

**THE SETIFIAN ROMAN BASINS
FROM THE PROBLEM OF IDENTIFICATION TO THE RECOVERY PROJECT**

MAHDADI Nouredine ¹

ABSTRACT

It was by serendipity, during a survey aimed at determining the course of an underground source by employees of the municipality of Sétif in 1907, that the beautiful monument was discovered at a depth of three meters of the "Roman basins" of Sétif (Algeria)². The architecture of this site caught the attention of both elected officials and the public and led to considering its conservation. Located in the Rafaoui garden (former Barral garden)³, it represents one of the most beautifully preserved open-air monuments in this city. However, it remains a subject of controversy as to its "origin"⁴. The present work seeks to weave a portrait of the model, which will provide us with the arguments necessary for its "identification", and thus brought a correction on its name, and at the same time justify the action of a support for its conservation⁵.

KEYWORDS: Heritage value added, Identification, Enhancement, Nymphaeum, Setifian Roman basins.

RESUMO

Foi por acaso, durante uma investigação para determinar o curso de uma nascente subterrânea realizada por funcionários do município de Sétif em 1907, que o belo monumento dos "Banhos Romanos" de Sétif (Argélia) ⁶ foi descoberto a uma profundidade de três metros. A arquitetura deste sítio atraiu a atenção tanto dos eleitos como do público, e levou a que se considerasse a sua conservação. Localizado no Jardim Rafaoui (antigo

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² This source feeds the two main and famous fountains of this city (Ain Fouara & Ain Droudj), located in a part known for its wealth of Roman remains. (Elizabeth Fenteress, Paul-Albert Février, Anissa Mohamedi, 1984).

³ Since this discovery, the site has been laid out as an "open-air museum garden", displaying this unearthed archaeological treasure.

⁴ Improperly called nowadays "Roman baths", instead of "nymphs", and this is what we are going to dismantle.

⁵ In our situation, the question of heritage is no longer posed only in terms of preservation, but also in terms of integration into the changing urban environment, which is another form of "valorisation".

⁶ Esta fonte alimenta as duas principais e famosas fontes desta cidade (Ain Fouara & Ain Droudj), localizada numa parte conhecida pela sua riqueza de vestígios romanos. (Elizabeth Fenteress, Paul-Albert Février, Anissa Mohamedi, 1984).

Jardim Barral)⁷, é um dos monumentos ao ar livre mais bem conservados da cidade. Contudo, continua a haver controvérsia quanto à sua "origem"⁸. O presente trabalho procura tecer um retrato do modelo, que nos fornecerá os argumentos necessários para a sua "identificação", e assim fazer uma correcção ao seu nome, e ao mesmo tempo justificar a acção de cuidar da sua conservação⁹.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: valor acrescentado patrimonial, Identificação, Valorização, Nymphaeum, Bacias romanas Setifian.

RÉSUMÉ

C'est par hasard, lors d'une enquête visant à déterminer le cours d'une source souterraine menée par des employés de la municipalité de Sétif en 1907, que le beau monument des "Bains romains" de Sétif (Algérie)¹⁰ a été découvert à trois mètres de profondeur. L'architecture de ce site a attiré l'attention des élus comme du public, et a conduit à envisager sa conservation. Situé en plein jardin Rafaoui (ancien jardin Barral)¹¹, il représente l'un des monuments à ciel ouvert les mieux conservés de la ville. Cependant, il reste un sujet de controverse quant à son "origine"¹². Le présent travail cherche à tisser un portrait du modèle, qui nous fournira les arguments nécessaires à son "identification", et donc à apporter une correction sur son appellation, et en même temps justifier l'action d'une prise en charge de sa conservation¹³.

MOTS-CLÉS: Plus-value patrimonial, Identification, Valorisation, Nymphée, Bains romains de Sétif.

⁷ Desde esta descoberta, o local tem estado disposto como um "jardim museu ao ar livre", exibindo este tesouro arqueológico desenterrado.

⁸ ImproPRIAMENTE chamados hoje "banhos romanos", em vez de "ninfas", e é isto que vamos desmantelar.

⁹ Na nossa situação, a questão do património já não se coloca apenas em termos de preservação, mas também em termos de integração no ambiente urbano em mutação, que é outra forma de "valorização".

¹⁰ Cette source alimente les deux principales et célèbres fontaines de cette ville (Ain Fouara & Ain Droudj), située dans une partie connue par sa richesse en vestiges romains. (Elizabeth Fenteress, Paul-Albert Février, Anissa Mohamedi, 1984).

¹¹ Depuis cette découverte, le site était aménagé en « jardin musée en plein air », en exposant ce trésor archéologique mis au jour.

¹² Appelé improprement de nos jours « bains romains », au lieu de « nymphées », et c'est ce que nous allons démonter.

¹³ Dans notre situation la question du patrimoine n'est plus posée en termes de préservation uniquement, mais aussi d'intégration à l'environnement urbain qui évolue, qui est une autre forme de « valorisation ».

INTRODUCTION

This work was based on an ambiguity on the "terminology" of the monument known as "the Roman basins" of Sétif, an expression with a blurred outline, used as default. At first glance, it was difficult to recognize elements referring to the "Basins", the conditions of this fortuitous excavation, and the absence of information, in particular epigraphic and monographic studies, has convinced us of the need for an in-depth study on this other architectural ensemble¹⁴ which symbolizes the "aquatic"¹⁵ element in this city. From the outset, the historiographical study imposed itself on us, to recall the debate around the question of water and its link with the wealth of this region often cited as a determining factor and favorable index of prosperity in the choice and the creation of human settlements¹⁶. As soon as it was discovered in 1907, this building marked its territory, stimulating the development of the lapal garden Barral; even more today with the urban development of the city, and the place it will take once its utility function rehabilitated. It is both working to revive this city and to recognize its past. Curiously, this construction, which so far has been insufficiently studied, remains unclassified¹⁷. Thanks to this study, it will be able to be reconstructed in the heritage inventories of Algeria¹⁸. Its status will be that of an object classified as a site with recognized cultural and historical value.

