

Tourism in the City of Taza (Morocco) during the French Protectorate: An Investigation into Origins, Evolution, and Management Approaches

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During the Protectorate, the French tried to exploit all the natural and historical resources that the country abounded, to develop all the economic projects that they established. Thus, tourism in Morocco took off with the protectorate period, and it emerged as a factor that helped develop the cities in which the French invested, whether in hotel or restaurant field or in the sale of handicraft products. The administration in charge of tourism in Morocco did not spare its efforts in introducing the tourist potential that Morocco flourished, so it took advantage of everything that was authentic and ancient related to Moroccan history, culture and economy to introduce it to foreign tourists. This paper aims to shed light on the tourism qualifications (both natural and historical) in the city of Taza, as well as the strategy adopted by the French Protectorate Administration to promote and manage the tourism sector in the city.

Keywords: *Tourism; qualifications; French protectorate; management*

Introduction

The year 1914 marked a pivotal milestone in the history of the city of Taza. It was during this year that the French authorities tightened their control over the city and its strategic routes, establishing a connection between the East and the West, specifically Tunisia with Morocco and Algeria within the framework of what was known as the North African Empire.

The military occupation of Taza was not an isolated event but part of the larger totalitarian perceptions that governed the truce project. These perceptions encompassed the integration of economic, social, and political aspects in order to establish hegemony. Consequently, the economic structures of the city underwent significant transformations that reflected the French perspective on economic affairs. These transformations were implemented based on prioritized arrangements, where the tourism sector emerged as one of the interwoven fields within these structures. This development aligned with the French vision of modern economic growth, which was closely tied to the global capitalist system.

As a result, it can be argued that the economic policies pursued by the Protectorate Authorities in the city led to the creation of new economic forms, such as tourism, which was considered a promising sector. It became a driving force that influenced other planned elements. Consequently, it received considerable attention thanks to the diverse natural qualifications, historical heritage, and significant

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tourist attractions in the city. Thus, tourism emerged as a new sector in the city following the French control, becoming a promising cornerstone that raised broad hopes among developers to stimulate the local economy and boost the revenues of various projects implemented in the city. This sector harnessed various natural and historical resources, leading to the establishment of new facilities.

Taza's Tourism Potential

The French Protectorate Administration realized that the chances of success of the tourism sector in the city of Taza are very great, and that this is not only due to its great desire to advance the sector, or a purposeful ambition to build a tourist infrastructure that it is enthusiastic about, but rather the indicators of its success lie in the tourism potential and diverse qualifications that the city abounds with. So those responsible for managing the city's tourism sector tried to employ and invest all this wealth to be a source of temptation and attraction for tourists.

The Element of Architectural Heritage: Employment and Valorization

The city of Taza is distinguished by the richness of its ancient civilization, evidence of which is the historical and architectural heritage of the ancient city, as it is linked to historical landmarks that establish that bygone era in its history, and is represented by the Great Mosque that was built during the era of the Almohads during the rule of Sultan Abd el-Mu'mn ben Ali Almohad, in which it is existed one of the most beautiful copper chandeliers in Morocco and the Islamic world (Tazi, 1984).

The mosque also has a large and important library from a historical, scientific and jurisprudential standpoint, in addition to a great sundial in the ablution square. The city also includes ancient architecture and historical qualifications that attest to the cultural prestige of the countries that succeeded in ruling Morocco, including gates, walls, towers, and schools, in addition to the Sidi Majbour roundabout, which was considered a national heritage and was registered among the historical buildings according to the ministerial decision dated August 30, 1949 (Qarar waziri, 1949).

In view of its historical and cultural depth and its manifestations in the city's architecture, the Protectorate Administration has surrounded it with a set of legislation to preserve it as a heritage that will be exploited in the development of the tourism sector. It classified many buildings as historical buildings, and prohibited their violation, demolition, or construction near them, such as the Grand Mosque, the Fortified Wall surrounding the city of Taza, the Bastion Fortress, Bab al-Jmaa, Bab al-Rih and the Spiral Tower, pursuant to the decree of July 21, 1916 (Dahir, 1916). On August 6, 1921, a ministerial decision was issued, authorizing the conduct of research related to restricting El Harrach Square among historical buildings (Qarar Waziri, 1921). The Protectorate Administration also restored some landmarks, such as the dome of the mosque, its library, and some walls (Pauty, 1921).

