Capital of Southern Algeria: the oasis town of Ouargla, between image, staging and urban landscape during French colonization (1854-1962)

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Abstract

Through the years, the Algerian Sahara space have had different status: a nomadic space, a scientific space (as a privileged field of research and study expeditions), and then industrial space with the discovery and the exploitation of oil deposits in Ouargla (1956). Today, the Sahara is mainly a touristic destination.

Therefore, this paper aims to review the meanders of a particular course of change of status that the capital of the Algerian South, the oasis city of Ouargla, has known since its initial historic centre's formation until the Algerian Independence (1962). Our approach is based on the study of the successive transformations of Ouargla's image and its urban landscape, mainly during the period of the French occupation of this region (1854-1962)[1], in order to enhance its "traditional" and "integrated" built environment which was staged during the first half of the 20th century. This time frame has undoubtedly contributed to the transformation and enhancement of the urban space of Ouargla, and has changed the image of the city by making it more attractive acquiring a new status accordingly: a

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[1] Period of French colonization of the city of Ouargla and not that of Algeria which is from 1830 to 1962

popular Saharan touristic destination. This status is unfortunately lost today due to the effects of globalization and mismanagement.

In this paper, we will try to define the image of the city and to draw its portrait using the urban and architectural characteristics presented in the valuable iconography of the time (photographs, maps, postcards, drawings, engravings, etc.) depicting the urban and Saharan landscape of Ouargla in order to proceed to the reconquest of this lost touristic status through a new and more adequate image.

Keywords: urban staging, image of the city, urban landscape, urban space, traditional built, tourist enhancement, French colonisation, Sahara, Ouargla.

1. INTRODUCTION:
Ouargla the status quo

Thanks to its current imposing economic role, which is based on the exploitation of hydrocarbons, and its strategic geographical location (in the North-east of the Sahara), Ouargla stands out, since the Middle Ages, as one of the largest Algerian cities. It benefits from a double status, both national and international, thanks to its rich historical and natural heritage (Fig:1). Yet, its urban morphology and the poor architectural quality of its urban spaces do not enhance this status. It should be noted that the architectural and urban qualities constitute the most relevant indicators for an endogenous and exogenous appreciation of built environment, which is spontaneously translated into the notion of "city's image". The latter is staged through the urban landscape and space as a basis of the social life environment, as well as its atmospheres so sought after by tourists.

Figure 1 : sand dunes and Oasis in Oargla, source, https://www.elmoudjahid.dz/fr/dossier/tourisme-saharien-ouargla-dans-les-starting-blocks-185716

'*The gateway to the desert*', so called by Ibn Khaldun [1], Ouargla oasis was and still is nowadays an important caravanning hub linking the cities of Touggourt, El-Goléa, the M'zab (Ghardaia) and Illizi. It is an obligatory transit point to access the Great South and sub-Saharan Africa (Kouzmine, Salhi, 2009) [2], [3].

By comparing Ouargla's built environment during the French occupation to that of today, we notice that it is in decline; a visible decline which is translated by a typological disorder in its architectural and urban features. The city is accordingly described as a "palimpsest city" and is suffering from a flagrant loss of identity and culture (built heritage in danger, whether neglected or completely ruined), (Fig:2 ,3).

It suffers particularly from a diffuse confusion in the architectural and urban language with a multitude of xenotypical elements of Saharan cities, which seriously alters its urban landscape's harmony.

Figure 2: View of the city of Ouargla, Source : Authors, 2020

Figure 3 : Urbans sequences from inside the old town of Ouargla, source : https://www.algerie360.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Ksar-de-ouargla-, https://www.aps.dz/media/k2/items/cache/b28926371b4c51f6941bf2728dcfd783_M.jpg

This preliminary overview of the deplorable state of conservation of Ouargla's built environment, worsened by other socio-economic and political factors (rural exodus, policy orientations towards the development of other sectors such as agriculture, etc.) has engendered a loss of the most characteristics values of the city, among other, its touristic value.

During the French occupation, the oasis of Ouargla saw its role as a caravanning center reinforced through the development of Saharan tourism. This territorial asset did not fail to make the city a center of great architectural and urban wealth, much more by its coherence than by the effect of foreign typological models introduced into the Sahara in the second half of the 19th century. This state of facts leads us to raise two main questions: How did the city of Ouargla acquire a touristic status? And how did the image of the city evolve in this sense through its urban landscape?

