

From Kufa to Blida Modelling Muslim New Towns Experience

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Abstract. The paper presents a comparative study between two Muslim "new towns" founded in different historical and geographic contexts; Kufa in Mesopotamia and Blida in North Africa. Kufa, described by Al-Tabari (d. 923 A.D.), was the first new town in Muslim territory, founded outside Arabia in 638 A.D. New Blida, known in the memories of Colonel Trumelet (1887) as Bled J'dida, was founded in 1824, during the latest period of Ottoman Empire in North Africa, just after the disastrous earthquake that destroyed old Blida. Six years later, North Africa passed to colonial French governance. Blida could thus be considered as the last new town of the Califat era. A comparison is made between the two towns regarding the site selection and land acquisition, physical layout, development process and decision making. With certain abstraction of differences that are mainly related to space and time specifications, a model that represents the continuity of the "new towns" experience in Muslim urban culture is constructed from the main similarities. The validity of the model is then tested through its application to some other Muslim "new towns".

Introduction

Erecting new towns is a rooted practice in the history of Islamic civilization, and it is as old as the religion itself. The spreading of Islam out of the Arabian Peninsula entailed the establishment of new settlements for the conquering army. Despite the "Islamizing" of the existing cities that were inherited from earlier civilizations, mainly Persian, Roman and Byzantine, the Caliphs (Muslim governors) founded many other towns in the new territories of Islam (Fig. 1).

Early Muslim cities can be roughly classified into three categories. The first one is that of inherited cities, such as Damascus, Aleppo (Syria) and Cherchell (Algeria) which were founded by Romans and transformed by Muslims to fit their own requirements¹.

¹ On the three cities see Houtsma *et al.* *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Vol. II, p735-736, p902-910 and Vol. VII, p349-350, 1987.



Fig. 1. The geographic location of the new towns in the Islamic Arab world (mentioned with a black square in themap).

The second category is that of "Princial" cities, created for political purposes, mostly as residences for the sovereign, such as the Round Baghdad² (Fig. 2) and al-Zhara in Andalusia³. The last category, consists of spontaneous cities that grew naturally away from any political decision⁴. Too often, princial cities, collapsed just after the extinction of the dynasty, or even after the death of the founder as is the case of the Round City of Baghdad. Whereas many cities in the two other categories are still in existence today.

In practice, the distinction between the two latter categories is not easy at all Princial cities, were sometimes attached to an existing settlement such as the Fatimid Cairo which was founded close to Fustat city. On the other hand, Kufa, Basra and Fustat, all erected in the first century of the Islamic calender, (mid-seventh century A.D), could be considered as new cities as they were created after a political decision and on undeveloped land. Yet, their development as will be seen in the case of Kufa, was spontaneous.

² Morris, A.E.J. *History of Urban Form* Longman, Essex, (1994), p. 382. Akbar J. *Crisis in the Built Environment*. Concept Media, Singapore, (1988), pp. 89-92. Hathloul S. (1996) *The Arab Muslim City*. Sahan, Riyadh (1996) p. 30.

³ Founded in 936 about 6 km from Cordoba. See Goodwin, G. *Islamic Spain* Penguin, London, 1990.

⁴ See Elisceff, N. "The Islamic City; Physical Lay-out." In: *The Islamic City*. Unesco, Paris (1976), pp. 90-103.

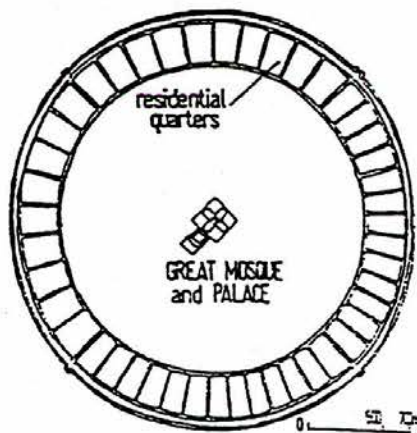


Fig. 2. Baghdad: The Plan of the Round City –Madinat (Iassner, J. *The Shaping of the Abassid Rule*, Princeton, 1980).

With regard to the Ottoman period (1452-1924 A.D.), the conquering of Constantinople (that became Istanbul) and the Eastern Europe cities was coupled with the fall of Andalusia (Islamic Spain) and the loss of many Muslim cities. Masses of Muslim communities in Spain fled accordingly to the Ottoman territory in North Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe and Anatolia. Thanks to its location, North Africa had been the most affected region by this migration as it witnessed an unprecedented trend of urbanization during this period. Cities such as Tetouan, Salé in Morocco, Blida, Algiers, Kolea and Cherchell in Algeria, and Soliman, Testour and Zaghwan in Tunisia were either erected or developed during these historical events⁵.

Muslim urban history experience was therefore marked by the two major periods of urbanization and erection of new towns, the first one was that related to the early spreading of Islam, and the later one was due to the expansion of the Ottoman empire coupled with the andalusian migration. However, the experience between the two periods had not ceased as other new towns such as the Fatimid-Cairo in Egypt and Al-Zahra in Muslim Spain were erected. Therefore, the present study will first focus on Kufa and New-Blida as case studies representing the two periods and then it will extrapolate the results to towns from intermediate periods. The hypothesis of the study is that beyond the difference in historical and geographical contexts, there were some aspects of continuity in the experience that manifested themselves in the physical model and the development process.

⁵ Benhamouche, M. "De Grenade à Alger ou la politique urbaine ottomane face au problème andalou" *Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies*. 11-12 Oct. 1995, pp. 31-47.