The present work was carried out in Master2, devoted to this monument which had to be integrated into the new development which occurred following the works of the city's tram network launched in 2014. The reflection carried out was born from this need to put in place

¹⁴ The first being the emblematic fountain of Sétif "Ain Fouara", which embodies an omnipresent memory in the Sétifian society.

¹⁵ According to recent studies, a renewed interest seems to be arousing for "Roman infrastructures" related to water, and new environmental concerns (climate, development of urban spaces, hygiene and conservation water in difficult climatic conditions, etc.).

¹⁶ All the testimonies (from Roman, Arab and European explorers) agreed, to recognize that there is a great wealth around Sétif (agricultural land and water sources): « *le sol est si fertile que sans jamais y mettre d'engrais, il produit de belles moissons* ». *Summary of records relating to immigration to the Swiss colonies, archives of the general government (GGA) 1N2*. Centre des archives d'Outre-mer (Aix en provence), France.

¹⁷ Pending "recognition & classification". Law 98-04 of June 15, 1998 on the protection of cultural heritage & that before, Ordinance 67-281 of December 20, 1967 on excavations and the protection of historic and natural sites and monuments. Algerian Official Journal.

¹⁸ That is to say considered as complementary to the work of "census".

a strategy for the development of this complex, considered as a "heritage object" unique in the city. Now we are witnessing in recent times a renewed interest in questions on "heritage", generated by the new tourist needs, which in turn have started a vast movement for its restoration and rehabilitation. On our scale this concern had become first, a mission of "identification" then to move on to a "development action", the contextuality of which had imposed itself as a condition for ensuring its safeguard and promoting the cultural and economic landscapes, and the scientific and educational fields¹⁹. (Fig. 1)

STATE OF CONSTRUCTION AT THE TIME OF ITS DISCOVERY IN 1907

For us as for the majority of the Setifian population, the architecture of this construction had remained the same, identical to that discovered in 1907; until our archival research reveals its original state, published in its excavation report in 1908, signed by the president of the archaeological society (department of Constantine), Mr. Jean Maguelonne²⁰; which differs from the actual one. A summary description, taking into account his work which was in progress, accompanied by planimetric representations (a plan & a section on a 1/100 scale) and a perspective view. He speaks of paved water pipes and precisely of "water tower" supplied by cisterns located in the vicinity probably dating from the time of the full prosperity of the old Sitifis.

¹⁹ The quest for innovative solutions to be able to finance the work essential for its conservation.

²⁰ « Découverte à Sétif d'un château d'eau & de citernes », *recueil des notices et mémoires de la société archéologique du département de Constantine*, 10^{ème} vol de la quatrième série, Imprimerie D. Braham, Constantine, (1908), p. 183-186.



Figure 1. General view of the Rafaoui Lapidary Garden (formerly Barral Garden), which served as a development support for the site of the Roman Basins just after its discovery in 1907.

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The said construction was buried three meters below, a means of collecting and retaining water already known since ancient times, certainly to allow regular use. The geometrical parts indicated that it consisted:

(...) ... of a large rectangle, three sides of which are formed by a masonry, vaulted and paved pipe, two meters wide; the long side of the rectangle is 20.15 m long and each of the other two sides, perpendicular to the previous one, 11.19 m; the fourth side is open and the inner surface of the rectangle is paved with stones, which allowed it to circulate easily. Access to the water pipe is through twenty-six large arched openings 2.50 m high by 1.05 m wide, twelve of these openings are located on the large interior side of the rectangle and seven on each of the other two sides. The pipe supplied by the left end of the long side and the water which feeds it comes from large tanks located a few meters away and which are also being cleared. No inscription, no dedication has yet been found; but the excavations are far from over and they continue. (MAGUELONNE, 1908, p.183 -186).

In addition, it should be known, that this discovery comes thirty years after a first less important excavation carried out by the services of the municipality of Sétif in 1876; that

archaeologist Joseph-Alexandre Poulle²¹ quotes in a report published in the same series of reviews of the archaeological society of Constantine in 1887:

(...) ... in Sétif itself, the sources that I had seen so rich, almost thirty years ago, were decreasing from year to year and raised fears of a complete disappearance, when, in 1876, the works which the municipality carried out brought up uncovered, at Place Barral, a large water chamber which engages under the wall of the Casbah; it is fed by a beautiful spring, which has increased the flow of the city's fountains. (POULLE, 1878, p. 101-106).

He informs us about the discovery of a “large room” on the site of a water source, probably that discovered in 1907, proof of the permanence and abundance of sources in this location, whose name or rather the identification was not followed and which remains ambiguous so far (Fig. 2 & 3).

TRANSFORMATIONS FOR CONSERVATION & ENHANCEMENT

The architecture of this construction described just after its discovery surprised us when knowing its current state. One thing is certain is that this construction has undergone transformations which are visible enough today. The municipal administration²² of the time, aware of the difficulties and the significant resources to be put in place to continue this excavation, preferred to include it in a project to develop a public space, in a small agglomeration in full prosperity and development , to make it a place of relaxation and leisure.

In this project, the water source went to become not only the means of supplying the neighboring fountains with drinking water, but also the means to serve as a decoration medium and iconographic program²³. Our site will use its location on the one hand and on the other hand to capture the dynamic effect of water, to develop a positive image, what C.

