Impact on the Islamic City of Tunisia with the Coming of the European System of Urban Regulation

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A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
	This review paper is an attempt to grasp the cultural conception of the Medina of Tunis, Tunisia (the Islamic city) and the traditional urban regulations by a study of classical religious and architectural treatises of Islam. The Medina is a space closed to the world outside, emphasising the life within. The Medina's fundamental features (single principal gateway, ramparts) were the expression of a single quality and order of things, a characteristic of the traditional ideology. This one is based on a homology in which ritual, space, language, person, and object come to be a single order of an integral whole; characterized by the interrelationship of worldly elements, of natural and supernatural orders in which the Medina was embedded and by which men attempted to attain social and cosmic order. Deviating from this synchronic understanding of the traditional conception of the Medina, this paper will next focus on the impact of non-Islamic urban regulations resulting from the diachronic process of colonial domination as represented in particular by the nineteenth century, French city design. This impact is viewed, in this paper, as a radical alteration of the face of the Medina in so far the essential feature of this design as the "opening up" of the Medina, for it erected a exposed-open plaza where once stood the singular gateway, and connected this one, a symbol of openness, by a network of broad avenues, with every corner of the city. This process is seen as a dynamic synthesis emerging out of an antithetical ideological and spatial dialogue in which alone the city and its citizenry must survive.

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1. The French Colonization of Tunisia

The historical ground of the political and economic situation that prevailed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries explains the genesis of the French colonial penetration of Tunisia. Historical sources show that during the eighteenth century Tunisia was engaged in international trades. "Tunisia had regular caravan trade with *Ghadamis* (merchants from Lybia)

during the eighteenth century. (...) The *Ghadamis* merchants bought in Tunis mostly European goods. This act seems to suggest that the *Ghadamis* caravan took back from Tunis goods intended for further retail trade in the interior of Africa."(Abu-Nasr1882,57). This fact attracted the attention of the English vice-consul Robert Trail who was instructed by the "Committee of Council for Trade" in London, to report on the importance of the *Ghadamis*'s trade in Tunisia "Trail says that the *Ghadamis* caravan came six times a year to Tunis, bringing slaves, *senna*, gold dust, ostrich feathers, and ivory. This report also shows that "the *Ghadamis* were a link with the Tuaregs from whom they bought the slaves."(Abu-Nasr 1982,57) Furthermore, Tunisia had an extensive trade with its neighbouring region, Algeria. The trade that Tunisia had with the city of Constantine was the most regular. "*According to a report written in 1735, the Constantine caravan came to Tunis every month. Bringing mostly livestock and burnous (a long cloak with hood made of wool) for sale in Tunis, the merchants of Constantine bought, besides the shashiyya [a red hat worn by men] and jeweller made in the country(...), mostly European goods*."(Abu-Nasr 1982,58).

According to the importance of commercial trade, some of the products were manufactured in commercial quantities in Tunisian cities, and most particularly in Tunis. Tunis produced rugs, blankets, burnouses, *sifari* (a cloth used as a wrapper by women), ropes, pottery-ware, perfumes, jeweller and shashiyya (A popular red hat for men used as a symbol of nobility). The industry of *shashiyya* had a very essential role in external commercial trade. Introduced into Tunisia by the Andalusian immigrants during the beginning of the seventeenth century, the *shashiyya* was exported to European and Oriental countries. "This industry was concentrated in the capital [Tunis]. In 1809/1810 the *shashiyya* makers of Tunis numbered 166. (...) The wool and vermilion used in it were imported from the Iberian Peninsula. The *shashiyya* makers either exported their products themselves or sold them to merchants who were either Muslim or Christian."(Abu-Nasr1982,56) Tunisia's agricultural products especially cereals and olive oil, were also part of international trade. Cereals and olive oil were mostly exported to Europe. While Europe was changing from feudalism to capitalist enterprise based on international trade, Tunisia started to experience instability in its international trade. This instability began with the European monopoly of the maritime transportation in the Mediterranean sea. European hegemony was intended to stop the privateering in which the Bey of Tunis and the Dey of Algiers were involved. (Privateering was not the same as piracy. Privateering had to be preceded by a declaration of war, and captured privateers enjoyed the rights of prisoners of war.(Brett 1973,88). Furthermore, during the second half of the seventeenth century, Europe started to build up its financial capital by the creation of unequal exchange known as the "domestic system." This system created an over taxation of product imported into Europe by Muslims and indigenous Jews of North Africa on the one hand, and the under taxation of European products exported into Tunisia on the other. During the nineteenth century European manufactured products overflowed Tunisia "A memorandum which was written in 1802 on the commerce of Tunisia by the English consul Perkins Magra shows clearly that the European merchants had Tunisia's major imports in their hands. Amongst other things, the French merchants imported coffee, sugar, hardware, iron, lead, and linen cloth beside various other manufactured goods coming from England, Germany and Holland. The European Jews dominated in the trade with Italy, and