The Protectorate Administration did not allow construction in the old medina except according to the local style, as the builders were obliged to adhere to

everything presented to them by the officials of the Fine Arts Department in terms of geometric shapes and decoration specific to the city, and preventing the creation of any building in the European style. The best evidence is the refusal of the president of Municipal Services in 1933 to allow the construction of a European-style house that the “Syndicate of Innovation and Tourism” intended to exploit for tourist purposes (P-V,1933). It was also prohibited to carry out any restoration except with the permission of the vice president of the Department of Fine Arts and Historical Buildings and from the Municipal Administration (Qarar waziri, 1922), in order to preserve the historical monuments and protect their cultural landmarks.

Figure 1. *El Bastion Fortress in Taza (Archives of Morocco)*



Natural Qualifications in the Taza Region

Taza has natural potential that the Protectorate Administration realized early on that it was very suitable for the emergence and establishment of a tourism activity capable of creating its radiance not only at the national level, but also at the international one, by exploiting it in the best way, to become a fundamental factor in the development of the tourism sector. These qualifications consist of a very important and diverse natural and forest field. Outside the walls and at the foot of the rock on which the city rests, there are orchards and gardens surrounding Taza from all sides, extending over an area estimated at 100 hectares that were irrigated from Taza river and Namli river (Agoumi, 1979). Charles De Foucault described it, saying, “It is a dense forest of fruit trees...perhaps unparalleled in Morocco” (De Foucault, 1999).

The thing that enhanced the aesthetic value of the city of Taza is that it is located between the Atlas Mountains and the front of the Rif Mountains, as this natural area includes mountains, including Bouyblane Mount, which is 3,000 meters high, and which has been covered with snow for a long time. The Protectorate Administration has bet on its investment to develop tourism and sports activities such as ice skating.

For example, in 1936, within the framework of the program to combat unemployment, the Protectorate administration allocated a loan of 50,000 francs to build a hostel on Mount Bouyblane, in order to provide suitable conditions for practicing this sport on this mountain, whether for those coming from Taza or from Fez (L'aménagement, 1936).

As for Tazekka Mount, which rises about 2,000 meters, and is covered with dense forests and is distinguished by the diversity of its plant and animal species, which constitute an area for eco-tourism and a natural place for summer vacations, due to its moderate climate in summer and its inclusion of many springs of water, it has reached an important position of care and attention. It even made it a national park extending over an area of 600 hectares in September 1950, according to a ministerial decision issued on July 11, 1950 (Qarar Waziri, 1950). The aim of establishing this park was to protect the natural resources provided by the summit of this mountain, especially the cedar tree, which remained isolated from the forests of the Rif and the Middle Atlas Mountains. Throughout the Protectorate period, it remained a destination for many local and foreign tourists, The most prominent among them is the Queen of Romania, Marie, who considered that her visit to Tazekka Park in 1935 would remain one of her most beautiful memories in Morocco (De Sivrey, 1935).

Figure 2. *A Tourist Picnic in Tazekka Park (Archives of Morocco)*



Near the Tazekka, there is the Sidi Abdallah area, which is considered one of the most picturesque areas in Morocco (Le Circuit, 1931), and the Bab Boudir area, which is 30 kilometers away from the city of Taza, and it also has natural, geographical, climatic and historical qualifications. These qualifications encouraged the Protectorate Administration to establish a summer tourist resort for summer

vacations in the Bab Boudir area, extending over an area of 78 hectares, in accordance with the ministerial decision issued on November 15, 1929 (Qarar Waziri, 1929). Due to the great demand this resort had, on June 2, 1948, the Protectorate Administration issued an order to expand it so that it could accommodate the large number of tourists (Dahir, 1948)

