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French Land, Algerian People Nineteenth-Century French Discourse on Algeria and Its Consequences

Paige N. Gulley

“Algeria, it is often said, is less a colony than the extension, across the Mediterranean, of France herself.”¹ This is an extraordinary statement by the General Government of Algeria in 1922. As early as 1913, historian Charles Emmerson notes, “a Frenchman would remind anyone who cared to listen [that] the southern extremity of the French Republic – that area legally considered the unitary territory of France, whole and indivisible – did not lie on the shores of the Mediterranean, but in Algeria, at the southern edge of the three French administrative départements...” Emmerson emphasizes, “It was only beyond them, amongst the undulating dunes of the Sahara, that the French Republic ended and the colonial French Empire began.”² Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Algeria had come to hold such a privileged place for the French that it was not a mere colony, but a part of France across the Mediterranean. This view, however, did not extend to the people of Algeria, as Emmerson highlights: “Although all the Algerian and French-born residents of Algeria, both European and non-European, were considered French subjects, most non-Europeans (Arab, Kabyle and Berber) were not considered full citizens.”³ This clearly indicates that Algeria and its people were viewed differently by the French. The distinction between the land and the people was created primarily through discourse, and became part of the French cultural imaginary. Indeed, this discursive difference – between Algeria, the valuable and useful land, and the people of Algeria,⁴ lazy, savage, and worthless – not only formed an integral part of the French understanding of Algeria but also influenced government policies on the colony throughout the nineteenth century. The French privileged the physical space of Algeria even as they devalued its people.

The significance of discourse and knowledge production have been extensively studied in the second half of the twentieth century, most notably by Michel Foucault, who introduced the concept of power-knowledge as mutually constitutive and clearly connected the production of knowledge with the creation of power.⁵ The use of specific language in describing the world, especially other peoples and cultures, is integral in the creation of knowledge about (and thus

¹ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie : Direction de l’agriculture, du commerce et de la colonisation [General Government of Algeria: Director of Agriculture, Commerce and Colonization], *La Colonisation en Algérie : 1830-1921* [*Colonization in Algeria: 1830-1921*] (Algiers: Imprimerie administrative Émile Pfister, 1922), PDF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France [National Library of France] (ark:/12148/bpt6k147325k), 3, my translation.

² Charles Emmerson, *1913: In Search of the World before the Great War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 267.

³ Emmerson, *1913*, 267.

⁴ I use the phrase “people of Algeria” throughout this paper to avoid using offensive terms such as “native,” which can in colonial contexts carry a connotation of inferiority, and the French “*indigène*” (literally, “indigenous”), which, though quite common throughout the nineteenth century, is today a highly offensive term. I use the term “*indigène*” only in direct quotes from original sources due to its lack of a direct English translation. I do not use the term “Algerian” in order to avoid confusion between the people of Algeria and the French and European settlers who referred to themselves as “Algerian” beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century (see p. 28-29 of this paper).

⁵ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), esp. 29-30.

power over) them. In a colonial context, Edward Said focused on the relationship between authors, their texts, and orientalist ideas, and highlighted that the language used to describe the world is essential in creating perceptions of that world, for both the author and the reader.

Language both reflects and creates the ideas it expresses. It is not merely a tool to be picked up and put down as needed; on the contrary, language is fundamental in human experience and comprehension of the world. As expressed by Friedrich Schleiermacher, the hermeneutic philosopher, “the innate nature of language modifies our mind.”⁶ Language can thus influence one’s understanding of the world: “language guides our perception intrinsically.”⁷ Using language is an act of interpretation. In fact, “the world is given to us already interpreted through language.”⁸ Therefore, words do not simply describe human experience; they contribute to perceptions of the world. In the same way that power and knowledge are mutually constitutive, so too are language and ideas. As Pierre Bourdieu argued, language carries symbolic power: the “power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world.”⁹ Thus, word choice intrinsically influences the perception of the subject of discourse and actions toward that subject, making a study of the language used by the French essential to understanding their perceptions of and policies on Algeria.

Discussions of the colonizer’s view of a colony would be incomplete if they failed to recognize orientalism, Said’s theory of the relationship between the “Occident” and the “Orient” and the ways that the colonizer (the West) viewed the colonized (the East). It is the notion that “[t]here are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated.”¹⁰ Said argues that the “Orient” is almost entirely an invention of the Occident, its own expectations and interpretations of the “other.” The creation of orientalist ideas is in large part the result of discourse and the use of specific language. As a reviewer notes, Said “underlines...the relation of the author to his material...[and] the relation between texts and the creation of a mode of discourse about the Orient.”¹¹ Because people wrote about the non-Western world in this manner, the oriental image came to define colonial relationships. Much of orientalism and its various applications focuses specifically on culture and people, and indeed, the French view of the people of Algeria was primarily an orientalist understanding.

Said briefly introduces geography into his discussion of orientalism: “as both geographical *and cultural* entities...such locales, regions, geographical sectors as 'Orient' and 'Occident' are man-made.”¹² However, it becomes clear in reading further that Said is speaking primarily of culture; geography is merely an indication of a different culture. The “Orient,”

⁶ Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, quoted in the introduction to *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1997), 11.

⁷ Jens Zimmermann, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15.

⁸ Zimmermann, *Hermeneutics*, 15.

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 170.

¹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 36.

¹¹ Sophie Fenouillet, "Edward Said, *L'orientalisme. L'Orient créé par l'Occident*" ["Edward Said, *Orientalism. The Orient Created by the Occident*"], *Mots [Words]* 30, no. 1 (1992): 118, my translation, http://www.persee.fr/doc/mots_0243-6450_1992_num_30_1_1691.

¹² Said, *Orientalism*, 5, my emphasis.

though sometimes conceived as a physical place, signifies “oriental” peoples, and in this sense, can be understood more as a space than a place. As such, it is overwhelmingly on culture that orientalism, and its resulting studies, concentrate. Few studies have been done of the French metropole’s understanding of the land of its colonies, the physical space that is Algeria, as distinct from and even in opposition to its people. This paper will work to fill this gap and examine in detail the significance of the discursive distinction between Algeria and its people and its effects on French policies.

The issue of language in Algeria, both during the colonial period and in the post-colonial era, is one that has been addressed by many researchers.¹³ Scholars including Farid Aitsiselmi and Mohamed Benrabah have examined the importance of the French language in the education system of French Algeria, while Abdelmajid Hannoum has focused specifically on the creation of French knowledge about Algeria through the records of the Arab Bureaus.¹⁴ Aitsiselmi and Patricia Lorcin provide valuable studies of French terms for the people of Algeria and the creation of distinctions between “Arabs” and “Kabyles.”¹⁵ Other scholars, including David Prochaska, have studied European settlers’ use of language in the creation of an “Algerian” identity.¹⁶ However, while these and other researchers have studied in great detail the people of Algeria and the French policies and relations toward them, there are no detailed examinations of the discourse on the Algerian land as distinct from, and more valuable than, its people, nor the effects of this policy on the eventual French understanding of Algeria as part of France.

In studying French colonization, most scholars define the French colonial policy of the nineteenth century as one of “assimilation,” which is contrasted with “association” in the twentieth century.¹⁷ Benrabah defines “assimilation” as “Frenchification,” asserting that the French goal was to make the people of Algeria more “French,” and thus more “civilized.”¹⁸ However, other scholars have suggested that “assimilation” was not so easily defined, and indeed, government documents from the colonial era demonstrate clearly that the situation in Algeria was more complicated than an “assimilation-to-association” model suggests. In a detailed study of the history of “assimilation,” Martin Deming Lewis argues that assimilation

¹³ See for example: Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002); Jean-Benoît Naveau and Julie Barlow, *The Story of French* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006); and Habiba Deming, “Language and Politics: A New Revisionism,” in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. Patricia Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006): 181-195.

¹⁴ Farid Aitsiselmi, “Language Planning in Algeria: Linguistic and Cultural Conflicts”, in *French in and out of France: Language Policies, Intercultural Antagonisms, and Dialogue*, ed. Kamal Salhi, vol. 18 of *Modern French Identities* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002); Mohamed Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013); Abdelmajid Hannoum, “Colonialism and Knowledge in Algeria,” *History and Anthropology* 12, no. 4 (2001): 343-379; and Abdelmajid Hannoum, “The Historiographic State: How Algeria Once Became French,” *History and Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (2008): 91-114.

¹⁵ Aitsiselmi, “Language Planning in Algeria,” and Patricia M.E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, prejudice and race in colonial Algeria* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995), esp. 41-49, 120-130.

¹⁶ This issue of “Algerian” identity will be taken up later in this paper; see esp. p. 28-29, also p. 48-51. David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 215.

¹⁷ One notable work which makes this distinction is Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria*; see also Robert Aldrich, “Colonialism and Nation-Building in Modern France,” in *Nationalizing Empires*, eds. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 2015), esp. 156.

¹⁸ Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria*, 25-26.

was much more nuanced than many scholars realize, incorporating policies toward both people and land.¹⁹ His work is one of the few that takes up the issue of land, providing important insights into the history of French policies of colonial land, though he fails to examine the question of the land versus the people of a colony, as well as neglecting to address in detail the uniqueness of the Algerian situation.

