The city will follow you: Tunis, Tunisia, and the Mediterranean

Thesis

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Abstract

The quotation “The City will follow you” from Constantin Cavafy’s poem *The City* foregrounds my experience of Tunis where I lived between 1995 and 2010. Starting with recollections of the 2004 closure of the British embassy in Tunis I survey some of the changes in the central Tunis streetscape at the end of the twentieth century and in the early years of the present century. Renewed official attention to the built heritage of Tunis and my awareness of this as a resident of the city is set in the wider context of a Tunisian national narrative that particularly in the post-1987 period sought to integrate migrant communities of Mediterranean origin into Tunisian history. This thesis follows the emergence of “Tunisia’s Mediterraneans” in public space and discourse based on my experience of a changing urban environment in the Bab al-Bahr and Bab Souika areas of Tunis.

The work of Clifford Geertz and Michel de Certeau inform this approach to the city of Tunis, while Béatrice Hibou and Etienne Balibar have provided a model for the development of a Tunisian national narrative. The term “Mediterranean” was widely used in the colonial period by French authors seeking to develop an identity for the settler communities of French North Africa. Habib Bourguiba nevertheless sought to develop a Tunisian way of being in the world, one combining a centralising national narrative with openness to other cultures. After 1987 the Ben ‘Ali regime revised school curricula and academic research in order to recast the national narrative
hitherto centred on the role of Habib Bourguiba. In “Sarkozy’s Mediterranean” and “Italiani, brava gente?” I highlight the persistence into the twenty-first century of traditional framings of the Mediterranean, while chapter 5 “Quicker than the human heart” returns to the changing urban forms we initially examined. A “post-revolutionary conclusion” situates “Tunisia’s Mediterraneans” in the post-2011 social and political landscape in which Tunisians grapple with their own diversity and the challenges this brings.
Dedication

To the inhabitants of Bab al-Bahr and Bab al-Khadra, Tunis

Τον στίχο της γης της με την πόλη της καλύπτει όποια τοποθέτηση.
Λυπάμαι για την χώρα μου, θα παγωθούμε σε άλλη χώρα.
Μια πόλη άλλη θα σήμανε καλύτερη από αυτήν.
Καινούριος χώρος δεν θα σερκιώσει, δεν θα σερκιώσει άλλη πόλη.
ή πόλη θα σε ακολουθεί
Acknowledgements

“The city will follow you,” wrote Constantine Cavafy and during the writing of this thesis memories of Tunis have been constantly present. During my sojourn in Tunis between 1995 and 2010 the Institut des belles-lettres arabes (IBLA) and the Society of Missionaries of Africa (Pères Blancs) provided documentary resources and fraternal encouragement. Michel Prignot, the late Lucien Descousse, and Laurence Michalak shared their memories of Tunis and were generous hosts. Noura Bensaad, Ezzedine Riahi, Khalil Tazarki, and Lotfi Essid accompanied me on my vagabondages. Daniela Melfa contributed heartening encouragement and helpful criticism, and provided the photographs which accompany this thesis. Julian Halliday assisted with formatting challenges. Justin McGuinness shared generously his knowledge of Tunis and other North African cities, while Laure Guino introduced me to Georges Perec’s exploration of the seemingly ordinary and mundane. I am grateful to Robert Lang for his incisive commentaries. Espace “Imagin” in Avenue Pline (Byrsa) hosted a number of exhibitions of my work notably La ville te suivra (2007), Jamais de la vie, jamais de la ville (2008), Regency Blues (2009) and Vagabondages in 2010. My thanks go notably to Miriam Mestiri.

Under the guidance of my adviser Dr. Sabra Webber questions and avenues of research emerged from the gallimaufry of Tunisian experiences. Dr. Dick Davis and Dr. Youssef Yacoubi encouraged me to reflect further on my time in Tunis. It is with pleasure that I thank them all for their comments.
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2002  Tunis en aquarelles (Tunis: View Design, 2002)

Reviews and articles


**Fields of Study**

Major Field: Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
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Prelude

On an April morning in 2004 a ruddy-complexioned Scottish piper in Highland dress stood on the balcony of the British embassy at Bab al-Bahr, the entrance to the Medina of Tunis. A slight breeze ruffling the folds of his kilt, he played the *Flowers of the Forest* as the Union Jack was lowered for the last time. This ceremony marked the closure of the British embassy after over three centuries in its location on the fringe of the Medina. The embassy would henceforth be situated in the new Berges du Lac development on the shores of the lake separating Tunis from the Mediterranean.

The piper then descended to the square in front of the embassy and played the more jaunty *Black Bear* in front of a few onlookers, mainly British embassy staff, Tunisian civic dignitaries and urban conservation specialists. Staff from the adjoining restaurant Le Pacha looked on curiously from the pillared balconies of what had once been the Raffo Palace. Giuseppe Raffo, of Genoese descent and born in Tunis in 1795, held high office in Tunis and was ennobled by the King of Sardinia in 1851.¹ In January 1959 Countess Daisy Raffo died in Tunis, “fortified by the Holy Rites.” The funeral cortege left from 40 rue des Maltais (now Rue Mongi Slim) just round the corner from the British embassy.²

The short ceremony marking the closure of the British embassy concluded in the British Council library on the ground floor. On a small pedestal was a portrait of Richard Wood, British consul in Tunis from 1851 to 1879. Wood’s eldest daughter
Farida married into the Raffo family in 1874. The key of the embassy was returned on a cushion to the Tunisian authorities, while a plaque (which has since disappeared) commemorating the British presence in the building was unveiled. The nature of the ceremony itself, cordial, yet concluding with the Tunisian state regaining control of the former embassy, seemed to encapsulate something of what has been termed “Tunisian-ness,” an exceptional openness to the “Other” and the patriotic preservation of national specificity. The British Council has since moved to sleek modern premises in Avenue Mohammed V and the library has become a fast-food restaurant called Sucré et salé. “Did we really need another fast-food?” wondered a Tunisian former employee of the British Council when I encountered him by chance a year later.
1 The Mediterranean Years

1.1 Introduction

Why foreground this short ceremony which I witnessed on that April morning in 2004? There are a number of reasons. The thesis title “The City will follow you,” a quotation from Constantin Cavafy’s poem *The City*, emphasises my personal experience of Tunis of which the ceremony described above was part. After an initial sojourn in Bab Menara from 1995 until 2002 on the western side of the Medina, between 2002 and 2005 I lived in the Bab al-Bahr area close to the former British embassy, situated in what was known in the nineteenth century as the Quartier Franc on the east side of the Medina. I then moved in 2006 to the neighbouring area of Bab Souika. These changes of domicile followed what Jacques Berque described as the historical trajectory of the city of Tunis, spreading from the heights of the Kasbah near Bab Menara down through the Medina to the colonial city constructed after 1881. The Quartier Franc, nucleus of the colonial city, was in reality a *ville franque* of consulates, schools, and churches on the fringe of the lower Medina. The European population by 1861 may have been around 10,000 and the total population of Tunis around 70,000.

As for the British nature of the ceremony, we may note that Britain, although not a Mediterranean country, was until the middle of the twentieth century involved in the projection of power in the Mediterranean. Remnants of this imperial role linger in
Tunis: the hereditary title of “Earl Alexander of Tunis” created in 1952 for Field Marshal Harold Alexander, Allied commander in North Africa and Italy in 1943 and 1944 still exists today. In 1992 an album-format history book was produced with the slightly preposterous title *At home in Carthage: the British in Tunisia.* Bab al-Bahr and the surrounding area were often chosen by British travellers as observation posts from which they described the streetscape. Captain J. Clark Kennedy stayed in the British consulate in 1845 and noted that “the scene from the balcony affords constant amusement …a continued stream of passers-by is flowing through the gate consisting of Moors, Turks, Bedoueens from the interior, country people from the villages, soldiers, porters and negroes.” In 1906 the British author Norma Lorimer looked out from her balcony of the nearby Hotel Eymon onto the ‘biblical’ streetscape below full of exotically-dressed Tunisians. She also noticed the British consul smoking a cigar on the balcony of the consulate. The cabbalist Aleister Crowley stayed at the Hotel Eymon in 1923 following his expulsion from Sicily. On the top floor of the hotel, now a lawyer’s office, there is a “window-on-the-world” from which one has a view across the modern city and out to Carthage on the other side of the lagoon. I used this window as a vantage point for a number of drawings.

This initial focus on the end-of-embassy ceremony and travellers’ descriptions of the Bab al-Bahr area reminds us that Europeans have thought of the Mediterranean and Tunisia-in-the-Mediterranean, in European terms, according to a cultural gaze and a cartography which see the Mediterranean as exotic, or as an earlier stage of Europe’s own history. A French commentator in 1920 affirmed that France, unlike Britain in Egypt or Italy in Tripolitania, was not on “an extended camping holiday” in Tunisia, but was the rightful heir of Latin civilisation. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has said, the
European constructs an “Other” that consolidates the imperialist self. This European image of the “Mediterranean,” can open up to interrogations from elsewhere, from its southern and eastern shores. While this thesis presents a view of the Mediterranean from a southern (Tunisian) shore in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, this is not simply, as Iain Chambers has said, to propose “the heroic space of the counter-narrative…an alternative history, identity and autonomous sense.” We shall see, in Chamber’s words, that “the divisions between the hegemonic and the subaltern, the victors and the victims decline into a more disquieting complexity.” While we shall study the official accounts of the colonial and postcolonial powers, attentive to their convergences, we shall also be alert to alternative narratives, where the “continuum of history fragments under the pressure of the unassimilated.”

This first chapter of the thesis “The Mediterranean Years 1989-2001,” will start with my observations in Tunis as a resident of the Bab al-Bahr area of central Tunis. I shall show how the term “Mediterranean” moulded both the material streetscape and state discourse, and, in chapter 2, move on to examine Tunisia’s understanding of itself as a Mediterranean country. Chapter 3 will examine historiography in Tunisia after 1987 as the product of a matrix of state and non-state intellectual, social, and political forces.

1.2 Subject positions and complicities

My affiliation to a largely French-speaking community of the Society of Missionaries of Africa, usually known as the “White Fathers” has been a factor of significance. This Catholic religious community founded the *Revue de l’Institut des belles-lettres arabes* in 1937 and had a tradition of ethnographic fieldwork. According to the community’s
own narrative, the White Fathers considered, even before Tunisian independence in 1956, that the French protectorate was only a passing phase (*une étape*) in more than a thousand years of Tunisian history.¹⁸ André Demeerseman, the founder of the review of the Institut, emphasised on numerous occasions the venerable character of Muslim civilisation in an essentially “Oriental” Tunisia.¹⁹

Although aware of this community narrative I found myself developing an alternative cartography as I explored Tunis on foot. Jacques Berque, as we noted earlier, described the unfolding history of Tunis from the heights of the Kasbah down through the Medina to the colonial city constructed after 1881. This movement seemed to have swept before it an accumulation of colonial bric-a-brac and mementos which had come to rest in the junk shops of Rue des Glacières: Italian coins from the 1860s, a Catholic chasuble, a photograph of members of a fencing club from the 1920s. Berque used the image of a heteroclite moraine of debris generated by European colonialism.²⁰ Certain street names in French and Arabic spun other webs of meaning: Rue de la Commission *nahaj al-koumissioun*, for example, recalled the International Financial Commission founded in 1869 to ensure the repayment of Tunisia’s debts to its European creditors.²¹ In the same street, a small nameplate on a door read “Antonio Jose Antonez Aguilar: capitaine espagnol,” possibly a Spanish Republican refugee of the 1930s. On the same building, a fire-mark indicated that the Assicurazioni Generali di Trieste (founded in 1831) had provided insurance cover.²²
1.3 “Telling” Tunis

These vagabondages were inspired by French scholarly investigations of the urban “everyday,” in particular its fragmentary dimensions composed of layered histories and experiences. In a statement which echoed through the 1980s and 1990s and inspired “proximate ethnographies” by Jean-Didier Urbain and Marc Augé, Georges Perec in Approches de quoi (1973) affirmed “Peut-être s’agit-il de fonder notre propre anthropologie, celle qui parlera de nous […] Non plus l’exotique, mais l’endotique” (Perhaps it’s a matter of founding our own anthropology that, that will talk about us…Not the exotic, but the endotic.”

