

# Architectural-archaeological study of the urban structure of the ancient palace in Qasr al-Bukhari in the state of Medea

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## Abstract:

The city of Al-Bukhari Palace is taken into account a circle of historical, civil, religious and social weight, which contributed to the building of civilization and also the codification of history, as historians agreed that the Ottoman period represented a period of civilizational stability. The proof of this can be the founding of the traditional palace within the city of Al-Bukhari Palace, with all its architectural elements of spiritual, civil and military buildings, and these monuments are only a living witness to the nobility of that civilization.

The ancient palace in its architectural structure consists of a mosque, residential quarters, a righteous guardian's corner, a main street or public square, collective warehouses for the storage of living resources, they are surrounded by an outer wall, crowned with watchtowers and most contain often one or two entrances.

**Keywords:** Al-Bukhari Palace; the ancient palace; architecture; urbanfabric; palaces.

## ملخص:

تعتبر مدينة قصر البخاري حلقة ذات وزن تاريخي، حضاري، ديني واجتماعي، ساهمت في بناء الحضارة وتدوين التاريخ، حيث أجمع المؤرخون أن الفترة العثمانية تمثل فترة استقرار حضاري، والدليل على ذلك تأسيس القصر العتيق بمدينة قصر البخاري، بكل عناصره المعمارية من مباني دينية ومدنية وعسكرية، وما هذه المعالم الأثرية إلا شاهدا حيا على عراقة تلك الحضارة.

ويتكون القصر العتيق في هيكله المعماري من مسجد، الأحياء السكنية، زاوية للولي الصالح، شارع رئيسي أو ساحة عمومية، مستودعات جماعية لتخزين الموارد المعيشية، ويحيط بهم سور خارجي تعلوه أبراج مراقبة، ويحتوي في أغلب الأحيان على مدخل واحد أو مدخلين.  
**الكلمات المفتاحية:** قصر البخاري، القصر العتيق، العمارة، النسيج العمراني، القصور.

## **Introduction:**

The city of Qasr Al-Bukhari is 65 kilometers south of Medea, the state capital. It is bounded to the north by Mujbar municipality, to the south by Bugzoul and Saniq municipalities, to the west by Umm Jalil and Bogar municipalities, and to the east by Al-Mufatha municipality. This city is home to an ancient palace. It was constructed in the desert style, which includes buildings in the Arab-Andalusian and Ottoman styles. Its dwellings are limited to one or two floors. They were all made of bricks, rubble, and uncurved stones, with flat tile ceilings.

This palace is not unlike the other palaces of Algeria's high hills and south, as it occupies an important strategic location installed on the southeast of the rocky hill, and it is a direct point of contact between the inhabitants of Algeria's north and south, as it is known as the gate of the desert. The ancient palace was inhabited by a diverse group of people, including the Qasrawis, foreigners, or Barani, as well as neighboring tribes.

The palace was also important in the development of the economy, particularly in terms of trade, as it served as a point of contact and trade exchange for animal and vegetable products. Furthermore, he was well-known for traditional crafts and industries such as shoemaking, clothing sewing, the silver and gold industry, the weaving industry (rugs and bernos), and the manufacture of agricultural tools.

The palace also flourished scientifically, as evidenced by the shrine of Sidi al-Bukhari, who was interested in educating the



within the year 698 AD, where its emirate appeared (al-Mili, 2007, p. 531). Historians have clarified its political borders, which reach north of Relizane, passing through Tsimsilet to Thaneya Uhud and Qasr al-Bukhar to the east...etc (Abd al-Rahman , 1965, p. 231).