Lewis argues that the roots of the assimilation policy can be traced to the French Revolution (1789-1799), when the government “declared the colonies to be ‘integral parts of the Republic’, and divided them into *départements* just as in the mother country.”²⁰ This initial assimilation of French colonies lasted for only four years, until Napoléon came to power. However, Lewis contends that it was this revolutionary practice that inspired calls for assimilation during the nineteenth century. In 1848, the French government “freed the slaves in the French West Indies, reestablished universal suffrage in the colonies as well as at home, and reinstated colonial representation in the metropolitan parliament... Algeria, still not completely conquered, was divided into *départements* and given a civil regime with parliamentary representation at Paris, though there the suffrage was limited to the French settlers.”²¹ These reforms were also short-lived; only the abolition of slavery and the establishment of Algerian *départements* survived Napoléon III’s *coup d’état* in 1852.²²

Following the establishment of the Third Republic in 1870, Lewis examines the increase in calls for the assimilation of French colonies. At this point, the majority of such arguments focused on the people of the colonies and attempts to “Frenchify” them.²³ Though Lewis notes that calls for assimilation were usually broadly extended to all French colonies, he also acknowledges that “Algeria was recognized as a special case. The [national colonial] congress declared that it was *une terre française* [a French land], not a colony...”²⁴ As such, Lewis’ work demonstrates that even within the French movement that favored assimilation for all French colonies, Algeria held a privileged position. Though the roots of the assimilationist movement were in the Revolution-era recognition of colonies as “parts of the Republic,” even the assimilationists of the national colonial congress considered Algeria to be more than a colony, and thus deserving of different policies. Algeria was the only colony designated as “French land,” despite calls for assimilationist policies in other French colonies. So what made Algeria different? Why did even those who traced their beliefs back to the inclusion of colonies as “parts of the Republic” differentiate Algeria from all other French colonies? And how did Algeria come to be understood as “the extension, across the Mediterranean, of France herself”?²⁵

In answering these questions, this paper will examine French government documents, as well as the memoirs of soldiers and politicians who visited Algeria during the nineteenth century. Based on these sources, it will argue that the French privileged above all the Algerian land. The

¹⁹ Martin Deming Lewis, “One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The “Assimilation” Theory in French Colonial Policy,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4, no. 2 (Jan. 1962), 129-153, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/177745>.

²⁰ Lewis, “One Hundred Million Frenchmen,” 134.

²¹ Lewis, “One Hundred Million Frenchmen,” 135.

²² In Algeria, the abolition of slavery was a more complex issue – see p. 16-18 of this paper.

²³ Lewis, “One Hundred Million Frenchmen,” 138.

²⁴ Lewis, “One Hundred Million Frenchmen,” 145.

²⁵ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 3, my translation.

people of Algeria were variously ignored or valued merely as laborers who could work the soil. The governmental discourse of the value of the land also brought it into conflict with the settler population of Algeria, which played a significant role in the colony beginning in the late nineteenth century. The understanding of the worth of the Algerian land was the foundation for French government policies on the colony throughout the nineteenth century, which often demonstrated a lack of unity among French officials and ignored the views and experiences of French settlers and officials in the colony. These policies and the views created by this discourse would ultimately play a role in the struggle for Algerian independence a century later.

Initial Experiences: The French Military

The French entered Algeria in July 1830, defeating and driving out the ruling Ottoman Turks.²⁶ This exodus of the Turks led Alexis de Tocqueville, in 1837, to compare the invasion of Algeria to a hypothetical Chinese invasion of France: “Suppose for a moment, Monsieur, that the Emperor of China, debarking in France at the head of a powerful army, made himself ruler of our major cities and our capital. And that after having destroyed all the public records without even taking the time to read them...he seized all the officials...; and deported them all at once to some distant country.”²⁷ Tocqueville asserted that this was exactly what the French did in Algeria, and that as such, it would be very difficult for the conqueror to govern the defeated territory due to the linguistic barrier and the lack of understanding of the country’s government.²⁸ In the case of Algeria, the government had been that of the Turks for 300 years prior to the French conquest, and thus it would be even more difficult to understand the culture and customs of the remaining population. Tocqueville used this comparison to suggest that the French alter their policies in Algeria; however, his analogy, made just seven years after the initial conquest, also highlighted the fact that the French were obligated to create their own policies and ideas about Algeria, due to their failure to engage with or attempt to understand the people of Algeria. This lack of interest in the people of Algeria from the beginning of French rule would continue throughout the colonial period, allowing the French to see the colony itself as part of France even as it ignored and marginalized the people of Algeria.

After the initial conquest, Algeria was left under the control of “largely autonomous generals, who waged brutal warfare against the local Arab and Berber populations.”²⁹ The fighting was not entirely one-sided, however; the people of Algeria mounted resistance to the French conquest, most notably the *jihad* led by Abd el-Kader from 1832 to his surrender in

²⁶ Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria*, 24.

²⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, "Deuxième lettre sur l'Algérie (1837)" ["Second Letter on Algeria (1837)"], PDF, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi : Les classiques des sciences sociales [University of Quebec at Chicoutimi: The Classics of Social Science], last modified October 10, 2013, http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/De_tocqueville_alexis/de_la_colonie_algerie/lettre_sur_algerie/lettre_sur_algerie.pdf, my translation.

²⁸ Tocqueville, "Deuxième lettre sur l'Algérie (1837)."

²⁹ Stacey Renee Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists: The Second Empire's Prisoners in Algeria, 1852-1858," *French Colonial History* 2, Colonial French Encounters: New World, Africa, Indochina (2002): 95, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/41938124>.

1847.³⁰ Abd el-Kader controlled large areas of land in eastern Algeria and called upon the people of Algeria living in French-controlled territories to immigrate to the east, even obtaining *fatwas*³¹ allowing him to attack those who refused.³² However, French persistence and brutality weakened his forces, leading him to surrender in 1847.³³ Though Abd el-Kader's struggle is often used to symbolize all resistance to French rule in Algeria, soldiers also faced attacks from various other groups.³⁴ Throughout the 1830s and early 1840s, one third of France's army served in Algeria.³⁵ During the conquest, an estimated 1.6 million people of Algeria and over 100,000 French soldiers were killed.³⁶

It was not until 1841, more than ten years after the initial takeover, that the French government officially annexed Algeria, making it a French territory.³⁷ Even after the annexation and the defeat of Abd el-Kader, the French government continued to leave Algeria under military control. Until the 1880s, the governor general of Algeria was a military officer, and the majority of the colony was ruled by Arab Bureaus, whose military members had experience in the areas they controlled, and whose archives were largely responsible for creating French impressions and understandings of Algeria throughout the nineteenth century.³⁸ As such, soldiers' experiences in Algeria represented the majority of the French presence in the initial few decades of colonial rule.

In order to successfully take control of the colony, the French army needed interpreters to communicate with the people of Algeria, and this group provides important insights into the official policy towards the people of Algeria in the 1830s. Just after the initial conquest, one interpreter was tasked with delivering a "Proclamation to the Arabs," in which he explained the intentions of the French and their hope that the people of Algeria would obey the French conquerors. At the end of this proclamation, he warned the people of Algeria that God "inflicts the most rigorous punishments on those who commit damage against the land and who ruin the

³⁰ Abd el-Kader is also commonly spelled Abdelkader, Abd-el-kader, Abd el Kader, 'Abd Al-Qâdir, Abdul-Qadir, Abdul Kader. For a discussion of his struggle against the French, see Benjamin Claude Brower, "The Amîr 'Abd Al-Qâdir and the 'Good War' in Algeria, 1832-1847," *Studia Islamica [Islamic Studies]* 106, no. 2 (2011), 169-195, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/23884954>. It is from Brower that I borrow the classification of Abd el-Kader's struggle against the French as a *jihād*.

³¹ "A *fatwā* is an Islamic legal pronouncement, issued by an expert in religious law (mufti), pertaining to a specific issue, usually at the request of an individual or judge to resolve an issue where Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), is unclear." However, in recent years, "the term "fatwā" has been widely used...to indicate that a death sentence has been dealt to someone or some group of people." Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, "What is a Fatwa?" *The Islamic Supreme Council of America*, accessed June 19, 2018, <http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/44-what-is-a-fatwa.html>. Brower, from whom this information is taken, appears to be using *fatwa* in its original sense. However, in this context, the term functionally implies both meanings.

³² Brower, "The Amîr 'Abd Al-Qâdir," 179.

³³ Marcel Emerit and Amy Tikkanen, "Abdelkader," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, last modified August 14, 2008, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abdelkader#ref97>.

³⁴ Brower, "The Amîr 'Abd Al-Qâdir," 175.

³⁵ L. Carl Brown et. al., "Algeria: History – French Algeria," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, last modified December 18, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Algeria/Cultural-life#ref46532>.

³⁶ Brower, "The Amîr 'Abd Al-Qâdir," 177.

³⁷ Abdelmajid Hannoum, "Colonialism and Knowledge in Algeria: The Archives of the Arab Bureau," *History and Anthropology* 12, no. 4 (2001): 344.

³⁸ Brown, "Algeria," and Hannoum, "Colonialism and Knowledge in Algeria," 343.

country and its inhabitants.”³⁹ Significantly, this statement emphasized above all harm to the land and the country, listing the inhabitants last, almost as an afterthought. In other words, it depicted the well-being of the country and the land itself as the primary concerns of the French. In fact, the physical soil was mentioned twice, as “land” and “country,” whereas the people appeared only once. Thus, even in the 1830s, the French were creating a discursive distinction between the land and the people of Algeria. The fact that they did not prohibit damage to the people suggests that the French considered the Algerians already to be “damaged,” or at least inferior, and that it was only their ruin – which it is impossible to recover from – that concerned the conquerors.⁴⁰ The land, however, had to be protected from both damage and ruin. Thus, from the very beginning of the conquest, the French in Algeria began to construct a discursive distinction between the land and its people which privileged the value of the soil.

In addition to the interpreters, many French soldiers were stationed in Algeria, especially from 1830 to 1860. Some of these soldiers, like Colonel C. Trumelet, published memoirs about their experiences in the colony. In his work, Trumelet detailed his life in Algeria over several decades, as well as the history of the town of Boufarik, which served as the base for Trumelet and his soldiers. His book depicted a very different Algeria than the agricultural paradise many others saw. Trumelet described a challenging country and people, neither of which would easily submit to French rule. He referred to a “struggle with the people, with the soil, with the elements.”⁴¹ Unlike most other sources, Trumelet depicted the people and the land as equally dangerous to the French, who were engaged in a “struggle” on both fronts.