One strand of such enquiries, drawing on the work of Erving Goffman, examined ritual in the modern world, acts or sequences of actions invested with individual and social meanings. I had the opportunity to develop my study of historical traces in the everyday between 2008 and 2010 by taking part in a research programme financed by the French Foreign Ministry and entitled Traces: Désirs de savoir et volonté d’être which included researchers from the Maghreb, France, and Italy. Fanny Colonna, the programme coordinator, mentions in the introduction to the volume of research published under the title Traces: Désirs de savoir et volonté d’être the reflection of the American artist Jasper Johns on an object that tells of the loss, destruction, or disappearance of other objects, not speaking for itself, but telling of others.

This section of the thesis draws inspiration from Michel de Certeau’s discussion in L’invention du Quotidien of the historicity of the everyday, a historicity rooted in ways of doing things rather than in discourses about them. We are “immersed in the everyday and the ordinary and there is no external vantage point from which to think
the everyday.” Clifford Geertz makes the same point: in his examination of the changing ways in which the Moroccan city of Sefrou has been culturally framed, Geertz noted that understanding a city is a public activity, carried on not in “the head,” “the heart,” or some other gossamery private place but in the *plein air* world by means of sign systems; in the case of Tunis, firemarks, streetnames and other objects in the built environment. Street names, encountered by the walker, evoke stories lying dormant in the street, and are there in a simple name, “folded up in a thimble like the silk dresses of a fairy.” Michel de Certeau drew a parallel between the acts of walking and narration both of which imply movement and trajectory. Walking Tunis, as I often did, was also therefore a telling and retelling of Tunis to myself. I noted the ubiquitous wrought-iron manhole covers on the pavements of Tunis bearing the name of the north-eastern French town of Pont-à-Mousson. In André Breton’s 1923 poem in praise of daily life *Plutôt la vie* an ordinary life is epitomized by “une petite ville comme Pont-à-Mousson” (a little town like Pont-à-Mousson).

De Certeau sees toponyms in particular as forming part of a bricolage which subverts homogeneous official representations. These names are particularly evocative in Tunis: rue des Moniquettes, rue de la Commission, rue d’Écosse, this latter possibly one of the shortest streets in Tunis between rue al-Jazira and rue Sidi Bou Mendil. Such names divert itineraries by opening up historical and personal associations, giving meaning and direction hitherto unforeseen. This is an “anti-discipline,” an examination of how individual practices can develop inventiveness in the face of technocratic control. However daily life and its possibilities, for the Surrealist Breton and later for Michel de Certeau, are threatened by alienating officialdom. Already the area around Bab al-Bahr was patrolled by members of the Police Secours unit in black...
 imitation-leather jackets, their belts festooned with stubby truncheons and crackling radios. They frequently demanded that passers-by, usually young men, produce their identity card. These same areas would soon become the object of more benevolent official interest, as we shall demonstrate in the next section of this thesis.

1.4 City life and city questions

Writing in 2002 Justin McGuinness noted the profusion of trinkets and inauthentic merchandise spilling out of the shops lining the rue de la Zitouna, the main destination for tourists seeking something Oriental to take home. Tourists visiting Tunis for the morning before retreating back to their hotel in a coastal resort would find in the rue de la Zitouna a noisy dash of “Eastern Promise.”

Amid the bustle of this street in 2002 a sign in French appeared on the façade of the former presbytery of Église Sainte-Croix. This church, closed in 1964, was constructed in 1837 on the site of a hospital for Christian captives of Tunisian corsairs. The hospital had been founded in the early eighteenth century by the religious order of the Trinitarians. The sign announced the planned opening of a Mediterranean Centre for Applied Arts in the former presbytery. The project (“phase one 2002-2004”) was supported financially by the Italian government and preliminary studies and execution of the plan were entrusted to the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina (ASM), founded in 1967 by the Municipality of Tunis. The ASM would henceforth play a role in preserving Tunis’ built heritage from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in addition to its primary mission of Medina conservation.

The Medina had been seen in the colonial period as the anachronistic antithesis of the modern city and, since the 1970s, as a bastion of Tunisian identity. A French
resident of the rue de la Zitouna area in 2006 described the medina as a “secret Arab city” in a style very similar to the British traveller of 1906 Norma Lorimer who described the gateway of Bab al-Bahr leading into the Medina as the frontier between an exotic Arab and Oriental locale quite different from the modern city with its boulevards and tramcars. The Sainte-Croix project would, according to the ASM link the Medina to the modern city of Tunis:

The building is an architectural entity capable of assuming a cultural role of great significance: a cultural hub linking the central Medina to what is termed “the European city” via the Quartier Franc with its rich history of conviviality among people from different Mediterranean countries. In the Quartier Franc are situated the former British embassy and Italian consulate, the French fondouk, and the Garibaldi house. The planned conversion of the Église Sainte-Croix, today the town hall of the Médina district, as well as the adjacent presbytery, into a Mediterranean centre of Applied Arts will reinforce the values of tolerance which has characterised the history of the Médina and highlight the Mediterranean identity of the city of Tunis.

To use Dean MacCannell’s schema, the visible presence of a sign in the rue de la Zitouna and the on-line ASM commentary quoted above are the first stages in “sight sacralization” with a marker distinguishing the Sainte-Croix complex of buildings as worthy of preservation. This is part of the modern ritual of sightseeing. Erving Goffman defines ritual as a “conventionalized act through which an individual portrays his respect and regard for some object of ultimate value to its stand-in.” Sainte-Croix was intended to become a “sight,” part of the modern ritual by which certain “sights” become invested with meaning and have to be visited. The “ultimate values” in the case of Sainte-Croix include “tolerance,” and “Mediterranean identity.” A visit to the
completed Sainte-Croix Arts Centre would become one of the rituals which, in the context of the Ben Ali regime, celebrated and expressed dominant official norms.46

As Iain Sinclair has observed in the case of London, urban refurbishment is accompanied by a moment when everything previously non-narrated is “suddenly explained, overemphasised, brochured.”47 “Heritage” replaces memories passed on “anecdotally, affectionately, by word of mouth.”48 Hitherto in work such as Has-Been’s Tunis (2003) I had listened to individual Tunisian, Italian, and Armenian voices. Now this “territory” of nostalgia I had mapped out was being occupied by official voices. Another text inscribed on the palimpsest. Béatrice Hibou noted that an authoritarian regime such as that of Ben Ali can only be partially understood in terms of coercion and manipulation.49 The majority of the Tunisian population seemed to lead a normal life.50

While Police Secours patrols and two police stations in the vicinity of the future Centre for Applied Arts were the visible manifestation of authority in Ben Ali’s Tunis, the authoritarian exercise of power has an imaginary, smoke-and-mirrors dimension, which involves, for example, the reinterpretation of history, public narratives and the absence of any concrete realisations.51 The “Mediterranean” identity of the city of Tunis, the “tolerant” medina, the vanished embassy plaque announcing Anglo-Tunisian friendship and the absence of any visible progress with the Sainte-Croix plan are some examples. The techniques of power reached into everyday situations.52 Daily life, according to Henri Lefebvre, is composed of the interpenetration of the “micro” (“the living root of the social”) and the “macro” technology, bureaucracy, or politically oppressive leadership.53

The next section of this thesis will examine more closely some of the theoretical terms such as narrative and nostalgia. I shall subsequently put the Sainte-Croix project
in the broader context of Tunisia’s national narrative, notably in the period between 1987 and 2010.

1.5 City narratives

The sign announcing the Sainte-Croix project and the more detailed description published on the website of the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina evoke a movement from the past (Église Sainte-Croix) into the prospective future of the Mediterranean Centre for Applied Arts. As de Certeau observed, the narration of a story has a dimension of movement, linking disparate spaces together.\(^5^4\) We all have within ourselves a personal “story” which we recount to ourselves, following the trajectory of our lives. This can be more than just a personal story-telling. Jean-François Lyotard borrows from Ivan Illich the term of “conviviality” to imply the communal nature of narrative.\(^5^5\) Narrative was originally a matter of reading aloud to an audience. The oral epics of Homer were part of the classical Greek sense of “identity,” a word whose Latin root (\textit{idem}) means not individuality but sameness. Through Homer Greeks could feel their common heritage that differentiated them from the surrounding barbarians.\(^5^6\) The epic, as Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs remind us, is a potent resource for claims to national distinction.\(^5^7\) The stories of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett create a common feeling of Americanness among an immigrant population whose ancestors were in other parts of the world when these heroes shaped their nation.\(^5^8\)

In the case of Tunisia, Béatrice Hibou’s \textit{The force of obedience: the political economy of repression in Tunisia} (2011) draws on Etienne Balibar’s article “The nation form: history and ideology” whose starting point is history as a narrative which attributes to an entity the continuity of a subject.\(^5^9\) It entails believing, in Balibar’s
words, that “the generations which succeed one another over centuries on a reasonably stable territory, have handed down to each other an invariant substance. Every social community (in this case “Tunisia”) reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past.”

This thesis will be studying a period, starting in the 1980s when the founding legitimacies of Tunisia were being eroded. Jean-François Lyotard, writing in 1989, suggested that “thought must yield to the evidence that the grand narratives of emancipation have lost their intelligibility.” During his sojourn in the Algerian city of Constantine as a philosophy teacher between 1950 and 1952 Lyotard joined the socialist organisation *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. He was aware of the crisis of modern imperialist ideology, as well as the potential new forms of inequality and domination associated with nationalism.

In 1989 Lyotard wrote that he had wanted to honour the name of Algeria through a “singular anamnesis,” and that the collection of articles entitled *The War of the Algerians* written between 1956 and 1963 were addressed to the city of Constantine, “perhaps without my knowledge. It is the correspondence of a lover. From a distance the lover confesses his jealousy of everything that deceives or will deceive the loved one. He admires the loved one, he encourages the loved one. He complains, knowing that the loved one will not meet the fate that courage and beauty deserve.”
1.6 City nostalgia

Tangible restoration and renovation were aspects of the “Mediterraneanising” of Tunis and more broadly, Tunisia’s national narrative during the Ben Ali years. Svetlana Boym uses the term of “restorative nostalgia” to describe the recovery and reconstruction of the past, a rebuilding of the lost home, while “reflective nostalgia” is aware of distance and cherishes shattered fragments of memory. The Arabic verses in the dedication page of this thesis reflect such sentiments: “Tunis welcomes travellers who come to her, yearning for her pursues them wherever they go. Were they to go from Tunis to the land of Iraq they would tenderly long for Tunis in the secret of their hearts.”

While nostalgia has a dimension of algia, longing and loss, as well as the aspiration to return home (nostos), restorative nostalgia, as the term implies, is the restoration (restauration in the French of the Sainte-Croix notice mentioned earlier) of a material past free from the patina of history. The Centre méditerranéen des arts appliqués in the heart of the Medina was thus envisaged as a manifestation of Mediterranean pluralism in the pre-colonial Quartier Franc detached from the post-1881 French occupation. This past of Mediterranean “conviviality” and “tolerance” in the case of the Sainte Croix project may be a utopia but restorative nostalgia in the case of Tunis and other colonial cities such as Saigon, Alexandria or Casablanca, is not nostalgia for the colonial empires but a quest for an easily-recognisable brand-name, “Mediterranean” in the case of Tunis, which will enable it promote itself as a city open to the wider region and the world.

Nostalgia is therefore a cultural practice responding to a variety of needs. While nostalgia is commonly thought to be fixated on an irretrievable past, it can be an imaginative resource for people struggling with the present, as William Cunningham
Bissell found in Zanzibar in the 1990s, linking individual experience to broader political issues. It can also be prospective and future orientated. As Ray Cashman has noted in his article “Critical nostalgia and material culture in Northern Ireland,” representations of the past can be wielded in order to construct a future more consonant with this yearned-for past. We mentioned earlier “alternative” narratives of the Mediterranean and we shall see that evocations of the cosmopolitan city of Tunis are used to critically frame the present and future.

1.7 Conclusion

This first chapter has noted how Tunisian and foreign observers have sought to understand and represent a particular area of the Medina of Tunis. What was the larger national narrative behind these developments noted in daily life in Tunis? The next chapter will have a broader scope, putting the Rue de la Zitouna in the context of the Tunisian national narrative as it developed notably after the removal from power of Habib Bourguiba in 1987 by Zin al ‘Abidīn Ben Ali.
Figure 1: Bab al-Bahr and Avenue de France looking towards Avenue Bourguiba.
Figure 2: the façade of the former Église Sainte-Croix, rue de la Zitouna, with the sign announcing the planned Mediterranean Applied Arts Centre (Centre méditerranéen des arts appliqués).
Figure 3 Aerial view of Tunis c.1985. The medina is in the foreground with the rectilinear Avenue de France and Avenue Bourguiba leading to the Port and Lake of Tunis.
From Bourguiba to Ben Ali

Habib Bourguiba, the first leader of independent Tunisia, aged and increasingly erratic, was ousted from his position as President on 7 November 1987 by Zine al-‘Abidīn Ben ‘Ali, an army officer with a security background and Prime Minister of Tunisia since October 1987. Bourguiba’s equestrian statue was removed from central Tunis, where it had occupied the site of a statue of the French politician Jules Ferry, prime minister at the time of the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881.

