Abstract: Jebala (Tlemcen district -Algeria) is one of the historical and cultural regions very rich in traditional rural villages. The strategic location of this region, in the heart of the Traras Mountains, made it one of the leading destinations of many Berber and Arab tribes. Its historical importance was greatly influenced by constructing the historical cities of Ternana and Nedroma in the Jebala territory. This factor had greatly affected these cities, both historically and from an urban point of view. Later after the fall of Ternana in the third century of the Hegira (X century), the tribes living in the city for many years were dispersed all around the Jebala region in where they built several rural villages. They attracted the attention of the French explorer interested in the rural heritage of the Tlemcen surrounding areas. However, literature review of these villages is still very scarce. Thus, this article tries to fill the gap in these villages’ historical and archaeological importance. The study had explored the region and has identified and studied the Jebala Berber villages, which are four: Matila, El-Ayoun, M’sifa and El- Yakoubi zaouia.

Keywords: Jebala region. Traditional Rural Villages. Ternana. Nedroma. Historical Cities. Berber and Arab tribes.
The Jebala territory is one of the most important parts of the Traras Mountains region. The literature mentions that the name originated from its geographical nature (mountainous), located within the Traras massif. Its location has helped the emergence of several historic towns and villages in the region. The growth of these villages’ number was closely linked to the development of cities resulting from the region’s Islamization. Also, historical events have played an essential role in the development and the population of this region. According to the nineteenth French statistics, The Jebala region contained nearly 90 villages.

Research in the field of ancient rural settlements in the middle Maghreb (current Algeria) is strongly linked to the region’s Berber and Arab tribes history. Historical events play an important role in determining the architectural features of Jebala ancient settlements. Thus, this article will try to identify and study the most important of these traditional vernacular villages while defining the most significant historical periods of the region, the origin of the Jebala tribes, and essential features of their ancient villages.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The ancient villages of Jebala (N.W. Algeria) are a local identity source that should encourage the local community’s participation in their region’s development based on these villages identification and valorization. In fact, the international community has acknowledged the built vernacular for its high cultural values. The ICO-MOS charter of the built vernacular heritage (1999, p. 1) has recognized this kind of architecture; it opens with the following:

The built vernacular heritage occupies a central place in the affection and pride of people. It has been accepted as a characteristic and attractive product of society. It appears informal but nevertheless orderly. It is utilitarian and, at the same time, possesses interest and beauty. It is a focus of contemporary life and, at the same time, a record of the history of society. Although it is the work of man, it is also the creation of time. It would be unworthy of the heritage of man if care were not taken to conserve these traditional harmonies, which constitute the core of man’s own identity.

In the Jebala region, many vernacular buildings disappeared due to the rural exodus and the replacement with modern housing types. Historical events have also played a significant role. Many old settlements and ancient houses were destroyed or abandoned during the French occupation (1830-1962) and the Algerian civil war (1991-2002). Despite that, many settlements and vernacular buildings still bear witness to the traditional rural way of life and how it was shaped to meet their inhabitants’ needs following their local culture, knowledge, climate, and natural resources. These traditions in the Jebala have been shaped by various factors, such as climate, local materials, and the specific culture and mentality.

The Jebala region’s ancient villages’ remains are priceless assets that bear witness of the past rural life in this cultural and historical region. However, the abandonment of the region’s villages has become a common aspect all around the region. This situation has resulted from various factors; the Traras Mountains built heritage has been threatened for a long period either because of the rural exodus, agricultural
industrialization, or the Algerian civil war. All of that has led to neglect, gradual deterioration, and even more seriously, destruction.

To preserve this legacy, we believe that the Jebala community needs to be aware of the importance of the region’s ancient villages and appreciate it and collaborate to improve their situation. Otherwise, the preservation of the Jebala ancient settlements, to avoid its loss and to ensure its transfer to the future generation, requires a work of identification to obtain primary information.

Identification strategies have played a primary role in the management of cultural heritage. They are essential for protecting, interpreting, and preserving historic buildings, archaeological sites, cultural and natural landscapes. They have an increasingly important place in the cultural heritage’s international conventions. The UNESCO convention of 1972 concerning the protection of the world’s cultural and natural heritage stipulated an international heritage committee’s establishment. Each member would submit an inventory to ensure the proper identification of its national heritage. In the same context, the council of Granada (1985, p. 2) concerning the protection the European architectural heritage states:

to identify precisely the monuments, architectural ensembles, and sites which may be protected, each party undertakes to continue the inventory and, in case of threatens, to establish appropriate documentation as soon as possible. will allow them to start making decisions and adopt strategies.

In this regard, the article is undertaken to identify Jebala region’s ancient villages and their main components to contribute to the raising of the local community’s awareness and ensure their needs of primary information and materials if a conservation program was programmed.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Jebala region’s villages presented in this article can be considered as archaeological sites composed of a set of ancient vernacular constructions’ remains, clustered or dispersed, that were once common elements of the region’s built environment. The study of these ancient villages has emerged from the need for the rural community self-identification with their origins. Thus, the Jebala settlements can be considered as a resource of pride and self-esteem that should encourage the inhabitant and their children to stay linked to their land. This rural heritage is one of the most critical components of the Algerian territory, which is ignored and threatened by the development effects on the rural regions.