In 1931, the Bab Boudir area witnessed the establishment of a summer camp by the French François MOHRING (Courrier, 2005) dedicated to receiving children between the ages of 7 and 10 years in two stages, each stage lasting 20 days. This camp, which had a capacity to accommodate 60 boys and girls, provided all the necessary facilities and health conditions to spend the summer vacation (Lopez, 1995). In 1936, this area (Bab Boudir) also witnessed the construction of 15 wooden houses designated to accommodate tourists (Lopez, 1995). Moreover, the nature endowed the Taza region with other natural features and qualifications that contributed to attract many tourists, for example, Dayet Shiguer which is located south of the city of Taza, on the road leading to Bab Boudir, at the foot of Mount Boumesoud (approximately 9 km long and 2 km wide), which its beauty increases in the winter, as it becomes a large lake that tempts visitors. For the French, it was one of the most prominent natural lakes in North Africa and Europe (De Sivrey, 1935). Not to mention the Ras Elma Waterfalls, then dozens of caves that are considered natural sources for the development of “exploration and adventure” tourism (Le Circuit, 1931), the most prominent of which is the Friouato Cave, was discovered in 1934 by the French Nibert CASTRET, and it was arranged in 1937 (Lopez, 1995). CASTRI described it, saying: “The Friouato Cave gave us the surprise of the presence of a slope that leads to depth, and reveals the most beautiful thing that one can see, as the bottom of the cave has a very large diameter, and a faint light reaches it, astonishing the visitor, as the feeling of depth gives the impression of human weakness in the face of what nature has done. The cave extends 160 meters underground, at the bottom of which there is a water bed that has not yet revealed all its secrets. The Friouato Cave is not only the largest cave in Morocco, but in all of North Africa” (Bouyon, 1938)

Protectorate Administration Strategy to Stimulate Tourism in Taza

The Protectorate Administration has made great efforts to develop tourism activity and provide appropriate conditions for it to flourish. It took the initiative to equip the city and the surrounding tourist centers with the necessary infrastructure for tourism. It also adopted an integrated strategy to introduce the city and its qualifications.

Regulatory and Legal Procedures: Foundations for structuring the Sector

The city of Taza witnessed the establishment of the tourist delegation on March 8, 1931, after the general assembly that held at the Majestic Cinema. It was called the “Syndicate of Innovation and Tourism in Taza” (Syndicat d’Initiative et de Tourisme de Taza). The credit for this goes to Mr. Modest MOHRING, President of

the Mixed Chamber of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, who strongly pushed for the establishment of this organization to ensure the management of the city's tourism sector. He was elected the first president of this delegation (Taza, No date), and after his death in 1934, several figures took over the management of this organization, most notably his son François MOHRING, who also played a major role in developing the city's tourism sector.

The first organizational step taken by the Taza Tourism delegation was to issue a tourist guide, which served as an identification card for the city of Taza and its tourism qualifications (Taza, No date). This delegation was also the first in Morocco which send in 1934, 15 copies of the official guide for the "Syndicate of Innovation and Tourism in Taza" to the Union of Tourist Syndicates in Paris, which the union appreciated and praised greatly, and considered it a model that all tourist unions in Morocco should emulate (Annuaire, 1934). This union received financial support from several parties to advance the city's tourism sector, for example, amounted to 14,000 francs from the Protectorate Administration, in 1936 (Subventions, 1933) and it obtained a loan from the Supreme Council of Tourism in 1933, amounting to 25,380 francs (Taza-Journal, 1933). To ensure the quality of tourism services in the city and its surroundings, the Tourism delegation formed a group of frameworks specialized in tourism guidance to accompany and guide tourists on their tours inside and outside the old city to explore the sites and landscapes (Bouyon, 1938).

Infrastructure is an Essential Factor for Boosting Tourism in the City of Taza during the French Protectorate

The Protectorate Administration took several measures to provide the appropriate ground for organizing and thriving tourism activity, which it considered a promising sector to revive and support the modern economy. It encouraged the private sector to engage in it, and in this regard, Boutes ACHILLE, the architect, built the Waterfalls Hotel in the Ras El-Ma tourist area, which is 7 kilometers away from Taza.

The French investors were keen to provide an integrated tourist environment in the city of Taza and its surroundings to secure what the tourist needed. In this regard, they established a series of high-level hotels in the most important streets of the new city. The following table shows the hotels in Taza in 1919.

