# BUILDING AS PROPAGANDA: A PALIMPSEST OF FAITH AND POWER IN THE MAGHREB

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*Introduction*

The Portuguese presence in Northern Africa lasted from 1415, when Ceuta was conquered by King João I, to 1769. This date represents the epilogue of a political, military, and commercial investment in the Maghreb, when the evacuation of Mazagão was decided in Lisbon. For more than three and a half centuries, its main expression consisted in isolated enclaves along the Strait of Gibraltar and Atlantic coasts. This was never a territory understood as a colony by the crown, but rather was based on the conquest and occupation of Arab and Muslim cities.

My interest is the effective adaptation of models with an Islamic matrix that new Portuguese lords carried out in cities devoid of their native population, as far as religious and civic architecture are concerned. Methodologically speaking, the research uses cartographical resources, morphological evidence, and field work to foster a cross disciplinary approach between architectural history, archaeology and history.

The first steps of analysis are directed towards the interpretation of the Christian basilica profile in dialogue with or opposition to the Muslim religious space and the adaptation of mosques to churches. Next, parallel analyses will stress how administrative buildings, now devoid of their original function, used military symbols as a discourse of power and as political reinforcement of this Christian claim in the early modern period.

The arrival of a new power and faith also implied a re-evaluation of the urban space, reducing its surface. Urban appropriations shrank cities, erased suburbs, and promoted the opening of new streets and squares, close to a Portuguese identification of the built environment. In some cases, opportunities to experiment more elaborate systems have left an urban heritage that is still present today.

Finally, in 1541, the foundation of Mazagão represents another paradigm of settlement in the Maghreb, which had been traditionally based on conquests. Recent research has shown how this town's urban layout can be globally considered a sacred precinct, the climax of all the urban experience acquired in this region where generally walled curtains meant a frontier for faith and possession. All political and military seizures carried with them a complete separation between Christian populations inside the walls and Muslims, whether Arab or Berbers, outside the fortified boundary. Only a few exceptions were considered by the new city tenants. The so-called "peace moors" status that was assigned to a reduced number of native allies was one case. The other was the Jewish community and, even so, an in wall *mellah* might have not been authorized and instead relocated next door, with military protection offered by the Portuguese.

*Historical and geographical context*

Portugal's experience with the Muslim world had already been a daily struggle when this young kingdom began its territorial fight against Almoravids and Almohads in twelfth and thirteenth-century Southern Iberia. Since the formation and recognition of Portugal as an independent kingdom in 1143,[1] the main political aim of Afonso Henriques, the first Portuguese king, and his successors, was a military war against the "infidel". Until 1249 when the Algarve (*al-Gharb al-Ândaluz*) region was definitively conquered by Afonso III,[2] the quest insisted on the expulsion of Arab forces from the western Iberian strip that was being drawn.

During the fourteenth century, mutual sea raids and skirmishes were frequent. The dispute over the Canary Islands, or even previous Italian ventures along the Maghreb coast as far south as Safi, demonstrated a growing interest in Northern Africa by European powers. Frequent Portuguese incursions in search of rich fishing resources or the opportunity for piracy confirm an increasing knowledge of topographical information available to merchants. Therefore, the first organized Portuguese military attack against Ceuta in 1415 should be seen not only as the starting point of the Portuguese overseas enterprise but also as the consequence of long military interaction with Islam.

In fact, more than a strictly territorial conflict, military conquests of Southern Iberian and Northern Maghreb Muslim strongholds carried along an objective program of regaining once Christian areas and reestablishing the cross over the crescent in their religious spaces. Northern Africa's territories, once part of the Roman province of *Tingitana Mauritania*, became Christianized just as all late Antiquity territories around the Mediterranean. That religious expression was maintained by a strong Byzantine influence in the period immediately following and was only replaced upon the Arab conquest in the late seventh century AD. Subsequent military episodes led to the Arab invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711 and the cantonment of Christian forces in the Asturias from where the *reconquista* would begin. Separate Iberian kingdoms, including Portugal, fought from north to south in an attempt to expel the Muslim armies across the southern shore of the strait of Gibraltar. While the Portuguese achieved that goal in 1249, only by 1492 did the joint crowns of Castile and Aragon take the city of Granada. Therefore, the project of continuing the slow yet victorious path towards the south was always present in a Mediterranean religious geography that was increasingly divided between north and south, west and east, where the increasingly powerful Ottomans were acquiring new domains and relevance.