As a soldier, Trumelet’s main responsibility was the conquest, placing him at war with various local groups. His relationship with the people of Algeria was rather complicated; it is clear that he saw them as not merely ignorant but also dangerous. He was willing to use them to his advantage if possible, describing a local leader as a “loyal and devoted servant who believed in us...”⁴² Although Trumelet was allied with at least some of the people of Algeria, the majority of them remained his enemy. He was willing to negotiate when possible, to avoid conflict, but when the people of Algeria were not willing to talk, Trumelet was brutal in his attacks. Describing a fight with one dissident group, Trumelet recounted how “we did not destroy as many [of them] as we had wanted to.”⁴³ Trumelet’s regret in this instance was that he had failed to kill many of this group, not that he had failed to form an alliance with them, and thus avoid any killing at all. He was willing to make agreements if possible, for the instrumental purpose of not being at war with everyone; however, Trumelet took pleasure in killing the people of Algeria, and even wished that he could have killed more. To him, the people of Algeria were merely an obstacle that prevented the French from creating a life in the colony.

In addition to the war, Trumelet and his men were faced with the difficulties of Algeria itself. He suggested overtly that the country was fatal: “the land...will kill [the inhabitants of

³⁹ L. Charles Féraud, *Les Interprètes de l’Armée de l’Afrique : Archives du corps* [The Interpreters of the Army of Africa: Corps Archives] (Algiers: A. Jourdan, Libraire, 1876), PDF, 168, my translation.

⁴⁰ The original French word, “mal,” can apply to people in a way that “damage” generally does not in English; in this instance, it could also be translated as “harm,” mental or physical.

⁴¹ Colonel C. Trumelet, *Bou-Farik* (Algiers: Adolphe-Jourdan, 1887), PDF, xv, my translation.

⁴² Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, 48, my translation.

⁴³ Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, 55, my translation.

Boufarik]” as part of “the war with the soil.”⁴⁴ This included a severe drought in 1838, as well as less serious ones in subsequent years, which further inhibited agriculture for soldiers already unaccustomed to the Algerian climate.⁴⁵ In fact, the land itself sometimes impeded the soldiers in their combat with the people of Algeria: “The difficulty of the terrain prevented our brave cavalry from driving the charge [against the people of Algeria] as far as we would have liked.”⁴⁶ Algeria itself was making Trumelet’s job as a soldier more difficult. Not only was he engaged in a war against the people of Algeria; he also had to contend with the challenges of the land and the climate. Thus, Trumelet’s experience of Algeria was that of an inhospitable, dangerous territory where one had to fight to survive.

Trumelet’s struggles in Algeria were not limited to the war, whether with the soil or the people. He also documented the various maladies both settlers and soldiers suffered: “the new regiments above all pay a large tribute to the climate, to the insalubrity of the Metidja [sic], and to the miseries of the African war...they die there without glory, killed by fever, by dysentery and by nostalgia.”⁴⁷ For Trumelet, Algeria was a deadly land that killed soldiers with its climate alone, condemning them to inglorious, painful deaths. In addition to the change in climate, Trumelet stated that his men also died from “nostalgia.” Significantly, this suggested that the foreignness of Algeria itself could be fatal, establishing it as clearly separate from France. In fact, the idea of fatal nostalgia was prominent in the early nineteenth century, as Thomas Dodman has noted. Dodman chronicles the history of the French *nostalgie*, which was until the late nineteenth century a technical medical term.⁴⁸ One French intellectual of the mid-nineteenth century described “nostalgia to be deadlier than poverty.”⁴⁹ As such, it was not unusual for a French commander like Trumelet to speak of his men dying of nostalgia in Algeria.

This understanding of fatal nostalgia had an effect on the colonization of Algeria. While Dodman acknowledges that it is impossible to attribute increased governmental attempts at colonization solely to nostalgia, he asserts that by the late 1840s, the French had begun to recognize that what their soldiers and settlers were missing was the feeling of a French *space* more so than a geographical French *place*.⁵⁰ As such, he asserts that increased settler colonization was in some ways influenced by nostalgia.⁵¹ Indeed, as early as 1839, French military physicians had proposed that one cure for nostalgic patients was to “make them forget

⁴⁴ Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, xiii, my translation.

⁴⁵ Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, 167.

⁴⁶ Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, 104, my translation.

⁴⁷ Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, 130, my translation.

⁴⁸ Thomas Dodman, “Tropiques Nostalgiques: Fatal Homesickness in French Algeria,” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 39, no. 3: Nostalgia in Modern France: Bright New Ideas about a Melancholy Subject (Winter 2013), 86, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42703773>.

⁴⁹ Achille Fillias, *Histoire de la Conquête et de la colonisation de l'Algérie (1830-1860)* [*History of the Conquest and the Colonization of Algeria (1830-1860)*] (Paris: Arnauld de Vresse, 1860), 348-34, quoted in Dodman, “Tropiques Nostalgiques,” 88, his translation.

⁵⁰ For theoretical background on the difference between space and place and its connection to the construction of nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

⁵¹ Dodman, “Tropiques Nostalgiques,” 87.

that they are in Africa.”⁵² This suggests creating a distinctly French society in Algeria, indicating that within a decade of the conquest, some Frenchmen already saw a need to make Algeria more than a simple colony by making it feel like France. Significantly, such recognition came almost exclusively from French soldiers with experience in the colony; most French politicians were not interested in Algeria until much later. Indeed, it would take several decades for mainland French officials to take a serious interest in colonization policies, and still longer until the French government officially recognized Algeria as part of France, not just a colony. However, the first articulation of Algeria’s ultimate place in the French imaginary came less than ten years after the conquest from within Algeria. Ironically, at that time, the idea of a French Algeria was in response to the perceived deadliness of nostalgia – that is, in response to the vast differences between Algeria and France.

With the various struggles Trumelet and his men faced in Algeria, including the war with the people of Algeria, physical illnesses, environmental difficulties, and psychological maladies like *nostalgie*, Trumelet’s experience of the colony was that of hardship. He, as well as many other soldiers of his time, viewed Algeria as so different and so far removed from France that it was fatal. However, despite all his suffering, Trumelet still spoke several times of “our Algeria.”⁵³ “Our” referred to the French, and thus Trumelet considered Algeria as French and supported efforts to master and populate the land with Frenchmen. Trumelet used “our” with the implication of possession – for him, Algeria *belonged* to France; it was not a *part* of France, demonstrating his a more traditional colonial view of Algeria as a French possession. Though he viewed both the land and the people as dangerous, Trumelet ultimately created a discursive distinction between them. The land, though hostile, could be dominated and possessed, and thus could be called “ours”; but the people could only, at most, be allies – or subjects – of the French. As such, Trumelet was willing to remain in Algeria and attempt to tame the land, despite its dangers; but the people of Algeria were to be killed, not negotiated with unless it was absolutely necessary.

Slavery and Prisoners: The First Differences of Opinion between the French Government and Its Officials in Algeria

The question of slavery in Algeria demonstrated that even within the first few decades of French presence in the colony, the French in Algeria recognized the value of the land and its potential while utterly rejecting the possible utility of the people of Algeria. Throughout the 1840s, the issue of slavery in French colonies and possessions was a prominent one, ultimately resulting in the abolition of slavery in all French colonies in 1848.⁵⁴ In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Eugène Bodichon, a prominent French doctor who settled in Algiers, noted that “[d]eath

⁵² M. Gaudineau, "Mémoire présenté à Mr [sic] Bégin, Inspecteur du service de santé, sur la création d'un dépôt de convalescence en Algérie," ["Recollection presented to Mr. Bégin, Inspector of the Health Service, on the Creation of a Convalescent Home in Algeria"] 7 June 1843, 30, Archives Historiques du Service de Santé de l'Armée au Val-de-Grâce [Historic Archives of the Health Service of the Army of Val-de-Grâce], Paris, carton 67, dossier 8, quoted in Dodman, "Tropiques Nostalgiques," 90, his translation.

⁵³ Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, xi, xiii, 404, my translation. The work also contains references to "our colony" and other similar expressions.

⁵⁴ See p. 6 of this paper.

comes quickly in Algeria' for European settlers."⁵⁵ As such, as scholar Benjamin Claude Brower notes, Bodichon believed that "only indigenous settlers would take root in Algeria. He agreed that such colonists could be best found by diverting captives from the Saharan slave trade and directing them towards Algeria. Here they would be legally emancipated and put to work on the land."⁵⁶ Significantly, Bodichon argued that only Africans from *outside* of Algeria were suitable for this purpose; he and other Frenchmen in Algeria espoused "the 'devotion' of African slaves of color in contrast to Algeria's 'belicose' [sic] populations."⁵⁷ The people of Algeria, in this view, were not suitable for any work and could not provide any benefits to the colony. In order to cultivate the land, the French would need to import Africans from elsewhere to work the soil. This proposition not only demonstrated French hostility toward the people of Algeria; it also highlighted the incredible importance of the cultivation of Algeria. Bodichon believed that Algerian agriculture was so important that the French should import Africans from elsewhere to achieve it. He also recognized the same "insalubrity" of Algeria that Trumelet had noted, which officials in France failed to comment upon.⁵⁸ Thus, Bodichon's proposal illustrated the extent to which the French in Algeria valued the land and despised its people.

The abolition of slavery in 1848 was one of the first clear indications of the split between French officials in France and those in Algeria. At the time of abolition, despite Bodichon's suggestion, the majority of slaves in Algeria were held by the people of Algeria, not the Europeans living in the colony, making abolition something that the French would have to enforce against the people of Algeria. However, Brower asserts that "administrators in Algeria felt little enthusiasm for a measure [the abolition of slavery] far from their own interests and aspirations. Therefore they did what they had learned to do in such situations, they equivocated."⁵⁹ The governor-general of Algeria argued that in a colony that was still not entirely conquered, it would be impossible to enforce abolition. Nonetheless, in practice, his administration used abolition to their own ends. For those groups that were against the French, the colonial administration strictly enforced abolition. However, Brower emphasizes, to their allies among the people of Algeria, "French administrators granted... permission to trade in slaves and keep those they owned, and in some cases, the French administration even returned fugitive slaves."⁶⁰ Thus, the French officials in Algeria used the law as a political tool to either reward or punish the people of Algeria. This selective enforcement of the law demonstrates that as early as the 1840s, French officials in the metropole lacked an understanding of the experiences of the French in Algeria, a problem that would continue throughout the nineteenth century.