Some questions about the Jebala region’s ancient settlements have to be asked in the context of this article, and can be formulated as follows: Are Jebala ancient settlements significant in terms of historical and archeological values? What villages’ features can be identified in this region?

It is important to mention that the literature about Jebala region’s ancient settlements is considered very scarce. The few studies that were produced are most geographical and historical are dating back to the French period (1830-1962). Thus, this region needs studies in the field of vernacular architecture identification. So, it is in that regard that this article discusses the historical and archaeological importance of such an endangered form of built heritage of the Jebala region.
Indeed, the research in the field of the Algerian rural settlements’s history and archeology is fraught with many difficulties regarding the lack of data especially in the western part, where studies are few, with the exception of a few articles made by Canal Josep, Edmond Destaing and René Basset on the countryside of Tlemcen district (NW Algeria). Most of those productions are inventories of ancient villages and a presentation of a tiny piece of their history, which poses the problem of lack of references; it is noted that Canal Joseph is the only author to have provided information on the Jebala ancient villages in an article dating back to 1887. For that reason, Jebala has been the object of this study focusing on the characteristics of ancient settlements and relating it to the historical events drawn from the few historical sources and references. In addition to that, the field work has the most important part in the realization of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to know that the research in the field of ancient rural settlements in the middle Maghreb (current Algeria) is strongly linked to the region’s Berber and Arab tribes history. Historical events played an important role in determining the architectural features of Jebala ancient settlements. The geography, the tribes origin are also important elements that our study should address in order to properly identify the ancient villages peculiarities.

Jebala Geography

The region of Jebala is part of the Central Traras Mountains as defined by the Tlemcen district’s national planning and development project. The Jebala covers 23,040 ha. It is limited by Gazawet, Soualia, and Tient municipalities on the North, Marnia and Maaziz on the South. On the West, Jebala is bordered by Souani. The historical city of Nedroma is situated in the East (AFRICANUS, 2010, p. 132).

Jebala is a rural area in which people are mainly farmers and stockbreeders. It is known for its important mountainous chain called Toumai, extended from Sidi Berriech to Bab-Taza, covering and areas of around 15 kilometers long and 12 kilometers wide. From the East, Toumai draws attention because of the Marnia and Mezawrou plains (TINTHOIN, 1961, p. 98). The relief in this region is formed by northern and eastern steep slopes coming from Filawsen mount. The Jebala reliefs becomes milder in the northern fertile plains, such as the plain of Mezawrou, Kouriba, El-Assa, Wled M’Hamed, and Bekhata, Adjaidjja localities.

The Jebala is rich of hydrogeological sources constituted by a set of intermittent streams draining the sub-catchment areas of Wadi Tleta, Wadi Tāïma, and Wadi Boukiw. Wadi Tāïma drains the western part of the Traras region starting from Jebala. The second one drains the area of Ternana going from the South to the North and is known as Wadi Lyoune. In the West, Wadi Gureb and Beni-Serria are the third and fourth watercourses of the Jebala region. They represent the region’s northwest and southwest limits and lead to Wadi El-Mwilah (CANAL, 1888, p. 56).

JEBALA FRACTIONS AND ANCIENT VILLAGES

During the Prehistoric period, literature sources are scarce. We do not have any historical data confirming the existence of human in this area; Pallary (1900, p. 98) states that, in the Traras region, there were no prehistoric caves. However, the
same author remarks numerous ruins, often on the crests (PALLARY, 1900, p. 98). We cannot agree with this researcher's vision and confirm his statement because, thanks to our study, we have listed several caves. Thus, the area still needs serious studies and thorough excavations to confirm the existence of prehistoric traces.

During the ancient period, Ptolemy first named the Herpiditanes, whom he placed at the foot of the Chalcorychia mountains, and who would have occupied the region between Nedroma and Oujda. The same domain has been extended by Mac Carthy (1857, p. 96), which, according to him, covers Beni Inassen, the Msirda, the Souhalia, the Jebala, and the Traras region.

Regarding the Roman era, our study confirms that no ruins prove their presence in Jebala. However, one of their main roads passed by the region. This makes us think seriously about the prospect of programmed excavations, which will help us understand the region's past, particularly during the Roman period.

