quite aptly articulated in the incident where the Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb (d.1286) ordained the expulsion of a reputed savant, Abū Ibrāhīm al-Waryāghlī over a matter of juridical dispute. The purport of the juridical matter has not come down to us, but there was discord between al-Waryāghlī and his *faqīh* (legal jurist) colleagues which degenerated into the formation of two groups of Berber students who were savagely opposed to each other, and provoked grave troubles in the city of Fez. On being made aware of the situation, the Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb ordained that they, along with the jurists in concord with them, be expelled from the precincts of the mosque, the locus of acute altercations among the *faqīhs* and the students. The Sultān took position with al-Waryāghlī's adversaries and blamed the savant as the one who was

reputed to consort with Sufis, and as the one who denigrated the pious institutions established by the Marinids.¹³⁵ However, the savant was reinstated very soon; the Sultān recognized his merit and desired to meet him but al-Waryāghlī adamantly refused to oblige. A contemporary author, al-Bādisī, describes a subsequent exchange between the Marinid sovereign and the savant in the great Qarawīyyīn mosque of Fez thus:

He [Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb] performed his prayers at the grand Qarawīyyīn mosque on Friday and came upon the jurist Abū Ibrāhīm [al-Waryāghlī] after the prayers. Having met...he saluted the savant, and requested his invocation. Presently, he walked with him and posed three questions to him, but Abū Ibrāhīm did not respond to any of them. "We are gathered here simply to be at peace and to be aided" he said to him, "not to interrogate and dispute. You do not have interest in questioning, for I know that if I answer you something that contravenes your intentions, you will not welcome it."...And in spite of his [Abū Yūsuf's] insistence, he persisted in his refusal...¹³⁶

The purpose of dwelling at length on this episode is to present it as one facet of the interactions between the Marinid sovereignty and the *ulemā* during the formative years when the Marinids were consolidating their hegemony over the Maghrib. Of course, such exchanges between the Marinid state and the religious elite are not the only reality of the Maghribi milieu at the close of the 13th-century. But even then, a friction between the Islamic norms of polity acceptable to the elite religious milieu of Fez and the dynastic exigencies and interests of the Marinid ruling house appears to have been of central

¹³⁵ Khaneboubi, *Les Premiers Sultans Mérinides*, 102.

¹³⁶ 'Abd al-Haq ibn Ismā'il al-Bādisī, *al-Maqsad al-Sharīf wa al-manzā' al-latīf fī al-t'arīf bi sulhā' al-rīf*, translated and annotated by G. S. Colin as "El-Maqsad: Vies des Saints du Rīf," *Archives Marocaines* 26 (1926): 107; hereafter referred to as *El-Maqsad*.

consequence in the introduction of the madrasa in the Marinid domains. Thus when Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb ordained the construction of the madrasa al-Saffārīn (c. 1271), the first to be commissioned by the Marinids, “in the direction of the qiblā of the grand Qarawīyyīn mosque (c.10th-century),”¹³⁷ it constituted a move to counter the influence of the powerful *ulemā* of Fez who, as revered sentinels of Islamic law and sanctity, exercised immense influence over the Maghribi urban milieu.

As we have seen, the advent of the Marinids to political hegemony and the transformed modes of state-control that accompanied their ascent were not well-received among the powerful religious elite of Fez as well as the general populace. Shatzmiller comments in this regard: “Both earlier and later chronicles provide plenty of evidence about the struggle between the regime and the religious milieu and clergymen over resources, control of public opinion and Islamic legitimization. This struggle highlights the role of the religious institutions in the Marinid state and explains the desire to control them.”¹³⁸

Evidently, the persistent air of friction with the elite of Fez that suffused the advent of the Marinids also finds reflection in the ways in which these sovereigns induced modifications into several important conducts of state, which had an acute bearing on their interactions with the institutionalized religious elite, and were designed to facilitate their primacy as sovereigns. First alerted to the power of the clergy by an uprising in 1250, the *ulemā*'s activities were subsequently monitored closely by the Marinid sovereigns. For instance, this monitoring was effected on one level in form of

¹³⁷ Al-Bādisī, *El-Maqṣad*, 107.

¹³⁸ Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 87.

sponsoring the sermons and teachings of reputed clerics by payment from the state treasury; if this arrangement was not agreeable to particular *faqīhs* in question, they were compelled to cease their activities. Specifically, the *imāms* of the mosques were charged with keeping the authorities informed regarding the congregations that took place in the mosques, especially those which drew a large number of participants. In 1253-54, when a preacher in the Qarawīyyīn mosque began to attain vast popularity, “the [Marinid] ruler ordered that this individual should be assigned wages, to ensure that he was identified as an employee of the administration and prevent him from engaging in adversarial activities.”¹³⁹ Related to this, the Marinid attempts to counter the influence of the religious elite were manifest in challenging the appointment of clergy to positions in religious institutions which were made by the *ulemā* without consulting the court. In a prolific manner, the Marinids started making the appointments to the religious institutions themselves, thus directing the activities of the *faqīhs* and *khatībs* (preachers), and thereby controlling the public opinion. Additionally, to reinforce the above measures, the Marinid state removed the *ulemā*'s freedom of action over the expenses in a move to control the constitution of the religious institutions and their personnel. All financial matters including decisions about renovations made to religious structures now required a seal of approval from the Marinid court, even when a project was being funded by public money.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Information from the 14th-century chronicler Abū'l-Hasan Alī al-Jaznāī's *Janā Zahrāt al-Ās fī Binā' Madīnat Fās* related in Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 88.

¹⁴⁰ Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 89-90.

It is thus, within the bounds of these above patterns of friction between the *ulemā* and the Marinid state at the close of the 13th-century,¹⁴¹ that the Marinid strategy of introducing the madrasa as an independent institution into the socio-cultural landscape of Maghrib al-Aqsā becomes intelligible. The entire Marinid enterprise of controlling the religious elite of urban Fez, by trying to absorb them into the state apparatus and presiding over their appointments as well as their discourse in order to make them submit to the exigencies of the state, is embodied in the creation of a novel structure, the madrasa, autonomous from the sphere of other religious institutions, most notably the two grand mosques of Fez, from where the *ulemā* had traditionally exercised their influence. The Marinid madrasa thus, as a completely state-sponsored institution, was conceived as an alternate site from where the state's exigencies could be upheld. In the Marinid context, the *raison d'être* for the creation of the madrasa principally lies in its role as an instrument for producing a cadre of functionaries devoted to the Marinid state, capable of replacing the previous religious milieu. In a significant way, through the medium of knowledge-practices enacted in its premises, it fulfills its charge for upholding and disseminating the ideological aspirations of the Marinid state.

In this light, the Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's incentive in creating the madrasa al-Saffārīn consequently allowed for the formation of new religious clergy possessing the right qualifications who could legitimize the Marinid rule owing to appropriate Islamic

¹⁴¹ The attempts to control the religious elite took other forms too. For instance, Sultān Abū'l-Hassan's (d.1351) travel retinue during his campaign in eastern Maghrib "included the judiciary, *muftis* and *qādīs*, both of the capital and the court, scholars, *fuqahā'* and *ulamā'*, as well as descendants of many noble families of Fez." No doubt, their presence imparted the Marinid entourage a peculiar dignity, and legitimized Abū'l-Hassan's conquest of neighboring Muslim lands. But by making them accompany him, Abū'l-Hassan also wanted to control their activities during his absence from the capital. See Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 90.

religious and legal training. In Shatzmiller's words: "Whether motivated by hostility of the clergy towards them, or for the sake of obtaining unconditional support by having new clergy, the Marinid regime embarked upon the formation of Berber clergy through the new religious institution, the *medersa*."¹⁴² Through the madrasa, Abū Yūsuf Yā' qūb needed to produce jurists who would be able to offset the privileged station of the established religious milieu of Fez as the only group who could exercise Islamic norms, and by association the only ones who could endow legitimacy.

But concomitant with the political imperatives instrumental in countering the clout of the established Fāsi *ulemā*, other related impulses undoubtedly delineated the Marinid enthusiasms in introducing the madrasas in the 13th-14th century milieu of Maghrib al-Aqsā. Islamic institutions, especially religious ones, play an enduring role in conferring legitimacy and prestige on their builders, and in this regard the creation of the madrasas, with the attendant provisions for their endowment and upkeep, would also become emblematic of the Marinid rulers' concern for, and involvement with, Islamic causes. While on the one hand, the Marinids' incentive in establishing the madrasas was embedded in creating a locus from which the primacy of the state could be promulgated, on the other hand, it rested on asserting themselves as champions of Sunni Mālikīsm, and casting their image as the upholders of orthodox Islam and its sanctified religious structures.¹⁴³ At any rate, some later Marinid Sultāns most certainly were motivated by

¹⁴² Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 91-92. For the causes leading to the introduction of madrasas by the Marinids, also see her earlier study in Maya Shatzmiller, "Les premiers Mérinides et le milieu religieux de Fès: l'introduction des Medersas," *Studia Islamica* 43 (1976): 109-118

¹⁴³ On a related ground, Ahmed Ettahiri states: "L'attachement des Mérinides à la multiplication de ces locaux d'enseignement fut, semble-t-il, dicté par leur désir de s'imposer dans un milieu religieux et social le plus souvent peu accueillant... Elle aspirait à leur conférer la légitimité qui leur faisait défaut, ou du moins un prestige religieux 'légitime et légitimant' leur pouvoir." See, Ahmed Saleh Ettahiri, "Locaux

the idea that their patronage of religious institutions was for the public good, in the cause of Islam. All in all, thus, the concerted attention lavished upon the creation of madrasas in the Marinid realm was pivoted on two seemingly divergent stimuli: of curtailing the power of the established religious elite by creating a new cadre of savants loyal to the state,¹⁴⁴ and of appeasing the religious elite as well as the general populace by creating pious, charitable institutions dedicated to Islamic norms.

In wake of the commissioning of the first madrasa, al-Saffārīn, by Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb however, the awareness of the Fāsi religious elite and the populace about its being an instrument of state-power, and their consternation at the madrasa's adverse political potential for them, was reflected adequately in the veiled antagonism that pervaded the institution's reception. In this regard, the 14th-century author, 'Alī al-Jaznāī, recounts the controversy surrounding the creation of the Saffārīn madrasa in his *Zahrat al-Ās*.¹⁴⁵ The madrasa's creation was tarnished with intense misgivings about the orientation of the *qiblā* of its oratory which apparently did not conform to the orientation of the *qiblā* of the Qarawīyyīn mosque. In addition, someone claimed that the madrasa's *qiblā* departed from certain other mosques of Fez too. On being made aware of the discontent fomenting amongst the *ulemā* as well as the populace of Fez in connection

d'enseignement au Maroc islamique: genèse et rôle de la medersa," *Revue Amal: Histoire-Culture-Société* 28-29, no. 10 (2003): 47.

¹⁴⁴ The fact that the madrasas were geared to produce savants and functionaries committed to the state is also evinced in the way in which the students to be trained in religious sciences were distributed. For instance, even as recently as the 19th-century, the Saffārīn madrasa was occupied by students from the regions of Sous or Zehroun, the 'Attārīn madrasa primarily accommodated students from the environs of Larache and Tangiers, and the Misbāhiyyāh madrasa predominantly catered to students from Haouz, Marrakesh, Doukkala and so on. See, A. Péretié, "Les Medrasas de Fès," *Archives Marocaines*, vol. XVIII (1912): 265-266, 269.

¹⁴⁵ Abū'l-Hasan 'Alī al-Jaznāī, *Janā Zahrat al-Ās fī Binā' Madīnat Fās* (Rabat: al-Matbu'ā al-Malikīyāh, 1991), 81.

with this matter, Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb brought together reputed legal scholars among the Zenata people (in other words, the Berber clergy devoted to the Marinid Sultān) to look into the issue, who ruled that the *qiblā* of the madrasa was fixed perfectly according to that of al-Qarawīyyīn mosque, which was determined by Idrīs,¹⁴⁶ and condemning it as incorrect amounted to debasing the holy *qiblā*. As al-Jaznāī comments: “By this judgment, the legal scholars of the Zanāta nation wanted to convey the message that the sultan had decided to establish the madrasa as he wanted it, and would not back down.”¹⁴⁷ Clearly, this event foregrounds the concerns of the Fāsi religious elite who, not without some justification, feared that the new institution of the madrasa would challenge their authority. Thus, even after their attempts to put the madrasa’s credibility into question by charging that it had a flawed prayer-angle, when the madrasa was officially inaugurated, “the Fāsi religious milieu’s alienation remained unabated, and was even heightened by the incident.”¹⁴⁸

In an analogous vein, during the first half of the 14th-century, when the institution of the madrasa was irrevocably associated with Marinid patronage, and was well-rooted in the Maghribi milieu, it provoked intermittent resistance stemming from similar issues that besieged its evolution as an instrument of Marinid aspirations for legitimacy. During Sultān Abū'l-Hassan’s time (r.1331-3148), a severe indictment of the madrasas came

¹⁴⁶ Idrīs: a descendant of the prophet, the founder of the Idrissīd dynasty in the 9th-century which controlled significant domains of Maghrib al-Aqsā; also the founder of the city of Fez. His persona took on a holy stature, especially with the re-exalted status of the *sharifs* (descendants of the prophet) during the Marinid period. Even to this day, the saintly cult built around Idrīs flourishes in Morocco.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Jaznāī quoted in Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 91.

¹⁴⁸ Shatzmiller, *Berbers and the Islamic State*, 91. On a related note, purely on grounds of structural configurations of the mosques, madrasas and other religious buildings dating from premodern Fez and elsewhere in the Maghrib, the issues related to their *qiblā* orientation still persist. For an exploration of these issues, see Michael E. Bonine, “The Sacred Direction and City Structure: A Preliminary Analysis of the Islamic Cities of Morocco,” *Muqarnas* 7 (1990): 50-72.

from Ibn Khaldūn's admired professor, al-Ābilī (d.1356), expressing his resentment against the Marinid authorities' strict supervision over the madrasas' educational activities:

The madrasas are detrimental to education and sciences because they entice the students by pension and the material advantages that they receive there. It is for those reasons that they turn to the teachers whom the government has designated for managing these colleges and teach there, or better, around the savants who consent to be subjugated to the will of the government. This is what diverts the students from the scholars representing true knowledge, the ones who are not recruited in the madrasas; for if the government were to recruit them there, they would refuse, or if they would accept, they would not fulfill (with docility) the mission that is expected of the others (less independent) than them.¹⁴⁹

Undoubtedly, al- Ābilī's objections to the madrasas, even when they were now a vital presence in the Maghribi socio-cultural landscape, bear testimony to the fact that the madrasas' prime innovation lay in their charge as exclusively state-controlled institutions, devised to prepare functionaries and legal scholars devoted to the aspirations of the Marinid state.

Therefore, it is within the rubric of specific social, cultural and political formations which beset the advent of the Marinids to political hegemony – most appropriately, their intriguing confrontation of power with the revered Fāsi *ulemā* – that the emergence of the Marinid madrasa can be situated. As conceived by the Marinids, the

¹⁴⁹ Account from Ibn Maryam al-Tilimsānī's *al-Bustān fī dhikr al-awliyā' wa al-'ulamā' bi-Tilimsān* quoted in Alfred Bel, *La Religion Musulmane en Berbérie* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1938), 326.

madrasa was intended to counter the influence of the entrenched religious elite; to that extent, even in its traditional role as an institution of religious learning and education, the madrasa's formation was fueled by political sensibilities centered on the construction of Marinid legitimacy. But on the other hand, within the bounds of institution-formation, the commissioning of the madrasas could also herald the Marinid sovereigns' secure alignment with the cause of Islamic religious sanctity. It could add to their prestige by portraying them as competent rulers, sensitive to the exigencies of public good as it related to exemplary Islamic conduct. And it is this logic of safeguarding the exemplary Islamic norms through the patronage of religious institutions on the part of the Marinids that finds a tacit expression in the concept of *waqf* or charitable endowment in the public domain, which mediated the creation of all the Marinid madrasas.

3.4: Relationships of *Waqf* and Water in the Marinid Madrasa

In a singular way, the processes of Marinid state-formation, and their expressions of control and legitimacy that impelled the creation of the madrasas, also bear upon these institutions' constitution as it extends to the web of charitable endowment. All the madrasas commissioned by the Marinid Sultāns were inscribed in the conventions of the *habūs* or *waqf* (charitable endowment). As is evident from the foundation inscriptions of these Marinid madrasas,¹⁵⁰ proceeds from an extensive array of establishments and properties were dedicated to their upkeep, payment of salaries to the professors and other

¹⁵⁰ Alfred Bel, in his seminal study on the monuments of Fez through their inscriptions, provides a detailed transcript of the madrasas' foundation inscriptions. See, Alfred Bel, "Inscriptions Arabes de Fès," *Journal Asiatique* (July-August, 1917): 81-170; (September-October, 1917): 215-67; (July-August, 1918): 189-276; (November-December, 1918): 237-399.

functionaries, and providing for the students. Thus, to the extent that this web of endowment brought a significant range of other structures and properties in city and elsewhere into a relationship with the madrasas, it inherently brought those structures into the sphere of Marinid control. The fact that in addition to the control over the discourse, the fiscal control of the madrasa too remained with the Marinids in their capacity as the ultimate overseers of these institutions, deftly puts the network of properties endowed for the madrasas within their range of influence.¹⁵¹

A distinctive network of structures dedicated to Marinid madrasas feature in the endowment deeds. For instance, apart from the immutable constitution of *habūs* in the foundation inscriptions of the madrasas, a later document entitled *Hawālah al-Madāris al-Qadīmah bi Fās* (the *hawālah* of the old madrasas of Fez) lists in detail the properties endowed for each madrasa in Fez; it primarily contains information about the properties that were attached to Marinid madrasas.¹⁵² The endowed properties, categorized according to their affiliation with a particular madrasa, and organized by areas, streets, and specific locations in Fez, include full or fractional components of establishments ranging from houses, shops, *funduqs*, and bakeries to water mills, *hammāms*, gardens, orchards, and *zellij* producing units (fig. 3.1).

Needless to say, the inscribing of this diverse array of properties into the economy of endowment has several commanding dimensions in regard to the ways in which the

¹⁵¹ Here, it may be fruitful to bear in mind that the entire legal enterprise in Maghrib al-Aqṣā reverted to the Sunni Mālikī school with the advent of the Marinids. In fact, this return to the Mālikī Sunnism, in complete departure from the heterodox unitarian doctrines imposed by the preceding Almohāds, was a major bid on the part of the Marinids in their quest for political legitimacy. As per the stipulations of Mālikī law, even when the founders were not allowed to associate with their endowment in any capacity, the state could exercise the ultimate authority on the functioning of such structures. Clearly, this has interesting implications for the state-sponsored, and endowed Marinid madrasas in relation to their *waqf* properties.

¹⁵² “Hawālah al-Madāris al-Qadīmah bi Fās,” mss. no. 160-48, *Bibliothèque Nationale et Archives*, Rabat.

entire apparatus of the Marinid madrasas functioned at various levels, too extensive to be addressed here. However, in the context of how the relationship of the madrasas to the city is constituted, the metaphorical connections that the madrasas make through these circles of endowment with the corresponding constituents of Fez's urban fabric acquires an accentuated meaning. The madrasas, by relegating their functional existence to the proceeds from a stipulated range of shops, dwellings, water-mills, gardens and so on, are situated in a web of encompassing relationships that extend beyond their own identity. Rather than existing in isolation, the madrasas now form a metaphorical connection with other sustaining structures through the bonds of endowment; in this fashion, they themselves become integrated, sharing the morphological constitution of Fez. The social economy of the *waqf*, in an emblematic manner, makes them participants in the topographical field of the *medina* or the city, thus imparting a singular demeanor to their institutional configuration.

On a related plane, the presence of water in the Marinid madrasas, and the ways in which it articulates its relationship with the madrasas, signals a metaphorical connectivity analogous to the one evinced in the madrasas' charter as charitable endowments. The presence of water is elemental to the visuality of the Marinid madrasas, as is evident from several ways in which it becomes manifest – in elaborate basins, vases, fountains, pools that comprise integral architectural elements of the courtyard of the madrasas (figs. 3.2 and 3.3), and in case of the Bou 'Inānia madrasa (1350-55), a water-channel traversing through one edge of the central court (fig. 3.4).¹⁵³ But this relationship

¹⁵³ “Impressive numbers of structures equipped with running water are attributed to Abū'l-Hassan: fountains, naturally, but also drinking-troughs, rooms for ablution, basins, tanks in mosques etc.” See,

between water and the structure of the madrasa ought to be seen as a symptom of the larger hydraulic economy of Fez. Nearly all the structures of Fez including residential dwellings were supplied with running water as a fruit of an ingenious hydraulic system that utilized the topographic gradient of the old city of Fez to its advantage.¹⁵⁴ The indispensable utilitarian aspect of water in the madrasas does not need any exegesis, but here, for our purpose, apart from becoming an element of the visuality of the madrasa, the network of water is designed to be transportable, to flow in and out of the space of the madrasa, and thus connect it with the encompassing urban fabric of the city. To give just one instance, the water supply to the madrasa al-Sahrīj (1321-23) emerges at its source in one of the smaller subsidiaries of Wād Fez (river Fez), and has a complex itinerary which includes a passing through the garden/ orchard of al-Walja, the quarters of al-Mahfiyā and Masmudā (in the Andalusian quarter of Fez) among others, and subsequently the Jāmi' al-Andalus, from where it feeds the adjacent Sahrīj madrasa, and the fountain of the contiguous Yāsminā street.¹⁵⁵ It is thus in the framework of this itinerancy that water becomes a medium, symbolically connecting the madrasas to other structures within Fez's topographical domain, and making them organic components of the medina's morphology. The analogy may be a bit forced, but as with the structures that are bound to the madrasas through the relationship of the *waqf*, water too, in its fluidity, spawns a network with the larger cityscape, and serves to situate the madrasas in the domain of the

Halima Ferhat, "Marinid Fez: Zenith and Signs of Decline," in *The City in the Islamic World*, ed., Salma K. Jayyusi et al, vol. 1 (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008), 249-250.

¹⁵⁴ For an overview of the hydraulic network in Fez during premodern times, see Tariq Madani, "Le réseau hydraulique de la ville de Fès," *Archéologie Islamique* 8-9 (1999): 119-142.

¹⁵⁵ See, Yassir Benhima, "La Madrasa as-Sahrīj de Fès: Etude Monographique et Essai de Restauration," (Memoire de fin d' etudes de 2eme cycle: Institut National de les Sciences d' Archéologie et du Patrimoine, 1995-96), 80.

organic relationships which structure the vast architectural compositeness of the Fez medina.

3.5: Marinid Madrasa and Urban Configuration of Fez: A Very Brief Note

A consideration of the metaphorical relationship of *waqf* and water with the Marinid madrasas also prompts a passing note on these madrasas' relationship with the morphological constitution of Fez as architectural entities. In this regard, it is instructive to note that five out of the seven extant Marinid madrasas in Fez, namely, the Saffārīn (1271), the Sahrīj (1321) along with its annex, the Sbāyīn, the 'Attārīn (1323-25), and the Misbāhiyyāh (1346), are clustered in the immediate proximity of the two great revered mosques of Fez, the Qarawiyyīn and the Andalusīyyīn, both founded in c.10th-century. While this placement of the madrasas by the Marinids in the proximity of the two great mosques can be inferred as validating the theory of the political formation of these madrasas as alternate sites from where the Marinid state's exigencies could be upheld, it also bespeaks the way in which these institutions of learning create a dialogue with Fez's topographical constitution.

On purely hypothetical grounds, if we posit the constitution of the old city of Fez as a set of dynamic urban processes that make its labyrinthine logic possible,¹⁵⁶ the strategically placed Marinid madrasas, in their capacity as a distinctive architectural

¹⁵⁶ Understanding the formation of premodern Islamic cities as a set of dynamic urban processes informed by local imperatives critiques the Orientalist paradigm which generalizes about the urban constitution of Islamic cities at one long static historical moment. The revisionist literature on Islamic cities and urbanity is vast. Among others, see Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19, no. 2 (May, 1987): 155-176; André Raymond, "Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 21, no.1 (1994): 3-18; Zeynep Çelik, "New Approaches to the 'Non-Western' City," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 3 (September, 1999): 374-381.

group, can be thought of as providing a negotiable face to that logic. Fez's continual morphology is most visibly exemplified by the tightly-packed, winding alleys of the medina (fig. 3.5), and the madrasas, in a figurative way, serve to anchor the winding spatial configurations of the medina to legible ports. As express architectural bodies, these madrasas are nodes of cohesion which aid in articulating and imparting a tacit organization to the maze-like contours of Fez.

Further, the relationship of the Marinid madrasas with the urban constitution of Fez also extends to the realm of their visual elements. To the extent that the visual configurations of these madrasas suggest a resolute adherence to the architectural and decorative idiom endemic to 13th-14th century Maghrib al-Aqsā, they share their vocabulary with other structures of the medina which partake of the same visual idiom. A swift comparison between the ornamental elements of the madrasas and the surviving fragments of woodwork and *zellij* from the dwellings dated to the 14th-century would make it explicit that they all are inscribed within the circles of a common artisanal palette associated with the Marinid epoch. Thus, as there is a connection established between the madrasas and other structures of Fez through the workings of *waqf* and water, there is a similar connection established through the permeability of the visual idiom between the madrasas and other structures of the medina which yet again reinforces the madrasas' constituency in the collective morphological profile of the Fez.

In the context of these madrasas' visual composition, however, the permeability of their decorative idiom has more encompassing dimensions. The next chapter will take into account the visual and ornamental features of the Marinid madrasas in a more

expansive manner, but for now it seems apposite to point out that even when there is a composite shadow of 13th-14th century Maghribi artisanship in the visual formation of the madrasas, their configurations partake of a long-standing cultural, social as well as political permeability in the western Mediterranean rim. Expounding upon this permeability is quite beyond the scope here, but over years, the coextensive cultural and political formations in the western Mediterranean rim, especially between Andalusia and the Maghrib, created a shared vocabulary which filtered down to a visual expression displaying extremely intimate affinities accentuated by an exchange of forms and meanings in the entire region irrespective of dynastic or religious affiliations.¹⁵⁷

This chapter has tried to outline some composite facets – in the social, cultural as well as political realm of 13th-14th century Maghrib al-Aqsā – related to the emergence of the Marinid madrasas. But there are additional questions related to the formation of these institutions, namely, their emergence in the broader context of Marinid building activity, their spatial and ornamental formations, their constitution as a visual archive, and their architectural organization as a system of control. I elaborate on these concerns related to the Marinid madrasas in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁷ This permeability is best evinced in the visual configurations of the Nasrid palace complex of the Alhambra as well as an array of contemporary 14th-century Andalusian structures, for instance, the El-Transito synagogue of Samuel Halevi (c.1360) in Toledo.

Chapter 4: Ornate Visions of Knowledge and Power in Marinid Madrasas

4.1: Marinid Building Activity and the Madrasas

The concerted attention that the Marinid sovereigns lavished upon the construction of madrasas, at least until the reign of Sultān Abū ‘Inān Fāris (d.1358), confers a curious specificity upon the architectural landscape of 13th -14th century Maghrib al-Aqsā. In one framework, this prolific emergence of madrasas outlines nothing but a constituency of the larger building activity on the part of the Marinids to mark their presence, and to institute their posterity through the means of material-architectural expediencies, as nearly all sovereignties are wont to do with varying degrees of modulations and successes. To this effect, the intensive architectural activity under the Marinids covered an extensive oeuvre ranging from military constructions of fort-walls, gates, and ramparts as well as civil works including palaces and *fundūqs* to utilitarian hydraulic works, and religious architecture comprising mosques, madrasas, and *zāwiyāhs*. Early on, with Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā’qūb (d.1286), a copious activity of building commissions was already in force. It was an enterprise most visibly embodied in his singular undertaking: his new capital, Madīnat al-Baydā or Fās al-Jadīd (new Fez), commenced in 1276, contiguous to the 8th-century Fās al-Bāli (old Fez), where the Sultān proceeded to provide, along with the Jāmi’ al-Kabīr or the great mosque, *sūqs* (markets) from Bāb Qantarāh to Bāb ‘Ayūn Sanhājā, a grand *hammām*, and mansions (*dār*) for the

nobility.¹⁵⁸ Among several other unnamed monuments, the author of the *Dhakhīrāh*, writing in the early 14th century, credits him with the commissioning of a *māristān* (infirmary) financed by the head tax (*jizyat al-yahūd*) levied on the Jews, and the creation of endowed *zāwiyāhs* and hospices in desolate regions (*falawāt*) for the benefit of passing travelers.¹⁵⁹

Such iteration of dynastic presence through architectural embellishments is consistently substantiated in the commissions of successive Marinid Sultāns. Under Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf (d.1307), during the famous protracted siege of Abd al-Wādīd's capital of Tlemçen¹⁶⁰ which lasted from 1299 to 1307, the singular architectural creation of the struggle between the Marinids and the Abd al-Wadīds was the formation of an adjoining settlement, al-Mansūrā; it promptly acquired the attributes of a city before its ruin and desertion in the years following Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf's assassination by his eunuch slave in 1307. Contemporary sources relate that al-Mansūrā's extensive precincts were encompassed by fortification walls and ramparts—their construction was accomplished in 1302/1303—within which were contained vast edifices, magnificent palaces, and

¹⁵⁸ Anonymous, *al-Dhakhīrāh al-Sanīyyāh fī Tārīkh al-Dawlāh al-Marīnīyyāh* (Rabat: Dār al-Mansūr, 1972), 162, hereafter referred to as *Dhakhīrāh*; Abū'l Walīd Ismāīl Ibn al-Ahmar, *Rawdat al-Nisrīn fī Dawlāh Banī Marīn*, 3rd edition (Rabat: Matbū'at al-Malikīyyāh, 2003), 29-30, hereafter referred to as *Rawdat al-Nisrīn*.

¹⁵⁹ Anonymous, *Dhakhīrāh*, 91. The *zāwiyāh*, as a Marinid establishment of public welfare, was more a structure dedicated to extending hospitality to those who called upon it, offering lodging to travelers in need. However, it shared many characteristics with its Sufi counterpart, the Sufi hospice, and its functions coincided with those performed by Sufi lodges. See; Francisco Rodriguez-Mañas, "Charity and Deceit: the Practice of the *it'ām al-ta'ām* in Moroccan Sufism," *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000): 71.

¹⁶⁰ Tlemçen: on the western fringe of present-day Algeria. Abd al-Wādīds (also known as the Zayyanids) were a tributary of Zenata Berbers closely related to the Marinids. Following the disintegration of the Almohād empire in the 13th-century, the Abd al-Wadīds, perched between the Marinids in Maghrib al-Aqṣā and the Hafṣids in Tunis, controlled the territories of central Maghrib from their capital of Tilimsān (Tlemçen). For a significant span of their hegemony, however, the Marinids and the Abd al-Wādīds were engaged in bitter conflicts with each other for power.

gardens fed by substantial water channels.¹⁶¹ Inasmuch that al-Mansūrā constituted a city by virtue of its spread, its sizeable population, and its commercial vitality, its attributes were materially manifest in the presence of *hammāms* (baths), caravanserais, and an infirmary within its walls.¹⁶²

Excluding a few segments of the rampart walls, and some intermittent relics such as cylindrical columns of onyx, sculpted capitals, and large vessels for ablutions which have been unearthed from the precinct of its great mosque, nearly none of the architectural embellishments at al-Mansūrā have survived.¹⁶³ The sole residue that signifies some inkling of the material stateliness of this ephemeral settlement are the vestiges of the Jāmi' mosque (1303) commissioned by Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf, and the remains of its ornately detailed minaret (fig.4.1).¹⁶⁴ In its planar imprint, the arrangement of the mosque displays a rigorously symmetrical formation predicated on the schema of a central courtyard flanked by aisles on three sides and an extensive hypostyle prayer-hall on the fourth (drg. 4.1). Here, the main entrance to the mosque was through the portal at the base of the minaret (fig. 4.2), on the same longitudinal axis but at the opposite end of the *mihrāb*; the entrance, through an aisle posterior to the façade wall incorporating the

¹⁶¹ 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères et des Dynasties Musulmanes de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, translated by Le Baron de Slane, vol. 4 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1969), 143, hereafter referred to as *Histoire des Berbères* 4. Also see; William Marçais and Georges Marçais, *Les Monuments Arabes de Tlemçen* (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Thorin et Fils, 1903), 192-221, hereafter referred to as *Les Monuments Arabes de Tlemçen*.

¹⁶² Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères* 4, 143; Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 308.

¹⁶³ Marçais and Marçais, *Les Monuments Arabes de Tlemçen*, 216.

¹⁶⁴ However, the inscription that runs along the frame of the portal [of the mosque] informs us that Sultān Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf, who is designated as the founder of this mosque, was dead when the edifice was completed. Further restorations of the mosque were presumably recommenced when the city of Tlemçen finally submitted to Sultān Abū'l-Hassan in 1336, and he undertook to revive the architectural activity in al-Mansūrā. See; Georges Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne, Sicile* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1954), 273. Also see; Rachid Bourouiba, *L'Art Musulman en Algérie* (Alger: Société Nationale d'Édition et Diffusion, 1972), 52-55.

minaret, opened to a square courtyard with three-nave colonnades flanking each of its lateral sides. These colonnades extended into the hypostyle prayer-hall, intersecting a transept of three naves running parallel to the *qiblā* wall. The three transversal naves, for their part, were interrupted by a square formed out of eight columns at their center, surmounted by a cupola in front of the niched *mīhrāb* enveloped by a spatial device quintessentially customary to mosques in the Maghrib—the *salle des morts*.¹⁶⁵ All in all, the planar formation of the al-Mansūrā mosque, on the one hand, seems to have attested to a spatial symmetry frequently associated with Marinid building practices, and on the other, to have extended to a generic vocabulary evolved from earlier schema of sacred architecture across the Maghrib. As for the remains of the rectangular minaret rising to nearly 40 meters, its structural formation, with contingent rearrangements, adheres to the typology resonant with earlier Almohād minarets, most markedly the ones attached to the Kutubiyyā mosque (c.1158) at Marrakesh, and the Giralda minaret of the great mosque at Seville (1171).¹⁶⁶ The ornamental scheme of its surviving façade, with a rich, elegant composition predicated on sequentially ascending registers of interlaced vegetal motifs in the spandrels of the arched portal, a lambrequin arch opening onto a now non-extant

¹⁶⁵ The function of *salle des morts* was funereal in nature, reserved for the ritual washing of the dead for burial while prayers would be recited for the deceased. As Golvin reports: “La plupart du temps, lorsqu’un service religieux à la mosquée est prévu par l’usage local, une petite annexe composée d’une ou de plusieurs pièces est construite, avec salle spécialement réservée au lavage des cadavres, mais dans certaines mosquées, au Maroc surtout, et plus spécialement à Fès, de véritables oratoires ont été élevés, généralement contigus au mur extérieur de la *Qibla* et on les appelle *Jāma’ al-Gnāiz* ou mosquée du service des morts.” Lucien Golvin, *Essai sur L’Architecture Religieuse Musulmane*, vol.1 (Éditions Klincksieck, 1970), 255. Probably, it was also used to house the liturgical objects (sometimes, the portable minbar) attached to the mosque.

¹⁶⁶ A survey of the architectural formation of such minarets—their quadrilateral plan often forming a small enclosure, their structure based on a series of accessible levels through ramps and stairs, the decorative scheme of all the four facades—can be found in Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*. For a discussion of the minaret in the context of its meaning in the Islamic socio-cultural landscape, and its evolution as an architectural form in Islam; see, Jonathan Bloom, *Minaret: Symbol of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

balcony which was supported by a projected lintel of muqarnas brackets, a panel of interlaced lozenge motifs adorned with colored ceramic tiles, and a series of blind lobed arches supported on slender colonnades, among other elements, expresses a compositional unity, marking the grace of the western Islamic decorative craftsmanship modulated to a refined idiom over time.