More than two decades passed after the conquest before the French government began seriously entertaining the idea of colonizing Algeria with French settlers. In 1852, Napoléon III's administration transported to Algeria a group of political prisoners who had been condemned for

⁵⁵ Eugène Bodichon, *Hygiène à suivre en Algérie, acclimatement des Européens. Hygiène morale* [Hygiene to Follow in Algeria, Acclimatization of Europeans. Moral Hygiene] (Paris: Rey, Delavigne & Cie, 1851), quoted in Benjamin Claude Brower, "Rethinking Abolition in Algeria Slavery and the 'Indigenous Question' (Repenser l'abolition en Algérie: l'esclavage et 'la question indigène')," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* [Journal of African Studies] 49, no. 195 (2009): 818, my translation, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/40380026>.

⁵⁶ Brower, "Rethinking Abolition in Algerian Slavery," 818.

⁵⁷ Brower, "Rethinking Abolition in Algerian Slavery," 817.

⁵⁸ Trumelet, *Bou-Farik*, 130, my translation.

⁵⁹ Brower, "Rethinking Abolition in Algerian Slavery," 808.

⁶⁰ Brower, "Rethinking Abolition in Algerian Slavery," 809.

leading insurrections in response to Napoléon III's *coup d'état* in 1851.⁶¹ The governor-general of Algeria, Jacques-Louis Randon, hoped that these 6,000 men would become permanent settlers, and attempted to institute programs that would allow them to build a life in Algeria as well as encourage them to ask their families to join them in the colony.⁶² However, the political needs of Napoléon III proved to be more important than the settlement of Algeria. By the middle of 1852, the emperor had begun issuing pardons to the political prisoners as a form of propaganda to increase his own popularity.⁶³ In 1856, when Napoléon III pardoned the remaining 800 prisoners, fewer than 50 chose to settle in Algeria. The rest returned to France to resume their previous lives.⁶⁴

The case of the prisoners demonstrated the lack of unity between the French government and its officials in Algeria. As historian Stacey Renee Davis notes, the government had yet to define its plans for the colony's future: "Was Algeria a mere dumping ground for unwanted French citizens, or a potential agricultural powerhouse that needed the proper economic and demographic resources to flourish?"⁶⁵ Napoléon III and his advisors treated Algeria like a French Australia, merely a convenient place to send subversives. By pardoning all the men, the emperor indicated that his own popularity mattered more to him than the settlement of Algeria. Randon, on the other hand, attempted to entice the prisoners to stay, preferring to view them as settlers; but with little support from the French government, as well as the prisoners' understanding that they would eventually be pardoned and allowed to return home, he failed.⁶⁶ While Randon could imagine, and indeed advocated for, a strong French presence in Algeria, the French metropole government continued to treat the colony as a "primarily military outpost... which existed to thwart the expansion of her European neighbors."⁶⁷ In fact, Davis observes, apart from its uses as a penal colony, Napoléon III "showed no interest whatsoever" in Algeria until the 1860s.⁶⁸

The prisoner experiment also revealed an important distinction that the French government constantly made between Algeria and its people. Both Napoléon III's and Randon's visions of the colony completely did not take into account its native, non-French inhabitants. Randon had hoped that the prisoners would remain to cultivate Algeria, believing that the colony had enormous agricultural potential. However, in Randon's mind, this potential could only be realized by French farmers. The "proper economic and demographic resources" that Algeria needed were primarily Frenchmen to colonize and cultivate the land.⁶⁹ Similarly, Napoléon III's use of Algeria as a penal colony disregarded the existence of the people of Algeria, acknowledging them only as a potential threat to the safety of the prisoners. Thus, even before the French government had clarified its intentions for Algeria, it operated under the assumption that only the land could have any value for France, whether as mere physical space or as

⁶¹ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 95-96.

⁶² Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 98-99, 107-108.

⁶³ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 101.

⁶⁴ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 109.

⁶⁵ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 94-95.

⁶⁶ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 109.

⁶⁷ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 94.

⁶⁸ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 110.

⁶⁹ Davis, "Turning French Convicts into Colonists," 94-95.

potential farmland. The people of Algeria, on the other hand, were completely ignored or viewed only as a threat to the safety of the French.

Not Useless: The People of Algeria as Agricultural Laborers, 1860s

In 1859, just a few years after the last convicts were pardoned and returned to France, the French Senate received one of the earliest calls for the creation of a concrete colonization policy, in the form of a petition from a Jesuit priest. Father Brumauld asserted in his petition that Algeria "could provide well-being to a large population, and also supplement the riches of France, through the abundance and excellence of its products of all types."⁷⁰ However, Brumauld believed that this potential value would remain unrealized due to the lack of French settlers in Algeria. Although he asserted that the "*indigènes* should be the principal element" in this endeavor, he also believed that they were "neither industrious enough, nor, above all, dependent enough on the conquerors" to make Algeria the valuable agricultural colony that it could be.⁷¹ As such, Brumauld presented Randon's view of Algeria, which would become common in the French government: the Algerian land was a valuable resource that could be exploited by the French, but the people were ignorant and lazy, in need of assistance from and even domination by the more capable French. Brumauld's petition was one of the earliest documents from within France to focus on the agricultural potential of Algeria, as well as to suggest the role of the people of Algeria in achieving this potential. Though he clearly privileged the value of the land, Brumauld also acknowledged that the people of Algeria could be utilized as laborers, unlike the soldiers and officials who saw them as merely a threat.

Brumauld emphasized the potential value and utility of the land in order to argue for the necessity of an increased French settler population in Algeria. However, he acknowledged that "the good families of farmers, who would be more desirable, do not emigrate voluntarily."⁷² Indeed, the difficulty of enticing French citizens to emigrate to Algeria would be a recurring problem throughout French attempts at colonization. As such, Brumauld suggested that the Senate institute a program to send the "unfortunate youth" of France to colonize Algeria, as this would not only transport French farmers to Algeria but also "relieve France of an ever-onerous, and sometimes dangerous, population," and provide the opportunity for "true physical and moral well-being" to that group.⁷³ Thus, Brumauld argued, his plan would benefit the metropole, the colony, and even the youths themselves. This linkage of benefit to the metropole with that of the colony would become more pronounced in later colonization programs, forming an important aspect of official French efforts at colonization.

It does not appear that the program suggested by Brumauld was ever put into action. However, his petition was one of the earliest documents of the French metropole government

⁷⁰ Ferdinand Brumauld (Father), *Pétition du P. Brumauld au Sénat en faveur de la colonisation de l'Algérie, et de la jeunesse malheureuse de France* [Petition of Father Brumauld to the Senate in favor of the Colonization of Algeria, and of the Unfortunate Youth of France] (Paris: Imprimerie de Ch. Lahure et Cie., 1859): PDF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k5808419w), 3, my translation.

⁷¹ Brumauld, *Pétition du P. Brumauld au Sénat*, 4, my translation.

⁷² Brumauld, *Pétition du P. Brumauld au Sénat*, 5, my translation.

⁷³ Brumauld, *Pétition du P. Brumauld au Sénat*, 8, my translation.

that emphasized the benefits of the colonization of Algeria, beyond mere military control. This was also one of the earliest instances of recognition by someone within France, not a colonial administrator like Randon, that Algeria could be a source of wealth rather than merely a drain on resources and a deterrent to the expansion of other European powers. As such, Brumauld's petition was an early step toward France's eventual recognition of Algeria as a part of France itself. By acknowledging that Algeria had the potential to be more than a military outpost, Brumauld suggested that it could be put to use for France's profit, providing increased incentive for the government to both colonize Algeria and begin to recognize it as part of French territory. Significantly, in Brumauld's case, this recognition came from within the French metropole, not from the colony. Brumauld's and Randon's visions of Algeria's potential were very similar, though Brumauld's came seven years later. However, neither was acted upon. This reflects both the French metropole government's lack of interest in Algeria until the 1860s, and the differences between the perspectives of the French who lived in Algeria and those who remained in the metropole. This difference of opinion would continue throughout the colonial period, affecting both ideas and policies on Algeria.

In 1860, the French government, led by Napoléon III, finally began taking a serious interest in Algeria. In September of that year, the emperor made a short trip to Algiers, during which he set the tone for the official discourse on the people of Algeria: "[E]levating the Arabs to the dignity of free men...improving their existence by taking from the land all the treasures that Providence buried there and that a bad government would leave barren, that is our mission."⁷⁴ In a classically orientalist manner, Napoléon III spoke of the people of Algeria as in need of "elevation" and incapable of using their resources effectively, suggesting that they were uneducated and perhaps even barbarous, and thus needed the French to "civilize" them. A key aspect of the "improvement" of the lives of the people of Algeria was the use of the land and its "treasures." As such, Napoléon III privileged above all the value of the Algerian soil and its importance to the French colonial project.

Napoléon III's policies on Algeria reflected this understanding of the value of the land and the inferiority of the people. During the early 1860s, his government focused on attempting to tie the people of Algeria to their land. In an 1861 letter to Jean-Jacques Pélissier, the governor-general of Algeria, Napoléon III defined the problem as "returning total security to Algeria, not only by our military occupation, but also, by attaching the Arabs to the land and by giving them property titles."⁷⁵ Clearly, there was a practical aspect to this project, namely that when the people of Algeria were attached to their land, they could be more easily controlled and surveilled than in nomadic groups. The issue of land was also (perhaps even primarily) one of agriculture. By granting property rights to the people of Algeria, the government would create a multitude of farms that could produce valuable crops for export to France. As such, the project of tying the people of Algeria to the land simultaneously allowed them to be used as laborers by the French and highlighted the importance of the soil.

⁷⁴ Napoléon III, speech (Algiers, Algeria, 19 September 1860), quoted in Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le royaume arabe : La politique algérienne de Napoléon III, 1861-1870* [*The Arab Kingdom: The Algerian Policies of Napoléon III, 1861-1870*] (Office des Publications Universitaires, 2014), 59, my translation.