Ceuta was the beginning of a settlement process that would comprise the conquest of several coastal urban assemblages and the establishment of castles at geostrategic points. The whole process took more than a century, from 1415 until 1519, and rather than being pre-determined, it adjusted to the political instability of the region. [insert Figure cities_1] Traditionally, historiography has divided Portuguese military conquests and the establishment of commercial outposts in Northern Africa into two important areas. On the northern tip of the territory, the military takeover of Ceuta, followed by Ksar Seghir in 1458 and Asilah and Tangier in 1471, defined what was then called the "overseas Algarve" [*Algarve de Além-mar*]. These former Muslim cities were integrated into the Portuguese crown even though their influence only occasionally went beyond the limits of their walls. A peace treaty with the kingdom of Fes allowed the European power to extend their administration towards the hinterland for a period of a few decades at the end of the fifteenth century.[3]

Further south, Portuguese ambition was to prevent Marrakesh from accessing its sea ports. The establishments of suzerainties in cities such as Azemmour (1486) or Safi (1488) in exchange for military protection clearly shows how vulnerable these places were, being caught between internal Moroccan disputes. As a consequence, a few years later, both cities were militarily conquered (Safi, 1508; Azemmour, 1513) as a part of a broader plan by King Manuel I to ensure a stronger Portuguese presence in this southern area and a leading position in reaping the commercial benefits of its harbors. Massa was another town that solicited Portuguese defense in 1497.[4] Several castles were built at strategically relevant sites along the coast, to provide additional protection for recently conquered cities such as Mazagão in 1514, fifteen kilometers south of Azemmour, or Aguz in 1519, approximately twenty-five kilometers south of Safi.

Other castles were erected in Santa Cruz do Cabo de Guer (today Agadir) and Mogador (now Essaouira) in 1505 and 1506, respectively. The former was established by private initiative and bought by the crown in 1513, in a clear message of Christian affirmation and military power in these southern lands. Nevertheless, Santa Cruz was also the ultimate turning point for Portuguese ambitions in the Maghreb when in 1541, the fortress town was taken in a military assault that would result in a complete re-evaluation of the Portuguese presence in these territories. In 1515, both the failure to install a new fortress in Mamora and the missed opportunity to capture the city of Marrakesh had already shown fragilities in this war against Arab kingdoms, impeding Manuel I's broader objectives at that time. It is important to understand how this political and military interaction worked both ways. Intermittent periods of battle and peace played a fundamental role in the conditions of the daily life of the populations and their architectural or urban achievements. Muslim leaders of occupied cities, vassals of the Portuguese Crown, were determined to resist and expel this foreign power. Information about possible attacks from the King of Fés or conflicts with the monarch of Marrakesh were frequent, and notably confirmed by Yahya Ou Ta'fouft, one of the most important "peace moors" of the Portuguese.[5] Others tried to take advantage of the bellicose situation and emerge as mediators between the Christian occupant and local tribes that found themselves in the midst of a war that was not theirs.[6]

Within the Portuguese expansion campaign, North Africa was the closest territory to the metropolis, but this was not the only Portuguese contact with the Muslim world. The rounding of the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, followed by Vasco da Gama's arrival to the Malabar coast in India, exposed the Portuguese to the Islamic states around the Indian Ocean, namely those clustered near the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the fortresses of Hormuz, Goa and Melaka created a maritime empire[7] in which Portuguese ships claimed mercantile routes and collected taxes. But in these locations the social exclusivity of the conquered or founded cities was not as drastic as in Northern Africa where the inherited urban space was completely devoid of an autochthonous population. In fact, Portuguese occupation enhanced a superposition of the Christian layer over the Muslim one and its degree depended on the duration of the presence. From over two centuries in Ceuta (1415-1640) to less than three decades in Azemmour (1513-1542), the mid-sixteenth century witnessed a crisis that shrank Portuguese military expression in the Maghreb; Safi's occupation was completed in 1542, and Ksar Seghir and Asilah in 1550. Although Ceuta and Tangier (until 1661), together with a new fortified investment in Mazagão, were the choices of the crown as far as keeping enclaves in North Africa are concerned, building adaptation or urban appropriation occurred mainly during the immediate years of each conquest.

