

**Spatial transformations in the city of Ouargla from the lkasser to the city:  
An Anthropological study (from the colonial period to the post-independence  
era)**

التحولات المجالية بمدينة ورقلة من القصر إلى المدينة  
دراسة أنثروبولوجية (من الفترة الاستعمارية إلى ما بعد الاستقلال)

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**Abstract**

**ملخص**

In this research paper, we will try to classify and discuss the most important stages of transformation in the field and in social relations. First, we will address the colonial stage as the beginning of the end of the traditional society, which witnessed profound socio-spatial transformations, overview the preponderant stage of restoring national sovereignty and, then, address the city of Ouargla after the palace. Then, we will move on to present the most important stages of spatial transformations as a result of social transformations, demonstrating the spatial situation of the old city "The Old Palace" before the French occupation, its transformations during the colonial stage. Finally, we will address the spatial transformations that occurred in the post-independence stage as a result of the integration of the desert into the general national community.

**Keywords :** Transformations, Ouargla, Urban Area, Socio-Anthropology.

سنحاول في هذه الورقة البحثية تصنيف ومناقشة أهم مراحل التحول في المجال وفي العلاقات الاجتماعية، في البداية سنتناول المرحلة الاستعمارية باعتبارها بداية نهاية المجتمع التقليدي، والتي عرفت تحولات سوسيو مجالية عميقة، لنصل إلى مرحلة استرجاع السيادة الوطنية و التطرق لمدينة ورقلة ما بعد القصر، وبعد ما سننتقل لعرض أهم مراحل التحولات المجالية باعتبارها نتيجة للتحولات الاجتماعية، بعرض الوضعية المجالية للمدينة القديمة " القصر العتيق " قبل الاحتلال الفرنسي، ثم تحولاتها خلال المرحلة الاستعمارية، لنعرض في الاخير التحولات المجالية الحاصلة في مرحلة ما بعد الاستقلال كنتيجة لإدماج الصحراء في المجتمع الوطني العام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحولات، ورقلة، المجال العمراني، سوسيو أنثروبولوجية.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that Ouargla, which is a civilized and urban receptacle city, had long existed since ancient times, but was not established as a distinct social entity except with the dawn of history, whereby many residential communities appeared, and with various names that became extinct, and with the Roman occupation of North Africa in the period between the second century BC and the century BC The first BC and the fall of the Berber states - Numidian, Carthaginian and Mauritanian -, and under the pressure of the Roman colonizer who pursued a policy of settlement, the Zenati barbarians moved to the southern side, and established many villages in them that expanded and coalesced with each other to form a homogeneous Egypt socially and politically, bearing the name of the largest tribe of the constituent tribes It is the tribe of Bani Warkala Al-Zanatiyah, and since this early date it has become an important station for the commercial caravans coming from the north or going into the depths of the desert (Al-Madani, 2001, pp 12-13).

And it remained in this image until the entry of Islam to it in the first century of migration, and this city has been subjected, in its long history, to more than one invasion, total demolition and being rebuilt again in the Islamic Middle Ages (dekkar, 2014, p 164).

Since the first Hijri century and the seventh until the 18th century CE, the ancient palace did not witness major urban transformations. Rather, it was a period of relative stability for its urban pattern and spatial organization.

Based on the foregoing historical facts, one might ask: what are the most important socio-economic transformations that the city of Ouargla has witnessed from the colonial phase until the post-independence period?

## 2. COLONIAL MILITARY TOWERS AND THE BEGINNING OF URBAN TRANSFORMATION:

The historical accounts reveal the stages of urban development for Lorglan, which was not a unified residential settlement, but rather fortified residential settlements separated from each other, and then became a single urban center, after all of them were surrounded by a wall, and other facilities were added to it such as the market and other public facilities, and the

Kasbah Which was used as the seat of the ruler of the palace, who was nicknamed the Sultan (Al-Sayyid Muhammad, 2016, p127).