We noted earlier the parallel made by de Certeau between narrative and movement: in an official Tunisian website designed for the fiftieth anniversary of independence in 2006 emphasis was laid on the “Change” of 7 November 1987 as an anticipation of the “movement of history” as manifested in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Tunisia’s national story was therefore exemplary. The nineteenth century Tunisian reform “movement” and the “movement” for national liberation were part of the wider movement of history.

The Ben Ali regime (1987-2011) claimed that in “today’s Tunisia” memory would be reconstructed without, it was claimed, any taboos or deformation. This claim implied that the “yesterday” of Habib Bourguiba’s rule from 1956 to 1987 had been marked by partisan history, and an authoritarian understanding of national unity. Speaking in July 1992 Ben ‘Ali stated that “one of our concerns has been the history of the nation which will henceforth be studied in an objective manner, re-establishing
collective memory with its specific features, and multiple dimensions. This collective memory will be preserved from fanaticism, bias, and any tendency towards exclusion or falsification.” In particular the history of non-Muslim communities and Tunisia’s Mediterranean heritage would become an integral part of the history of Tunisia. The term “Mediterranean communities” yoked together nineteenth century settlers from Italy, Malta and France as well as Tunisia’s indigenous Jewish community. To what extent was this narrative created by the “Benalist” regime as part of its reinvention of Tunisia after 1987? Or did it build on the heritage of the ousted Habib Bourguiba? In order to answer these questions we shall situate both Ben ‘Ali and Bourguiba in the wider context of historiography in Tunisia.

2.1 Tunisia: in search of the Mediterranean

As the Tunisian historian Sadok Boubaker has shown, Tunisian chroniclers historically associated the Mediterranean with the frontier between the Muslim and Christian worlds. The Muqadimma of Ibn Khaldoun presents the Mediterranean, termed the Bahr al Rūm or the Bahr al Shām, as being composed of an eastern and a southern shore dominated by Islamic rulers while the north, west of Byzantium, is Christian. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century Muslim commentators portrayed the European outposts dotting the North African coast as dangerous enclaves inhabited by “the evil infidels who are settled in the coasts of the sea,” to quote a letter of the Ottoman Sultan Selim II dating from 1573. The heterogeneous collection of Christianized Arabs and roguish European malefactors inhabiting the presidios were as welcome, as Nabil Matar has said, as an Algerian corsair outpost in Portsmouth would have been among the populations of southwest England and Wales. Algiers in the seventeenth century may
have had a variegated population, yet an eighteenth century Algerian commentator still recalled the number of shells fired at his city by the French in 1682; three hundred in January 1682, seven hundred in December of the same year.\textsuperscript{77}

Tunisian historians between the seventeenth and the middle of the nineteenth centuries rarely alluded to Tunisia’s geographical situation. Only in 1884 did the historian Mohammad Bayram al-Tūnisī give a detailed description of the country’s maritime dimension.\textsuperscript{78} Julia Clancy-Smith has described the nineteenth century reformer Kheireddine as part of a “Mediterranean community of thought” of which “Mediterranean Muslim” nations were part, yet Kheirredine’s only allusion to the sea was in the context of Portuguese discoveries in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{79} Kheirredine saw Tunisia’s place within the wider Ottoman world as a guarantee of the country’s independence, a calculation which would be proved unfounded in 1881 when France occupied Tunisia and Tunisians awaited in vain the arrival of an Ottoman fleet.\textsuperscript{80}

The French writer Arthur Pellegrin, founder of the Society of North African Authors, highlighted Tunisia’s lack of Mediterranean awareness in his \textit{Histoire de la Tunisie depuis les origines jusqu’à nos jours} (1948), and describes the indigenous population as mostly composed of nomads and sedentary agriculturalists.\textsuperscript{81} Pellegrin nevertheless locates Tunisia within the wider Mediterranean region while describing its history as dominated by outside invasions and influences: “Tunisia is a country which is Mediterranean from the ethnic, geographical, and cultural point of view… decisive events in the country’s history are the result of outside forces. Its history is that of a territory much coveted and often invaded, rather than that of a people conscious of its historical continuity.”\textsuperscript{82} Pellegrin emphasised Tunisia’s multicultural heritage while underlining its disparate and disunited character. French culture, he claimed, gave
renewed “dynamism and direction, making Tunis into one the liveliest cultural centres of the Mediterranean.”  

2.2 Mediterranean men

By the 1930s the term of “Mediterranean” had been appropriated by French writers such as Louis Bertrand (1866 -1941) who claimed to have discovered an archetypal “Mediterranean man” on the basis of the southern European ancestry of the Algerian community, while marginalising the country’s Arab and Berber heritage. In the 1930s a new generation of “Mediterraneans” including figures such as Gabriel Audisio and Albert Camus sought to move away from the debilitating Latin symbolism of Louis Bertrand towards an aesthetic inspired by Greece, Odysseus and seafaring communities. “North Africa,” wrote Camus in 1937 “is one of the sole countries where East and West coexist. There is no difference between an Italian or a Spanish docker of Algiers and the Arabs who surround them.” The Mediterranean, Camus thought, was “diffuse and turbulent, like the Arab quarters or the Genoese-style ports in Tunisia.”

Other commentators were less conciliatory: in 1937 General Paul Azan criticised a tendency among what he termed “narrow-minded (French) bureaucrats” and “indigenous xenophobes” to limit the term “Tunisian” to what was indigenous and Muslim; according to Azan, “Tunisian means everything which develops in Tunisia under French protection, both people and their intellectual and artistic achievements.” Azan is effectively dictating to indigenous Tunisian Muslims an understanding of Tunisian-ness diluted in the wider Mediterranean. It was also, as the White Father scholar Jean Déjeux noted, a settler attempt to answer the question posed by the presence of immigrant communities in a foreign land: “Who are we? How can we prove
that we are at home here?”

Less than twenty years before Tunisian independence, these remarks by Azan are evidence of a fleeting colonial identity among settlers in Tunisia, similar to the sense of “Algerianness” among Europeans settlers of Mediterranean origin.

2.3 The 1930s: from Bourguiba to bars of the Mediterranean

A rare Arab articulation of the Mediterranean at this time was that of Taha Husayn in his *Future of Culture in Egypt* (1938) published in the wake of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, and which presented Egypt as belonging to Europe and not to the East in cultural terms. Interaction between Greek and Roman cultures and the cultures of the Near East supported Taha Husayn’s claim that Egypt is culturally part of Europe, while Egypt shares little with China, Japan, or India.

Habib Bourguiba nevertheless consistently articulated a Tunisian way of being in the world, one which would reconcile a sense of belonging to the Arab and Muslim community with Franco-Arab bilingualism and openness to the modern world. He denounced the Eucharistic Congress of Carthage in 1930 as an affront to Tunisia’s Muslim personality while at the same time affirming that: “Nous ne reprouvons pas tout contact avec la civilisation occidentale, cette étape magnifique dans la marche de l’humanité, ni avec les hommes qui la représentent avec éclat dans ce qu’elle a de grand et de beau, mais nous ne voulons pas que le progrès indéniable, tant matériel que moral, soit la rançon d’une exploitation abominable.”

The national “nous” can be open to engagement with the wider world, yet will retreat defensively when threatened. The nineteenth century Tunisian statesman Kheireddine Pasha expressed something of the same approach when he noted in 1873 that “we shall not hesitate to visualise the world
as a single united country peopled by various nations who surely need each other. The general benefit to be derived from the experience of each nation, even when it is pursuing its personal interests, suffices to make it sought after by the rest of mankind.**90**

Curiously the most sustained treatment of the Mediterranean by a Tunisian author in the interwar period is by the bohemian writer and heroic drinker Ali Douaji (1909-1949), in his short but idiosyncratic *Périple dans les bars de la Méditerranée* which describes a sea journey undertaken in 1933 to Marseille, Naples, Athens, Izmir (Smyrna), Istanbul and Alexandria. Ancient civilisations are evoked as well as the author’s desire for cultural fusion frustrated by the refusal of the West to accept the Orient.**91**

Douaji was born in the Bab Souika area of Tunis, not far from where I lived between 2006 and 2010. Born into a bourgeois family of Ottoman origin he belonged to the *Taht Essour* circle of nonconformist literary free-thinkers who met in a Bab Souika café. Douaji’s plays and short stories comprise a savagely satirical fresco of Tunisian society caught up in the “enterprise of creative destruction” that was colonialism, to use Daniel Rivet’s phrase.**92** *Périple dans les bars de la Méditerranée* resembles Raymond Queneau’s *Zazie dans le métro* in that Douaji does not actually spend a great deal of time in bars (the Metro is on strike and Zazie explores Paris by other means) although Douaji is not interested in ruins and museums. He is nostalgic for past Ottoman glory, notes without condemnation the practice of nudism on the Côte d’Azur, and describes his difficulty in eating macaroni in Naples.**93** Douaji’s work was studied in Tunisian schools after 1956 although, as we shall see, he has recently attracted stern criticism. Khelifa Chater saw Douaji as personifying a Tunisian way of being in the world, open and welcoming.**94** Jacques Berque was more circumspect, seeing in Douaji a
representative of a generation “broken on life’s rocks,” to use the Tunisian romantic poet Abu l-Qasim Chabbi’s expression, a generation torn between their fascination with Western culture and their awareness of colonialism’s evils.95

2.4 Back to school after 1956

Nevertheless school history textbooks published in French in 1961, 1963 and 1969 for use in Tunisian schools situated Tunis in the wider Mediterranean, depicted as the setting for conflict between Spain and the Ottoman Empire although religious solidarity between the Turks and the inhabitants of the Maghreb is downplayed. The corsairs are seen as fomenting conflict between Christians and Muslims although Algiers and Tunis in the sixteenth century are presented in these manuals as cosmopolitan and multicultural cities. Particularly noteworthy is the mention below of the *lingua franca*:

The Regency of Algiers, founded in 1525 by Kheireddine, consolidated itself over the next fifty years and resisted successfully Moroccan and Spanish invasions. The city flourished remarkably thanks to the activity of the corsairs, greedy adventurers of diverse origins. Algiers in the seventeenth century was a prosperous and cosmopolitan city, rich and bustling, a place where people from all over Europe and the Mediterranean met and interacted…Tunis, like Algiers, was a cosmopolitan city where Turkish, Arabic dialect, and the *lingua franca* - a blend of Provencal, Italian, Spanish, and Turkish and Arab words - were all spoken.96

However as Jocelyne Dakhlia has emphasized the *lingua franca* was composed essentially of elements drawn from Latin languages, rather than from Arabic, Turkish and other languages of the Islamic world.97 Tunisian school manuals underlined the positive aspect of the French colonial presence as well as its injustices. Attention was give to Tunisia’s Mediterranean location in terms similar to pre-independence school
text books which underlined the proximity of Tunisia to France within the Mediterranean area:

Because of its geographical situation close to France and its Mediterranean climate similar to that of Provence, the Maghreb, from the time of the French conquest onwards, constituted the most important part of the French Empire...French influence made itself felt in all aspects of life: economy, population, cultural and political life. Overall, these transformations changed the face of the Maghreb, giving it a European appearance with cities, agricultural enterprises, and a modern infrastructure. This new Maghreb developed above all for the benefit of the Europeans and was, however, merely juxtaposed with traditional Muslim society without seeking to reform its structures and functioning. Nevertheless the colonial system introduced a system of administration more efficient that that of the preceding regimes of government and brought material progress, above all from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.98

Nevertheless, this view of a Tunisia open to the wider Mediterranean and modernity coexisted uneasily with a narrower narrative. By 1979 a fifteen-volume Histoire du Mouvement National Tunisien had been published, highlighting the role of Habib Bourguiba in the independence struggle. The history of the Tunisian national movement was presented as the history of Bourguiba himself, starting with the founding of the Arabic-language newspaper Al’Amal al-Tūnisī (L’Action Tunisienne) in 1932.99 Other nationalists were disqualified: the Tunisian Liberal Constitutional Party or Dustûr, founded in 1921, was described by Bourguiba in a speech in 1966 as composed of Tunis-based urban elites out of touch with the Tunisian people whom he, Bourguiba, had been able to mobilise around the Neo-Dustur party formed in 1934.100
The personality of the nation evolved over the centuries in a halting fashion, and was now guided by the nationalist movement:

Over the centuries, this country has known many periods of prosperity, yet has subsequently fallen into decline…the movement of progress has not been followed by all the population. Entire regions and collectivities have remained isolated…all our effort is directed towards the integration of the nation, first psychologically, then economically, fusing together all the social classes in a single crucible: the homeland.101

The Tunisian people would be delivered from obscurantism and division:

The people have suffered too much from the plurality of factions and now have to align themselves with the only party (the Neo-Destour of Bourguiba) united around one man and a single ideology.102

By the early 1980s disillusion had set in. The publication in Paris of the Franco-Tunisian author Hélé Béji’s Le désenchantement national. Essai sur la décolonisation in 1982 was a sombre assessment of the evolution of Tunisia since 1956.103 Nationalism’s drift into uniformity or “nationalitarianism” was seen as the main cause of crisis in Tunisia and the Third World rather than Western domination.104

The absence of freedom characterising independence today must be questioned, as it contains a terrible contradiction: the entity which liberated us is the one that today dominates us, and while dominating also reassures, by protecting our new sense of national belonging against the crushing weight of neo-colonialism.105

The sense of a fin de règne was compounded by demonstrations in January 1984 after food subsidies were withdrawn. Recession in the petroleum industry caused the return of thousands of workers from Libya while tourism suffered in the aftermath of the Israeli bombing of a PLO compound in the Tunis suburb of Hammam Lif in 1985.
and the US air raid on Libya in April 1986. The Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique led by Rāshid Ghannouchi was winning increasing support and Tunisia was awash with rumours about the senescent president’s mental and physical fitness.106

The crisis of the modern postcolonial state in Tunisian and across the Maghreb also affected the area of national history. Hitherto, to use Etienne Balibar’s expression, individuals had been invited to project their individual existence on to the weft of a collective narrative.107 This had been seen as linear, leading up to the present-day in a recognisable pattern. In the case of Tunisia this narrative was personified by Bourguiba himself. One might make a parallel with labour history as studied internationally in the 1970s, as historians sought to recover workers’ history in order to strengthen class-consciousness and hopes of future triumph.108 By the 1980s a number of factors intervened which put this collective narrative under strain: memories of national struggle and anti-colonial heroism were fading and individual veterans of the independence were giving their versions of events. This recalls post-modern readings of history, where, as Brenda Marshall has said histories hitherto “forgotten, hidden, and considered unimportant” re-emerge.109

In Algeria, for example, 1976 Rabah Zerari, alias Commandant Ezzedine of Wilaya IV published his memoirs under the title On nous appelait fellagh and shook the hand of his former adversary General Marcel “Bruno” Bigeard on French television in October 1976. In Tunisia the socialist Eli Cohen Hadria published his memoirs entitled Du protectorat français a l’indépendance tunisienne in 1976 and the former prime minister Mohamed Salah Mzali published Au fil de ma vie in 1972.110 As Bourguiba and other members of the heroic nationalist generation faded from the scene, states across the Maghreb sought ways to integrate individual and community histories
into an inclusive national story, seeking to defuse any centrifugal tendencies.\textsuperscript{111} The planned Mediterranean Centre for the Applied Arts (discussed in Chapter 1) on the site of a former hostel for Christian captives of the corsairs is a tangible example of the aspiration to integrate the particular and problematic into a harmonious ensemble.\textsuperscript{112}

**Conclusion**

This section has sought to identify the place of the Mediterranean in the longer time-frame of Tunisian history, noting the limited interest of Arab historians in the Mediterranean, and their perceptions of it as an area of conflict. Colonial Mediterranean identity sought to frame the Mediterranean in a Eurocentric cartography. After 1956 the Bourguiba regime, despite its authoritarianism, integrated a Mediterranean dimension into the Tunisian narrative, recycling elements of the colonial Mediterranean. The bohemian Ali Douaji, caught in the contradictions of colonialism, was presented in the 1970s as a figure emblematic of the Tunisian story of openness to the wider world.

However, as Béatrice Hibou has said, Bourguiba was at the centre of everything and exceeded the very narrative that he instrumentalized.\textsuperscript{113} Zine el ‘Abidîn Ben ‘Ali, Bourguiba’s successor, could not draw on the historical legitimacy of Bourguiba as “Supreme Combatant” and needed to draw his legitimacy from ostentatious references to the past. The next section of this thesis will examine how legitimacy was derived from a historical tableau of a united Tunisia which had evolved from its Mediterranean minorities: In Tunisian society under Ben ‘Ali, consensus in social and political life was accompanied by consensus in history, integrating complexity, and the “vulgarity of relations of force, of struggles, and of negotiations.”\textsuperscript{114}
3 1987: Ben ‘Ali’s “new” narrative

In the light of our study of Tunisian history during the Bourguiba period, the claims of the Ben ‘Ali regime that a more inclusive national narrative dated from the “Change” of 7 November 1987 can be seen as one example (among many) of the tendency of the regime to portray itself as the pioneer. As Éric Gobe and Vincent Geisser noted in 2006, the fiftieth anniversary of Tunisian independence, the Ben ‘Ali regime tended to downplay the achievements of the period before 1987, suggesting that Ben ‘Ali had liberated Tunisian women and developed the economy. Ben ‘Ali’s accession to power in November 1987 was accompanied by a quest for a renewed national narrative to supplement waning nationalist sentiment, but constancy accompanied innovation (to use Kenneth Perkins’ expression), in this and other areas of national life.

3.1 Heritage games

We noted (page 14 supra) the concern of the regime with national history. The term “heritage” (patrimoine) acquired a new prominence, with the promulgation of a Heritage Code in 1994 and the elaboration of a historical narrative composed of successive layers of civilisation: Carthage was destroyed by Rome but the Roman city of Carthage succeeded it: ruptures and conflict are succeeded by continuity. Tunisians
would be reconciled with their past, one in which openness to other cultures and civilisations was a constant theme.\textsuperscript{117}

In 1988 the Institut national d’archéologie et d’art (INAA) was renamed Institut national du patrimoine (INP). 1994 saw the promulgation of the \textit{Code du Patrimoine} which extended the term to objects of national or universal value of any period. Legislation governing the protection of architectural heritage sites in Tunis and elsewhere in the country was extended to cover buildings dating from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Additions to the national heritage list in 2001 included Jean Resplandy’s Art Nouveau Municipal Theatre in Avenue Bourguiba, the Moorish-style Trésorerie Générale designed by Raphael Guy in Avenue Habib Thameur (ex-Avenue Roustan) and the Banque d’Algérie (Rue de Rome) both dating from the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{118} The railway station at Tozeur in southern Tunisia, a miniature masterpiece of \textit{Arabiscance}, with its blue wooden \textit{tindas} shading the windows, was also listed as part of national architectural heritage. The first listed building from the Protectorate period had been the Erlange Palace ―En-Nejma ez-Zahra‖ at Sidi Bou Said.\textsuperscript{119} Between 1956 and 1985 the only building given listed status had been the Ribat of Monastir.\textsuperscript{120}

The Mediterranean was in the forefront of the Tunisian media for more immediate reasons in 2001, when the fourteenth Mediterranean Games were held in Tunis in August of that year. The first Mediterranean Games had been held in Alexandria in 1951, at a time when the city retained something of its cosmopolitan veneer as “Queen of the Mediterranean,” a title Alexandria had bestowed on itself in 1930.\textsuperscript{121} Whereas the Mediterranean Games of 1975 (Algiers) and those of 1983 (Casablanca) had taken on a partisan and nationalist character, the Tunisian media
highlighted the common cultures and history of the countries on the shores of the Mediterranean and sought to raise public awareness of the Mediterranean as an ancient area of diversity, tolerance, and peace, of which Tunisia was a beacon. Three victorious Tunisia women wrestlers however were hailed by the Tunisian press as “Queens of the Mediterranean,” in an unintentional evocation of cosmopolitan Alexandria.

In November 2001 the Ben ‘Ali Chair for Dialogue among Civilisations and Religions was founded, with archaeologist M’hamed Hassine Fantar as first titular professor. Over the next ten years such initiatives multiplied: in early 2010 the Italian news agency ANSA announced that “a proposal for a new inter-religious cultural centre in Tunis will be submitted next month to the Ben ‘Ali Chair for Dialogue among Civilisations and Religions. The building plan includes prayer rooms for Jews, Christians and Muslims, a media library and recreation spaces. Young architect Ouedjene Hachani said the project was inspired by Tunisia’s historic role as a crossroads of civilisations and religions.”

3.2 Everyday consensus

At an everyday level the national narrative shifted in focus. The Arabic adjective of wataniyya ("patriotic") replaced that of qawmiyya ("national") to designate the national identity card. “Watan” is an old term in Arabic designating, among other meanings a sense of rootedness in a place. A place implies ancestors who have lived there in the past and who have handed down the place and its associated culture. These ancestors manifested themselves in a variety of ways: in 1989 Ali Douagi, author of Périple dans les bars de la Méditerranée commemorated by a postage stamp while one of the rare
corridors in the 9 Avril Faculty of Human and Social Science to have a non-Arab name was named after the third-century Patristic scholar Cyprian of Carthage. Tunisian banknotes in the Bourguiba era generally carried a portrait of Bourguiba himself, from 1993 onwards selected great figures from Tunisia’s appeared on banknotes: Hannibal (on the five dinar note), Elissa, foundress of Carthage (on the ten-dinar note), Kheireddine Pasha (on the twenty-dinar note) and Abu l-Qasim Chabbi on the thirty-dinar note. Classical Mediterranean Antiquity, the nineteenth-century reforming statesman, and the Arabic romantic poetry of Chabbi converge.

This “patrimonialising” of a history as an unfolding tableau took place in the wider context of construction by the regime of political consensus. In a speech in early 1989, President Ben ‘Ali spoke of “confronting together our difficulties as if we were a single person,” and “uniting citizens around their patriotism and spirit of sacrifice.”

The National Pact of 1988, a statement of political philosophy to which a variety of political parties adhered including the Islamist MTI (Mouvement de la tendance islamicque), acknowledged the centrality of Tunisia’s Arabo-Islamic heritage while evoking modernizers such as the nineteenth-century Tunisian statesman Kheireddine Pasha, suggesting that this latter figure was a native of Tunisia and not a mamlük from the Caucasus:

Our people’s identity is specifically Arabo-Islamic, rooted in an ancient and glorious past. We aspire to confront today’s challenges. The situation of our country, in a region which was the cradle of great human civilisations, has enabled our people through the centuries to contribute to human civilisation and given us an aptitude for renewal and creativity. Carthage was one of the two greatest powers of Antiquity. Our people is proud of the genius of Hannibal as well as of
the heroism of Jugurtha. Tunisia is equally proud to have been the starting point of the conquests which brought the message of Arabo-Islamic civilisation to the Arab Maghreb, to the north of the Mediterranean and Africa as well as of the great figures the country has produced such as Imam Sahnoun, Ibn Khaldoun and the reformer Khéreddine. 129

All of these trends were reflected in school curricula after 1987, which recall Balibar’s “projection of the individual existence on to the weft of collective narrative.”130

Our country is situated on the shores of the Mediterranean. Its climate is temperate. These factors made the country one of the first sites of human habitation. Several civilisations have contributed to the prosperity of the country. 131 Since the dawn of history Tunisia has been a place of encounter and exchange between civilisations...a civilisation of Afro-Roman origin developed in our country, a Roman branch springing from a Carthaginian trunk. Without Carthage and the role of its maritime commerce which facilitated the movement and diffusion of civilisational (sic) influence, without Magon and the manuals which caused agricultural sciences to progress, without Hannibal’s genius, the mosaics of the African provinces, the thought of Tertullian and Saint Augustin, Mediterranean culture and Christian culture in Europe would not be what they are today. 132

We noted earlier in this thesis (section 1.6 “City Narratives”) Etienne Balibar’s perception of national history as a narrative which attributes to an entity the continuity of a subject. 133 The formation of the nation appears as the fulfilment of a project stretching over centuries. The use of the word “appears” reminds us, as Balibar says, that this formation is a retrospective illusion. 134