*Building adaptation*

The main sample for Portuguese intervention in the built environment of the Maghreb is provided by fabrics and structures inherited after conquests in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. New symbols of faith and power were imperative urgent in Christian territories subtracted stripped from the kingdoms of Fes and Marrakesh. The key issue revolves around the foundation of a new image of the city where not only churches or cathedrals evolved from former mosques, but late gothic castles also effaced Muslim *Kasbahs*. The presence of the Portuguese crown was to be apprehended through a rhetorical language that communicated a firm message to permanent hostile outskirts. In fact, the ecclesiastical organization transplanted

by the Portuguese to these territories did not wait for the actual military take over for the establishment of dioceses. Frei Aymaro de Aurillac already held the title of bishop of Morocco in 1413, as did Fr. Nuno Álvares de Aguiar for Tangier's diocese in 1469,[8] in both cases two years prior to the conquest of each city. This fact clearly draws attention to the papal commitment to the Christian re-conquest of the former Roman province of *Tingitana Mauritania*. Further south, and also years before Portuguese military settlements, in 1499, the district and diocese of Safi, composed by several places including Azemmour and Mazagão, was established by the Papal Bull *In apostolice dignitatis.*[9]

Of all the historical facts upon the conquest of Ceuta in 1415, the investiture of three royal princes as knights by King João I is one of the most famous and praised by chronicles.[10] This episode occurred in the main mosque of the city, subsequently consecrated as a church. Spatial transformations were about to occur in order to adapt the existing religious constructions - Ceuta, Ksar Seghir, and Azemmour's provide the most significant case studies. Not only do they configure different approaches and chronologies, but they also present the most relevant archaeological evidence.

Before plunging into the specific particularities of each case study, it is important to understand general prerogatives that offered typological and morphological advantages to the transition process from Muslim to Christian cult. Geography has determined that mosques in northwestern Africa have their *qibla* wall oriented towards the east or east-southeast. The niche that marked that wall - the *mihrab* - was then in the perfect position to be consecrated as the main altar of the new temple, respecting the Christian tradition of orienting churches' main chapels to the east. Another simple adaptation was the use of the minaret as a bell tower in the first years. These characteristics reveal that while these two religions were often antagonistic, they were more similar from a spatial perspective than the military context leads us to believe.

For many aspects of the Portuguese presence in the Maghreb, Ceuta was inevitably the paradigm to be followed. In the aftermath of the 1415 conquest, the building which offered higher standards of dignity and nobility was the main mosque of the old medina, largely because of its imposing size. It received the most impressive descriptions by visitors, namely

the Arab geographer Al Ansari,[11] or the priest Nicolau Lanckman de Valkenstein.[12] Both texts acknowledge the existence of a large hypostyle room containing several naves. Although their number has been the object of discussion it is impossible to determine today.[13] A higher central aisle was surely present and indicates a specific volumetric aspect of Ceuta's mosque which makes it closer to the basilican models so familiar to Christian guidelines. Dedicated to Our Lady of Assumption, the new cathedral was clearly marked as "Templŭ Summŭ" in Georg Braun's view of the city. [insert Figure Septa_2] Since the 1572 engraving is a copy of an early sixteenth century drawing, it proves how the architectural features of the previous building were still discernable.[14] Indeed, a taller volume can be distinguished in the center of a row of scissor shaped roofs as having a front portal. Reasonable doubts arise as far as the adoption of the former minaret is concerned because two towers can be observed in the same view. The tallest, at the back of the building, suggests the maintenance of the old Muslim minaret whereas its shorter version, to the right, looks like a bell tower, confirmed by later iconography.[15]

Besides basic characteristics that eased the Portuguese appropriation of the ancient main mosque of Ceuta, its higher but mainly wider central aisle validates the disclosure of the model of the Damascus mosque transported by the Umayyad upon their advancements towards the West. In fact, a raised, gabled transept was not an obligatory part of a mosque but is particularly present in Maghribi mosques.[16] The same typology can be seen in the Qarawiyin mosque in Fez, the territorial reference city for Ceuta. Unlike in Damascus or Fez where the transept could be more easily recognized as a prominent part of the mosque, the difference in Ceuta was that the roofing system did not extend parallel to the *qibla*, but instead perpendicularly. This specific feature made Portuguese adaptation a smoother process as the most disseminated gothic model of building churches in Portugal could be straightforwardly transposed to the other shore of the Strait of Gibraltar. Even though the Ceuta mosque has several parallel naves, the Christian mendicant profile of a higher central nave sided by two lower aisles, one on each side, was quickly interpreted from the pre-existing Muslim construction.

Gradually, the Portuguese appropriation of this space introduced changes to the inherited religious setting, not only by eliminating eccentric aisles and thus attempting to obtain a

traditional plan of three naves, but also through the decorative language introduced on the main façade which now needed to declare the new faith that it housed. Until the end of the seventeenth century, later than the period of Portuguese occupation of Ceuta, the cathedral kept this aspect and no further important architectural transformations were undertaken.[17] Its state of ruin would determine the erection of a new cathedral by the Spaniards in the following century. Nevertheless, the symbolism was preserved and understood as the re-positioning of the Christian faith after an era of Muslim interruption since the Byzantine period. The preservation of the holy site was maintained at all costs. Next to Ceuta, in the city of Tangier, one can more adequately speak of a succession of religious strata since the current day mosque is a seventeenth-century building that replaced the Portuguese cathedral, which had previously adapted the medieval Islamic mosque that was already built over a Byzantine church!