imported into Tunisia Italian silks, Dutch, French and English cloth, Italian pistols, and drugs, besides some of other articles coming from Germany and Italy."(Abu-Nasr 1982,58) The introduction of European manufactured products into Tunisia endangered local industry. Shashiyya for example, started to be manufactured in France and Austria-Hungaria. This fact terminated the industry of shashiyya whose vitality depended on being integrated into the external commercial network of Tunisia. Up until then, the manufacturing of shashiyya had been an important source of external revenue. Because the wool and vermillion required by this vital industry were imported, the manufacturing of *shashiyya* was heavily involved in international exchange. The French conquest of Algeria in 1830 gave the *'coup de grace'* to Tunisia's economy. The French created a boundary that isolated Tunisia from the local trade with Constantine: " The eastern part of Algeria, which used to be in close economic relationship with Tunisia, had been separated by an increasingly impenetrable boundary. The exchanges decreased between the two countries, consequently this sudden change created a deep colonial penetration with aggravation of the economic situation."(Raymond 1961,22).

Increasing economic deterioration made Tunisia dependant on European negotiators. The consuls representing European countries such as France, England, and Italy were both diplomatic agents and charge afairs. They were the intermediaries in the negotiations between their government and the *Bey* of Tunis. This situation opened Tunisia to European merchants who "were armed with extraterritoriality and better credit facilities. Tunisian craft began to decline before the competition of cheap European goods. As a result, "the intrusive force of Western way began to make itself felt in new style of architecture, dress, and sumptuary."(Brown 1974,242)

Politically, this change had a corrosive impact on the local government. In dealing with the political situation during the mid-nineteenth century, Carl Brown, stated:

"In earlier days before Europe was so overwhelmingly strong or so single-mindedly determined to bring Barbary to heel, it had been the custom of European consuls to kiss the *Bey*'s hand in official audiences. However, in May 1836 French consul Schwebel, newly arrived to take up his duties in Tunis, refused to kiss Mustapha *Bey*'s hand. (...) During this same period, a new bluntness began to appear in the consular language addressed to the *Bey* or his ministers. Withdrawal from formal audiences in a huff, threat to send a naval demonstration, or to break off relations, demands for acceptance of terms within an absurdly short period became frequent. It was as if the work of the consul in Tunisia was to be short-tempered."(Brown 1974,242).

Under these circumstances, the foreign consuls increased their authority in Tunisia. "whom, previously circumspect, began increasingly to bully the Tunisian government, harass Tunisian subjects (especially the international merchant class), demand-- and usually receive-- exceptional privileges and exception for themselves and their subjects domiciled in Tunisia. The foreign community grew in size, economic strength, and arrogance."(Brown 1974,241) During the mid-nineteenth century, Hess Wartegg reported on the privileges that the European community had in Tunis: "(...), *the position of Europeans in Tunis is a very favourable one. During my stay in Tunis, a murder was committed by a subject of a European power. What was to be done with the fellow? Sentence him to death? There was no hangman. Lock him up? This Consulate contained no prison.*

The consul had to ask his Government for instruction. As there was no communication by sea between that power and Tunis, the criminal would have had, in case of extradition, to be sent by Italian vessel, at great cost, to the next harbour, and from their home by railway. Under these circumstances, and with the existing gratuities, it can be easily understood that matters are often winked at."(Hess-Wartegg 1882,189).