After the incident of the murder of the flatters on February 16, 1881 AD by the Tuareg, Colonel Luchatli - Governor General of Ouargla - hastened to establish special military centers and towers in the main strategic areas, controlling the passage of commercial convoys on the one hand, ensuring security for the centenarians, and allowing them to confront the resistance The inhabitants of the desert on the other hand, and from it extended its influence over the strip located behind the Saharan Atlas, and in terms of its construction style, they are small buildings, covered with distinctive domes, and contain a residence for the guard assigned to guard the nearby wells, and this tower is open to travelers, especially military officers and employees, and all of this is subject to the regulation One of the most famous of these towers is the Flatters Tower, known as the Omar Idris Tower, in the Tamassin area. It is an important meeting point and crossing point for desert caravans on the cross road between Ain Saleh to Ghadames, and the Ouargla - Hassi Tawil - Ghadames road. This tower was built between 1906 and 1907 AD, as well as the Lallemand Tower, which was built in 1894 AD in Hassi Belhiran, 140 km east of Ouargla. (Chafou, 2015 p 292).

The CHandez Tower, known as the Red Tower, which was built in the private area of the Bani Thawr tribe in the city of Ouargla, is the first manifestation of urban transformation in the city of Ouargla after its occupation in 1854 AD.

This tower was named after the officer CHandez, who died in 1918 AD, and the works of this tower began in the late 1885 AD, when Colonel "Lechtelier" worked to separate the Arab office directed to the civil administration from the armed forces, and then the construction of the tower in Bani Thawr by the engineering With the help of military workers who came from Algiers, this is in addition to the assistance of about 300 men who were sentenced to prison in Bab El Oued. The works of this tower were completed and inaugurated in November 1887.

The reasons for building this tower are due to the colonial authority's lack of some administrative offices for people's affairs, and its use as a control center, in addition to the expansion of the old palace residences until they became adjacent to the administration headquarters

that was in the old castle - Sultan Qasr Ouargla - where the Uqba bin Nafeh school and narrow this about The administration's interests, as well as the authorities' lack of a sense of security.

This tower is located in the middle of a military barracks with thick walls and high walls, and extends over an area of more than 1,000 square meters. There are four guard and watchtowers in the corners of the outer wall, and it consists of two floors:

- **The Ground floor:** It includes several rooms devoted to interrogation and torture.
- **The upper floor:** It also includes interrogation and torture rooms, opposite 12 individual cells ( Chafou, 2015 pp 293-294).

As for the old city, the old palace, it also knew some of the new buildings, which were founded by the French administration, such as the school, the clinic and the church. However, the old palace did not lose its distinctive urban character during the colonial period, and after independence it was used as public facilities for the residents of the palace.

### **3. THE COLONIAL NEIGHBORHOOD "LA CILISSE:**

After the fall of the city of Ouargla in 1854 AD, under the control of the French occupation, all the colonial urban facilities were of a military nature, such as the Red Tower in Bani Thawr and some military barracks. In the northern cities, the difficult desert nature does not appeal to the centenarians to reside there, and we find in the city of Ouargla only one neighborhood of the remnants of French civil urbanization, which is the neighborhood known as "La Seles", which is the name of the French construction company supervising the project of the new city "Zahret al-Salam" which It was launched in 1956 AD, and there are some buildings in it that were allocated by the colonial authority to the administrative and technical supervisors of this project. The new city stems from technical studies, which confirmed the danger of urban expansion in the old area of the city, as it is a depression and defines the phenomenon of groundwater escalation, which worries the The day of residents and officials in the city of Ouargla, as a result of the frequent floods of the sanitation networks and the resulting pollution of the residential surroundings and the wear of roads due to attempts to repair them, and the continuous renewal of this problem despite the supervision of several national companies on its completion and maintenance.

Today, this neighborhood "La Siles" is considered one of the most prestigious neighborhoods in the city of Ouargla, as it is a planned neighborhood and in the heart of the city there are many private residences "villas" and it is diverse in its social composition, and the majority of its residents are wealthy merchants, holders of prestigious positions and local elites.