The same cannot be said of a similar religious building appropriated by the Portuguese in Azemmour. Here, in an urban environment that originated later in the Arab period, the need to establish a new cult and lord was obvious. Situated further south along the Atlantic coast, the main mosque apparently was of a smaller scale and showed no evidence of a raised transept. No visual records remain from the Arab or subsequent Portuguese phases, except the engraving in Braun's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* which depicts several over-represented prismatic minarets inside the walled perimeter.[18] One is led to assume, given the accentuated gap between the street level and the lower floor in the interior, that the present mosque is the same building that hasevolved from the medieval period, adapted as a church during the short Christian occupation. If so, the adaptation process was much more straightforward than in Ceuta. The former mosque, which presented three parallel aisles to the *qibla*, saw its *mihrab* immediately converted into an altar. In 1541, the new church was already described as having three naves[19] which correspond to the oldest part of present-day mosque of the *Kasbah/Mellah* neighborhood, the former Portuguese area of the town. Even though it did not possess a raised transept in the direction of the *mihrab*, a virtual crossspace became the most important arched and visual perspective towards the east, without disturbing the general boxshaped exterior of the building.

The temptation to approximate pre-existing religious buildings to the mendicant profile was probably greater than the means and resources to do so. Nevertheless, whenever an opportunity to build a church from scratch happened, that was the model to follow; the ruins of the Portuguese cathedral at Safi still document the erection of a three-nave late-gothic basilica. It was definitely an exportable religious typology for a growing empire during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Nevertheless, the transformation of Muslim structures was a much more frequently utilized used process in such an economically challenged expansion as the Portuguese.

This was the case of Ksar Seghir from 1458 onwards. The symbolic meaning obtained by the substitution of faith rituals and objects was probably even more important than the financial issues. Ksar Seghir was a small town on the southern shore of the Strait of Gibraltar, and played an important role as a crossing point to the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages. The Portuguese intervention in the town's mosque was less discreet than Azemmour's adaptation to Christian cult, with more longitudinal space like in the neighboring city of Ceuta.

The mosque the European settler encountered also contained three naves parallel to the *qibla*, a wall clearly marked by its *mihrab* niche and the *minbar*'s chamber. The covered praying hall was preceded by a courtyard with at least one portico in the southwest side.[20] Christian adaptation transformed the portico into chapels with painted altars and reorganized the northeast part of the former mosque, closer to the main public square, as a re-oriented nave facing a newly built five-sided head chapel. Therefore, a long rectangular space turned attention away from the original *mihrab*, with both extremities topped by Christian symbols - a new altar towards the southeast and a bell tower instead of the minaret. Only further archaeological research will fully clarify some aspects regarding the Portuguese architectural appropriation.

Building adaptation did not just relate to religious structures. It involved many other inherited constructions among which the captain's headquarters played as much of a symbolic role as churches or cathedrals. Still in Ksar Seghir one can note the metamorphosis that occurred in the former Islamic Sea Gate, *Bab al Bahar*. In 1460, it was transformed into the captain's house due

to the lack of noble residential conditions in the rest of the town.[21] At first, a straightforward accommodation under the vaulted double-chambered gate was undertaken, and the defensive structure was reinforced by the erection of a round circular tower. A few decades later, this action was followed by a larger program aimed at defining a walled perimeter encircling the former Islamic gate.[22] Although it was mainly a defensive structure established around a central court, which provided access to two layers of fire power and was connected to the sea by a long fortified bastion called a *couraça*, the Portuguese castle provided a new image of the installed lord in former North African Muslim strongholds. This castle acted not only as a military back-up in case of enemy penetration into the town, but also as a lavishly decorated building where grand windows allowed the captain to address the local population.

Ksar Seghir is near two other cities captured by the Portuguese in 1471, Asilah and Tangier, where significant rhetorical architectural statements were also visible. In the latter, the inherited Moorish *kasbah* was completely substituted by a new building on the walls of which a late-Gothic language can be read. [insert Figure Tingis_3] The new *château*-looking structure was closer to a palatine sort of acropolis than to a military facility as shown in Braun's atlas.[23] It was mostly blind at ground level, pierced by generous windows on the first floor and covered by tiled roofs punctuated by chimneys. In Tangier's lower city, another castle was then needed since the upper castle did not fulfill its defensive duties, serving mainly as an emblematic representation of the Portuguese crown overseas. Although more pragmatically located, allowing the effective control of the harbor and its activity, this late fifteenth-century lower castle also boasted late-medieval architectural features such as a donjon crowned by *machicoulis* and watch towers.