During the Islamic period, Jebala were interesting for Muslim explorers. Ibn Khaldun mentions that the Koumia tribe are the children of Faten and brothers of the Lemaia and the Matghara. They formed three branches from which all the families of this tribe derive. These branches were the Nedroma, the Sagbara and the Beni Iloul. From the Nedroma came out the Nefouta, the Harça, the Ferda, the Hefana, and the Ferana. The Beni Iloul were divided into M’sifa, Outioua, Hbicha, in Hionara and in Oualgba, the Sagbara formed the tribes of Matila and Beni Hobacha. The tribe of Koumia inhabited the maritime country of the central Maghreb, around Archgoul and Tlemcen (IBN KHALDŪN, 1854, p. 345). So, according to him, the Jebala tribes belonged to the Koumia tribe, and were important in the region, such as the Beni Iloul, M’sifa and Matila. The Jebala Berbers made part of the great tribe of Zenata, who, before the Muslim era, came under the leadership of their leader Dorris, to settle in the region known as Koumia, which included all the mountainous part of the region coast, going from Guellala to Oran.

Ruins existed on the crest of Jebel Toumaï. According to oral tradition, these ruins would be those of a large Berber village that lived before the submission of the Jebala to the Arab conqueror Moulay Idris. Thus, they would date back to the first century of the Hegira (710 A.D.).

The importance of Jebala tribes has been translated by the creation of several ancient villages. According to Canal (1888, p. 67), At the beginning of the 2nd century of the Hegira (790 A.D.), the Jebala were divided into two fractions, Beni Iloul and Zérara. The latter had created the hamlet of Matila, which still exists. According to the same author, a population from El-Ayoun, came to settle in the Matila as berbers, and founded the village bearing the same name. later, in the eighth century of the Hegira, the Arab fraction of El- Yakoubi zaouia, descending from the Wled Ali ben Tahla tribe, came under the leadership of the marabout Sidi Abderrahmane El- Yakoubi, and became a part of the Jebala (CANAL, 1888, p. 67).

According to Tinthoin (1961, p. 95) based on arab explorer descriptions, the situation was prosperous in Jebala, and particularly around the city of Ternana. During this period, the region’s coast (called Goumia) was populated by Zenata tribes who were concentrated in Ternana. Before the invasion of Ternana and its destruction, the inhabitant were scattered all around the region. This justifies the creation of numerous hamlets and villages in Jebala in the 15th century, under Turkish rule, Jebala settlements were put under the supervision of Nedroma’s bey. Later, after the colonization of
the west region of Algeria by the French armies (19th), most of Jebala people took refuge in Morocco. They have, then allied themselves with El-Emir Abdelkader resistance and finally submitted to the French armies.

From what has been mentioned above, the Jebala tribes included Berber tribes in the region from the beginning of Islam, such as Beni Iloul and M’sifa and Matila and El-Ayoun. Over time, the area has known the arrival of Arab tribes, such as El-Yakoubi zaouia. All these tribes populated the region and have created several hamlets and villages that still bear witness to their history. However, Jebala has not been subjected to any in-depth archaeological study. The monographs established during the French colonial period are the only sources presenting a few features of the region. These studies are not enough and need to be supported with a contemporary more elaborated work. In addition, the scientific explorations carried out on Jebala between 1840 and 1842 were not interested in the socio-cultural character (DELAMARE, 1850, p. 98).

THE CITY OF TERNANA

As mentioned above, the Islamic period was a flourishing period in the Jebala during which several settlements were built. The most important one is the city of Ternana, which was described by Ibn Hawqal (1873, p. 87), in the third century of the Hegira as a fortified city containing fruit and fertile lands. Al-Bakri (1857, p. 87) continued and made a relatively more detailed description of Ternana. He described as a city located about ten miles from the port of Macin (near to Bkhata), and eight miles from Nedroma, surrounded by walls and containing a bazaar, a mosque, and several gardens. According to the same author, the city was inhabited by the Beni Iloul, a fraction of the Demmer tribe and that it was the residence of Abd Allah, the Ternanian, one of Ali ibn Abi Taleb grandsons. It line with these two explorer, El-Idrisi described Ternana as a stronghold with a flourishing market, vineyards, and well-watered gardens (DOZY; JOHAN, 1866, p. 97).

Therefore, Ternana had great importance in the Jebala region’s development since it referred to the Idrissides. However, and since the beginning of the seventh century of the Hegira, Ternana declined rapidly and then disappeared without letting any tarec. What is even more mysterious is the lack of any source mentioning the reason for the city’s disappearance and stating if that is caused by the arrival of Banu Hilal tribes or a result of the Almoravid-Almohad conflict. Also, the exact location of the city remains unclear; according to some old maps, the location Ternana is supposed to be in the North of the current Jebala village, not far from the locality of M’sifa. Despite that, no studies or excavations have been carried out to the present date.

THE CITY OF TERNANA

After the decline of Ternana, Nedroma became the capital of the Traras region. We considered Nedroma as one of the few cities with authentic Muslim features. It is located on the southern slope of Mount Filawsen at 420 meters above sea level, built at the crossroads of some crucial roads in the region; the ancient Roman road leading south to Marnia and Morocco through the Bab-Taza...
mountain pass; the road leading to the East towards the Tafna through the valley of the Wadi Sidi El-Hacen; the road leading to the North towards the ancient port of Ad Fratès (Nemours, during the French colonial period/ Gazawet nowadays); finally, the road leading to the West towards the saddle of Sidi Brahim (TINTHOIN, 1961, p. 95).