²¹ Poulle, Joseph-Alexandre: North African archaeologist and epigraph; in Sétif he occupied the post of receiver of the Domains between 1851-1857. Cf., "Obituary. M. Poulle", history and geographic of the department of Constantine, Souvenir of the fiftieth anniversary 1853-1903,1902, *Recueil des notices et mémoires de la Société archéologique*, p. 101-106.

²² Administration under the leadership of Mayor Achille Sèbe. Cf. Bouveresse, Jacques, *un parlement colonial? Les délégations financières algériennes 1898-1945, L'institution et des hommes*, publication des universités de Rouen & du Havre, (2008), p. 644.

²³ A harmony in the landscape, generated by the composition of the lapidary garden, and the architecture of this stone construction.

Feldmann Weiss calls "the archeology of the senses" in his approach on the study of Trajan's nymphaeum in Ephesus (WEISS, 2009, p. 66-69) "The water circulated in the nymphaeum and in the city, from the central mouth to the basin, from the overflow over the parapet until its flow in the sewer, produced effects visual, auditory and sensory". (LAMARE, 2019, p. 227-228). We are therefore going to read this layout to see what summer the transformations and adjustments made to the architecture of this construction have since called, curiously, "the Roman basins" of the Barral Garden of Sétif.

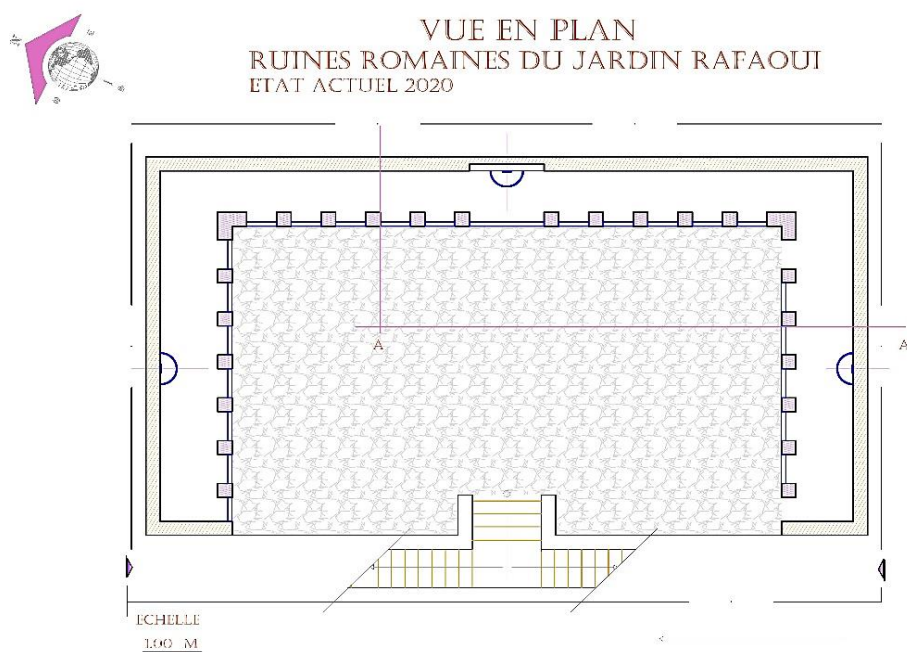


Figure 2. Plan view of the current state of the so-called "Roman Basins" in Setif.
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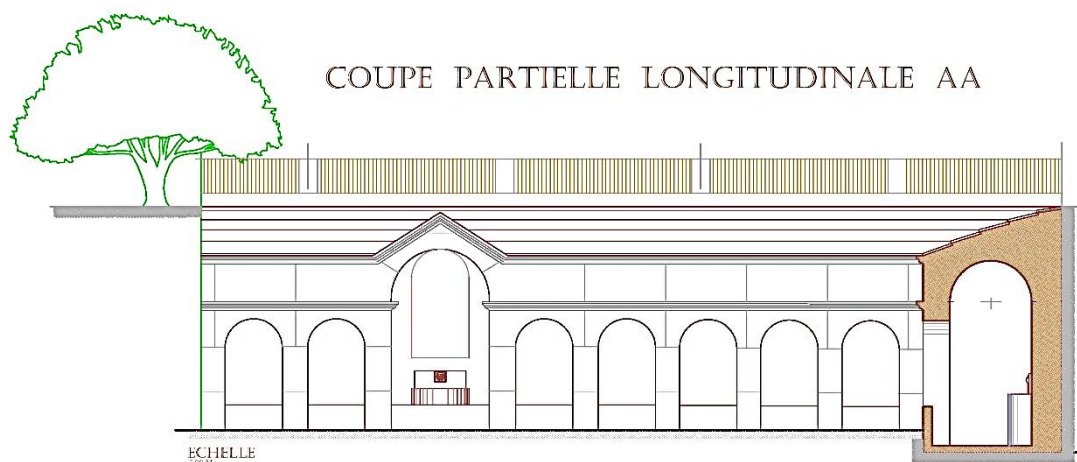


Figure 3. Longitudinal partial section AA of the current state of the so-called "Roman Basins" construction in Sétif along the north/east axis.
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STATE OF CONSTRUCTION TODAY

After its discovery in 1907, the architecture of this site caught the attention of elected officials as well as the public, and led to considering its conservation. Since then, some efforts have been made for its enhancement, in particular its integration into the Rafaoui lapidary garden (formerly Barral garden)²⁴, and even if today the site appears to be in a good state of conservation, an in-depth archaeological study promises to be difficult. Today, this construction had inevitably become a "monument" without follow-up, since then, its preservation and enhancement has remained problematic.