The effects of outside pressure and the establishment of extraterritoriality privileges and immunity against action of local government, favored the settlement of immigrants in Tunis. Speculation became prevalent. For example Jean Ganiage reported that the European negotiators speculated on false credit to a conflict in which they would use the protection of their consuls. What was the impression of local Tunisians in this situation? As Brown puts it, "*the native Tunisian began to develop the idea that any dispute with a European was best avoided. Whatever the rights of the matter, the European won. Such a conditioning helps explain the examples of acquiescence and virtual servility toward foreigners, (...).*"(Brown 1974,242) In other words, the local Tunisian adopted a language of virtual submission to turn on himself by means of refuge. As a consequence of this deteriorating situation, the *Bey* of Tunis started to take initiatives of modernization in order to gain back the respect of his sovereignty from the European challenge. These ones were mostly based in emulating the European concept of power based on military strength . The Bey modernized the military troops and arsenal. A large number of French military advisers were asked by the *Bey* to train the army, in this situation, the *Bey* recruited the French ones as professionals who would be in his service following the pattern which had been used in the Turkish military system of Janissaries. The cost of military modernization made the *Bey* seek loans from French banks. "*It appeared to be a golden opportunity for French interests in Tunisia. Those inclined to a Machiavellian interpretation of modern imperialism might assume that France had finally induced Ahmed Bey to take the bait.*"(Brown 1974, 286) This new situation did not accord with Tunisian traditional ideology nor with the *bey*'s own predilection. As a result of these new expenditures and credit system, the Tunisian government was becoming indebted vis-a-vis the French banks with a high interest rate. [*The loan of 1863 which was made by "La Maison Erlinger" who, for 37 million, from which the Bey got only a part of them, (...) obliged Tunisia to pay back 65 million, the annual interest was more than 4 millions.*] (Raymond 1961, 25)

In order to pay the debt the *Bey* increased the local taxes of the farmers. In 1864 this over taxation caused the insurgency of the tribes of the Sahel against the *Bey*. In 1866 and 1867, drought and starvation followed the civil revolt and the Crimean war. By 1869 an international financial committee composed of England, Italy, and France had decided on the financial control of Tunisia. Competition to invest in Tunisia occurred among the three countries. In the 'Berlin treaty,' in which England agreed to concentrate on the colonization of Egypt and Cyprus, France, already engaged with a considered investment and a military presence received exclusive exploitation rights in that country, and Italy got nothing (Italy later concentrated on Lybia). As Raymond puts it " *l'expédition [militaire] française ouvrait largement la Tunisie a l'exploitation capitaliste.*" (Raymond 1961,28-29) The French troops imposed on the *Bey* the signature of the treaty of the official French

colonization of Tunisia.

2. The New World View

Regarding perspectives of space and time, we will direct our attention to the diachronic process of colonial domination and its impact of external influences on the world of Islam. This process was the result of Europe during the age of discovery and the industrial revolution. The imposition of the European experience of urbanism on the pre-existing traditional city reflects an alien culture characterised by the modern social order that Max Weber associates with the "vast cosmos of modernity." From a historical perspective, when we combine the developmental process of the city in time, within the European urban experience, we will be dealing with the peculiarity of modernity and its dynamics. In proposing the ascetic origin of modern capitalism, Weber's framework of study provides a graphical contrast between two types of world views, pre-modern and modern, in Western Europe. Weber explains that the decline of the pre-modern city derives from the implications of the sixteenth- century Reformation. The pre-modern city went through a transformation that made it no longer capable of being self-contained within its boundaries. Its full sense was transformed because of change in politically oriented commercial and industrial undertakings. Weber's framework stand on the erosion of social interaction resulting from the new world view that derives from the Calvinistic doctrine of pre-destination (Weber l958,109-110).

3. The Impact Of The New World View On The Cultural Heritage

What is relevant to my point here is the ramification of this imported new world view for the spatial ordering of the city, the medina. Following the era of industrial capitalism, the city's nature of being the expression of an integral system broke away and became a source of financial and political competition. Industrial capitalism divorces the man of work from the work he does, for he does not control his labour, but rather must sell it.

This process has affected man's use of space, which had previously been a support for his social relations. Following the era of industrial capitalism man no longer experienced his surrounding world in the same integral way as he had before. Monetary values of real estate became the sole directing mechanism in the organisation of space. This new organisation of space made the actor a passive participant in his world.

In nineteenth century, rules for understanding appearances moved beyond the rules through which Rousseau analysed the city. « He could imagine the cosmopolitan public as alive by portraying everyone in the city as an actor, (...). In the Nineteenth century capitals, the appropriate theatric form was instead the monologue . Rousseau hoped for a social life in which masks would become faces, appearances signs of character. In a way, he realise his hope ; masks did become faces in the Nineteenth century, but the result was the erosion of social interaction.(Sennet 1977,217) The spatial arrangement underlying the nineteenth century, French city design reflects the principle of isolation and subsequently magnifies the reduction of social interaction.

