

MOROCCO – HERITAGE @ RISK!



Essaouira (Mogador). Second east wall: rising damp due to surface water and rain water, causing stone surface erosion

Case Study – The Historic City of Meknes

The old Medina (city) was established in the 10th century and was the capital during the reign of Alaouite Sultan Moulay Ismail (1672-1727). Meknes is situated 130 km to the east of Rabat, located on the flank of a mountain spur overlooking the valley of the Boufekrane. About 20 substantial houses are of high artistic value, as well as some private family houses with inner courts which have a traditional design concept and architectural vocabulary. These houses are decorated with stucco, faience (*zellij*) and have painted and gilded wooden ceilings. The lanes have overhangs supported by decorated wooden rafters.

In the last ten years the Inspectorate of Antiquities only undertook two small projects. The Ministry of Interior financed six other small projects under the supervision of the Inspectorate. The rising damp in walls caused by leakage can be noticed in many places. The street rain drainage system is not working. There is no study concerning the physical pattern. The traditional craftsmanship should be improved and supported. The potential of tourism should be exploited by improving cultural activities and developing the main plaza.

Funds for conservation projects are very limited. In his ICOSMOS report some years ago, Saleh Lamei suggested including the city of Meknes in the World Heritage List as such a nomination would urge the government of Morocco to pay more attention and give more support to ensure the conservation of these outstanding examples of heritage, but sadly nothing has actually happened to meet these objectives.

Meknes, deteriorated Caravanserai, re-used as carpentry workshop