El-Bekri is the first explorer who has described Nedroma as a city located at the foot of the mountain, where fertile plains and cultivated fields lie. He continued by stating that his river’s banks produce much fruit (AL-BAKRI, 1857, p. 78). Thus, El-Bakri emphasizes the city’s geographical location and its agricultural potential. Hassan Al-Wazzan follows El-Bekri and described Nedroma as a city built by Romans that subjugated the region and took advantage of large circuits and fertile plains. According to the same author, ancient historiographies said that the city was built such as Roman cities. For this reason, the city retained the name of Ned-Roma. During this time, the city walls were still existing, but the houses were ruined. Later, Africanus (2010, p. 49) remarked that the surroundings of Nedroma were very abundant, and several gardens existed. Leo the Africanus proposed an explanation of the Nedroma word origin as a composition of two words Ned and Roma; The first word means similar, and the second one Roma, which means obviously Rome. Thus, Nedroma, as a whole means, ‘is similar to Rome’ (BASSET, 1901, p. 98). Of course, this explanation has no value and is not credible.

During the French explorations, Maccarthy (1857, p. 65), visited the Nedroma’s old walls constructed with adobe, its ruined Kasba, and its big mosque and he considered it as an industrial city where pottery manufacturers, wool threads, and blacksmiths flourished. According to him, the town had two tanneries, two turners who made reels and chairs, manufactured leather shoes, and manufactured haiks. Tinthoin (1961, p. 78) states that the importance of Nedroma was related to its market to which the butchers of Tlemcen and Oran came to be supplied with cattle.

**JEBALA VILLAGES IDENTIFICATION AND INVENTORY**

Our study based on the field work conducted on Jebala villages has enabled us to find four main locations: Matila, El-Ayoun, Msifa and Zaouiet el Yacoupi, which is confirmed by the decomantary research. They are all located on the northern slope of the mountainous range bordered on the East by the Kais mountain of Bab-taza, and on the West, the Kal Kebail touches the Toumaï mountain. El-Ayoun is the first village that we find at the foot of Toumaï mountain. The principale agglomeration is Bab Ed Dechour, which is a village of about 25 to 30 houses. This case is located on a very frequented route connecting the Soubhia region to the Jebala and the Maaaziz, and passing through the saddle of Toumaï mountain. El-Ayoun fraction comprises other small hamlets, namely Koubba, Zorabna, and Hojeija (Figure 1).
In line with documentary research findings, Kari (2015, p. 174) state that Traras’ villages and hamlets are often located under the shelter of hills to be protected from strong winds, and near water sources and fertile lands to ensure their supply of goods. In the case of Jebala, we have remarked that villages are located between the two Wadis of El-Ayoun and Belalama of the site’s advantages. In this area, villages are aligned on both sides of the city of Nedroma on the Toumaï-Filawsen mountainous range, as it was described by Tinthoin (1961, p. 87). Also, the hamlets located in the northern plains of Toumaï are surrounded by wadi taïna gardens.

Our study states that Jebala villages are numerous, and dispersed through the region, and that went in line with Canal’s (1888, p. 90) description, who states that villages used to have their reserve provisions of cereals, wheat, barley and were stored in 93 silos (Matila 30 silos located in El Haouanat; El-Ayoun 28 located in Goubba Sidi Mohamed bel Arabi; M’sifa 25 located in Raiat; Zaouiet el Yacoupi 10 located in Zaouiet Sidi Abderrahmane (CANAL,1888, p. 90).

As mentioned previously, our study, based on field work, stated that Jebala region is divided into four central areas. First of all, Matila village (Figure 2) is located at the beginning of the mountainous region and currently called Haoumet. This case has been modernized and lost, therefore, a lot of his traditional features. Al-Jarv village, located on the eastern side, and built on the Agueb cliff is another of the Jebala villages, in where some ancient vernacular houses still exist.

On the northern side of the same hill exist Al-Haouada village, caracitized by its irregular shape, and with the absence of alleys or paths. In this case, the vernacular houses are separated from each other, and some of them have disappeared. We have remarked that the mosque is located at the front of the village on the western side, and

Figure 1: Jebala main villages according to French studies (1941)
Source: Major state cards modified by Authors
has been renovated. At the foot of Mount Kais, there are two villages, Wled Taleb, in where, only a few houses remain, and Wled Abbas with its ancient rectangular form; the main road containing the mosque is intersected by two paths connecting the western and eastern sides of the village.

To the West of Matila, our study concerned M’sifa village (the center of Jebala), which, according to Basset (1901, p. 45) was taken in 695 h. (1295-1296) by the Merinid Abou Yaqoub Youssouf; when he took the city of Tiemcen. M’sifa contains five villages, from which we have taken three as a model. The first one is Wled Meziane village, built on a slope, and in which only few houses still exist. To the North, we notice the M’sifa village (Figure 2), built on a limestone circular plateau surrounded by a valley. We have noted that M’sifa does not contain any roads; the limestone houses are linkcd to each other.