Kufa and New Blida: Foundation and Development Site Selection and the Land Acquisition

In the case of Kufa, historians relate that the city was basically founded for military reasons (Al-Tabari, Ibnu Kathir). The conquest of Persia and the conversion of its population to Islam entailed permanent settlements in the new territory for the conquerors who were mostly Bedouins. Al-Tabari reports that Arabs first settled in Al-Mada'in Persian city just after its fall in their hands. However, they left it quickly as they could not cope with the climate. On reporting cases of diseases among soldiers to the Caliph, the military chief Sa'd was allowed to establish a new settlement that suited the Arabs "on condition that the new camp would not be separated from the Caliph by any sea or river" (Al-Tabari V2, pp. 330-335)⁶. The condition taken on board, a site on which there was some traces of a former settlement was chosen.

With regard to land acquisition, the two famous historians do not relate any information on the state of property of the chosen land and the procedure of its acquisition. It seems therefore that the land was either not owned and therefore taken from Persian empire as a booty (Al-Mawardi, p179-180)⁷, or it was simply an undeveloped land, *mawat*⁸, and thus, had been vivified. However, three Arab Christian families that settled in small-scattered compounds were reported to have been found in the area when Muslim conquerors arrived and decided to settle there⁹. Regarding the size of the site, it should have been a large open land that accommodated a population of one hundred thousand soldiers¹⁰.

Concerning Blida (standing for a small city), its old nuclei preceding the arrival of Ottomans to the region, witnessed an unprecedented growth due to the massive arrival of Andalusians from the coast. In 1535, the first Pasha¹¹ that had just settled in Algiers visited the growing city and met Sidi Ahmed al-Kabir, its spiritual leader and founder. After a long discussion, the Pasha granted a financial aid to al-Kabir to develop the city and lay out its public facilities¹² (Fig. 3, 4).

However, the city was completely destroyed after the earthquake of 1824. Facing the problem of the homeless population that would have shrunk to 3.000 people¹³,

⁶ Al-Tabari (died in 311H/923AD) *Tarikh Al Umam wal Muluk*. Muassassat Azzedine, Beirut, 1986, Vol.2, pp. 330-335.

⁷ Al-Mawardi (died in 450H/1057AD) *Al Ahkam Al Sulatnyiah*. Dar Al Kutub Al Ilmyiah, Beirut, 1978, pp. 179-180.

⁸ Literally means dead land. In Juridical terms it is the unowned and undeveloped land.

⁹ Jait, H. *Kufa; Naissance d'une Ville Islamique* Maisonneuve, Paris, 1986, p. 98

¹⁰ Akbar, J. *Crisis in the Built Environment*, 1988, p. 88.

¹¹ The local Ottoman governor.

¹² Cl.Trumelet (1887) *Blida, recits selon la légende, les traditions et l'histoire*. Jourdan, Alger, Vol. II p. 584.

¹³ This information given by Trumelet was based on a military report of the first French expedition to Blida that took place in 1838. However, the same source indicates that around 3.000 bodies were found under the

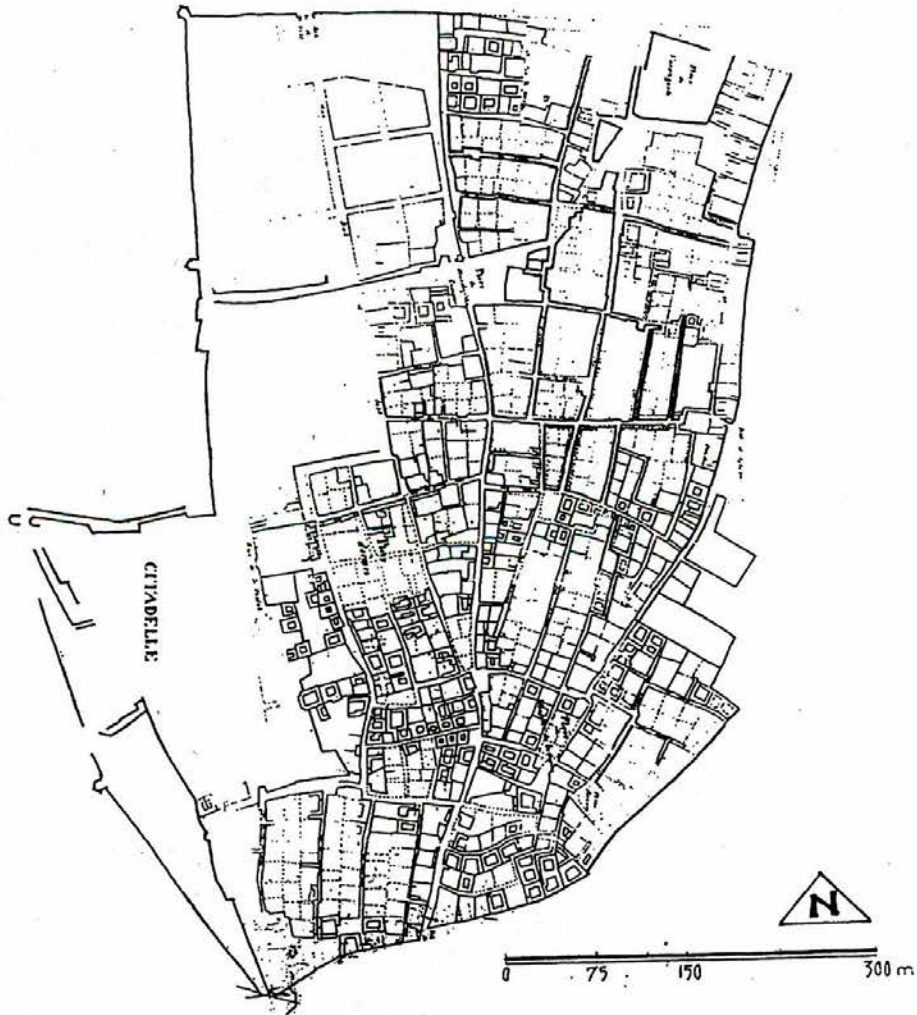


Fig. 3. Blida: General plan around 1835 (Archives of the Genie Militaire, Vincennes, Paris).