#### **4. POST-INDEPENDENCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF BEDOUIN SETTLEMENTS AND UNPLANNED NEIGHBORHOODS:**

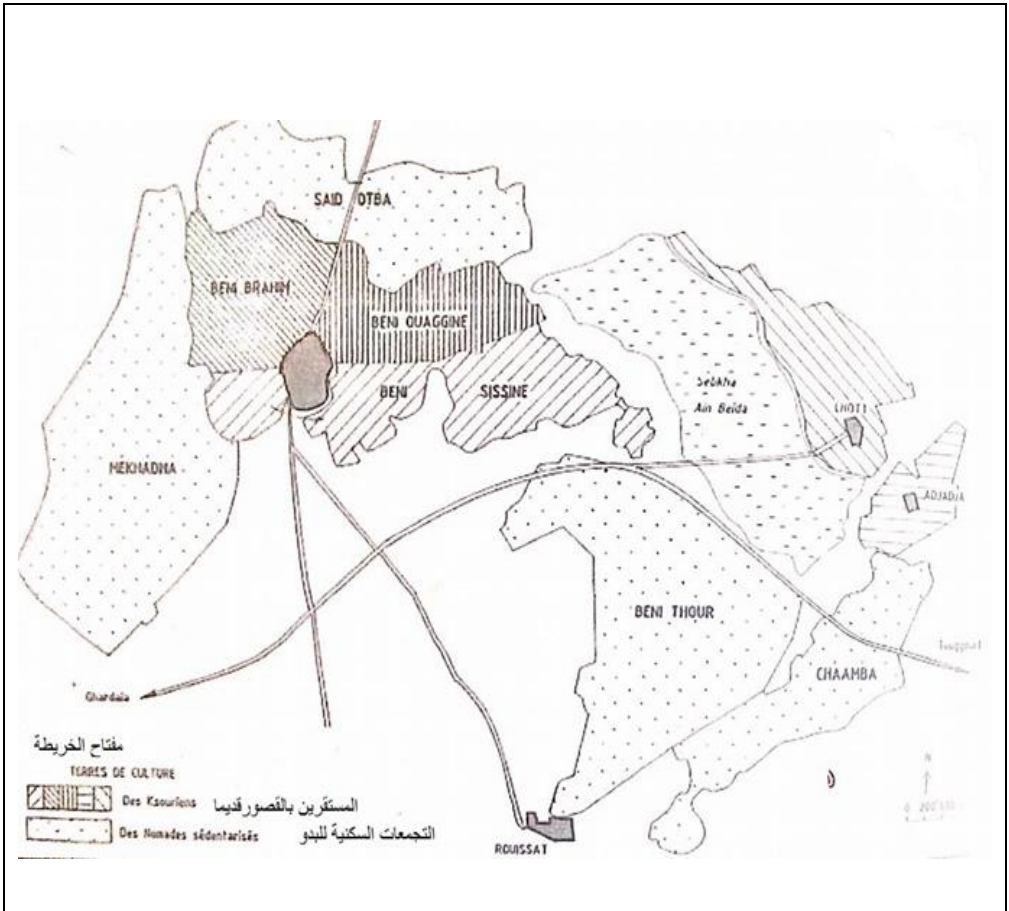
Since the beginning of the emergence of the Bedouin tribes in the Algerian desert in the 10th and 11th centuries AD until the 18th century AD, they live according to the pattern of movement and migration between the outskirts of the Sahara from east to west, and from the far north to the south, thus extending their influence over all its paths, and controlling the movement of its convoys. Trade, they have been masters for centuries.

The profound transformations that the world witnessed during the 18th century at all levels, especially the emergence of modern means used in commercial transportation, the arrival of the French occupation of the Algerian desert, and its siege of the movement of Bedouins in the desert and its quest for their stabilization and stability, all these factors paved the way for the emergence of stable residential communities for them in the vicinity of the historical city. In most of them are tents, then to appear at the end of the colonial phase, and the beginnings of independence, housing for them built with the materials used in the construction of the old palace housing.