Arriving from the Rafaoui public garden, progressing towards this construction below, we discover a large space open to the sky similar to a large courtyard, of a rectangle shape whose treatment on the ground is in paving, and limited by a series of 'rhythmic arcades fashion in cut stone: this is the covered courtyard. Constituted in this way, it occupies the three orientations North, East and South. The west side is devoted to the monumental staircase. This covered courtyard offers visitors the possibility of moving under a vaulted shelter to go to the bottom to meet the water that flowed above the pools, in a decor of

²⁴ Since this discovery, the site has been converted into a "Lapidary garden", exposing this archaeological treasure unearthed and with a few stones bearing engraved Latin inscriptions.

caves. The assembly constituted in this way evokes the importance of the “aquatic” element in the staging of a certain event space²⁵ or official meetings, which far exceeds the immediate needs of water supply “(...) fountains offered not only water but a space of freshness and rest in the heart of the city”. (LAMARE, 2019, p. 35).

Furthermore, it is not known whether this construction was once located inside or outside the city. We assume that the current location could glorify "*the entrance to the city*"²⁶; no indication comes to confirm one or the other assumption (inscriptions, stories, studies, iconography, etc.) (LAMARE, 2019, p. 43)²⁷, which obviously remain thorny. One thing is certain, it is that the aquatic element had become among the utilities of these places visited and their builders, an essential architectural component.

COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS

This surprisingly well preserved excavation has dimensions in mass equal to: (25.05 mx 16.10 m), will allow us an almost complete architectural study, that is to say the elaboration of its plan and the restitution of its state of together, thanks to the permanence of its various elements of composition, namely:

The stairs: formed of two opposite flights facing each other, in stone of twenty-five (25) steps each, and which lead to the same landing at the bottom, which brings us back to the large courtyard by through another doubly wide flight of four (04) steps.

The courtyard: served from the lapidary Rafaoui garden by two (02) flights of stone stairs, this large space preceding the courtyard gives the whole a certain monumentality, and should have been at that time the support of official events, and covered on the ground by a stone paving, we do not know if it is worked on the basis of a layout or randomly arranged.

²⁵ These places were to serve as meeting and sociability space. Op.cit., (N. Lamare, p. 247).

²⁶ Referring to the general plan of Sétif drawn up by Amable Ravoisié (Planches L VIII) Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie pendant les années 1841, 1842 et 1843, Centre des archives d'Outre-mer (Aix-en Provence), 1N22.

²⁷ In both old and recent publications, there is a significant deficit in references to Africa in the study of monumental fountains.

The courtyard: "U" shaped space which delimits the large courtyard on the North and South sides with equal dimensions of 11.91 m and on the East side with a larger dimension of 20.15 m. A sort of gallery with a depth of 2.00 m allows access to the fountains.

Porticoes: arched in freestone, forms the crown of the courtyard with a number of spans equal to seven (07) in the North and South, and eleven (11) in the East. On this side is the only raised span marking the axially of the courtyard and at the same time that of the basin with the main source, this staging was probably looking for a certain balance of this architectural ensemble.

The roof: formed of five (05) rows of stone slabs, with a slight downward inclination covering the thickness of the covered courtyard.

The basins: three in number (03), including a main one located in the East and two other secondary ones in the North and South, facing the courtyard and collecting water, in a semi-circular shape and a diameter of 1.10 m.

Gargoyles: a sort of mask-shaped hole through which water gushes, the iconographic source indicates the face of a feline "a lion".

The gutters: use water drains from the three basins, covered with stone paving to find the decor of the whole.

The water tank: which serves as a catchment and springboard for the supply of the two surrounding public fountains (Fig. 4 & 5).



Figure 4. View of the crown of arcades and its curved central opening on the East side of the building.
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Figure 5. View of the courtyard on the North & South side, today a passage to reach the fountains, another time a paved pipe where circulated the drawing water.
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A word for the only material practically used here the cut stone which appears in two different forms: the *sandstone* extracted from the nearby quarries²⁸, for the current works, of paving as here on the level of the courtyard and the roof; and the *white limestone*, for the pillar blocks and sections of the arches, finally for the friezes along the crown of the porticos and under the support of the roof.

FILIATION BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCE & WATER SOURCE IN SÉTIF

During the 1960s, Jean Birebent, this engineer became an archaeologist, delivered a study which remains relevant today on ancient hydraulic developments in eastern Algeria, the scope of which was to re-develop the means of water supply, thanks to barely visible remains. This reflection can now be largely developed at a time when the issue of climate change is in the spotlight, and may exceed the ambition of our study.

It is therefore across the entire Setif territory that many resources have always been exploited in farms and villages by means of wells or tanks (BIREBENT, 1962, p. 163-164), such as "*Bir Ennsa, Kalfoune, Berdia, Messaoud, El Anassser, El Hassi, etc.*"

We retain from the experience of J. Birebent, that archaeological studies remain a challenge as in the past, a kind of "data" bank of these different achievements related to the "aquatic" element such as thermal basins, fountains, aqueducts, wells, cisterns and water towers, etc.

From there, we have taken up some reflections that come from our doctoral research, to start this work, by approaching the heritage of this city according to historical and archaeological deductions, which brings us back to the first stage of the presentation of the beginnings of the archeology research in Algeria²⁹. By emphasizing the stakes in the recognition of traces of Roman civilization and the inventory of spatial planning that took

²⁸ Nodier, Charles, *Journal de l'expédition des portes de fer*, Paris, imprimerie Royale, (1844). In CAOM, Res 5891. p. 218, 220, 222, 223, (*La région Sud-Est du chef-lieu de Sétif : Ain Lahdjar, Baïda-bordj et Guella*).