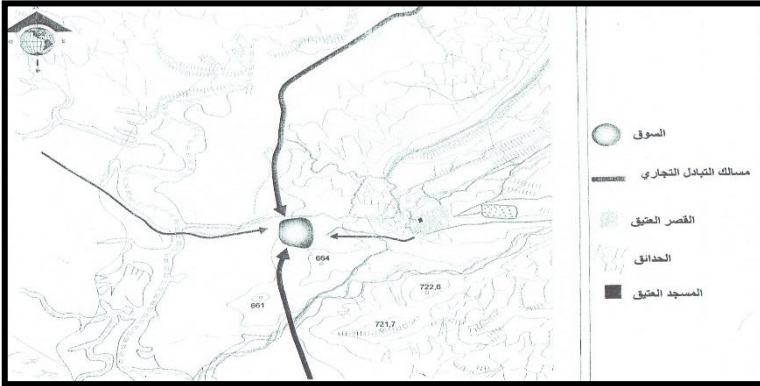


Figure (03): Map of the ancient palace during the Ottoman period

The area of Al-Bukhari Palace also saw the Zirid period, where it had been affiliated with it ( al-Andalusi, 1992, p. 66), and therefore the ancient palace was subject to Ottoman rule (Fig. 03). After they took the Medea region, Beylik Al-Titari, and its chief was called the Emir and belonged to town of Algiers and also the Zawiya Palace of Sidi Al-Bukhari, and he was affiliated with the Algerian authority (Salih , 2003, p. 458).

#### 1.4. Colonial period:

The city fell after a protracted resistance to the soldiers of "Mustafa Abu Merzak" who finally surrendered to the French, and therefore the area of Qasr al-Bukhari became under the French regime, affiliated with the Bogar military center. During the reign of Emir Abd al-Qadir, many groups joined the resistance against the French occupation, and what confirms this can be the presence of the fortress of Emir Abd al-Qadir within the city of Bogar.

## **2. Geographical and historical appearance of the ancient palace:**

### **2.1. Palace concept:**

The palace is the house, and it was said that every house is made of stone, so named because it is confined to the sanctuary, i.e. confined. (Ibn Manzur, 1993, p. 186).

As for the wise revelation: (*...and you built palaces on its plains and carved homes into mountains...*) (Surah Al-Araf, Verse 73), the palace is that the fortified plain of the village, where the fortifications of this sort of palaces should be an external wall, surrounding monolithic houses around a middle courtyard. There's one entrance, which is meant to belong to the mountain palaces (Muhammad, 2004, p. 28), and these palaces also contain stores and shops for the nomadic tribes that are kept in them whenever they are going removed from the pasture (Colomien, 1809, p. 162).

Among the characteristics of the palaces of the high hills, are the defensive qualities, that is, their presence above the mountain tops, on their slopes, or on solid rocky plateaus or hills, as is that the case within the "Ancient Palace" where it enjoys its presence near water sources and within the middle of fertile arable lands. His people built their homes so as to beat natural hardships, and that they were ready to provide adequate living conditions.

Many traditional crafts and industries spread within the old palace, like shoemaking, textile industry, gold and silver industry, and agricultural tools industry, so as to fulfill their daily needs, and also the number of crafts in this period reached 50 crafts (Heitress, 1979, p. 231).

### **2.2. Ancient palace site**

The ancient palace is located 150 m from the left side of the "Chlef River". It is bordered to the east by the municipality of "Al-Maftha", and to the south by the municipality of "Sang",

while the rest of the sides are surrounded by residential neighborhoods, and the corner of the good guardian Sheikh Maysoum.

### **2.3. History of the establishment of the ancient palace:**

The ancient palace is attributed to the Al-Shurafa tribe in Al-Fatiha, and it was called "Awlad Al-Bukhari", and "Muhammad bin Farhat Al-Bukhari" was its first ruler, who came to it in the year 144 AH corresponding to 761 AD, during the mission of the Caliph "Abu Jaafar al-Mansur Muhammad Ibn al-Ash`ath al-Khuza'i" at the head of 40 A thousand knights, to restore the rule of Africa, which was seized by the Berber "Abu al-Khattab".

Aghlab bin Salem was a lieutenant of Al-Ash'ath, commissioned by the Caliph, who then established the "Aghlabid Kingdom" in the year 184 AH corresponding to 800 AD, under the rule of "Harun al-Rashid" by his son Ibrahim (Camus, 1855, p. 169).

During the 112-year period of the existence of this kingdom, the family of "Muhammad bin Farhat bin al-Bukhari" had always occupied important positions with the rulers of Kairouan, and following the fall of "Aghlabid Kingdom" in the year 296 AH corresponding to 908 AD, the children of al-Bukhari came to the region with the exception of some of its members who went to settle near The kings of Tlemcen (Camus, 1855, p. 169).

There are some French reports that attribute the establishment of the palace to two of the sons of "Al-Bukhari", "Si Al-Mukhtar" and "Abdullah", because "Sir Sheikh Bin Al-Din Merabet" from the children of "Sayyid Al-Sheikh" (the Emir of Oran) made it his religious station, and it became Known as the corner of Sidi Bukhari (Damastugue & Boughari, 1853-1860).