The purpose of dwelling on the architectural outlines of the congregational mosque at al-Mansūrā is to foreground the generic typological similitude, which, with improvisations dictated by the imperatives of a site or an urban context, pervades the representative oeuvre of mosques constructed under the Marinids. Clearly, the most evocative features of these planar arrangements recall the developments evinced in structures as early as the great mosque of Qairaouan, whose primary defining elements go back at least to the Aghlabid reconstructions of the 9th century, and where an articulation indicative of strikingly western Islamic constructional developments, such as the intersection of the accentuated central nave of the prayer-hall with the transept running parallel to the *qiblā* wall, which forms the so called T-plan, the substantially greater spatial ratio of the covered prayer-hall in relation to the courtyard, and the placement of the square-shafted minaret on the fringe away from the prayer-hall, convey a manifestly regional conceptualization of space-making in Islamic religious architecture. An equivalent planar-structural arrangement is preserved in the religious constructions under the Almohāds, principally at the Kutubiyya mosque (c.1158) in Marrakesh, and the mosque of Tinmal (1153).¹⁶⁷ Subsequently, to subtle degrees of architectural adjustments

¹⁶⁷ In context of the planar/ structural evolution of religious buildings in the Islamic west, but more specifically in the context of the mosque of Tinmal (a prime surviving religious monument of the

and adaptations, mosques erected under the Marinids reproduce these generic spatial, structural as well as ornamental specificities; a rapid assessment of the organization of the representative mosques commissioned under the Marinid sovereignty, most notably the Jāmi' al-Kabīr of Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb, and the later constructions under Abū'l-Hassan, especially the mosque at al-Ubbād (on the outskirts of Tlemçen) dated to 1339, and the Jāmi' Hamrā (mid-14th century) at Fās al-Jadīd, amply validate the above appraisal.¹⁶⁸

From one perspective, this enduring transmission of planar and structural sensibilities is analogous to the fact that the emblematic spatial and decorative conventions pertaining to religious structures established in the Maghrib were available to the Marinids for ready appropriation. Such appropriation of architectural forms, again, signifying an investiture of dynastic presence through material expediencies, but of a somewhat diverse nature, was effectively realized in the acts of architectural interventions into existing Almohād as well as other structures that the Marinids inherited. These interventions on the part of the Marinids merit attention inasmuch that they consciously signal an appropriation of the sacral as well as dynastic aura associated with the structure in which the interventions—renovations, extensions, alterations or additions—have been made. They permit to make that aura one's own, and signify propriety over the structure's quintessence in the sense that the ones who make the

Almohāds), Christian Ewert says: “The ground plan of the mosque of Tinmal is an example of the T-type already adumbrated in eastern Umayyad architecture—especially in the al-Aqsā Mosque in Jerusalem—and prefigured with astonishing clarity in the pre-Almohad West in the Aghlabid reconstruction of the Great Mosque of Qairawān, that is to say, before the middle of the ninth century.” See, Christian Ewert, *The Mosque of Tinmal (Morocco) and Some New Aspects of Islamic Architectural Typology*, vol. LXXII, Proceedings of the British Academy (London: The British Academy, 1986), 116.

¹⁶⁸ For a comprehensive architectural study of these and other mosques of the period; see, Boris Maslow, *Les Mosquées de Fès et du Nord du Maroc* (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1937).

interventions become the sole mediating agency presiding over the emanation of the structure's social, cultural and visual meanings.

It is in this light that the Marinid interventions into some of the earlier architectural foundations—the ones in the Qarawiyyin mosque at Fez, and in the great mosque at Taza are the most noteworthy—ought to be appreciated. To illustrate this occurrence, it may be apposite to pause a bit on the Marinid extensions to one of the most representative specimens of architecture in the Islamic west, the great mosque at Taza (drg. 4.2),¹⁶⁹ originally an Almohād foundation datable presumably to 1142 (fig. 4.3).¹⁷⁰ The definitive information concerning the Marinid enlargement and reparation of this structure is preserved in the inscription plaque placed in the wall contiguous to the *qiblā*. Incised in black *zelli*, the inscription states that the Marinid Sultān, Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf, ordained in 691/ 1292-93 an expansion of four lateral naves (*balātāt*) before the *mihrāb*, and two axial naves, one each on the eastern and the western flank of the mosque, along with corresponding modifications to the *sahn* (court) on the eastern perimeter, and restoration of several decrepit architectural elements that needed attention.¹⁷¹

Undoubtedly, in this intervention into the architectural fabric of the mosque (as well as in later renovations of 1352-53 during the reign of Sultān Abū 'Inān Fāris), it is

¹⁶⁹ Taza: situated around 100 miles east of Fez. Historically, it has had strategic importance due to its topographic location, governing the sole negotiable pass through the mid-Atlas range, which had been the traditional route of entry into Maghrib al-Aqsā from the east.

¹⁷⁰ According the *Kitāb al-Istiqsā* of al-Nāsiri, the fortifications and other constructions at Taza had been ordained by the Almohād caliph, Abd al-Mumin in 1134-35. However, Henri Terrasse, following other sources, such as the memoirs of al-Baidāq (E. Lévi-Provençal, *Documents inédits d'histoire almohade*, pp. 147-48), which furnish us with a precise chronology of Abd al-Mumin's campaigns in the northern regions of Maghrib al-Aqsā, points out that the Almohāds did not hold sway over the vicinity of Taza until 1142. See, Henri Terrasse, *La Grande Mosquée de Taza* (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1943), 18.

¹⁷¹ G. S. Colin, "Épigraphie Historique de la Grande Mosquée de Taza," in Terrasse, *Grande Mosquée de Taza*, 11-12. Also see, Maslow, *Les Mosquées de Fès*, 19-22.

possible to conjecture a contemplated move on the part of the Marinids towards appropriating the spatial character of the structure by imparting to it an elaborate planar arrangement whose generic visage, in turn, is predominantly drawn from the same existing Almohād model. The character of the space which stems here from a planar unity based on symmetrical distribution of columns and bays in the prayer hall, and which is associated with the building practices under the Marinids, is ultimately the fruit of the visual and structural mores nurtured under their Almohād predecessors.

As for the decorative scheme of the mosque, which is almost entirely confined to the two prominent intersecting axial and transversal naves, the bay before the *mihṛāb*, and the *mihṛāb* niche itself, a comparable act of appropriation is at work in the sense that the Marinid artisans were disposed to modulate, reproduce, and thereby retain significantly the decorative organization of the Almohād edifice (fig. 4.4).¹⁷² A highly nuanced ornamental palette embellishes the key architectural elements of the great mosque at Taza. Apart from several specimens of densely carved stucco work with their array of floral, geometric and calligraphic motifs adorning the strategic surfaces of the two accentuated naves and the *mihṛāb*, the most distinguishing feature of the mosque is the extraordinary articulation of the pierced plaster cupola (fig.4.5) over the square formed by the intersection of the naves in front of the *mihṛāb* niche. In its imaginative conception, its geometric intricacy, and its ornamental richness, this cupola stands alone, its only inspirational prototype being an identical domed vault in the great mosque at Tlemçen founded by the Almohāds in 1136. Shaped out of thirty-two interlaced ribs that form a star pattern at the center, the vault is supported on lambrequin arches with

¹⁷² Terrasse, *Grande Mosquée de Taza*, 36-37.

intricately carved muqarnas squinches acting as zones of transition to the dome. The entire ensemble along with the space between the ribs is articulated with intricate floral, geometric and epigraphic decoration; especially the bay beneath the cupola is replete with ascending registers of such decorative panels and friezes carrying inscriptions in angular as well as cursive Kufic script.¹⁷³

In the context of this ornamental program, it is not merely the issues related to the decorative treatment of architectural elements that inform our understanding of the artistic sensibilities of the Marinid milieu. Rather, there is the question of the received traditions of contemporary craftsmanship, which, cutting across the media of expression, generated distinctive patterns, motifs and forms instrumental in creating a visual identity of the particular milieu of the 13th-14th century Maghrib. In substantiation of this assertion, we may merely take into account the intricate decorative arrangement of the majestic bronze chandelier (figs.4.6a & 4.6b), which, according to the epigraphic text of the verse on one of the circular bands on its interior, was presented to the Great Mosque of Taza by Sultān Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf in 694/ 1295.¹⁷⁴ In the pierced vegetal and floral traceries on various registers of its panels and bands, in its immaculate replication of the ribbed cupola, and in its densely articulated calligraphic bands, a direct analogue with the visual motifs of the mosque as well as its other liturgical furnishings—the minbar (pulpit), the *anzā* (carved wooden screen before the *mihṛāb*)—is made apparent; the same sensibility of craftsmanship, operative in determining the visual scheme of the mosque, is

¹⁷³ Terrasse, *Grande Mosquée de Taza*, 45-47.

¹⁷⁴ “I have been cast in the mold of radiant beauty as the Amīr, Abū Yā'qūb, had wished when he gave the command for me to be constructed...It is the year four following ninety after six hundreds to which was traced the date of this chandelier...” Colin in Terrasse, *Grande Mosquée de Taza*, 13.

effective here.¹⁷⁵ In this regard, the formative artistic as well as constructional palette of the Marinid milieu is not limited to a medium; on the contrary it bespeaks a more pervasive sensibility where media such as architecture, woodwork or metalwork act as a mere instruments for casting that sensibility in a tangible form.

In the overall framework of the Great Mosque of Taza then, entering into an exhaustive, component-by-component narrative of its spatial, constructional as well as ornamental organization is redundant here;¹⁷⁶ rather, the rationale in touching upon its generic visual schema in a composite manner is to foreground the reservoir of the artistic sensibilities from which, irrespective of the medium of expression, the artisans/ builders of the Marinid milieu drew their material. And it is this approach—the centering of the disseminative artistic-constructional sensibility which is a product of its specific conditions—that will allow for an engagement with the comparable visual characteristics of the Marinid madrasas insofar as it can be maintained that a visual palette stemming from an analogous artistic sensibility of the time inhabited these institutions of learning in the Marinid dominions.

The same line of inquiry based on common spatial, constructional and decorative norms of the time in all certainty informed the civil architecture as well as public works commissioned under the Marinids. Unfortunately, nearly none of the civil monuments of the Marinid period have survived for us to make any credible assessment regarding their

¹⁷⁵ Along with Terrasse, *Grande Mosquée de Taza*, a comprehensive discussion of this chandelier as well as other Marinid liturgical objects is found in Michel Terrasse, “Le Mobilier Liturgique Mérinide,” *Bulletin d’Archéologie Marocaine* 10 (1976): 185-208.

¹⁷⁶ Readers wishing to gain in-depth descriptive information about this structure are referred to early studies, such as Henri Terrasse’s monograph cited in the footnotes above, which provides a description of specific components of the mosque along with a detailed consideration and study of each decorative motif. My quest here has a different purpose; it seeks to engage with the processes that make this decorative palette, this visual meaning, possible, in relation to the visual formation of the Marinid madrasas.

structural as well as visual configuration. Following Marçais, if the site of the park identified as the ‘gardens of Lalla Mīna’ (encompassed within the Marinid palace ramparts in Fès Jadīd), which “had been laid out by them, equipped with pavilions and terraces from where they dominated the plantations and the surrounding countryside,”¹⁷⁷ provides any indication of the Marinid civil building practices, then it may not be too implausible to hypothesize that the elementary organization of Marinid palaces, in essence, partook of the organizational principles based on an arrangement of pavilions, terraces and miradors commanding impressive vistas, first developed under the Abbāsids, but closer to home, under the Umayyāds of Spain.¹⁷⁸ Further, a singular revelation about the Marinid taste for sumptuous palaces and fine residences comes from a passage in Ibn Marzūq’s *Musnad*, where he refers to Sultān Abū’l-Hassan’s (d.1351) scrupulous instructions for constructing a new residence for the purpose of lodging a Hafsid princess whose hand he had asked in marriage. The specifics of the instructions to the artisans involved in this project are preserved thus:

I desire a mansion comprising four chambers, each distinguishable from the other, with two pavilions which are adjacent. The walls should be covered in various decorations in plaster as well as ceramic tiles. For wood, we will use carved and closely-jointed cedar with floral as well as polygonal [interlaced] motifs. The patio will have its divisions sculpted, and will be paved with *zellīj*

¹⁷⁷ Al-Nāsiri quoted from his *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā* in Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*, 310.

¹⁷⁸ And in this regard, the only example contemporary with the Marinid building activity that has survived nearly intact is the Nasrid Alhambra at Granada. There is no valid way to examine its spatial character in conjunction with the Marinid civil monuments, but the decorative palette of the Alhambra clearly shows a marked similitude with the ornamental idiom employed under the Marinids on the other side of the strait. For an exposition on the theme of architectural pavilions and miradors as devices for commanding the gaze over sweeping vistas, thus becoming instruments for power and authority; see among others, D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

and marble; on it shall be placed the marble bases and their columns. The architectural design of the ceilings shall be different in all the four chambers, following the procedures of floral and geometric decoration known to the artisans; these ceilings should then be painted. The portals should be adorned with inlaid work in wood, as should be the wardrobes and the small doors. All the ornamental metalwork will be in polished bronze, and shall be gilded or silver-plated.¹⁷⁹

Even if we accept Ibn Marzūq's description of Abū'l-Ḥasan's energetic architectural involvement with a grain of hesitation, his account, at the very least, does point to the Marinid sovereign's basic awareness about the prevalent constructional and decorative modes of the times.¹⁸⁰ A recognizable inventory of materials and decorative motifs—carved woodwork and sculpted plaster with floral and geometric motifs, and an unequivocal taste for ceramic tiles, *zelliġ*, and gilded bronze—is identifiable here, and it heralds a firm likelihood that the very same artistic sensibilities organizing a cross-section of Marinid sacred structures permeated the architectural organization of their civil as well as other commissions.

The issue centering on the permeability of the structural and visual arrangements in the Marinid milieu is well-served by a few other specimens, which include architectural fragments recovered from domestic dwellings, *funduqs* (inns), and *hammāms* (baths); these structures, along with the palaces, are representative of the civil

¹⁷⁹ Muhammad ibn Ahmed ibn Marzūq al-Tilimsānī, *al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Ḥasan fī Ma'āsir Mawlānā Abū'l-Ḥasan*; extracts in E. Lévi-Provençal, "Un Nouveau Texte d'Histoire Mérinide: Le Musnad d'Ibn Marzūk," *Hespéris* 5 (1925): 38-39, trans. 75-76.

¹⁸⁰ In this regard, it may be worth keeping in mind that Abū'l-Ḥasan was indeed a vigorous patron of architecture and the most prolific in the commissioning of madrasas throughout the Marinid dominions.

architectural repertoire of the 13th-14th century Marinid epoch. For the *funduq*—a prime example from the Marinid times is the Funduq al-Tattawīniyyīn near the Qarawiyyīn mosque—a generic paradigm of a planar arrangement defined by a central courtyard scheme is operative, even when the spatial elements of the court, the porticos, and the chambers are subjected to inevitable transformations in deference to the functional character of the structure.¹⁸¹ In case of the Tattawīniyyīn, Marçais draws attention to the finesse of the sculpted woodwork that forms a frieze around the funduq’s vestibule, which, based on the stylistic similitude of its craftsmanship and decorative themes, permits us to consider it contemporaneous with the Attārīn madrasa of 1325.¹⁸² The *hammāms* constructed during the Marinid period—the representative among them being the Hammām al-Alou (c.1355) in Rabat, the hammām in the Chella (c.1350) and the Hammām al-Mukhfīyā at Fez—even when they adhere to the spatial hierarchy ordered by the sequential progression into the *frigidarium*, the *tepidarium*, and the *caldarium* adopted from the Roman baths, still reproduce all the characteristics of the 14th century Maghribi visual idiom in the decorative details of their cupolas, their ornamental stuccowork and woodwork (fig. 4.7).¹⁸³

In the same vein, the vestiges of a small palace, *Dār al-Sultān*, contiguous to the tomb and mosque of Sidi Bou Midyān (1339) at al-Ubbād on the southwest precinct of

¹⁸¹ Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*, 315.

¹⁸² Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*, 315.

¹⁸³ Henri Terrasse, “Trois Bains Mérinides du Maroc,” in *Mélanges Offerts à William Marçais* (Paris: Éditions G. P. Maisonneuve, 1950), 311-320. In the context of the Hammām al-Mukhfīyā, Terrasse, while appraising the decorative elements of the bath, says in regard to the richly designed wooden cupola that it has the same artistic vigor as the rich ceilings of the madrasas.

Tlemçen have retained the basic characteristics of their architectural configuration.¹⁸⁴

Though the remnants of this structure have lost nearly all their surface embellishments, some fragments—lozenge elements, cursive inscriptions, paved mosaics, carved friezes—attest to the richness of the decor, but more importantly, to their affinitive relationship with the ornamental elements of the madrasas in Fez.¹⁸⁵ A selfsame affinitive relationship can be discerned in the fragments of cedar lintels or mosaic panels that have come down to us from the domestic residences of 14th century Fez, and an assessment of the visual characteristics of such specimens (figs.4.8 & 4.9) currently preserved at the Batha Museum at Fez, can adequately confirm the equivalence of the artistic palettes that governed the visual mores of the Marinid milieu.¹⁸⁶

4.2: Marinid Madrasas: Planar and Visual Affinities

In general, it is within the rubric of the above architectural activity in the 13th-14th century Maghrib al-Aqsā that the quintessence of the Marinid madrasas and their manifestation in the Maghribi socio-cultural landscape should be situated. The myriad factors impacting the nascence of these madrasas under the Marinid sovereignty have

¹⁸⁴ The palace is beyond doubt a Marinid oeuvre of the same epoch as the mosque and the madrasa at al-'Ubbād (both Abū'l-Hassan's constructions dated to 1339 and 1346 respectively). In all probability, it was one of the embellishments that the Marinid princes reserved for their favored recreational visits. See, Marçais and Marçais, *Les Monuments Arabes de Tlemçen*, 266.

¹⁸⁵ Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident*, 311.

¹⁸⁶ We have, for example, the sculpted cedar lintel from the 14th century residence, Dār Swiqet al-Dabban, measuring 203 x 45 x 23cms, with the inventory no. 45.2, and a panel with excised ceramic and polychromatic inlay-work, again from the same residence, measuring 125.5cms in height and 34cms in width, with the inventory no.C11, both preserved at Musée du Batha in Fez. More significantly in this regard, however, the overall architectural arrangement of domestic dwellings in the Marinid epoch, at a planar, structural as well as decorative level, potentially served as a prototype for the Marinid madrasas. This line of thought has been convincingly proposed by scholars such as Lucien Golvin, Jacques Revault and Ali Amahan. I touch upon the association between the domestic residence and the madrasa at more length later in the chapter.

been addressed in the previous chapter. Here, the endeavor is to present in a composite manner an account of the visual scheme of these madrasas, and uncover the meanings that accrue to their spatial, structural and decorative arrangements.

Within the Marinid sphere of patronage, the madrasa al-Saffārīn (1271), erected under the auspices of Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb, leads the chronological order.¹⁸⁷ Textual sources speak of an earlier madrasa, founded in Ceuta in 635/ 1238, through the private sponsorship of a savant, Abū'l-Hasan Muhammad al-Shārrī.¹⁸⁸ However, even when the social as well as political implications of a privately funded madrasa in the Maghrib could offer interesting insights into the dynamic of knowledge and power, the functional as well as visual contours of this madrasa in Ceuta, in absence of any material evidence, remain apocryphal at the best. In any event, the madrasa al-Saffārīn (fig.4.10) is the first among the state-sponsored official madrasas that quite comprehensively delineates the acme of these institutions in the Marinid milieu of the 13th-14th centuries. To the extent that it instates a rooted establishment of madrasas in Maghrib al-Aqṣā, the madrasa al-Saffārīn, in a peculiar way, has defining consequences for the later madrasas due to the near-certainty that, functionally and institutionally, it must have been a very satisfying experiment for the Marinid state apparatus; the madrasa's achievements, as an instrument for state power, must have been ostensible enough to prompt the subsequent sovereigns

¹⁸⁷ Anonymous, *Dhakhīrāh*, 162-163. Some sources also refer to the madrasa as al-Halfāwayyīn, or al-Yā'qūbiyāh after its patron, Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb. See, Abū'l-Hasan 'Alī al-Jaznāi, *Janā Zahrāt al-Ās fī Binā' Madīnat Fās* (Rabat: al-Matbu'ā al-Malikīyāh, 1991), 81.

¹⁸⁸ Muhammad bin al-Qāsim al-Ansārī al-Sabtī, *Ikhtisār al-Akhhār ammā kāna bi-thagr Sabtā min sanīyy al-Āsār* (Rabat: al-Matbu'ā al-Malikīyāh, 1996), 27-29; hereafter referred to as *Ikhtisār al-Akhhār*. Also see, Virgilio Martínez Enamorado, *Epigrafía y Poder: Inscripciones árabes de la Madrasa al-Ādīda de Ceuta* (Ceuta: Museo de Ceuta, 1998), 23-25. On al-Shārrī; see, Ahmed ibn al-Qādi al-Miknāsi, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibās fī dhikr man halla min al-a'lām madīnat Fās*, Vol. 2 (Rabat: Dār al-Mansūr, 1974), 485-86, hereafter referred to as *Jadhwat al-Iqtibās*.

into investing in this new institution and fostering its manifestation throughout their realm with a sustained zest.¹⁸⁹

After the construction of al-Saffārīn in 1271, there seems to be a hiatus in the commissioning of madrasas until 1320 when Sultān Abū Saīd Uthmān (r. 1310-1331) ordained the erection of the madrasa al-Makhzan at Fās al-Jadīd.¹⁹⁰ We can do nothing definitive other than to theorize the causes that spawned this hiatus in the commissioning of madrasas, even when there was consistent building activity during the time; among other examples, the extensive constructions of al-Mansūrā and the extensions to the great mosque at Taza sufficiently exemplify this building activity. It is probable that the causes for this hiatus were inscribed in the still unsound influence of the Marinid authority where both, Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb, and his successor, Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf, were recurrently embroiled in warfare, either with their eastern neighbors, the Abd al-Wādids of Tlemçen, or with the Christian kingdoms of Spain. Presumably, such pressures could have taken the sovereigns' attention away from the madrasas, when their architectural enthusiasms found relevance in the more pressing military as well as public utility foundations.

At any rate, it is Sultān Abū'l-Hassan al-Marīnī (d. 1351) who emerges as the most avid builder of madrasas. With his early patronage of the madrasa al-Sahrīj (1321-23) along with its twin, the Sbāyīn, which he commissioned in Fez during the reign of his

¹⁸⁹ The notion of the Marinid madrasas as instruments of state power has been considered by a range of scholars, and it seems to be the explanation in currency. Among the contemporary scholars holding this view, see Lhaj Moussa Aouni, "Fès, Capitale des Mérinides," *Caetaria* 4-5 (2004-05): 213, where he says in relation to the Marinids: "Une fois installée à Fès, ils sentirent le besoin de passer pour les grands défenseurs de l'islam, d'où leurs interventions successives en Espagne pour aider les Musulmans du Nord du détroit de Gibraltar; d'où également leur zèle pour diffuser et développer la Science. La construction des médersas s'inscrit en effet dans cette perspective."

¹⁹⁰ Apart from the madrasa al-Makhzan, Abū Saīd Uthmān's other remarkable commission is the renowned Attārīn madrasa, commenced in 1323 and completed in 1325.

father, Abū Saīd Uthmān (d.1331), Abū'l-Hassan seems to have grasped the potential of these institutions of learning in manipulating the expediencies of political authority and legitimacy. His unremitting investiture of these academic institutions in various key centers of the Marinid realm within a fairly short span vindicates this notion abundantly. Ibn Marzūq, in his *Musnad al-Sahih*, while eulogizing Abū'l-Hassan's extensive building works ranging from mosques, minarets and zāwiyāhs to hospitals, bridges and fountains, provides a substantial inventory of madrasas commissioned by his benefactor. According to Ibn Marzūq, along with madrasa al-Wādī and the madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh (1346) in Fez, Abū'l-Hassan provided similar monuments in each city of Maghrib al-Aqsā and Central Maghrib:

Then Abū'l-Hassan—may God be pleased with him—erected identical monuments in each city of Maghrib al-Aqsā as well as Central Maghrib: he constructed first at Taza an attractive madrasa, and at Meknès, Salé, Tangiers, Ceuta, Anfā, Azemmour, Safī, Aghmāt, Marrakesh, Qasr al-Kabīr, and at al-'Ubbād outside Tlemçen...In all of them, one finds a stately construction, marvelous decorations, numerous masterly compositions of elegance; they comprise sculptures, stucco surfaces, paving of various designs formed out of combinations of mosaic squares (*zellīj*), an assemblage of marbles in different colors, artistically sculpted woodwork, water in abundance...¹⁹¹

With all their magnificence meriting our chronicler's reverent adulation, none of the madrasas in the cities above, save the ones at Meknès and Salé, are extant today. A few relics—ornate marble capitals and carved cedar panels—retrieved from Abū'l-Hassan's

¹⁹¹ Ibn Marzūq in Lévi-Provençal, "Un nouveau texte," 35, tr. 69.

Madrasa al-Jadīdāh (1347) in Ceuta, and preserved in Museo de Ceuta, only serve to reiterate the ornamental themes which mark the Marinid workmanship. In their generic visual scheme, these sculpted capitals and wooden panels with their interlaced vegetal motifs interspersed with inscriptional formulas in floriated Kufic as well as cursive scripts (fig.4.11), fall within the index of the decorative palette defining other Marinid madrasas of the time.¹⁹²

As for the madrasas in Meknès datable to the Marinid period, there is indication of three: in addition to Abū'l-Hassan's oeuvre, the madrasa al-Jadīdāh, erroneously credited as the Bou 'Ināniā to his son and successor, Abū 'Inān Fāris (d.1358), the Madrasa al-Fīlāliyah, and the madrasa al-'Udūl embody the dynasty's patronage of these institutions in the city. Historical information regarding the madrasa al-Fīlāliyah (fig.4.12) remains inadequate, with a solitary mention in 16th-century scholar and historian Ibn Ghāzī's chronicle, devoted to the city of Meknès, where he attributes the madrasa's creation to Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb.¹⁹³ In 1717, the grand Alawite monarch, Moulāy Ismā'il, undertook extensive restorations of the structure; this restructuring, hand in hand with other additions and renovations, have had the consequence of robbing the madrasa of any of its distinctive Marinid architectural facets, especially in regard to its

¹⁹² The decorative as well as epigraphic scheme of these fragments is suffused with customary benedictory formulas such as "continuing prosperity and universal benefaction," common in the inscriptional themes in most Marinid monuments. For a comprehensive study of the Ceuta relics' ornamental as well as epigraphic constitution; see, Martínez Enamorado, *Epigrafía y Poder*.

¹⁹³ See, Muhammad ibn Ghāzī al-Uthmānī, *al-Rawd al-Hatūn fī Akhbār Maknāsāh al-Zaytūn*, 3rd ed. (Rabat: al-Matbu'ā al-Malikīyah, 1999), 36; hereafter referred to as *al-Rawd al-Hatūn*. Al-Fīlāliyah seems to be a later name for the madrasa; Ibn Ghāzī, in *al-Rawd al-Hatūn*, refers to it by two appellations, madrasa al-Shūd, and madrasa al-Qādī. The name, al-Fīlāliyah, in all likelihood, originated at some later juncture when the madrasa had taken in a significant number of students from the region of Tafilalt. On Ibn Ghāzī, see ibn al-Qādī, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibās*, vol.1, 320.

decorative embellishments.¹⁹⁴ The provenance of madrasa al-‘Udūl (fig.4.13) is even more obscure. The author of *al-Rawd al-Hatūn* makes no mention of it, and it is only with later testimony of the Nasrid vizier, poet, and chronicler, Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khatīb, who speaks of witnessing three Marinid madrasas during his visit to Meknès in the later part of the 14th century, that this madrasa, oeuvre of an anonymous Marinid sovereign, is reckoned among the institutions of learning commissioned in the city during the Marinid epoch.¹⁹⁵ Akin to the madrasa al-Fīlāliyah, the madrasa al-‘Udūl, too, has suffered innumerable alterations and disfigurements, with the consequence that it preserves for us no structural or ornamental integrity reflecting the Marinid building idiom.¹⁹⁶ With this state of affairs in effect, the madrasa al-Jadīdah at Meknès (c.1335),¹⁹⁷ commonly known by its misnomer Bou ‘Ināniā (fig.4.14), remains one of the two well-preserved Marinid madrasas in cities other than Fès; the other is the madrasa of Abū’l-Hassan at Salé completed in 1342.

Before making a composite appraisal of the architectural schema of these madrasas, however, it will be worthwhile to pause on the fact that both the madrasas, at Meknès as well as at Salé, are products of a planar as well as visual idiom whose generic syntax had been satisfactorily codified by the time they came into existence in the middle of the 14th-century. In this sense, the planar configurations of both these madrasas do not participate in any significant experimentation or departure from the generic norm. In their

¹⁹⁴ Abdeltif el-Khammar, “Les Madrasas Mérinides de Meknès,” *Archéologie Islamique* 11 (2001): 115.

¹⁹⁵ Ibn al-Khatīb’s observation is later corroborated by Leo Africanus writing in the 16th century. See, el-Khammar, “Les Madrasas Mérinides de Meknès,” 128. Also, based on the appellation, Bou ‘Ināniā, erroneously attributed to Abū’l-Hassan’s madrasa al-Jadīdah, Khammar conjectures that the madrasa al-‘Udūl could be Sultān Abū ‘Inān Fāris’ oeuvre. There is no abiding evidence to support this conjecture however.

¹⁹⁶ el-Khammar, “Les Madrasas Mérinides de Meknès,” 128.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Ghāzī, *al-Rawd al-Hatūn*, 37.

overall effect, they perpetuate the spatial arrangements first consolidated in their Fāsi precursors such as the Sahrīj or the ‘Attārīn. As with all other Marinid madrasas, their architectural scheme, articulated in an ensemble of relatively intimate proportions, is shaped out of the imperatives of the medina’s dense fabric into which they are planted. It is the medina’s distinct morphological constitution and the concomitant spatial constraints out of which the architectural character of the medina is forged, that at least partially explains the affinity of these madrasas with other domestic establishments—dārs, residences, and modest fundūqs—in the medina.¹⁹⁸

This above contention is borne out by a perfunctory consideration of the architectural schema of the few known dārs (residences) assigned to the Marinid epoch whose spatial arrangement, in general, is predicated on the central courtyard scheme. Only a handful of such dwellings datable to the 14th-century are extant (fig.4.15), and even the ones that retain the elements from their original Marinid construction have suffered many depredations over time. However, the planar as well as visual arrangements of several of these dwellings in the old quarters of Fez— for instance, some features of mansions such as the dār Sfaira, dār al-Manjūr, dār Zoutien and so on, originally datable to the early 14th century—allow us to make fairly cohesive correspondences with the architectural attributes of such dwellings described by contemporary chroniclers, most notably by al-‘Umari and Ibn Marzūq, and subsequently by Leo Africanus who reports on various facets of Fez based on his sojourn to the city in

¹⁹⁸ For the line of thought advocating the influence of traditional domestic architectural forms on madrasas; see Lucien Golvin, “Madrasa et Architecture Domestique,” extract of *L’Habitat Traditionnel dans le Pays Musulmans autour de la Méditerranée* (Le Caire: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1990): 447-458.

the 16th-century.¹⁹⁹ Fusing the attributes of the Fāsi residences described in these chroniclers' accounts with the surviving architectural elements of these houses, the representative spatial as well as visual characteristics of these medieval domestic dwellings present to us an organization where:

[T]he houses are in brick and in stone or in mud, notably in the suburbs of the capital. The walls are embellished with décor in plaster and ceramic tiles. At the center is an empty space or a patio with or without an arcade articulated with stone or brick pillars ornamented with *zellij*, or indeed with veritable columns in marble. The plan, in general anticipates two, and occasionally four, chambers facing each other. The interior courtyard, aligned with porticos supports an arcade communicating with one or two, often more, superposed levels. The porticos are bound by sculpted lintels as well as arches. The patio is adorned with a basin, and is paved with *zellij*. Apart from the basin, one can see the fountains placed over collection basins made out of marble. The doors giving access to rooms are in cedar wood carved in a complex assemblage of patterns... The ceilings are made out of cedar wood, and are finely arranged in varying polygonal décor; one can often find in them cupolas structured out of wood...²⁰⁰

In its architectural sensibility, such spatial and visual configuration of the 14th-century domestic architecture forms a veritable prototype for the contemporaneous madrasas.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ For an exhaustive study of the houses, and mansions of Fez datable to the Marinid and Sādiān epochs (14th-17th centuries); see, Jacques Revault, Lucien Golvin & Ali Amahan, *Palais et Demeures de Fès: Époques Mérinide et Saadienne*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985); hereafter referred to as *Palais et Demeures de Fès*.

²⁰⁰ Revault et al, *Palais et Demeures de Fès*, 81-82.

²⁰¹ We find substantiation for this assertion in several authors. In appraising a now non-extant private mansion in Fez, dateable to the 14th-century, Alfred Bel finds correspondences between the visual scheme of domestic architecture of Fez, and the madrasas belonging to the same epoch. "Il fut surpris d'y découvrir un décor épigraphique et floral rappalent la décoration architecturale des belles médersas et mosquées de

Needless to say, an artisanal sensibility comprehensive to more than one building type is at work here. Apart from the planar organization of relatively modest proportions that reproduces the spatial idiom of domestic structures in the Marinid milieu, the madrasas' visual palette too—the *zellij* work, the carved stucco with its formations of geometric, floral and vegetal motifs, the sculpted woodwork, and the epigraphic decor—affirms an affinity with the *dārs* of Marinid Fez, yet again ratifying the line of thought which advocates a common Marinid artistic/ constructional palette cutting across a diverse array of civil as well as religious structures. In the madrasas commissioned by the Marinids thus, a regional architectural idiom, with suitable reconfigurations spawned by the functional imperatives of a particular structure, asserts its characteristic identity, architecturally situating these Marinid institutions of learning in a visual framework distinct from their counterparts in the eastern Islamic domains. It is with this typological similitude between the elements of the Marinid madrasas, and the domestic architecture of 14th-century Maghrib al-Aqṣā in mind that we take into account the architectural scheme of madrasa established at Salé, and subsequently to the most distinguished extant constellation of Marinid madrasas, the ones that have shaped over time the Marinid identity in the city of Fez.

Nowhere does the above-mentioned affinitive silhouette of domestic dwellings find more palpable inflection than in the madrasa at Salé commissioned by Sultān Abū'l-

Fès, cette construction étant elle-même date de la belle époque mérinide, au commencement du XIV^e siècle.” *Palais et Demeures de Fès* (1985), 92. In a similar vein, Marçais states regarding the house datable to the Marinid period: “Elle n’est pas, comme plan, sans analogie avec les maisons de Grenade, mais la composition des façades sur la cour l’apparente nettement aux médersas marocaines de même époque.” Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*, 313.

Hassan al-Marīni (d. 1351).²⁰² Constructed in 742/1342, according to the inscription on the marble foundation plaque embedded in the wall of the western arcade of the structure's court,²⁰³ the Salé madrasa is accessed through an ornate portal (fig.4.16) with a crenellated horse-shoe arch outlined by a rectangular inscriptional band in Kufic letters which frames carved interlaced stucco patterns with highly articulated rosettes in the arch's spandrels. This ensemble is topped with two cedar beams intricately embellished with motifs formed out of a rhythmic progression of geometric as well as more organic vegetal forms, which, in turn, are surmounted by a series of ornamented projecting brackets covered by an awning formed out of consoles in sculpted wood, thus forming a canopy over the portal. The exquisite richness of this decorative scheme – indeed, this ornamental palette defines all Marinid architectural undertakings – could be read as symbolic of Marinid aspirations, as a self-conscious projection of Marinid presence through significations of the visual expression that these sovereigns controlled as patrons. Here, in case of the Salé madrasa, such an association is made manifest quite directly when the text of the inscriptional band on the portal boasts of the madrasa's lavish decoration by invoking the visitors to admire the beauty of its construction:

Look at my wonderful door! Rejoice at how carefully I am put together, at the remarkable nature of my construction and at my marvelous interior! The

²⁰² Lucien Golvin offers an equivalent insight: “Ses formes peu communes, conséquence probable de servitudes urbaines initiales, s’inspirent de l’architecture domestique locale tant dans la distribution des pièces autour d’un patio central que dans le décor.” Lucien Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1995), 255.