²⁹ The expression designates both field operations and publication work.

place in Sétif on pre-existing elements, such as "water sources". In addition, the only vestiges of the town of Sétif, of which we have the material traces remain mainly vestiges of Roman times, indicated by the work of researchers archaeologists & historians like: (Elizabeth Fenteress, Paul-Albert Février, Anissa Mohamedi, Blanchard-Lemée) who all mentioned the work of the architect Amable Ravoisié and the designer A-E. Alphonse Delamare (GIDE & BAUDRY, 1859, p. 142)³⁰. Both soldiers who played a very important role in the description of the monuments of Setif. Other documents have been combined to constitute as complete a range as possible to treat this thematic, in particular the accounts of Arab geographers and historians (Al-Qadi Nu'uman, 904; El-Bakri, 1068); the story of Al-Idrissi in 1154 suggests that the landscape of Setif was a territory of intense trade and especially rich in orchards and plenty of water.

All these indications inform us about the presence of water sources near the Byzantine citadel still visible even before the birth of the city from its ashes (NODIER, 1844, p. 220)³¹, and curiously close to the discovery of the site of the "Roman basins". This is what the survey of the general plan of Sétif established by A. Ravoisié (Planches L VIII) indicated in several places the existence of these healthy and abundant waters (Fig. 6).

³⁰ Adolphe-Edwige-Alphonse Delamare was a career soldier, artillery captain and draftsman in his spare time. Like A. Ravoisié, he played a role in the precise description of the monuments of Algeria. The results of his work were published under the title *Archaeology: Exploration Scientifique de l'Algérie pendant les années 1840 à 1845*, in Gide et J. Baudry éditeurs, Paris, (1859), 193 planches, 142 pages.

³¹ It should be remembered that the town of Setif did not exist as a living settlement until 1839, the date of the first French military settlement on the Byzantine citadel.

UNE PARTIE DU PLAN GENERAL DE SÉTIF
ÉTABLI PAR A- RAVOISIÉ (PLANCHE: L VIII)

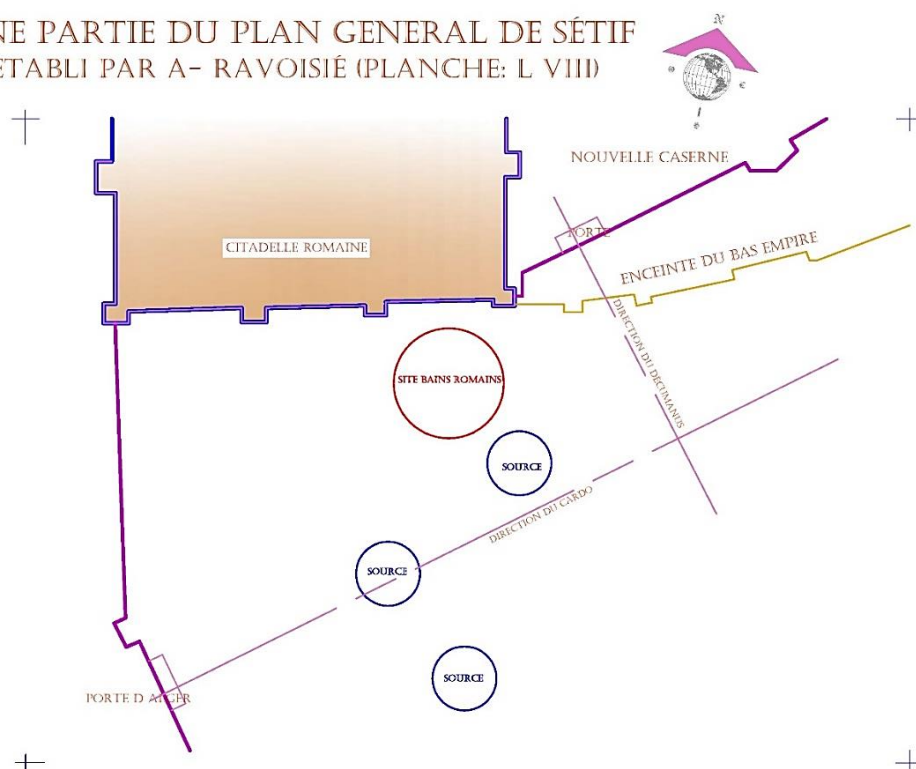


FIGURE 6. This figure established by A. Ravoisié, representing the three Roman tracks, (the lower empire and the provisions dictated by royal decree) & finally the many sources of water near our site.

Source: MAHDADI, N, 2020. According to the drawings of A. Ravoisié, *Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie 1840, 1841 et 1842*, planche 58, vol 1, chap. 4, CAOM Bib 10. 107(1).

Our research, which has been underway for some time, focused primarily on the origin of the layout of the town of Sétif, in reference to that discovered within the city limits of the Lower Empire of the time. Roman, with the Byzantine citadel still visible and the preexisting elements in particular the "sources". Until then, the question of water had almost never been at the center of concerns³², but we knew at least in the lower part south of the fortress several sources had been reported³³ in time, and sewers under paving had been seen during the last construction works for the Setifian tramway network.

Everything agrees that our construction is fed by the abundant sources in the area, which until today still provide water to the two symbolic fountains of the city (Ain Fouara &

³² Academic bodies and official state institutions.

³³ Arab writers, and often military French explorers.

Ain Droudj)³⁴. We are therefore in this logic which uses the existence of a source to argue the identification of a "development" of water; similar to an analysis based on indisputable indices rather than starting from approximate or even insufficient publications.

ROMAN "BASINS" OR FITTED OUT "FOUNTAIN"?

To approach this question, we started to draw up a panorama of recent knowledge on the theme of water, that is to say, advantage of previous surveys and the issues of the day, in order to perceive the questions that structured it, the disciplines that studied it, and the main obtained results. This helped us to position ourselves in the scientific field. We borrowed a lot from historians, archaeologists, and authors of all kinds to defend our approach.