Mustapha Pacha, who was the last Ottoman ruler in Algeria, initiated a project of a New Blida, called *Bled J'dida*, located about half an hour of walk, away from, and lower than, the old city (Fig. 4).

debris, and that among 1.300 houses of the old city, only 20 remained. Tramelet Cl. *Blida, recits selon la legende, les traditions et l'histoire* Vol.2 p. 879. This means that the city would have a population of no more than 10.000 persons.

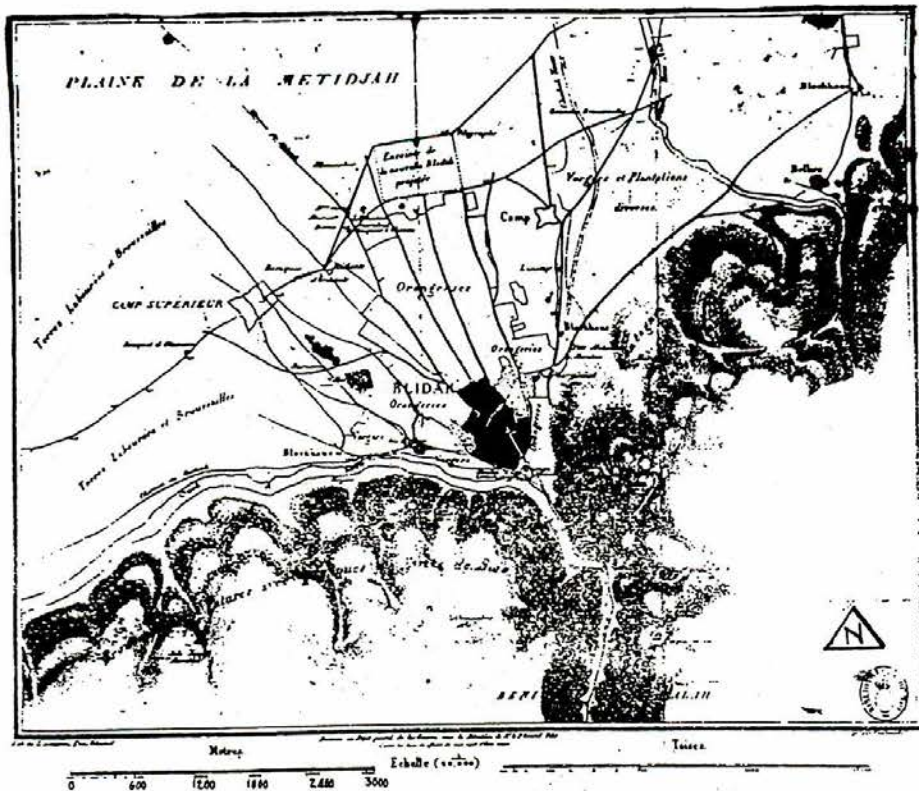


Fig. 4. The location of Old Blida and the New City "Bled J'dida" in Mitidja region (Genie Militaire, France).

Regarding the selection criteria for the site, Yahia Agha, the acting administrator who was in charge of the project, realised that buildings in the would-be selected area, were entirely saved from the earthquake¹⁴. According to other historical sources, the site was selected mainly due to the availability of water (Al-Zahar, died in 1832). Due to the topography of the site, water springing from the Atlas mountain traced many canals that penetrated the old city and reached the selected location¹⁵ for the would-be new city.

Concerning land acquisition, compulsory purchase was a current practice in such circumstances. Al-Zahar reports without further information that after choosing the site, Yahia Agha bought the land from Awlad Sultan tribe who owned it.

¹⁴ Trumelet Cl. *Blida, recits selon la légende, les traditions et l'histoire*. Vol.II, p. 875.

¹⁵ Al-Zahar, C. (1781-1832) *Mudhakirat Ahmed Sharif al-zahar. Naqib Al Ashraf*. (Memories of Al-Zahar) SNED, Algiers, 1980. pp. 155-156.

Comparing choices of the site in the two cases, basic needs for human settlements (water, health, security) would be the main determinant factors of city location. This tradition was in fact fairly described by the Arab historian Ibnu Khaldun in his theory of "Umran"¹⁶ in which he explained the reasons for the life and death of Arab cities¹⁷.

The physical layout

One of the most striking similarities between the two cities is the recourse to a primary rectangular form. Regardless of the discussion on the roots of this practice in ancient cultures¹⁸, chronicles state that the size and shape of the central space in Kufa was determined, according to the shoot of an arrow by a soldier to the four horizons. On estimating the dimensions of the city, Jait H. (1986) concludes that it was roughly a square that had 240m on each side¹⁹. However, no source mentions how the borders of the city were defined, whether by a constructed wall as was the tradition at that time, or just as an urban edge in negation with the countryside (Fig. 5).