In fact, a very similar prismatic tower can still be seen in Asilah. Built in the early years of the sixteenth century by master builder Diogo Boytac,[24] this atavistic donjon did not have a specific use other than to declare Portuguese lordship over the town and its surroundings. In Tangier and Asilah both towers sent rhetorical messages of power, of Christian settlement in Africa, using military vocabulary now devoid of its original function and turned obsolete by the emergence of

artillery. This fact is particularly evident in Asilah where the atavistic donjon is in clear contradiction with the coeval works of pre-modern building of bastions and walls.

*Urban appropriation*

Portuguese influence in former Muslim cities on the northwestern coast of Africa was not just limited to changes in their public buildings, but went beyond and took the whole urban surface into account for the establishment of new city concepts. Most of the time, the inherited in-wall area was too large for the scarce military means of the conqueror. Thus, in the cities the Portuguese occupied a pragmatic attitude was the rule, oriented towards the fortresses' sustainability in a hostile environment. Significant reductions in perimeter and surface were carried out, in a procedure known as *atalho* (downsizing).[25] This technique led to a radical analysis of the appropriated cities, regularizing them geometrically, positioning them closer to the sea or river mouth, re-evaluating their internal disposition, and thus left a Portuguese mark on Morocco's modern cities.

The results of these techniques show a propensity for geometrically regular shapes where the construction of curtain walls established ninety degree angles with the pre-existing defensive structures, excluded sprawling inland sections, and opened the urban space to the harbor. All decisions made by the Portuguese enhance the effective concern of straightening the former Islamic medina's curving limits. In the vicinity of the port, new buildings were built in order to respond to a developing market of exchanges between Europe and the Maghreb: the customs, the exchequer, and sometimes even a mint. Ceuta, Tangier, or Safi's examples reveal another distinctive factor, a double *atalho*, which is only present in the larger Portuguese possessions that earned the status of a city (*cidade*) because these cities housed a cathedral.

After the shortening process, sectors of former Islamic cities were preserved within a tighter circuit of walls. A new image of the urban space was pursued during the occupation course in an attempt to create a European identity which faced difficulties when inheriting Muslim fabrics and households that were deeply rooted in the urban landscape. The short Byzantine period that extended late-antiquity structures in closer areas to the strait of Gibraltar, notably in cities such

as Ceuta or Tangier, seem to have vanished after centuries of Muslim presence. Not only earlier pagan temples, but more importantly paleo-Christian basilicas slowly disappeared, as did the remains from orthogonal planning, which were abandoned or deeply reconfigured. Therefore, a non-Muslim built environment was almost completely absent in the inherited cities.

One can speak of a first degree of urban appropriation in cases such as Ceuta, Ksar Seghir, and Tangier, on the Strait of Gibraltar shore, or also Safi, further south, where very practical decisions had to be made. Generally, the selection of morphological urban elements from the conquered city was the most evident and easy way of settlement. Therefore, from the earliest years the Portuguese tried to identify signs of familiarity in the street layout. *Zanqat Ibn Isa* in Ceuta was immediately assumed as the new main street - the *rua Direita* - due to its broad section and quite linear trace.[26] *Rua Direita* connected important town gates, usually the sea with the countryside, or these with notable public buildings. At the same time, it allowed for new public displays of military parades or religious processions, important symbols of European expansion beyond the Mediterranean.

Invariably, the main street would disembark in or be interrupted by a wider open space interpreted as a new public square. In fact, cities in the Maghreb presented a model where communal spaces were mainly concentrated in public buildings such as mosques or baths (*hammam*) and usually absent from the urban environment. Moreover, even large open air precincts for religious use, called *musallà* or *saria*, located just outside the walls or next to a cemetery[27] were automatically excluded following the *atalho* short-cut procedures. Portuguese central squares or yards were places of gathering, housed the local market, or permitted public announcements by the governor or captain, distributing several secondary arteries. Ksar Seghir's "*terreiro*" or Ceuta's "*aira*" were particularly keen on establishing a logistic platform that linked *rua Direita* with the castle and main church. The latter example sought a geometrized regular configuration. Indeed, a tendency towards a grid sketch of the whole urban display was the result of decades of slow Portuguese transformation and regularization of streets.