2. CONCEPTS DEFINITIONS:
The triad: image of the city - urban setting - urban landscape and the touristic potential.

The development of tourism in Ouargla takes into account its image and its staging to boost its touristic potential. These two concepts (image of the city and urban

staging) intermingle and overlap to come together as a single concept, that of the urban landscape and its staging.

The image of the city, which results from landscape reflections, is a precept introduced by the American Kevin Lynch, with the notion of 'immagibility' (Lynch, 1969) [4]. It is a means of making the city which stems from the rationalisation of landscape and aesthetic discourse with a method of approaching urban form based on the visual aspect. The basic principle which follows from this is an elementary one and argues that : «The stronger and clearer is the image of the city, the greater is the quality of its form " (Orillard, 2005) [5].

Aesthetics, visuals, and the image of the urban

The visual aspect is the main spearhead of the city's image in the landscape conception of Camillio Sitte. Kevin Lynch, Christopher Alexander, Aldo Rossi, Léon Krier and Jane Jacobs have made it a significant factor in assessing the city's touristic potential (Depuis, 2009) [6].

In this approach, aesthetics is considered as the basis of urban images' creation, and consequently the driving force behind the reinvention of the city's image (Pouleur, Érès, 2017) [7]. The image of the city is therefore a factor of paramount importance in the evaluation of its touristic potential. The former's construction requires therefore a specific layout planning while considering the current urban landscape.

Generally, the urban landscape, through its aesthetic aspects and the image it conveys, allows us to understand distinct aspects of the voluntary or spontaneous mutation of the so-called urban spaces. It is considered as an urban scene perceived by the human eye in two different ways, either from a fixed point in space or throughout a mobile observation during pedestrian displacements.

The treatment of the urban landscape as a stage is part of urban scenography. By restoring the image of cities and enhancing their identity, their architectural, urban, cultural,and natural features are systematically staged.

Tourism development is one of the main reasons for urban transformation and planning. The urban landscape, especially in its visual and aesthetic aspects, has a considerable influence on the image of the city and its management.

The control of the urban landscape is one of the solutions which support, the creation and management of the image of the city which is unique and particular. Its staging is the pivotal point for the improvement of the living environment and the promotion of tourism.

Urban staging or when the theatre overflows the city:

The overflow of theatre into the city has given rise to a new conception model of the urban space by staging it. The staging resulting from the renewed interest in the landscape approach consists of scenographing urban spaces to make them significant places, highlighting accordingly the identity of the city through its natural and cultural heritage by means of permanent or ephemeral installations, events or artistic creation. This practice has become part of everyday life and takes part of the enhancement strategies of living environment's quality, and the promotion of tourism in cities (Gangloff, 2017) [8] .

3. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL PATH ON THE OUARGLIAN URBAN LANDSCAPE:

This study was based on the urban history of the city of Ouargla with the consideration of the visual aspects as a first point of our analytical approach. Since the image is an undeniable reflection of history and its reality, we explore within this paper ancient iconography through "pictorial analysis" as the main instrument of the research process.

Described as the "science of images" by the historian Augustin-Joseph Crosnier [9], iconography allows us to encompass a set of representations on the same theme or subject, perceiving in the case of this study, the aesthetic, scenic and plastic signs depicted in the urban pictorial productions of the city.

The analysis of the urban landscape of the city of Ouargla through its different status' changes will take into consideration the urban space in its historical aspect as described in the textual references (historical documents, newspapers, writings, etc.), showing a 'chronological sensitivity' (Lepetit, 1980) [10].

The fundament of this approach is that space can never be understood outside of time. In our case, the relation visual forms - textual references must be highlighted in order to confirm the results' validity (Curl, 2015) [11].

It is noteworthy that this research's aim goes beyond relating the city's history through time. Thus, our focus lies on comprehending, critically and analytically, the significance of actions and events' succession which has a direct relationship with the staging of the image of the city through its urban landscape. The following table summarizes the entire dimensions, constituents, indicators and tools for the study (Table 1).