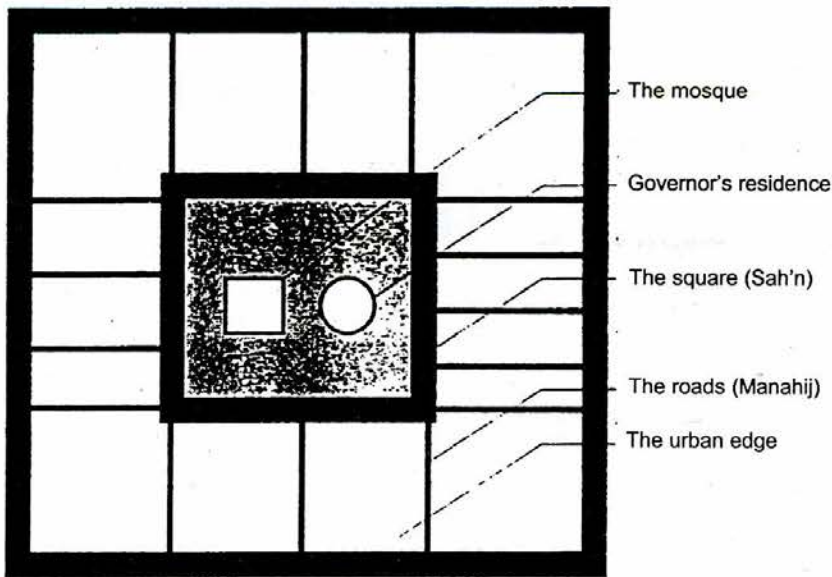


Fig. 5. The model of Kufa according to the description of Al-Tabari.

¹⁶ An arab term which could be roughly translated to the "Science of Cities", "Urbanism" and/or "Urban Sociology".

¹⁷ Ibnu Khaldun (died in 1406) *Al Muqaddimah*. Beirut, 1967.

¹⁸ According to N. Elisseef Op.cit, the city wall in Muslim cities is a tradition that was inherited from the Roman period. However, the layout process of Kufa as will be seen, and its dimensioning leads us to make some reserves on this hypothesis.

¹⁹ Djait H. *Kufa, naissance de la ville Islamique*, 1986, p.118.

In the case of Blida, Colonel Trumelet, based on the plans of French military services that were established just after the colonisation of Algiers in 1830, states that the city wall of the new Blida had a rectangular form of 517m by 705m (Fig. 6). No other evidence about defining these measurements was mentioned²⁰.

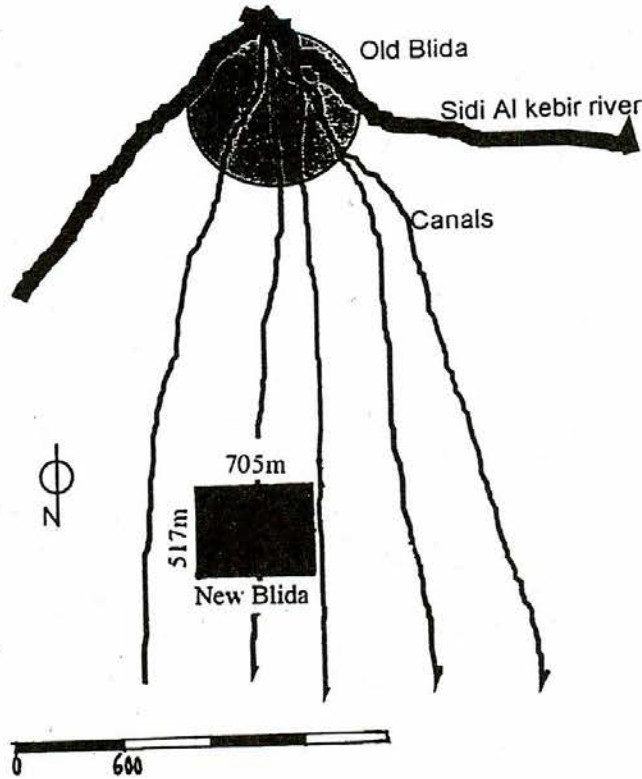


Fig. 6. The location and form of the new Blida (after the Archives of the Genie Militaire, Vincennes, Paris).

Public spaces

The definition of the future city center seems to be the next step of the foundation. In the case of Kufa, the Great Mosque and the government's residence, *Dar al Imara*, were the first buildings laid out. According to al-Tabari, the mosque was defined within a central open square *Sah'n*, beyond which private houses were built later on. The square was herein after used as an open market that surrounded the mosque, the governor's house and the treasury. Consequently, the four public elements; the mosque, the governor's residence, the treasury and the open market, constituted together the city centre of Kufa.

²⁰ Trumelet Op.Cit, p. 876.

In the case of Blida, both Trumelet and al-Zahar, agree about the simultaneity of the construction of the city wall and the central mosque. Builders and masons, who were ordered to assist Yahia Agha, would have been divided into teams each of which had its part of the city project. Despite the absence of the governor's residence in Blida - as the city was not politically as important as Kufa, the great mosque was to be the main component of the future city centre. In fact, besides its ordinary function as a place of worship, it had also political and judicial functions since that the founder of the city, Sid Ahmed al Kabir, and his son who inherited the leadership, ruled the city from the mosque. A religious school *Zawia*, would also be annexed to the mosque as was the case of Kolea (Fig. 7), the other Algerian Ottoman new town which was rebuilt after an earthquake²¹.