Table 1. *Hotels in Taza in 1919*(Archives of Morocco)

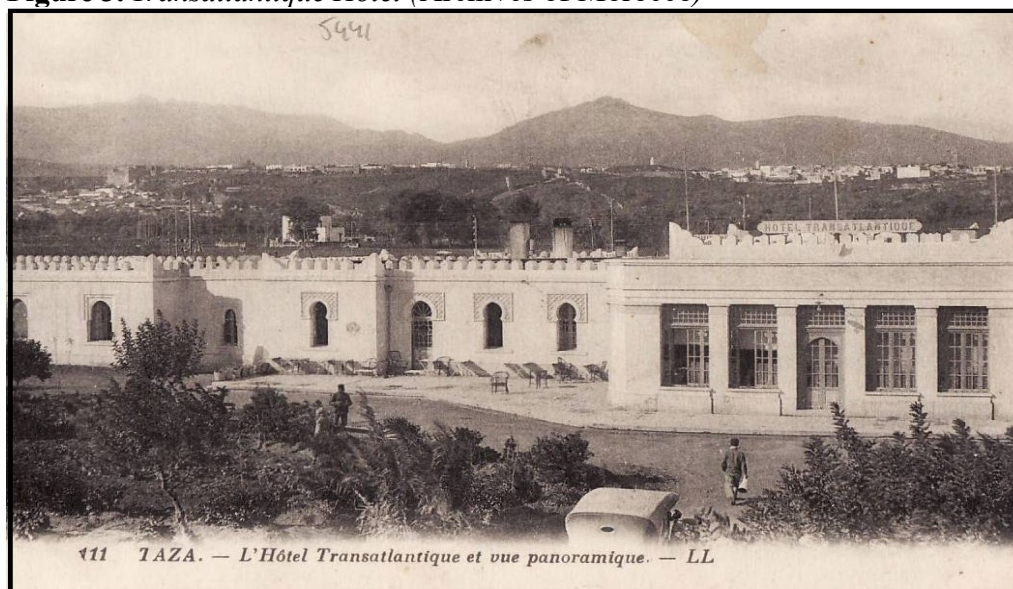
Hotels	Number of rooms	The price per night in francs
Simon	37	from 4 to 10
Foreigners	10	from 2.50 to 3
Post Hotel	10	from 2.50 to 3
Algiers Hotel	12	from 2.50 to 3
Figari Hotel	20	2.50 to 3
France hotel	19	2.50 to 3

During the 1930s, the city of Taza witnessed the opening of several hotels with high services, such as the Dauphini Hotel on Station Street, which was opened on

February 12, 1933. It was owned by the French Prosper Blache, one of the oldest residents of the city of Taza (he arrived there in 1919 and contributed to its economic development). Its opening ceremony was attended by the president of the region- Mr. Gendre-, president of the Mixed Chamber and the Tourism Syndicate, and- Mr. MOHRING-, president of Municipal Services -Mr. KETAN-. All of them stressed in their interventions that this hotel will be a new pride for the city, and will respond to its needs with regard to accommodating visitors and tourists (Taza-Journal, 1933). The cost of one night was between 12 and 25 francs (Taza, No date).

The Transatlantique Hotel, affiliated with the North African Travel and Hotels Company, remains the most important hotel built in Taza due to its distinguished location overlooking the ancient city and the surrounding gardens and orchards, and then for the quality of services that tourists were benefited during their stay there (L'Afrique du Nord, 1923).

Figure 3. *Transatlantique Hotel* (Archives of Morocco)



This sector was also supported by the establishment of the hotel loan system that was granted by the Real Estate Loan Fund pursuant to the decree of January 18, 1929. These are long-term loans that were granted for the purpose of building, repairing, arranging and equipping hotels (Dahir, 1929).