Figure 2: satellite images of Jebala villages; Hawada (left) and M’sifa (right)
Source: Authors

The third village concerned by our survey is Kriqan, built on the northwest of M’sifa on a rectangular hill surrounded by olive trees. A path connects the North of the town and the South. On the western side of M’sifa, El-Ayoun area contains three villages. The first called Dar El Nasser is located on the southeast side with a longitudinal form, as it was built on a rocky hill. This village has a main alley interspersed with some lanes. Its mosque is located on the south side. Dar El Nasser’s houses are constructed with stones.

Just below Dar al-Nasir, our study has identified Bab al-Dasher a village or Al-Diab, which is built on a cliffside. The form of the village is irregular, and the houses are nested against each other, which makes it difficult to determine their shapes. Not far from the Al-Diab, on the West, we find Al-Qoba of Mohammed El Arbi village, which was called as that on the name of the founder of the brotherhood of Derqaouna (CANAL,1888, p. 98). We note that this village differs from the Jebala other villages because of its relatively more spacious houses, that contain up to 11 rooms. The village is built on a slope with no paths or alley; the distance between one house and the other can go up to 30m.

Zaouyat el Ya’qoubi village is also one of the main Jebala ancient villages. It is located on the North of Nedroma. The village takes its name from Sidi Abd Errahman El ya’aqoubi who was born in the IXth century of the Hegira, at the Wled Ali ben Talha that a tradition links to the family of Aqil, son of Abou Taleb. According to Basset
(1901, p. 56), he was brought up in zaouyat el Mira where he learned the Koran and then studied in Nedroma and Beider. Our study was not able to find out any trace of houses or any other element.

In line with Kari (2015, p. 194) we note that there is a set of natural factors affecting the shape of Traras rural villages, and particularly in Jebala. The configuration of the relief has greatly influenced the forms of villages. We have remarked that plains seem to be better suited to grouped villages, as in M’sifa and Al-Aïoun while fragmented amlets are located in relatively more stippled locations. Whether dry, solid, swampy or soft, the soil surface nature can radically influence the habitation conditions. Also, we noted that water resources and the existence of fertile lands had an essential role in the determination of the village location. Also, we found out that wadis, were usually used to protect the villages; valleys surrounded the most important villages.

**Jebala Religious Architecture**

- Mosques:

In addition to houses, our study reveals that Jebala villages contain several religious buildings, including mosques, tombs, and Zaouias. Matila region includes two important mosques. The first is Al-Jarf mosque (Figure 3), built on a cliff by an intention of glorification (above all the village’s houses). The mosque layout is irregular, and contains a prayer room composed of two naves parallel to the qibla wall (wall of a mosque in front of which Muslims pray and giving the direction of Mecca.). We have remarked that this of mosque is less or more similar to the Prophet’s mosque in Medina, which was surely their source of inspiration.

![Figure 3: photo of Mosque Al-Jarf remains. Reconstitution essay. The mosque entrance. Source: Authors](image)

In the middle of the qibla wall, the mihrab is built of stone, surmounted by a semicircular vaulted arch. From the West, the qibla wall contains two windows for lighting. To support the roof of the building, the constructors made pointed arches that remind us of some characteristic features of the Ottoman style (Figure 3). On the southwestern side of the qibla wall, two irregular rooms were built of stone. The first room was used to teach students, and the second was for the imam (a religious person who leads the prayer. He is preferably a person who should be educated in the rites and daily practice of Islam). There was a water stone-made tank in the extreme North, plastered...
with lime mortar for ablution. This mosque has great importance in the Jebala region to teach Koran, and where people learn auxiliary principles of jurisprudence and science. **Wled Taleb** mosque (Figure 4) is not very different from that of Al-Jarf since is rectangular and contains naves parallel to the qibla wall. A group of semicircular arches was added to this mosque during a renovation operation that retained the original shape.

The second type of Jebala’s mosques contains only an irregular or rectangular prayer room. **El-Ayoun** mosque (Figure 5) attracts visitors’ attention by its simplicity, and for that reason, it can be considered a model: the roof is supported by wooden columns. This characteristic is also found in many other mosques in the region, as in **Dar Nasar** mosque.

- **Tombs:**

We have noted that funerary monuments are dispersed in all the region of Jebala. The **Hwita** is one of the common examples of Jebala Tombs, which is a simple square or rectangular sanctuary with a low surrounding wall not exceeding the size of
a person. Amongst other, Sidi Abd Allah Hwita (Figure 6) is built of stone just right by M'sifa village. Not far from M’sifa, we note the existence of another rectangular stone tomb: Hwita Sidi Daoud.

Figure 6: Hwita of Sidi Abdellah  
Source: Authors.