Dimensions	Analytical elements and constituents	Indicators - Data to be researched	Tools for introspection
Visual and urban aesthetics	Model, stylistic or aesthetic order	-architectural style and pattern - embellishment -current and/or exceptional urban and/or architectural elements	Iconography (pictorial analysis)
	Environment and landscape	Skyline, silhouette	Iconography (pictorial analysis)
		Microclimate, vegetation	Iconography + textual references
History	Formation, creation and historical development	-the origins -stages that marked the creation, transformation and/or constancy of the	-city maps, historical documents + textual references
Space/society/tourism	Tourism needs	Symbolic -Materiality	Iconography + textual references
		Activities and events (festivals, exhibitions, etc.)	Iconography + textual references

Table 1: Dimensions, constituents, indicators and tools for the study.
Source: Authors, 2022

4. THE BASIC ICONOGRAPHIC CORPUS OF STUDY:

The set of graphic media of the pictorial production chosen for this iconographic study of the city of Ouargla varies between maps, city plans, postcards, paintings, sketches and photographs, paying attention mainly to the depicted subject on each of the materials studied: square, street, urban facade, façade, etc.

The corpus was also selected on the basis of other parameters: iconographic materials' type, origin, date of production, historical context of production, and their spatiotemporal characteristics.

Unlike drawings and paintings, which may be subject to personal or even ideological and idealistic interpretations proper to artists, photography and postcards remain more reliable as a study reference. Thus, for sake of objectivity, we prefer to mainly rely on this type of iconographic source. Painting, sketches and other visual, and potentially subjective representations, will only be explored for analyzing Ouargla's image during periods when no photography was produced.

5. ANALYTICAL PATH ON THE URBAN OUARGLIAN LANDSCAPE
Ouargla, the original and traditional built environment

Originally Ouargla, or Wardjelan, ancient Berber name of the city (Delheure, 1988) [12], is a traditional vernacular entity: a Ksar built according to a typically Saharan and Berber know-how. It is a traditional fortified village that responds to the societal, organizational and climatic requirements of the region, with a very compact urban scheme.

The ksar was classified as a national heritage site in 1996 and a protected sector in 2008 by the Algerian authorities. Even if the date of its foundation remains unknown, previous research argue it was probably created during the 9th century[2]. The Ksar has an organic shape (a deformed oval shape) and is located in the heart of the palm grove, with a seven doors rampart. (Fig: 4).

The Ksar, known as that of "Beni Warjlene "[3], is divided into three distinct districts, each intended for a different tribe. We have the districts of "Beni Sissine", "Beni Ouaguine" and "Beni Brahim". In the middle of these districts we find the Souk (traditional daily market) at the crossroad of the main streets. It consists of a large square delimited by a series of arcades.

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[2] Ibn Qutayba speaks about Ouargla in the 9th, then Ibn khaldoun in the 14th and Leon the African in the 15th

[3] The sons of Ouargla is the translation of Beni Warjlene

The place of the souk
The frontiers between the three districts

Figure 2: Ancient aerial view of the Ksar of Ouargla review by Authors, 2022

The physical character of the ksar; i.e. its ramparts, its entrances, the configuration of its maze-like streets, its lively market, its two mosques and their minarets, as well as the layout of its whitewashed houses, makes the character of Ouargla.

It is the main symbol of identity of this region alongside with its visual properties that give the urban landscape an authentic traditional character, and the image of the city a historical and heritage value.

It is therefore a very down-to-earth urban landscape, in line with nature, and mainly marked by the verticality of minarets, the entrance gates, and the magnificence of its palm trees (Fig: 5, 6).

Figure 5: postcard, Panorama of the Ksar of Ouargla – North side , Source : Publics archives

Figure 6: interior view of the Ksar, Source: http://ouargla.free.fr/images1/pic84.jpg%20vu%20s ur%20lala%20malika

Ouargla: from the original traditional town to the garrison town (from 1854)

The occupation of the Algerian Sahara by French military corps took place gradually in several stages. The most significant of these stages is the period of

the Trans-Saharan (1879-1881) with the expeditionary missions of Flatters, Foureau-Lamy and then Choisy [4].