New representation values were demonstrated through a street lifestyle that envisioned the opening of more windows towards the public space, thus reversing the intimacy and privacy issues that had characterized the former Muslim inhabitants' urban behavior. Morphological urban consequences were reflected through a continuous rejection of the inherited fabric and its gradual correction *vis-à-vis* a regular plan that, nevertheless, could never be fully established in the majority of Portuguese possessions. Resources were scarce and massive urban plans were usually out of the question in cities that witnessed continual warfare.

However, a second degree of urban appropriation occurred in Azemmour and Asilah where signs of regular planning are clearer. In the early decades of the sixteenth century there were opportunities to create new towns from scratch, taking advantage of completely or almost empty areas that were free from built constraints as was usual in the rest of the conquered coastal cities. On the one hand, the castle/town of Azemmour, which resulted from the process of downsizing, encountered in the former *kasbah* and mosque the only landmarks for a renovation thought to be the most adaptable possible.

On the other hand, Asilah was reborn from the ashes of the destruction caused by an Arab assault in 1508. Occupied in 1471, only by the turn of the century did King Manuel I feel the need to implement defensive measures and agree to cut short the inherited surface. The Arab attack accelerated the process of building up a serrated *atalho,* which preserved less than half of the former surface, shaped around a castle and a town *(vila)*, with its axis on the *rua Direita*. Asilah's plan shows a discernable geometric pattern based on long quadrangular figures, concentrated between the town, sea, and castle gates, the areas most affected by the incursion of the army of Fez. Altogether there are seven units, with lengths consistently measuring 62 to 66 meters.

*New foundations*

Both Azemmour and Asilah show a different side of the building propaganda that was being carried out in North Africa by the Portuguese. Not only did mosques evolve into churches or Muslim castles converted into princely houses, but also the urban context was converted into

identifiable aspects related to a new town scheme that followed metropolitan modes of urbanization. If the foundational basis of these two cases is somehow mingled in a dense process of military appropriation, there were others that were settled over empty or scarcely inhabited territory. Mazagão was the most successful case of a new Portuguese establishment in the region. In fact, as the chronologically latest example, it can be considered the summit of the accumulated building experience. What Asilah and Azemmour had also shown was the establishment of long rectangular-shaped built units with similar proportions in both towns and Mazagão. [insert Figure fabrics_4]

After the conquest of the neighboring town of Azemmour, the Portuguese established a castle in Mazagão the following year. Diogo and Francisco de Arruda, master builders, composed a quadrangular structure with curtain walls linking four cylindrical towers.[28] In 1541, Mazagão saw new investment with the building of a modern bastioned fortification and an in-wall town, submitted to a grid project. This royal initiative was managed by a team of architects led by Benedetto da Ravenna and built by João de Castilho.[29] For more than two and a half centuries, the impregnable Mazagão remained in the hands of the Portuguese crown.

The localization of the first square castle, meanwhile transformed into central headquarters housing several storage halls, a hospital, a cistern, and other administrative buildings seems to have worked as a generator of the 1541 projected town. It also provides the metric base for the grid planning of Mazagão since the regularity of blocks derives from the subdivision of the square unit into half portions. This matrix can mainly be verified in southern and eastern areas of the town. Nonetheless, the project of Mazagão seems to have gone beyond a mathematical orientation of the city.

The 1514 castle, around which the whole plan is thought, acted as the literal heart of a newly established Portuguese outpost. The corners of this quadrilateral structure launched diagonals that define the position of the newly fortified bastions with the exception of *S. Sebastião* bastion. To the west, an open yard matches the same square surface, bordered by the governor's palace, the town gate, and *Carreira* Street, the broader one. In fact, four other square figures can be enclosed within the fortified walls, drawing the shape of a Christian cross. Its base is right at

the sea gate entrance and the main axis is followed by the widest street. The second cross axis intersects the first one at the former castle, now a water, cereals, and ammunition provider for the town. Both transepts help to define northern and southern urban limits. Lastly, Mazagão's main church is located at the top of this virtual cross, which also allows the connection to the hinterland through the town's yard. [insert Figure Mazagão_5]

The plan is charged with a significant symbolic meaning intertwined with a rational spirit found in Cartesian geometries. The entire military precinct should also be understood as a sacred place for a Christian settler that expressed himself through façades and architectural objects as well as urbanism. Both secular and sacred dimensions seem to have travelled simultaneously in the letters and orders sent by the crown for the construction of Mazagão. As early as 1514, King Manuel I of Portugal was sending furniture and ornaments for the small chapel the first castle could accommodate, thus denouncing how important the religious activity and presence was from the first days of settlement.[30] Later, in 1547, his successor and patron of the modern foundation, corroborate the tone by assuring that the fortress would always be kept in a state of defense, not only its ramparts but also its church.[31]