²⁰³ The construction of this small madrasa was accomplished in nine years from 1333 to 1342 according to the foundation plaque. The plaque also explicitly lays out the sources of the *waqf* revenues to provide for the madrasa, and ensure its good functioning. The details of this foundation inscription as well as other laudatory verses dedicated to Abū’l-Hassan inscribed on several architectural elements of the madrasa – arches, ornamented stucco panels, and woodwork – are recorded in Mohamed bin ‘Alī al-Dukkālī, *al-Ithāf al-Wajīz: Tārīkh al-‘Adwatayn* (Salé: Manshūrāt al-Khizānah al-‘Ilmīyah al-Sabīhīyyah bi-Salā, 1986), 52-56; hereafter referred to as *Ithāf al-Wajīz*.

craftsmen have completed there a piece of artistic workmanship which has the beauty of youth...²⁰⁴

This invocation to partake of the madrasa's beauty incites an allegorical reading into the visual scheme of madrasas, a premise which we will have occasion to visit later in a more concerted manner. For now, it would be opportune to suggest that this inscription can be read as transmitting a self-laudatory proclamation, one in which the patron, speaking through the tongue of his self-adulating creation, obliquely commends himself for making this refined structure possible through his vast resources and sumptuous taste.²⁰⁵

It is the above constructional as well as the ornamental sensibility that the intimately proportioned Salé madrasa reproduces in its interior. Through the portal, a rectangular vestibule, walled on the left but with a staircase ascending to the cells on the upper stories on the right, leads to a symmetrical court with an ablution basin hewn out of marble; the open court is surrounded by colonnaded cloisters on three sides and the prayer hall on the fourth (fig.4.17). Akin to the Attārīn madrasa of Fez, the Salé madrasa, in deference to the topographic parameters of the site in which it is lodged, is devoid of cells or chambers around the court on the ground floor; veritably, the constraint of the site – which also accounts for an overall trapezoidal asymmetry in the planar formulation of the madrasa (drg. 4.3) – serves to enhance the modesty of its scale, avowing its affinities

²⁰⁴ Charles Terrasse, *Médersas du Maroc* (Éditions Albert Morancé, 1927), 15; also see Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 242. For the text of the Arabic verse inscribed on the portal-band, see al-Dukkālī, *Ithāf al-Wajīz*, 53.

²⁰⁵ The madrasa's refined beauty is consistently acknowledged by later chroniclers. The 19th century historian, al-Nāsirī, recounting the achievements of Sultan Abū'l-Hassan, refers to the madrasa as an architectural monument of studied elegance and artistic merit, with ornate sculpted panels and an array of carvings, which strike the eyes with a spirit of admiration. See, Ahmed ben Khālid al-Nāsirī al-Salāwī, *Kitāb al-Istiqsā li akhbār duwāl al-Maghrib al-Aqsā*, section on Marinids translated by Ismaël Hamet, *Archives Marocaines* 33 (1934): 283, hereafter referred to as *Kitāb al-Istiqsā*.

with the architectural makeup of the domestic structures of the milieu. In the context of the imperatives of the medina's dense morphological constitution, the "irregular plan [of the Salé madrasa] not only manifests the constraints of a constricted terrain, but also the wishes of the Marinid sovereign in erecting his madrasa in the immediate proximity of the grand mosque."²⁰⁶ Such planar arrangement convergent on the central court – and this constitutes the salient trait of all the Marinid madrasas – only serves to detain the viewer's attention on the court façades (fig. 4.18). In this case, the two lateral façades of the court are punctuated by irregularly spaced round masonry columns riveted with *zellīj* tiles,²⁰⁷ thus forming five divisions, where the four adjacent smaller ones are surmounted by crenellated arches, and a larger opening at the center is crowned with a carved wooden lintel. The smaller sides of the court parallel to the prayer-hall present three divisions with a cedar-wood lambrequin arch in the center flanked by two smaller arches (fig. 4.19).²⁰⁸ The entire assemblage supports the cloisters enclosing the madrasa's court.

In general, the architectural masses of the Salé madrasa abound in a decorative density; as with other Marinid madrasas in Fez, the organization of sculpted wood and stucco as well as the patterned configurations of *zellīj* ascertain that no surface is left unadorned.²⁰⁹ These decorative masses – confined to the rich ornamental complexity of the court façades in a character consistent with other Marinid madrasas – conform to the idiom honed by the Marinid craftsmen where an identifiable ascending register of

²⁰⁶ Brahim Afatach, "La Madrasa d'Abû al-Hasan al-Marîni de Salé, une Oeuvre Architecturale Marocaine du XIVe Siècle," *Revue d'Histoire Maghrébine* 13-14 (May 1999): 185.

²⁰⁷ It is a rare example, probably the only one among the madrasas, where the columns are riveted with *zellīj* tiles. Ch. Terrasse, *Médersas du Maroc*, 16.

²⁰⁸ Ch. Terrasse, *Médersas du Maroc*, 15; Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident*, 290; Afatach, "La Madrasa de Salé," 185-86.

²⁰⁹ Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 255.

ornamentation, refined in its workmanship and technique, delineates all the levels of the court façades. A geometrical astuteness, an intricacy of the interlaced vegetal and floral configurations in the carved stucco panels (fig. 4.20) as well as column capitals, an ornamental grandeur of cedar-wood friezes, lintels and ceilings (fig. 4.21) – they all order the visuality of the madrasa’s interior space in a distinctive manner, as does the profuse interweaving in this decorative scheme of the horizontal bands (fig. 4.22) as well as the floriated medallions comprising Kufic or cursive inscriptions; almost exclusively, they are verses from the Qur‘ān, pious formulas, or eulogies dedicated to the madrasa’s patron. In the process, all these elements impart to the visual organization of the madrasa an unmistakably explicit Marinid identity.

This impressionistic reckoning of the schema of Abū’l-Hasan’s madrasa at Salé – and my aim is far from going into a meticulous exposition of the individual spatial components or decorative elements of the madrasa – is meaningful for the relationship it spawns with the spatial and visual characteristics of other Marinid madrasas, most pertinently the group of structures in Fez.²¹⁰ Again, in the similitude of the planar formation as well as the generic format in which the architectural and ornamental

²¹⁰ Expressing similar opinion, another study on the Salé madrasa rounds up by stating : “Le présent travail a tenté montrer le mode de construction de la madrasa d’Abu al Hasan qui dénote la fidélité de l’architecture de la madrasa au style adopté par les institutions mérinides de Fès.” See, Samir Raoui, “La Madrasa d’ Abou al-Hasan: Etude Architecturale et Essai de Restauration,” *Memoire de fin d’etudes de 2eme cycle* (Institut National de les Sciences d’ Archéologie et du Patrimoine, 1998-99). Here, I must reiterate that, in assessing these Marinid madrasas, it is redundant to go into detailed descriptions of these structures, and hence I eschew such an approach. Consequently, I often leave out a mention of several components and details of these madrasas – the prayer-hall, the mihrāb, the classification of ornamental motifs and geometric patterns, the student cells, and other service spaces such as the toilets. Of course, some description is inevitable but the exploratory rationale which propels this study rests on an endeavor to explore the key components of these madrasas’ distinct visuality and the prime issues related to their architectural formation. Thus, to the extent that I attempt to describe the physical features of the madrasas, I will merely point out in a synthetic way the generic spatial and visual configurations that bind them as a group of structures, and make them singular in their distinct visual formation.

composition is structured, an artistic palette encompassing the visual configurations of other Marinid madrasas is discernable here. Thus, with the composite visual outlines of the Salé madrasa in estimation, which, in their distinctive idiom, herald a cohesive sensibility of contemporaneous Marinid artisanship, I turn to the singular body of Marinid madrasas instrumental in shaping the urban identity of 13th-14th century Fez.

4.3: Marinid Madrasas in Fez: Spatial and Visual Formation

As mentioned earlier, the madrasa al-Saffārīn of 1271 or 1276, also referred to in the sources as al-Halfāwayyīn, or al-Yā'qūbīyāh after its founder Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb, must have materialized as a satisfying expedient for the successive Marinid sovereigns to ardently cultivate a building program promulgating these institutions of learning.²¹¹ The precise impulses behind the Saffārīn madrasa's origins remain indistinct, especially since no foundation inscription or decree that can shed light on the madrasa's endowment (*habūs*) constitution has yet been unearthed.²¹² The only reference to its commissioning is in a notice in the textual sources that the Qādī of Fez, Abū Umayyāh Mufaddal bin Muhammad, who had completed his studies in the East, had been charged with the supervision of the project by the Sultān Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb.²¹³ In a peculiar way, this appointment of a religious scholar who had spent his formative time in the eastern Islamic lands, where the institution of the madrasa was well-consolidated at the time, is

²¹¹ Just in Fez, in a span of eighty years from 1270 to 1350, the number of madrasas commissioned by the Marinids, including the non-extant madrasas, al-Labbādīn and al-Wādī, sums up to nine. If we take into account the madrasas commissioned in other centers of the Marinid domains during the period, the prolific incidence of these institutions becomes remarkable.

²¹² Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 215.

²¹³ Anonymous, *Dhakhīrāh*, 162; al-Jaznāī, *Zahrāt al-Ās*, 81. A short biographical notice of Abū Umayyāh, along with the mention of his appointment as the overseer of the Saffārīn madrasa is found in ibn al-Qādī, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibās* 1, 339.

conspicuous for the experiences and references it potentially may have brought to creating an institution of learning patently unfamiliar in the Marinid capital. Be that as it may, the singular attention that the Saffārīn commanded as a new institution of learning is amply substantiated in Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's act of exclusively dispatching to it the corpus of Arabic books and manuscripts retrieved from Castille. Ibn Abi Zar', in his *Rawd al-Qirtās*, informs us that, during Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's fourth *jihād* undertaking against the Christian kingdom of Castille across the strait in 1284, one of the clauses of the Marinid sovereign's treaty with the defeated Don Sancho of Castille, was the return of this huge cache of scholarly Islamic books and manuscripts. According to Ibn Abi Zar':

[the emir] gave him [Sancho] orders to dispatch all the Arabic books that he may find in the possession of Christians and Jews in his domains, and Sancho sent him thirteen chests of books comprising Qur'āns, commentaries such as those of Ben Atīyā, Al-Thālibī and others; books of hadīth and their exegeses by Al-Tahdhīb, al-Istidhkār and others; texts pertaining to special doctrines, philology, grammar and Arabic literature and so on. The Emir of Muslims [Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb] dispatched all those books to Fez, and they were submitted for the use of the students in the college that he had ordained to be constructed by the grace and generosity of God.²¹⁴

It is in light of this singular attention given to the Saffārīn madrasa that its occurrence ought to be appreciated – as a quintessential investiture that may have determined the trajectory of these institutions' subsequent efflorescence in Maghrib al-Aqsā.

²¹⁴ Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 296. Also see, Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères* 4, 118.

However, this oldest Marinid madrasa, in its contemporary embodiment, is a product of innumerable depredations and transformations, to the extent that there is no way of cohesively determining its original architectural expression. Even when its generic spatial scheme adheres to a configuration based on a central courtyard plan evinced in other Marinid madrasas, the planar irregularity of the Saffārīn (drg. 4.4) clearly seems to stem from its insertion into the dense organic constitution of the coppersmiths' quarter – the madrasa derives its name, Saffārīn, from it – in the immediate proximity of the venerated Qarawīyyīn mosque. An entranceway from the north, forming a portico-like space, leads to the interior of the madrasa, where an open courtyard with a square pool (*sahrīj*) at its center, dominates the spatial composition (fig. 4.23). A series of student-cells accessed through arcades punctuated by arched pilasters flank the eastern and western edges of the courtyard (fig. 4.24); the upper floor reproduces a similar scheme where the student-cells with preceding galleries on the three interior faces of the structure look down into the courtyard. It is, however, the oblique positioning of the prayer-hall on the southern edge of the courtyard (fig. 4.25) – the imperative orientation towards the direction of the *qibla* – that makes the eccentricity of Saffārīn's planar configuration most manifest. The other striking feature of the Saffārīn's visual composition is the presence of a small square-based minaret over the entrance-arcade, curious for the fact that it stems from the upper storey of the madrasa without any trace of its formation on the ground floor.²¹⁵ Faced on its sides with interlaced masonry lozenge

²¹⁵ Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 218; Ch. Terrasse, *Médersas du Maroc*, 18. In regard to the typological similitude of the Marinid madrasas in Fez, the only other madrasa equipped with a minaret is the elaborate Bou 'Ināniā, commissioned by Sultān Abū 'Inān Fāris (d. 1358). In case of the Bou 'Ināniā, however, the assimilation of a minaret into the architectural scheme is explained by the madrasa's concurrent functioning

patterns supported by two identical niches topped with lambrequin arches, and crowned with a small lantern bound by a frieze of merlons, the minaret (fig. 4.26) still retains the remnants of polychromatic tile-work that adorned its surface, thus providing us with an inkling of the original visual scheme of the structure. With all these features in mind, the spatial and visual arrangement of the Saffārīn comes across as a little removed from the more symmetrical expression of the madrasas following it, especially the Dār al-Makhzan located in Fès Jadīd, the Sahrīj, the Sbāyīn, and the ‘Attārīn, all constructed within a span of five years from 1320 to 1325.

As for the madrasa al-Saffārīn’s decorative scheme, nearly all the evidence has been lost to us. However, Alfred Bel, in his early 20th century study on the monuments of Fez, speaks of some vestiges of carved stucco on the wall above the *mihṛāb* composed of ornamented epigraphic bands in geometrized Andalusian script.²¹⁶ Above the stucco revetments are narrow bands of woodwork framing a sizable panel of carved cedar adorned in stylized Kufic characters. Finally, an ornamented cupola in wood, remarkable in its artisanship, crowns the ceiling of the prayer-hall.²¹⁷ All in all, these fragments of carved stucco and cedar friezes are the only vestiges offering a glimpse into the

as a congregational mosque. A minaret was also attached to the north eastern edge of the madrasa Dār al-Makhzan (Fās al-Jadīd) in the 19th-century when the ‘Alawite ruler, Moulay Hasan (r. 1873-1894) undertook its restoration, but needless to say, the newly appended minaret cannot be considered a part of the original Marinid construction.

²¹⁶ Alfred Bel, “Inscriptions Arabes de Fès,” *Journal Asiatique*, t. X (1917): 147; hereafter referred to as *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès*. Even though a little dated, Bel’s incomparable study of the monuments of Fez (especially the madrasas) through their inscriptions is probably the most detailed study of these monuments ever undertaken. Along with extensive inscriptional schemes of the Fāsi monuments, Bel also discusses their visual and ornamental features with a systematic elaboration. Interested readers are directed to the issues of *Journal Asiatique* from 1917 to 1919 (see bibliography for the complete citation) for this study composed in several parts.

²¹⁷ Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1917), 147.

madrasa's decorative schema, potentially providing an indication of the visual idiom permeating the Marinid artisanship of the time.

Compared to the Saffārīn, the subsequent Fāsi madrasas commissioned by the Marinid sovereigns – the madrasa Dār al-Makhzan in the palatial precincts of Fès Jadīd (1320), the madrasa al-Sahrīj (1323) with the contiguous Sbāyīn, and the madrasa al-‘Attārīn (1325) – display a generic planar symmetry predicated on the central courtyard scheme, albeit with their own minor tunings and adaptations. Even a cursory observation suggests that in these madrasas, a relative visual uniformity has been achieved. Though the Dār al-Makhzan madrasa, in its current state, almost certainly retains nothing of its Marinid identity, the Sahrīj and the ‘Attārīn, in their layout and the composition of their interior façades comprising the key architectural elements, exude a semblance of unity so that they can now be experienced as a group of structures intimately bound by their analogous visual formation, as Marinid structures with a distinctly codified functional as well as architectural identity.²¹⁸ On a concurrent plane, the primacy of an instituted incidence of these structures in the social landscape of 14th-century Fez, and the attention they signaled as significant instruments of the Marinid state aspirations, seems to have found an inadvertent echo in contemporary chronicles. The fact that the commissioning of these madrasas is singled out for separate mention in the textual sources – and not all structures garner that recognition – attests to their singularity for the Marinid sovereigns

²¹⁸ At least in case of the Sahrīj and the ‘Attārīn of Fez, Abū'l-Hassan's madrasa at Salé, the so-called Bou ‘Ināniā of Meknès, and the later Bou ‘Ināniā of Fez, a distinctive visual relationship binds them together as a set of recognizable Marinid structures. The Dār al-Makhzan of Fès Jadīd and the Misbāhiyyāh of Fez adhere to this visual relationship but their current state of preservation does not allow us to make any definite assessments in this regard. In fact the Misbāhiyyāh, clearly informed by the spatial schema of *funduqs*, signals striking innovations in its planar arrangement by incorporating two courtyards, thus altering significantly the spatial expression of the structure.

as well as for the Fāsi milieu in the early years of the 14th-century. Thus the earliest notice pertaining to the creation of all the three madrasas mentioned above is found in Ibn Abi Zar's, *Rawd al-Qirtās*, a work contemporaneous with the creation of these madrasas.

Regarding the madrasa of Dār al-Makhzan (or madrasa of Fès Jadīd) the author of *Rawd al-Qirtās* informs us that the Sultān [emir] Abū Saīd Uthmān decreed the construction of this grand academy of Fès al-Jadīd in 720/ 1320, where he established *faqīhs* and students for the study and teaching of religious sciences, and provided for all of them with the revenues of the *habūs* (pious endowment) constituted for the purpose.²¹⁹ As for the madrasa's location within the precincts of the royal palace, we can only hypothesize about its placement within the insularity of the royal complex, rather than at a strategic locus in the cityscape of Fez akin to its other counterparts. But as Henri Terrasse has noted, there is a locative rationale to the creation of these madrasas in the sense that after the founding of the madrasa al-Sahrīj in 1321, each of the three great mosques of Fez had a madrasa in its immediate proximity, and the location of the madrasa of Fès Jadīd in proximity of the grand mosque in the palace ought to be seen as Abū Saīd Uthmān's predilection for the new Marinid city (Fès Jadīd).²²⁰ According to Terrasse, it is normal that Abū Saīd rapidly equipped his seat of government (the Marinid establishment of Fās al-Jadīd contiguous to old Fez) and the grand mosque of his palace with an institution of learning.²²¹

²¹⁹ Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 320. Al-Nāsirī, writing in the 19th century, reproduces nearly identical information about the madrasa's creation. See, al-Nāsirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqsā*, 179.

²²⁰ Henri Terrasse, "La Médersa Mérinide de Fès Jdid," *Al-Andalus*, no. XXVII, fasc. 1-2 (1962): 247.

²²¹ H. Terrasse, "La Médersa Mérinide de Fès Jdid," 247.

The foundation inscription of the madrasa, which was clearly installed under the auspices of the then crown-prince, Abū'l-Hassan – his name figures prominently in the text of the inscription alongside his father, Abū Saīd Uthmān – charts a detailed inventory of the endowments committed to the madrasa.²²² However, apart from the plaque bearing this foundation inscription, very little of the madrasa's original elements seem to have survived.²²³ Here, the planar configuration is predicated on a simple linear axis (drg. 4.5), where an entrance opening into a central courtyard with a rectangular pool attached to a circular collection basin at the center, culminates into the oratory (fig. 4.27). Two cloisters, interspersed with brick pilasters – presumably demarcating the students' cells – flank each of the lateral faces of the court. The prayer-hall itself is articulated by two naves parallel to the *qiblā* wall; both are separated by an alternation of two pilasters and two columns topped with lambrequin arches, thus forming a colonnaded façade within the prayer hall. As for the madrasa's ornamental embellishments, the only surviving components worth note, apart from a few vestiges of carved stucco encasings over the arches in the courtyard, are the remains of ornamented stucco on the arched screen

²²² Alfred Bel provides the complete text of this long inscription along with a translation and a commentary. See, Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1917), 155-170.

²²³ As early as 1917, Alfred Bel remarked: "Among all the Marinid madrasas about whom I have to speak here, it [the madrasa of Fès al-Jadīd] is the most dilapidated. With the exception of a marble panel embedded in the wall to the west of the prayer-hall, there is nothing to report regarding this ancient structure dedicated to the Islamic sciences." See, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1917), 153. It must be mentioned here that the madrasa of Fès Jadīd probably is the least known among the madrasas of Fez. In a very large measure, it is due to its inaccessibility arising from it being a part of the palace complex in Fès Jadīd. The information about its considerable dilapidation and transformation comes to us from the early documentation of scholars such as Alfred Bel, but even to this day, access to this madrasa is near nigh impossible. However, Lucien Golvin, in his concluding remarks on the madrasa of Fès Jadīd, attests on the force of a photograph he cannot reproduce that the madrasa has preserved good evidence of its original decor. The same photograph seems to indicate some restoration in form of constructions above the galleries flanking the court. See, Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 228. But for all purposes, one suspects that currently, the madrasa, apart from a presence of a few original visual elements, exists in a completely altered state with no reminiscences of its Marinid past.

forming the two naves in the prayer-hall (fig. 4.28), where a composition patterned out of lozenge panels carrying intricate floral and vegetal motifs, and carved relief work framed by ornate calligraphic bands, embellish the surfaces. In their generic formation, these decorative vestiges avow the sensibility operative behind the Marinid ornamental palette, thus identifying the madrasa of Fès Jadīd with the visual vocabulary of its contemporaries, the madrasa al-Sahrīj and the madrasa al-‘Attārīn.

Even when they generically remain within the fold of the planar typology generated by a central courtyard with surrounding aisles, the madrasa al-Sahrīj (with its contiguous annex, the Sbāyīn), and the madrasa al-‘Attārīn, exhibit a marked individuality in their spatial arrangement. Yet again, the forces that order their spatial expression arise from these madrasas’ locative specificity in immediate proximity of a grand mosque, the Qarawiyyīn, in case of the ‘Attārīn, and the Andalusian, in case of the Sahrīj and the Sbāyīn; they embody the constraints imposed by the dense morphological constitution of the oldest quarters of Fās al-Bālī (old Fez).

However, the spatial configuration of the madrasa al-Sahrīj presents salient analogies with the madrasa of Fès Jadīd.²²⁴ Perhaps the significant hand of Abū’l-Hassan al-Marīnī in the creation of both these madrasas, and the translation of his will as a patron into an architectural sensibility, might have been a factor in inducing a similitude in their spatial expression. According to the text of the foundation inscription sculpted on a rectangular marble-onyx slab, and preserved in prayer-hall of the of the Sahrīj madrasa, Abū’l-Hassan had ordained its construction in 721/ 1321, when he was still a crown-

²²⁴ Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*, 287.

prince during the reign of his father, Sultān Abū Saīd Uthmān (d.1331).²²⁵ Ibn Abi Zar', in his *Rawd al-Qirtās*, informs us that

in 721 [1321], the emir Abū'l-Hassan 'Alī b. Uthmān b. Yā'qūb b. 'Abd al-Haq (may God be satisfied with them all) erected the academy adjacent to the mosque, Al-Andalus; it was constructed with great care and equipped with a grand reservoir, the place for ablutions and a lodging intended to house the students. All the establishments were supplied with water from the source situated outside Bāb al-Hadīd, and cost a grand sum exceeding 100,000 dinars. The emir established in it doctors [of religion], students and readers of the Qur'ān, and provided for their requirements and clothing...²²⁶

Further, for the madrasa al-Sahrīj, a curious textual source, a lost manuscript entitled *al-Tabrīj fī binā' madrasa al-Sahrīj* by an anonymous author who is supposed to have participated in the madrasa's construction could have potentially provided hitherto unknown details of its establishment and construction.²²⁷ But for the want of such information, the details of the madrasa's founding in relation to its extreme proximity to the Andalusian mosque, and the motivations for creating two madrasas (the Sahrīj and the Sbāyīn) adjacent to each other can only be matters of inference.

²²⁵ It is notable that within the context of Marinid madrasas, al-Sahrīj is the first, and probably the only madrasa founded by a crown-prince and not a sovereign. In effect, Abū'l-Hassan had acquired during the lifetime of his father, a power of royal proportions as a recompense for quelling the rebellion of his brother, Abū 'Alī against his father. He [Abū'l-Hassan] thus commanded a personal guard, and actively participated in managing the affairs of the state. See, Yassir Benhima, "La Madrasa as-Sahrīj de Fès: Étude Monographique et Essai de Restauration," (Memoire de fin d' études de 2eme cycle: Institut National de les Sciences d' Archéologie et du Patrimoine, 1995-96), 34.

²²⁶ Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 320-321. Also see, al-Nāsirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣā*, 180.

²²⁷ The source of this information is 'Abd al-Salām ibn Sudā's, *Dalīl Mu'arrikh al-Maghrib al-Aqsā*, cited in Benhima, "La Madrasa as-Sahrīj," 32.

As mentioned above, the spatial arrangement of the madrasa al-Sahrīj calls to mind an affinity with the generic layout of the madrasa of Fès Jadīd in the sense that it conforms to an identical organizational scheme comprising a dominant rectangular courtyard framed by rows of student-cells on its two lateral flanks, while the opposite face of the entrance culminates into a substantial prayer-hall accessed through three arched doorways opening into the court (drg. 4.6). But here, the only elaboration in the planar configuration stems from the fact that the entrance to the madrasa, elegantly canopied with an ornate *sābāt*, opens into the vestibule of a transversal corridor providing access to the staircase and the area for ablutions (*dār al-wudū*). Thus, there is a buffer space between the entrance and the courtyard which also extends around the court to form the aisles (fig.4.29) providing access to the student-cells; these aisles also support the superstructure on the upper floor, predominantly comprising student's cells. But in this set of structural relationships, it is the court embellished with an elaborate pool – the madrasa, in fact, derives its name, al-Sahrīj, from this water-body²²⁸ – that forms the core of the entire ensemble, and provides the madrasa with its singular visual expression (fig. 4.30). Here, the court façades (fig. 4.31), articulated by a series of pilasters rising up to ornately formed capitals, carved lintels on the upper levels, window encasings with ornate muqarnas arches, and sculpted cedar awnings beneath the roof, create the distinct visual character associated with the exemplary idiom of the artisanship that informed the Marinid milieu.

²²⁸ The early sources, especially the endowment deeds, refer to this madrasa as Madrasa al-Andalus or Madrasa al-Kubrā, to distinguish it from the much smaller madrasa al-Sbāyīn, which goes by the appellation, Madrasa al-Sughrā.

At a variance, even when the madrasa al-Sbāyīn, whose name originates from the seven (*saba‘a*) modes of reciting the Qur‘ān, reproduces the spatial scheme of the Sahrīj on a modest scale, it appears to be conceived as nothing more than an annex to its larger neighbor. Its appellation, madrasa al-Sughrā (the smaller madrasa), in distinction to the madrasa al-Sahrīj being referred to as the madrasa al-Kubrā (the principal madrasa), adequately attests to the two madrasas’ hierarchical relationship. But more notably, the text of the madrasa al-Sahrīj’s foundation inscription, while mentioning the provisions of its founding, attaches the madrasa al-Sughrā (the Sbāyīn) with the Sahrīj as a part of its overall constructional program.²²⁹ It therefore seems probable that, as indicated by its title, the Sbāyīn was perhaps created exclusively for the study of the Qur‘ān, and the seven techniques of its recitation, while the Sahrīj encompassed a much diverse teaching program.²³⁰

Owing to its status as an annex to the Sahrīj madrasa, the spatial arrangement of the Sbāyīn, while centered on a courtyard flanked by galleries with student cells, is devoid of the prayer-hall. Consequently, freed from the directional imperative of the *qibla*, the Sbāyīn’s orientation as well as spatial thrust (plan 4.6) is at a right angle to the generic axis of madrasa al-Sahrīj to whose prayer-hall it abuts. Reminiscent of domestic dwellings, the spatial arrangement of the Sbāyīn adheres to a course where a covered entrance corridor, facing the western wall of the Andalusian mosque, leads to the central

²²⁹ A complete text of the inscription (with a detailed inventory of *habūs* properties), and its translation with commentaries is found in Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1917), 215-237.

²³⁰ Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 221. As for the seven manners of reciting the Qur‘ān, known as the science of the *riwāyāh*, it is a science of sacred euphony that occupies itself solely with the correct vocalization of the Qur‘ān, and is effected in seven [Arabic] dialects. See, A. Péretié, “Les Medrasas de Fès,” *Archives Marocaines*, vol. XVIII (1912): 283.

courtyard with vestiges of a small fountain-basin at the center (fig. 4.32). The court is framed by colonnaded arcades on all sides, forming three bays bound by wooden lintels supported by four brick pilasters at the angles and four intermediate circular columns (fig. 4.33); the entire framing of the arcades precedes the student-cells arranged around the court, and the arrangement is quite closely reproduced on the upper floor. As for the décor of the Sbāyīn madrasa, there is no way of making a coherent assessment of its schema owing to the madrasa's advanced state of ruin. Only, some carved lintels in cedar-wood (fig.4.34), and vestiges of *zellīj*-work (fig. 4.35), give us some suggestion of the madrasa's former embellishments. All in all, the madrasa al-Sbāyīn, in its position as an institution as well as a built form, seems to be in the shadow of the more splendid architectural formations of its neighbor. Probably, as Golvin asserts: "...the Sbāyīn stands a tad derivative owing to the temperance of its architectural forms and its décor which never attained a splendor comparable to the Sahrīj."²³¹

With the madrasa al-‘Attārīn, the generic typology codified in the spatial configurations of its contemporaries seems to have gone through a subtle modification, undoubtedly, in deference to the imperatives impressed by the morphological constitution of the space in which it is planted, contiguous to the Qarawiyyīn mosque. This probably contributes to the ‘Attārīn's exceedingly compact form, and the mild irregularity in the orientation of its prayer-hall; yet, there is no denying the elegance of its forms and the richness of its décor, espousing its reputation as a marvel of Marinid artistic accomplishment. The madrasa's foundation inscription, preserved on a marble plaque embedded in the wall of its prayer-hall states that the Sultān, Abū Saīd Uthmān, ordained

²³¹ Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 225.

its construction in 723/ 1323, and its completion was achieved in 725/1325.²³²

Concurrently, *Rawd al-Qirtās* informs us that:

[in 723/1323]...the emir of the Muslims, Abū Saīd, ordained the construction of the grand academy, which is situated contiguous to the Qarawiyyīn mosque. It [the madrasa] was constructed under the surveillance of the revered Sheikh Abū Muhammad ‘Abd-Allāh b. Qāsim al-Mezwar. The emir, in company of religious doctors and holy men, himself assisted in the madrasa’s foundation, and succeeded in creating a magnificent edifice, more splendid than any other sovereign had elevated on this earth before him. He provided it [the madrasa] with water from an abundant source, and established in it *faqīhs* and savants, an *imām*, a *muezzin*, and other employees for its upkeep...He bought properties to constitute a *habūs* for the profit of this establishment, for the love of Allāh, the most High, and in the hope of meriting grand recompense.²³³

The generic arrangement of the madrasa al-‘Attārīn – the madrasa of the perfumers, adopting its name from the perfume and spice markets through which it is accessed – rests on a primal axial symmetry (drg. 4.7), where a covered entrance embellished with an exquisitely ornate door, develops into a vestibule giving access to the staircase on its right leading to the student-cells on the upper floor, and to the area for ablutions (*dār al-wudū*) on its left. On its axis, the vestibule leads to the central court framed by two porticos on its lateral side (fig. 4.36); the same axial thrust culminates into a rectangular prayer-hall whose *mihṛāb*, in alignment with the direction of the *qiblā*, is orientated at a right angle with the generic axial thrust of the edifice. The courtyard, devoid of any

²³² Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1918), 195-203.

²³³ Ibn Abi Zar’, *Rawd al-Qirtās*, 321. The 19th-century historian, al-Nāsirī, reproduces the same information, albeit with minor flourishes. See, al-Nāsirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqsā*, 180.

student cells, retains at its center an ornate ablution basin hewn out of marble, while the schematic composition of its lateral façades is predicated on three arches supported at the center by two ornate pilasters (fig. 4.37), and flanked by two narrow arches resting on slender marble columns (fig. 4.38).²³⁴ The composition rises to the upper level to accommodate three windows (of the student-cells on the upper floor) encased in three niches surmounted by corbelled arches supporting the carved wooden cornices beneath the roof (fig. 4.39). The prayer-hall too, with its richly composed entrance, has retained a substantial part of its surface embellishments, most visibly articulated by the intricacies of the ornate stucco over its horse-shoe arched *mihṛāb* (fig. 4.40).

In revisiting the issue of the consolidated visual identity of the Marinid madrasas – an identity evinced in its full expression in the ‘Attārīn and the Sahrīj madrasas – the key to its formation resides in the sumptuous articulation of the madrasas’ court façades. It is the rich treatment of these façades that provides a legible face to the workings of a more encompassing visual vocabulary, one that outlines an aesthetic idiom honed in the 14th-century Marinid milieu. The discernible similitude of forms here stems from a homogeneity of their decorative elements; in essence, they partake of a palette reducible to patterns in mosaic, carved stucco and woodwork, and a stylized calligraphic scheme. In both these madrasas, the vast interplay of architectural forms, brought about by an orchestrated concurrence of pilasters and columns topped with muqarnas capitals and cusped arches, imparts a rhythmic semblance to the façades. In addition, the relationships

²³⁴ Georges Marçais states in regard to this arrangement: “Cette combinaison de grands et de petits arcs, de piliers et de colonnes, dont la salle de prières de Fès ej-jdid nous a déjà fourni un exemple, semble bien être une invention des constructeurs de nos médersas maghrebines.” Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*, 288.

of these façades' masses are accentuated by an ornamental complexity borne out of diverse geometric permutations of *zellīj* tiles (fig. 4.41a & 4.41b), a network of interlaced floral and vegetal curves as well as adorned medallions in stucco (fig. 4.42a & 4.42b), and intricately carved cedar-wood panels, lintels and cornices (fig. 4.43a & 4.43b), all of them enriched with stylized calligraphic renditions complementing the overall ornamental scheme (figs. 4.44a & 4.44b). The premeditated coming together of these elements, thus, forges the characteristic visuality of the Marinid madrasas, in the process, binding them as a manifestly related group of structures. They are not bound as much by the individual modulations of their planar arrangements as by the common palette of their architectural and ornamental constituents. And it is this pervasive palette that bonds the subsequent Marinid madrasas, namely the Misbāhiyyāh and the Bou 'Ināniā, to their precursors.

In the context of its planar formation, the madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh, commissioned by Sultān Abū'l-Hassan (d. 1351) in 747/ 1346, presents an anomaly.²³⁵ Inaccessible currently due to extensive state of decrepitude, its conception on a relatively vast scale bespeaks a heightened educational activity centered in the madrasas. Undoubtedly, by the middle of the 14th-century, the institutionalization of the madrasa in the Maghribi landscape was attained to a degree that a need to accommodate a greater influx of students translated into the transformed spatial character of its structure.

²³⁵ However, the foundation inscription of the Misbāhiyyāh, retrieved from the grand hall facing the court, seems to be incomplete, and does not provide the date of the madrasa's foundation. Fortunately, the inscription sculpted on the bands of cedar, which frame the foundation plaque, remedies this deficiency; it reads: "The construction of this madrasa, the one with the grand chamber and its adjoining cells[of students] as well as the marble paving was achieved in the year 747 [1346]." Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1918), 262. Bel also provides the full text of the foundation inscription listing the *habūs* (endowment) properties singled out for the madrasa. A relatively recent study of the Misbāhiyyāh is in Aouni, "Fès, Capitale des Mérinides," 214-219.

Situated in the immediate proximity of the Qarawiyyīn mosque, the Misbāhiyyāh is named after Misbāh b. ‘Abd-Allāh al-Yālsūtī, who apparently was the first *faqīh* appointed by Abū’l-Hassan to teach in this establishment.²³⁶ Sources also refer to it as madrasa al-Rokhām or the madrasa of the marble, probably for the fact that its courtyard provided the final setting for the elegant marble basin that had commenced its journey from Almeria in Andalusia. The 14th-century chronicler, Al-Jaznāī, in his *Zahrāt al-Ās*, recounts the journey of this basin (fig. 4.45) adorning the court of the Misbāhiyyāh:

A basin of white marble weighing one hundred and forty three quintals was brought from Almeria up to the city of Larache; from there, it was transported to the waterway of Qasr ‘Abd al-Karīm, and boarded on a wooden cart until it arrived at the village of Awlād Mahbūbah located on the banks of the river Sbū. From there, it was transported through this river up to its confluence with [river] Wād Fès, and boarded again onto a wooden cart in order to be brought to the madrasa al-Sahrīj, located in the Andalusian quarter. Some years later, the basin was transported to the madrasa al-Rokhām [Misbāhiyyāh] that the emir of the Muslims, Abū’l-Hassan, had ordained constructed next to al-Qarawiyyīn mosque. It is this basin which is found today in the *sahn* [of the madrasa]; it was brought from Almeria in 725/ 1324-25.²³⁷

However, the circumstances and the motivations behind the transfer of this basin from the madrasa al-Sahrīj to the madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh remain veiled, and one can merely hypothesize that such itinerancy of artifacts underscores a more encompassing economy of exchange within which the Marinid artistic production is inscribed.

²³⁶ For a biographical note on this savant; see, ibn al-Qādī, *Jadhwat al-Iqtibās* 1, 336.