Ouargla was occupied on 23 November 1854. Due to its geographical location, situated at the foot of the southern slope of the Saharan Atlas, it is the base of a strategic outpost which will eventually become the "stronghold" through which several missions (military and scientific) were organized and took support to serve as a control point of communications between North and South, East and, West and also to connect North Africa with sub-Saharan Africa.

The ksar of Ouargla, the traditional urban center, was the scene of the first stage of changes that the city underwent. Afterwards, it became the object of a restructuring operation, as soon as it was occupied by the French military corps. During this first urban operation the "Rivoli" Street (Fig: 7), also known as the Hundred Columns Street, was created in 1872.

Figure 7: urban sequence in the "Rivoli" Street, Source: Publics archives

It is a straight breakthrough street conceived in a Haussmannian style. Such a new urban element has not only changed the morphology of the Beni Sissine district, in order to facilitate access to military corps, but also the initial visual urban aspect of the former maze-like Ouarglian street.

Progressively, the change observed in Ouargla's built landscape will become more and more specific, particularly with the establishment of the 'Meharist troops'[5] base and the injection of military and then civil functions and services dedicated to the

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[4] French scientific and military expeditions
[5] Company of the French army specialized in the infiltration and control of the Sahara

new settlers' comfort while being used to continuously control local populations (Kouzmine, Y.; Fontaine, J.; Yousfi, B.-E. and Otmane, T., 2009) [13].
Consequently, the city's defensive system was also conceived within the framework of a military organisational perspective. Thus, several strategic infrastructures appeared, including the command post of the "Territory of the Oases" and a military residence; the military circle (1883) and the defensive forts of the Casbah (1884), Chandez (1887), Lutaud (1907), and the fort of the Military Engineers (1918), (Pillet,1997) [14]. (Fig: 8,9).
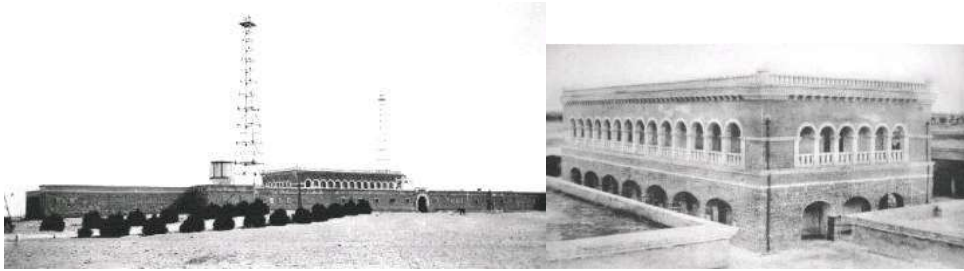
Figure 8 : Visual perspectives of Fort Chandez, source: http://ouargla.free.fr/21.html

Figure 9: View of Fort Lutaud , source: http://saharayro.free.fr/bordjs/fortsn09.htm

The urban landscape of the town was then marked by these new military structures. The offensive and defensive features are now predominant and the height of the walls of the "Bordjs", (fortress in Arabic), the arrangement of their merlons and battlements, the robustness and massiveness of their architecture and the height of the watchtowers, mark the new image of the city.
This martial staging of the city altered its authentic urban landscape and gave it intimidating military characteristics, reversing the initial image of the city. As a result, the status of the city has changed from that of a traditional Saharan city to that of a hostile and austere garrison city.

Ouargla, the double city: from garrison town to modern Saharan city (1927 to 1962)

This new period had undoubtedly marked a great shift in the perceived image of the city, it moved from garrison town to modern Saharan town:
 "*Ouargla, today, is no longer a mirage. You walk in the sand, you walk for a long time and even longer, and suddenly there are tamarisk trees, eucalyptus trees, palm trees. The track is now called Avenue Laperrine. There are villas surrounded*

by gardens, schools, children playing on the promenade, a swimming pool, a cinema, enormous and very smelly flowers (...) It's called Ouargla." [6] [15].

As we can see, Carbillet, a French army colonel in charge of the governance of Ouargla, presents a true picture of the colonial vision concerning the general image of the new city.

Such a structural reconsideration of the traditional Saharan city, as described in the external sources, is the result of another series of interventions related to:

• The construction of a new town (the Carbillet project) by the French authority (Fig: 8a,9a);

• Engagement in marketing and Saharan tourism campaign.

