

Typology : **House in the medina of Sfax**

Country : **Tunisia**

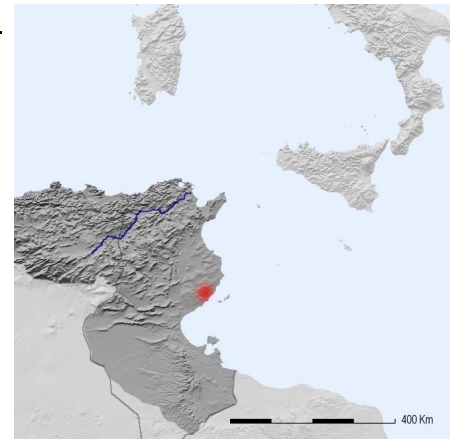


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SYNTHESIS

The medina of Sfax presents the architecture of Arab-Islamic cities in Tunisia. This typology is found in a good number of Arab-Islamic metropolises in Tunisia which are port towns (Sousse, Gabès, Mahdia, ...). This type of construction is rarely older than two centuries. These houses correspond to the type known as the courtyard house, with a patio around which the space is laid out. Their dwelling function is increasingly giving way to economic functions, particularly trade, services and crafts (especially shoemaking), and they are turned into souks¹ or workshops with no special fittings, leading to either the irreversible transformation of the buildings or their deterioration to varying degrees of recoverability.



ANALYTICAL GROUP OF THE TYPOLOGY

Urban (Environment)	Grouped (Implantation)	Fixed (Character)	Definitive (Origin)	Permanent (Use)	«Seated» (Cultural)	High / medium (Economic level)	Compact (Morphology)
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FORMS OF THE TYPOLOGY



INVENTORY OF THE COUNTRY'S TYPOLOGIES

House in the medina of Tunis	House in Testour	Sulaiman house
House in the medina of Sfax	Borj dwelling in the suburbs of Sfax	House in Tozeur (Djérid)
House in Matmata	House in Douriet-Cheniri	House in Djerba

FORMS OF THE TYPOLOGY

Implantation

This typology is found in a port town (such as Sfax) or in a good number of Arab-Islamic metropolises in Tunisia which are port towns (Sousse, Gabès, Mahdia, ...).

Use/associated activity

Dwelling.

Dating

This type of construction is rarely older than two centuries.

Altitude

Orientation

The detached constructions generally face south or south-east. In town centres, in adjoining constructions, it is the main room giving onto the patio which has the best orientation.

Ground surface covered

About 200 m².

Surface area of housing

About 200-400 m².

Number of floors

GF. Sometimes two levels: the second may be a separate home.

Number of homes

Generally a single home on the GF. The first floor, originally joined to the GF, may develop into a second home.

Number of families

Originally, the house was for one family, then, in each room-dwelling, a family (the father and the children's families), when the sons marry and until they have their own home.

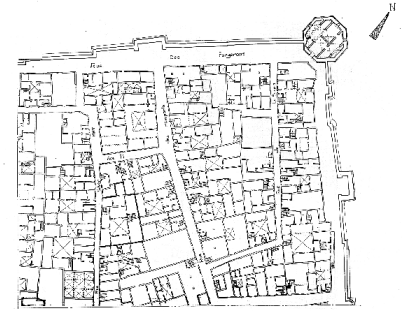
Average number of members per family

6 or more members.



Functional outline

Urban fabric



Elevation



Section



±0



+1



Roof

House in the medina of Sfax

Walls

Bearing walls of rendered rubblework.

Framework

Sills with timber beams are common. The use of vaults is not out of the ordinary.

Roof

Generally flat, forming a terrace roof.

Rendering

Generally rendering of aerated lime mortar. Cladding with traditional ceramics as protection, but above all as decoration, is only found in wealthy homes, and particularly in the courtyard or patio.

Openings and projections in the facade

There are no windows giving onto the street, the entrance door being the only opening in the facade.

Traditional systems of air-conditioning

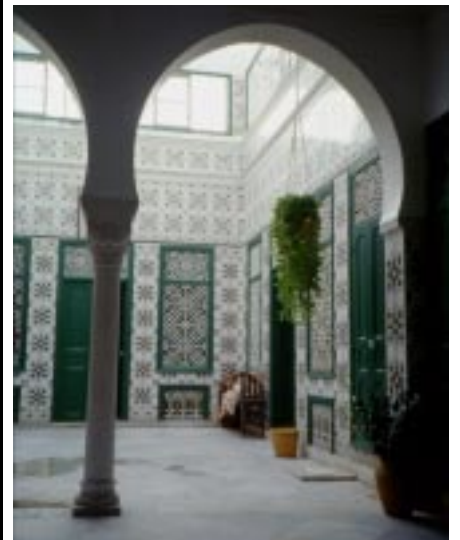
No special systems. Party walls, the lightness of the roof, the *korran* and the central courtyard all form a system which adapts well to the zone's climatic conditions.

Drinking water supply systems

The well and the water tank, which collects rainwater, are the water sources.