Then this area became a station for receiving commercial caravans, coming from the south and passing through to the

north. It was necessary to establish a commercial market to exchange goods and merchandise between the neighboring tribes. And when that market became famous, the Ottoman authorities built 40 houses in the ancient palace, after it was huts and tents for the people of the desert. Taxes were imposed on the commercial convoys arriving to it, where the "Aghouatians" and "Bani M'zab", who were famous for trading livestock, wool, grain and carpets, settled in the ancient palace (Eugene , 1856, p. 20).

#### **2.4. The origin of the inhabitants of the ancient palace**

The inhabitants of the ancient palace consist of homogeneous elements that can be divided into three types, namely:

##### **2.4.1. The first inhabitants of the palace:**

They are the part who inhabit the land, and that they are made from a family whose origin is from the palace and is go past a pacesetter. Their number is 238 and that they live in 42 houses.

##### **2.4.2. Banu M'zab:**

The Banu M'zab constitute an industrial group originating from the M'zab Valley and other desert areas, which practice various professions, especially trade, and own 31 house .In addition to the most important number of stores, which reached 78, Where the M'zab reach 161 residents.

##### **2.4.3. Barani or foreigners:**

They are the foreigners who come to remain within the palace for work, or the transients and are renewed all the time. These residents are the unstable part of the palace (Damastugue & Boughari, 1853-1860).

### 3. The urban fabric of the ancient palace:

This palace does not differ in its planning (Fig. 04) from the rest of the palaces of the high hills and the south of Algeria, as it occupies an important strategic location installed on the southeast of the rocky hill, and it is a point of direct contact

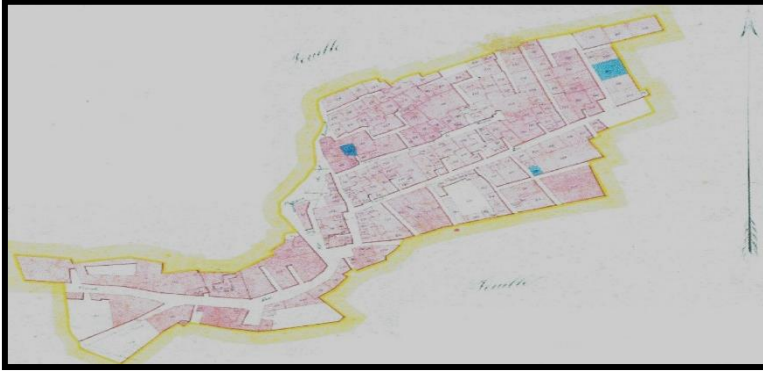


Figure (04): Schematic diagram of the streets of the ancient palace

between the inhabitants of the north and south of Algeria, as it is called the gate of the desert.

#### 3.1. Ancient mosque:

This mosque is found within the northwest corner of the palace wall, near the corridor resulting in the northern door. it's one amongst the oldest mosques in Al-Bukhari Palace. it absolutely was built by "Sidi Ahmed Al-Sayej" during the amount between 1828 AD and 1863 AD, where the population of the palace failed to exceed 500 people in 1826 AD (Damastugue & Boughari, 1853-1860).

This architecture is of great importance, because it could be a religious institution of the character of holiness, and it enjoys the loyalty of the community. In addition to the actual fact that the mosque could be a distinctive architectural unit, and sometimes within the assemblies of palaces we discover a mosque, usually called the "Ancient Mosque," within the middle of the palace and intended for all residents (Hamlawy, 2000, p. 20).



### 3.2. The shrine of Sidi al-Bukhari:

After the establishment of the town of Al-Bukhari by the "children of Sidi Al-Bukhari", they chose a site within the pasture, and made it a spiritual place. This building is circular in shape, built of stones and mortar and bears the name "Sidi Al-Sheikh"(Damastugue & Boughari, 1853-1860).

This shrine consists of a dome or a college to show the residents and memorize the Qur'an, because the neighboring tribes flocked to that to get the blessings of the guardian, and after the death of the sheikh, a mausoleum was erected to him in honor of his charitable work and was called "the shrine of the Zawiya of Sidi al-Bukhari." (Damastugue & Boughari, 1853-1860)

After the traditional palace was rebuilt by the Turks within the 15th century AD, the name "Sheikh Al-Bukhari" was related to the traditional palace, and it became called "Al-Bukhari Palace". Today, that shrine has changed into a mosque frequented by many people.