⁷⁵ Letter of the emperor [Napoléon III] to Marshall Pélissier, 1 November 1861, original housed in the Fonds Brunon [Brunon Collection], quoted in Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*, 152-153, my translation.

Around the same time, one of Napoléon III's councilors suggested a model of colonization that would use the people of Algeria for both security and cultivation: "Militarily organized, these *indigène* settlers, while cultivating the soil, would not lose their warlike virtues."⁷⁶ This suggestion reinforced Napoléon III's intention to use the people of Algeria for the defense of the colony because "Algeria had already cost [France] a lot."⁷⁷ The French did not want to lose more French soldiers defending Algeria; however, it was perfectly acceptable if a few of the people of Algeria were killed defending their land, because it was the land that was most important to the French. Thus, French willingness to exploit the "warlike" character of the people of Algeria also further highlighted their relative lack of value, while emphasizing the importance of Algeria itself and the need to defend it.

Those who opposed Napoléon III's plans for Algeria employed the same distinction between the land and the people to argue against trusting the people of Algeria. Napoléon III was remarkably arabophile for his time.⁷⁸ Despite his orientalist view of the people of Algeria as less civilized than the French, his plans for the colony indicated a high level of trust in the people of Algeria, as well as a desire to help them. However, many of his own councilors, as well as various French political parties, opposed his ideas on Algeria, criticizing the emperor's project for giving too much freedom to the people of Algeria and lacking French involvement. Critics worried that such a policy could backfire on the French: "Take care that the Arab frontier foot soldiers, charged with defending the western frontier of Algeria, don't one day open the door to the English or the Moroccan partisans."⁷⁹ Fears that Napoléon III's leniency could lead to renewed hostilities between the French and the people of Algeria constituted the majority of the criticism of the emperor's plans.

To prevent this possibility, officials suggested sending more Frenchmen to the colony to oversee the people of Algeria. Pélissier believed that Algeria was in need of a French presence beyond the plans of the emperor. His report to Napoléon III in 1861 stated that "the Arab needs to be the arm but he would not know how to be the head of colonization...we must continue to entice the European [to Algeria] by offering him land to acquire just as we must attach the Arab [to the land] by making him a proprietor."⁸⁰ Pélissier did not challenge the idea of tying the people of Algeria to the land and benefitting from their labor; rather, he objected to the lack of French people to lead the process. In fact, Pélissier believed that not only Frenchmen but Europeans in general were needed in Algeria, demonstrating an orientalist view of the people of Algeria as well as privileging the land of Algeria as an enticement for European settlers. As such, his suggestion underlined above all the value of the soil – the people of Algeria would be useful only if they were tied to the land, working it for the benefit of France (as the "arms" of colonization), and the territory itself would in turn attract more European settlers to Algeria (an idea that would influence later governmental attempts at colonization). Thus, even those who felt that Napoléon III would give the people of Algeria too much responsibility agreed that they

⁷⁶ Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*, 129, my translation.

⁷⁷ Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*, 130, my translation.

⁷⁸ Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*, 59, 129-131.

⁷⁹ *Lacroix à Urbain* [*Lacroix to Urbain*], no. 23, 2 June 1861, quoted in Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*, 130, my translation.

⁸⁰ *Rapport de Pélissier à l'empereur* [*Report of Pélissier to the Emperor*], 30 November 1861, quoted in Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*, 153, my translation.

needed to be tied to the land to benefit France, and thus recognized their value as agricultural laborers.⁸¹

The French policies concerning Algerian land during the 1860s followed the advice of Marshall Pélissier, attempting to take into account both the people of Algeria and potential European settlers. However, the ultimate goal was always the exploitation of the soil. In 1863, the Senate “recognize[d] the *indigène* tribes as proprietors of the territories that they occupied,” making them the legal owners of their land.⁸² Territory not owned by the people of Algeria was divided into lots and put up for sale.⁸³ Anyone, Europeans or even “the *indigènes* themselves,” was eligible to purchase territory, for “the final goal [was] to promote the development of the land.”⁸⁴ Thus, under Napoléon III’s government, influenced by his own arabophilia, the people of Algeria were not only allowed to purchase land but also granted property rights to their ancestral territories. However, this generosity still served the ultimate goal of putting the soil to use for the enrichment of France.

Though “the Government placed the highest of hopes” on the land sale system, it had little effect on either the cultivation or colonization of Algeria.⁸⁵ Instead of turning the land into profitable farms, “the buyers, free from all obligation, neither lived [on] nor exploited [the land], hoping only to resell their land at a profit.”⁸⁶ However, agriculture was not the only goal of the land sale policies. Officials like Pélissier had hoped that the sales would also bring more settlers from the metropole to Algeria, thus increasing colonization. However, of the 248 lots sold in 1866, “more than half [were] acquired by *indigènes*. No buyer from the metropole presented himself.”⁸⁷ In fact, in 1870, the new governor-general of Algeria stated that “‘the land sold to support colonization’ was bought by *indigènes* or resold to *indigènes*.”⁸⁸ As such, the policy failed both to bring French settlers to Algeria and to increase the cultivation of the colony, for the majority of the French believed that the people of Algeria needed French guidance to make the land profitable for France.

Calls for colonization were often, as in Pélissier’s report, calls for French instruction of the people of Algeria, who could be used to work the soil but needed the more knowledgeable French to direct their efforts. As such, the issue of the colonization of Algeria was inextricably tied to the use of the Algerian soil. The land sale policy of the 1860s was perhaps the clearest evidence of this connection: in selling the land, the government hoped to attract Frenchmen to Algeria, thereby bringing valuable European agricultural skills that could be taught to the people of Algeria, who would also be allowed to buy and work the soil. However, the failure of

⁸¹ Arguments like Pélissier’s, which in many ways echoed Brumauld’s, suggesting the necessity of bringing French settlers to Algeria to oversee the people of Algeria, teach them European cultivation methods, and use their labor were not unique to French colonialism. For example, an eighteenth-century British commentator on colonization suggested “setting Europeans ashore in West Africa in a managerial capacity. They would then be able to apply the considerable European skill and experience in tropical agriculture.” Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 70.

⁸² Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 21, my translation.

⁸³ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 21, my translation.

⁸⁴ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 21, my translation.

⁸⁵ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 22, my translation.

⁸⁶ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 23, my translation.

⁸⁷ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 23, my translation.

⁸⁸ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 24, my translation.

Frenchmen to work the land or even to buy it rendered the policy a failure. Much of the territory was sold, but the majority of it ended up back in the hands of the incapable (in French eyes) people of Algeria, who, without guidance from the French, would continue to waste its potential. Thus, the French government tied the issue of colonization and increasing the French population in Algeria directly to the Algerian soil. It was the land that the French government was most concerned with, and the land that would eventually be considered so important that it became a part of France, not a mere colony.

Though colonization was a major goal of the French government from the 1860s, there was already a small settler population in Algeria. According to a governmental report, in the decade from 1861 to 1870, this population increased by 25%. However, “the agricultural population lost 1%” in the same period.⁸⁹ This discrepancy further disappointed officials who privileged above all the cultivation of Algeria. The settler population, though small, was already beginning to develop its own unique culture. As early as 1860, Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer notes, even as Napoléon III’s government was attempting to entice French people to colonize Algeria, “a generation of settlers born in Algeria reached adulthood without having known France. They declared themselves, with a certain force, Algerians, even as they remained French.”⁹⁰ This remarkable self-appellation would continue until the end of French rule in Algeria. The fact that the settlers were willing to adopt the term “Algerian” to refer to themselves indicates the lack of importance of the people of Algeria, who were referred to primarily as “Arabs” or “*indigènes*” (“native/indigenous”). In fact, the term actively marginalized the people of Algeria while legitimizing the settlers’ place in the colony, as scholar David Prochaska argues: “Thus, at one blow the settlers proclaimed their hegemony in Algeria and at the same time obliterated the native Algerians in the very terms they used to describe themselves.”⁹¹ Additionally, the settlers’ use of the term “Algerian” suggests that although the majority of them were not farmers, they still felt a strong sense of attachment to the land – that is, to Algeria (*Algérie*), from which they derived the term Algerian (*Algérien*).

The Need for Colonization: The 1870s

In the 1870s, the French government was still unsure of their approach to Algeria. The failure of the land sale policies of the 1860s to either increase the cultivation of Algeria or encourage French people to move there left officials with few options. In fact, many French officials were still not convinced that Algeria needed to be colonized. Those who supported colonization were forced to create new strategies to increase the French population in Algeria, since the sale of land had been unsuccessful. As such, officials encountered problems both in enticing French people to move to Algeria and in convincing their fellow politicians that such projects merited their attention.

For those French politicians who supported colonizing Algeria, the early 1870s proved providential. In 1871, France ceded the territory of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, following its

⁸⁹ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 23, my translation.

⁹⁰ Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*, 15, my translation.

⁹¹ Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 223.

defeat in the Franco-German War. Many residents of this territory emigrated to France, unwilling to remain under German rule.⁹² Seizing this opportunity, the French government offered Algerian land, free of charge, to any Alsatians “who choose French citizenship and will commit themselves to going to Algeria.” By an October 1871 decree, “the settlers must commit to cultivating, to putting to use and to inhabiting their concession; the failure to execute these obligations can lead to forfeiture [of their concession].”⁹³ Colonization was again tied intimately to the Algerian land: Alsatian settlers were required to farm the soil or risk losing it. By 1874, this system had brought 877 Alsatian families to Algeria. However, the French government reported that the majority of these settlers, “bereft of resources and formerly city-dwellers or fabric workers, ignorant of working the land; disoriented and suffering from a climate they were not used to, failed...”⁹⁴ Thus, though land had become the primary motivation for colonization, French officials again ignored the experience of the French in Algeria. Some French politicians had come to accept the insistence of Randon and others that the Algerian land was valuable; however, they continued to ignore settler experiences of the harshness of the Algerian climate, a fact that had been reported upon decades earlier by the military.