²³⁷ Al-Jaznāī, *Zahrāt al-Ās*, 37.

The primary anomaly of the Misbāhiyyāh's spatial arrangement stems from its generic orientation, away from the direction of the qibla; in all likelihood, it was a consequence born out of its designated location in the saturated topography contiguous to the Qarawiyyīn mosque. This also accounts for the disequilibrium of the madrasa's architectural masses, and unexpected ruptures in its spatial order, which seem to be the indicators of the madrasa's subjection to successive additions, often by trial and error, thus inducing an unbalanced transformation in its spatial character.²³⁸ Yet, the entire southern block of the Misbāhiyyāh, comprising the court, the grand chamber, and the student cells with their preceding corridors, seems to have been conceived with an evident concern for symmetry. Its spatial arrangements (drg. 4.8) still emulate the vocabulary evinced in the madrasa al-Sahrij, ²³⁹ with the entrance opening to a corridor, which runs along the three sides of the court, and provides access to the students' cells. The corridor, in turn, is punctuated with brick pillars separated by wooden screens (*mashrabiyyāh*) formed out of geometric lattice-work; this ensemble is topped with sculpted cedar lintels (fig. 4.46). At the other edge of the court, which preserves the above-mentioned marble basin at its center, an opening composed of two ornate arches, resting on the ornamented capital of a slender marble column (fig. 4.47), leads to a grand square chamber, atypical due to the absence of the *mihṛāb* in it.²⁴⁰ The unusual character of the Misbāhiyyāh's spatial formation, however, arises from its two storeys comprising

²³⁸ Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 233.

²³⁹ Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident*, 289.

²⁴⁰ Even when not formally a prayer-hall owing to the impasse presented by its inability to accommodate the *mihṛāb* in the right direction of the *qiblā*, this grand hall was probably used for prayers in addition to being the primary location in the madrasa for teaching.

students' cells (fig. 4.48), and the insertion of the rooms behind the grand chamber, composed around a small patio inscribed with a circular basin at its center.

The decorative scheme of the Misbāhiyyāh undoubtedly emerged from the same contemporaneous artistic palette that defines the Marinid visual idiom. The remnants of ornamental motifs on some carved cedar lintels (fig.4.49), and the rich stucco carving embellishing the entrance to the grand chamber (fig.4.50) seem to attest to the madrasa's sumptuous ornamental grandeur. In its overall formation, however, even when the Misbāhiyyā's visual formation reveals an adherence to the idiom consolidated in the Sahrīj and the 'Attārīn, its spatial configurations, owing to a complexity of its vast proportions, illustrate close affinities with the vocabulary of *funduqs* (inns).²⁴¹ To that end, this madrasa heralds a move away from the intimate domestic scale that characterizes these Marinid institutions of learning.

Following the Misbāhiyyāh, the efflorescence of the Marinid madrasas in Fez reaches its culmination in the creation of the sumptuous Bou 'Ināniā, the grand oeuvre of Sultān Abū 'Inān Fāris (d. 1358), constructed between 1350 and 1355. To the measure that the Bou 'Ināniā represents a summation of the Marinid artistic identity, it embodies a development where the distinctive formation of the Marinid madrasas is brought to its optimum fruition. Its presence stimulates an appropriate delineation of its scheme, and I will dwell more expansively on the spatial and visual formation of the Bou 'Ināniā in the last section of this chapter when I draw on it as a representative madrasa to explore the correspondences of these Marinid institutions' architectural schema with the practices of

²⁴¹ In this regard, Lucien Golvin states: "Si l'aspect général du bâtiment n'a que peu de rapports avec l'architecture domestique connue à Fès à cette époque, il évoque assez bien celle des funduq dont certaines, datant des Marinides, subsistent encore." Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 236.

knowledge-production that were conducted in their fold, and to posit those correspondences as symptomatic of the power-knowledge nexus involving the Marinid state patronage.

For now, to sum up this composite narrative of the Marinid madrasas in Fez, it emerges that, on the plane of their spatial configuration, they follow a simple central courtyard scheme, where their individual planar idiosyncrasies are born out of specific conditions of their location and the morphological context into which they are lodged. What binds them together as a type stems from the distinctive vocabulary of their architectural elements – columns, capitals, arched niches, and muqarnas formations – and the interior space composed and articulated with refined permutations of *zellīj*, stucco, and sculpted cedar, interspersed with dense calligraphic ornamentation. This ensemble, in a palpable way, opens up a visual archive; the surfaces of the interior courts of these madrasas, as repositories of materials, ornamentation, and techniques making up the palette of the Marinid artisan, engender a visual lexicon geared for retention as well as transmission of visual knowledge through an experiential engagement. It is this notion of a visual archive that I now seek to survey in the context of the visual formation of the Marinid madrasas.

4.4: Marinid Madrasa as a Visual Archive

Apart from the introverted spatial configurations induced by their nestling in the labyrinthine opacity of the Fez medina, or in fact, precisely as its consequence, the distinct visual disposition of the Marinid madrasas resides in the rich composition of their

interior façades and the intricate complexity of these façades' ornamental articulations. However, the embellished composition of these madrasas is always already tied up in a relationship with the viewer's experience of it. Needless to say, the visual formation of these Marinid structures is only meaningful when it extends to the experiential field of its partakers, even when, for most part, they may have been a special section of the Marinid milieu comprising the *faqīhs* and the students who inhabited the madrasas, not to mention the echelon of state functionaries who had access to these structures. The architectural and decorative configurations of the madrasas, say, the Sahrīj and the 'Attārīn, are therefore akin to a document, to be read, and in this framework, their architectural as well as ornamental elements constitute a visual archive. The entire scheme of these Marinid institutions engenders a repository of architectural forms and ornament. To invoke Oleg Grabar's formulation of the meanings accruing to such ornamentation, the forms of these madrasas' court façades – their architectural masses, the arrangement of their elements, and the articulations of their decorative and ornamental scheme – become intermediaries through which the visual experience of their interlocutors is mediated.²⁴² As constituents of the visual archive, “these intermediary agents facilitate or even compel access to the work of art by strengthening the pleasure derived from looking at something.”²⁴³

But it is not merely the pleasure derived from appreciating the décor of these madrasas that sustains the notion of the visual archive. The visual articulations of these madrasas are also a lexicon of artistic forms available for appropriation, for retention and

²⁴² See, Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

²⁴³ Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, 230.

reprocessing, and for transmission through the devices of memory.²⁴⁴ Of course, this argument can be made for practically every work of art; only here, in case of the Marinid madrasas, the overt assertiveness of their composite visual relationships, which, for all purposes, shapes these madrasas' architectural identity, lends a credible vitality to surmising their configurations as a visual archive.

The apt equivalence for the notion of an archive that can be retained, reused and transmitted evolves from the institutional rationale of the madrasa itself, as a locus of education and knowledge-production. In alignment with practices codified across premodern Islamic cultures, a prime body of this knowledge-production circulated through oral transmission. As a requisite of acquiring knowledge, a huge corpus of religious and scholarly material was memorized, and reproduced from memory when needed to be invoked. In a cultural process that Dale Eickelman refers to as the "art of memory," the memorization of canonical religious texts, just as the Qur'ān was memorized, was also a starting point for the mastery of religious sciences; it was a task facilitated for the men of learning in Morocco by using standard treatises written in rhymed verse.²⁴⁵ To a great extent, the imparting of knowledge was based on transactions

²⁴⁴ By saying that the visual articulations of the madrasas are available for retention, I aim to point out that the madrasa, in its spatial as well as ornamental entirety, is a palimpsest, with an accumulation of several layers over time. It is a document worked and reworked over by succeeding generations in form of modifications and restorations. In that sense, the artistic knowledge gathered from the madrasa's visual archive can also be employed to rework the madrasa's own configurations, and thus retain the character of these configurations over time.

²⁴⁵ Dale F. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no.4 (October 1978): 489-90. Even Ibn Khaldūn, writing a few decades after the creation of the Marinid madrasas, remarks on the excessive role that memorization played in Islamic learning, especially among the learned men in Maghrib al-Aqsā. See, Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated by Franz Rozenhal, vol. 2 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 430; hereafter referred to as *Muqaddimah*.

of memory, where students used the method of repetition in order to implant the information in their mind.²⁴⁶

For the Marinid madrasas thus, akin to the way in which the retention and transmission of [formal] knowledge takes place through texts, oral transmission or memorization, an analogous retention and dissemination of visual knowledge embedded in the configurations of these madrasas – a live, active archive of forms, patterns, taxonomies of architectural ornament, materials and techniques – can said to be in process. As conventional texts and treatises are learnt and understood through the transactions of memory, these madrasas’ architectural/ visual components too can be seen as memorized through a sustained praxis. They are transmitted through a visual, and even a tactile, mode, through the agency of a master making the apprentice consistently observe and mine the visual archive, and make praxis out of repeatedly engaging with it until he retains it in his memory for later reproduction and dissemination through his artisanship. This notion of graphic transmission gains special currency in light of the fact that no contemporary crafts or construction manuals codifying architectural techniques, patterns, ornamentation, and categorization of architectural forms employed in these Marinid structures have come down to us. Nothing akin to a Topkapi scroll is known for these madrasas or for the artistic production of premodern Maghrib al-Aqsā in general. Clearly then, with no evidence of codified art manuals, it is not far-fetched to infer that the visual configurations of the madrasas themselves, as an archive of forms, became transmitters of an architectural vocabulary to be appropriated through the “art of

²⁴⁶ Chouki el-Hamel, “The Transmission of Islamic Knowledge in Moorish Society from the Rise of the Almoravids to the 19th Century,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 29, Fasc. 1 (February 1999): 70.

memory” by repeated visual confrontations with, and learning from, the knowledge/ techniques inscribed in their visual arrangements.

Such memorization from the archive is probably best illustrated, albeit a little obliquely, by the extensive technical vocabulary employed even today by artisans to categorize a stunning array of designs and geometric formations in *zellij* work or vegetal and floral motifs in stucco. Every architectural element, for instance, a specific form of an arch, a muqarnas lintel, or a cedar awning, and every decorative formation, for instance, each differently-shaped *zellij* (fig. 4.51), and every complex geometric formation composed out of *zellij*, is identified by its specific name; it is a meta-language that has been operational since long for the description and understanding of the architectural and visual formations of Maghribi structures.²⁴⁷ The vast lexicon of this terminology, identifying and describing the array of designs and techniques, is the only interface through which the visual configurations of the madrasa make a correspondence with spoken language; in absence of codified manuals for artisans, this terminology becomes the singular instrument for preserving and transmitting the techniques of artisanship.

It is safe to assume then that an extremely developed and detailed vocabulary of architectural components of a building (structural as well as decorative) derived from repeated encounters with the visual archive of exemplary structures such as these madrasas was well in place during the Marinid times. The surviving Marinid madrasas,

²⁴⁷ For a documentation of the techniques of artisanship as well as a cataloguing of the patterns and motifs that have defined the artistic palette of the architecture of Morocco since premodern times, refer, among others, to André Paccard, *Traditional Islamic Craft in Moroccan Architecture*, translated from French by Mary Guggenheim (Éditions Atelier 74, 1980).

and the ubiquity of the artistic idiom, first honed during the Marinid epoch, and subsequently embraced unremittingly as emblematic of Moroccan artistic identity, are testimonies to this archive. To this end, the notion that the architectural configurations of the Marinid madrasas can be understood as embodying an archive of forms and elements opens up intriguing vistas for approaching these structures' visual meaning.

There is another dimension to the notion of the visual archive: the archiving of the will and aspirations of the patrons in the visual configurations of the madrasas, in our case, the Marinid Sultāns whose will was the absolute instrument in the creation of the madrasas.²⁴⁸ Insofar as the Marinid madrasas stand as testimonies, not only is this will mirrored in the Sultāns' tacit control over the visual expression of the commissioned structure, – in a different context, we have already encountered Ibn Marzūq recounting Sultān Abū'l-Hassan's scrupulous architectural stipulations for the palace he commissioned for the Hafsid princess²⁴⁹ – it also finds an explicit expression in the madrasas' inscriptional schema archiving and exalting their patrons' metaphorical association with the structure.

One clue to understanding the Marinid Sultāns' attachment to their exemplary creations – the madrasas – probably resides in the fact that they, especially Abū'l-Hassan and his son and successor, Abū 'Inān Fāris, took substantial pride in being men of piety, refinement, and learning.²⁵⁰ Abū'l-Hassan's *khatīb* and chronicler, Ibn Marzūq, makes it

²⁴⁸ All the Marinid madrasas are a product of royal patronage, that is, they were commissioned exclusively by Marinid sovereigns. This stands in significant contrast with the patronage of madrasas in other Islamic domains, where we find several examples of patronage by ministers, other courts dignitaries, and wealthy noblemen.

²⁴⁹ Refer to the text related to note 22 above.

²⁵⁰ Mohamed Bencheikroun, *La Vie Intellectuelle Marocaine sous les Mérinides et les Wattasides (XIIIe, XIVe, XVe, XVIe siècles)* (Rabat, 1974), 37-45.

a point to repeatedly mention the sovereign's concern for piety, the assembly of devout learned men around him, and his attentive study of Islamic texts ranging from the *hadīth* compilations of Muslim and al-Bukhārī to the *Muwattā'* of Imām Mālik.²⁵¹ The public display of Abū'l-Hassan's piety also translated into graceful transcribing of the Qur'ān by his own hand. He is known to have copied four copies of the Qur'ān running into several volumes, endowed for the holy sites of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Only one of these four copies, composed in thirty volumes, and endowed by the Sultān to the Aqsā mosque in Jerusalem in 1344-45, has survived, and is now preserved in the Islamic Museum at the Haram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem.²⁵² Magnificently adorned, according to Ibn Khaldūn, with the outer cover inlaid with ivory, ebony, and sandalwood, decorated with gold, and set with pearls and rubies, these copies of the Qur'an, as artefacts, undoubtedly were elevated to a special station by virtue of the fact that they were written in the hand of the sovereign himself.²⁵³ As Erzini has pointed out, these Qur'āns were endowed for the holy sites in the Mashriq (east), and "their delivery and presentation played a significant part in Abu'l-Hasan's diplomatic relations with the Mamluk dynasty (1250-1517), rulers of

²⁵¹ For this aspect of Abū'l-Hassan's personality recounted by Ibn Marzūq; see Régis Blachère, "Quelques Détails sur la Vie Privée du Sultan Mérinide Abu'l-Hasan," *Mémorial Henri Basset: Nouvelles Études Nord-Africaines et Orientales*, t. XVII (Paris: Publications de l'Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines, 1928): 83-89.

²⁵² Nadia Erzini, "The Qur'an Manuscript Copied by the Marinid Sultan Abu'l-Hasan, for Endowment to the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem," (2006), Unpublished.

²⁵³ Ibn Khaldūn provides the details concerning Abū'l-Hassan's copies of the Qur'ān: "The sultan resolved to copy in his own hand a beautiful copy of the Holy Book and to present it to the shrine at Mecca, hoping to merit, by this offering, divine favour. When his task was complete, he collected the binders to gild and ornament this volume, and Qur'anic readers to correct and punctuate the text. The cover of this book was formed of pieces of ebony, ivory, and sandalwood, admirably worked. It was decorated with strips of gold, pearls and rubies. The cover was of leather solidly worked and ornamented with gold thread. The whole was enclosed in silk and satin, then enveloped in other cloths of linen. The sultan withdrew from his treasury a large sum of money destined for the acquisition of properties in the East, of which the revenue was consecrated to the payment of a certain number of Qur'anic readers who used this copy." Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères* 4, 240-242. (Erzini's translation).

Egypt, Syria-Palestine and the Hijaz. Manuscripts were ceremoniously exchanged between the Marinid and the Mamluk dynasty.”²⁵⁴ All in all, this cursory reckoning of manuscript-production at the hands of this Marinid sovereign allows us a glimpse into his preoccupations – a composite intertwining of pious and political motivations archived in a visual economy of material artefacts.

The Sultān Abū ‘Inān, in a similar vein, is described as a scholar, a poet, a keen bibliophile as well as a calligrapher of high distinction.²⁵⁵ A specimen of his impressive calligraphic skill survives in the book of *hadīth*, compiled by Ibn Marzūq at the behest of Sultān Abū ‘l-Hassan, and copied in Abū ‘Inān’s hand.²⁵⁶ The pages of this manuscript (fig. 4.52) reveal a composition in well-formed Maghribi *khat*; occasionally, some verses or titles are framed by an ornate border containing interlaced geometric patterns. This arrangement is enhanced in the frontispieces where the script in gold letters is enclosed in two successive frames formed out of geometrically patterned bands in ultramarine and maroon.

In the visual composition of these above manuscripts, as in another Qur‘ān manuscript produced for Sultān Abū Saīd Uthmān (fig. 4.53),²⁵⁷ it is possible to get an inkling of the disposition that fuelled the sensibilities of these Marinid Sultāns. Evidently, the Marinid sovereigns had a particular interest in expressing their piety, and the

²⁵⁴ Erzini, “The Qur’an Manuscript,” 2.

²⁵⁵ Ibn al-Ahmar, *Rawdat al-Nisrīn*, 38. Also see, Bencheekroun, *La Vie Intellectuelle*, 40-41. In this regard, Ibn Khaldūn relates that during the military campaign in Ifrīqiya (regions comprising present-day Tunisia), Abū ‘Inān carried his entire library with him. See, Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah* 2, 54.

²⁵⁶ Bibliothèque Nationale et Archives, mss. no. D3582. The manuscript entitled *kitāb al-ahādith al-arba ‘in an-nabawīyyāh min riwāyāt al-khilāfā al-‘alawīyyāh* is preserved in the archive section of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Rabat.

²⁵⁷ Bibliothèque Nationale et Archives, no. K2949. Just a few leaves from this manuscript survive, and are preserved in the archive section of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Rabat.

splendour of their reign, through art and epigraphy.²⁵⁸ Thus, to the extent that the calligraphy and design of these manuscripts make associations with those of contemporary artefacts in other media – the carved marble tombstones of Abū'l-Hassan and his wife, Shams ud-Dohā, the two Marinid banners preserved in the cathedral of Toledo, and the monumental bronze chandelier commissioned by Abū'l-Hassan for the Qarawiyyīn mosque are a few representative examples – they are inscribed in the more encompassing circle of patronage, in the archiving of their patrons' aspirations within an interrelated visual economy of material production. And it is the same sensibility – an archiving of pious as well as political imperatives – that are invested in the Marinid sovereigns' exemplary artistic accomplishments, most concertedly in the madrasas.

In the Marinid madrasas, the archiving of their patrons' aspirations, in addition to finding a reflection in the architectural compositions and the ornamental palette of the structure, is directly expressed in ubiquitous exaltation of the Sultān's name and deeds in the inscriptional scheme. Verses in ornate Kufic or Andalusī script, excised in *zellij* or stucco, become veritable tablets on which the patron's presence is inscribed, and thus archived. In terms of their distribution, Qur'ānic verses and pious formulas form the predominant content of the inscriptional corpus; the upper registers comprised of carved cedar-wood friezes and lintels almost exclusively carry Qur'ānic inscriptions (fig. 4.54), while pious formulas such as “perpetuity and eternal glory and munificence and health and bliss” and “perpetual luck and perfect benediction” intersperse all the registers of the madrasas' visual scheme (fig. 4.55). It is however, on the lower registers where they can be easily read that the verses dedicated to the patron abound, forming inscriptional bands

²⁵⁸ Erzini, “The Qur'an Manuscript,” 24.

in excised *zellīj*, or on ornate capitals of the columns (fig. 4.56). Just to cite one instance among several, the cursive inscription on the ornate capital of the marble column supporting the right aisle in the court of the ‘Attārīn madrasa, exalts the patron, Sultān Abū Saīd Uthmān, through the following verse:

I have been sanctified by the piety and the affection,
ever since I have been founded, among madrasas
I surpass a solid fort in power and nobility,
since glory is powerful thanks to knowledge, and not by the throne of Bilqīs.
I have been founded in the third year added to twenty
augmented by seven centuries.

It is the grace and generosity of [Abū Saīd] Uthmān b. Yā’qūb
that the sciences are restored in favor of the ones who support it and for teaching.²⁵⁹

Similarly in the Bou ‘Ināniā madrasa, a plethora of inscriptions woven into its decorative scheme inscribe Sultān Abū ‘Inān’s figurative presence in the structure by extolling his virtues in the verses that comprise a visible part of the inscripational arrangement.²⁶⁰

The visual configurations of the Marinid madrasas thus seem to corroborate the notion of a visual archive on both the grounds discussed above. On the one hand, they offer themselves as lexicon of forms and elements to be appropriated, retained and disseminated, while on the other, they encrypt the patron’s aspirations and motivations in their forms. It is this hypothesis of the archiving of the patron’s will in these madrasas’

²⁵⁹ Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1918), 220-221.

²⁶⁰ Alfred Bel records several such inscriptions in his seminal study. See Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1918), especially 370-390. Writing in the 16th century, Leo Africanus, too, comments on the calligraphic scheme of the Bou ‘Ināniā: “The walls round about as high as a man can reach, are adorned with the plaster-work of Majorica. In many places you may find certain verses, which declare what year the college was built in, together with many epigrams in the founder’s commendation.” Johannes Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, trans. John Pory (London, 1600), 127.

visual configurations that directs us to the question of the correspondences that these Marinid institutions' architectural schema make with the practices of knowledge-production that were conducted in their fold, and how the visual configurations of these madrasas embody spaces of control, in resonance with the power-knowledge nexus involving the Marinid state patronage. This is an issue which I attempt to contemplate now through a consideration of the visual configurations of the Bou 'Ināniya madrasa, the oeuvre of Sultān Abū 'Inān Fāris, constructed between 1350 and 1355. It is the last madrasa commissioned under Marinid sovereignty before their gradual decline after Abū 'Inān's death in 1358.

4.5: Marinid Madrasa: Ornate Visions of Knowledge and Power

In foregrounding the correspondences that the visual configurations of the Marinid madrasas make with the nature of knowledge practices enacted within their fold, in exploring the meaning of the spatial configurations and the ornamental effusiveness of these Marinid institutions in light of power-knowledge nexus inherent in their creation, the Bou 'Ināniya madrasa (1350-55)²⁶¹ serves as a consummate model for the primary reason that it embodies a development where the distinctive formation of the Marinid madrasas is brought to its optimum fruition. In its role as a congregational mosque, it also marks a novel conception of Marinid madrasas,²⁶² and in consequence of this modified

²⁶¹ The madrasa is referred to as the Mutawakkiliyāh in its foundation inscription as well as in the endowment deeds, after Abū 'Inān's epithet, al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh (one who relies on God). Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1918), 363-369.

²⁶² "En effet, la madrasa Bū'nāniya inaugure une nouvelle conception du monument, par son par son rôle lié à l'extension de la ville par la complexité de son programme architectural – madrasa, mosquée à hutba, minaret et horloge – enfin par son plan cruciforme, d'un parfait équilibre, témoignant d'une influence orientale évidente." See, Catherine Cambazard-Amahan, *Le Décor sur Bois dans l'Architecture de Fès*:

identity, it is the only extant Marinid madrasa in Fez which incorporates a clearly articulated minaret as a salient component of its architectural assemblage. But most significantly for our purpose, with the exception of the madrasa al-‘Attārīn, the Bou Ināniā is the best-preserved among all the Marinid madrasas with its architectural and ornamental elements retaining their original character quite faithfully.

The sumptuous visual configurations of the Bou ‘Ināniā clearly arrested the attention of many of its interlocutors. Ibn Battūtā, in his *Rihlā*, extols it as “a building without compare in the inhabited world for its extent, its beauty, its uniqueness, its plentiful supply of water, and the beauty of the site,” adding that he has seen nothing like it among the madrasas of Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Khurāsān.²⁶³ Writing in the 16th-century, Leo Africanus describes the monument in these terms:

One there is among the rest most beautiful and admirable to behold, which was created by a certain king called Habu Henon [Abū 'Inān]. Here is to be seen an excellent fountain of marble, the cistern of which contains two pipes. Through this college runneth a little stream in a most clear and pleasant channel... Likewise there are cloisters to walk in, most curiously made with certain eight-square pillars of diverse colors to support them. And between pillar and pillar the arches are beautifully overcast with gold, azure and diverse other colors...²⁶⁴

Époques Almoravide, Almohade et début Mérinide (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989), 141.

²⁶³ Ibn Battūtā, *The Travels of Ibn Battūtā*, vol. 4, translated by H. A. R. Gibb (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1994), 933. Of course, Ibn Battūtā’s effusive recounting of the Bou ‘Ināniā madrasa’s splendor has more to do with eulogizing his patron, Sultān Abū ‘Inān.

²⁶⁴ Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, 127.

With all its visual stateliness however, it is the relative anonymity of the Bou ‘Ināniā on the exterior – a characteristic of all Marinid madrasas in Fez – and its introverted expression of space-making that is remarkable. In this regard, the Bou Inānia, like other madrasas commissioned by the Marinids, presents a set of relations worth speculating—nuances of spatial organization and ornamental scheme, the educational activity conducted therein in relation to these architectural nuances, and these nuances communicating with the intended discourse produced in the madrasa which had implications for the authority of its Marinid patron, namely the Sultān Abu ‘Inān Fāris. This conjecture gains currency from the historical realities associated with the advent of the Marinids. As discussed in the previous chapter, important sections of the populace of Fez, especially the powerful *ulemā* and the Idrīssid *sharīfs*, were highly resistant to the advent of these “uncouth nomadic usurpers,” thus compelling them to seek concord with the Fāsī elite by a reinstatement of Mālikism,²⁶⁵ and an initiation of novel practices such as celebrating the *mawlīd* (prophet’s birthday) on the one hand, while establishing bases for the dissemination of their own power-laden discourse on the other. With these conditions in mind, one could speculate if the spatial and visual configurations of the Bou ‘Ināniā (representing all the Marinid madrasas here) could be read as a system for effectively monitoring the activities that were conducted therein.

Ensnoced on the western edge of the medina between two principle arteries, the Ta’ala Kabira and the Ta’ala Seghira, running through Fès al-Bāli, whatever asymmetry that the Bou Inānia displays at a planar level is clearly a consequence of its insertion into

²⁶⁵ The Mālikī school of Islamic jurisprudence which, otherwise dominant in the Maghrib al-Aqsā, was completely suppressed by the Almohāds who preceded the Marinids.

the organic body of the pre-existing medina network (drg. 4.9).²⁶⁶ However, for all purposes, the madrasa does retain a formal symmetry, especially to the extent that its space radiates out consistently from the central focal point of the courtyard (fig. 4.57). The principal entrance of the Bou ‘Inania opens to the Ta’ala Kabira, across from Dār al-Udu²⁶⁷ with the remains of the magnificent *majānah* (horologe/ clock) on its façade (fig. 4.58a & b). A canopied structure, *sābāt*, supported on arches, spans across from the Bou Inānia to the Dār al-Udu covering the breadth of the Ta’ala Kabira; this canopied enclosure, thus, articulates the approach and entrance to the madrasa. The entrance leads to an ornate vestibule with carved stucco panels on the walls and a wooden *muqarnas* ceiling vault; the axis of the steps and the vestibule, in turn, gives way directly to the courtyard.

The generic architectural space of the Bou ‘Inānia does not differ from the spatial schema common to a large number of sacred structures in Islam, which is constituted by a central courtyard with a prayer-hall on one of the faces of the court. Needless to say, the presence of the prayer-hall, with its aisles punctuated by stucco-ornamented horse-shoe arches, the *qibla* wall emphasized by an ornate *mihrab*, and star-burst patterned wooden ceiling, is much more prominent here in comparison to other madrasas (fig. 4.59).²⁶⁸ On

²⁶⁶ For a detailed description of the architectural features the Bou ‘Ināniā, see Bel, *Inscriptions Arabes de Fès* (1918), 332-399; Ch. Terrasse, *Médersas du Maroc*, 24-29; Marçais, *L’Architecture Musulmane d’Occident*, 291-294; Golvin, *La Madrasa Médiévale*, 236-245.

²⁶⁷ Dār al-Udū: A contemporaneous structure built across from the madrasa Bou ‘Inānia. It served as a space for performing ritual ablutions before prayers. In that sense, it forms a remarkable extension to the Bou ‘Inānia madrasa.

²⁶⁸ The prayer-hall of the Bou ‘Ināniā is quite elaborate since the structure also functioned as a Jāmi’ mosque. As regards the merger of the madrasa and a Jāmi’ mosque, the Bou ‘Ināniā provides the sole example in the Marinid context, with the probable exception of the madrasa in the Chella – another oeuvre of Abū ‘Inān contemporary with the Bou ‘Ināniā – which displays similar attributes. It is possible that, in this regard, Abū ‘Inān, as a patron, implicitly appropriated the ideas and concepts emergent in wake of

the two sides other than the entrance and the prayer-hall, the court is flanked by aisles demarcated by a series of openings framed by embellished pilasters at regular intervals (fig. 4.60). The aisle behind these openings is partially segregated from the court through screened balustrades of wood with polygonal lattice-work and geometric motifs. These aisles, again topped with an ornate wooden ceiling, serve as buffer spaces between the court and rows of cells for student-lodging. In the case of the Bou ‘Inānia, however, at variance with other Marinid madrasas, we encounter a spatial innovation in the sense that these rows of student cells flanking the court are interpolated on both the flanks at the center by two square “*iwān*-like” chambers. With their carved stucco walls in the interior and their ribbed wooden domes, they presumably functioned as lecture halls (fig. 4.61).²⁶⁹

Two staircases, one contiguous to the minaret on the west, and the other on the northern edge of the vestibule inside the main entrance to the madrasa, lead to the upper floor. The upper level is essentially composed of a series of bare students’ cells organized around corridors, small patios or terraces (fig. 4.62). Among these cells, a number of them have arched windows framed within recessed panels, each surmounted by a *muqarnas* arch, which look onto the central courtyard below.

As regards the ornamental scheme of the Bou ‘Inānia—and as in all the Marinid madrasas, it predominantly features on the façades of the courtyard—a couple of general

heightened social, cultural and diplomatic connections with Islamic east. See, Cambazard-Amahan, *Le Décor sur Bois*, 141.

²⁶⁹ The introduction of these *iwān*-like chambers in the Bou ‘Inānia has prompted scholars to posit an eastern Islamic influence in its formation. But even with the introduction of these flanking chambers, the spatial scheme of the Bou ‘Ināniā, in a generic sense, resolutely seems to adhere to that of other Marinid madrasas. In case of the Bou ‘Inānia, the assertions about it employing the four-*iwān* scheme come across as a bit facile. As with other madrasas such as the Sahrīj and the ‘Attārīn, the explanation for the typological evolution of the Bou ‘Ināniā ought to lie in the domestic architectural forms of Fez, albeit in a modified manner.

observations will suffice. Art and architectural historians have been fascinated by the intricate intensity of the ornamentation in the Marinid as well as the contemporary Nasrid buildings of Granada in Spain. In the same spirit, the courtyard of Marinid madrasas displays a profusion of decorative motifs which imparts to these structures their distinct visual character. As in other Marinid madrasas, notably the ‘Attārīn and the Sahrīj, the decorative scheme in the court of the Bou ‘Inānia is expressed through three specific registers of the façade. Rising from the level of the floor up to the sill level, there is a rich tapestry of *zellij*, the colorful tile mosaics, arranged as complex geometric motifs (fig. 4.63). Rising further, the façade is modulated through intricately detailed patterns carved in stucco with repetitive geometric and vegetal motifs (fig. 4.64). This composition is then topped with exquisitely carved wooden lintels above the stuccoed *muqarnas* frames, as well as carved wooden brackets and parapets supporting the roof (fig. 4.65). The entire decorative scheme of the court facades is embellished further with ornate calligraphic texts (fig. 4.66). Predominantly verses from the Qur’an, but also interspersed with pious formulas and verses eulogizing Abū ‘Inān, these inscriptions form a significant component of the decorative palette of the façade, as bands defining the upper edge of the *zellij* surfaces, on wooden lintels, and in medallions which form decorative motifs of carved stucco surfaces. Curiously, other spaces of the Bou ‘Inānia, especially the students’ cells, are utterly devoid of visual embellishments; they stand in stark contrast to the ornamented exuberance of the courtyard.

To speculate upon the visual meaning of the Bou ‘Inānia (and with it, the other Marinid madrasas) in a historical-cultural context, it will be worthwhile to reflect on the

cultural and political aspirations of the time which seem to have shaped its functioning. One way to think about the meaning of the Marinid madrasas is to take into account the Marinid state's ideological alignment with the Mālikī *faqīhs*. Regarding the rise of the Marinids, it is oft-repeated that they did not come to power on the wave of a consolidated religious agenda. That being said, their ostensible distancing from the heterodox tenets of the Almohāds from whom they wrenched power, and their reinstating of the Mālikī school of law as the supreme religious-legal authority in matters of day-to-day conduct, does not come as a surprise in light of their bid to legitimize their rule over the populace, and especially the elite 'ulemā of Fez who traditionally possessed the effective religious, and thereby, social clout.

However, to the extent that the Marinid reinstatement of Mālikism was in aid of assuring the upholding of the Marinid authority and its effective implementation, certain injunctions of the Mālikī law regarding endowments – and all Marinid madrasas were public endowments – would have been in favor of the Marinid state. As George Makdisi has pointed out in this context, the Mālikī legal stipulations prohibited the founder from constituting himself as the administrator of his own *waqf* (endowment).²⁷⁰ Thus, the founder could not associate himself/ herself with the endowment in any capacity once the *waqf* was established. But ironically—and this has intriguing implications for our state-sponsored madrasas in the Mālikī environment of Fez—the endowment, in the final

²⁷⁰ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 238. According to Makdisi, the Maliki law, which prohibited the founder from constituting himself as the administrator of his own *waqf* was the prime factor in a reluctance towards the commissioning of madrasas. He says: “To my mind, this Maliki principle was a factor in decline of this school in Baghdad in the Middle Ages at the time when other schools were benefitting from the new madrasas as recruiting centres. This principle also explains why the Malikis, found chiefly in North Africa and Spain, never had any madrasas in Baghdad, nor are they known to have had anywhere else in Eastern Islam, except Syria. They were of rare occurrence in North Africa, including Egypt, and rarer still in Spain.” Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 37-38.

reckoning, had the provision of reverting to the legal authority of the state. Such a caveat upheld by religious law clearly had favorable consequences for the retention of Marinid authority over the royally commissioned madrasas. In this framework then, mediated through the authority of the prevailing jurisprudential school in Maghrib al-Aqsā, the madrasa becomes a site for the Marinids, from which, an ideological corpus resonant with their legitimizing aspirations could be produced and disseminated.

Further, following a concurrent thread of speculation, a profuse employment of *mukhtasars* (abridgements of the canonical texts) in contemporary curriculums deserves attention. Contemporary commentators have attested to these abridged texts establishing their marked presence in the 13th-14th century educational milieu, clearly with explicit sanction of the Marinids. As Vincent Cornell writes in his study of pre-modern Moroccan Sufism:

One of the most important cultural by-products of close relations between Morocco and Egypt in the Marinid period was the adoption of Eastern pedagogical techniques. The most visible symbol of this innovation was a reliance on abridgements (*mukhtasar*, pl. *mukhtasarat*) in teaching grammar, theology and law...It was not long before the abridgments that were used in rural Morocco made their way into the state-controlled madāris of Fez.²⁷¹

To the extent that these *mukhtasars* were a handmaiden of standardization, as was intended by the *ulema* as well as the imperial authority of the time, one may suggest that they paved way for a governed, streamlined discourse common to all centers of learning within the Marinid domains. In this light, the practices of education in these madrasas

²⁷¹ Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 127-128.

attained a deliberate specificity, pressed into service for the sustenance of the Marinid state's ideological and authoritarian needs.