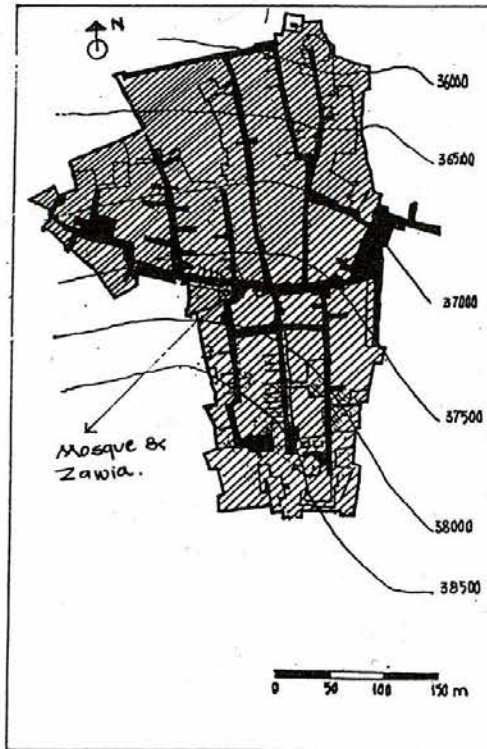


Fig. 7. Koléa: General plan around 1830 (Archives of the Genie Militaire, Vincennes, Paris).

²¹ Kolea is also a new city grown due to the arrival of Andalusian migrants. It is located in central Algeria, about 20km to the north of Blida. Al-Zahar reports that its Great Mosque and its Zawia (school) was rebuilt by Mustapha Pasha after the earthquake of the 16th century. Al-Zahar Op.cit. See also the author's Doctoral thesis *Gestion urbaine de Dar Es Soltane, grand Alger 1516-1830*. University of Paris VIII, Chap.12.

Opposite to Kufa case in which information on building materials is missing, al-Zahar relates that before launching the field work for constructing New Blida, Yahia Agha ordered clay and bricks to be prepared on the site and beams to be collected from the forest nearby.

The layout of roads

The road network layout was thoroughly described in the history of Kufa. According to Al-Tabari, Al Mawardi and Ibnu Kathir, the local governor Sa'd Ibnu-Abi-Waqqas received careful instructions from Umar Ibn'l Khattab, the second Calif (634-644 A.D.), about the roads and streets network, and the distribution of fiefs within it. Accordingly, the main roads, *al-Manahij*, were to be forty cubits, those following them (the secondary roads) to be thirty cubits, and those in between (the tertiary roads) should be twenty, and finally lanes, *al-Aziqqah*, should be seven cubits. "Nothing being made to be less than that" the order concluded²².

The order comprised further instructions concerning the number of the main roads and their directions. Starting from the central square, *Sahn*, that will be later on the city centre, five roads were to be laid out to the north, four to the south and three to each of east and west directions. A secondary network was then to be laid out from other less important roads that would be either parallel to the main roads or crossing them.

With regard to Blida, neither Al-Zahar nor Trumelet stated how the roads network was organised. The only source available is the rough plan that was established by the French army showing the both the old city and the new city, on which we can see two lanes crossing each other at the centre of the rectangle that would be the city. It is probable that the two roads existed as footpaths before the initiation of the project²³.

As a common tradition in Muslim cities, main roads represented borders of residential quarters that identified privatised territories of tribes and social groups within the city. This feature would explain the important number of the main roads in the case of Kufa as well as its absence in Blida. In fact, tribes in Kufa would be more or less, as numerous as the number of intervals between roads compared to Blida where only five or six ethnic groups formed the social structure that were, the Mozabits, the Andalusians, the Jewish, the Jijeli and Uled Sultan²⁴.

²² Al-Tabari and Ibnu Kathir cited by Hathloul SA (1996) *Arab Muslim cities* p. 36. Akbar J. (1988) *Crisis in the Built Environment* p. 85.

²³ The premature failure of the project prevents us from guessing what the development of the streets would have been; as a consequence of the building process or initially laid out by the authorities. However, a rough layout of streets could be seen in Art8. section1. Carton 8 Blidah 1831-1842 in Archives of the Ministry of Defense, Vincennes, Paris.

²⁴ The Mosabit people are those coming from the Mzab region, south of Algeria, whereas the Jijeli are those who are originally from Jijel city, East of Algiers, and Uled Sultan is the local tribe that owned the land of Blida city.

Despite the cultural interaction between Arabs and Romans in the East and the availability of Roman models in North Africa such as Timgad, Jemila, and Cherchell cities, the urban pattern in the two cities seems to have followed a distinguished urban development that negates the Roman model of city planning (Fig. 8). This could furthermore be confirmed in cities that inherited the orthogonal grid pattern such as Damascus and Aleppo where the main axes *Cardo* and *Decumanus* were willingly transformed (Fig. 9).