One of the examples of conscious manipulation of city space as a tool for social plan, is the transformation of Paris by Le Baron Haussmann during the reign of Napoleon III and the second empire. This spatial transformation was intended to control the distribution of city population concerning the social class.

The Hausmannian transformation of Paris occurred as a result of the junction of an industry with banking (based on productive spending and the Saint Simonian principle) on the one hand, and the lessening of social interaction by exacerbating inequalities among the population on the other. This spatial strategy can be as an attempt to create 'conflict-free' city life by using spatial separation as a means of control. In his social analysis of the nineteenth century, transformation of Paris, Henry Lefebvre states that the Haussmannian plan is an elaborate class strategy deriving from the class tension that erupted in 1848.(1968,23) The plan was to arrange the city without taking into consideration its preexisting reality. What is relevant to my point here is that the spheres of this society's foundation, such as social, economic, religious, power, and political spheres, became separated into different entities and created a situation in which there was a conscious use of one to legitimise the others. This separability at the level of the city reached its climax in the form of single-function urban development.

Each district of the city was to receive a single category of people and be actively governed by a commercial ethics to legitimise political ends. It is this kind of city that Paul Wheatley has called the city of the entrepreneur in which, « the values of society were structured about the prevailing expediential norms of the market place and manifested themselves in a consensus appropriate to technical rather than the moral order ».(Wheatley 1967,26)

The society's foundations became reinterpreted and integrally related to a new ideology. The contrast resulting from the superposition of new ideas over old ones had a great effect, within the same society and ground roots. In the case of colonial domination, where the new ideology derives from an alien culture and obtrude on an non-subject society to this new dynamism, one can reasonably assume that the settlers' process will generate friction with substantial devastating effect on the indigenous society.

4. The Coming of the European System

This section of the paper deals with the impact that the 19th century French colonial urban regulation on the Medina of Tunis. It is important to notice that the way the French represent space of another culture and this is important because the general model indicates that is likely to affect the understanding another culture. For example, it is interesting to see how the French represent the Egyptian cultural heritage at the world exhibit of the end of the nineteenth century. In the world exhibit , "the Egyptian exhibit had been built by the French to represent a winding roadway of Cairo, made of houses with overhanging upper stories and a mosque like that of *Qaitbay*, It was intended to resemble the old aspect of Cairo, even the paint on the buildings was made dirty. (...)

the imitation of the street was made laid out in a haphazard manner of a bazaar. Shops and stalls crowded the way where Frenchmen dressed as sold Perfumes, pastries, and *tarbushes*. The Egyptian visitors were disgusted by all this and stayed away. Their final embarrassment had been to enter the door of the mosque and discover that, like the rest of the street, it has been erected as what Europeans called a façade. 'Its external form as a mosque was all that there was. As for the interior, it had been set up a coffee house, where Egyptian girls performed dances with young males, and dervishes whirled.(M. Tymothy,1988,1)

The first Europeans arrived in Tunisia during the seventeenth century. They were followed about a century and a half later by predominantly French immigrants. The church, which was run by a Catholic mission, was the meeting and rallying point of the European community. The church seemed to have served as an institution which people would rely on more than the consulate.

[In case of need, they addressed themselves to the Capuchin missionaries. They asked them to keep their savings, to divide inheritances. Even more than the consulates, the church was the rallying point par excellence. The Faith was very alive, and the ascension that the priests of the mission exercised was absolute.] (Ganiage 1960, 28-29)

While the Italians, British, and Maltese were merchant adventurers, the French conducted systematic capitalist enterprise. This is evident, for example, in their investment in building transportation facilities and military installations in certain strategic locations for the transport of the objects of their commerce. It is with the proclamation of Tunisia as a "protectorate" by the French at the end of the nineteenth century and the establishment of a French government over the country that the right foundations for the accommodation of the incoming French community were laid, especially in urban centres. It was this which ushered in modern society. The elements of this transformation are seen in Tunis in the construction of an elaborate network of avenues and railways. The establishment of schools that imparted western liberal arts and scientific education, the introduction of an administration based on the French model of public service in which modern bureaucratic structures such as *La Municipalité* and *Les Ponts et Chaussèes*; replaced the traditional chieftaincy administration of the Bey; the establishment of communication such as the post office and telegraph; the introduction of Le *Ministère des Finances* with the accompanying view that urbanism is based on real estate and commercial enterprise; the introduction of le *Credit Foncier* which through legal reforms abolished land collective ownership and replaced it by a Western European concept of private property; introduction of entertainment such as Le Casino and Le Theatre Francais; the introduction of representative government; and so forth. From the French colonisation this process was seen as "a civilising mission." This mission was the imposition of French cultural norms on the spaces of Tunis.