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6 Dirs of Colonel Carbillet in the Paris-Soir newspaper of 15 January 1938 translated from French to English by the authors for better understanding
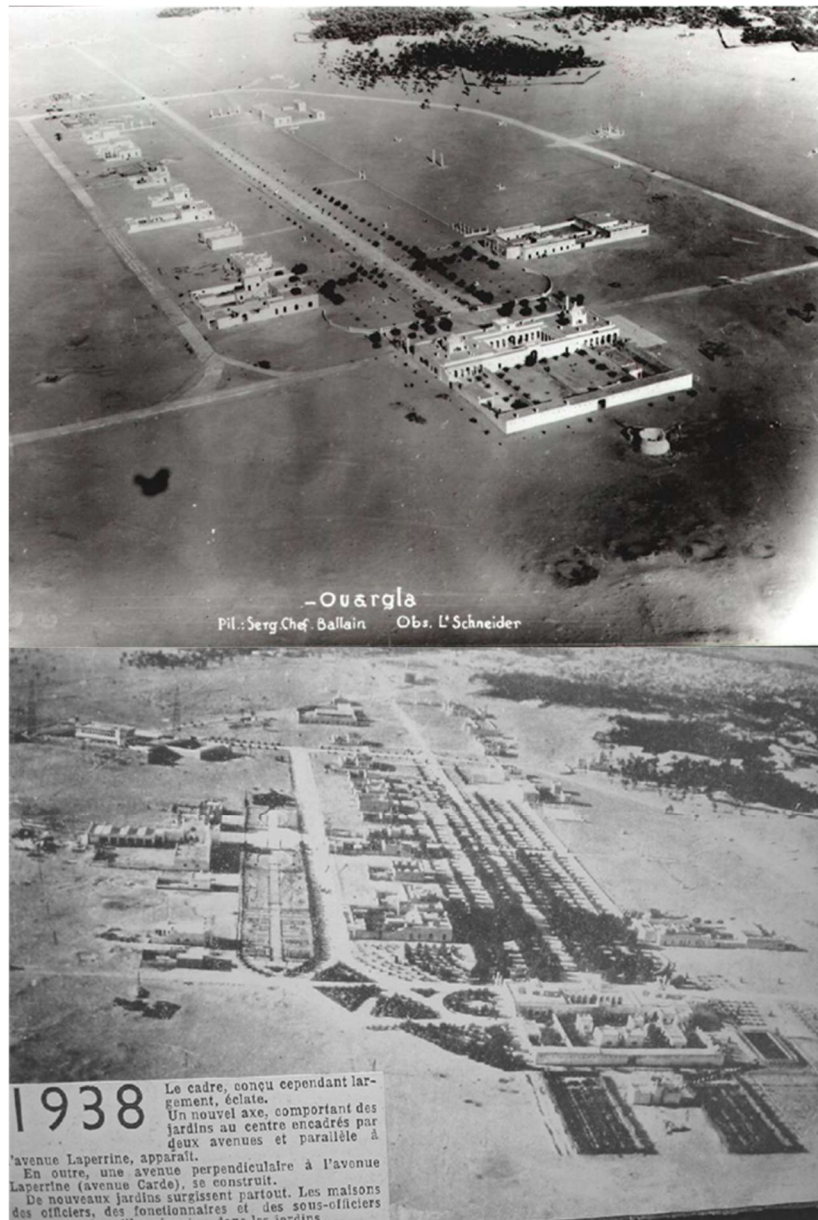
Figure 8a : From the French military installations seen from the sky, to the new city of Ouargla, source: http://ouargla.free.fr/22.html

Figure 9a: view of the new town of Carbillet and its gardens, Source: (Humbert, 2000)

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The new town of Carbillet (1927-1940) - the integrated built environment

Carbillet carried out the most distinguished transformation of the city's appearance with a novel urbanism in the region by introducing:

- A regular urban plan (Fig:12) withe wide avenues punctuated by service facilities and memorials (Fig: 10, 11),
- Squares and landscaped gardens lined with arcades, which are announced and put into perspective by monumental urban gates (Fig: 12,13).
- A new architectural style (Fig: 11,12,13,15,16).