In the interest of the Protectorate Administration to develop hotels and raise the quality of services provided to tourists, committees were sent to cities to visit hotels and determine their condition and the extent of their keenness to provide all appropriate conditions for receiving tourists, and then classify them and award prizes to the owners of hotels that gained their trust. The visit of one of these committees to the city's hotels, for example, on May 3, 1947, resulted in the Dauphini Hotel being crowned the best tourist hotel, the station and Guillaum Tell hotels being classified in the category of medium-class tourist hotels, and awarding prizes to the owners of the three selected hotels, including Mrs. Coulais, the owner of the hotel Station, and the wife of the representative of the local hoteliers (Le Courrier, 1947).

In addition to hotels, many restaurants, cafes and bars in Taza were founded to meet the needs of European tourists. We mention among these bars: Henri Bar in Station Street owned by Xavier DICK (Taza, No date)., the “Chez Nous” bar in Station Street owned by LATESSIER, and Syrnos Bar in Fez Avenue owned by Suzanne CASANOVA, the Bright Bar (Splendid-Bar) in the Commerce Street owned by Mrs. Yve FAURE, and the Coulisée Cinema Bar in the Avenue Marshal Lyautey owned by Jean PERIN (Annuaire, 1952). The following table gives us an overview of the most important restaurants that were established in the city of Taza during the period of the Protectorate.

Table 2. *The Most Important Restaurants in Taza during the French Protectorate Period (Annuaire, 1952).*

Restaurant name	Localization	The owner	Price for meal and wine
Station restaurant	Station street	Mme. Yve BENEVENT	15 Francs
Dauphini Restaurant	Station street	Mr. Prosper BLACHE	15 Francs
Guillaume TELL Restaurant	Trade alley	Mr. BARER	From 12 to 15 Francs
Al Sharq Restaurant			12 Francs
Travelers Restaurant	Oran street	Mr. MARTINEZ	12 Francs
Excelsior Restaurant	Lyautey Square	Mr .Manuel BROTONS	15 Francs

Just as the French were interested in building hotels, restaurants and cafes, they did not neglect to pay attention to the issue of transportation in Taza, so they placed tourist taxis at the disposal of tourists to visit and discover the various tourist points around the city. The following is the tariff for rental cars during the 1933-1934 season.

- Taza – Waterfalls	round trip	40 francs
- Taza - Ras Elma	round trip	75 francs
- Taza - Dayet Shiguer	round trip	125 francs
- Taza - Bab Boudir	round trip	150 francs
- Taza – Tazekka	round trip	200 francs
- Tourist tour: Taza - Tazekka - Sidi Abdallah – Taza		300 francs (<i>Annuaire, 1952</i>).

The tourism sector in Taza benefited from the city’s position in the strategy of the Protectorate Administration project, as it was linked to a road network connecting it to eastern and western Morocco. Among these roads were those that were specifically extended for the purpose of serving tourism, the Chiguer Road, for which a loan of 2,000,000 francs was allocated for its construction in 1933 (P-V, 1933), and Road No. 311 extending from Taza to Sidi Abdallah, which was recognized as a public road by a ministerial decision issued on December 20, 1948 (Arrêté, 1949). The tourism sector also benefited from the railway’s passage through the city, and from the presence of some travel and tourism companies such as the General

Company for Transport and Tourism (C.T.M.), which facilitated tourists' travel to Taza (Taza, No date).

In the same context of supporting tourism and providing appropriate infrastructure in the city, a municipal swimming pool was built. We do not know the date of its opening, and all we have is that in 1931, the municipality of Taza allocated a financial sum of 54,000 francs to build it and equip it (Budget, 1933).

Conclusion

Tourism in Taza was known for its launch during the protectorate period, and it appeared as a factor that helped the development of the city, whether in the hotel or restaurant field or with regard to the sale of handicraft products. The administration in charge of tourism in Taza did not spare its efforts in introducing the city, exploiting everything that is authentic and ancient in the culture and economy of the Tazis society to introduce it to foreign tourists. Thus, the Protectorate period in Taza inaugurated a new economic sector that first strengthened the incomes of foreigners, and then also some of the city's people who were dependent on agriculture and crafts, so tourism constituted a source of livelihood for some Tazis. Although their benefit from this sector remained limited, because most of the tourism institutions were owned by foreigners, the sector worked to revive many crafts that were deteriorating. The colonizers did everything in their power to introduce the city, whether by its historical, natural or folkloric landmarks.

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