5. Impact of External Influence on the Medina

In this Part, I will deal with the impact the colonisation process had on the spatial setting of the Medina. This was characterised by the opening up of 'closed' space. It is crucial to note that the term 'closed' as it is related to space in traditional Tunisian culture goes beyond the obviousness of

physical spatial appearance. The French colonial's view of 'closed' reduce the mere physical appearance of closeness. One must remain all the time aware of this misunderstanding. The elaboration of the port has extended The opening up of the Medina. This process has grown once Tunisia's potentialities became open to capitalistic exploitation. The opening up of the Medina was the occasion of facilitating the flow of goods to the metropolis, France. Consequently, the Medina became an object full of potential for the economical and political interest.

Colonial penetration transformed Tunis socially, spatially, and ethnically into separate discrete units-- the so called indigenous city, the Medina, and the European quarter. In particular, this separation was due to the introduction of colonial urban regulations. The spatial transformation was presented as an urbanism which generated urban projects based on the idea of 'extending' the city and making it 'beautiful.' In treating colonial urbanism as a philosophy representing the values of dominating political power in Tunis, Dale F. Eickelman stated, The overall shape of the town of Tunis suggests how this philosophy was spatially projected. As some Tunisians comment, the overall street plan takes the form of a cross rammed into the Medina [sic], making the colonial imagery even more suggestive. One plan for Tunis, elaborated under the Vichy regime but never carried out, took the notion of this type of planning one step further. The 'modern' part of Tunis was divided along one principal axis between Christians and Muslims (...) and along with another axis between bourgeoisie and workers, thus using the principle of religion and class for the spatial ordering of society.(Eickelman 1981, 274)

6. The Transformation of the Medina

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Medina started to experience a sudden change in its spatial pattern. One of the changes can be seen as early as 1878. The origin of this change started in the vicinity of the main gate, *Bâb El Bahr* (gate of the sea). Inside the Medina, European consulates were established in the old Medina's buildings which formerly housed travellers and traders. These houses were called *Fondouk*. As part of this settlement, a Catholic church and a school were erected.

This quarter of the Medina came to be the European quarter, which continued to be extended outside the main gate, between the gate and the sea. According to the nineteenth century, traveller Hess-Wartegg, this quarter became known as the "Quarter of the Franks". From the gate mentioned above, a broad and imposing street extends to the shores of the El. Behireh lake and the harbour. Fine, stately mansions, most of them built during the last few years, form this street, called the "Marina," which almost reaches to the lake. This street contains European bazaars, large houses of business, hotels, the offices of the French telegraph, the tobacco manufactory, the [French] consulate with its large gardens, the European casino and finally the cafes most frequented in the town, and it is ornamented with some shady groups of trees beside, and contains some public coffee gardens. On both sides, smaller streets run into the Marina, also lined with beautiful buildings, and this latter ends in the Piazza Marina, the real centre of the European quarter. In the street running south are the Swedish, German, Austrian, and Spanish Consulates, as well as the shipping agents