If the above speculative readings into the primary guiding impulses behind the emergence of Marinid madrasas are worthy of consideration, it proceeds that the entire functional apparatus of these spaces bespeaks of some kind of monitoring for the fact that it was mediated by ideological motives on part of Marinid authority. The inwardly oriented spatial organization of the madrasa, in this sense, invokes the notion of architecture as a system of control and surveillance.²⁷²

To revert to the Bou Inānia, we see that its architectural organization is effectively predicated on the central courtyard (fig. 4.67). The other major areas of the madrasa, namely the students' cells, are of such meager dimensions that they would barely accommodate a single person in their stringent space (fig. 4.68). Clearly, these cells were not intended as places for spending extensive amounts of active day-time. Therefore, the spatial thrust of the madrasa, for all purposes, channels its occupants to congregational spaces, and indeed, most spaces – the courtyard, the prayer-hall and the two ancillary chambers flanking the court – are of a congregational nature. The courtyard of the Bou Inānia and the lecture halls opening to the court, by virtue of their ability to accommodate groups, are spaces highly conducive to being monitored. This architectural organization of the madrasa, therefore, is amenable to facilitating the production of a discourse with

²⁷² I hesitate to invoke Foucault here since, I am not sure if it is valid to graft his exposition on power, knowledge and architecture as a system of surveillance, which evolves from a critique of the post-enlightenment western milieu onto the social, cultural and political operations of a premodern Islamic state. However, to the extent that his ideas provide modified tools of articulation for engaging with the nature of the Marinid madrasas, one may draw on his works such as *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), and *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of a Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1977).

the above-mentioned deliberate specificity. In these congregational spaces, where the state-appointed *ustādhs* (professors) work with a group of students, the control over the discourse that is produced, and the modes through which it is disseminated, is quite clearly defined. The architectural-spatial arrangements of the Bou Inania themselves, thus, play a role in facilitating desired modes of knowledge-production and their modulated branching out into the day-to-day transactions through which life was governed in the Marinid domains.

Potential meanings embedded in the ostentatious ornamentation on the facades of the courtyard of the Bou Ināniā could be reflected upon in the framework of similar complexities. Here, it will suffice to say that the hierarchy of geometric as well as vegetal motifs in the *zellīj* work, the carved reliefs in the stuccoed panels, ornate woodwork, and *muqarnas* arches, all interwoven with calligraphic bands, apart from providing a distinct visual register to the space, also provide it with a distinct architectural face (fig. 4.69a & b). They lend a visual primacy, an aesthetic authority to the courtyard, thereby, enhancing its centrality in the over-all architectural scheme. In other words, these ornamental motifs, by directing ones' visual energies to themselves become agents in binding the visitor to the experience of the particular space. In relation to our conjecture about the interior of the Bou Ināniā as a monitored space, the decorative scheme of the madrasa, in a very oblique visual sense, can be interpreted as aiding the process of congregation. Here, the stark, frugal bareness of the cells is offset against the decorative exuberance of the congregational spaces of the Bou Inania, a clue that the congregational spaces are valorized as spaces of authority. The ornate court and the lecture halls attain a spatial

charge that beckons; by the sheer character of their visual embellishments, they become spaces of focus. Through this understanding of the architectural space of the Bou Ināniā then, we can once again invoke its correspondences with the monitoring of the discourse produced therein, to the nexus of knowledge-practices and power within the framework of Marinid architectural patronage. In summation, the Bou Ināniā, like other madrasas commissioned by the Marinids, spawns a series of speculative probes into its visual as well as functional nature: it invites a consideration of its spatial organization and its ornamental scheme, the monitored modes of educational activity conducted therein, and the spatial nuances of the madrasa communicating with the intended discourse that is produced.

As represented by the Bou Ināniā, the Marinid madrasas may thus be understood as architectural tableaux on which ornate configurations of knowledge and power are inscribed. Their visual meaning can be thought of as being situated in the aspirations of their Marinid patrons whose statements of power and authority are mirrored in the spatial and ornamental articulations of these structures as well as in their more intangible operations. As visual archives, as architectural entities expressing consummate social, cultural, and political imperatives of their time, and as an exemplary cluster of specimens in the continuum of Islamic art, these madrasas still invite further explorations into the dynamics of their presence. As for the questions that remain, I shall voice them out as open-ended queries in the following epilogue as I conclude this study on the madrasas produced under the Marinid sovereignty.

Summation: the Afterlife of Marinid Madrasas

The composite explorations in the preceding chapters have attempted to delineate the distinctive composition of the Marinid madrasas as it was shaped by the social and cultural processes within the milieu of 13th-14th century Maghrib al-Aqsā. The specificities of these madrasas' spatial arrangements, and above all, the registers of their ornamental palette – the complex geometric *zellij*-work, the floral and vegetal intricacy of the stucco, the carved woodwork, and the organic interspersing of calligraphy – bespeak a quintessential Marinid artisanal sensibility, and confer upon them a distinctive personality among the vast oeuvre of art and architectural production in premodern Islamic cultures. More appositely, the way in which their spatial and ornamental configurations seem to have been formulated – as tangible analogues to institution-formation in service of the Marinid state apparatus – elucidates the correspondences of their architectural expression with the monitored modes of their operation, with their mandate as instruments for upholding and disseminating the ideological aspirations of the Marinid state.

But concurrently, the role of these madrasas in enhancing the prestige of their Marinid patrons is incontestable. To the extent that the commissioning of the madrasas also heralded the Marinid sovereigns' secure alignment with the cause of Islamic religious sanctity, it supplemented the sovereigns' prestige by projecting them as exemplary rulers, sensitive to the exigencies of the populace, fired up to espouse the commendable Islamic norms. And it is this logic of safeguarding the exemplary Islamic

norms through the patronage of religious institutions on the part of the Marinids that finds an inherent expression in the visual sumptuousness of these structures. That the prestige of the patron was mirrored in the opulent visual grandeur of the madrasas is aptly illustrated by an anecdote recounted by Leo Africanus involving the details of the costs incurred in the construction of the Bou ‘Ināniā madrasa. On being presented the bills of the expenses which were excessive for a structure of those dimensions, the madrasa’s founder, Sultān Abū ‘Inān Fāris, is reported to have torn them, flung them into the water-channel running through the madrasa’s court, and extemporized a distich of verse whose purport was that each precious, beautiful thing cannot be but cheap however grand its expenditure might be, and “neither is anything of too high a price, which pleaseth a man’s affection.”²⁷³ In Abū ‘Inān’s grand gesture, it is possible to discern the esteem that his creation, the Bou ‘Ināniā madrasa, commanded in his eyes. It is an esteem mirrored in the exquisite visual arrangements of the madrasa, in the architectural opulence accorded to the madrasa through Abū ‘Inān’s will in order to make his own allegorical presence in the structure more manifest.²⁷⁴ All in all, the anecdote represents the resolute centrality of these institutions of learning in the Marinid milieu.

²⁷³ Johannes Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, Translated by John Pory (London, 1600), 127. Hillenbrand reproduces the couplet thus: “Beauty is cheap, no matter what the cost/ For a thing that enthralls, money’s well lost.” See, Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 246. Also see, Alfred Bel, “Inscriptions Arabes de Fès,” *Journal Asiatique* (November-December 1918): 343, and Charles Terrasse, *Médersas du Maroc* (Éditions Albert Morancé, 1927), 24.

²⁷⁴ We have seen a related awareness of and involvement with architecture and its ornament in Sultān Abū’l-Hassan’s scrupulous requirements for the palace he had commissioned for his new bride where he specified in detail how the interior spaces of the structure should be arranged and ornamented. See, E. Lévi-Provençal, “Un Nouveau Texte d’Histoire Mérinide: Le Musnad d’Ibn Marzūk,” *Hespéris* 5 (1925): 38-39, trans. 75-76.

Further, the plentiful commissioning of the madrasas by the Marinids in the city of Fez is a phenomenon which does not merit any special exegesis. As the power-base and the capital of the Marinid domains, Fez, understandably enough arrested the Marinids' enduring attention. It is in the embellishment of old Fez along with the contiguous new city, *Madīnat al-Baydā* or Fès Jadīd, that the Marinid resources were concertedly invested. From among the entire oeuvre of Marinid madrasas, it is in Fez that they are the most numerous, and survive as a cohesive group. Thus, a study that centers on the madrasas commissioned under the Marinids, inescapably equates to a study of these madrasas in Fez. It is for this reason that Fez features so dominantly in engaging with these Marinid institutions of learning, this group of structures bound by the express imperatives of their formation as well as a shared visual palette.

But the madrasas commissioned in other centres of the Marinid domains, for instance, the ones at Salé and Meknès, are inscribed equally in the circle of Marinid institution-formation as they are in the artisanal idiom permeating 14th-century Maghrib al-Aqṣā. Even the incidence of the madrasa in the Marinid *khalwā* of the Chella does not constitute as much an anomaly when read in light of the typological associations it makes with its other Marinid counterparts. Of course, this formation also has to be appreciated within the context of a burgeoning impulse in the Marinid Maghrib al-Aqṣā; it is an impulse embedded in the institutional as well as structural compositeness of the large social institutions ingrained in the Islamic east. The creation of these madrasas thus becomes symptomatic of the cultural translation taking place between the 13th-14th-

century Maghrib al-Aqṣā and the broader socio-cultural lexicon of the Islamic world contemporaneous with it.

In the ultimate reckoning however, the study of the Marinid madrasas spawns fresh queries in relation to the trajectories that they have charted in subsequent epochs. Most remarkably, a near-total wane in their commissioning after the creation of the Bou ‘Ināniā madrasa (1350-55) is quite intriguing. What could be the reasons for these madrasas’ supreme decline after their prolific creation, especially under Abū’l-Hassan and Abū ‘Inān, in all the reaches of the Marinid domains? In this regard, the most straightforward explanation probably lies in the infirmity of the Marinid Empire itself on the heels of Sultān Abū ‘Inān’s assassination in 1358. The subsequent Marinid rulers, with brief spells of respite, were embroiled in relentless power-intrigues, and eventually, after the death of Sultan ‘Abd al-Haq al-Marīnī in 1465 during the revolution in Fez, the Wattāsīd ruling house assumed the effective prerogatives of governing the state. The prime days of Marinid sovereignty in the Maghrib were over with Abū ‘Inān, and with it were gone the conducive energies for architectural patronage and institution-formation.

However, there may be another possible cause for the termination of the madrasa building activity under the Marinids: the debilitation of the Marinid hegemony also coincides with the ravaging onslaught of Black Death that hounded Europe as well as vast expanses of Islamic polities during the middle of the 14th-century.²⁷⁵ Undoubtedly, the magnitude of this pestilence must have significantly muted all the social, cultural, and

²⁷⁵ A comprehensive account of the social and religious responses to Black Death in Islam is found in Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977). In context of the Marinids, the only work that focuses on epidemics and famines in medieval Maghrib is Jamal Lakrakeze, “Famines et Épidémies au Maroc Mérinide et Saadien du XIII^e au XIV^e Siècles,” Doctorat Nouveau régime (Ph.D.), Université de Toulouse II, 1993; Unpublished.

economic processes in the Marinid realms. In wake of the extensive disruption of civic life – agriculture, industry, hygiene, public health, and so on – it is not very far-fetched to hypothesize the epidemic’s negative impact on most areas of the social and cultural life in Maghrib al-Aqsā including the building activity under the Marinids.

The Marinid madrasas, nevertheless, have endured in their own way, with each surviving madrasa charting its own curious trajectory, its own afterlife. The madrasa al-‘Attārīn and the madrasa Bou ‘Ināniā are well-preserved emblems of Moroccan heritage, while the madrasa al-Sahrīj needs concerted attention on that front. The madrasa al-Sbāyīn and the madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh are in too advanced a state of ruin to give us any cogent information about their spatial and visual configurations, while the two oldest Marinid madrasas, the Saffārīn and the Dār al-Makhzan of Fès Jadīd, are transformed beyond recognition to retain any of their original Marinid embellishments. With this state of affairs to reckon with, the foremost question that emerges in relation to the Marinid madrasas is: what forces have shaped each madrasa’s afterlife?

While there is no definitive way of answering the above question, this line of interrogation opens up a different terrain involving the dynamic of French colonial intervention in constructing a modified discourse around these structures, and mediating in their preservation.²⁷⁶ There is extensive documentation from the French protectorate period that records in detail the policies and actions related to the conservation of these

²⁷⁶ As early as 1917, Alfred Bel, in his seminal study on the monuments of Fez, decried the issues involved in the preservation of the madrasas, and touched upon the pitfalls of European interventions: “N’oublions jamais que, s’il n’est pas possible de demander aux artistes décorateurs de Fès à notre époque de faire du style de l’époque mérinide, il n’est pas moins délicat à nous, Européens, de toucher à ces productions des artistes du XIV^e siècle, que de vouloir nous mêler, nous profanes, de réglementer et d’ “européaniser” les institutions religieuses de l’Islam.” Alfred Bel, “Inscriptions Arabes de Fès,” *Journal Asiatique*, t. X (1917): 151.

monuments, and a consideration of the Marinid madrasas within the framework of their inadvertent incorporation into the operations of colonial modernity is a separate project in itself. However, the impact of the French colonial presence on these structures has clearly shaped their contemporary bearing. Standing seven hundred years apart in time from the milieu in which they were created, nearly disassociated from their original function and character, the Marinid madrasas speak to us through the veil of the transformations that have accrued to them over centuries. In a severance from their original persona, the value of these madrasas lies in their existence as specimens of Moroccan architectural heritage.

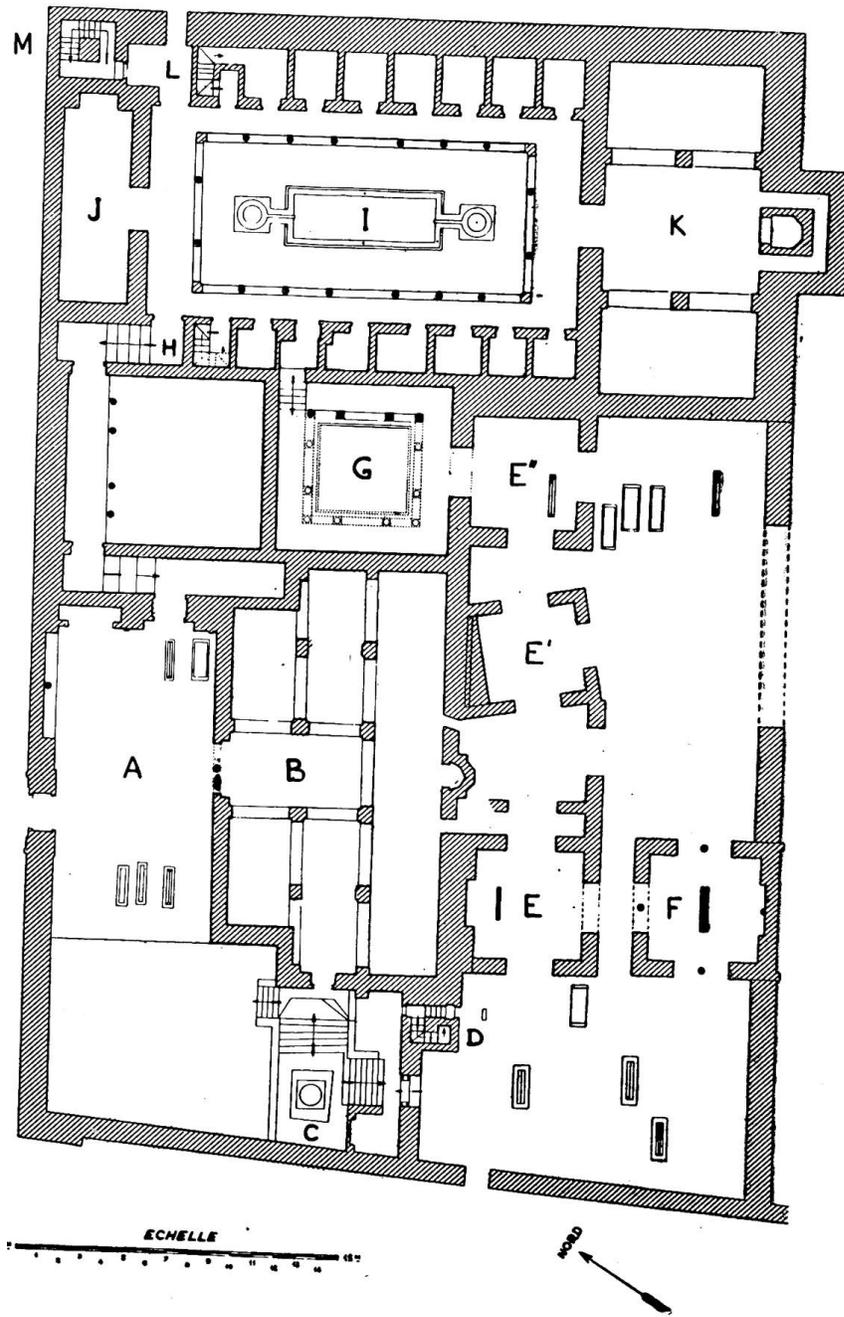
Thus, the final question that emerges in connection with the Marinid madrasas is: to what extent do these emblems of Marinid heritage play a role in defining contemporary Moroccan identity? In this regard, it can only be said that all the later epochs have appropriated and replicated the visual idiom honed during the Marinid times to the extent that it has become the standard visual register for Moroccan artistic expression even in our own times. Contemporary Morocco seems to have embraced these madrasas as historical emblems of its identity. In their transformed state as ‘museums’ harboring an aura of the representative visual heritage of Maghrib al-Aqsā, the Marinid madrasas, with their distinctive ornamental configurations, define the Moroccan visual sensibility even today. It is a sensibility diligently reflected in the replication or interpretation of their visual motifs in contemporary structures – among a plethora of examples, the Sultan Hasan mosque at Casablanca (fig. 5.1 & 5.2), completed in 1993 is a vibrant specimen – and it bespeaks an alignment with these symbols of Maghribi heritage. It is an alignment

fundamental to the creation of contemporary Moroccan identity through an appropriation of its visual past.

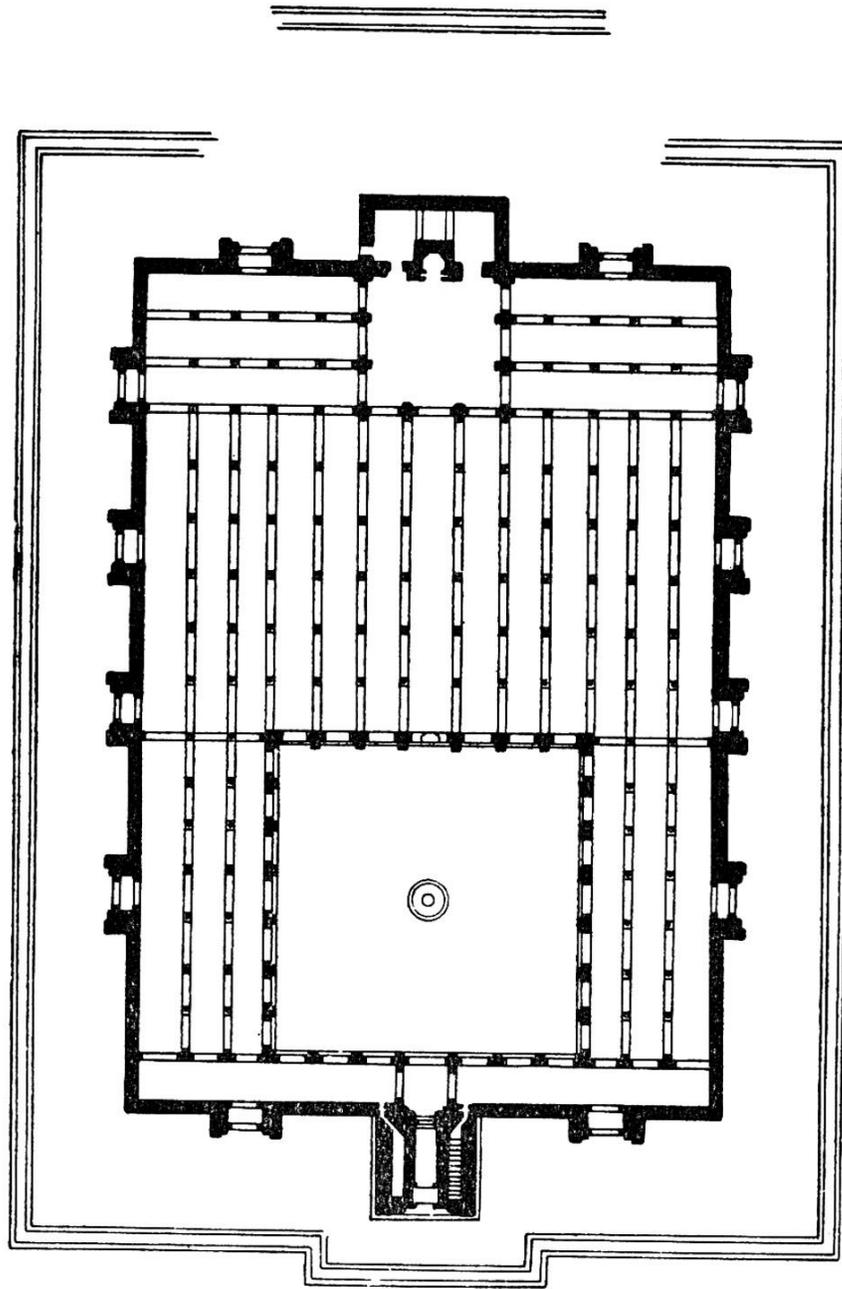
Within the encompassing framework of Islamic art history thus, the Marinid madrasas rest on a conspicuous plane, owing to the singular conditions of their incidence, and more so by the composite relationships of their spatial and ornamental configurations endemic to the social and cultural processes of 13th-14th century Maghrib al-Aqṣā. In this regard, the explorations in this dissertation are just a premise for discovering new terrains of inquiry into the dynamic of these madrasas' formation, visuality and afterlives – into their historical vicissitudes – within the frame of art and architectural production in premodern Islamic cultures.



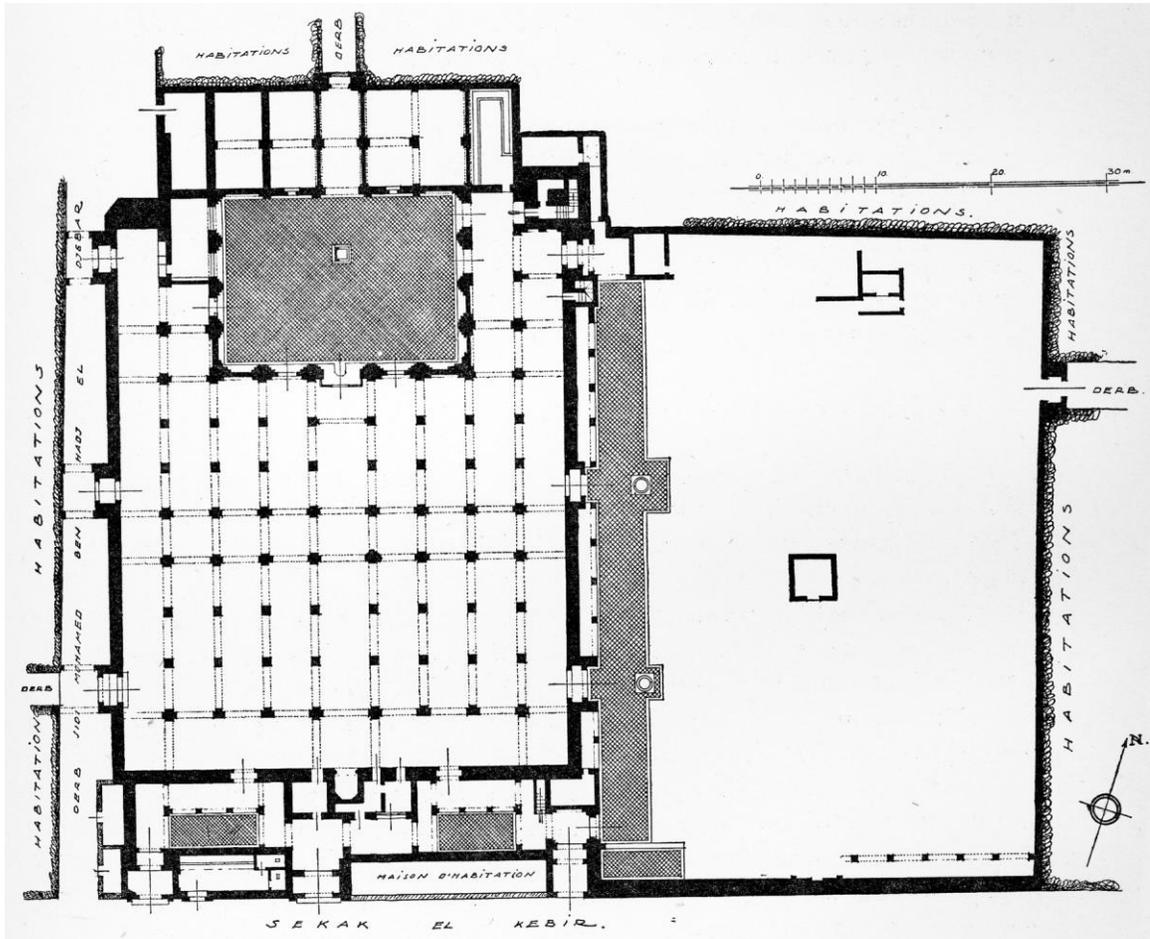
Map 1.1: Map of Morocco



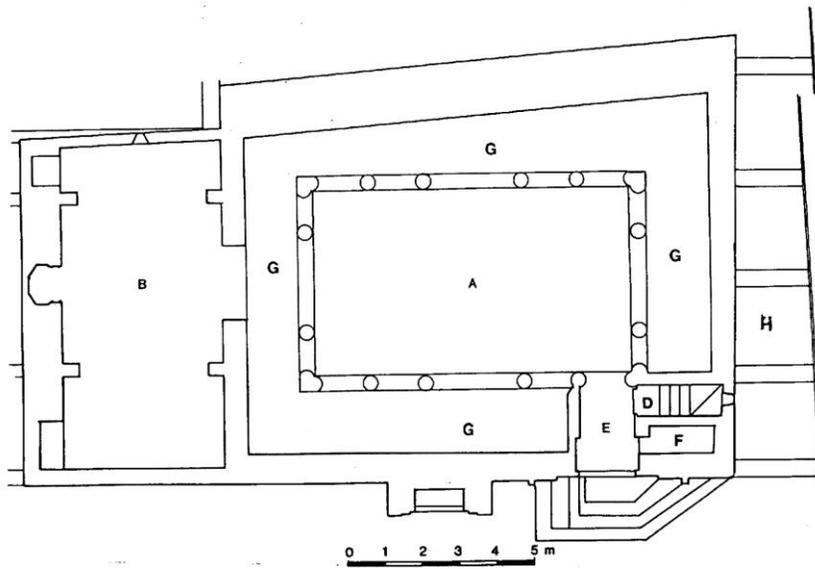
Drg.1.1: Chella: Marīnid *Khalwā*: Schematic Plan.



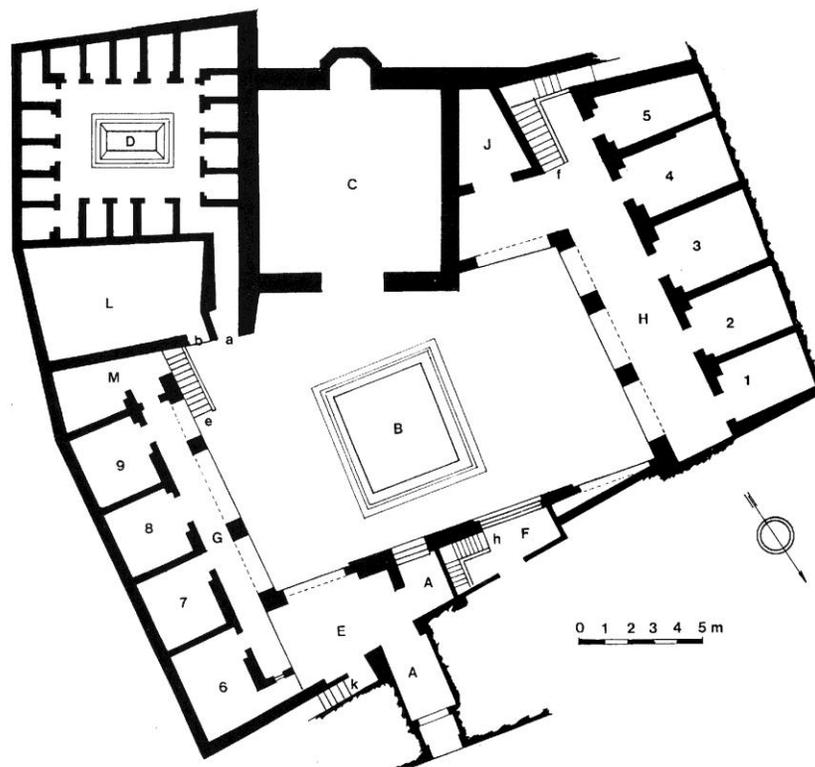
Drg.4.1: Jāmi' mosque at al-Mansūrā: Schematic Plan



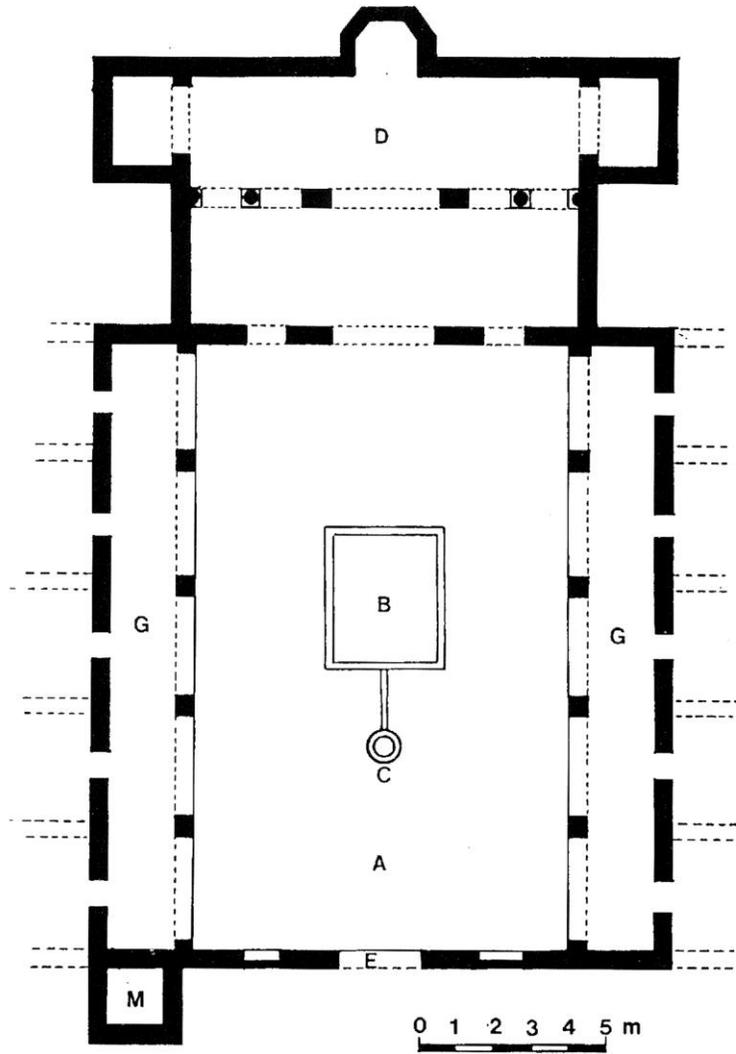
Drg.4.2: The Great Mosque at Taza: Schematic Plan.



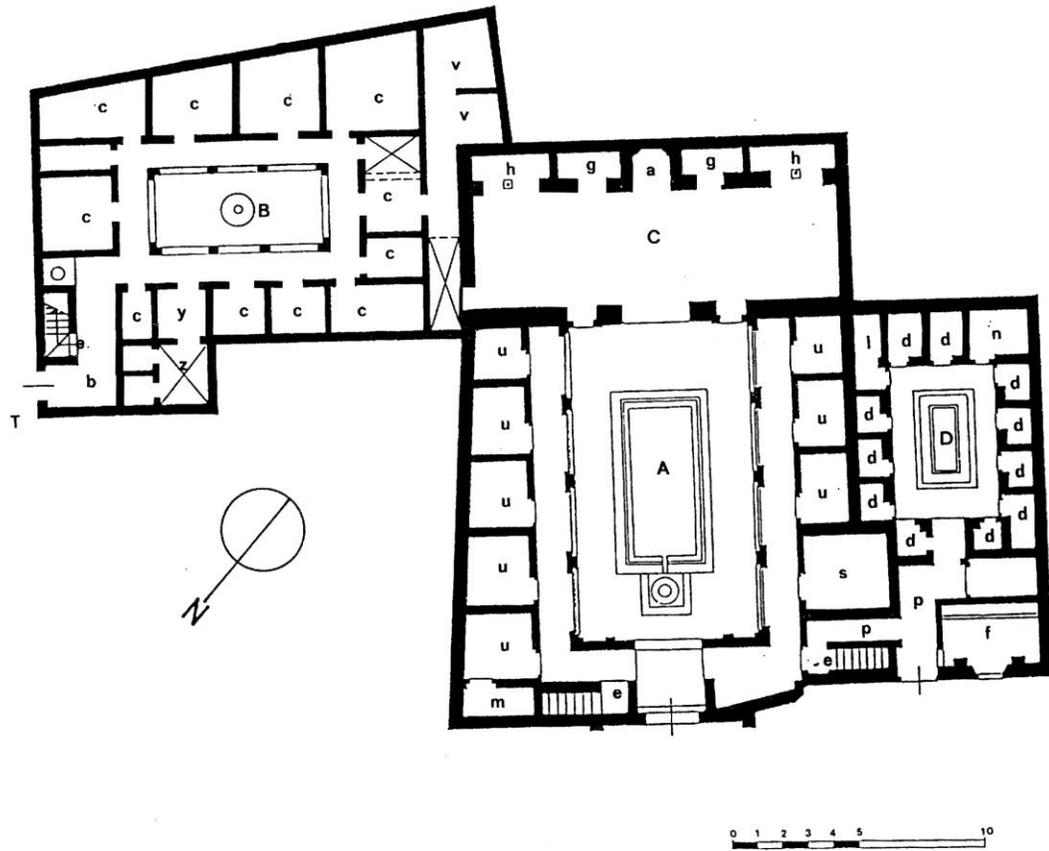
Drg.4.3: Madrasa of Abū'l-Hassan at Salé: Schematic Plan.