In the Maghreb and particularly in Algeria, the results of several excavation companions from French explorations in archeology at the end of the 19th century, were published either in the collection of Constantine, or in the African review, or in the form of excavation reports. This production had enabled a good number of researchers and historians archaeologists to work on the theme of water through the ancient monuments which represent it, that are the "fountains"³⁵. On this issue, one cannot help but mention the remarkable work by Nicolas Lamare on "monumental fountains in Roman Africa"³⁶, and the concerns raised by the problem of studying the hydraulic network in general: the establishment of " an epigraphic corpus; the vocabulary of these buildings and their functions; the technical and architectural aspects of the fountains; on the restitution of the decor based on the literary and iconographic archives; as well as the study of these fountains in their urban contexts.

The author has treated almost everything on this theme, which has become since then a reference. On the other hand, our work based essentially on the bibliographic

³⁴ Service of the archaeological district of Sétif, site manager in collaboration with the services of the popular and communal assembly of Sétif.

³⁵ These are fountains which, according to the documentation and epigraphic sources of the Roman era, are part of, without excluding the thermal baths and aqueducts.

³⁶ Lamare, Nicolas, *Les fontaines monumentales en Afrique romaine*, Rome, Collection de l'École française de Rome 557, (2019), 484 pages.

examination in particular the manual of Roman architecture (GROS, 2002, p. 420), and the publications in the form of "monograph" of several fountains of Africa, in particular (Friedrich, Rakob, 1979) who published the source sanctuary from Zaghouan to Lambèse in eastern Algeria; and (Pierre, Aupert, 1974) a monograph of Tipasa's nymphaeum in the Algiers region. Not to mention the original work of (Norman, Neuerburg, 1971) who presents in a catalog his essay on typology, quite complete on the fountains of Italy. There remains another reference in this type of study, by its originality in the singular and varied treatment of fountains, by proceeding to a classification in tree structure whose origin remains the "natural cave". (LAMARE, 2019, p. 52-53).

In addition, the historian and archaeologist Stéphane Gsell (1901), in his work "the ancient monuments of Algeria", in the first volume (I), presents a fairly complete synthesis on the Roman basins of Algeria, where he summarizes all of these public establishments built inside cities such as Cherchel, Tipasa, Djemila, Lambèse, and Guelma etc. In the second volume (II), he describes the mosaics discovered in the majority of these basins. The significant fact remains the total absence of the name "Roman basins of Setif" at the location of this study. The architecture of said construction frames the water and enhances it, like what curiously Pierre Gros tells us in the classical Greek example, through reading the monumental fountain of Ialysos of Rhodes: "(...) ... the best represented type of the Greek fountain is indeed composed of a simple portico, without upper colonnade.] ... [Under which one reaches the basin, the architecture encloses the water and offers in the best of case a courtyard for those who come to draw it". (GROS, 2002, p.420-421).

On the other hand, he cites that the technical register in this kind of situation can be used as a lever to resolve this ambiguity in the terminology of this type of construction:

(...) ... only recalling that it applies rather to the source than at the fountain.] ... [... the water collection basin, is in Latin the word lacus: it can be fed by a reservoir (pscina) or depend on a water tower (castellum aquae). The tap or swan neck through which water is distributed is the epitonium ..] .. [which originally designated a gargoyle-shaped mask and eventually becomes, by metonymy, the equivalent of a fountain.] ... [... where the mascherone through the mouth of which water flows for public use in medieval and reviving cities. (GROS, 2002, p.420-421).

We have managed to draw up a table summarizing our bibliographic research despite the difficulties of gathering dispersed documentation and difficult to communicate data.

Table 1. Synthesis of bibliographic research

Author (chercheur)	Fields of study	Landmark synthesis in research on fountains (Nymphs)
N. Neuerburg (1965)	Italy	Presentation of a fairly complete catalog and a first detailed typology of buildings, but with a reduced synthesis.
P. Aupert (1974)	Roman Africa	A monograph of Tipasa's nymphaeum, coupled with a first recension of African nymphs and their metamorphosis "the septizonia".
W. Letzner (1999)	Roman West	His work encompasses almost all the fountains of the Roman West, whose records are uneven and reduced.
C. Dorl-Klingenschmid (2000)	Asia minor	Offers a catalog, supplemented with widely updated plans.
N. Lamare (2019)	Africa (Maghreb)	His work attempts to highlight the general characteristics of monumental African (Roman) fountains, while including them in a larger coherent whole. pp, 55-56.

Source: MAHDADI, N, 2020. (according to N. Lamare, *Les fontaines monumentales en Afrique romaine*, Rome, Collection de l'École française de Rome 557, (2019), p. 39 – 54.

Two observations emanate from this overview:

1. The craze for architectural studies linked to the aesthetic aspect of monumental fountains, to the detriment of questions linked to the hydraulic network of cities. And
2. The absence of studies on the "fountains" of the Maghreb, in spite of their large number and their richness, which can easily rival those of the East and the West. (LAMARE, 2019, p. 39-54).

If the site closed to the public seems to show a better state, on the other hand it begins to register signs of degradations for a few years. The architectural study which represents the essential aim of this work remains valid. We believe that the elements of composition cited allow us to reconstruct this architectural ensemble without constraints. Historical study³⁷, however, remains difficult, due to the scarcity of sources and the absence of a monograph. At this stage, the identification problem remains topical following the transformations that have taken place.

³⁷ Whose main act remains the "identification" of this monument.