### 3.3. Sheikh Al- Maisum zawiya:

Originally, the zawiya was a side of the mosque where the teaching sessions were held. The zawiyas were well-known throughout the Islamic world, particularly in Iran, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire. They are known as baltkayas (Hamlawi, 2006, p. 221). The zawiya is a collection of religious buildings in the Islamic west (Nassib, 1998, pp. 27-28).

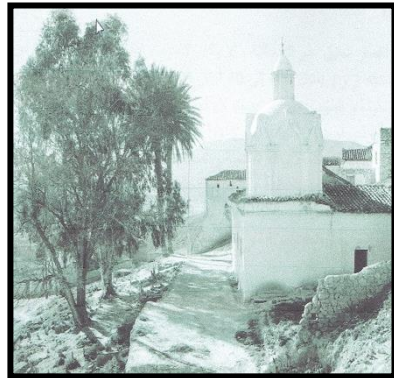


Photo (01): Sheikh Al-  
Maysom Zawiya

Sheikh Maisum's zawiya (photo No. 01) is located 300 meters outside the walls of the ancient palace. The location was appropriate for seclusion, worship, and meditation because it

was away from the hustle and bustle of urbanization. And modest housing is taught to children, and this zawiya is surrounded on all sides by housing units ( [Bouhloufa, 2017, p. 191](#)).

The "Sheikh Maisum" zawiya was established in the 18th century AD, after he moved from the "Chlef" region and settled in Qasr Al-Bukhari. This zawiya served as a refuge for students, and after Sheikh Al-Maisum died in 1883 AD, he was buried in his zawiya, where a mausoleum and a dome were built for him over his grave, known as the "Sheikh Al-Maisum" dome ([Pretty, 1907, p. 05](#)).

### **3.4. The wall:**

Although the ancient palace was built on a high hill, a wall was needed for protection, and the Islamic religion encouraged and called for the construction of walls for external fortifications, until the wall became one of the city's distinguishing architectural elements. This palace's walls are made of stones and bricks and have a thickness of 2 meters and a height of 10 meters ([Othman , 1988, p. 50](#)).

### **3.5. Streets and alleys:**

The old palace has a main street, or what is known as "Al Rahba" in Islamic architecture. It is a public corridor that runs through the palace. It is one kilometer long and four meters wide. It is not covered and is surrounded by neighboring houses and shops. Its role is to connect among its pillars, such as the outer door and the mosque, while the main street's role is to organize pedestrian movement that leads to all the alleys.

The Old Palace also has narrow alleys (Picture No. 03) that run through it, with a width of 2.5 m. We find some narrow alleys with no windows, and other roofed alleys that serve a social function, which is the passage of women from house to house without covering or veiling, and doing manual work such as preparing and weaving wool. The alley, in addition to reducing the intrusion of sunlight and rain, serves a climatic and social function that is appropriate for this palace (Tayqa



Picture (03): Secondary streets or alleys



Photo (02): Main Street

& Fathi, 2011, pp. 14-16).

### 3.6. Market:

The market is a commercial center where people go to meet their needs and exchange goods and merchandise. It is a communication and dissemination channel for political, religious, and ideological information. (Abdelhak , 2011, p. 53)

After the "Awlad Al-Bukhari" settled in the Old Palace, they considered establishing a weekly market (Picture No. 04) for commercial exchanges, and this market was largely responsible for the establishment of the ancient palace, which had previously been huts and tents for desert dwellers, where the Ottoman authorities built forty houses and surrounded them with a large wall (Al-Madani, 1933, p. 231).

The "BeyTitiri" imposed tax fees on the weekly market, and the collection of these fees is the leader of the Rahba who rents the market, and the size of the load determines the value

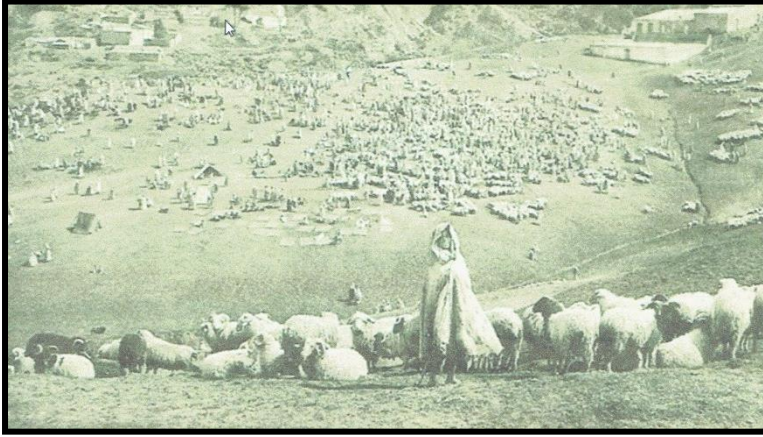


Photo (04): Old Palace Market

of the fee (Eugene , 1856, pp. 19-20).