and bank houses; while the street north of the Piazza Marina contains the palace of the English consul and many European business houses, and also the dwellings of the Italians and Maltese. Toward the West, a third street lies between this place and the inner town [The Medina], and there the Roman Catholic Church as well as a convent and the residence of this bishop are situated.(Hess-Wartegg, 1882, 185) According to the map of 1882 , three French military installations were erected in the countryside close to the Medina and inside the wall of its *R'bat*. The first location was on the southern wall of the Medina and housed the military troops called "La Caserne du Premier Regiment," (the post barracks of the first regiment). The second one was in the plains a mile north of the Medina. This was the place of the barracks called, *"La Caserne d'Artillerie,"* for the accommodation of guns and powder. Finally, the third was a mile North of the Medina. This location was a military hillstation for observations. This hill-station was called *"La Redoute du Belvedere."* By 1882, both the military and colonial civil settlements were set up. An increasing link between these settlements was made by a network of rails and roads. This spatial change divided the city of Tunis into three major "functional" parts, the indigenous city (the Medina), the military barracks, and the civil station (which included the new business centre and the residential area). The inner and outer walls, which were outlets that made the Medina into an integral whole, and which formerly marked its boundary, were removed and replaced by a network of broad avenues. Which its network connected every corner of the city with the new "functional" parts mentioned above by a system of transportation and new open spaces. Thereby, this new process penetrated and disconnected the Medina from its two *R'bats*. After this transformation the *R'bats* became suburbs. These *R'bats* originally were the Medina's integral components. In this connection, it is crucial to note that, in the Tunisian language, the term *R'bat* means the link which makes two units or elements dependent and indistinguishable from each other, as an integral whole.

7. The Opening Up of the Medina

The Spatial change of the city of Tunis is the result of prescriptive spatial regulations. These were based on "La Convention" made in 1793 for the master plan of Paris known as the "Plan des Artistes" from which the transformation of the city of Paris under the Second Empire was developed .(Municipality of Tunis, no date,5) In Section B of Chapter two of the urban regulations (see Appendix B below), the guidelines for spatial arrangement are based on: (1) Practical traffic; (2) wholesomeness; (3) Aesthetics; and (4) accommodation of recreational activity. Consequently, these guidelines led to the erection of:

1)- Broad avenues penetrating the city.

2)- Public roads connecting the suburbs to the 'business centre with appropriate traffic.

3)- Boulevards and circular gardens to create recreational promenades and "air" beltways.

The indigenous city, the Medina, was taken into consideration for its picturesque nature, a piece of jewellery for touristic and artistic attractions. The Medina is characterised in these regulations by its [character], [unity], [layout] and [isolation].

Character:

The essential quality of the indigenous city, in its many structural details and aspects, is the result of circumstances such: The sun; the mores and customs; a special turn of spirit.

These are the conditions that have caused the streets to be narrow and crooked, the houses to be small, and the brightest colours to be used , the terraced roofs to be superimposed on each other, and the decorative motifs to have an architecture suitable for them.

Unity:

One of the great advantages of the superiority of the indigenous city of Tunis is that it offers a complete wholeness.

Layout:

It is a charm in addition to this wholeness. Isolation: For all the preceding factors, the indigenous city has kept its calm, this meditation, this expression of Arab customs and art, this lack of promiscuity dreamed of for oriental cities (Municipality of Tunis, no date,5)[translation mine)].

These spatial considerations, (Character, Unity, layout and Isolation) that directed the prescriptive regulations stipulated that some open spaces should be made inside the Medina. The following excerpts from the Notice sur le Projet d'Aménagements d'Embellissements et d'Extension de la Ville de Tunis, illustrate French views on city changes in Tunis.

- Public plazas should be made inside the indigenous city .

- Every time that we conduct a demolition for new open space, we should be aware of being meticulous about the conservation of old architecture for the purposes of artistic, historical and archaeological documentation. It is for these reasons that, when a new road goes through an inner courtyard of a house, this courtyard should be preserved so that it will be transformed into a small public space.

- Every fragment of an architectural element should be rearranged and exposed publicly

The impact of this spatial penetration generated a radical alteration of the traditional model, the Medina, in so far as the essential feature of this new spatial order was the 'opening up' of the Medina. Integral features such as fortifications that characterised the Medina as 'closed' space to the world outside, emphasising the life within, an idea restated in the notion of the Medina's single gateway, were obliterated by a network of broad avenues and plazas. For example, a wide , open plaza was erected where once stood the principal gateway. This plaza , a symbol of colonial presence, was connected by a network of broad avenues, with every corner of the city.