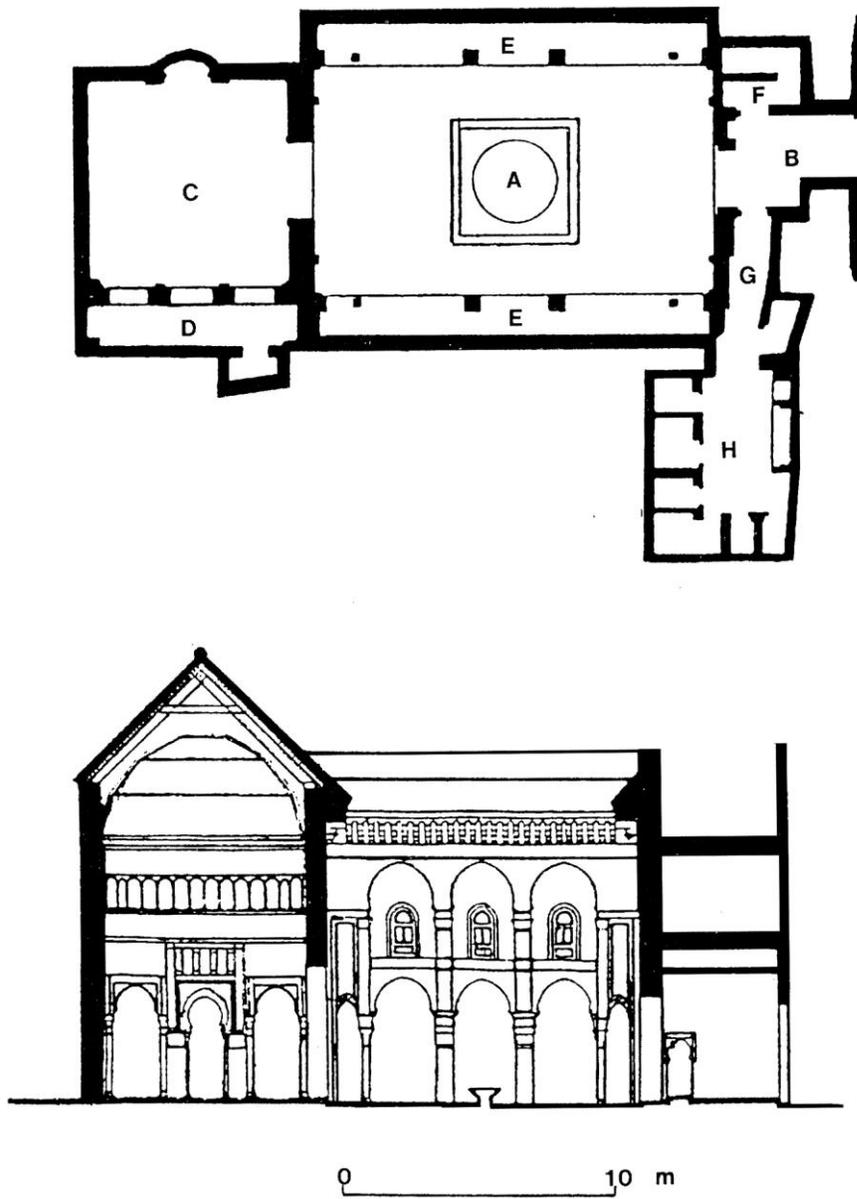
Drg.4.4: Madrasa al-Saffārīn: Schematic Plan



Drg. 4.5: Madrasa Dār al-Makhzan: Schematic Plan

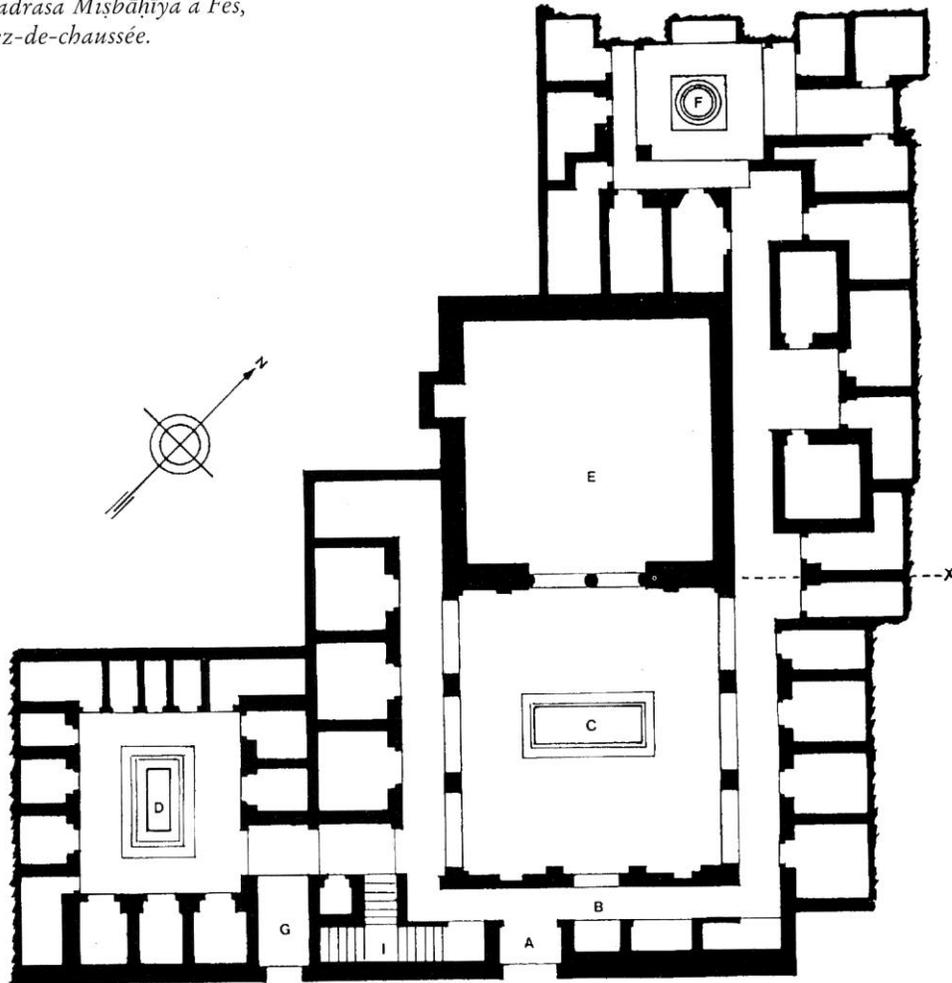


Drg. 4.6: Madrasa al-Sahrīj (with Sbāyīn): Schematic Plan

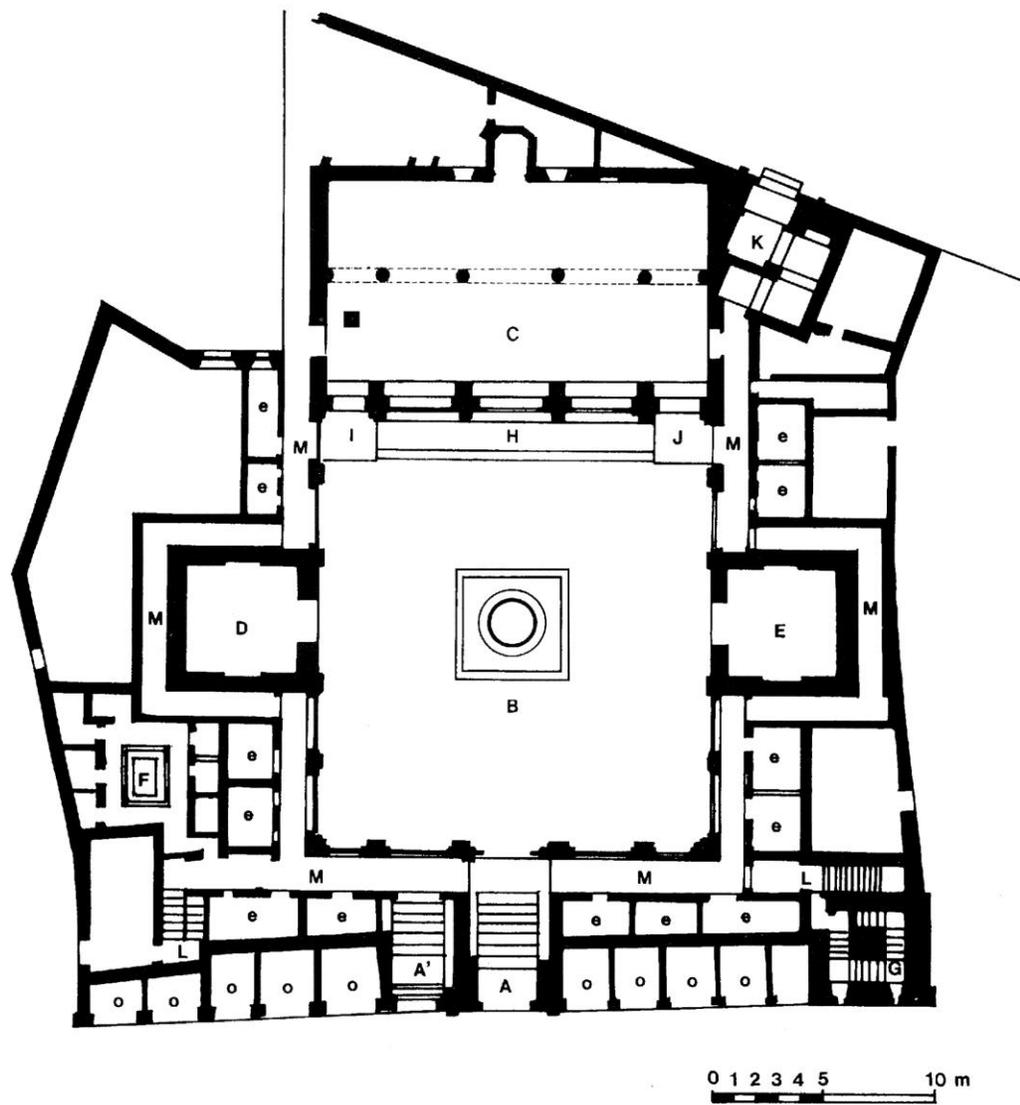


Drg. 4.7: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn: Schematic Plan and Section

Pl. 66. *Madrasa Mişbāhīya à Fès,*
plan du rez-de-chaussée.



Drg. 4.8: Madrasa al-Misbāhīyyāh: Schematic Plan



Drg. 4.9: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā: Schematic Plan.



Fig.1.1: Chella: View of the Fortifications



Fig.1.2: Chella: Portal flanked by Bastions



Fig.1.3: Chella: Detail of the Portal



Fig.1.4: Chella: Detail of the Bastion with *muqarnas* Elements



Fig.1.5: Chella: Remains from the Roman period



Fig.1.6: Chella: Entrance to the *Khalwā*



Fig.1.7: Chella: *Khalwā*: Court with Graves



Fig.1.8: Chella: *Khalwā*: Remains of Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's Mosque



Fig.1.9: Chella: *Khalwā*: Minaret of Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's Mosque



Fig.1.10: Chella: *Khalwā*: Remains of Abū'l-Hassan's Sepulcher



Fig.1.11: Chella: *Khalwā*: Remains of Abū'l-Hassan's Sepulcher, Detail



Fig.1.12: Chella: *Khalwā*: Early Excavations

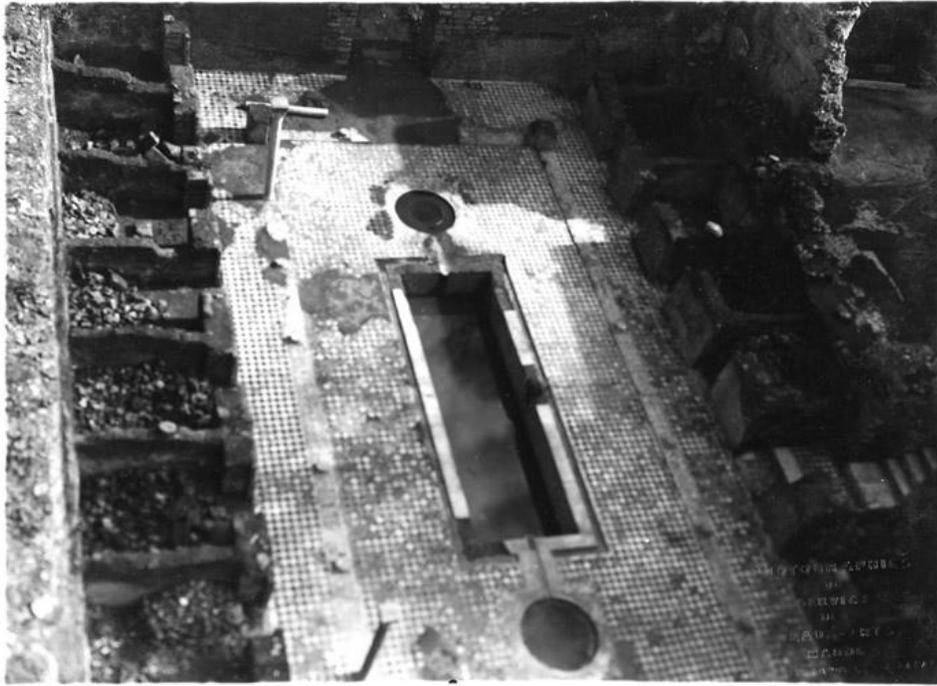


Fig.1.13: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa



Fig.1.14: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa with the Pool in the Court and the Remains of the Student's Cells



Fig.1.15: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa: Courtyard and the Minaret



Fig.1.16: Chella: *Khalwā*: Abū Yūsuf Yā'qūb's mosque:
Remains of the Minaret



Fig.1.17: Chella: *Khalwā*: Abū'l-Hassan's Sepulcher: Ornamental Details



Fig.1.18: Abū Yā'qūb Yūsuf's Marble Funerary Stele

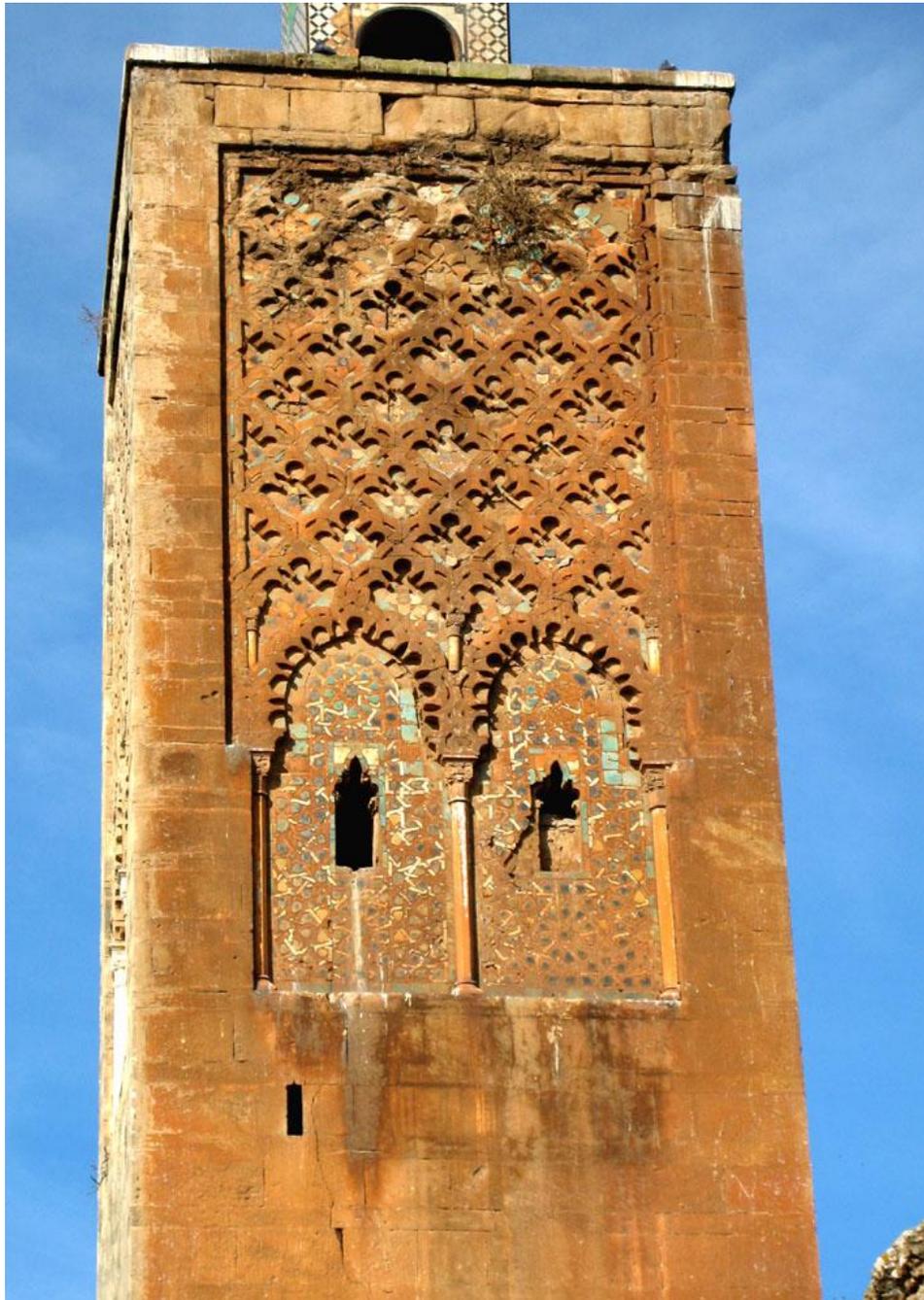


Fig.1.19: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa: Minaret with lozenge patterns and remains of *zellij*



Fig.1.20: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa: Band of Inscription at the Entrance to Courtyard



Fig.1.21: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa: Courtyard with Pool and Ancillary Chambers



Fig.1.22: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa: Remains of the Stairs



Fig.1.23: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa: Pool with Circular Collection Basin



Fig.1.24: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa:
Arched Colonnades in the Prayer-Hall



Fig.1.25: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa:
Remains of the *mihrāb* niche in the Prayer-Hall



Fig.1.26: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa:
View of the Court with the Remains of the Anterior Chamber



Fig.1.27: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa:
Minaret: Details of Geometric Tile-Work



Fig.1.28: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa:
Remains of Decorative *zellij*

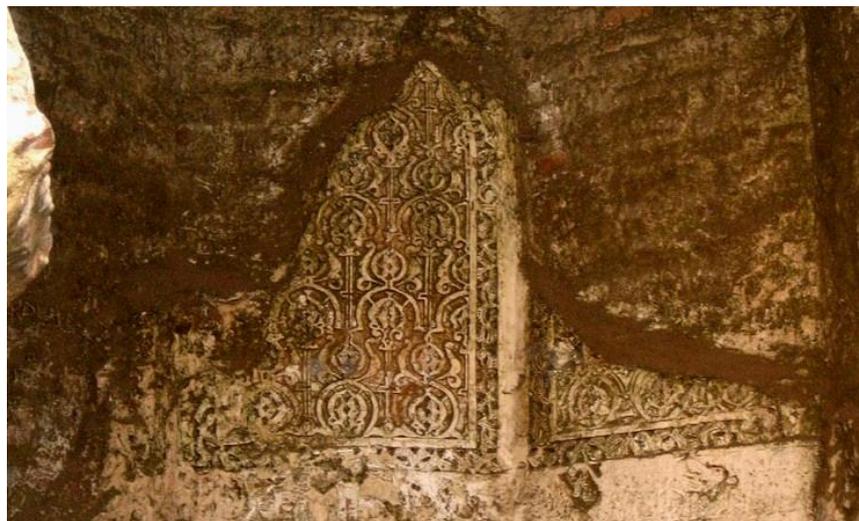


Fig.1.29: Chella: *Khalwā*: Madrasa:
Traces of Ornamental Stucco in the *mihrāb* niche



Fig.1.30: Chella: Tombs of *Marabouts* or Popular Saints



Fig.1.31: Chella: Gathering for Pious Reverence near a Grave



Fig.2.1: Isfahan: Madrasa i-Imāmī

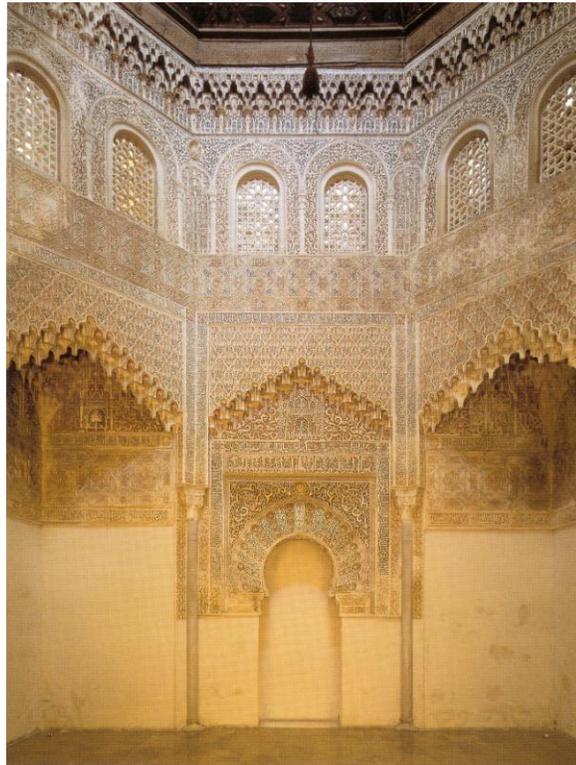


Fig. 2.2: Restored *mihṛāb* façade of Madrasa al-Yūsufiyyā at Granada



Fig.3.2: Madrasa al-Jadīdah (Bou ‘Ināniā) at Meknès:
Basin-Fountain in the Court

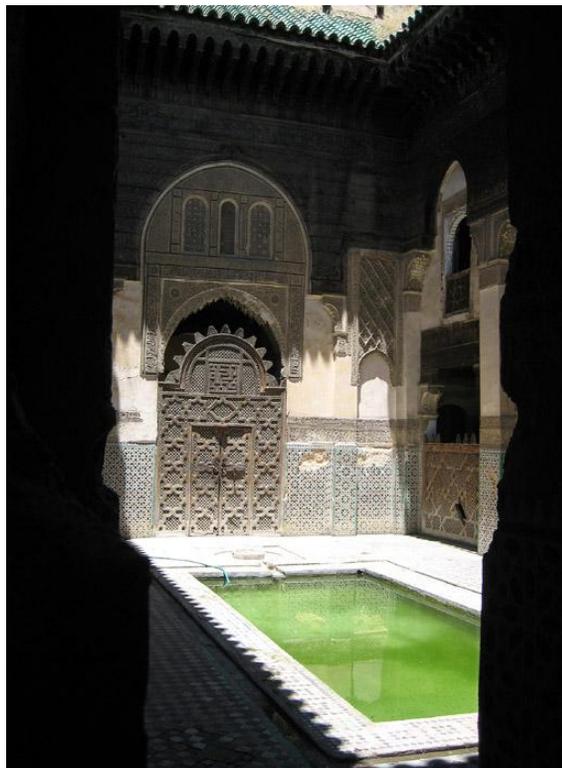


Fig.3.3: Madrasa al-Sahrīj, Fez:
Pool in the Court



Fig.3.4: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā, Fez:
Water-Channel in the Court adjacent to the Prayer-Hall

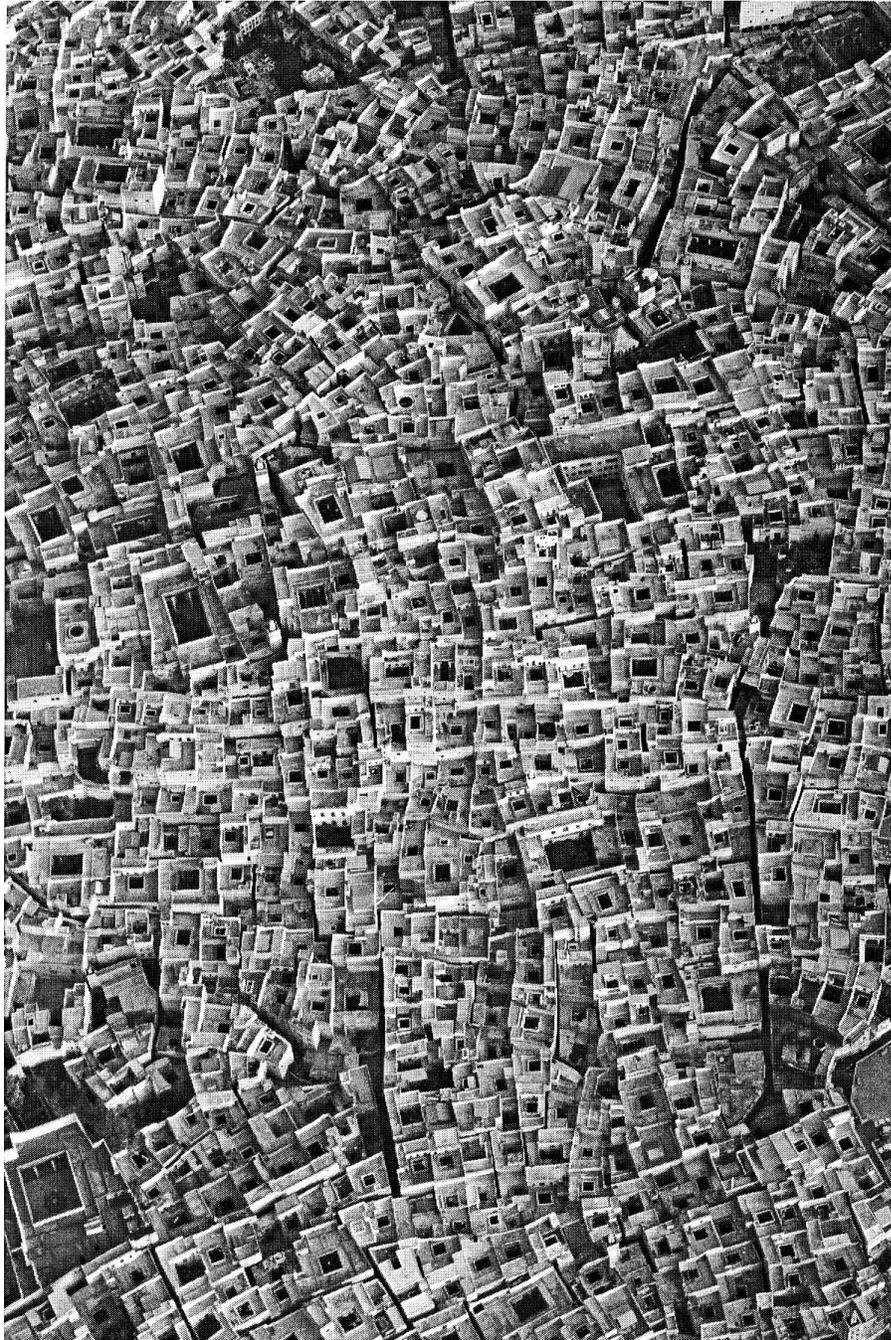


Fig.3.5: Ariel view of Fez *medina*

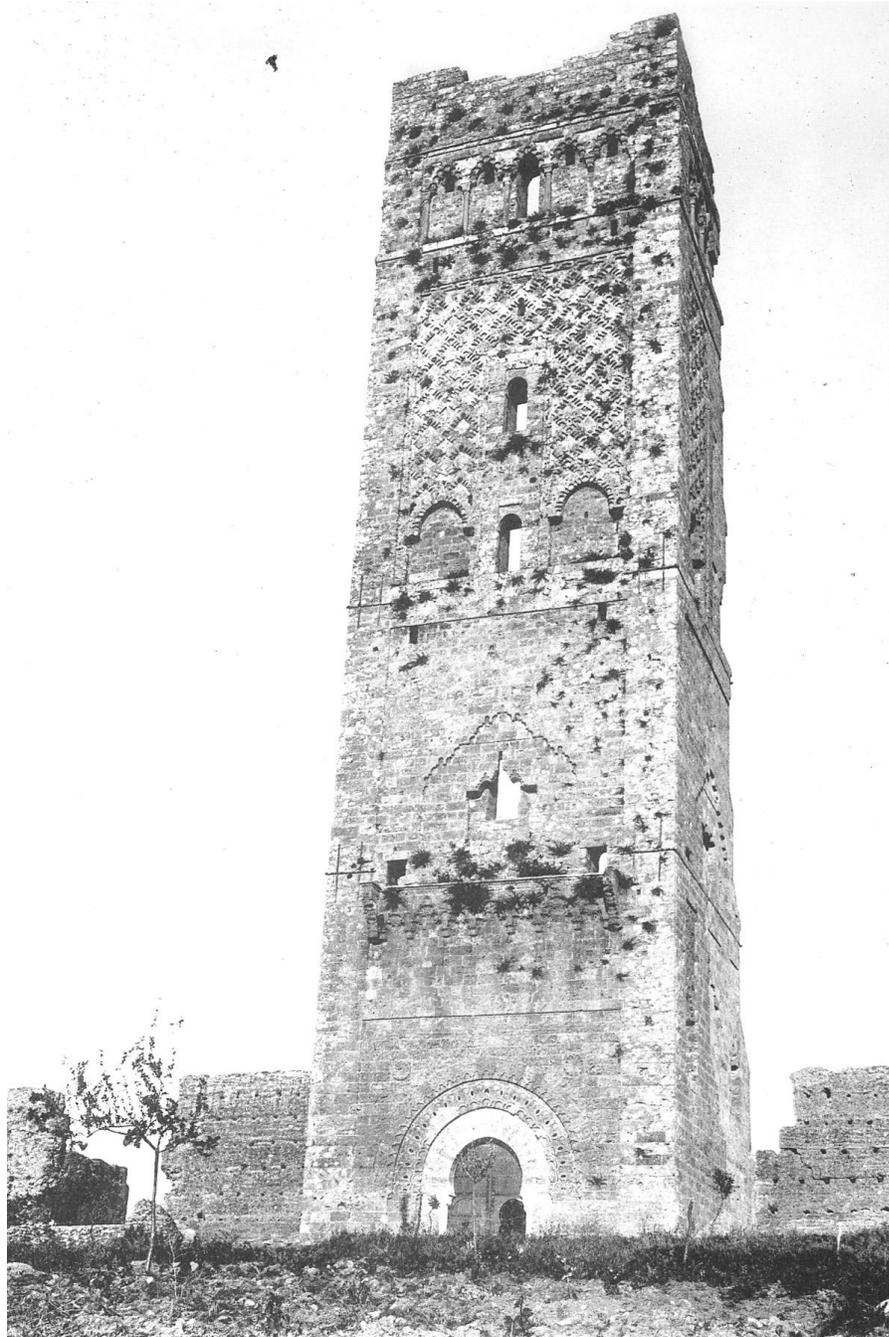


Fig.4.1: Great Mosque at al-Mansūrā:

Remains of the Minaret

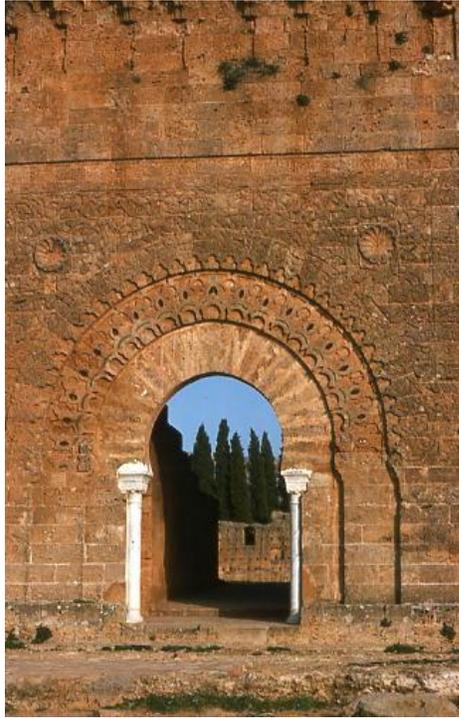


Fig.4.2: Great Mosque at al-Mansūrā:
Detail of the Ornate Portal at the Base of the Minaret



Fig.4.3: Great Mosque at Taza:
View of Court and Minaret after Restoration

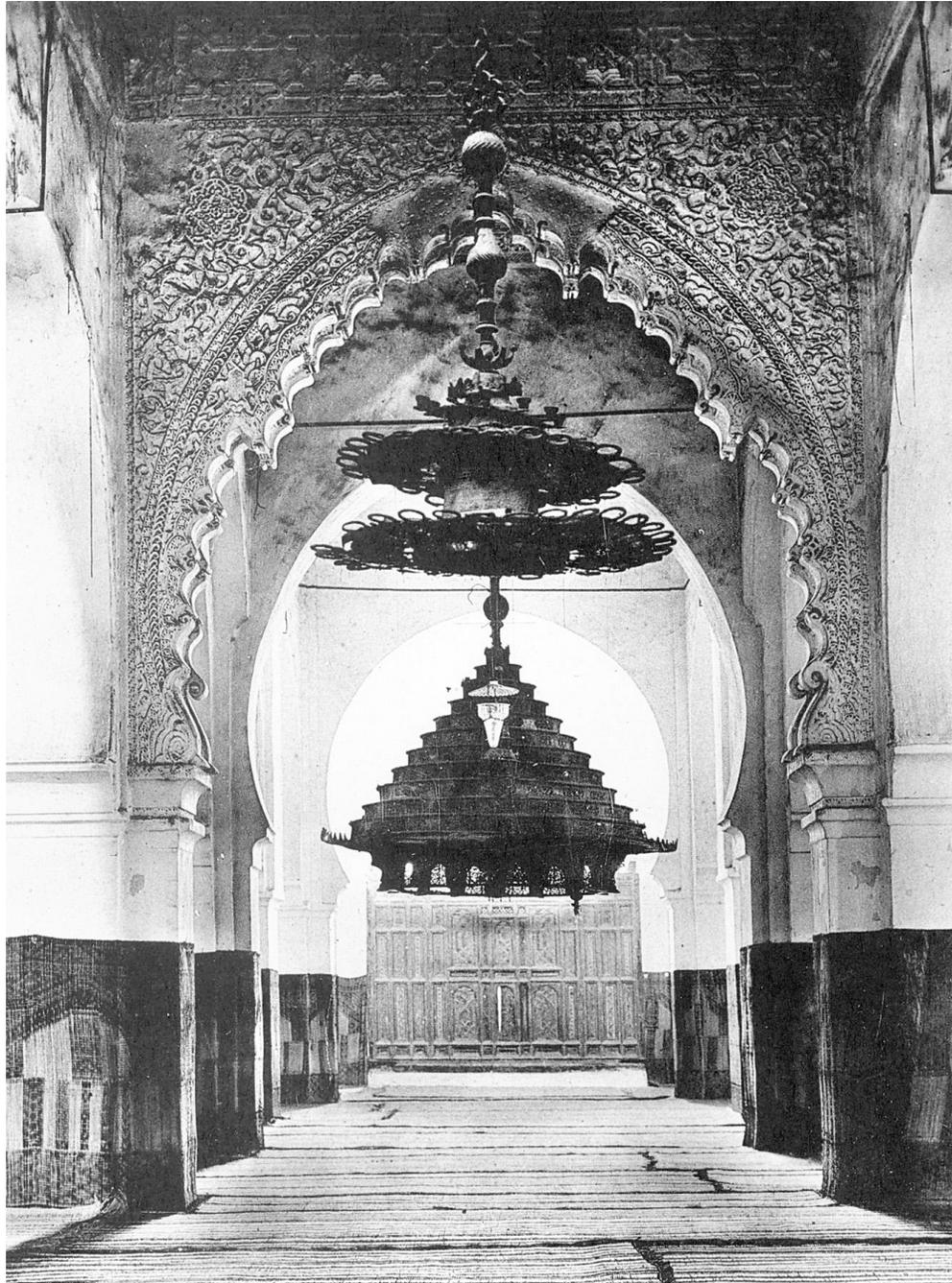


Fig.4.4: Great Mosque at Taza: Bay before the *mihrah*

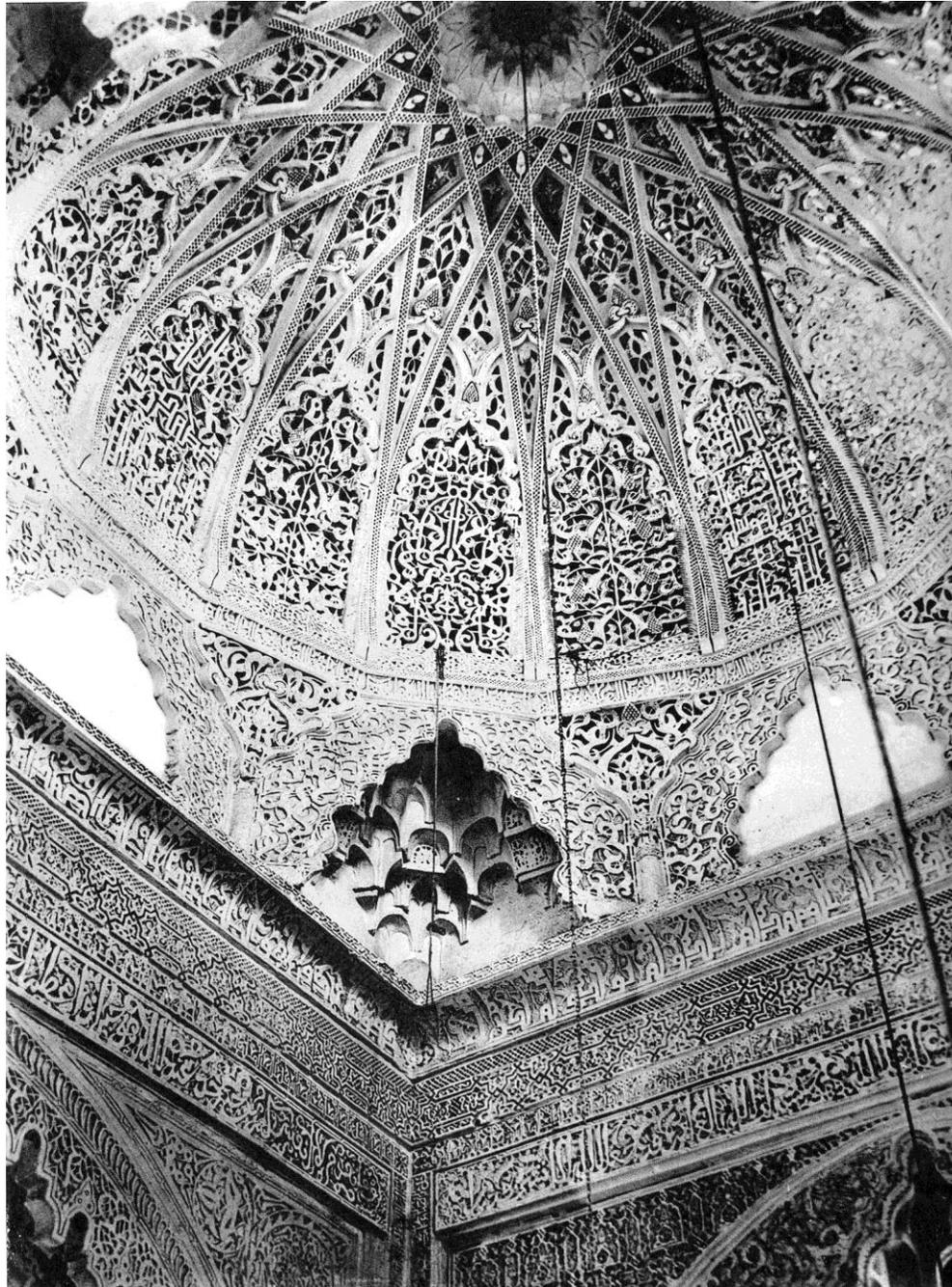


Fig.4.5: Great Mosque at Taza:
Pierced Dome over the Bay in front of the *mihṛāb*