Through the Jebala region, shrines, with their domes, are present everywhere. The most important ones of Jebala are Moulay Abdelkader in Toumaï (Figure 7) and Mohammad ibn Al-Arabi. Moulay Abdelkader shrine is a square layout, 3 meters long, accessible through an arched entrance of 1.92m. It contains a mausoleum surrounded by four arches supporting a ribbed dome that rises from about five meters. The mausoleum is surrounded by a stone wall of an irregular shape.

Figure 7: Moulay Abdelkader Tomb, Photo and layout  
Source: Authors.

The second shrine was built in honor of Muhammad ibn al-Arabi, who led campaigns against the Ottomans. The square layout shrine is accessed through a sim-
ple entrance surmounted by a semicircular arch enclosed in a frame. The shrine walls contain built-in arches that serve to support the polygonal dome. A rectangular wall surrounds the mausoleum, 9.55 m long and 8.27 m wide, including two entrances facing each other, and its height is about one meter.

In addition to shrines, El Yakoubi Zaouia is also one of the most known religious places in Jebala right by Zaouiat El Yakoubi village. The Zaouia has a rectangular layout form constructed with stone walls and accessible through a pointed arch entrance. It contains a simple mausoleum surmounted by a circular dome with a coffin in the middle. The mosque is accessible through a simple entrance on the west side. The locals have restored the building, painted walls, and added a library.

Jebala Region Traditional Habitation

As mentioned by Kari (2021, p. 280) The Jebala inhabitants, Berbers, and Arabs, as one of Traras Mountains main areas, took their houses as spaces for social and agricultural activities. In line with Kari (2021, p. 278) who defined two type of villages according to their built density, and defined a general type of the Traras house, our study on Jebala was able to identify two types of vernacular houses in Jebala region. The first one is built within the village boundaries, and the second one is isolated (Figure 8), constructed far from settlements.

Figure 8: Isolated habitation in the Matila region
Source: Authors

Within the framework of our study, we were able stress the features of some of the isolated house in Jebala, one in Matila, built on a rocky slope, using limestone stones, locally called Saffah. The house has a rectangular layout, accessible through a Sqifā (a transition space that ensures the intimacy of the house interior) located southwest. The Sqifā leads to a rectangular courtyard, surrounded by rectangular rooms, some of which contain a Brija (a laying place for poultry).

In the same typology of vernacular houses, we noticed Qala Qbail, on the south-eastern side of El-Ayoun. This house was regarded as a Berber fortress belonging to the Wled Amar family, according to ancient oral accounts. The house, which
was built on a slope, is considered a fortified house, as we noticed the presence of a wall located on the western side (Figure 9). This house has two courtyards; the first is rectangular, accessed by a 1.5 meters long entrance, and surrounded by rooms. The second courtyard is elevated from the first courtyard level and separated by a stone wall. Unlike the first, the second courtyard is surrounded by rectangular rooms only on the southwest and east sides.

![Figure 9: Qalaa Qbail house](Source: Authors)

When it comes to the second type, the houses are built inside the villages. We took examples from all the Jebala region, starting from Matila, from which we selected Wled Abbas hmalet. We studied Tazi house located on the west side of the village mosque. Its plan is rectangular and accessible through a simple entrance. On the southwest side, another entrance leads to a rectangular Sqifa, through which we enter a main arched room with a stone bed. The rest of the rooms are rectangular and are located on the northwest and northeast sides.

![Figure 10: M'sifa village house Example](Source: Authors)
Through the Jebala, we studied the M’sifa village as it is one of the most important cases in terms of houses density and character authenticity. In this village, we selected two houses. The first one (Figure 10), located on the northernmost side of the village, is a rectangular courtyard house is limited, on the north, by narrow rectangular rooms. From the other side, the courtyard is bordered by the stable and the Sqifa, which comprises three entrances leading to other rectangular narrow rooms.

When it comes to the other selected case, located in the South of the M’sifa village, the house was inhabited by two households, and consisting of two courtyards. The first family space is located on the southeast side, accessed by a simple entrance leading to the courtyard, and surrounded by three narrow rectangular rooms. The second courtyard is located on the northwest side and contains a Sqifa and two other narrow rooms.

In El-Ayoun locality, we studied two cases of vernacular houses. The first one is known as Dar El Nasser, and in where we found that the traditional houses have the same characteristics as the houses in a Matila and M’sifa villages with just some minim differences (Figure 11). In general terms, the layout of the houses varies from irregular to regular forms.

From what we have stated above, we can conclude that two main factors influence the construction of vernacular houses in the Jebala region, and are closely related to these defined by Kari (2015, p. 198) regarding Traras mountains region. The first factor is related to the geographical conditions, according to which the land configuration determines the shape of the house. The second factor is the social particularity of the Jebala community, according to which families wanted to expand in the same house; if a son marries, he constructs it room next to his parents’ home.

Also, we noted, as stressed by Kari et al. (2021, p. 280) in the Traras case, that the majority of the Jebala traditional houses are courtyard houses type. The courtyard
is the heart of the house; all the rooms are around. It gathers all the family members who perform daily and economic activities, such as textile manufacturing. We can add that the social value is related to the size of the house, as is the case of El Qoba village’s houses that translated how wealthy were the village’s inhabitants.