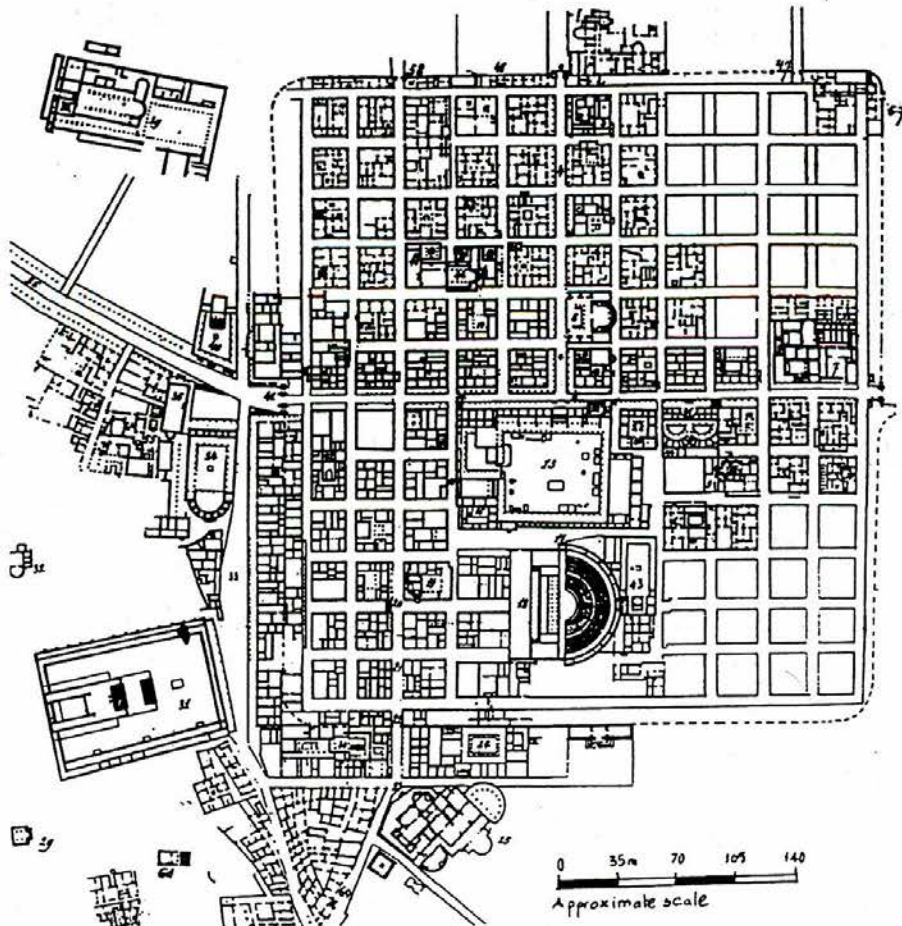


Fig. 8. Timgad: General plan of the settlement as excavated by the Direction des Antiquités.

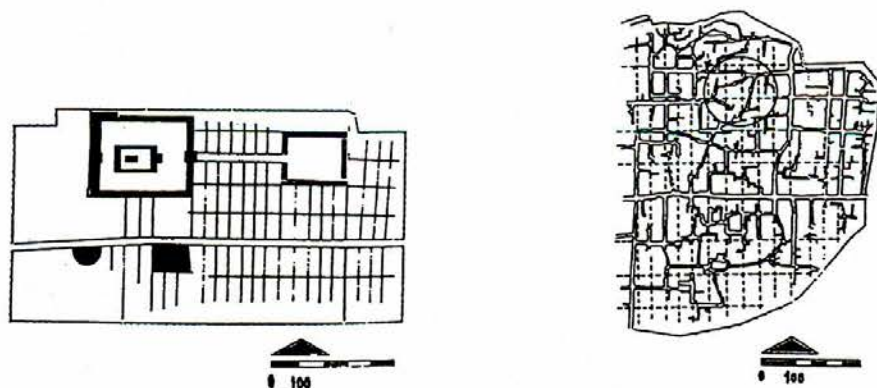


Fig. 9. The original plan of the Damascus during the Roman era and the transformations that occurred during the Islamic era (Sauvaget J. "Le Plan Antique de Damas" SYRIA, XXVI, 1949, pp. 342-356.

The residential space

With regard to the construction process in residential areas, quarters in Kufa were located just behind the central square, *Sahn*. According to Al-Tabari, land outside the central square was subdivided into physical units called *Khitat* (pl. of *Khitta*; a planning unit) that were partially defined within the roads network and were distributed to tribes. As regards dimensioning of these units, Al Tabari states that the Caliph Umar ordered that the fiefs *Qata'*²⁵ were to be sixty cubits²⁶. Two hypotheses regarding the sizing of the *Khitta* as a physical unit of planning could be made in this regard. If the *khitat* had the same size, large tribes would have been allotted more than one *khitta* as Hathloul (1996) suggests. This could also be inferred from the existence of "mixed units", called *akhlal*, that accommodated numerous small families that had no kinship relating them.

The second hypothesis is that these units had various sizes, at least in their length, as width would have been defined by the main roads intervals, in order to cope with the different sizes of tribes. This could also be inferred from the exception made in Umar's message regarding Bani Dabbah tribe for which the fief was ordered to be exceptional²⁷.

In both cases, the internal organization and the building process in the *khitta* were the sole affair of the tribes. Organizing access to members of the tribe and dividing the

²⁵ Plurial of *Qita'*, a piece of land granted to a person by the governor.

²⁶ Al-Tabari Op.cit. The sixty cubits would either mean a width, a length, or both of them which means that fiefs were square in shape.

²⁷ There is no information in the consulted sources about the reason for this exception.

land would be agreed upon by a consent among them in the presence of their chiefs. Residential quarters would therefore have developed incrementally as space was slowly consumed by residents according to their gradual and ever growing needs (Fig. 10).