Even though Mazagão represents an evolution in terms of military architecture, while its plan is still a compromise with the urban tradition developed in the examples of occupation by conquest, this stronghold acted as the firm rhetorical answer to the Saadi dynasty counterattacks in 1541. After the 1769 Portuguese withdrawal, Mazagão remained devoid of people for more than half a century as it was considered an "unfaithful" land by the local Arab population.[32]

*Conclusion*

New buildings and urban spaces established by the Portuguese on North African soil were as strong as a weapon. The message carried by architecture and urban display was a political and religious one and the degree of intensity could range from a simple cross, framed by a former *mihrab,* to the conception of an entire townLevels of propaganda also ranged from symbolic statements, whenever a Christian consecration of an inherited mosque took place, to more explicit and visual apparatus. Flags waved on balconies and towers, conveying ownership and

religious property rights to the besieger. Inside the walls, geometry played a central role, rationalizing shapes and designing street layouts. New buildings worked as architectural manifestos in their interaction with the former urban environment, contributing to the creation of a new city image.

Controlled dimension, geometrical shape, linearity, perspective, and public space are concepts that the Portuguese empirically used, applying a case by case assessment. Sometimes they were clearly identified as the late-medieval *bastides* or new towns, "exported" to North Africa in the pursuit of a late Christian Reconquest beyond the Strait of Gibraltar. This was the case of the majority of the conquests, especially for Azemmour and Asilah. In terms of traditional historiography, mercantile advantages and military achievements have somehow masked the probable religious significance of the urban layout, besides the conquest itself and the overruled Muslim spaces and objects by Christian ones. Mazagão's analysis has underlined how architecture and urban design have played decisive roles in the settlement of sacred precincts by the Portuguese in North Africa.

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[1] Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal* (Lisbon: Editorial Verbo, 2001), I, 89-90.

[2] Serrão, *História de Portugal*, I, 137-140.

[3] Adolfo L. Guevara, *Arcila durante la ocupación Portuguesa (1471-1549)* (Tangier: Publicaciones del Instituto General Franco para la Investigación Hispano-Arabe, 1940), 28.

[4] *Letter from Manuel I to the inhabitants of Massa*, Estremoz, January 11, 1497, in *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (AN/TT), Livro das Ilhas, fl. 50 (copy of the 16th century).

[5] For example: *Letter by Nuno Mascarenhas to king Manuel I*, Safi, April 3, 1517 in AN/TT, Cartas dos Governadores de África, n. 310) or *Letter by Yahya Ou Ta'fouft to king Manuel I*, Azemmour, Abril 27, 1517 (AN/TT, Corpo Cronológico, I , m.21, n. 93)

[6] *Letter by Yahya ben Belsba' to king Manuel I*, end May, 1517?, in AN/TT, Gaveta 15, m.18, n. 5.

[7] Charles R. Boxer, *O Império Marítimo Português, 1415-1825* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2001), 62.

[8] See: Atanásio Lopez, *Obispos en la África Septentrional desde el Siglo XIII* (Tangier: Instituto General Franco para la Investigación Hispano-Arabe, 1941), 183 and 168-169, respectively.

[9] *Bulla de Alexandre VI*, 17 de Junho de 1499 (AN/TT, Bulas, maço 16, nº 21), in *Alguns Documentos do Archivo Nacional da Torre do tombo, ácerca das navegações e conquistas portugueza* (Lisbon: Academia das Sciências de Lisboa / Imprensa Nacional, 1892), 95.

[10] Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Chronica de El-Rei D. João I* (Lisbon: Escriptorio, 1899-1900), III, chapt. 95.

[11] There are three available translations of Mohammed Ibn Al Qasim Ibn Mohammed Ibn Ahmad 'Abd Al Malik Al Ansari's description of Ceuta, finished in 1422, seven years after the Portuguese conquest: Al Ansari, "Descrição de Ceuta muçulmana no século XV", trans. Joaquim Figanier, *Revista da Faculdade de Letras* XIII (2ª série), 1 (1947) 10-52; Al Ansari, "Una descripción de Ceuta musulmana en el siglo XV", trans. Joaquin Vallvé Bermejo, *Al-Andalus* 27 (1962) 398-442; Al Ansari, "La physionomie monumentale de Ceuta : un hommage

nostalgique a la ville par un de ses fils, Muhammad B. Al-Qasim Al Ansari" , trans. Abdel Magid Turki, *Hespéris-Tamuda* 20-21 (1982-83) 113-162.

[12] Nicolau Lanckman de Valkenstein was a priest and procurator of Friedrich III, who travelled in Queen Leonor's train to the city in 1451. António Brásio, "A primitiva catedral de Ceuta", in *História e Missiologia. Inéditos e Esparsos* (Luanda: Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola, 1973), 66.