Thus, in any case, the Jebala traditional house is a set of narrow rectangular rooms, in where we find the stable near the entrance to facilitate the introduction of cows and goats. There is also a kitchen, locally called a kheima, near the main rooms. The traditional houses are also particular, with Sqifa serving as a separation space between the courtyard and the private rooms or between one room and another. The houses also contain grain silos in the middle of the yard, in which the traditional rural family stocks the year’s provisions.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

Studying building materials is crucial to understanding the constructive system specificities and architectural traditions. This step explains the role of the houses’ environment in modelling the house configuration. Also, it enables the identification of the cultural preferences related to the choice of materials and their implementation. Jebala is considered to be an area of stone-built traditions; stone is the material that offers the best conditions of conservation while the plant materials succumb easily to the action of time. From a geological point of view, the Jebala region is mainly a limestone region. This kind of stone was used to construct many villages, such as the M’sifa, El Diaab, Dar El Nasser, Kriqan and Wled El Abbes villages. The second type of stone, used in Jebala villages is Tafza (limestone rock with silica predominance). It was widely used in the construction of many towns, such as the Hwitia and Wled Taleb villages. Another type of stone is E’sam, characterized by its blue color (a limestone that gives high-temperature lime). The region’s geology has helped and enriched the construction’s aspects by providing a variety of stones used in the construction of the Jebala villages, which were mostly built on mountainous, rocky slopes, and plateaus.

As in all around Traras region (KARI, 2015, p. 198), and in addition to stone, Earth was widely used in the construction of Jebala. It was used as mortar to construct walls, and sometimes to cover walls and house slaps. In Jebala, Earth is sometimes mixed with pottery and small stones to give it more strength. But, in the Jebala, the Earth is more often mixed with straw known as E’ramoud.

Brick was not widely used in the Jebala region compared to stone. It was only used in the construction of religious and important places such as the arches of El Jarf mosque and some elements in M’sifa and Wled Taleb villages. Through the brick dimensions, we can refer them to the medieval period of the end of the Zianid period and the Ottoman period. We found two types of bricks; red and white.

The use of wood in Jebala villages constructions is common. The trunks of thuja are used for roofing as beams. They are also used as columns and for the fabrication of door and window sills. The wood of Taga is also used predominantly in the construction of the region’s houses. Reeds are used as voliges, as they allow, thanks to their silhouette and their length, to have a well-sealed and uniform roof.

Lime is very common in urban architecture, such as Nedroma and Tlemcen ancient cities. It is often less so in rural construction. Its absence is a sign of the rusticity of the construction (PESEZ, 2019, p. 95). In some houses and mosques, it is only used
to whitewash walls. In the case of M’sifa village, lime was widely used (Figure 12). That is because of the abundance of limestones around the village site.

- Construction techniques

Concerning the foundation techniques and our study, we noticed two techniques used in constructing the Jebala traditional houses: the first one supports houses in earthen soils and consists of longitudinal stone blocks. The second foundation method is used to support houses in rocky places. Houses are put on existing large stones in these sites that serve as foundations. Among the most prominent examples of the use of this method is the village of Dar El Nasser (Figure 12)

There are two construction methods; the first consists of constructing two relatively thin walls of about 25 cm, in the middle of which Earth or lime mortar and pieces of small gravel are filled. We noticed that these kinds of walls differ in their mode of construction from one village to another, as we found in El-Ayoun or El-Diab villages, in which small stones of almost circular shape were regularly used in the construction of traditional houses. The second method used in the construction of walls consist of putting diagonally small blocks of stone to give an aesthetic character to the house.

As for the corners of the house, they used a particular method for their execution. In the same corner, they used small and large pieces of stone placed one above the other. This process contributed greatly to the corner’s stability and the house after that (Figure 13).
Figure 13: Houses’ corner construction method
Source: Authors

The Jebala houses’ Roofs are usually covered by a notch of wet Earth, beaten to be stabilized. In addition to the wood troncs, the roof contains lime Reeds or Taga branches used to support the weight of Earth.

- water and agriculture:

Water is one of the important sources of human life in this mountainous region. Thankfully, Jebala is nicely watered by rainfall and abound in aquifer resources. For example, in the Nedroma city surrounding, water oozes on the Filawsen massif and Ain-Tolba, southeast of Bab-Taza locality. According to a study conducted in 1868, in the Traras Mountains, there were more than 250 springs and wells, including two wells among Attia, 76 springs and 17 wells among Beni-Manir ancient district, 44 among the Beni Mishel, and 50 among the Jebala. According to what has been mentioned, we can see that the region contains many water sources invested in agriculture.

In Jebala, the main crops are barley, wheat, corn, and beans; They also cultivate fig and peach trees and have many beehives producing highly valued and premium honey. During our study, what caught our attention was the absence of hydraulic facilities used to transport water to the farmlands, as in the Beni-Senous region, where the ancient people depended mainly on water sources for water supply and rainwater.