The beginning of the independence stage for the city of Ouargla means integration into the national state, after it witnessed during the colonial period the most violent stages of transformation on the social, cultural and economic level.

The first beginnings of the attempt to settle the Bedouins in the city of Ouargla by the colonial authorities between the years (1870-1890) were for political and security purposes, because their movements in the desert were a danger to the French soldiers, as well as to prevent their contact with the revolutionaries and the mujahideen and the transfer of weapons, and this coincided with the total collapse of the convoy trade, The relative stability of these Bedouin groups was, until 1952 AD, 6000 families still resided in tents.

**Fig.1. Map of the spatial distribution of settlers and Bedouins in the city of Ouargla.**



**Source: Quoted from the book of the mini-geography of the region of Ouargla, Mark Koot, p. 28.**

After independence, the Bedouins became convinced of the impossibility of a traditional lifestyle again, so it was the beginning of the strengthening of their homes and the gradual abandonment of tents. Unplanned residential communities appeared, which caused urban problems later on, related to the difficulty of preparing them and linking them to water, electricity, gas and sewage networks.

Each tribe settled in its old homes, which were the focus of their travels during the periods of their arrival in the aspects of the historical city “the ancient palace”, and these neighborhoods took the names of these

tribes, the Al-Makhadamah neighborhood, the Saeed Utbah neighborhood, and the Bani Thawr neighborhood, with the exception of the Shaanba tribe, which was distributed in the Al-Ruwaisat and Ain Al-Bayda areas, as it is the most. The tribes are Bedouin, and the last of them are urbanized and settled in Ouargla. These residential communities are dominated by randomness, lack solid infrastructure, and differ in their design from the houses of the ancient palace, as they consist of a ground floor only, unlike the houses of the ancient palace, which all contain two floors. These houses are characterized by their spaciousness. Its area and availability on a spacious courtyard and a barn dedicated to livestock, these houses did not carry a specific urban pattern, due to the modernity of the Bedouins with a pattern of stability, the state strived, beginning in the seventies of the last century, to final and total settlement of these Bedouin groups, and their integration into the new urban life through preparation urban areas for their neighborhoods, linking them to the infrastructure and all the necessities of life such as water, gas and electricity networks, paving roads and so on, as well as building public facilities such as schools and institutions. Diverse services, and thus the city of Ouargla defines this spatial transformation by the emergence of these neighborhoods and the historical city becomes just one of the neighborhoods of the city of Ouargla.

Beginning in 1971 (the nationalization of hydrocarbons) and beyond, the city of Ouargla experienced a great economic dynamism, which attracted a large number of new residents looking for job opportunities. The last century witnessed a huge influx of people who fled the security turmoil in the northern cities.

Majaliya, these neighborhoods were not established next to the ancient palace or the urban Bedouin neighborhoods, but were in the outskirts of the city, due to the difficulty of owning an urban space in the neighborhoods with a tribal composition. The most famous of these neighborhoods are:

**- Soukra neighborhood:**

This neighborhood is located in the southwestern side of the city. This neighborhood is considered to be the largest of the slums in the city of Ouargla, with a large population density, and a diverse social composition from different regions of the country. Among its most famous neighborhoods is the “Awlad Nile” neighborhood coming from the Djelfa region, as well as

the “Al-Tabasa” neighborhood. Or “Awlad Obeid” who came from the state of Tebessa, the “Breikia” neighborhood, who came from the city of Barika, and other neighborhoods that are diverse in their social composition, with a very small presence of residents from the traditional groups in the city of Ouargla.

**- Bouzid neighborhood:**

This neighborhood is located in the southeast side of the city, and chaotic buildings are spread in it, so that the size of some streets does not even accommodate cars. This neighborhood is not much different socially from the Soukra neighborhood, where there are various social groups in their affiliation.

This type of neighborhood is known as anthropology with sub-cultures, which express the lifestyle of groups that share certain cultural patterns related to the practice of a specific activity, whether it is a formal or informal activity. These neighborhoods have produced many social evils as a result of their unplanned nature and lack of public facilities and stability of vulnerable social classes.