In the case of Tunisia these generations are represented in a fragmentary way by a litany of names leapfrogging across the centuries: the Carthaginian agronomist and
viticulture specialist Magon, Hannibal and Jugurtha (second and third centuries BCE),
Tertullian and Saint Augustin (second and third centuries CE), Ibn Khaldoun
(fourteenth century) and Kheireddine Pasha (nineteenth century). Through a network of
apparatuses and daily practices (such as the school curriculum) the individual is
instituted as *homo nationalis* from cradle to grave. When it comes to producing the
people, only the imaginary is real.\(^{135}\)

### 3.3 Ex pluribus unum?

In 1987 the review of the Institut des belles-lettres arabes (IBLA) in Tunis published a
collection of articles entitled “La Tunisie scrute son histoire.”\(^{136}\) An article by
Mohamed Hédi Cherif examined Tunisian historiography covering the twentieth
century. Hédi Cherif noted that out of the ten *doctorats d’états* presented by Tunisian
scholars only two concerned the twentieth century. The post-independence period had
seen the publication of numerous books, articles and memoirs, although, published
during what Cherif termed the ‘sensitive period of decolonisation’, they highlighted
the tensions and violence of the colonial experience and the resistance of the local
population.\(^{137}\) Nevertheless the Tunisian scholar Bechir Tlili studied in 1984 marginal
currents of thought at the colonial period, such as French socialists in North Africa,
identifying the factors which influenced the development of indigenous trade union
and political movements.\(^{138}\)

Tunisian historians in the mid-1990s began to study the communities composed
of nineteenth century migrants to Tunisia from the northern shores of the
Mediterranean, although the Tunisian Jewish community was generally included among
the “communities.” While relations between the Ben ‘Ali regime and Israel remain a
subject for speculation, the study by Tunisian scholars of their country’s “communities”
including the indigenous Jewish community coincided with the formalisation of
relations between Tunisia and Israel. In April 1996 Tunisia and Israel established
“interest sections” in each other’s country. Despite the controversies generated in the
Arab world at this time by “normalisation” of relations with Israel, Israeli and Tunisian
Jewish historians were invited by their Tunisian “colleagues” to participate in renewed
study of Tunisia’s Mediterranean communities:

Convinced that the history we are writing should be the synthesis and expression
of diverse sensibilities we are favourable to the idea that Israeli University
colleagues should join us in our research. Many Jews originally from Tunisia are
now in Israel: around 20,000 Jews left Tunisia for Israel between 1948 and
1955.1

Tunisian historians worked in collaboration with scholars from elsewhere in the
Maghreb and countries on the northern shores of the Mediterranean. Italian
participation in the study of Tunisia’s “communities” took on a particular form: not
only departed settlers but also Tunisians of Italian descent such as Silvia Finzi who had
remained in Tunisia after independence in 1956. In 1998 the “History and memory”
research unit based at the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities of the University of
Manouba organised an academic colloquium to study relations between Jews and
Muslims in Tunisia. In February 1998 Habib Kazdaghi, one of the historians involved,
presented the research unit Histoire et mémoire in these terms:

The independence of Tunisia (in 1956), the reaffirmation of the rights of the Arab
and Muslim majority together with the conception of national unity which
prevailed after 1956, meant that it was inopportune to highlight the presence or the numerical strength of other communities or groups living in the country.  

The Minister of Higher Education, Dali Jazi, quoted Zine el ‘Abidine Ben ‘Ali’s 1992 speech which evoked “a national history and a collective memory resplendent in the richness of all its dimensions and specificities though the centuries.” This continues the “Tunisian-ness” of the Bourguiba years: a permanent ambivalence between understanding the other and withdrawal into self."

Dali Jazi went on to say that members of the Tunisian Jewish community had the right to serve his patrie (Tunisia), even though in reality the majority of the Tunisian Jewish population had left Tunisia between 1956 and 1970. It is also striking that while this colloquium was centred on the Tunisian Jewish community, Tunisian historians would go on to study “communities” with very different historical trajectories such as the Sicilians, the French settlers of the protectorate period, together with the White Russians and the Spanish Republicans of the interwar period. The term “community” therefore became a convenient label for non-Muslim Tunisians whatever the length of their presence in the country.

The term of “communities” was sometimes used in conjunction with “Mediterranean” creating an impression of comity on the basis of Mediterranean belonging.  

For some French colonial commentators, the Italians were effectively “Latin sisters,” for others the “Sicilian peril,” for yet others the Sicilian immigrants to Tunisia and the Maltese were classed in a derogatory fashion as the “Sicilo-Maltais,” a term hardly redolent of Mediterranean fellow-feeling. A community-centred approach (French, Italians, Sicilians, Greeks…) to the study of Tunisia’s population can also obscure shifting and re-imagined identities. Partha Chatterjee notes that one of
the changes effected in the colonial period was “the impoverishment of the earlier ‘fuzzy’ sense of community sense and an insistence on the identification of community in the ‘enumerable’ sense.” 147 A community-centred study of Tunisia using reified terms such as “the French,” and “the Italians” risks running along “channels excavated by colonial discourse,” to use Chatterjee’s term. 148 More recent research has tended to use the term “creole” to designate trans-national figures such as Giuseppe Raffo whom we encountered at the beginning of this thesis. 149

Gaston Loth, a Tunis-based French commentator suggested in 1905 a policy of assimilation of the Italian population through education and military service. 150 This, he claims, will hasten the fusion in Tunisia (and in Algeria) of the three ‘Latin peoples’ (French, Spanish, and Italians) into a new French nation. North Africa will be a gigantic melting pot rather than a juxtaposition of rival groups of settlers of different origins. 151 Loth claims that Italians resident in Tunisia shed their national identity and see themselves as “Tunisians.” 152 The assimilation of these “Tunisians” to the French population will be hastened by that fact they are the descendants of the Normans who occupied Sicily in the eleventh century. 153 Loth also indulged in some craniological speculation, suggesting that dark-haired individuals with smaller than average cranial width in proportion to length are found in large numbers in Italy and in France. 154

Terms such as “cosmopolitanism,” also used in the discussions of the Tunisia’s Mediterranean also come up against the reality of the centralising French Protectorate administration after 1881, and the developing tensions of colonial society. Colonial commentators often suggested that relations between communities had always been more cordial in a prelapsarian past: as early as 1906 the Colonial Congress in Marseille affirmed that in 1881, on the eve of the establishment of the French protectorate, the
Tunis population of European origin (700 French, 11,000 Italians and 7,000 Maltese) “lived on good terms with the Muslims, spoke Arabic, and were content with their situation.”\textsuperscript{155} Robert Montagne (1893-1954), sometime naval officer and specialist of the High Atlas, writing in the \textit{Annales sociologiques} in 1936 noted that the development of European quarters in urban French North Africa contributes to the decline of what he calls “the curiosity and sympathy of the first pioneers towards native society.”\textsuperscript{156} The interracial friendships of the “pioneer period” had become rare by the 1930s.\textsuperscript{157}

The smoothing over of conflict and untidiness and the appropriation of diverse community histories into national history recalls Partha Chatterjee’s discussion of how the Bengali middle-class nationalist elite of Calcutta incorporated diverse identities such as Buddhism and Jainism into a classical “Indian tradition,” a process which Chatterjee terms the “vertical appropriation of sanitized popular tradition.” Common to both Indian and Tunisian nationalist narratives is a view of national history as singular, with the many subsumed in the One. We shall return in the conclusion of this thesis to the question of the singularity of national history.

\textbf{3.4 Building consensus}

The strength of the Mediterranean narrative as in the case of other elements of the Tunisian collective narrative such as the “reforming tradition” lies in their capacity to mask difference and discontinuity. As Béatrice Hibou noted with regard to the term of “reformism,” another key element of the national narrative in the Ben Ali years, the term “Mediterranean” can be used and understood in a variety of disparate ways. Tunisians, whether politicians or academics inhabit a common imaginary landscape and have emerged from the same schools, universities and political movements. The
“reformist” narrative with Kheireddine Pasha as protagonist has facilitated convergence: Islamist movements and certain secular parties signed the Tunis Declaration of 2003 of which reformism was a cornerstone. The Ben Ali regime and its secularist and Islamist rivals cultivated what Etienne Balibar terms the “imaginary singularity of national formation…moving back from the present into the past.”\textsuperscript{158}

The 1988 National Pact expressing consensus between different Tunisian political forces evoked the foundational reformist event of September 1857: the Security Pact or ‘\textit{Ahd al-Amān}. This latter event has a Mediterranean dimension in that the Pact proclaimed the religious and civil equality of all the Bey’s subjects while giving favoured status to European immigrants to Tunisia and ending state monopolies. These measures of openness and tolerance to the “Other” and notably to their commercial enterprises were however the result of pressure from European consuls in Tunis, notably Richard Wood (mentioned at the beginning of this thesis) and his French colleague and rival Léon Roches. These measures (like other nineteenth century reforms) were imposed from above and, more ominously, from outside.\textsuperscript{159} In Kheireddine Pasha’s words:

\begin{quote}
I heard a certain leading European statesman say in substance that the torrent of European civilisation is overflowing the world. Nothing can face it without being destroyed by the strength of its unceasing current. 160
\end{quote}

Within this common imaginary landscape however, individual interpretations may vary: some of the scholars involved in the history of the country’s Mediterranean had a background in left-wing politics. Professor Habib Kazdaghi (of the Mannouba \textit{Histoire et mémoire} research unit) reviewed a book on \textit{Écrivains et poètes italiens de Tunisie}:
Scrittori e poeti italiani di Tunisi (2009) in Attariq aljadid, the weekly journal of the Ettajdid party, founded in 1993 after the demise of the Tunisian Communist party:

By assembling the scattered fragments of their memory the Italians contribute not only to the writing of the history of their own collectivity, but also the history of Tunisia, for this memory is also that of plural Tunisia.¹⁶¹

Under Ben ṬAli the term “plural Tunisia” functioned as a rallying-call for the legal opposition to then-President Ben Ali. This evocation of a pluralistic social reality which existed in the past is prospective in nature. As Ray Cashman noted, nostalgia can be of service in the present when marshalled as an appeal for a better future.¹⁶² After the January 2011 revolution, the Faculty of Literature, Arts and Humanities of Manouba would present itself as having been an outpost of tolerance and academic independence, as we shall see in the conclusion of this thesis.

Did this Golden Age of “plural Tunisia” actually exist? In a sense this question is secondary. One recalls Alaa Al Aswany’s On the State of Egypt: What Caused the Revolution (2012) of which one reviewer has written:

Al Aswany launched a frontal attack on his Islamist rivals’ golden age, claiming that the fanciful past they dangled in front of their unsuspecting followers was nothing but an ideological fabrication. Al Aswany concluded, through some dubious calculation, that “real” Islamic history knew only three decades of justice, while the remaining fourteen centuries were tyranny and moral degradation. Though framing his view as a more honest interpretation of history, in truth it was as superficial as that of his rivals: Islamists portrayed their whole history as good, while his supposedly more nuanced reading presented it as perhaps three percent good and the rest downright miserable. But this was not a struggle over historical
accuracy on that account, both versions were equally erroneous but rather a struggle over which past should inspire the future.\textsuperscript{163}

A “plural” Tunisia reconstructed by scholars such as Kazdaghli and the liberal Egypt of the first half of the twentieth century evoked by Al Aswany were thus ways of critically framing a present dominated by autocratic regimes.

More broadly interest in a cosmopolitan Tunis in the 1990s and early part of the present century recalls the aspirations of European intellectuals from the 1980s onwards for a world beyond the nation state, with the multi-ethnic Hapsburg era contrasting with the narrow claims of ethno-nationalism.\textsuperscript{164} The conciliatory role of the ‘elites’ in Tunisian history in the nineteenth century was mentioned at an international forum on the theme of religious coexistence in the Mediterranean organised by the weekly news magazine \textit{Réalités} in November 2009 in Tunis. Today’s “elites” could play a similar role, reconstructing the “cosmopolitan identity of Tunisia,” an identity of which the majority of the population are unaware.\textsuperscript{165}

Today’s “elites” are not those who controlled the municipalities of Tunis or Alexandria in the late nineteenth century in societies structured around national and religious communities with a strong degree of autonomy.\textsuperscript{166} As Frederick Cooper has pointed out, an attempt to illuminate present issues may be worthy motivation for exploring the past, but risks a confusion of categories.\textsuperscript{167} Here the term “elite” is used by Kazdaghli as a term to express his vision of the role of the “elite” in the Tunisia of the early twenty-first century, skirting round the historical context in which Mediterranean urban elites were formed. “Trying to illuminate present issues is a fine
motivation for exploring the past,” as Cooper comments, “but as one looks backward one risks anachronism.”