This construction, after having been designated at its discovery as being a “water tower”³⁸, had since then become in our eyes “obsolete”: on the one hand, its source of water no longer being exploited on the technical level of same way as it originated. On the other hand, the decor of its architecture sought a certain "monumentality" to facilitate official use; all this suggests a staging for a fitted out “fountain”. In addition, we just make a few observations that guided us by referring to:

1. Archaeological research on Sétif (which does not mention "basins" on this site at any time)³⁹;
2. The writings that speak rather of two (02) identified basins: (basins of the Triumph of Venus and the basins of the 5th century built on the remains of the first). (LASSUS, 1958, p. 50-59);
3. The absence of traces of morphological elements such as: (the large pool, the frigidarium, annex rooms of the thermal basins, changing rooms, etc.) on the site;
4. The absence of aqueduct traces to transport a large and continuous volume of water necessary for thermal practices. (Lamare, 2019, p. 242)⁴⁰.

This set of arguments rejects the hypothesis that this construction represents "basins", and at the same time brings it closer to the image of a furnished fountain, with all that it symbolizes as aesthetic and utilitarian value⁴¹. Outside this framework, this formatting was not only studied to find the purity of the forms, but as a type of establishments having allowed the success of the Romans on this earth, and thus reinforced this "filiation" between this country and France; is that Pierre Bourdieu, calling:

³⁸ Search report Mr Jean Maguelonne, p. 183-184.

³⁹ Historical studies and archaeological research carried out after this discovery such as: Paul-Albert Février, Elisabeth Finteresse, Stéphane Gsell, Anissa Mehamdi, etc.

⁴⁰ This does not automatically imply the existence of cisterns or wells, implies that there is autonomy of supply by an aqueduct; very often baths from Roman times were exploited only by wells.

⁴¹ It remains linked to a public space, it organizes the urban landscape, and finally organizes an event space.

(...) a strictly symbolic efficiency of the form [...] ... putting forms is giving an action or a discourse the form which is recognized as suitable, legitimate, approved, that is to say a form such as one can publicly produce, in front of everyone, a will or a practice which, presented otherwise, would be unacceptable. (BOURDIEU, 1986, p.40-44).

COMPARATIVE STUDY

This task is often re-established on the basis of a comparative study, with the aim of making a readable reading of the "diversity" of the examples explored, which generally are only represented at the level of the plans which remain very varied. In this difficult situation, the case-by-case study must prevail. This is one of the reasons which forced us to restrict our field of investigation for examples belonging to the same historical period and the same geographical area "the establishment of a typology must take into consideration an object of study well surrounded by geographical and chronological limits and which presents a relatively weak evolution in these border". (LAMARE, 2019, p. 52). This is what the procedures are limited to show both in Neuerburg (1965) and in Letzner (1999): ease and clarity in reading the characteristics of the cases studied "(...) it would be wise to think not to multiply the categories, by distinguishing each element in each building, but rather to group the monuments into major categories, favoring common points rather than variants". (Lamare, 2019, p. 53).

The idea would therefore be to find a "classification" based on a grouping of forms, rather than on a division, which risks giving an outdated or badly structured work. The work of P. AUPERT (1974)⁴² made it possible to establish a complete table forty (40) fountains of Roman Africa, devoted to the study of the architecture of the monumental fountain of Tipasa⁴³, whose subject was the "cult" of the water. He helped us find a course of action, which was associated with an important bibliographic and archival analysis. The principle consisted in dissociating the main building blocks by comparing them with others of the same family.

⁴² His work, although it is ancient, remains a reference in the study of the fountains of Africa. *Op.cit.*, (Lamare, p. 41)

⁴³ Aupert, Pierre, *le nymphée de Tipasa et « septizonia » nord-Afrique* (Coll. E. F. R., n° 16), Rome ; Ecole française de Rome, (1974).

This way of doing things does not seek difference (distinction), but rather a rapprochement between the different fountains chosen as examples.

From there, we set out to outline a classification based on the peculiarities of the compositional elements of our construction by placing it in a coherent whole, that of the fountains of Roman Africa studied by P. AUPERT (1974). We have arrived at a "codification" which remains arbitrary: **H3/2/a** or **C2/1/b**.

Table 2. Identifications of the compositional elements

compositional Elements	Description
Plan	The arrangement of the background walls receiving the U-shaped water sources, very common in the case of classical Greek fountains.
Roofing	Formed of stone slabs placed on their points, which overlap one another according to a slope; once laid, take on the appearance of a tiled floor to ensure stability, waterproofness and aesthetics of the construction.
Basin and Channels	Water receptacle attached to the back wall, in the form of an abcid. Generally they take a position on an axis materializing a perspective or a position offering the user the possibility of accomplishing a "ritual" across a meaningful course. a pavement serving as a cover for the gutter which makes use of it for the evacuation of water from the basins.
Pillar	Rectangular, formed of stones of size of parallelepiped shape, arranged in horizontal bases to distribute the loads well.
Gargoyle	Stone carved decoration of the orifice through which water comes out, most often representing an animal.

Source: MAHDADI, N, 2018. / Works Master 2, Institute of Architecture of Sétif, Ferhat Abbas University of Sétif1.

FROM THE FOUNTAIN FITTED OUT TO THE "NYMPHAEUM"?

Let's start from the description of said construction, which is very similar to a fitted fountain. Pierre Gros reminds us that in the ancient Greek literature, Pomponius Mela⁴⁴ (113),

⁴⁴ *Roman geographer, one of the oldest writers who described the world. In Wikipedia. Op.cit., (Lamare, p. 52).*

speaks of this type of construction like a cave dedicated to the Nymphs⁴⁵, and Pline L'Ancien⁴⁶, defined as a Corinth fountain, that is to say a fountain which has compartments in caves. The two evoke an arrangement around water, the function of which would be to celebrate a "religious" ritual, or "marriage". The principle consists in applying an architectural treatment to a natural cave, in which the water considered "sacred" arrives, and flows into a basin. The layout of the cave in a vaulted room, reminiscent of the celestial vault took the form of an apse, which was already answered at that time among the Greeks.