Waste water drainage systems

Before the public drainage system was built, waste water was evacuated into a covered pit which was regularly emptied, and in farming areas, the water from washing clothes, etc., was used to water the fruit trees.



CURRENTS TATE OF VITALITY AND PRESERVATION

Their dwelling function is increasingly giving way to economic functions, particularly trade, services and crafts (especially shoemaking), and they are turned into *souks* or workshops with no special fittings, leading to either the irreversible transformation of the buildings or their deterioration to varying degrees of recoverability.

TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

Effect / Cause

Since it attained independence, Tunisia has undergone a socio-economic and cultural evolution, intensified in recent decades.

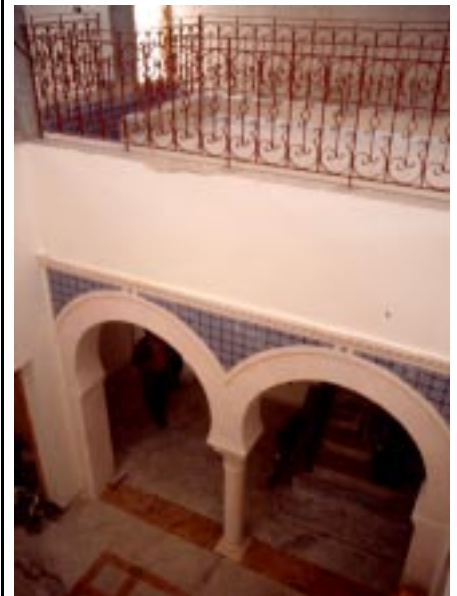
Economic development has led to an improvement of living conditions and a major population increase. Social evolution has been marked by the destructuring of forms of community life as a result of the individualisation of economic production. This process has basically led to a change from the traditional patrilocal dwelling to the individual, so-called modern dwelling. Traditional architecture, characterised by the fixity of its forms, no longer offers satisfactory responses to new emerging housing needs. This has prompted designers to an ongoing search for a new, more adapted form of architecture.

Typological transformations:

- Modification of the urban landscape in terms both of volume and of structure and spatial organisation.
The causes are varied and not necessarily linked to the abandonment of certain traditional materials and techniques. The adoption of a new code of urbanism which edges out "introverted" architecture (courtyard house with no external facades) to introduce an extroverted type of architecture is one such.
- Different spatial organisation due to the new allocation of spaces (bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, ...).
Adoption of layouts from other cultures, being seen as signs of modernity. The superposition of several social uses of the space often creates conflict between form and function.
- Improvement of sanitary installations and transformations affecting the kitchen and other rooms.
Spontaneous superposition of two social uses of space (one traditional, the other "modern").

Change in use:

- The former owners leave the house which is then turned into a *souk* or a craft workshop.
Change of owner of the house or in owner's social status.
- Division of the traditional house and its transformation (after a fashion) into several smaller houses or maisonettes, generally rather disfigured.
Break-up of the family and division of property between heirs (particularly if the house is the only inheritance).



House in the medina of Sfax

Change in use of construction materials and techniques:

- **In use, living:** dressed stone, rubblework and lime (although use of these materials is neither systematic nor generalised).
- **Little used, in decline:** dressed stone, rubblework.
Walls built of stone are considered to be more resistant and offer greater thermal comfort than double partition walls of brick.
- **No longer used:** none, but certain techniques and materials are becoming more uncommon, even rare.
- **Recent incorporations:** cement, reinforced concrete, steel and industrially produced baked clay products.
The reasons for this are economic (availability on the market) and psychological or even cultural (they are associated with modernity).

CAPACITY FOR REHABILITATION

Aspects of the typology:

Score from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent)

- | | |
|---|---|
| · Capacity for sale or rental on the property market | 8 |
| · Capacity for adaptation to present-day family and social requirements | 2 |
| · Capacity for adaptation to present-day comfort requirements | 3 |

Score from 0 (insignificant) to 10 (major)

- | | |
|---|---|
| · Technical difficulty of rehabilitation | 2 |
| · Administrative difficulty of rehabilitation | 0 |
| · Financial difficulty (very high cost) of rehabilitation | 5 |

Obstacles preventing rehabilitation/causing the user to decide not to rehabilitate:

Score from 0 (does not represent an obstacle) to 10 (represents a major obstacle)

- | | |
|---|---|
| · Administrative difficulties | 0 |
| · Major technical difficulties | 3 |
| · Irreversible deterioration of the structure | 5 |
| · Listed/protected building | 1 |
| · High cost of rehabilitation | 5 |
| · Absence of aid/subsidies | 2 |
| · Cost of the project and permits | 6 |
| · Status of building/lease | 6 |
| · Inflation of property prices | 3 |
| · Social decline (delinquency, ...) | 4 |
| · Poor environmental conditions (absence of minimum infrastructures, ...) | 1 |
| · Desire to change the building for a modern one | 9 |
| · Lack of sensitisation/appreciation on the part of the users | 9 |
| · Not considered necessary (by the user) | 9 |

Comments:

The constructions have more or less capacity for rehabilitation depending on their age and the construction materials used.
There is a wide range of circumstances and many different situations are found.



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