8. Impact of External Influences on Traditional Ideology

The obliteration of the Medina's integral features, which not only characterized it in terms of enclosed space but also united in it all those units which belonged to a global entity, altered the Medina in the direction of openness and linearity as the result of the influence of nineteenth century French design as a form of modern urbanism. A disturbance in one unit would cause a disturbance in the others. I view the disturbance as an impact of colonial domination in so far as its essential feature is to penetrate the Medina, by bringing the outside into the inside of the city, and striking at its very root the 'closed' nature of the Medina. I depict the colonial process whose essential feature

is the 'opening up' of the 'closed ' space as the intrusion of outside cultural influences into the world of Islam. In this connection, the sociologist and historian Hichem Djait, in dealing with the impact of external influences on the Maghreb, termed this outside intrusion, the process of colonisation, a "rape", [*The occidental colonization has, deeply penetrated, traumatised, and fertilised (the Maghreb) at once. But the intimate penetration of the Occident, the colonial rape, has jammed it over centuries and installed into it (the Maghreb) mental and material structures*.] (Djait 1974, 30) (Translation mine) What is relevant to my point here, is that the idea of closed space as I relate it metaphorically to the Muslim woman's veil has been confusedly perceived as a surface-mask veiling a static and ossified object.

In this connection, I recall the nineteenth-century French poetry dealing with the description of the Tunisian Muslim woman.

> [*And, knowing how to heavily raise and lower*
> *Her two museum eyelids*
> *She clothes herself completely with an artful simplicity*
> *As soon as one looks at her with the air of a lover.*
> *She does not think. Her beauty has no soul.*
> *But one sees dressed from her feet to the depths of her eyes*
> *This divine animal, Woman,*
> *And that is worth as much as a soul--and even more.*]
> (Delarue-Mardus 1975,159-160) (Translation: Marion Ross.)

Another French poet wrote about the veiled Muslim women:

> [*... And her great eyes, piercing as two stars*
> *The night of the mask, and the complicity of the wind*
> *Which, under the white veil, flattens the pink towel*
> *Redoubling the mystery where her flesh is enclosed.*]
> (August Nicolas 1975,160) [(Translation: Marion Ross)]

It is not infrequent that the French poets indicate the resemblance of the city to a woman.

> [*It is a calm street, with old, closed houses*
> *Where the jealous Orient hides its treasures from view*.]

The same poet continues later,

> [*Of the things within, nothing filters out*
> *Through the slit-open doors of the heavy pink doorways.*
> *In this street where shadow is made of light*
> *Where the soul of Tunis sleeps its siesta of summer*
> *I come then to promenade my poet's dream*.]

This poetry about the closed space and the veil hides a meaningful element which is part of the internal aspect of Muslim society. This is the resilience that the Tunisian society creates against a threat. Eric R.Wolf in elaborating on the attitude that Algerian society had vis-a-vis the French colonial threat, stated, "This attitude of reserve bears the Arabic name of *kitman*, a Quoranic term signifying hiding place, hence a tendency to turn inward."(Wolf 1969, 225) Turning inwardly, Muslim society creates inviolable zones from which uncontrolled forces are ready to overflow. Bourdieu has made the same point about the Algerian woman's Veil, "By wearing it , the Algerian woman creates a situation of non-reciprocity; like a disloyal player, she sees without being seen, without allowing herself to be seen ."(Wolf 1969, 226). This colonial process that I associate with the 'opening up' of the 'closed space' of the Medina was impossible in the pre-colonial era. The idea of a 'closed ' nature is connected with the person, house and city as they resonate with each other, in their orientations regarding to the sun, to their respective inner worlds. It is like Muslim women wearing the veil who can allow herself by the use of it as an outlet to exercise an overflowing action of her passionate and languorous gaze without being seen or penetrated. The 'closed' spatial configuration has a reversal effect in suggesting that a precinct is inviolable to any cruder intrusion or penetration. This internal aspect is embedded in traditional ideology. Which is based on a homology in which ritual, space, words, action, person, and object come to be in a single order of totality.

The spatial penetration of colonisation was intended to make an end to this internal dialogue, which we might call a meaningful polyphony such as an improvisation accompanying the melody. This internal spatial dialogue was characterised by the interrelationship of worldly elements, and was accompanied with an ostinato of the natural and supernatural orders in which the Medina was embedded.

The devastating effect of colonial penetration has destroyed the harmonic structure. Its effect has led to a decomposition and atomization of the city. The city has become spatially separated into two distinct sections. The first section is the Medina, which spatially illustrates not only a traditional ideology where all spheres such as political, social, economic, aesthetic, erotic, and so forth are interrelated with each other, but also encompasses within its walls a multi-ethnic, multi religious citizenry. In other words, the Medina can be termed as a city which is made of a sum of conceptions. The second section is the European quarter which spatially represents a cultural distinct group with a community whose foundations are based on the capitalist economic order exhibiting a 'strange coalition' between religion and politics, both belonging to modernity, an imported world, yet one which is detached from its ground roots in an older religious synthesis.