Fig.4.6a: Great Mosque at Taza: Bronze Chandelier

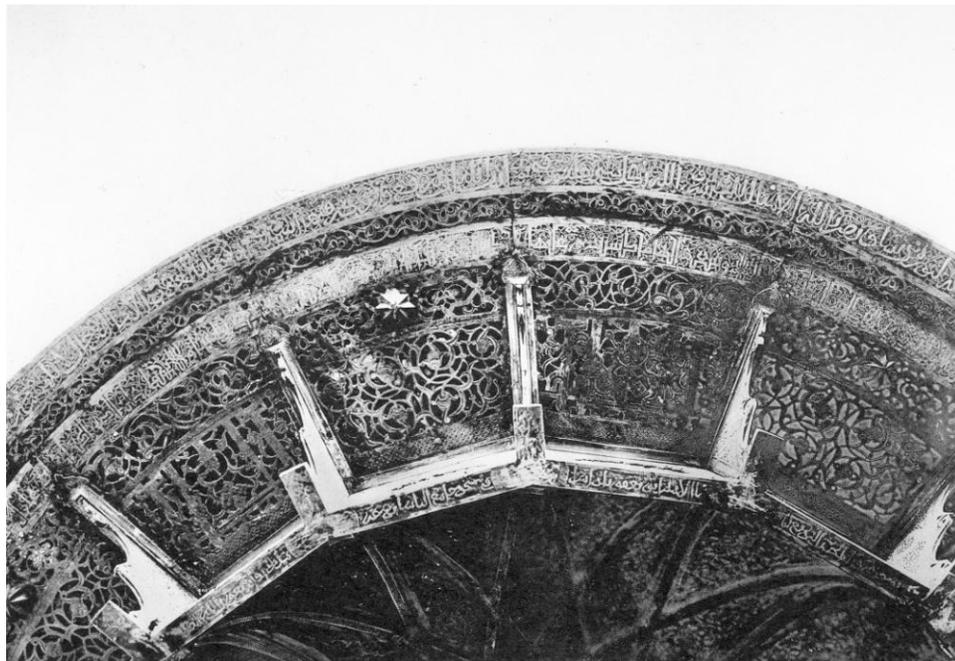


Fig.4.6b: Great Mosque at Taza: Detail of Bronze Chandelier

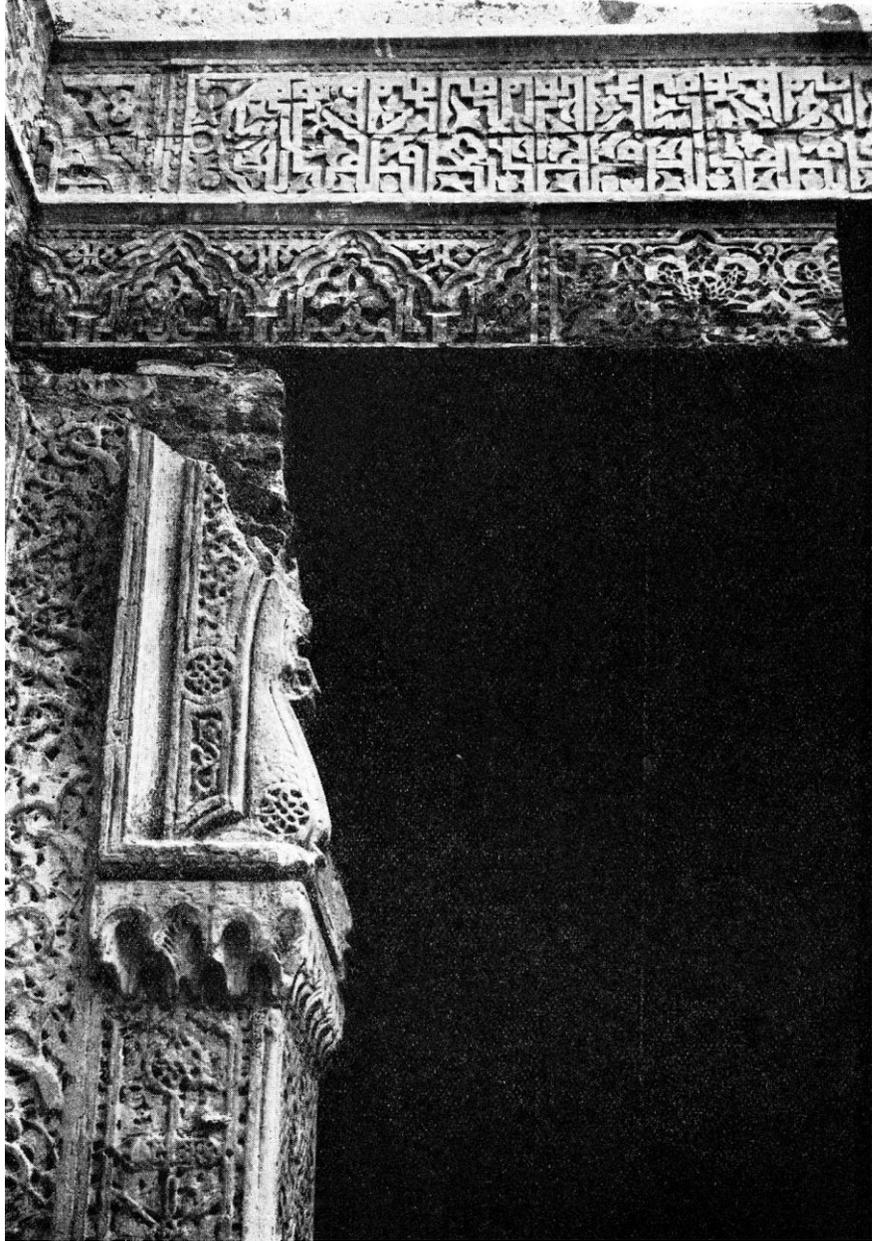


Fig.4.7: Hammām al-Mukhfiyā, Fez:
Detail of carved stucco and cedar lintel



Fig.4.8: Ornate Cedar Panel from Dār Swiqet



Fig.4.9: *Zellij* Panel from Dār Swiqet



Fig.4.10: Fez: Madrasa al-Saffārīn: View of the Court



Fig.4.11: Carved Cedar Panel from Madrasa al-Jadīdah of Ceuta preserved at Museo de Ceuta



Fig.4.12: Meknès: Madrasa al-Filāliyah

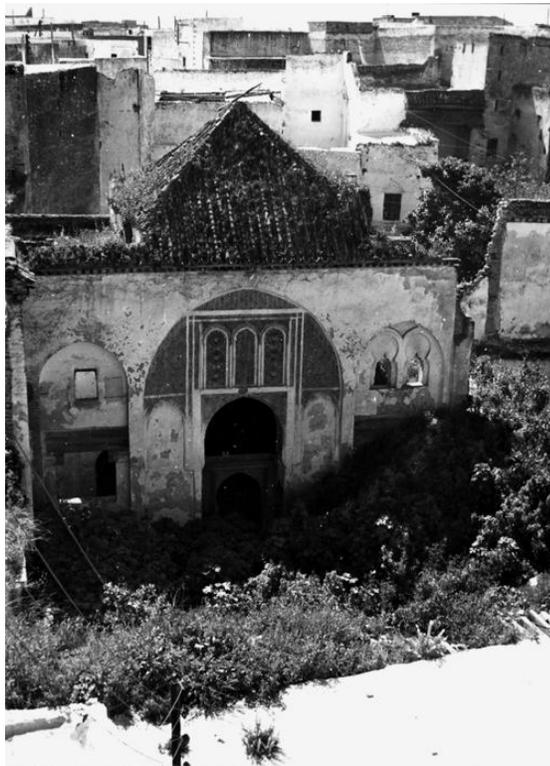


Fig.4.13: Meknès: Madrasa al-'Udūl



Fig.4.14: Meknès: Madrasa al-Jadīdah
or Madrasa Bou ‘Ināniā



Fig.4.15: Dār Alaoui (14th -century)



Fig.4.16: Salé: Abū'l-Hassan's Madrasa: entrance portal



Fig.4.17: Salé: Abū'l-Hassan's Madrasa: view of Court

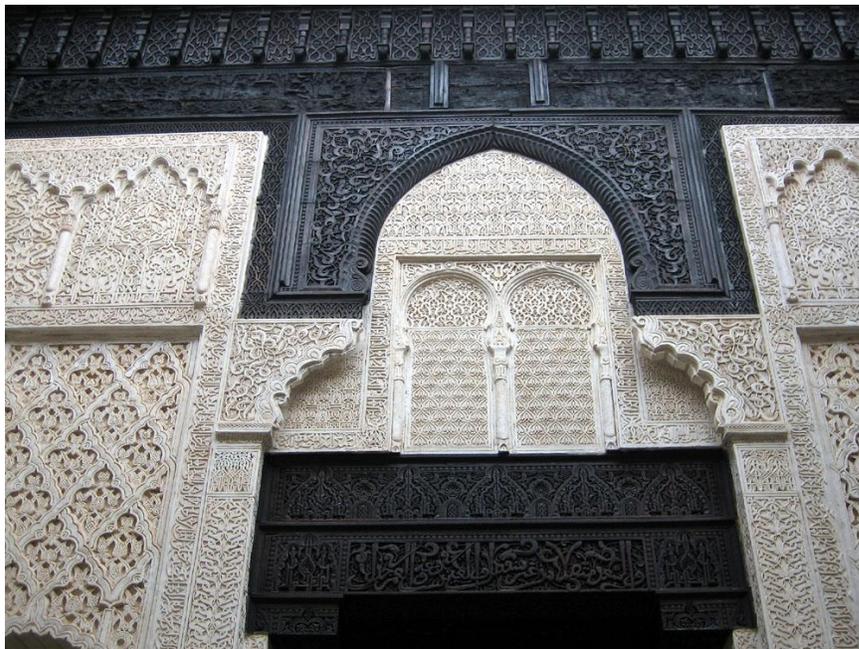


Fig.4.18: Salé: Abū'l-Hassan's Madrasa: detail of Court façade



Fig.4.19: Salé: Abū'l-Hassan's Madrasa: Façade of Prayer-Hall

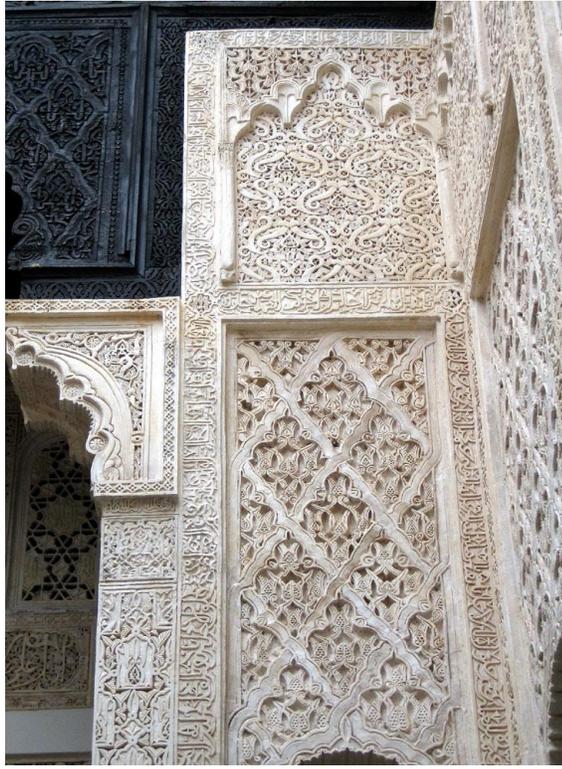


Fig.4.20: Salé: Abū'l-Hassan's Madrasa:
Ornamental Stucco Panel

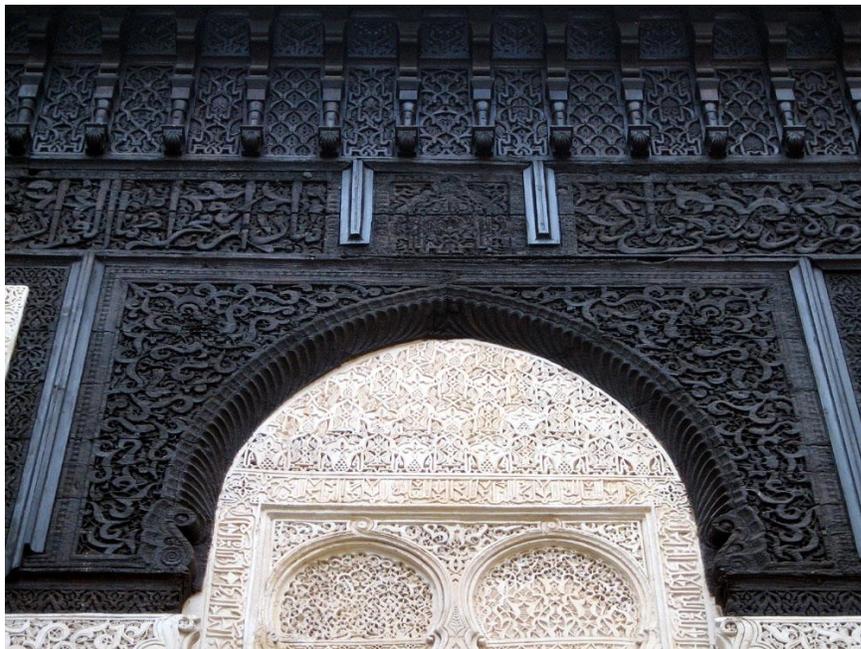


Fig.4.21: Salé: Abū'l-Hassan's Madrasa: Carved Cedar Frieze



Fig.4.22: Salé: Abū'l-Hassan's Madrasa:
Ornamental calligraphy in *zellij* and stucco



Fig.4.23: Fez: Saffārīn Madrasa: Court with the Pool



Fig.4.24: Fez: Saffārīn Madrasa: Arcade with Arched Pilasters



Fig.4.25: Fez: Saffārīn Madrasa:
Prayer-Hall from the Court



Fig.4.26: Fez: Saffārīn Madrasa:
Minaret over Entrance Passage with interlaced Lozenge Masonry



Fig.4.27: Fez: Dār al-Makhzan Madrasa:
Court with Pool and flanking Cloisters

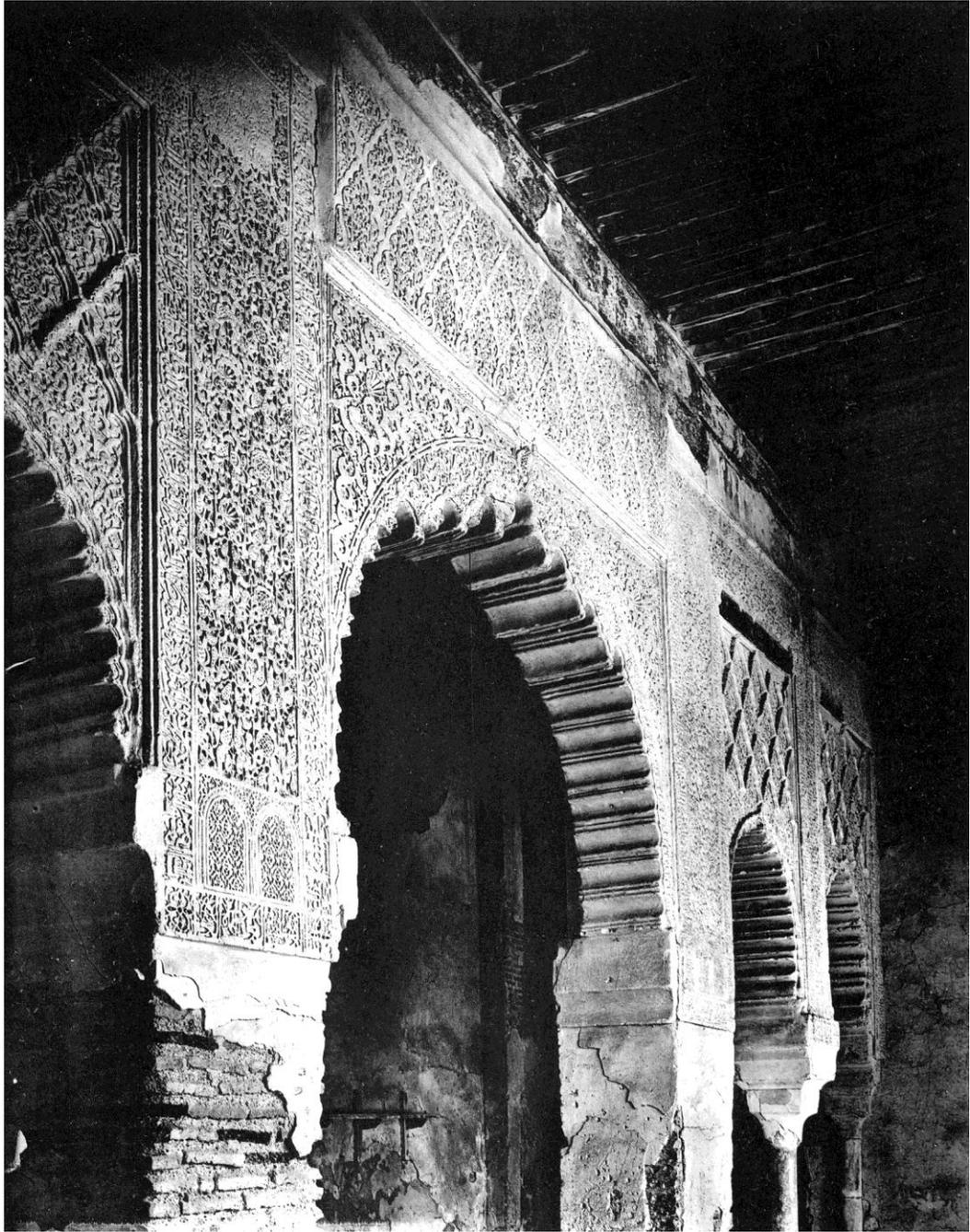


Fig.4.28: Fez: Dār al-Makhzan Madrasa:
Ornate Colonnaded Façade in Prayer-Hall



Fig.4.29: Fez: Madrasa al-Sahrīj:
Façade of the Arcade between Court and Student's Cells

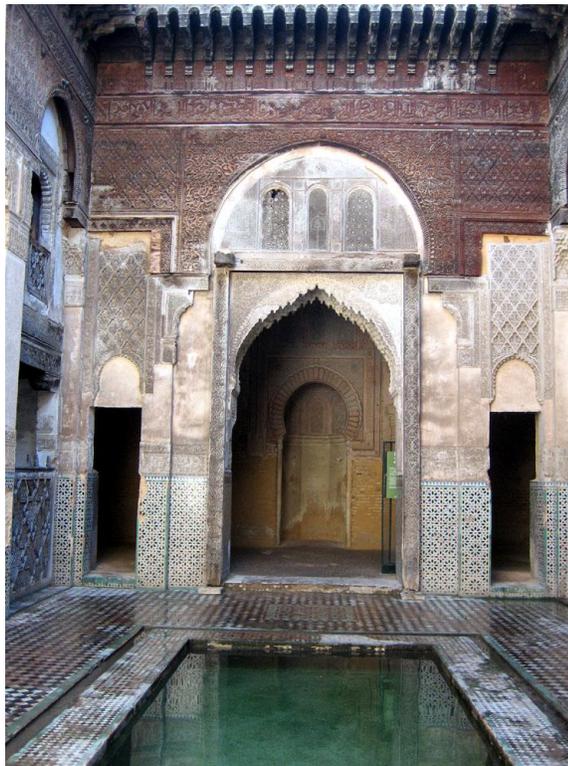


Fig.4.30: Fez: Madrasa al-Sahrīj:
Court with the Pool



Fig.4.31: Fez: Madrasa al-Sahrīj: Detail of Court Façade



Fig.4.32: Fez: Madrasa al-Sbāyīn: Court

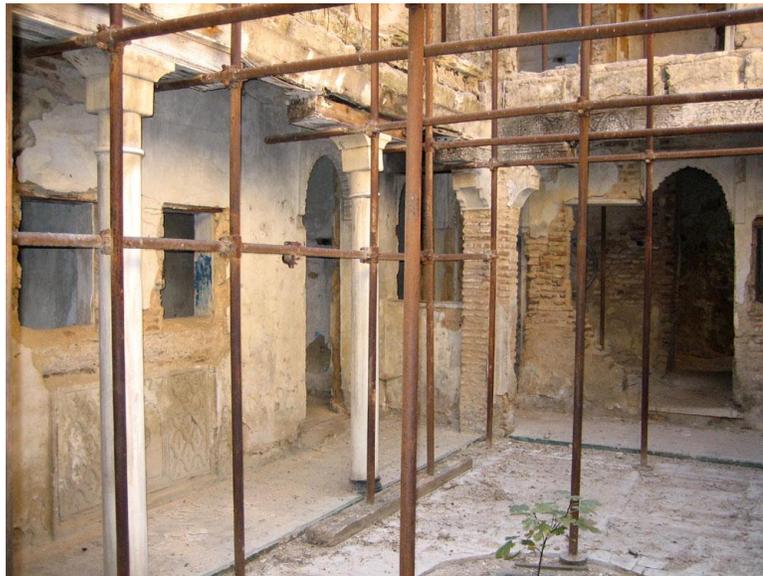


Fig.4.33: Fez: Madrasa al-Sbāyīn: Colonnaded Arcade from Court



Fig.4.34: Fez: Madrasa al-Sbāyīn: Detail of Carved Cedar Lintel



Fig.4.35: Fez: Madrasa al-Sbāyīn: Vestiges of *zellij*

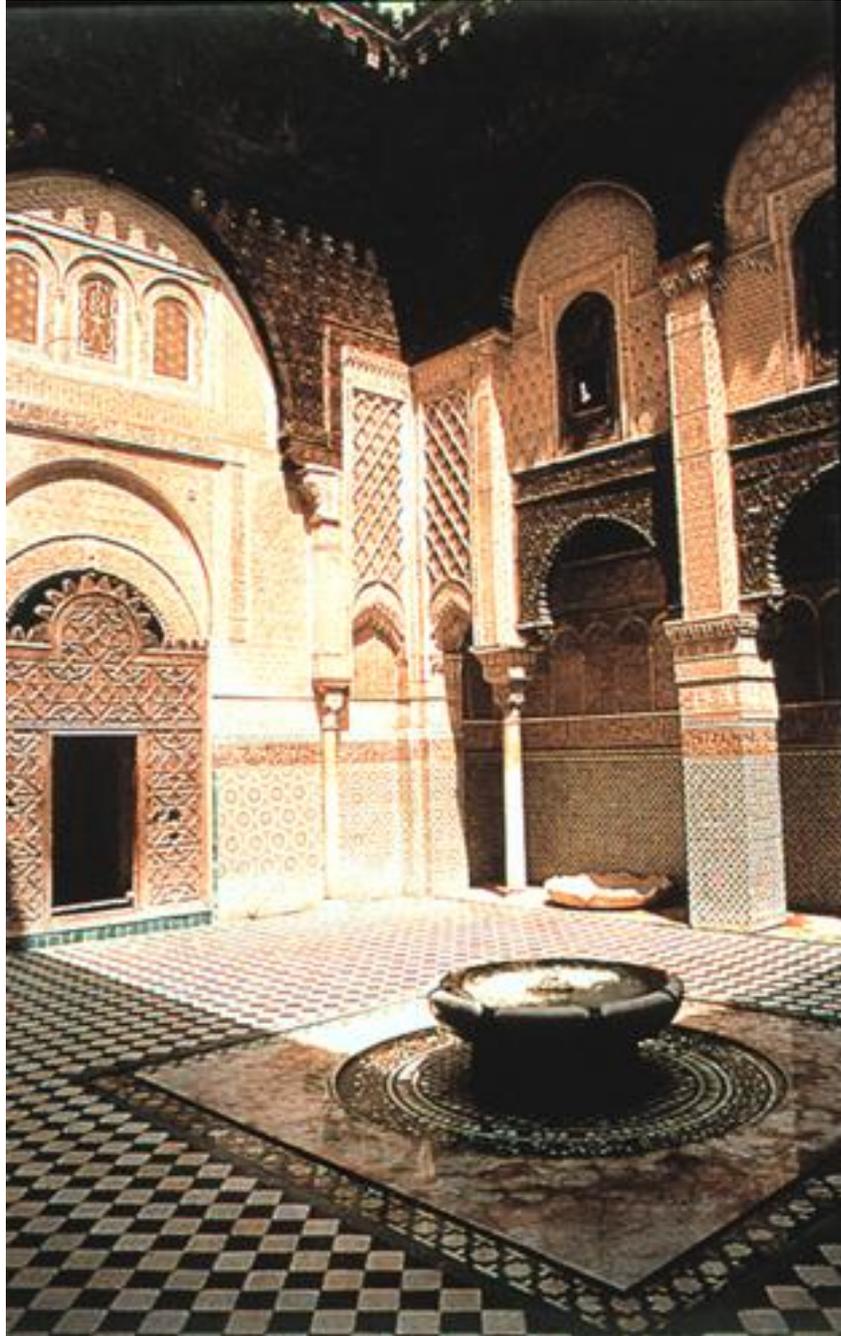


Fig.4.36: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn: Court and Arcades

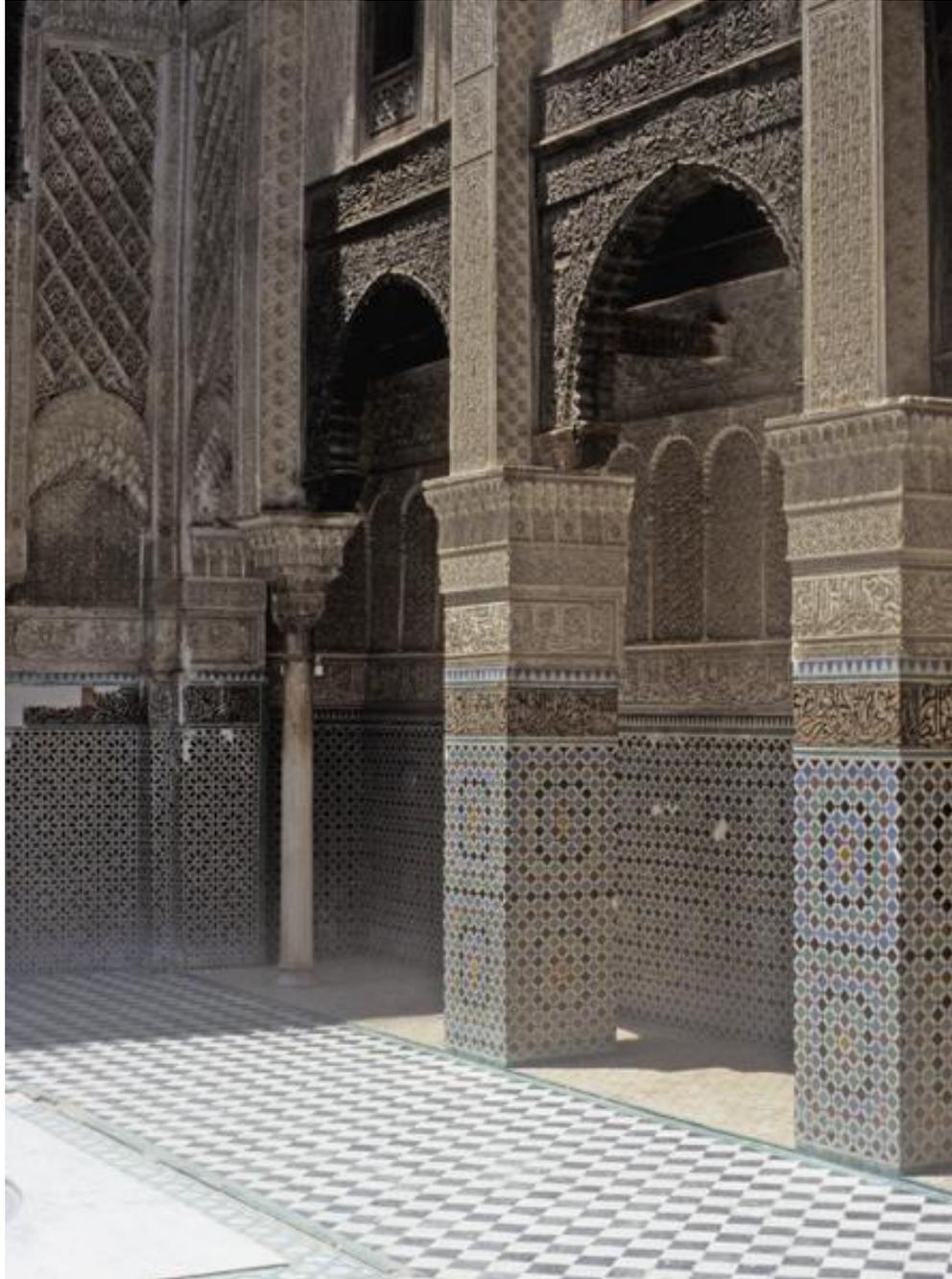


Fig.4.37: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn: Arcade Façade with Ornate Pilasters

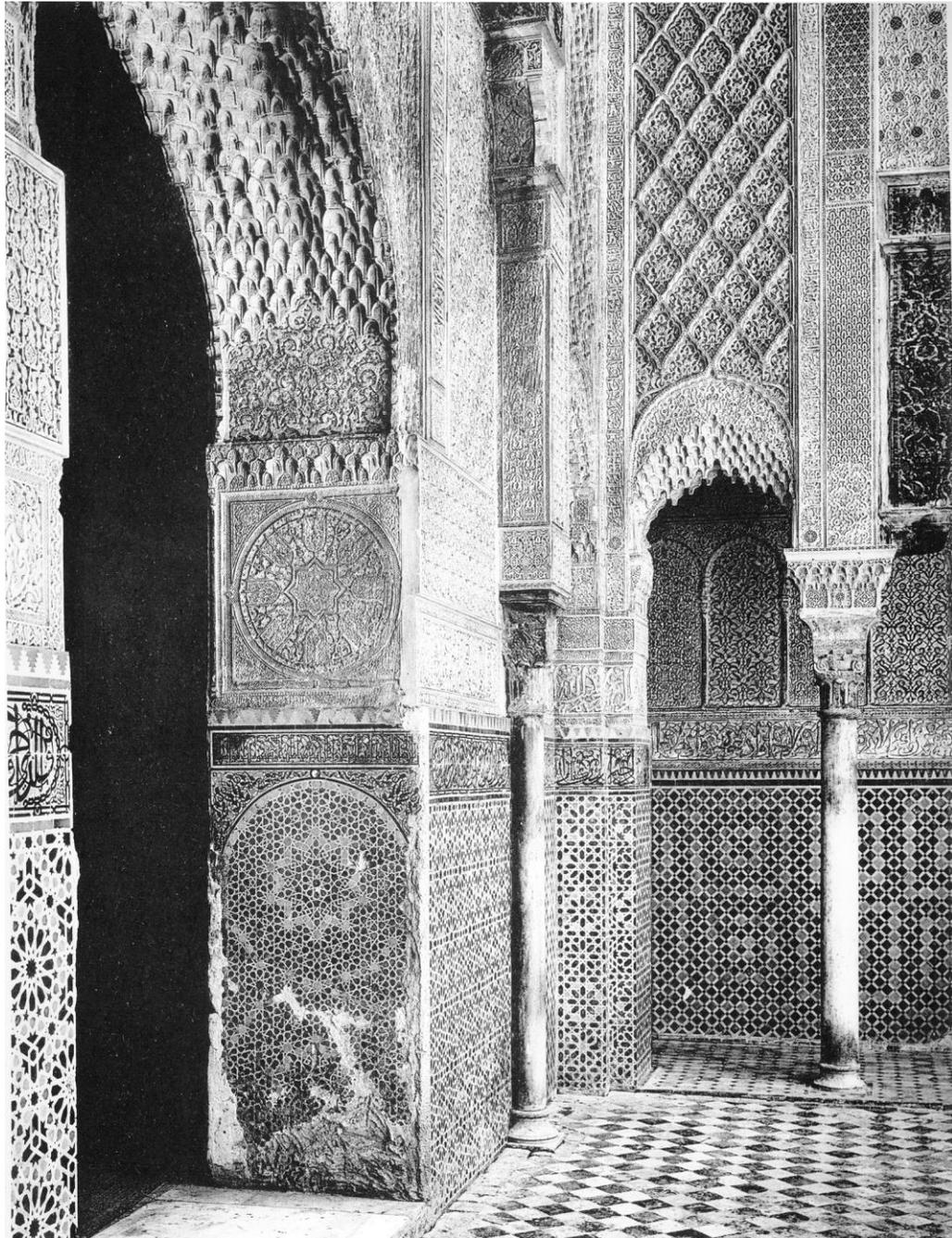


Fig.4.38: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn: Muqarnas Arch on Marble Column

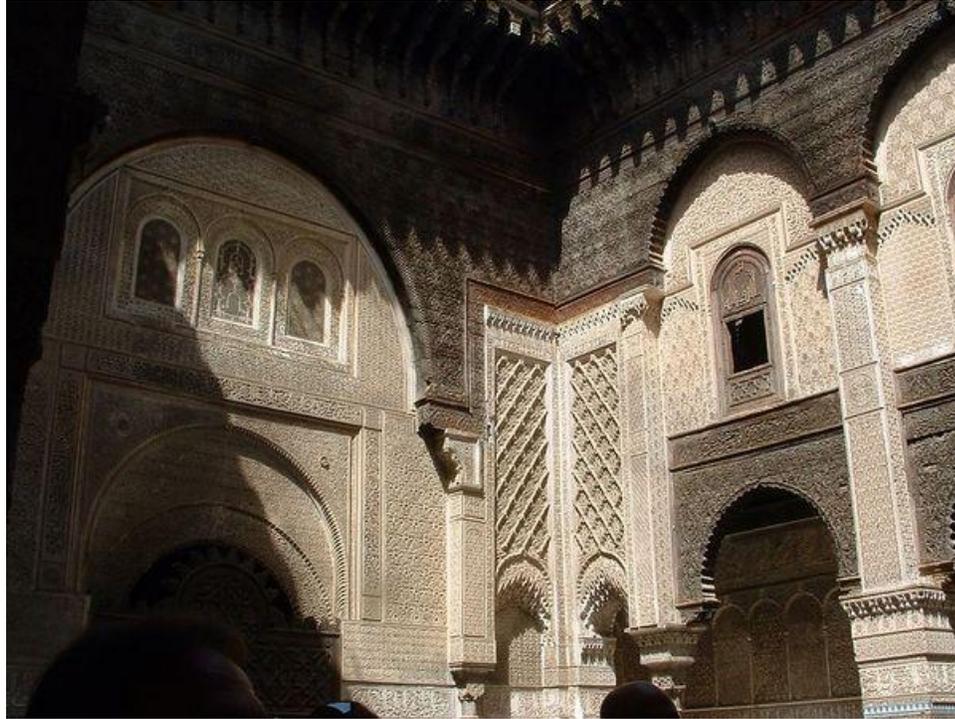


Fig.4.39: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn: Court Façade



Fig.4.40: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn:
Ornate *mihrab* of the Prayer-Hall