**Fig.2. Soukra neighborhood (the largest slum in Ouargla city)**





**Source: Google earth 2019 version, image from a height of 300 m.**

The large influx of job seekers in the city of Ouargla after its transformation since the nationalization of hydrocarbons into an economic pole that provides thousands of jobs, and the migrations of many families from the north of the country during the security crisis (the black decade) made the Soukra neighborhood, the largest informal neighborhood in the city, and the most in terms of number. The population is characterized by a diverse social structure that includes immigrants from all regions of the country, which gave this neighborhood a special flavor as a popular neighborhood, whose residents share simple lifestyles.

## **5. THE URBAN PRESENT OF THE ANCIENT PALACE “BETWEEN THE DIFFICULT STEADFASTNESS AND THE IMPERATIVES OF TRANSFORMATION”:**

The construction of these palaces is usually concentrated in main blocks that branch into small centers forming a local network of palaces associated with the world of agriculture (palms), water wells or

paragraphs supervised by the largest palaces that develop into a historical city linked to the world of caravan trade and the existing political system and religious supervision, in addition to a relationship. These palaces belong to the world of Bedouin tribes and semi-Bedouins, who played an important role in the construction and activities of these cities and palaces through economic exchange, social integration and mutual protection (khelifa, 2010, p 128).

Through field investigation, we noticed some transformations that affected parts of the palace, with the large part of it preserving its original architectural model. These transformations are represented in the following elements:

- **Road restructuring:**

Many of the alleys and streets of the palace were restructured and expanded to become more functional. He took advantage of the demolition of some buildings to expand the narrow alleys. The social transformations and requirements of contemporary life made it necessary to restructure the main entrances leading to the three neighborhoods. Sometimes the need for civil protection intervention, or the transfer of devices and equipment, which are used for different purposes was the reason behind the restructuring of some roads without prejudice to those roads that lead to the houses inside the Kasbah.

- **Expansion of the road leading to the central market of the palace:**

With the aim of linking the old city with the new neighborhoods, the road leads to the central market of the palace - currently Martyrs Square - which is considered the entrance to the main market of the palace - was expanded. Through this road, the palace connects to the street leading to the new neighborhoods of the city.

- **Inclusion of administrative facilities inside the palace:**

Some facilities were not present in the palace before, such as the Savings and Reserve Bank, the Commercial Register Fund and some other facilities. The presence of these administrative facilities is sure that it provides services to the residents of the palace. However, it bears a symbolic significance that links this palace to the central authority, and symbolizes its loss of the political independence that it enjoyed before the establishment of the modern national state after independence.

- **Changing the used building materials:**

Perhaps it is paradoxical that the building materials used in the past in the palace were more in harmony with the desert environment,

according to the residents of the palace. Gypsum and stones, for example, make the house stay cool in summer and hot in winter, unlike cement and bricks. Most of the new construction and restoration works inside the palace use modern materials in construction.

- **Change the storefronts:**

The shift in the economic system and the transition from agriculture as a hub of economic life inside the palace to other activities, was also reflected in trade. Several new shops appeared with modern facades that changed the morphology of the palace shops, such as mobile phone shops, electronic stores and others.

- **Rebuilding according to new patterns:**

Many of the buildings inside the palace collapsed due to their old age and needed restoration or reconstruction. Despite the efforts made by the Palace Association for Culture and Reform to preserve the identity of the urban palace and classify it as a national heritage in 1996 AD, some of the owners of these buildings reconstructed their homes according to the newly common building pattern. , which does not express any identity, so these new buildings were like strange objects inside the palace, despite their small numbers, which indicates the interest in the functional and technical aspect of the residence without paying attention to the cultural function of it.