In the case of Blida, texts do not provide such a thorough description as in Kufa. The only information stated by Colonel Trumelet concerns the appeal of Yahia Agha to the suffering population to start building their homes in the new city, which implies that the urban development of residential quarters, if it took place, would have followed the same incremental process within the urban framework defined between the center and the city wall. In other words, the internal organization of residential quarters would have been the sole affair of the residents that were socially organized into tribes and ethnic entities and thus, joining the model of Kufa. Houses would have been built individually or mutually by the new settlers without the governor's interference.

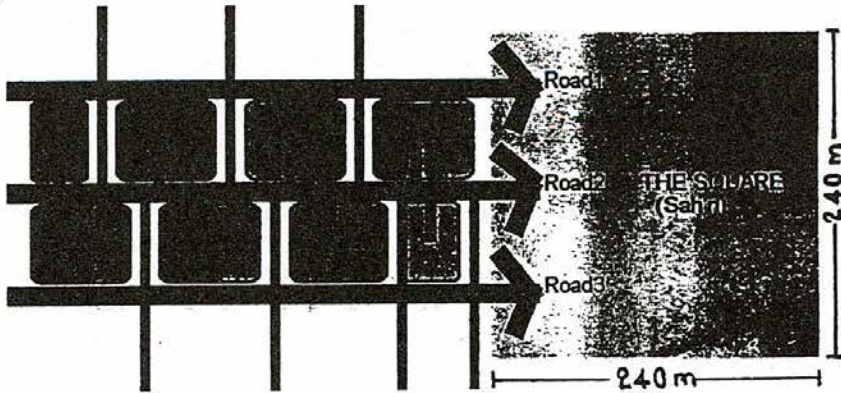


Fig. 10. A model of distribution of residential quarters in Kufa based on the description of Al-Tabari.

A Profile of a Model

The previous sections described the physical and historical contexts within which each of the two cities had been erected. In this section a focus will be made on major similarities that enables us to reach a certain abstraction and to establish a theoretical model of development for the two cities.

The physical form

In the absence of major topographic constraints, both cities seem to have been planned in or referred to a rectangular form. The New Blida was defined at its early stage by its external wall that had a rectangular form of 1.100 cubits by 1.500 cubits, (517m x 705m) and that was built up in the first year despite the continuous shakes and rains that

interrupted the construction work²⁸. Regarding Kufa, despite the absence of any information on its city wall, which might be due to its nature as a military camp erected in the hinterland of the conquered region, its overall form would have been zoomed out from its giant central square that had according to some estimations, 240m in each side. This shape would be justified by its simplicity in terms of construction and dimensioning as well as the absence of any topographic constraint in the site.

The urban space

Similarity between the two cities could also be observed in the organisation of the urban space that was based on the distinction between the central square and the residential space. Public buildings, such as the great mosque, the governor's house and the market, were the first urban projects to be planned and erected in the central space. In the case of Kufa the distinction of the two spaces was further stressed by a canal-like trench around the central square that separated it from residential quarters and prevented houses to transgress it. The two spaces were linked by the roads hierarchy that ensured a direct access of the neighborhoods to the centre through the main arteries.

The decision-making process

The decision-making system can be divided into three levels. At the higher level, the decision concerns the foundation of the city. In the case of Kufa, the decision was an outcome of an intensive correspondence between the local governor and the Caliph. The case was the same for Blida where the new town appeared first in the mind of the local administrator, Yahia Agha, due to the critical situation of the old city after the earthquake. The idea was then discussed for nearly a month with the Mustapha Pasha, the Ottoman governor²⁹ [29].

At the second level, decisions were made by the local administrator and the representatives of different social groups concerning the choice of the site, the layout of the city and the distribution of land. In the case of Kufa, the population that consisted basically of conquerors was organized into tribes each of which had its chief that represented it in the congregational meetings with the governor. For example, in the absence of any information on the distribution of khitat, Jait states that the "coin-tossing" rule should have been the only recourse to settling the intensive interference of the chiefs and concurrence that might have appeared between different tribes regarding the best locations in the city.

In the case of Blida however, the procedure of site selection seems not to have been respected by the local governor, the reason which could explain the failure of the project. Colonel Trumelet reports that the decision was made solely by Agha without

²⁸ Colonel Trumelet Op.Cit. Vol.2 p. 879.

²⁹ Al-Zahar Op.Cit.

consulting the local population and its spiritual leader, the son of Sidi-Ahmed-al-Kabir³⁰, who preferred reconstructing the old mosque of the city rather than participating in the construction of the new one. The people also refused the offer of the governor to settle in the new city claiming that they were too poor and weak to build new houses. After one year of the project initiation, very few houses were accordingly built in the new city. Most other residents went back to their old collapsed houses and started repairing them. The failure of the project therefore seems to have been mainly due to the absence of community participation at this stage of decision-making process³¹.

At the third level, which mainly consists of urbanization and construction of the residential quarters, decision-making system seems to be a bottom-up process. Private houses and internal organization of residential areas should have been left to the residents who developed collectively their land within the urban structure defined by the authority. In describing the internal organization of residential quarters for example, it was reported that each neighbourhood in Kufa had its own open space at its center, called *Rahba*, used partially as an open stable for animals, and a burial ground.

The model

On concluding, the model that manifests itself in the two case studies could be represented as an interaction of two complementary but distinct spheres of action. The first one is that related to the public authority action which was mostly in charge of the infrastructure of the future city, such as the city wall, the location of the future city-center, the construction of the public buildings (the mosque, the governor's Residence, the market and the school), the laying out of the traffic network and the distribution of land.