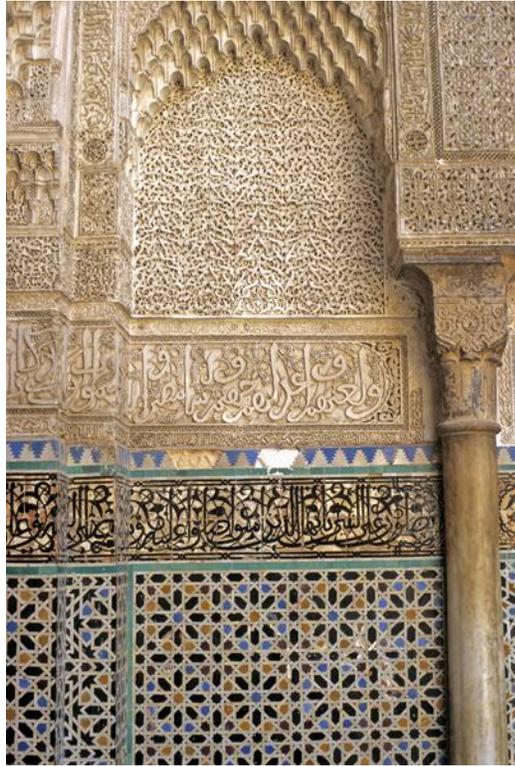


Fig.4.41a: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn:
Detail of *zellij* and ornate stucco



Fig.4.41b: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn: Detail of *zellij*

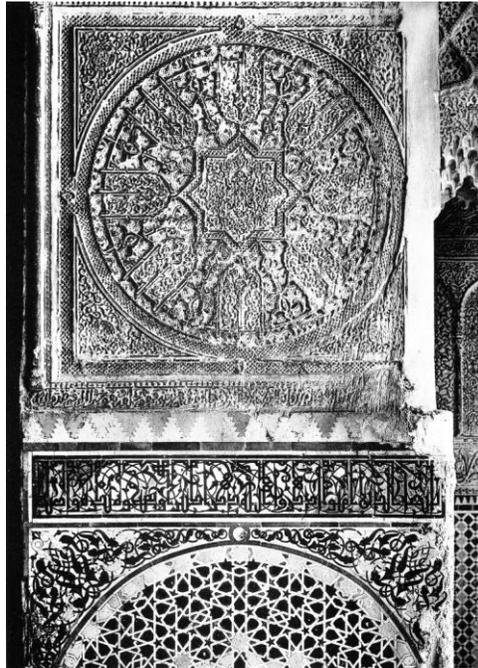


Fig.4.42a: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn:
Detail of Ornate Medallion in Stucco



Fig.4.42b: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn:
Ornate Stucco



Fig.4.43a: Fez: Madrasa al-Sahrij: Detail of Carved Cedar Frieze



Fig.4.43b: Meknès, Madrasa al-Jadidah: Carved Cedar Lintel



Fig.4.44a: Fez: Madrasa al-‘Attārīn:
Ornamented Calligraphy in Stucco

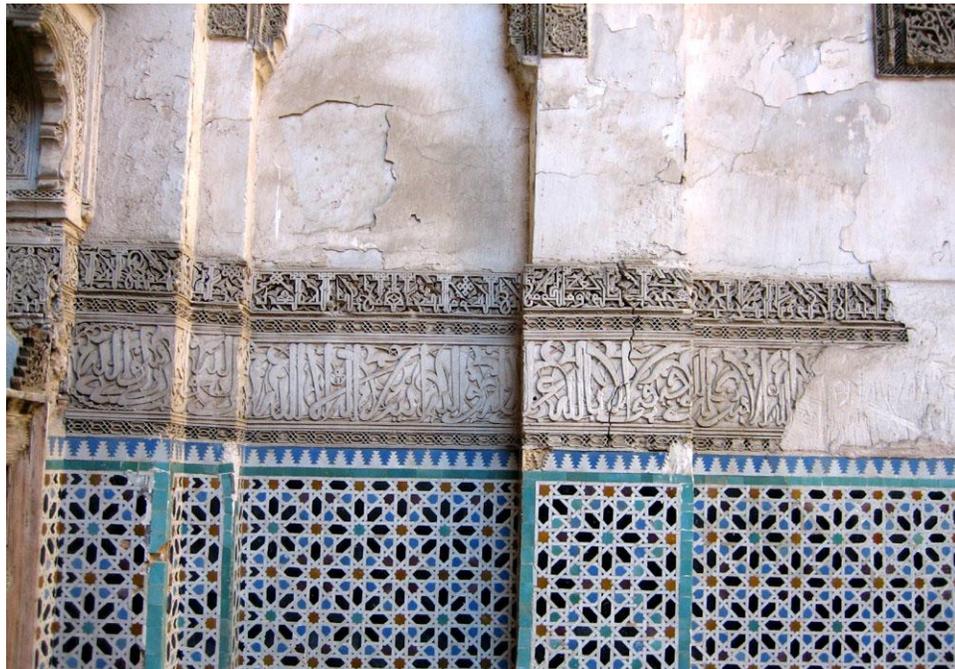


Fig.4.44b: Fez: Madrasa al-Sahrj: Band with Ornamented Calligraphy

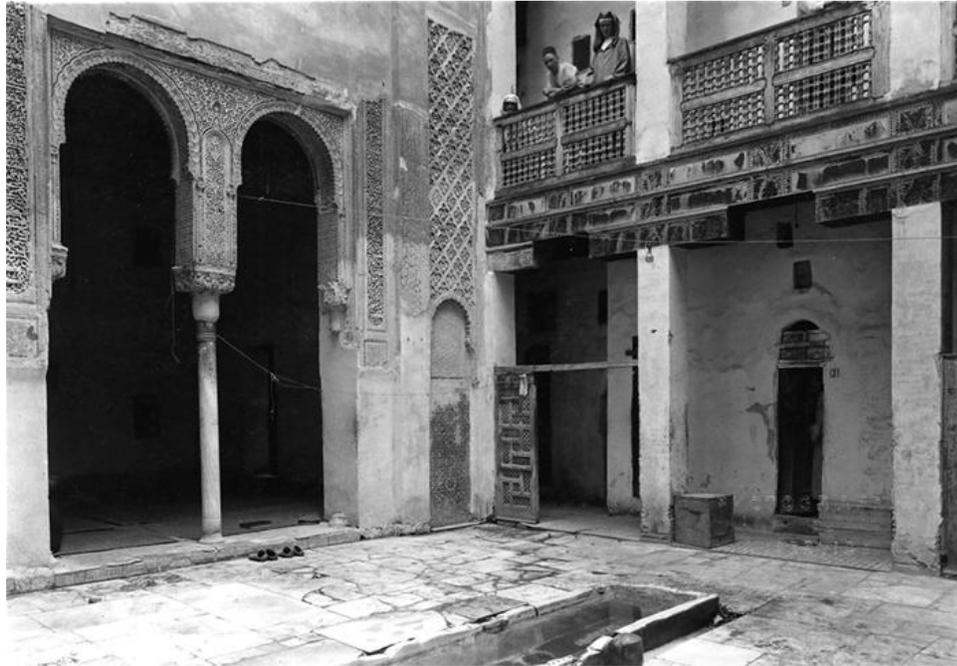


Fig.4.45: Fez: Madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh: Court with Marble Basin



Fig.4.46: Fez: Madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh:
Court Façade with *Mashrabīyyāh*



Fig.4.47: Fez: Madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh:
Two-Arched Entrance to the Grand Chamber



Fig.4.48: Fez: Madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh:
Court with two Storeys of Student Cells

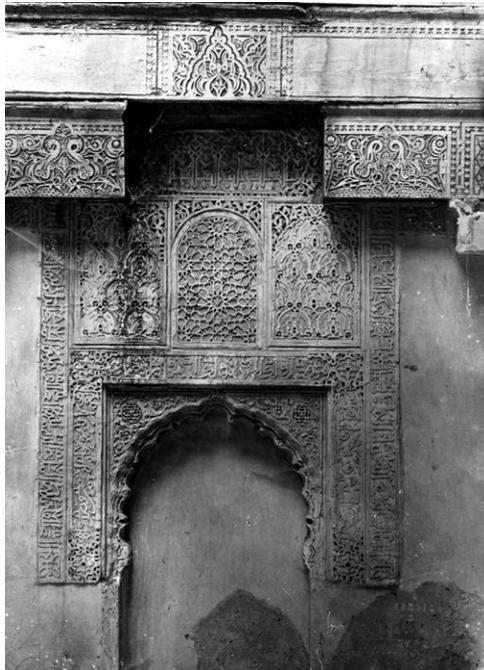


Fig.4.49: Fez: Madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh:
Ornamental Motifs in Stucco and Carved Lintel



Fig.4.50: Fez: Madrasa al-Misbāhiyyāh:
Detail of Column at Entrance to Grand Chamber

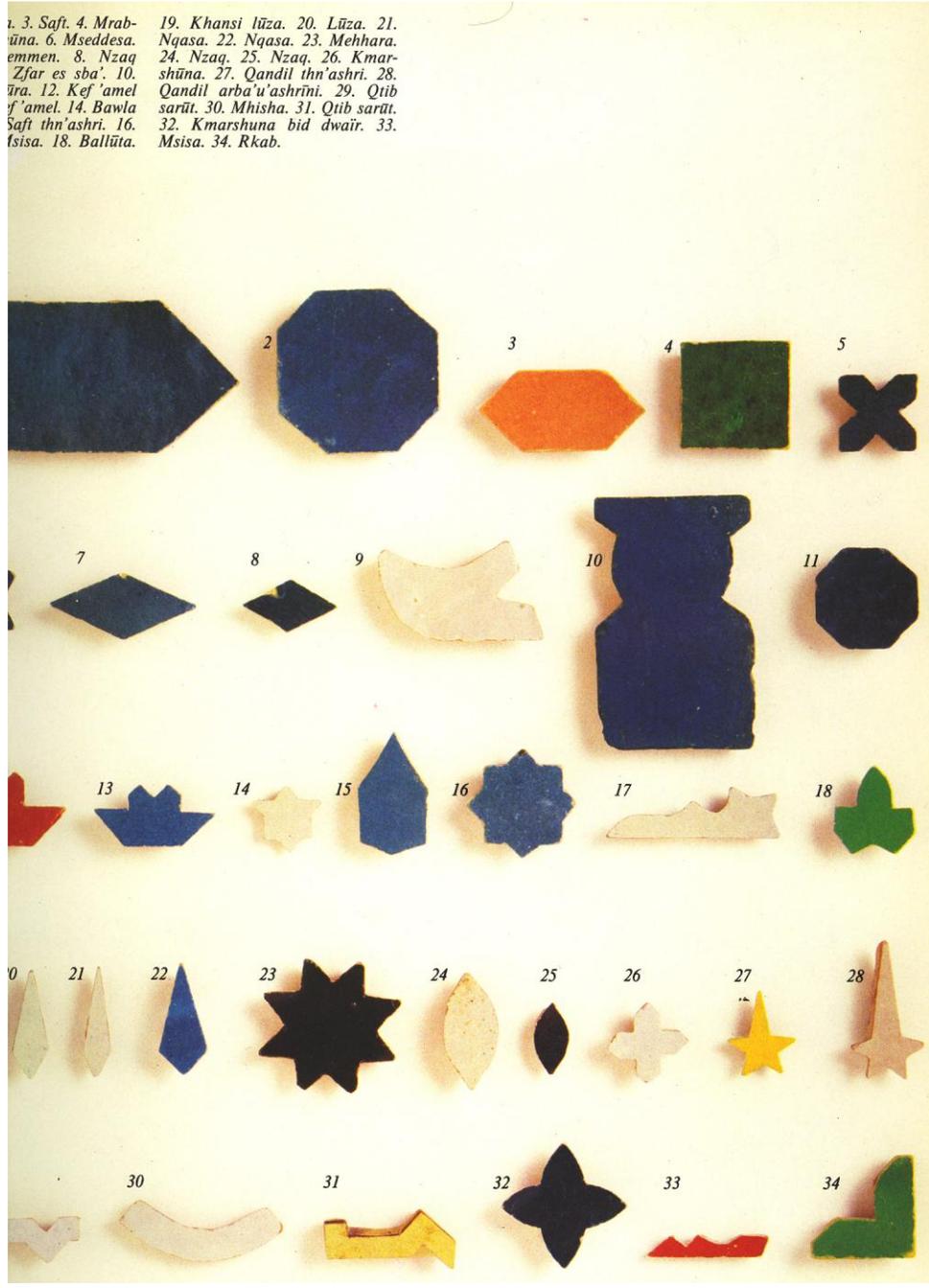


Fig.4.51: Catalogue of zellij tiles with their nomenclature



Fig.4.54: Fez: Madrasa al-Sahrij:
Qur'anic Inscriptions on Carved Cedar Frieze



Fig.4.55: Fez: Madrasa al-Attarin:
Marble Column with Formulaic Inscriptions



Fig.4.56: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Inscriptional Bands in excised *zellij* and stucco

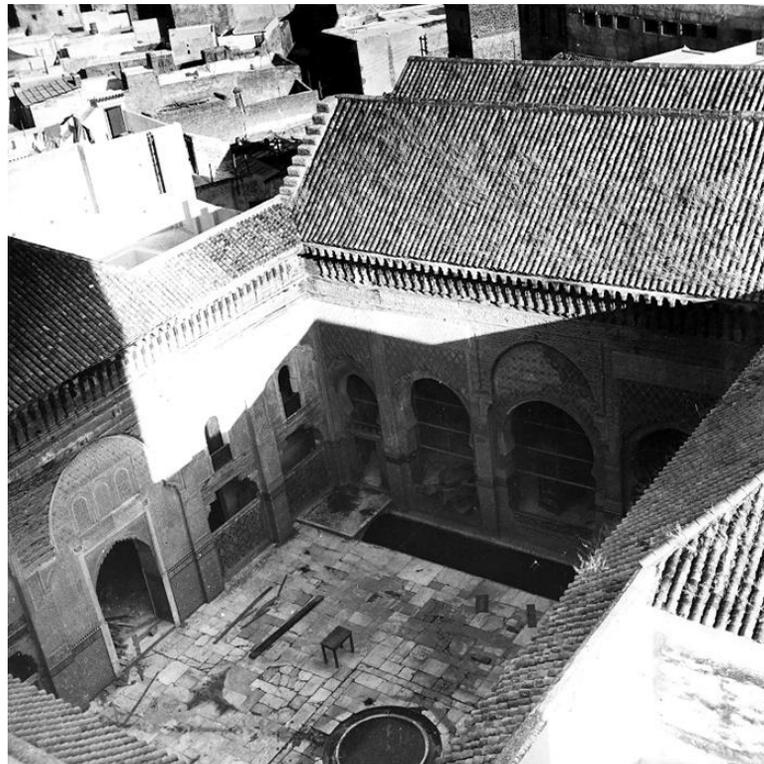


Fig.4.57: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Bird's Eye View of the Court

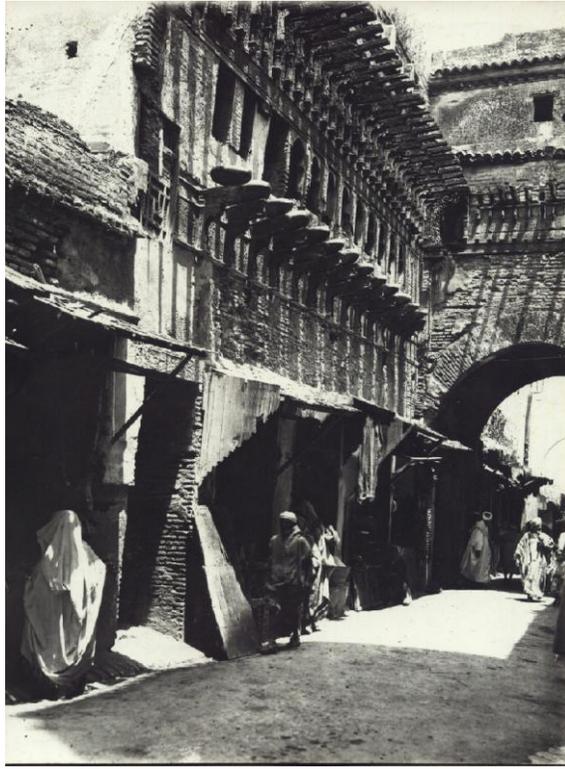


Fig.4.58a: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Approach from Ta'ala Kabira



Fig.4.58b: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā: Remains of the Water-Clock

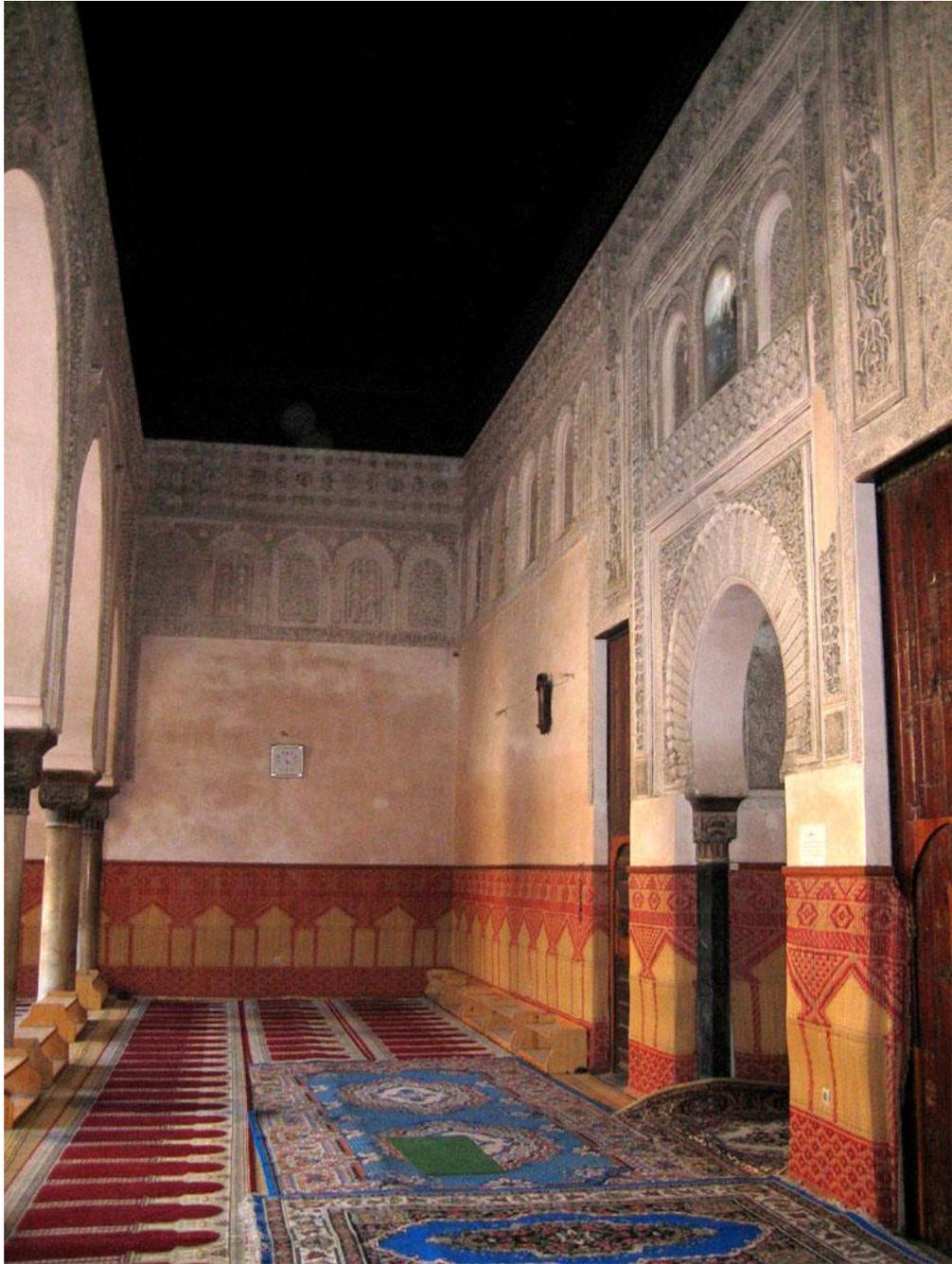


Fig.4.59: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā: Prayer-Hall

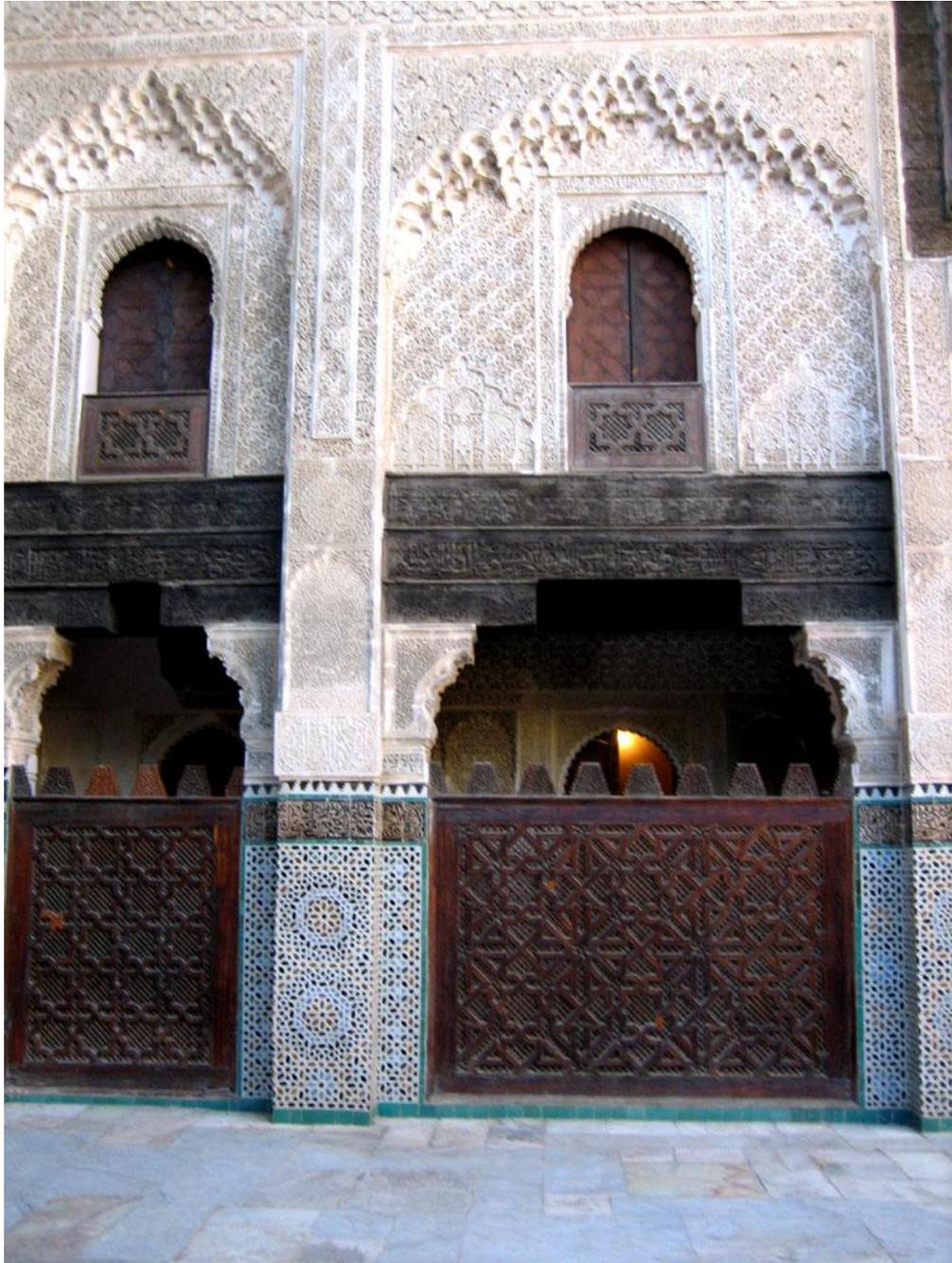


Fig.4.60: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā: Court Façade



Fig.4.61: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Hall on the lateral flank of the Court



Fig.4.62: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Terrace with access to Student Cells on Upper Storey

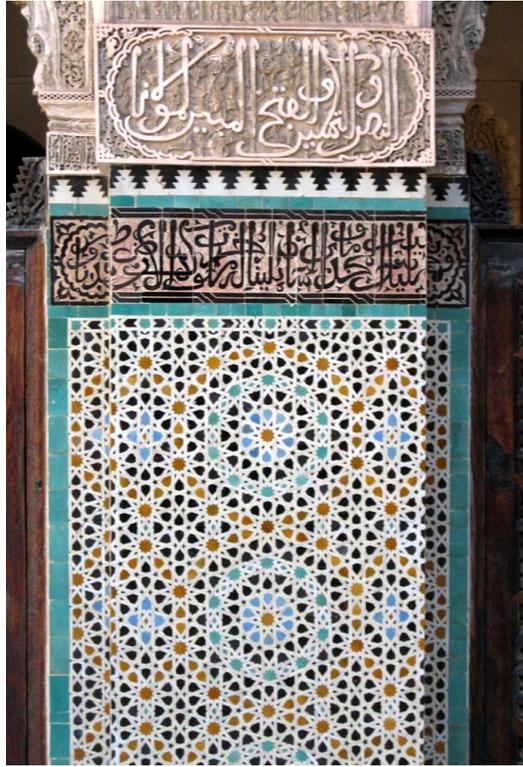


Fig.4.63: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā: Detail of *zellij*

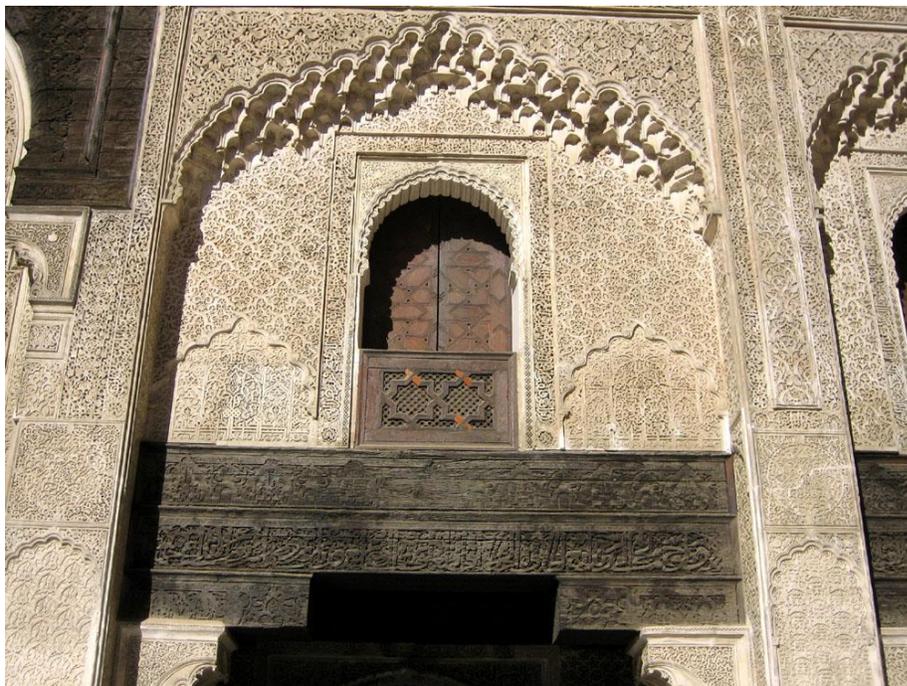


Fig.4.64: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Façade with Ornamented Stucco and arched frames with *muqarnas*

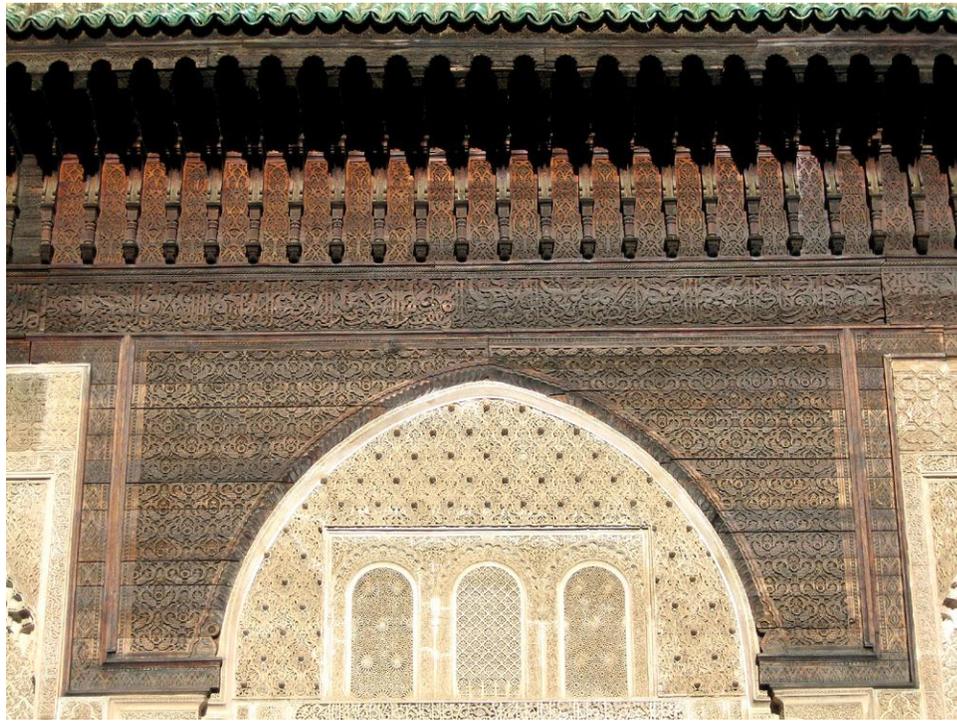


Fig.4.65: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Carved Cedar Frieze with Brackets

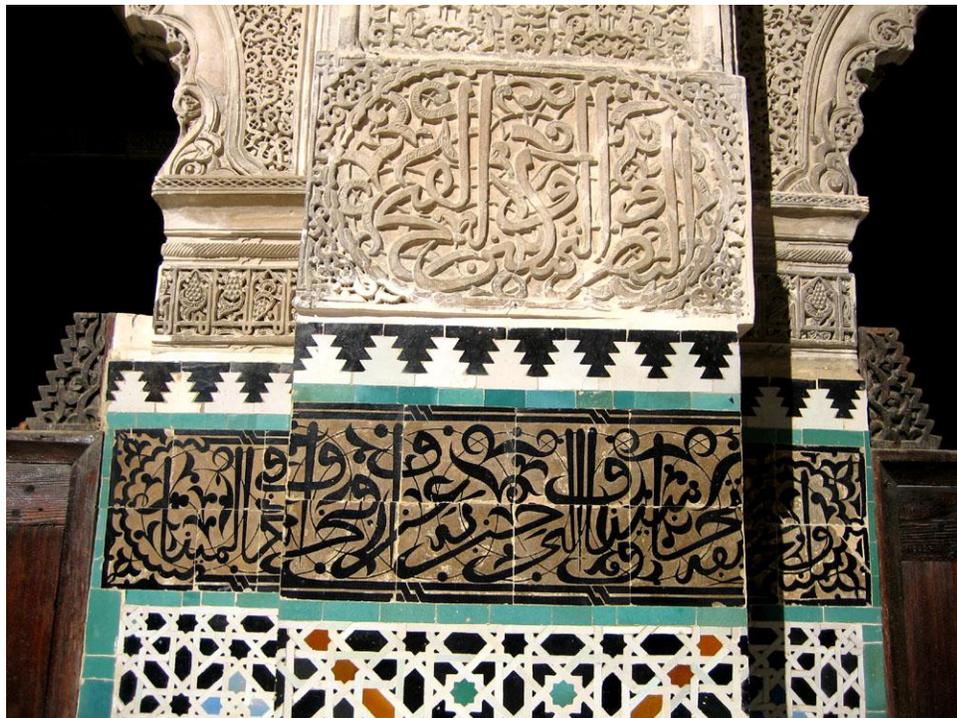


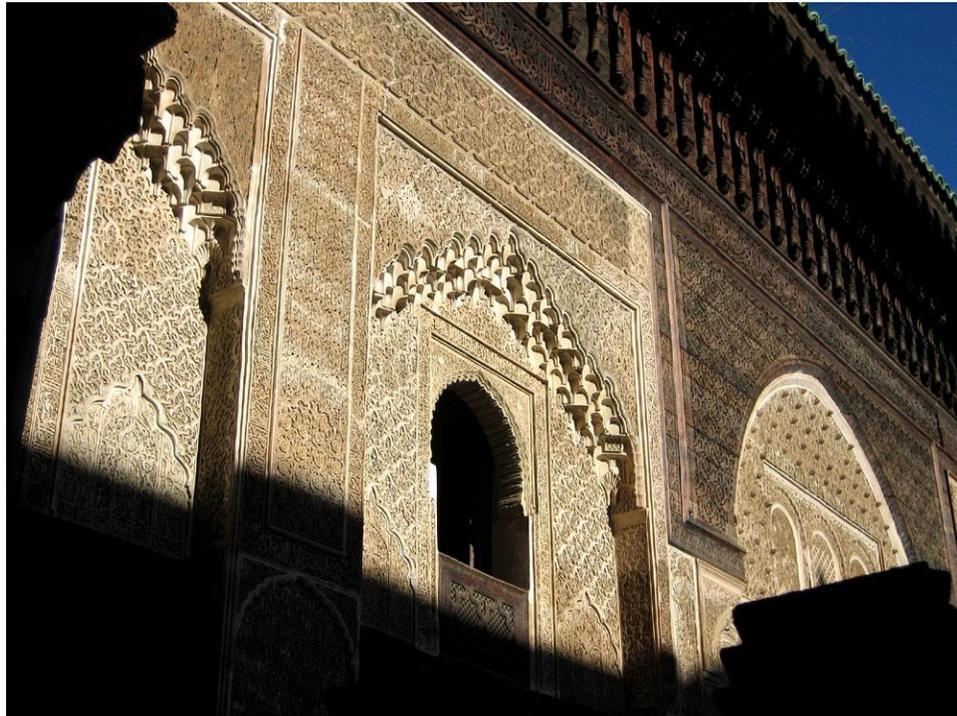
Fig.4.66: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā: Ornate Inscriptional Motifs



Fig.4.67: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā: Court



Fig.4.68: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Student Cell



Figs.4.69a & 4.69b: Fez: Madrasa Bou 'Ināniā:
Ornamented Court Façades



Fig.5.1: Casablanca: Sultan Hassan Mosque

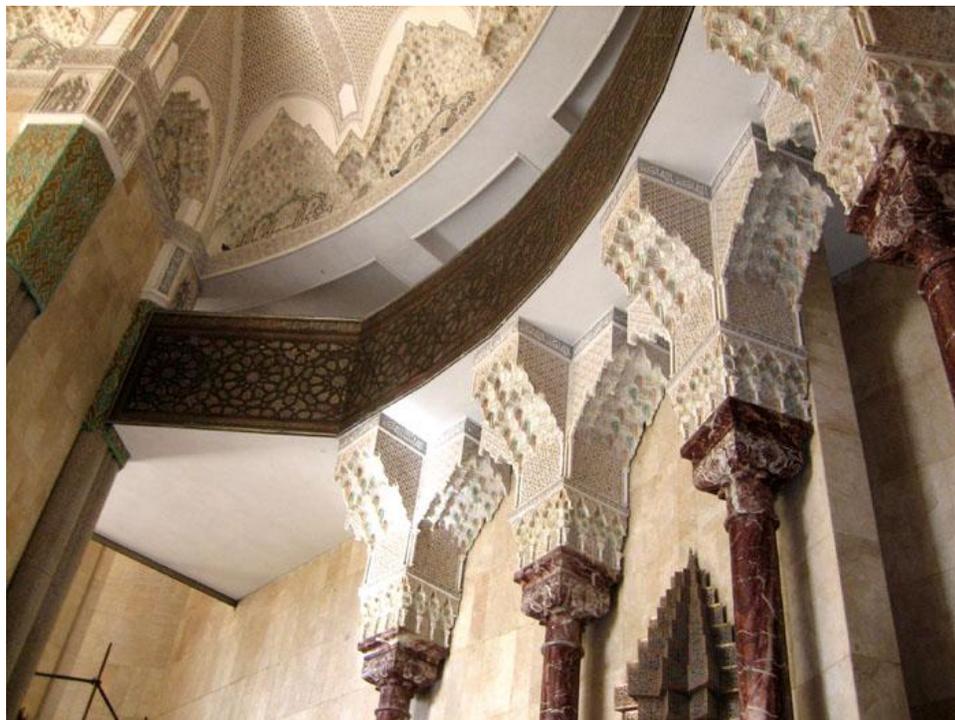


Fig.5.2: Casablanca: Sultan Hassan Mosque

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Appendix

Principal Marinid Sovereigns (And Madrasas Constructed in Fez during their Reign)