Can we then project the architectural image of our construction, which has become a furnished fountain, on the cliché of a "nymphaeum"?

Beyond that, another aspect deserves particular attention. The common character which comes back for many of these "nymphs", over a fairly long period: the monumentality, and the originality of their architecture (decor) dedicated to official programs (mainly religious). But a little later, they lost this sacred use:

(...) the name they bear has passed into common use and has lost much of its initial meaning: the architectural significance has taken precedence over the sacred significance, even if, obviously, the religious value of these monuments is underlying, if only through the role attributed to water, source of life, in buildings under the aegis of the Emperors. (GROS, 2002, p. 419)

This is not the case with our fitted fountain, which immediately after its revelation quickly served as the ideal support for a harmonious composition between: the garden, the courtyard below, the crown of rhythmic arcades and the sensory effects of the 'water; to make it a place of relaxation and rest. This "monumentality" was no longer perceived in the richness of the decoration, nor in the statuary or the epigraphy (*which both remain absent*); but rather in this staging: the user of these places, gradually discovers this monument, by means of a succession of images made of openings and closings of the visual field, by moving in space

⁴⁵ Nymphae (feminine characters from Greek and Roman mythology): refers to the deities of the waters or springs. *In Encyclopedia on line*.

⁴⁶ Roman writer author of a large encyclopedia entitled " Histoire Naturelle", In Wikipedia. *Op.cit.*, (Lamare, p. 52).

what Gordon Cullen called "Townscape"⁴⁷. On this journey, the landscape of this fountain described upstream, dialogues with this user in a particular language (perceptual & symbolic), with regard to its architectural elements, which invite the pleasure of discovery. It comes to us to use it at the end of the term *Nymphaeum*⁴⁸ to designate our public fountain.

FROM THE "REPRESENTATIVE" FUNCTION TO THE "UTILITY" FUNCTION

After identifying this "construction" by exploring its **representative** function, comes the action of re-establishing balance with its **utilitarian** function. This amounts to asking the question of its place in the city, with all the challenges of the new development plan and embellishment of the city following the advent of the "tram". It was practically inconceivable to take care of this pupa alone without worrying about its environment; this would automatically put it in danger. From there, the question of heritage will not only be posed in terms of preservation of the monument object alone, but it will be posed in terms of its integration into its urban environment. The aim is to make this contextuality a regulatory framework to promote and protect the monument as it was already dictated in the Cracow charter in 2000: *the environment must be linked spatially, socially, economically to historic complexes*⁴⁹. In Algeria, this concern for contextuality (which we also call, the surroundings of monuments) was born with the concept of "zone" of protection within the framework of the implementation of the plan of safeguard and enhancement of the sites archaeological (PSMVSA, in its article 30)⁵⁰, as a spatial entity inseparable from the monument, and that it must not depend only on

⁴⁷ Thomas Gordon, Cullen, *The concise townscape*, Éditeur Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, (1971), 199 pages. *A visual analysis of the landscape based on the "psychology" of perception (visual stimulation of the individual moving in space and time)*.

⁴⁸ (From Greek *numphaion*) which designates a sanctuary dedicated to the Nymphs, these being deities of water or springs, alive and gushing. *In Universalise*.

⁴⁹ And long before in the charter of Athens in 1931, and then in that of Venice in 1964.

⁵⁰ This strategy initiated by the government after the establishment of the classification of historic monuments and archaeological sites, law 98-04. Official Journal of the Algerian Republic No. 44, June 15, 1998.

the parameters of visibility of the landscape, but must also include those of culture and economy⁵¹.

In this approach, what will be taken into consideration are: the views from the monument, the deviation of traffic and the use of the vegetation around, simultaneously giving monumental value and use value to the whole. Thus defined, this Roman nymphaeum in the Rafaoui garden will become a space for relaxation and breaks in the city, and will structure a stroll between the two main fountains (Ain Fouara & Ain Droudj), the Amusement Park and the Park trunk. In this way, we "redefine" the urban space by stimulating the emergence of new forms of cultural urbanity, and thus confirming our right to the collective memory of this city.

CONCLUSION

Originally, the situation of this so-called "Roman basin" construction was part of a site known for its wealth of water sources, near the wall belonging to the Byzantine citadel. The recent work on the city tramway has awakened in us, as a researcher and actor of heritage, the interest of the place it occupies and the role it can play in relation to the new development plan in the structuring of its territory⁵². The purpose of this study was to make a comparative study in order to weave a portrait, which would provide us with the arguments necessary for its "identification" and at the same time justify the action of taking charge of its conservation. To come to this end, we have used the different methods used by many researchers to classify these types of constructions throughout the world, over a relatively long period of the Roman Empire. N. Lamare's thesis remains for us a reference by the breadth and topicality of the information cited. On the other hand, the work of P. Aupert allowed us to find a course of action for designating our fountain as a "Nymphaeum". This heritage object had become a benchmark basis for change by integrating into its architectural space activities of "relaxation and pleasure" and into its immediate environment a restructured "public garden"; we have made it a vector of economic and socio-cultural development through an unprecedented

⁵¹ This construction as soon as it was discovered to mark its territory, in general it is the socio-cultural aspect which is most often attached to the concept of "heritage" while the legal, economic and even political aspects often pass over in silence.

⁵² In the legibility of the urban landscape, the cultural landscape and the collective memory of the Setifian people.

beautification and urban improvement operation⁵³.

This contribution brought us a new aspect on the architecture of one of the Roman fountains of Sétif; hoping that it will be a better setting for those who will resume in the future the archaeological study of this site that we have visited. Although this study was limited, there is hope for backing up a shared memory.

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⁵³ Through a route generating "urban" activities such as: (shipping, coffee, meeting, walking, etc.).

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