In the interests of colonization, the French government opened the concessions to other French citizens, not solely Alsatians. The October decree also instituted a broader “system of concessions applicable to all French of European origin.”⁹⁵ Under this system, the settler received a lease with an obligation of nine years of residence. If, after this period, he had met his obligations, the lease would become a title to the land.⁹⁶ This strategy was in response to the failure of the land sale policies of the 1860s: instead of trying to sell the land, the French government turned to a system of free concessions, with the obligation of cultivation. This approach further emphasized the perceived importance of the land: the government was willing to give it away, so long as it would be put to use.

This emphasis on bringing Frenchmen to Algeria was a product of the continued belief in the inferiority of the people of Algeria. In 1879, an unofficial parliamentary excursion visited the colony to “search for all that which can be favorable to the development of Algeria.”⁹⁷ Journalist Paul Bourde’s book about the trip both emphasized the potential of the Algerian land and demonstrated that there were still many French politicians who were against the colonization of Algeria. Bourde spent a great deal of time (an entire chapter, in addition to various mentions throughout) discussing the agriculture of Algeria, including reflections on specific crops: “In the past the production of [olive] oil was left in the hands of the *indigènes*, who obtained only products that could not be sold.”⁹⁸ His descriptions underlined the richness and great potential of the soil, but demonstrated clearly that working it could not be “left” to the people of Algeria, who did not know how to use it effectively. Similarly, Bourde asserted that the farms of French

⁹² "Alsace-Lorraine," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, last modified Feb. 17, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Alsace-Lorraine>.

⁹³ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 24-25, my translation.

⁹⁴ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 26, my translation.

⁹⁵ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 25, my translation.

⁹⁶ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 25.

⁹⁷ Paul Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie: Souvenir de l’Excursion Parlementaire (Septembre-Octobre 1879)* [*Across Algeria: Recollection of the Parliamentary Excursion (September-October 1879)*] (Paris: G. Charpentier, editor: 1880), ii, my translation.

⁹⁸ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, 38, my translation.

settlers in the colony “show what European activity will make of [Algeria]...Look at this farm and look at the miserable encampments of the [people of Algeria] that are established in the surrounding areas.”⁹⁹ For Bourde, European knowledge was required to “make” something of Algeria, because the people of Algeria lacked the intelligence or the skills to cultivate it properly. He emphasized the necessity of French colonization, and again tied it to the cultivation of the land. In an orientalist manner, Bourde underlined the inferiority of the people of Algeria, who were perceived as incapable of effectively using their resources. However, he also highlighted the great potential value of the soil itself.

Bourde’s account of the excursion also demonstrated that there was still a division among French officials and French residents of Algeria. He lamented, “When I think that there is still in France a political faction that would like to leave the country to the Arabs! ...Would they condemn the most fertile of countries to eternal sterility?”¹⁰⁰ Thus, Bourde simultaneously asserted the importance and value of Algeria as an agricultural producer as well as the stupidity and inferiority of the people of Algeria, in whose hands the potentially fertile and profitable land would be left sterile and worthless. In his condemnation of those who would “leave the country to the Arabs,” Bourde also emphasized the split between French officials in France and those in Algeria. Despite the land concession and sale policies, Bourde’s concerns demonstrated that many French politicians still did not consider colonization a major issue. Though he had been in Algeria for little more than a month, Bourde recognized its potential value and called for colonization, while many French officials who had never left France continued to ignore the colony.

Bourde’s work further underlined the different views of French officials in France and in Algeria by directly contradicting images of the colony presented by other politicians. Describing a prospector he encountered, Bourde reflected, “This madness of the search for treasures is fairly common in Algeria, where many different conquerors [throughout history] have left legends of buried treasures.”¹⁰¹ Even Napoléon III had spoken of “taking from the land all the treasures that Providence buried there.”¹⁰² According to Bourde, however, such treasures were nothing but a legend, even “madness;” the sole “treasure” of the land was its agricultural potential, which could only be realized through the work of French settlers. In dismissing the prospectors’ “madness,” Bourde also dismissed the views of French officials, including the Emperor, that the Algerian land might contain mineable resources. Thus, he further emphasized the division between French politicians and those who had first-hand experience of Algeria.

Though Bourde’s book purported to be merely an account of the excursion, it was filled with statements on the potential value and importance of the colony. In fact, in many instances, it was more an argument in favor of colonization than a descriptive work. Even the introduction concluded with the statement that the author held “the firm conviction that the destiny of France is very intimately concerned in its [Algeria’s] prosperity.”¹⁰³ This sentiment recurred throughout

⁹⁹ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, 47-48, my translation.

¹⁰⁰ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, 47-48, my translation.

¹⁰¹ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, 56, my translation.

¹⁰² Napoléon III, speech (Algiers, Algeria, 19 September 1860), quoted in Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le royaume arabe*, 59, my translation.

¹⁰³ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, vi, my translation.

the book, with various laments and more subtle indications that the French did not care enough about Algeria. This point was emphasized once and for all in the conclusion: “In general, we don’t believe enough in our colony, and the settlers who know it fiercely desire to destroy this vexing sentiment...”¹⁰⁴ Bourde’s use of “we” in this instance referred to the French people in France, who had little or no experience of the colony and tended to ignore it. Those who did concern themselves with Algeria, Bourde continued, relied on “[t]he judgment...that was formed during the first thirty years that followed the conquest.”¹⁰⁵ Bourde’s goal was to correct these tendencies, to demonstrate that Algeria was not only worthy of notice by the French but also potentially beneficial to France. He equally sought to demonstrate that this value was intimately tied to the issue of colonization: Algeria was essential to French prosperity, and French colonization was essential to achieving this potential.

However, Bourde went beyond merely calling for colonization; his final thoughts asserted that the “goal is to make of Algeria an entirely French country.”¹⁰⁶ He recognized the potential for Algeria to become truly a part of France, and was an early advocate of such a policy. Significantly, this call came from a Frenchman with experience in Algeria, one who continually emphasized that most French politicians did not share his viewpoint. Thus, it is clear that even in the late 1870s, some in the French government were still largely ignoring the views of the French in Algeria. Even Bourde, who only visited the colony for a month, felt that Algeria was, in essence, France’s future, and deserved far more recognition and attention from French officials than it was receiving.

Despite the gloomy impression given by Bourde’s rather passionate calls for more official concern with Algeria, some measures for colonization were instituted fairly successfully in the 1870s. In fact, the French population in Algeria increased by 65,000 people between 1871 and 1880.¹⁰⁷ This increase in population, however, only further problematized the divide between French officials and the growing settler population. The fact that primarily city-dwelling Alsatians might struggle to agriculturally colonize Algeria never occurred to the officials who created the land concession system. Thus, even as some French politicians were starting to acknowledge Algeria’s potential value, they continued to ignore the experiences of the settlers, who had not only recognized Algeria’s value long before officials, but also had a much more realistic view of the hardships of life there.

Questioning Colonization Strategies in the 1880s

In the early 1880s, the French government began to critically examine its policies on Algeria and assess their effectiveness. A petition to the Chamber of Deputies¹⁰⁸ by E. Tiennotte de Princey at this time raised the concern that “the number of French established after fifty years

¹⁰⁴ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, 379, my translation.

¹⁰⁵ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, 379-380, my translation.

¹⁰⁶ Bourde, *À Travers l’Algérie*, 385, my translation.

¹⁰⁷ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ The lower house of the French Parliament under the Third Republic, which was established in 1870 and lasted until the invasion of France in 1940.

in Algeria (140,000)...is insignificant.”¹⁰⁹ There were, Tiennote de Princey lamented, far too many settlers from other European countries in Algeria, who could easily become the majority. His concern with increasing *French* presence in the colony touched on questions of French mastery of Algeria and fears of its loss. To remedy this, he suggested that the Chamber of Deputies modify the terms that soldiers were required to serve in the army, recommending that soldiers be released from the military a year early if they were willing to live for two years in Algeria. The French government could even, he proposed, “create military agricultural villages” for these men.¹¹⁰ Such villages would contribute not only to the settlement of Algeria, but also to increasing the use of the land, again emphasizing the importance of agriculture in Algeria. “[W]hat is necessary for Algeria,” Tiennote de Princey concluded, “are French workers, workers and again workers” to increase the cultivation of the Algerian soil.¹¹¹ Thus, Tiennote de Princey believed not only that Algeria needed French settlers, but that these settlers had to be willing to both remain in the colony for several years (under his plan, soldiers would be obligated to live in Algeria for at least two years) and work in the colony, preferably by cultivating the land. As such, he again tied the issue of colonization to the use of the land. Significantly, Tiennote de Princey himself owned property in Algeria, though he was originally from western France. Thus, his petition represents another instance of the French government largely ignoring the suggestions of French settlers and Frenchmen with experience in the colony.¹¹²

Faced with the relative failure of previous efforts to increase the French presence in Algeria, the French government was growing tired of spending money on Algerian colonization projects. At the end of 1883, the Chamber of Deputies debated and ultimately rejected a proposal to “place at the disposition of the Minister of the Interior a sum of 50 million francs to be used for the acquisition of land and in colonization efforts in Algeria.”¹¹³ The proposed funds were to be used to “create, in Algeria...175 new villages, 175 essentially agricultural colonization

¹⁰⁹ E. Tiennote de Princey, "A Messieurs les députés" ["To the Deputies"] (Rennes: Imprimerie de Catel, 1881), PDF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k57888197), 1, my translation. Though Tiennote de Princey never specifies exactly to whom his petition is addressed, it seems reasonable to assume that it was to the Chamber of Deputies, as he repeatedly addresses his reader as "the deputies," as opposed to "senators" (as in the French Senate) or "assemblymen" (as in the National Assembly), for example.

¹¹⁰ Tiennote de Princey, "A Messieurs les députés," 2, my translation.

¹¹¹ Tiennote de Princey, "A Messieurs les députés," 3, my translation. The original French word, "bras," is usually translated as "arm"; however, it can also mean "worker," similar to the way one can speak of "farmhands" in English. I chose to translate it as "workers" in this instance to avoid confusion with the English "arms" as in weapons.