After the proclamation of Tunisia as a French colony, the French colonials controlled the apparatus of power and force.

The example portrayed in this study, the city of Tunis, is exactly what we have the superimposition of modernity, deriving from an alien (French) culture, on a pre-modern traditional culture. In this colonial context, we are dealing with an example of heterogametic discontinuity in which we can expect the two world views, the indigenous, traditional one and the transformed imported modern one-- to provide a strange contrast with devastating effects on the traditional system of integrated belief. Consequently, the resonance between men, house, city, and government which belongs to a single quality and sequence of things, a characteristic of the traditional order, cannot in any way be equated with that of the new order. For example, the units such as the ramparts and city gates which were parts of the integral unity with which man attempted to attain social and cosmic order, have been fragmented. Without a doubt, some of the them still exist. These can also be seen as representing an ossified, cold former age; they are bits of artefacts, caged in museums.

9. Reinterpretation of the tradition and the cultural heritage

This section will take into consideration the contemporary context of Tunis in which bits and pieces of the integral system still exist as reminders of the older tradition. Their union has collapsed, but the antithetical ideological and spatial dialogues of the 'closed' and 'open' space have come to become integrally related to another ideology which is inherent to the colonial era. In other words, it is a neo-colonial ideology. The differentiation between the 'closed' and 'open' space, evident in modern Tunis, enables the two to be paradoxically reinterpreted to ally once they have been separated. It is in this context of such differentiation alone that the Medina is being used as a 'museum', for 'national' art. In this situation, the Tunisian elites, who were allowed to be 'assimilated' under the French colonial domination period (and who actively participated in the independence of Tunisia), seem to have become conscious of the cultural values and the romantic and picturesque aspect their traditional way of life had in colonial society. In such context, the Medina was taken as an object full of potential for their economic and political interests. In the late 1960's with the burgeoning of the tourist industry, there was a shift to regarding the Medina as part of the national heritage, and various plans, some of which were the subject of international competition, were evolved as an effort to regard it as section of the national business.(Eickelman 1981,277)

The Medina was considered as a "Dodge city," using Carl Brown's terms(1974,29), exhibiting a 'national' culture in which the past, is viewed through folkloric manifestations, as playtime. In this connection I mention the case of the Medina of Fes as an example of the new interpretation of tradition:

[It] is the reappropriation of the old town by the culturally and socially dominant classes (the elites) as a kind of museum organised according to their (and international) conceptions of the "traditional" and 'Islamic thought' that are taken to have informed it. And so we find a brief announcement in a newspaper as a witness to a new version of tradition: UNESCO is about to launch next year an international appeal for the restoration of the old imperial city of Fes, in Morocco. A blueprint, elaborated by international experts (...) provides that the historic buildings should be restored and their inhabitants rehoused elsewhere, to create centres dedicated to Islamic arts and thought.(Gilseman 1982, 210-211).

There is no clear line between the pre-modern and modern eras, but ideologically and socially they are two distinct entities. The images of modernity are variable, but the one that has been introduced under colonial domination is tinged with legal inequality and encouragement to speculation. The old triadic relation of city, citizenry, and government has been replaced by the national constituent assembly (the first session of it was held in 'independent' Tunisia, on March 25, 1956 with representatives of the various ethnic and religious denominations). The multi-ethnic, multi-religious phenomenon-- a new ideology which is inherent to the colonial era has been manifested, within the Tunisian population, as a modernising image. Its manifestation is expressed by divisions under radical ideas, economic competition, party affiliation, and so forth.

"The irony is that the very bourgeoisie that moved out of the Medina as it emerged under colonialism now, as a crystallised and formed class in the postcolonial period, reappropriates the Medina in the name of a supposedly historically conscious desire to preserve an unchanging set of sacred Islamic Values. In doing so, of course, it changes once again the social pattern of the city and religion. Furthermore, its conception of history is limited to a static and elitist view."(Giselnan1982,212).

The Medina has now achieved a new universalisation of meaning and becomes a subject of interest and competition among diverse groups. Today it is the largest public attraction in Tunisia, just as it indeed was in pre-colonial times.

10 References

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