3.5 Mediterranean Sarkozy

We noted earlier Tunisia’s establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, which were subsequently suspended in October 2000. Tunisia was the first North African country to sign a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement in July 1995. The Mediterranean became an area of convergence with Tunisia’s European partners: in 2008 Nicolas Sarkozy would visit Tunis and declare: that “Tunisia is at the heart of the Mediterranean, where East and West converge. Tunis is as close to Nice as Nice is to Dunkirk.” His Tunisian counterparts reiterated that Tunisia unfailingly supports “every initiative aimed at building solid bridges of communication, dialogue and understanding between civilisations and religions, in a context of tolerance, moderation and mutual respect.”

Sarkozy’s speech recalls the pan-Mediterranean vision of Audiosio and Camus to which we alluded in a preceding section of this thesis, “Mediterranean Men.” It is not only a question of recalling historical precedents: as Philip Dine has shown the “eternal Mediterranean” has been part of the symbolic store nurtured notably by the Algerianist studies movement focussing on the culture of the French populations of North Africa. The Centre Universitaire Mediterraneen in Nice has a Chair of Algerianist Studies and there are thirty cercles active in France. We noted earlier in Chapter One of this thesis the barrage of publicity in Tunisia for the 2001 Mediterranean Games and its evocation of a Mediterranean Tunisia. Sport had been an essential ingredient of settler life in North Africa as seen, for example, in Camus’
sensual descriptions of swimming in the Port of Algiers in *L’été à Alger*. Today’s Algerianists evoke the games and spectacles of Roman Africa while *La Méditerranée réinventée: réalités et espoirs de la coopération*, a 1992 publication of the René Seydoux foundation celebrated football’s role in establishing sporting links between Latin and North African peoples. Albert Camus, sometime goalkeeper of the RUA (Racing universitaire d’Alger) football team would have approved.

**Conclusion**

In this section, we have sought to understand some of the ways in which the Mediterranean has been suspended in a net of significations spun in parallel on both sides of the Mediterraneo. We noted the continuity between the Bourguiba period and the Ben ‘Ali regime in terms of opening Tunisian history to a Mediterranean dimension, although this was more systematically undertaken after 1987 both in terms of school curricula and the academic study of the country’s Mediterranean communities. In the Mediterranean house there are many mansions. One, Sarkozy’s Mediterranean dream, was of French origin, another, which we shall now go on to study, was Italian.
Hitherto we have examined how Tunisian scholars have revisited the multicultural past of Tunisia of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We have also noted multiple interpretations from official consensus to discreet contestation in the pre-2011 period. In this section we shall turn our attention to the Italian contribution to the reconstruction of that phase of the country’s history. The Italians involved include former members of the Italian settler community in Tunisia, Italian academics, and present-day residents of Tunisia of Italian origin, such as the Finzi family who piloted from 1997 onwards the Progetto della memoria, a series of publications which sought to reconstruct the memory of the Italian collectivity of Tunisia. A brief survey of the Italian presence in Tunisia will set the scene.

When the British traveller Charles Kennedy visited Tunis in the middle of the 1840s there were between 4,000 and 5,000 Sicilians, Sardinians, and mainland Italians in Tunisia. At the time the population of Tunis was estimated at 120,000. The modernisation projects of Ahmad Bey had attracted workers and artisans. A considerably smaller number of Jewish immigrants had arrived in Tunis from Leghorn in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and were active in commerce and the professions. When Kennedy met Ahmad Bey, the ruler of Tunis, the conversation took place in Arabic and Italian and the interpreter was Giuseppe Raffo, the Bey’s secretary,
whom we encountered at the beginning of this thesis. Of Sardinian descent though born in Tunis in 1795, Raffo held, as Kennedy notes, one of the highest and most confidential posts in the Regency from the 1820s until 1862.\textsuperscript{174} At the other end of the social scale, Kennedy’s Maltese servant Angelo spoke “execrable Italian” while his Mameluke escort, Baba Jebb spoke “very indifferent Italian.”\textsuperscript{175}

After the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881 a Franco-Italian agreement in 1896 had secured Italian recognition of the French protectorate in Tunisia in return for a series of conventions guaranteeing a large measure of autonomy to Italian institutions. There were at this time 55,000 Italians in the country, outnumbering the French by five to one.\textsuperscript{176} Italians and other immigrants were recruited in preference to Tunisians on infrastructure projects. The resulting animosity exploded into violence in 1911 when Tunisians clashed with residents of a nearby Italian area. The \textit{Colon français} attributed the blame for the disturbance to Turkish \textit{agents-provocateurs} stirring up Tunisian opposition to the Italian offensive in neighbouring Tripolitania which had begun on 5 October 1911\textsuperscript{177}. The same issue of the \textit{Colon français} also criticised the “insolence of the Italian lower classes” who were involved in daily scuffles in front of the offices in central Tunis of the \textit{Colon français}' rival publication \textit{La Dépêche Tunisienne} which posted up news of Italian victories in Tripolitania.

After the First World War the French authorities sought to facilitate the naturalization of Italians who outnumbered the French by two to one. French literature on Tunisia tended to relegate the Italian population to the background even in areas such as Beja or Grombalia where the Italian population was numerous.\textsuperscript{178} A British military handbook on Tunisia dating from the Second World War described the Italians as lacking, in the eyes of Tunisians, the “prestige of the French” who form “the
After the defeat of Axis forces in 1943 in Tunisia, Italian institutions were abolished and the French authorities sought to assimilate Italians to the French community. As nationalist activity in Tunisia increased in the 1950s, the majority of the Italians seem to have tacitly supported the French presence, although a minority did sympathize with the nationalist movement. After independence in 1956, most of the Italians departed, and by 2000 only 800 Italians from the pre-independence period remained.

Italian scholars began to document Italy’s settlement attempts in French-controlled Tunisia, producing a well-crafted narrative of benevolent Italians struggling for opportunity in a land controlled by the French. The collected monographs of the Progetto della memoria of the mid-1990s are built on a number of assumptions, including a “neglect” of emigration history (such as that of the Italians to Tunisia in the nineteenth century) by conventional historians, and a postmodernist challenge to the objectivity of history, which becomes merely one narrative strategy among others. The experience of the Italians of Tunisia is studied as micro-history by the omnivorous Progetto della Memoria which incorporates fragments such as monographs on literature, art, kitchen recipes, architecture, while detaching them from their original context, which involved, as we have seen, rivalry and violence between Tunisians and Italians as well as conviviality. The Progetto della Memoria echoes Lyotard’s criticism of “grand narratives” while participating in the construction of the Tunisian national narrative of which the Italian experience is part. We noted earlier the tendency to study individual communities as part of the Tunisian mosaic: as Daniela Melfa has recently noted, the term “Italian” has been adopted uncritically, with a category of practice used for self-understanding (“Italians”) adopted as a category of
This tendency has been accentuated by the dominance of scholars who are both analysts and protagonists of Italian identity and history in Tunisia, often with personal or family connections to the collectivity whose history they are reconstructing.

Despite the Memory Project’s interest in social micro-history, in some ways it recalls older Italian historiography in other parts of the Mediterranean such as Egypt. Anthony Santilli has recently studied how Italian historians, notably the Neapolitan Angelo Sammarco (1883–1948) in works such as *Gli Italiani in Egitto, il contributo italiano alla formazione dell’Egitto moderno* published in 1937 sought to highlight the participation of Italians in the development of Egypt. Sammarco belonged to the officially-sponsored school of “royalist scholarship” in the Egypt of the 1920s. He highlights for example the often-overlooked Italian contribution to the building of the Suez Canal. The Memory Project tends to emphasise the contribution of Italians to the development of Tunisian infrastructure, notably in the architectural domain.

Both Sammarco and the Memory Project see the contribution of the Italians as part of the modernisation of Egypt (in the case of Sammarco) and Tunisia in the case of the Memory Project. Although the Memory Project’s shift of focus away from elite-centred “grand narratives” has enabled new ground to be broken, in other ways the Project remained confined within the traditional paradigm of Western-driven modernisation and progress espoused by earlier scholars such as Sammarco.

The “royalist” school of historiography in Egypt also stressed Egypt’s capacity to integrate the “foreign colonies” who according to Henein Bey Henein, writing in 1926, lived in perfect harmony with Egyptians. The Italians in particular were in contact with “all classes of the indigenous population.” We find traces of this
approach in the celebratory tone of some elements of the Memory Project: the “Week of intercultural dialogue” held in Tunis in 2008 with the participation of Tunisian scholars and Italian artists, diplomats and politicians explored themes such as “Italian emigration in Tunisia: its role as a vector in Tuniso-Italian encounter.” In a preface written in 2000 by the Italian ambassador in Tunis for one of the Progetto della Memoria’s publications, the tone is somewhat smug:

The promoters of the Memory Project see the past as providing a model of coexistence between different peoples. The Italian community showed a constant capacity to engage with the Tunisians in an atmosphere of openness and fruitful conviviality, which was not always the case of other communities at the time.

As Albert Memmi has shown, the Italians occupied a position in Tunisia between colonizers and colonized. They were much less removed from the Tunisians than the French whose relationship with the Tunisians was “stilted and formal.” Italians spoke Arabic, formed friendships with Tunisians, and sometimes married Tunisians. Nevertheless, continues Memmi, “the same European origin…and a majority of identical customs bring them sentimentally closer to the colonizer… It will be understood that as much as they may be outcasts in an absolute sense their behaviour vis-à-vis the colonized has much in common with the colonizer.”

The Memory Project could also be examined in the light of the work of Italian historians such as Angelo Del Boca who have interrogated the narrative of Italiani, brava gente, according to which Italians were somehow more tolerant in colonial settings than other Europeans, due to a national aptitude for empathy and understanding. A new generation of scholars in Italy and elsewhere are bringing new tools of cultural theory to bear on the narrative which has hitherto prevailed.
5 Quicker than the human heart: the changing forms of Tunis

Le vieux Paris n’est plus (la forme d’une ville change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d’un mortel). With this quotation from Charles Baudelaire’s Les fleurs du mal we return, in this penultimate chapter, to the built heritage of Tunis, to explore how the “Mediterraneanising” of national history affected the country’s capital, how it was depicted and how it was remodelled.

The first chapter of this thesis was centred on my observations of the changing streetscape of the rue de la Zitouna. Chapters 2 and 3 put these personal experiences in the wider context of the Mediterranean in Tunisian history and notably in the renewed national narrative developed after 1987. The present chapter will study in more detail the changing streetscape of central Tunis.

Between 2000 and 2001 major work was undertaken to improve the Avenue Bourguiba, from the Bab al-Bahr on the eastern edge of the Medina to the end of the Avenue Bourguiba on the bank of the lake separating Tunis from the Mediterranean. A fountain system was installed after months of muddy disruption to the Place de la Victoire at Bab al-Bahr in front of the British embassy. In Avenue de France pavements were widened and café terraces spilled across the widened pavements, effectively reducing the space available for pedestrians. Facades of nineteenth-century buildings were cleared of trailing wires and garish plastic signs. In the Avenue Bourguiba workmen laboured round-the-clock, removing some of the ficus trees (and all the florists) from the central Ramblas-like esplanade. The facades of buildings such as the
former Maltese Club in Rue de Grèce and the former Politeama Rossini were restored, while next to the Municipal Theatre a commercial centre was constructed in a pastiche Art Nouveau style on the site of the demolished Tunisia Palace Hotel. Street furniture on period models recalling Haussmann’s Paris was installed. The Roman Catholic Cathedral of Saint Vincent and Saint Paul had already been extensively renovated in the mid-1990s while the smaller Greek Orthodox Cathedral and Russian Orthodox churches were also refurbished. Small plaques outside these latter buildings now describe as them as centres of the Greek and Russian “communities” of Tunisia.