Figure 10 : the wide straight street, Laperrine Avenue, source :
http://algerroi.fr/Alger/ouargla/images/5_d_ouargla_avenue_laperrine_3.jpg

Figure 11: several commemorative steles dedicated to deceased French commanders and officers,
source: source: http://ouargla.free.fr/images1/pic161.jpg

Figure 12: postcard featuring: The urban gates of Carbillet , source:
http://ouargla.free.fr/images1/pic160.jpg

Figure 13: View on Square in the new town of Ouargla, Source:
http://ouargla.free.fr/images1/pic168.jpg

The Carbillet project also accommodated uncluttered villas with gardens, which are also a novel architectural element in the region.

The architectural language proposed by Carbillet is of Sudanese origin. It was specifically designed for the region in order to characterize official buildings (museums, schools, sub-prefectures, etc.), most often formulated in a classist typology, combined with the current trend of the time riveted on picturesque aesthetic approaches (such as neo-Moorish, and oriental style),(Fig:15,16,17,18).

Carbillet's style is thus derived from the African style amalgamated with the most dominant formal and architectural elements of the local Saharan style.

This stylistic eclecticism, which can also be observed in almost all Orientalist productions from the end of the 19th century, changed the image of the city by giving it a new character which marked a scenic turn in its urban landscape thus breaking with the traditional landscape of the city. In 1938 Petit lieutenant in the Meharist Company wrote: "*The city is double, a European city, and an indigenous city*"[7] [16].

Thus, Ouargla had a new version of itself, contemporary and modern, less condensed, with the consideration of cars in the design of its roads, and a well-studied vegetation (adapted with the climate like the mimosa tree, the eucalyptus, etc.). The city acquires thereby a double identity due to the coexistence of two distinct yet synchronic physical entities (Fig: 14).

During this period, the city lived through new facilities that transformed it and set the scene in line with the vision and aims of the French occupation in order to be confortable for the settlers and the tourists. A series of utilitarian projects of a touristic, cultural, communicational, administrative, educational and religious nature, and mainly several hotels, were built. We give examples of the Barnabé Hotel (1881), Dar Ediaf or the guest house (1932), the Transatlantic Hotel (1934) and the Saharan Museum (1938), (Pillet, 1997) [14].
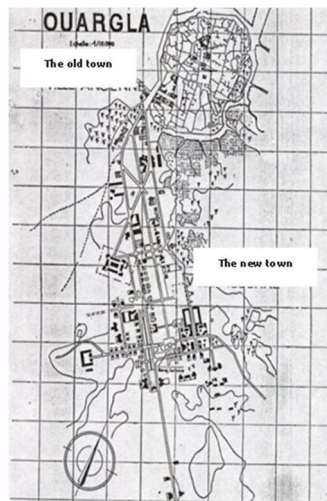

Figure 14: map of the city of Ouargla from 1954 with two distinct yet synchronic physical entities, Source: **http://ouargla.free.fr/images1/pic171.jpg**, review by Authors, 2022

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[7] Translated from French to English by the authors for better understanding

Figure 15: postcard of urban landscape of Dar Diaf (the guest's house), source: publics archives

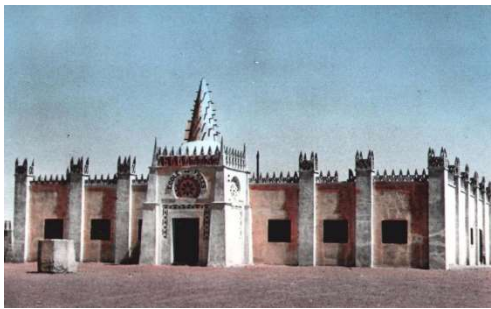Figure 16: scenic framing of the Trans-Saharan Museum, source: publics archives

Figure 17: the girls' school, source: http://ouargla.free.fr/images1/pic170.jpg

Figure 18: postcard of the Church of Ouargla, source: https://en.geneanet.org/public/img/gallery/pictures/cartes_postales/30/7789532/large.jpg

Religious buildings, and buildings for instruction (Fig:17,18), were also built such as the Church of Ksar in 1923 (Pillet, 1997) [9], and the Church of Ouargla in 1933 (Humbert, 2000) [17]. Service facilities and administrations was also part of the development plan. The justice of the peace in 1888, the sub-prefecture in 1902, the radio telegraph post office in 1915, and the prefecture were consequently created within the framework of this plan.