The second sphere involving the private and collective actions of residents was in charge of the "infill" work within the defined framework of the city. This work includes mainly the subdivision of residential space into plots and its gradual construction either for private or collective requirements. Social structure, which was mainly based on the tribal organization, would have provided an administrative background that co-ordinated different actions at this level.

The interaction between the two spheres of actions is reflected in the coexistence of two different geometric patterns, which is common in most Muslim cities. The irregular geometry generated by the organic tissue of houses, winding streets and dead-ends, is

³⁰ Sid Ahmed Al-Kabir is the founder of the city who is originally Andalusian and arrived to the region shortly before Ottomans. He was for this reason, as well as his son after him, a spiritual leader of the local population. See Trumelet Op.Cit.

³¹ It is worthy to note here that the French colonization that took place six years after the earthquake, which might be another factor in the interruption of construction work in the New Blida.

most often articulated with relatively pure geometric forms of monumental buildings, such as the city wall, the bazaar (covered market) and the Great Mosque.

The algorithm of decision-making system of each sphere of action explains best the nature of the two geometries. In the case of public sector, the construction was generally characterized by a linear process. Projects were generally conceived by the ruler or his deputies, approved by legal authorities, financed by the treasury and undertaken as a "one for all" construction by master builders and architects. Whereas in the private (and collective) sector, the development of urban space was characterized by an incremental development and spontaneous process. Land was consumed gradually according to the domestic emerging needs of the family.

The Model Applied to Other New Towns

The described model could also be observed in the foundation process of some other towns mainly; Basra, Fustat and Cairo. Basra was founded in the same region and period as Kufa. In describing its foundation, historians do not give many details as in Kufa. However, it is reported that the same directives were applied to its roads network and layout³².

Regarding Fustat, it was founded in 20H/641A.D., (i.e. three years later than Kufa), on an existing site along the Nile that was once occupied by Babylon. At its early stage it was also a military camp that was established to conquer Egypt. Historians diverge regarding the pre-existence of a scheme that preceded its growth. However, they agree that tribes that were more than twenty settled each in its own *Khitta* (planning unit). In a fairly central position to the north-east of Babylon was the residential quarter of the governor and the Great Mosque³³. Regarding its boundaries, it seems that at this stage, just like Kufa, being a military city, had no external wall. However it was surrounded by a barricade of thorn-bushes³⁴.

Cairo was founded under the Fatimids (909-1171 A.D.) in 969 A.D. north of Fustat which was a great capital at that time. After having chosen the site on the Nile, the conquering general, Jawhar first established the layout of the city wall and started construction of the two major buildings; the governor's palace and the mosque³⁵ [35]. Residential quarters, *khitat*, were then defined outside the future city centre and allotted to the twenty ethnic groups making his army.

³² Al-Mawardi, A.H. (d. 450/1058) *Al-Ahkam Al Sultaniyyah*. Cairo Al-Habib Press, 1960. On the actual archeological excavations on the old city of Basra see Azzawi, A.S. *Al Basra* (1994) (through excavations), Matbaat Al Sharja, Sharja.

³³ Houtsma et al. (1987) *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Vol. II, p.816. Akbar (1988) *J. Crisis in the Built Environment*. p. 86-87.

³⁴ Houtsma et al. (1988) *The First Encyclopedia of Islam*. Vol. II, p.817.

³⁵ Alssayad, N. (1992) "The Islamic City as a Colonial Enterprise." In: *Forms of Dominance* Avebury Aldershot p. 36.

Summary and Conclusion

The Islamic territory witnessed a rich experience in founding new towns. Early ones, were initially military camps that were established in new conquered lands. They then gradually turned into civilian settlements. Kufa was the first town in this chain of experience. Whereas Blida is the closing example which was founded towards the end of Caliphate, i.e. the Ottoman period. Despite the difference in historical and geographical contexts of the two cities, striking similarities were identified in terms of physical form, spatial organisation and decision-making system that could constitute together a model of urban development.

من الكوفة إلى البليدة تجربة المسلمين في إنشاء المدن الجديدة

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ملخص البحث. يقدم هذا البحث دراسة مقارنة بين مدينتين جديدتين شيدتا في موقعين مختلفين وتاريخين مختلفين، هاتان المدينتان هما: الكوفة في العراق والبليدة في المغرب الأوسط أو الجزائر الحالية. فالكوفة لقيت عناية كبيرة لدى المؤرخ ابن جرير الطبري (توفي سنة ٩٢٣م) لأنها أول مدينة أنشئت في الأقاليم الجديدة خارج الجزيرة وذلك سنة ٦٣٨م. أما البليدة أو البلاد الجديدة فقد كانت آخر مدينة شيدت في العهد العثماني سنة ١٨٢٤م وذلك بعد أن دمر زلزال سنة ١٨٢٤م المدينة الأصلية - البليدة - وقبل أن يحتل الفرنسيون المغرب الأوسط سنة ١٨٣٠م. وقد كانت لذلك مادة للوصف التاريخي للضباط الفرنسي تريملي (١٨٨٧م) الذي عاش في تلك المدينة. وتهدف المقارنة بين المدينتين إلى تجاوز الاختلافات الزمنية والمكانية والوصول إلى بعض التشابهات بين المدينتين من حيث التخطيط والتنفيذ والشكل العام؛ وذلك بغية استخراج نموذج مجرد لتجربة المسلمين في إنشاء المدن الجديدة. ولتأكيد هذا النموذج واختبار مدى صلاحيته فقد قورن بمدن أخرى أنشئت ما بين التاريخين.