### **3.7. Shops:**

The majority of the shops (Picture No. 05) were located on the ground floor of the residences and were spread across the main street of the ancient palace, extending from the eastern door to the western door of the palace. It is solely for retail sale to meet the daily needs of the palace's residents, as opposed to the market, which serves both palace residents and foreign visitors.

### **3.8. Bathrooms:**

The public bath is a public place where people can bathe. The Arabs used this type of bath in the past, as it reached its peak of development during the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatimid periods. The bath has three sections: a cold section, a warm section, and a hot section. Three well-known bathrooms can be found in the ancient palace. It is the "Grandfather's" and "Aunty Masouda's" baths (Photo No. 06), which have been closed for a long time and converted into housing, and the

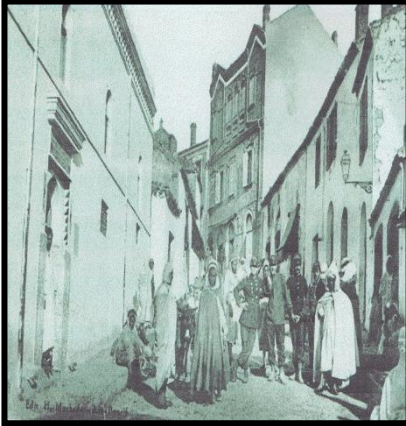


Photo (06): Aunt Masouda's bathroom during the colonial period

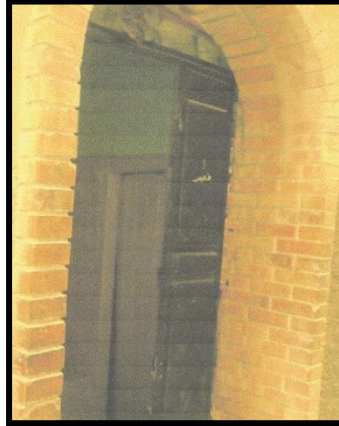


Photo (07): The entrance to the current bathroom of Fuhais

"Fhais" bath (Photo No. 07), where the palace's inhabitants still bathe.

### 3.9. The oven:

The furnace has been known to man since ancient times, but there is no specialized study to know the structures of engineering furnaces.



Photo (05): ancient Palace

Some scholars believe that modern ovens are similar to their middle ages predecessors (Al-Tayyib , 1984, p. 62), and in general, the oven is a shop that may be owned by its owner or rented. The kosha, the shop, the floor receiving bread, and the wood-burning store are all part of it (The Tribe of Fares Al-

Maliki, 2011, p. 190). The oven is used to bake bread, sweets, and meat, and it is the most famous oven in the ancient palace. Ben Azzouz El Kawash" was located on the main street but has since closed.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The ancient palace's strategic location was not by chance, but according to the rules followed in the construction of Islamic cities, where it is located in a high place, close to the weekly market, as well as from the facilities necessary for the daily life of the palace's residents, and if we examine this palace objectively, it turns out that it does not exceed To be a modest small town, and this is clearly shown in the style of its construction.

We arrived at a set of conclusions after studying the historical and descriptive field theory of this archaeological landmark, the most important of which are:

- ❖ Ease of recognizing its architectural elements, by comparing it with the desert palaces, as well as the Casbah of Algiers.
- ❖ The design of the antique palace structure, falls within the Ottoman Arab style.
- ❖ The French intervention on the ancient palace led to the obliteration of the Islamic architectural elements, for the residential facilities.
- ❖ After the indigenous people left, the palace was neglected and vandalized, and it remained neglected by local authorities and competent bodies, who did not recognize its archaeological and cultural significance, and it did not benefit from projects dedicated to the maintenance and restoration of monuments, as well as an attempt to restore consideration to this landmark, which is part of the formation of a nation's identity.

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