**6. THE NEW URBAN POLE, AL-NASR NEIGHBORHOOD « AL-KHAFJI », THE DIALECTIC OF SPACE AND IDENTITY:**

The continuous expansion of the city included almost all the empty spaces, and the new spread of the city, requires overcoming the obstacle of the sabkha - the plural of sabkha according to the translator - and moving the construction further, as it connects with the old oases, as is the case with Sidi Khuwaylid in the east, especially the "Khafji" district - Bamendel to the west - where it occupied a wonderful position suitable for urbanization on a runway under a main cliff and at a high level on the sabkha - and the new city is scheduled to house 50,000 residents, thus defining the future surroundings of the Greater Ouargla. (Koot, 2016, p 43).

The administrative name of this new urban pole is "Hay Al-Nasr", but the common name is "Al-Khafji" and it may come to mind that this name derives from the local dialect of the inhabitants of the city of Ouargla, such as naming high places with "Qara" and the like. La toponymie - (a

science concerned with studying the names of places), many places take their name from historical events that occurred in them, so time freezes and becomes a place, as they say! Which applies to calling this new urban pole "Khafji." The first construction workshops in this area were launched in 1985 AD. The Iraqi army's invasion of Kuwait during the Gulf War, and its arrival in the city on the Saudi-Iraqi borders, "Al-Khafji." This news was repeated a lot in the media. The students of this isolated university residence and the city's residents called this new area "Al-Khafji," deriding its geographical distance and its isolation at the time from the city. Ouargla, and its administrative name is "Hay al-Nasr." You may find many of its residents do not know it, and today it has become a huge urban pole, comprising more than 35,000 residents, and several large residential neighborhoods are under construction.

The new urban pole, Al-Nasr neighborhood, "Al-Khafji", differs morphologically from the old city of Ouargla, "the ancient palace", as the presence of multi-storey collective housing, and the open nature of the neighborhoods is the most important thing that differs these neighborhoods from the historical city. It consists of seven gates, and despite the removal of this wall in 1958 AD, the storefronts and residences are now performing the function that the wall used to perform, and the old city has preserved its closed nature.

The buildings that were built in Al-Nasr neighborhood were not designed, either in their external form, or the architecture of the house and its parts from the inside, according to the ecological and sociocultural needs of the paper family. The house area does not exceed 100 square meters and consists of three rooms and a balcony. The existence of the problem of real estate vessels in the desert, and the lack of population density compared to the cities of the north. Where might there be technical justifications for building such a type of buildings ? Through several field investigations and interviews and interviews with residents and newsmen from Al-Nasr neighborhood, there is almost agreement that no The suitability of these neighborhoods, especially for the traditional groups in the city of Ouargla. The house in the architecture lacks the most important parts of the home for the Ouargla family. The roof, for example, is the place where the family spends most of its time, especially during the night period in summer, which is considered the longest season in the city of Ouargla - about six months - ,

and in The morning period in the winter season due to its exposure to the sun, in addition to - Al-Hosh or Al-Rahba - and other parts, which prompted these residents to rent or sell these dwellings in most cases. He may use it for sleep only, and spend most of his daily life in his old field, which he himself formed according to his social and cultural needs.

All these factors led the residents of these new neighborhoods to reformulate the public and private sphere according to their social and cultural needs, and to try to find those missing parts in their new homes in the public spaces adjacent to their buildings; In public squares, sidewalks, green spaces, building entrances, and car parks, as soon as you take a quick tour of Al-Nasr neighborhood, you will see a wide spread of parts added to the buildings, used by these residents as an alternative to the yard (the courtyard) that does not exist in the new dwelling, which the balcony does not compensate for the narrowness its area.

## **7. CONCLUSION :**

Anthropology considers the urban field as a projection of the general society's perception of life and its social self. The society is formed for it an urban identity that distinguishes it from the rest of the societies, which is not available in the Nasr neighborhood in Ouargla. The reformulation of the public space by the population cannot be viewed from the purely legal aspect, as it is a public sphere and it is forbidden to exploit it for anything other than what was set for it, it is basically a problem - my identities - Social and cultural, it raises the issue of the absence of planning and the exploitation of the outputs of scientific research in the field of social sciences, to employ them in urban engineering and construction according to the social and cultural requirements of the residents of each region, and to abandon dealing with housing in the language of numbers to express the extent of the treatment of the housing crisis.



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