¹¹² Little information is available on E. Tiennote de Princey beyond what is written in his petition, which indicates that he owned land in Algeria, near Bône (present-day Annaba), and was also a lawyer in Ille-ét-Vilaine, in Brittany, France. It is unclear whether he lived in Algeria or France at the time he wrote his petition, nor is it clear how much time he spent in Algeria, how much land he owned, or what he did in Algeria (the French "*propriétaire*" can mean either landowner or landlord). In terms of the Chamber of Deputies' response to his petition, it is unclear in which year it was written – the Bibliothèque Nationale lists the publication date as 1881, though there does not appear to be any specific evidence of this in the document, beyond the statement that the French had been in Algeria for 50 years at the time of writing. As such, it is difficult to find records relating to the petition. However, I have not discovered any references to a change in French army policies such as Tiennote de Princey suggests.

¹¹³ *Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés : compte rendu in-extenso. 28 décembre 1883.* [Official Log of the French Republic. Parliamentary Debates. Chamber of Deputies: Verbatim Report. 28 December 1883] (Paris: Imprimerie du Journal officiel, 1883), PDF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k64358647), 3010, my translation.

centers.”¹¹⁴ The bill was defeated by a vote of 249 to 211.¹¹⁵ However, the failure of the bill did not reflect a lack of interest in Algeria nor a refutation of the importance of the Algerian land; on the contrary, many of those who spoke against the bill affirmed their support for the colonization of Algeria. Rather, the bill’s defeat represented a rejection of the methods that were being used in this effort.

The main issue that the deputies debated was the question of “official colonization” versus “independent colonization.”¹¹⁶ Neither of these terms was clearly defined, and various deputies seemed to use them in slightly different ways. However, the main difference between them was consistent: “independent colonization” encompassed any instance of French citizens choosing to move to Algeria without the active role of the French state in enticing them to do so, while “official colonization” included colonization strategies that had state participation. For example, one deputy stated that, “It is indisputable that it is by the law of 13 September 1871 [regarding the relocation of Alsatians to Algeria] that the National Assembly marked the starting point, as it were, of official colonization.”¹¹⁷ Thus, this deputy considered “official colonization” to be a relatively new practice, little more than a decade old, in which the government offered concessions to entice settlers to Algeria. However, the governor-general of Algeria, Louis Tirman, asserted that, “nothing in Algeria is done except by official colonization... There is not a city, not a village that was formed entirely without the intervention of the State, without the State distributing land to the inhabitants[;] there is not a single one.”¹¹⁸ As such, Tirman supported the proposed allocation of funds, arguing that his government needed the money to acquire land to create new villages in Algeria. The ultimate defeat of the bill demonstrated yet again the divide between French legislators and French colonial administrators over the best way to govern the colony.

Tirman’s arguments in favor of the measure relied on the potential of the Algerian land and the ignorance of the people of Algeria. He argued, quoting an economist, that, “The descendants of the Moors cannot be, whatever anyone says, completely incapable of understanding intensive agriculture; it is a question of time, of example and of education.”¹¹⁹ Therefore, Tirman emphasized the value of the people of Algeria as agricultural laborers under French guidance, asserting that French colonization was essential in Algeria in order to expose the people of Algeria to the French “example” of agriculture, allowing the French to “educate” the people of Algeria in cultivation and thus increase the profitability of the colony. As such, Tirman’s support of the bill emphasized above all the value of the Algerian soil, and the need to

¹¹⁴ *Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés : compte rendu in-extenso. 27 décembre 1883.* [Official Log of the French Republic. Parliamentary Debates. Chamber of Deputies: Verbatim Report. 27 December 1883] (Paris: Imprimerie du Journal officiel, 1883), PDF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k6435863t), 2977, my translation.

¹¹⁵ *Journal officiel de la République française...28 décembre 1883*, 3010.

¹¹⁶ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2988, my translation. “Colonisation libre,” which I have translated as “independent colonization,” could also be translated as “free colonization.”

¹¹⁷ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2977, my translation.

¹¹⁸ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2986, my translation.

¹¹⁹ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2987, my translation. Tirman stated only that he was quoting a Monsieur Leroy-Beaulieu. This quote was taken from “De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes” [“On Colonization by Modern Peoples”], by Pierre Paul Leroy-Beaulieu (1843-1916), a nineteenth-century French economist whose work included reflections on world economics, colonization, and French colonies including Algeria and Tunisia.

have French farmers both cultivating it and setting an example for the people of Algeria so that they could use the land to its fullest potential.

Those who opposed the bill were not against colonization *per se*, but rather against this particular piece of legislation. For example, Deputy Ballue,¹²⁰ who opposed the measure, stated, “I am perfectly convinced that it is in the interest of France to pursue with a constant concern the development of our admirable colony. I am convinced that all the efforts that we undertake to develop the prosperity of Algeria will succeed in the manner most beneficial for the metropole itself.”¹²¹ He was not concerned about the necessity of colonizing Algeria, but rather the methods that were being used to do so, which he argued were ineffective. Significantly, he asserted that the “prosperity of Algeria” would directly benefit France, and indeed supported the development of Algeria because it was “in the interest of France.” Thus, by the 1880s, even those who did not support official colonization efforts, due to their past failures, had finally acknowledged the importance of Algeria to France and the necessity of doing something to encourage its development. Bourde’s condemnation of those in the French government who would “leave the country to the Arabs” was by 1883 less relevant, replaced by debates on what methods would be best suited to encouraging the development of Algeria, rather than whether or not it should be colonized in the first place.¹²²

Those who supported official colonization relied on the now well-established distinction between the value of the Algerian land and its people. Deputy Georges Graux,¹²³ who was in favor of the authorization of 50 million francs for the colonization of Algeria, argued that, “if one wants to wait for colonists to come settle individually in Algeria, one will perpetuate the infancy of *indigène* agriculture.”¹²⁴ He asserted that without official colonization, no Frenchmen would settle in Algeria of their own accord, and thus the potential of the land would not be realized due to the “infancy” of the agricultural methods of the people of Algeria. Georges Graux further contended, quoting the economist Michel Chevalier, that, “What is required, to make Algeria a French land, a possession that benefits France, that adds to its grandeur, to the force of its industry and to its military power, is a strong European population.”¹²⁵ This argument privileged the potential of Algeria, not only agriculturally but also industrially, while also marginalizing the people of Algeria by asserting that the colony could only reach its profitable potential through the creation of a “European population” in the colony. Thus, in arguing for official colonization, politicians like Georges Graux relied on the discursive distinction between the potential of Algeria and the inferiority of the people of Algeria.

Arguments against “official colonization” also focused on the use of the land and the necessity of having French settlers cultivating it, in the same way that arguments supporting the bill did. Much official colonization up to that point had relied on the expropriation of land from the people of Algeria in order to build towns. However, many, including Ballue, felt that this system was ineffective. Ballue suggested instead that, “Before wanting to implant in Algeria a

¹²⁰ The source refers to deputies only by their last names and their region; Deputy Ballue was from the Rhône. *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2994.

¹²¹ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2977, my translation.

¹²² Bourde, *À Travers l'Algérie*, 47-48, my translation

¹²³ Of Pas-de-Calais. *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2994.

¹²⁴ *Journal officiel de la République française...28 décembre 1883*, 2998, my translation.

¹²⁵ *Journal officiel de la République française...28 décembre 1883*, 2999, my translation.

more considerable population...begin by augmenting the productivity of the soil...you will augment the wealth of the *indigènes*, and, without even employing expropriations, by an agreement with them, you will be able to ask them to cede their land to you.”¹²⁶ He argued that by taking such measures as diverting rivers to improve irrigation, the French could increase the productivity, and thus the value, of land belonging to the people of Algeria. Because their land would be more productive, he reasoned, they would need less and thus be more willing to cede it to the French, who would then acquire more valuable territory than they would have with a policy of expropriation, in addition to pacifying the people of Algeria and preventing them from resenting the French for seizing their property. Significantly, though his plan was in opposition to French policy up to that point, it relied on the principle of maximizing the value of the land and obtaining soil for cultivation by French settlers as the basis of colonization. Thus, the importance of the land and its integral role in colonization were widely accepted in the French parliament by the early 1880s.

Another deputy who was against the project, Deputy Guichard,¹²⁷ expressed the idea of Algeria that would eventually become the official policy; that is, the image of Algeria as part of France. Guichard began by commenting that “our dearest desire is that [Algeria] ceases to be a source of diversion that weakens France, and that, in the closest possible future, it becomes for us an auxiliary force that augments the power of the country.”¹²⁸ Guichard too tied the development of Algeria to the prosperity of France, as well as acknowledging the past divisions over Algerian policy and the lack of attention paid to the colony, which, he asserted, actually “weakened” France. However, Guichard went beyond such links between Algerian settlement and French prosperity to anticipate the eventual place of Algeria in the French imaginary: “I believe that Algeria does not have to be solely a possession from which France draws more or less direct profit; I believe that it must be a new France...”¹²⁹ Thus, as early as 1883, Algeria was beginning to be considered more than just a colony by members of the French government, who could see the potential to create a “new France.” Though they disagreed on the best methods for achieving this goal, the deputies concurred that the colonization through cultivation of Algeria was essential to the prosperity of both the colony and the metropole.

Officials’ lack of consensus on the best approach to the management of Algeria resulted in inconsistent policies on the colony, despite the agreement on the value of its land. This was in contrast to agricultural policies in other European colonies. In Kenya, for example, the colonial administration established a plantation economy that increased the agricultural exploitation of the colony and also placed settlers in the role of managers rather than farmers. With this goal, economist Richard Wolff observes, “officials developed a complex set of laws and institutions which forced the vast majority of African males between the ages of fifteen and forty to seek work on European plantations.”¹³⁰ In addition to the creation of the plantation system, administrators also restricted Kenyans to specific territories whose conditions did not allow them

¹²⁶ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2983, my translation.

¹²⁷ Of Yonne. *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2994.

¹²⁸ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2988, my translation.

¹²⁹ *Journal officiel de la République française...27 décembre 1883*, 2990, my translation.