It should be noted that it was on the eve of the commemoration of the centenary of the occupation of Algeria in 1930 that this city underwent the largest staging operations of its public space (Fig: 19).

Figure 19 : postcard featuring The Centenary Gate 1830-1930, with the sign of Tanit, source: publics archives

The succession of these actions previously cited has immediately an impact on the city and its image, which materialised through numerous transformations and which was preserved thanks to a large pictorial production.

This pictorial production bears witness to this image's change initiated by the colonists. The steback of the buildings, the elevation by means of steps, the gigantism of buildings size, the monumentality as well as the plantation of trees other than palm trees make them easily identifiable, and totally redefines the contours of the urban landscape.

The vertical markers of the urban landscape of the ouarglian public space, in this case the facades of buildings, have largely contributed to the formation of this new urban landscape. Their compositions, proportions, elements' arrangement, colors and texture have directly affected the perception of the city and the quality of its image.

The skyline of the city was redesigned and enhanced. We can notice the introduction of monumentality, the elevation with steps, and the crowning with the "ogival" domes with stakes. Pilasters and stalagmite buttresses mark the corners of the buildings and frame the entrances. The use of arches and arcades was also very frequent, whether to shade the streets or to pierce the façades which were flanked by ancestral cultural symbols such as the sign of Tanit[8] , also called the Laam Alif.

This same symbol, as well as the stalagmites also adorned the new urban entrances on each road leading to the town which were called "Gates of Carbillet". These urban entrances indicated the new town, marked the new urban landscape of Ouargla and allowed it to be easily identified. In addition to inviting, receiving and welcoming visitors, it was also a means of controlling and securing mobility into the town.

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[8] Triangle-shaped sign with two raised arms and a circle representing Tanit, a Berber and Punic deity

Ouargla's marketing and tourism campaign

Later on, successions of political decisions were taken which had a greater impact on Ouargla. Indeed, in 1957, a "Ministry of the Sahara" and the Common Organisation of Saharan Regions (COSR) were created. The latter is a territorial authority created by the French government. The objective of the collectivity was to develop and promote socially and economically the Saharan regions dependent on the French Republic, with the likelihood of a separatist intention (between the North and the South) given the growing economic value of this area after the discovery of oil in 1956 near Ouargla, which will propel its notoriety on a large scale.

 It should also be noted that with the division of Algeria into departments in 1958, Ouargla became the capital of the department of the oasis with the Sahara as the 6th department. This made its administration more centralized.

It was therefore a readjustment to the type of town by changing to a mixed military-civilian status that followed. At the same time, an avant-garde touristic and marketing campaign was launched to make the city more attractive for winter tourism, which was in vogue at the time (with the Citroën raid of 1922, the trans-Saharan rally of 1930, travelling fairs and the circus)[9]. In addition, we can refer to some movies shot on the most emblematic places of the city such as l'Atlantide released in 1921, Grands jeux in 1954 as well as a series of documentaries with Fête militaire à Ouargla, and Palmeraie de Ouargla both in 1958.

There was no need for install new sets for their realisation, the architecture, the urban landscape (market square) and the natural heritage (the dunes surrounding the city) served as an already existent and relevant background.

We also notice the upholding of several festivals and cultural events specific to the region such as the dates festival, the camel day and fantasias (Fig:20) in order to preserve the original atmosphere as well as the oriental, Saharan and Berber character of the city.

Figure 20 : postcard featuring a Fantasia in the Place du Bureau Arabe, source :publics archives

[9] The Citroën raid: is the first motorized crossing of the Sahara, from Touggourt to Timbuktu using the automobile (the Citroën caterpillar) with the aim of promoting the Sahara and proving that it can be crossed with a car.The Trans-Saharan Rally is a competitive sporting event which was first organized for the commemoration of the centenary of the colonization of Algeria in 1930 and had as its starting point Algiers to reach Gao in Cameroon, a round trip via Ouargla.

Thus, the media coverage, the conquest of the Sahara by car, and the restructuring of the city 'will truly mark the beginning of tourist's penetration in the Sahara' (Minvielle, 2008a) [18]. This immediately gave the city an international status and led to an influx of tourists and curious people coming to discover the city.