At the period of decolonisation, scholars placed Tunis in the category of “villes d’économie sous-développée” highlighting the problems of integration between the European city, the slums constructed by rural migrants (bidonvilles) and the old city or medina. This perception of the city persisted until the 1980s. Writing in 1988, Michel Péraldi described the colonial city as resembling a down-at-heel provincial French town whose clocks had all stopped about 1965. The juxtaposition of the two cities – the Medina and the post-1881 city constructed under the Protectorate – conveyed the unresolved tension of the colonial experience:

Cette ville a l’air trop vaste pour le peu de chalands qui la sillonnt, comme désertée d’une partie de sa vie dont elle ne parvient pas à effacer la trace. C’est une ville de la province française dont les horloges seraient bloquées vers les années soixante en plein cœur de la ville, non pas vraiment un vide, mais une rigidité, une crispation spatiale. Cette ville…attend sans doute d’être à son tour revisitée et réappropriée, mais reste pour l’instant comme une cicatrice à ce point douloureuse qu’elle n’a pas inventé son néo de néo-colonial. Medine et ville coloniale semblent toujours se nourrir de leur différence, comme aimantées sur la meme tension antagonique qui qui les a fondées.
By the early twenty-first century, perceptions had changed. The untidy juxtaposition of a crumbling medina and a half-finished modern city was now presented by urban historians in 2004 working in a project funded by Euromed Heritage II as “two forms of closely linked urban fabric.” In the same way that facades became sleek and smooth, the asperities of history were smoothed over, conservationists and urban scholars avoided terms evocative of past conflict such as the “colonial city”, and designated central Tunis outside the Medina as “the twentieth-century city,” product of a period of urban growth around the Mediterranean from Tangiers to Latakia, via Marseille and Alexandria.\textsuperscript{202} Tunis: the Orient of modernity (2010) one of the last coffee-table architectural works of the Ben Ali period describes the modern city of Tunis as a “dense and coherent form, a harmonious balance between the Medina and the European city….a convergence was possible only under the tolerant skies of Tunisia.”\textsuperscript{203}

Such discourse is part of a wider revival of the cosmopolitan component of the hybrid cities, such as Saigon, Shanghai, Zanzibar, and Istanbul whose growth accompanied that of world trade, European imperial expansion, and the decline of older inland cities.\textsuperscript{204}

Officially obliterated for decades, their cosmopolitan component, long associated with an abhorred colonialism, is experiencing an unprecedented revival. Today, nostalgia for a transnational culture and its expressions in provincial cosmopolitanism is becoming a powerful political tool in an increasing number of cities.\textsuperscript{205}

The nostalgia here is not the bitter-sweet longing of loss (“reflective nostalgia”) but rather “restorative nostalgia” which patches up the past and restores it in the form of

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architectural projects and financial investments. In the case of Tunis the early 1990s saw a series of initiatives – exhibitions and publications as well as the ambitious renovation of the Avenue Bourguiba in the heart of the colonial city – in order to reinforce the image of Tunis as a Mediterranean city at the crossroads of various civilisations. This process was controlled by urbanists and architects working within official structures such as the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina.

Recent years have nevertheless seen not only measures of protection and restoration of existing buildings but also conversions which purport to retain a particular “spirit of place”: the Tunis architectural review Archibat praised the successful conversion of a former bank in the Avenue de France into a hotel. Unnoticed by Archibat however, the names of the architects and contractors (Fourneron Bey and Allar-Clemens) as well as the one hundred year-old plaque bearing the name of the adjoining street (Rue de l’Ancienne Poste) have all vanished from the smooth, sleek facade of what has become the Tunisia Palace hotel with its wood-panelled “Bar 1900.”

As Svetlana Boym has observed in her study of the “restoration” of the frescoes of the Sixtine Chapel in the 1980s restorative nostalgia has no use for the signs of historical time. The past is a value for the present; it is not a duration, but a perfect snapshot of a prelapsarian moment. David Lowenthal notes however:

We expect most artefacts to show signs of wear and age . . . Because we feel that old things should look old, we may forget that they originally looked new . . . An element of mystery and uncertainty distinguishes past from present. We expect the past not to be precise or specific, but rather to be vague and incomplete, waiting to be filled in by our own imaginations.
At Bab al-Bahr the sober neo-Moorish facade of the former British embassy has been successfully massacred: neo-classical architraves and balustrades correspond to what a contemporary architect imagines to be colonial architecture or to cater to a taste for fussy neo-classicism.

Sometimes amid the restoration work in the early twenty-first century one encountered former members of pre-independence elites who lamented the way that Tunis had been occupied by uncouth rustics (afāqis: a person “from the horizons”) from the rural hinterland, and listed the names of now-closed bars:… Les Ambassadeurs, Tic-Tac, Bar de l’Air, Chez les Nègres, Bar Paul, echoing the drunken commentary of Zaki Bey al Dassouki in Alaa al-Aswany’s Yacoubian Building:

There used to be a lovely bar here with a Greek owner. Next to it there was a hairdresser’s and a restaurant, and here was the leather shop La Bursa Nova. The stores were all fantastically clean and had goods from London and Paris on display . . . See the wonderful architecture! This building was copied to the last detail from a building I saw in the Quartier Latin in Paris. 212

The Tunisian state and conservationists have sought to remake Avenue de France and other colonial streetscapes as places of consumption. This is however a reconstruction, smoothing over facades and consuming history while doing so. Individual Yacoubian Building-style nostalgia is a disruptive commentary on such efforts of conservationists, as the restorative nostalgia of the developers and the Tunisian state spur counter-nostalgias among former elites, marginalised, as we noted earlier, from the period of Habib Bourguiba onwards. 213

While the initial protests against the Ben Ali regime began in peripheral regions, starting in Sidi Bouzid in mid-January 2011 the decisive public demonstrations took
place in the Avenue Bourguiba, renovated ten years previously. These rural hinterlands of the “interior” had been marginalized by colonial economic development which, in Tunisia as elsewhere in the Maghreb, had been concentrated on the coasts. Tunis, and Tunisia would henceforth have to reckon with the afāqis from the distant rural hinterlands where the spark of resistance had been kindled.
Figure 4 The former British Embassy after restoration work in June 2012.
Figure 5 The sign outside the Greek Cathedral of Saint George, rue de Rome, Tunis.
6 A post-revolutionary conclusion

The Ben Ali regime sought to present today’s Tunisia as integrated and homogeneous, constructed, as we noted earlier (section 3.1 of the present thesis) on consensus. Tunisia’s foreign partners often underlined the stability, modernity, and homogeneity of the country, echoing regime discourse. The Franco-Tunisian historian Lucette Valensi, speaking in 1995, affirmed that “nationalism returned the country to its rightful owners, and moulded them into a modern and homogenous nation.”

After 2011 the divisions within a supposedly “homogeneous” Tunisian society, have become evident to Tunisians themselves. The debate on national identity has been rekindled, notably during the election campaign of autumn 2011. Nevertheless, events suggest that the Mediterranean narrative is more than the now-defunct creation of a self-serving regime and an “elite” group of Francophone scholars. The Ennahda electoral programme for the elections of autumn 2011 noted (in terms similar to those of the Ben Ali regime) Tunisia’s Arabic, Islamic, African and Mediterranean links, and its historical relationships with various countries along the shores of the Mediterranean. This does not mean a seamless transition from the pre-2011 “Tunisian Mediterranean.” Mouncef Ben Salem, currently Tunisian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research was criticised early in 2012 for his comments during an interview on 1 May 2006 with the independent website nawaat.org in which he (Ben Salem) described Ali as “one of the drunkards of the Taht Es-sour circle who consumed
cats and collected cigarette ends.” Under the Ben Ali regime, to the regret of Ben Salem, the literary works of the degenerate Douajji were part of the primary and secondary school programmes. These remarks have provoked Douajji-esque criticism against “Sire Ben Salem” on the part of Tunisian bloggers.

Tunisia’s new leaders have however been careful to project an image of tolerance, notably with regard to the country’s Jewish community. Ten years after the terrorist bombing of the Ghriba synagogue on the island of Djerba in 2002 the Tunisian prime minister Hamadi Jebali, speaking at a World Tourism Organisation meeting in Djerba in April 2012 welcomed Jewish pilgrims to the Ghriba. The synagogue is reputedly built on the site of a tomb of a Jewish virgin who brought scrolls from Palestine and around 6,000 pilgrims visit each year thirty three days after Passover. Jebali spoke of a “tolerant and welcoming” Tunisia while the Tunisian President Mouncef Marzouki welcomed Tunisian Jewish children from Djerba to the presidential palace in Carthage on 15 April 2012. These initiatives came shortly after incidents in central Tunis on 25 March 2012 when calls were made at an Islamist demonstration to prepare for “combat against the Jews.” On 5 January 2012 a visiting Hamas leader was acclaimed at Tunis-Carthage airport with “cries of death to the Jews.”

Hélé Béji, who had criticised the authoritarian tendencies of Habib Bourguiba in the 1980s, issued a ringing condemnation:

Tunisians, you rose up against tyranny and injustice with true hearts: you were righteousness. You smiled with your million different faces: you were tolerance. But recently at Tunisia’s Carthage International Airport, you were not fair, or fraternal, or worthy, not great, neither good nor human. By pounding your raised fists and shouting “Death to Jews!”—or worse, “Killing the Jews is
a duty”—you offered the spectacle of a crazed phalanx that plunges us into stupor and affliction. Not only have you failed in your endeavour, but you have insulted the Palestinian cause, in deploying slogans as mordant as those used by their enemies. You have begun to distil a dark poison in the credulous soul of a good-natured and kind people. I do not recognize you, Tunisians, I do not recognize you. Are you the ones who shouted in chorus: “Muslims, Jews, Christians, we are all Tunisians”?222

Even if the term “Mediterranean” may occupy a less prominent place in public discourse than has hitherto been the case, “Tunisian-ness” as a capability to embrace diversity, remains therefore potent. Tunisians such as Beji and others who protested in the name of “plural Tunisia” have appropriated the discourse of Tunisian-ness as used by both the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes, in the sense of an aptitude to engage with the “Other.” While the “Other” (in this case the Tunisian Jews) has largely left the country what is important is the integrity of Tunisianity, endangered by chanting “Salafists” at Carthage airport. Other forms of “otherness” are now being explored in novel ways: Black Tunisians, for long marginalised, are organising associations to promote equality and overcome racist practices which belie the “tolerant crossroads of cultures” image of Tunisia projected by the Ben ‘Ali regime.223

Ironically the University of Mannouba, where the “cosmopolitan” school of historians developed in the 1990s (see section 3.2 “ex pluribus unum?”), has become over the past few months the scene of confrontation between university teachers who see themselves as defending secular and scientific values and “Salafist” students who seek to give Islamic values visibility on the University campus while invoking their right to wear the *niqab*. Foreign scholars have been asked to sign a petition supporting
the Dean and his colleagues who oppose the Salafist students’ demands, citing the role of the University of Manouba as part of the progressive avant-guard. We received this petition by e-mail via the Milan-based Società per gli studi del Medio Oriente (SeSaMO).\textsuperscript{224} This “internationalising” of post-revolutionary controversy seems to contrast with the attitude of Tunisians with regard to the outside world during the 2011 revolution: the Tunisian scholar Nabiha Jerad describes the revolution as having derived from the sovereign will of the people, without foreign intervention.\textsuperscript{225}

Tunisians today are having to recognise and explore the challenges of their own plurality. A theme of this thesis has been the contrast between the imposed consensus of the Ben ‘Ali regime and the celebration of a plural and harmonious past. We noted (in the initial “Mediterranean Years” section of this thesis) the contrast between the vigilant Police Secours and the creativity associated with the projected Mediterranean Centre for Applied Arts in the former Sainte-Croix presbytery in rue de la Zitouna. Perhaps Tunisians will develop new forms of imagined community that are not overwhelmed by the history of the postcolonial state, which as Partha Chatterjee has said, saw a surrender to the old forms of the modern state.\textsuperscript{226} Abdallah Larouï’s words resonate with new meaning today, “the only antidote to tradition is hope, that is, an open future, and that is the profound meaning of revolution, whatever name it may bear.”\textsuperscript{227}
Endnotes

1 Giusepape Raffo was the eleventh child of a Genoese watchmaker. In 1825 he became bash-kasak (master of the Wardrobe) and was responsible for correspondence with European consuls. The King of Sardinia ennobled him in 1851 and he carried out a number of diplomatic missions in Europe. Raffo, promoted to the rank of general, was appointed in 1860 member of the Tunisian majlis al akbar and died in Paris in 1862. See Ahmad ibn Abi l-Ḍiyāf, Ithāf ahl al zamān bi akhbār Tūnis wa’Ahd al amān, chapitres IV et V: règnes de Husaîn Bey et Mustafâ Bey, ed. André Raymond, volume II: commentaire historique (Tunis: IRMC-ISHMN 1994), 160

2 La Presse, 5 January 1959. Mme Ghislaine Ladjimi kindly drew my attention to this reference.


5 Jacques Berque, Le Maghreb entre deux guerres (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 196. This book reflects Berque’s long and intimate association with the Maghreb, where he was born and where he distinguished himself as administrator and scholar. As one reviewer said: “this work is not written according to any rigid mode of analysis. It can rather be likened to a large mosaic. The style and the method are eclectic. That it is often personal does not deter Berque from using hard data along with some very illuminating vignettes. The book’s subtleties and its often cryptic, impressionistic, and episodic style, challenge the reader. But he is rewarded for his efforts by Berque’s insights and profound understanding. No other person but Jacques Berque could have written this book.” Benjamin Rivlin, The Journal of Politics 30 (1968): 558–559.