[13] Gozalbes Cravioto tries a reconstitution but suggests that the number of 180 columns could be achieved or even surpassed if one takes into account the columns that used to separate the former ablution courts. Carlos Gozalves Cravioto, *El urbanismo religioso y cultural de Ceuta en la Edad Media* (Ceuta: Instituto de Estudios Ceutíes, 1995), 93.

[14] Jorge Correia, "Clash of Power and Creed: Cultural (Re)foundations in Northwest Africa", in *Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe*, Intersections, vol. 22, eds. Maatern Delbeke and Minou Schraven (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 193.

[15] Perspective of Ceuta around 1695 in João Thomas Correa, *Livro de Várias Plantas deste Reino e de Castela* (Lisbon: Livraria da Casa do Espírito Santo de Lisboa), fl. 58.

[16] Robert Hillenbrand, Islamic Architecture (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 50-53.

[17] Lorenzo Pérez del Campo, "Etapas en la construcción de la catedral de Ceuta", in *Actas del Congreso Internacional "El Estrecho de Gibraltar"*, ed. E. Ripoll Perelló (Ceuta, 1987 - Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a distancia, 1988) 4, 42-43.

[18] Georg Braun, Frans Hogenberg and Simon Novellanus, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (Cologne, Philippus Galleus: 1572), I, 56-56v.

[19] *Order by António Leite*, Azemmour, April 12, 1541 in AN/TT, Corpo Cronológico, II, m. 234, n. 131.

[20] Charles L. Redman and James L. Boone, "Qsar es-Seghir (Alcácer Ceguer): a 15th and 16th portuguese colony in North Africa", *Studia*, Sep. 41-42 (1979) 20-21.

[21] "(…) E por que naquella uilla nom auya casas em que se elle bem podesse aloiar. Todo o mês de Setembro entendeo em mandar fazer huuns paaços muy nobres com que afortellezou e afremosentou o castello da uilla. (…)" in Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Crónica do Conde D. Duarte de Meneses*, ed. Larry King (Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1978) 235. "It. Nos arcos mouriscos sobre que o dicto apousentamento esta fundado que estam na casa onde o dicto capitão (…)" in *Regimento das obras de Alcácer Ceguer*, Évora, December 20, 1508 in *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (AN/TT), Corpo Cronológico, II, m. 19, n. 106.

[22] "It primeiramente queremos que na dicta villa se faça hua barera que cerque as casas do apousamento do capitaom (…)" in *Regimento das obras de Alcácer Ceguer*.

[23] Braun et al., *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, I, 57r-57v.

[24] *Archivo Histórico Portuguez* (Lisbon: 1903-1918), I, 365: "(…) Mandámos ora tomar a Diego de Alvarenga, cavaleiro da nossa casa, de todo o dinheiro e cousas que recebeo e despendeo nas obras da nossa villa de arzila, os annos de 509 e 510, em pagamento dos soldos da gente que na dita villa serviu, (…); e 10:000 rs. de mestre Butaqua; (…)".

[25] Jorge Correia, *Implantation de la ville portugaise en Afrique du Nord: de la prise de Ceuta jusqu'au milieu du XVIe siècle* (Porto, FAUPpublicações: 2008).

[26] Leopoldo Torres Balbas, *Ciudades hispano-musulmanas* (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1985), I, 337, and Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Crónica da tomada de Ceuta*, ed. Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira (Lisbon: Academia das Sciências, 1915), 214. *Rua Direita* means literally "straight street" but its most accurate meaning is "direct street" thought it was often winding and marked by torsions.

[27] Torres Balbas, *Ciudades hispano-musulmanas,* I, 219-220.

[28] *Letter from Francisco de Diogo de Arruda to Manuel I*, Azemmour, Mars 31, 1514, in AN/TT, Corpo Cronológico, 1ª parte, m. 15, n. 14.

[29] *Letter from Luis de Loureiro to João III*, Mazagão, August 25, 1541, in AN/TT, Corpo Cronológico, 1ª parte, m. 70, n. 75.

[30] *Order by Manuel I*, Lisbon, Agosto 8-23, 1514 in AN/TT, Corpo Cronológico, 1ª parte, m. 15, n. 117.

[31] *Letter from Luís de Loureiro to João III*, Mazagão, Agosto, 27, 1547, in AN/TT, Corpo Cronológico, 1º parte, m. 79, n. 71.

[32] For example, see: Joseph Goulven, *La Place de Mazagan sous la domination portugaise (1502-1769)* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1917).