Although made and surrounded by gardens, orchards, and large quantities of olive trees isolated or gathered by small massifs, Jebala does not contain forests. The only areas that can, less or more, be called a forest, in Jebala, is the uncultivated spaces covered with undergrowth and coppice, in which dominant species are: the odorous yellow broom, the lentisque in tufts or shrub, the thuja, the juniper, and the dwarf palm tree.
CONCLUSION

After exploring the Jebala region, we have observed its historical richness. It influenced the foundation of some of the important cities of Traras mountains region, such as Ternana, one of the ancient capitals of the regions Nedroma, the city of the Almohads. Thus, the Ternana fall impacted the region’s history, which has caused the emergence of a high concentration of traditional rural villages such as Matila and M’sifa. The Jebala were favorable for implementing Arab and Berber tribes’ villages, as it is located on a connecting road between Nedroma and Morocco and between the city of Marnia and the coast. Due to its importance, the region has known the arrival of several scholars and personalities, such as the Al-Yaqubi, who made it a station for the Mascara and Morocco tribes, especially during the Ottoman period.

Thus, Jebala has witnessed several historical periods during the Islamic time, starting with the fall of Ternana ancient city and the emergence of the Berber tribes and the implementation of their villages; M’sifa, El-Ayoun, and Matila, amongst others. The second stage of the region’s history starts with the emergence of Almohads and the Koumia tribe as the most important tribe in the Traras Mountains, from which several tribes diversified. Then, the region knew the arrival and installation of Ottomans. Several zaouias and tribes rejecting the Ottoman authority emerged in the Jebala.

According to an archaeological point of view, the Jebala region is known for many traditional rural villages, which can be traced to the end of the Zianid dynasty and the Ottoman period. They have attracted our attention, and we have explored the region and presented and analyzed the main ones. Jebala Berber villages are four: Matila, El-Ayoun, M’sifa and Al-Yaqoubi zaouia. We have examined some of these villages’ traditional houses, and we have noted that the Jebala houses were spaces for social and agricultural activities. Two types of traditional rural houses were identified in this region. The first one is built within the village boundaries, and the second one is isolated, constructed far from settlements. Materials and techniques of construction were also identified in this work. In addition to houses, The Jebala villages contain several religious buildings, including mosques, tombs and Zaouias. Other important factors influencing the village’s genesis and development were also identified, such as water sources and courses.

AVALIANDO O SIGNIFICADO HISTÓRICO E ARQUEOLÓGICO DOS ANTIGOS ASSENTAMENTOS MONTANHOSOS DA REGIÃO DE JEBALA (N.W. ARGÉLIA)

Resumo: Jebala (região de Tlemcen-Argélia) é uma área histórica e cultural caracterizada por povoamento denso de aldeias rurais tradicionais. A localização estratégica desta região, no coração das montanhas Traras, fez dela um dos principais destinos de muitas tribos berberes e árabes. A sua importância histórica foi muito influenciada pela construção das cidades históricas de Ternana e Nedroma no território da Jebala. Este facto afectou significativamente estas cidades, tanto do ponto de vista histórico como do ponto de vista urbano. Mais tarde, após a queda de Ternana no século III da Hegira (século X), as tribos que haviam habitado a cidade durante muitos anos foram dispersas por toda a região de Jebala, onde construíram várias aldeias rurais. Estas tribos atrairam a atenção dos exploradores franceses interessados no património rural das áreas circundantes de Tlemcen. No entanto,
EVALUANDO EL SIGNIFICADO HISTÓRICO Y ARQUEOLÓGICO DE LOS ANTIGUOS ASENTAMIENTOS MONTAÑOSOS EN LA REGIÓN DE JEBALA (N.W. ARGELIA)

Resumen: Jebala (región de Tlemcen-Argelia) es un área histórica y cultural caracterizada por poblamiento denso de aldeas rurales tradicionales. La localización estratégica de esta región, en el corazón de las montañas Traras, hace de ella uno de los principales destinos de muchas tribus berberes y árabes. Su importancia histórica fue muy influenciada por la construcción de las ciudades históricas de Ternana y Nedroma en el territorio de Jebala. Este hecho afectó significativamente estas ciudades, tanto del punto de vista histórico como del punto de vista urbano. Más tarde, después de la caída de Ternana en el siglo III de la Hégira (siglo X), las tribus que habían habitado la ciudad durante muchos años fueron esparcidas por toda la región de Jebala, donde construyeron varias aldeas rurales. Estas tribus atrajeron la atención de los exploradores franceses interesados en el patrimonio rural de las áreas circundantes de Tlemcen. Sin embargo, la bibliografía sobre estas aldeas es aún muy limitada. Así, este artículo pretende rellenar la brecha sobre la importancia histórica y arqueológica de estas aldeas. El presente estudio incidió sobre toda la región de Jebala, identificando y estudiando las siguientes cuatro aldeas berberes: Matila, El-Ayoun, M’sifa y El- Yakoubi Zaouia.


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