6. RESULTS:

Although the notion of urban staging had not yet been introduced into urban jargon during the period of the French occupation of Algeria, its precepts were already used, it was just the terms that differed. At the time, we referred to this practice par by the term "embellishment".

The touristic potential of the city of Ouargla has been boosted through the mutation of its urban landscape, which has certainly led to a change in the city's image. Ouargla has been reinvented through its urban landscape which has been staged in a significant and avant-garde way.

The change of status that the city has undergone has led to a change in its image through the transformation of its urban landscape. Two phases of mutations and three changes of status can be noted: from the original city, sober and uncluttered in the middle of its palm grove, to a military city with an austere character, then with the construction of the new city, Ouargla became a double identity city, traditional and contemporary and European-like.
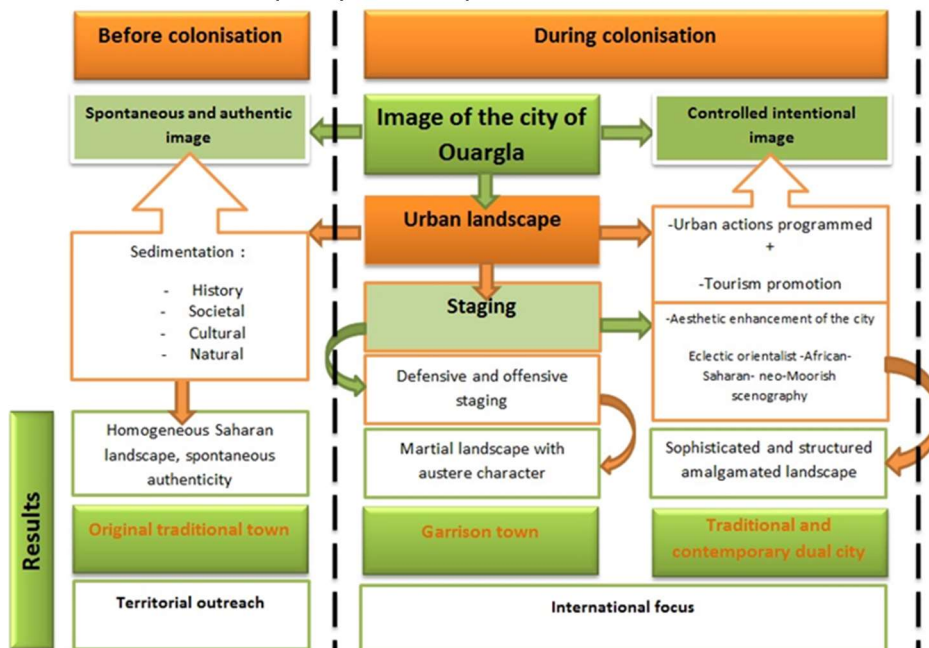
Thus all the elements necessary to attract tourists were gathered. The cultural and natural heritage, combined with the modernity of the new infrastructures and the campaign to develop and promote the Saharan regions initiated by the colonists, made the city a distinguished touristic destination. Figure 21 illustrates the results obtained in this research.

7-CONCLUSION:

Playing the card of change of scenery, and considered as the French orient at the same time Arab-Muslim , Berber, oriental and ancient, the Sahara has become an exotic destination.

The city of Ouargla did not escape this tendency and its built environment was staged; a mark of the orientalist current from the end of the 19th century, with the aim of proliferating Saharan tourism, which was very fashionable at the time. On the other hand, a policy of promoting the city led to a split of the city giving birth to the new Ouargla. At the same time authentic and contemporary, the city was able to flourish and to establish its notoriety.

The scenographic treatment of this new city orchestrated by the colonizer between 1927 and 1962) confirms the existence of a new urban and architectural sensibility which combines contemporaneity and the Saharan cultural heritage.

Carbillet's staging of the city is certainly eclectic but not lacking in audacity, and stands out improbably with this surrealist amalgam of raised contemporary buildings, marked by Saharan architectural elements, monumental urban squares and gates flanked by ancestral symbols, wide alleys, and landscaped gardens.

The harmony of these elements has created the ideal scenic setting for the Ouargla's urban theatre production where tourists are so fond of appearing and acting in this Saharan play.

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