7 At home in Carthage: the British in Tunisia, ed. Philippa Day (Tunis: Trustees of Saint George’s Church, 1992).


9 Norma Lorimer, By the waters of Carthage (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1906), 62.
“There has been an English consul in Tunis for 250 years, and the present one has all the appearance of a well-bred, well-groomed Englishman, who could sleep in a Bedouin's camp and bathe in the sand of the desert (a dispensation which Allah grants to the children of the Sahara for their ablutions before prayer) without in the least affecting his British spick and span-ness.” Norma Lorimer was born in Auchterarder (Scotland) and wrote thirty-five travel books. She lived on the Isle of Man and subsequently sojourned in Canada, China, Japan, and the United States. She died in 1948. See *Who was who 1941-1950* (London:1952), vol. 4, 698.


16 Ibid., 59.


19 See the Archives générales des Missionnaires d’Afrique (A.G. Mafr.), Registre Demeerseman, “Quelques aperçus sur la psychologie tunisienne :conférence donnée au Centre des hautes études d’administration musulmane, Paris, July 1946.” Demeerseman was addressing pupils of the CHEAM at the invitation of the director Robert Montagne.

20 Berque, Le Maghreb entre deux guerres, 367.


22 On firemarks see Nicholas Warner, “Sources for architectural and urban history: Charles Goad and the fire insurance plans of Egypt 1898-1910”, in Le Caire-Alexandrie: Architectures Européennes 1850-1950, ed. Mercedes Volait (co-edition IFAO/CEDEJ, Cairo : 2001), 219-231. Fire marks, metal or ceramic plaques, were used by insurance companies to physically “tag” buildings. They originated in Britain in the seventeenth century. See B. Wright, The British Fire Mark 1681-1879 (Cambridge: Woodhead Faulkner, 1982), 14 sq. British companies continued to produce fire marks until 1945 in a variety of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, and Italian. Ibid, 386.

23 Michael Sheringham, Everyday life: Theories and practices from Surrealism to the present (OUP: 2007).

24 Sheringham, Everyday life, 293.

25 Ibid., 299.


27 Sheringham, Everyday life, 228.

28 Ibid.


30 Michel de Certeau, L’invention du quotidien, II, 192, quoted by Sheringham, Everyday life ...381.

31 Sheringham, Everyday life,46.

32 Ibid., 67.

33 Sheringham, Everyday life, 380.


35 Sheringham, Everyday life, 218.


37 Daniela Melfa kindly photographed this sign for me in June 2012.

McGuinness, “La médina de Tunis paysage et textures urbains...”, 76.


On the Medina of Tunis as national symbol see Escher and Schepers, “Revitalising the Medina of Tunis...” For the Medina’s role as a cultural centre notably during Ramadhan see McGuinness, “La médina de Tunis paysage et textures urbains...”

Lorimer, *By the waters of Carthage*, 17, 18. The “secret city” is a quotation from an unpublished text written in 2007 by a volunteer teacher of the Délégation catholique pour la coopération (DCC).


Ibid., 1– 9.

Ibid., 15.

Ibid., xiv.


Ibid., 227.


Ibid., 15.


Ibid.


Lyotard, *Political Writings*, 170.


71 See *Histoire communautaire, histoire plurielle : la communauté juive de Tunisie* (Tunis: Centre de publication universitaire, 1999).

72 Quoted in 1998 by the then Minister of Higher Education Dali Jazi. See *Histoire communautaire, histoire plurielle la communauté juive de Tunisie* (Tunis: Centre de publication universitaire, 1999), 35.

73 See, for example *Les communautés méditerranéennes de Tunisie* (Tunis: Centre de publication universitaire, 2006).


76 Ibid.


78 See Bayram al-Tunisi, *Al Qutr al tunusi fi safwati al itibār bi mustawda’ al amsārī wal aqtārī* , (Tunis, Beit al Hikma, undated).


80 André Demeerseman has shown that a lexicon denoting local Tunisian patriotism began to develop at this period, with terms such as bilādunā (our country) inhabited by the ahliyyun (“people of our family”) while in 1842 Ahmad Bey had taken the title of amīr al-muminīn bil qutr al-tunīsī: “the prince of the believers in the Tunisian region.” See “ Formulation de l’idée de patrie en Tunisie de 1837 a 1873,” *revue de l’Institut des belles-lettres arabes* 113 (1966), 35–71 and 114–115 (1966),


82 Ibid., 27. : “Tunisia is a country which is Mediterranean from the ethnic, geographical, and cultural point of view… decisive events in the country’s history are the result of outside forces. Its history is that of a territory much coveted and often invaded, rather than that of a people conscious of its historical continuity.”


85 Ibid.


94 Chater, “Itinéraires méditerranéens,” 27.


Abbassi, *Quand la Tunisie s’invente*, 64.


Béji was born in 1948 in Tunis. Her mother was French and her father, Mundher Ben Ammar was brother of the second wife of Habib Bourguiba. Her husband Khaled Béji, from a family of notables in Le Kef (north-western Tunisia) is a Paris-based lawyer and uncle of the husband of Cyrine, one of ex-President Ben Ali’s daughters. (I am grateful to Ezzedine Riahi for providing these background details.) Following the publication of *Le désenchantement national*. *Essai sur la décolonisation* in 1982 Hélé Béji left her teaching post in the University of Tunis and worked for UNESCO. After returning to Tunis towards the end of the 1990s she founded the Collège international de Tunis in her house situated in the Bab Menara quarter of Tunis. She envisaged that this Collège would be a setting for informed and free debate.


Ibid.


See page 3.


Ibid., 220.


Ibid., 120.

Bacha, “La construction patrimoniale tunisienne,” 118.


Driss Abbassi, Quand la Tunisie s’invente (Paris: Autrement, 2009), 112–113.

Ibid., 11. See La Presse, 16 September 2001, 16.


Abbassi, Quand la Tunisie s’invente, 77.


Balibar and Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class, 138.

Abbassi, Quand la Tunisie s’invente, 85.

Ibid., 89.

Balibar and Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class, 86.

Ibid.

Ibid., 93.

Ibid.


Ibid., 98.

Ibid., 108.


*Histoire communautaire, histoire plurielle la communauté juive de Tunisie* (Tunis : Centre de publication universitaire, 1999), 35.


*Histoire communautaire...* 35.

See for example *Les communautés méditerranéennes de la Tunisie* (Tunis : CUP, 2006).

La Tunisie après la guerre: problèmes politiques. Writing under the pseudonym of “Rodd Balek,” Charles Monchicourt, an experienced member of the French *Contrôle Civil* who had served in Tunisia since 1898 distanced himself from the terms of “Sicilian peril” and ‘Italian invasion’ and suggests that the Italian population of Tunisia should enjoy the full benefits of French citizenship. Italian citizenship rights, guaranteed in Tunisia by the 1896 Conventions, are an anachronistic Levantine survival which should be abolished. This will ensure harmonious relations between the two “Latin sisters.” The term “Sicilian peril” was employed by Jules Saurin, *L’invasion sicilienne et le peuplement français de la Tunisie* (Paris : Augustin Challamel, 1900).


Ibid., 224.


Ibid., 1-2.

Ibid., 429.

Ibid., 426.


"Rapports antérieurs et rapports actuels entre les indigènes et les Européens,” *Questions tunisiennes: congrés colonial de Marseille, 6-9 septembre 1907* (Paris :Challamel,1907).


Ibid.

*Balibar and Wallerstein, Race, nation, class : ambiguous identities*, 87.
Perkins, 17.


*Réalités*, n°1245, 5 - 11 November 2009.

Robert Ilbert, “De Beyrouth à Alger, La fin d’un ordre urbain,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, n° 32, numéro spécial ‘La Méditerranée. Affrontements et dialogues’ 32 (1991) : 15-24. Some of these cities, notably Alexandria and Tunis, had long-established city councils (the Tunis *baladiyya* dates from 1858) with a measure of autonomy although Alexandria’s municipal council was suspended in 1926 and after 1952 the city’s governor was appointed by central government. A similar situation existed in post-1956 Tunis, with the mayor nominated by presidential decree. The website of the Tunis municipality today gives a prominent place to the Ministry of the Interior.


Ibid.

Abbassi, *Quand la Tunisie s’invente*, 94.

Sarkozy affirmed on the same occasion that the Union pour La Méditerranée was “a dream which for centuries had waited for a generation capable of its realization.” His Tunisian counterparts reiterated that Tunisia unfailingly supports “every initiative aimed at building solid bridges of communication, dialogue and understanding between civilisations and religions, in a context of tolerance, moderation and mutual respect.” See *Tunisie Plus* 1 (2008): 6.


175 Kennedy, Algeria and Tunis, vol.2, 18, 50.

176 Perkins, A history of modern Tunisia, 44.

177 Le Colon français, 7 November 1912.


179 Naval Intelligence Division (Royal Navy), Geographical Handbook Tunisia, (H.M. Stationery Office/Oxford University Press, 1945), 149.


183 Ibid., 6.


185 Cooper, Colonialism in question: theory, knowledge, 64.


187 Ibid.

188 Sanguini, Architectures italiennes. See also Finzi, “Il Progetto della Memoria: obiettivi e risultati.”

189 Henein Bey Henein, in Yusuf Qattawi (ed.), L’Égypte, aperçu historique et géographique gouvernement et institutions vie économique et sociale (Cairo : L’Institut Français, 1926), 382, quoted by Gorman, Historians, state and politics, 178.


191 Armando Sanguini, in his preface to Architectures italiennes de Tunisie (Tunis: Éditions Finzi), 2000.

193 Ibid., 15.
194 Ibid., 14.
196 See for example the volume Le savoir historique en question : gens d’Europe en Afrique méditerranéenne (note 180 supra).
197 Santilli, “Un mythe historiographique au service de deux nations...”
199 See for example Jellal Abdelkafi, La médina de Tunis (Tunis : Alif, 1989), 102.
200 Michel Peraldi, Alain Tarrius, and Geneviève Marotel L’Aménagement à contre-temps (Paris : L’Harmattan, 1988), 118. “En face du café de Paris il y a le café de Tunis, en face de l’ambassade de France la cathédrale catholique et son mendiant. Les boutiques ont leurs enseignes écrites en arabe et en français. Près de la gare, la rue de Carthage concentre les commerces d’outillage agricole où viennent se fournir les paysans de la Medjerda comme trente ans avant venaient ici les propriétaires terriens français. ...tous les immeubles datent des années soixante, avec just ce qu’il faut d’écailles et de coulures pour signifier leur désuétude.Cette ville a l’air trop vaste pour le peu de chalands qui la sillonnent, comme désertée d’une partie de sa vie dont elle ne parvient pas à effacer la trace. C’est une ville de la province française dont les horloges seraient bloquées vers les années soixante en plein cœur de la ville, non pas vraiment un vide, mais une rigidité, une crispation spatiale. Cette ville...attend sans doute d’être à son tour revisitée et réappropriée, mais reste pour l’instant comme une cicatrice a ce point douloureux qu’elle n’a pas inventé son néo de néo-colonial. En fait cet éclatement prend deux formes....l’un qui est sans doute le resultat de la vieille fracture entre Médina et ville coloniale qui semble se perpétuer au dela des rapports sociaux qui l’ont produite. Médina et ville coloniale semblent toujours se nourrir de leur difference, comme aimantées sur la même tension antagonique qui qui les a fondées.”
201 McGuinness and Mouhli, Tunis 1800-1950, 75.
206 Ibid.,
209 Personal observation, May 2010.
213 See page 26 of this thesis.
215 La Tunisie mosaïque, 29.
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
224 http://www.petitions24.net/appel_pour_la_defense_des_valeurs_universitaires: “The Faculty of Literature, Arts and Humanities of the Manouba has been targeted because of the pioneering role this Faculty has always played in safeguarding university values, institutional autonomy, academic freedom, as well as developing tolerance, a spirit of criticism and renewed methods of research.” (accessed 17 May 2012).
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