¹³⁰ Richard D. Wolff, “Economic Aspects of British Colonialism in Kenya, 1895 to 1930,” *The Journal of Economic History* 30, no. 1: The Tasks of Economic History (Mar. 1970): 276, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2116744>.

to enter into competition with settler farms.¹³¹ As such, the British administration in Kenya succeeded in building a system in which the Kenyans were functionally forced to become agricultural laborers who would make the land profitable for Britain. In French Algeria, however, such a system was never instituted, despite the recognition of the value and potential of the soil. This failure to take concrete action on Algeria was due to the government's continued division over Algeria and officials' lack of recognition of the needs and opinions of the French settlers in the colony.

Calls for a *French* Algeria: The 1890s

In the early 1890s, the issue of Algeria was addressed directly by the French Senate. As part of an 1892 inquiry into the state of affairs in Algeria, Émilien Chatrieux wrote, and subsequently published, a 350-page volume detailing and critiquing the history of French actions in Algeria and providing suggestions for future policies. The preface noted that while other works contributed to the inquest were "hasty" in their production, "M. [Monsieur] Chatrieux adds a serious book, full of facts and precise documents..."¹³² This work represented the official French governmental view at the end of the nineteenth century, and reflected both the importance of the Algerian land and the lack of value of the people of Algeria, as well as expressing concern about the continued lack of French understanding of the colony. As such, it represented the prevailing turn of the century view, as expressed by an author who had lived for a substantial period in Algeria and was thus quite knowledgeable about the colony, as well as being familiar with the French bureaucracy.¹³³

Chatrieux began his work by emphasizing how little most Frenchmen knew about Algeria. Even the writer of the preface, the Deputy of Algiers at the time, highlighted that "[t]his book is not the work of a theoretician; it was not created in the silence of the cabinet, far from the country of which it speaks: it is the result of the everyday experience of men and matters of Algeria, the observation of day-to-day life."¹³⁴ This fact not only set it apart from other works on the colony, but also gave it more legitimacy in the eyes of the Deputy, demonstrating the continued divide between French politicians and Frenchmen in Algeria. Chatrieux himself stated in his Notice to the Reader that he "was struck by the considerable number of inexactitudes" in the contemporary literature on Algeria.¹³⁵ In fact, he asserted that "Algeria is not sufficiently known by the mother country, who seems too often to be ignorant [of Algerian matters]."¹³⁶ As such, Chatrieux declared his intention to "summarize...succinct[ly] and faithful[ly]...the actual state of Algeria," which would "be useful to French readers, who desire to quickly form a complete idea of what Algeria is today and what she could become..."¹³⁷ Chatrieux believed not

¹³¹ Wolff, "Economic Aspects of British Colonialism in Kenya," 277.

¹³² Émilien Chatrieux, *Études algériennes. Contribution à l'enquête sénatoriale de 1892* [Algerian Studies. Contribution to the Senatorial Inquiry of 1892] (Paris: Augustin Challamel, editor, 1893), PDF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k1660581), vi, my translation.

¹³³ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, ix-x.

¹³⁴ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, vi, my translation.

¹³⁵ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, ix, my translation.

¹³⁶ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, ix, my translation.

¹³⁷ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, ix-x, my translation.

only that the French had an inaccurate idea of Algeria, but also that they lacked an understanding of its potential. His account of Algeria, with the aim of correcting the misconceptions about the colony, sought to remedy the decades-old division between French officials in Algeria and those in the metropole.

Chatrieux's work concentrated on the value of the Algerian land while also affirming the inferiority of its people. The chapter on colonization began, "Algeria is an essentially agricultural land. Its richness is entirely in the soil."¹³⁸ This statement demonstrated not only the philosophy behind colonization policies in the 1870s, but also Chatrieux's belief in the importance of the Algerian land. Though the colony had experienced famines in the past, these were due, Chatrieux asserted, to the "negligence" or "lack of foresight" of the people of Algeria.¹³⁹ In fact, he continued, "only the European, with his civilization, knows how to subject the soil to the intensive cultivation that will return one hundred percent [of its potential]."¹⁴⁰ Thus, Chatrieux demonstrated yet again the French belief in the value of the Algerian soil and tied the issue of colonization to it by emphasizing the lack of agricultural competence of the people of Algeria.

In reviewing past colonization policies, Chatrieux was complementary of the French government's recognition of the potential value of the Algerian land: "We have understood,... that the future of North Africa had to be rooted in the progressive acquisition of land for the European settlers, [who] bring with them their scientific methods and their sophisticated equipment."¹⁴¹ However, despite this recognition, many colonization policies failed to significantly increase the cultivation of Algeria. Chatrieux blamed this failure largely on what he perceived as French leniency in allowing the people of Algeria to keep their own land or even to buy land, labelling it "imprudent generosity...[that] always weighed heavily on the colony."¹⁴² This "generosity" prevented France from using the Algerian land to its full potential by allowing the people of Algeria to continue cultivating it ineffectively.

Though he acknowledged that the government recognized the value of the Algerian land, Chatrieux ultimately argued that the French government needed more clearly-defined policies on Algeria. He asserted that "[w]hat our successive governments have lacked is: 1) From the beginning, a clear awareness of what they wanted to do [in Algeria]... 2) As a consequence, a clearly conceived management plan, followed with perseverance, if needed with obstinacy."¹⁴³ This lack of a clear objective for Algeria led to management of the colony by a "central government [that was] hesitant and indecisive."¹⁴⁴ This "central government" was not the colonial administration of Algeria but the French government, which Chatrieux criticized for its lack of interest in Algeria and its ignorance of the colony and its potential value. Ultimately, Chatrieux concluded, the Senate was at a crucial juncture: "We want to remain in Algeria. Well then, the question is...if we want to remain there as masters, or as foreigners tolerated by the

¹³⁸ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 43, my translation.

¹³⁹ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 43, my translation. Original "*imprévoyance*" can be translated as either negligence or lack of foresight, in addition to carelessness, inattentiveness, or dereliction, i.e. of duty. While "lack of foresight" seems most relevant in this context, any or all of these translations could also apply.

¹⁴⁰ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 44, my translation.

¹⁴¹ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 46, my translation.

¹⁴² Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 47, my translation.

¹⁴³ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 297-298, my translation.

¹⁴⁴ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 298, my translation.

conquered populations.”¹⁴⁵ Up to this point, Chatrieux suggested, the French had been the latter; they had not taken full possession of Algeria, nor had they realized its potential. Chatrieux felt strongly that the French needed to be more assertive and decisive in the colony, and his suggestions to this effect became the governmental policy on Algeria.

Chatrieux’s report not only concluded that the French needed to be more assertive in Algeria but also that they needed to focus more on its Frenchness. His work argued that “[i]n Algeria, it is necessary to carry out *French* policies. That is the lesson of history.”¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, he asserted, “[w]e have tried time and again to create an Algeria *for the Arabs*. Events have always cruelly demonstrated that this was nothing but a dangerous illusion. Because we conquered Algeria, we must make it a colony that is for neither the Arabs, nor the foreigners, nor the Jews; but *for the French*.”¹⁴⁷ This was the culmination of several decades of distinction between Algeria and its people. Not only should France carry out French policies in Algeria, confirming its place as a part of France; these French policies must be carried out for the French, who were clearly distinguished from the primarily Muslim (“Arab”) people of Algeria. In other words, the report suggested that French official policy largely ignore the people of Algeria and instead focus on the French and on policies that could make Algeria truly a part of France, while denying this status to the people of Algeria.

When Chatrieux’s work did recognize the people of Algeria, it was only to highlight and codify their inferiority. It asserted that decades of policies encouraging the people of Algeria to become more like the French had had little effect, and as such, the French should “resign ourselves to treating them as subjects.”¹⁴⁸ This argument finally institutionalized the view of the inferiority of the people of Algeria by suggesting that they officially become mere subjects of France, not worthy of equal citizenship. Hence by 1913, there was a distinction between the people of Algeria and the Europeans living in Algeria, in that the people of Algeria lacked rights tied to citizenship. After almost a half-century of viewing (and discussing) the people of Algeria as inferior, these beliefs became the official French policy in the colony. Significantly, this occurred at the same time that the government began to consider using truly French policies in Algeria, no longer adapting them for use in the colony but merely transplanting them from France to Algeria. As such, the official subjugation of the people of Algeria occurred at the same time that the government began to treat Algeria as an extension of France, not a mere colony. In this way, the legitimation of Algeria, the land and its value, as undeniably French, was tied to the policy of effectively disregarding the people of Algeria.

Chatrieux’s recommendation that the French employ French policies in Algeria counters the widely accepted narrative of French colonial policies at the turn of the twentieth century. Many scholars recognize this time as the transition from a policy of “assimilation” to one of “association.”¹⁴⁹ In his study of French empire, for example, Robert Aldrich asserts that “‘assimilation’ had suggested that, in theory, the colonies (and the colonized) could potentially be treated just as the metropole; ... natives, with suitable acculturation, could become fully-

¹⁴⁵ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 298-299, my translation.

¹⁴⁶ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 42, my translation, original emphasis.

¹⁴⁷ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 41-42, my translation, original emphasis.

¹⁴⁸ Chatrieux, *Études algériennes*, 313-314, my translation.

¹⁴⁹ See pages 5-7 of this paper.

fledged Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, and the French political system could simply be transported overseas.” However, Aldrich continues, “around the turn of the century, ‘association’ replaced ‘assimilation’ in the policy handbooks: . . . colonies might need to be ruled differently from the metropole and from each other, accession to French rights (and Frenchness) was unlikely for many and would require a long initiation: the colonies did not just form a geographical extension of the metropole.”¹⁵⁰ Though Aldrich’s analysis of the treatment of the people of Algeria is consistent with Chatrieux’s work, his description of French governance contrasts with Chatrieux’s emphasis on French policies in Algeria. While Aldrich describes a trend in which the French initially recognized the colonies as French and later began to differentiate them with different policies, Chatrieux’s work and the various management strategies throughout the nineteenth century suggest that in Algeria, this was not the case. On the contrary, it was only at the turn of the twentieth century that the French government recognized Algeria as part of France and began to use French policies there. Thus, even as other colonies were deemed in need of specialized governance, Algeria was defined as part of France and therefore in need of French policies.

However, even as the French government declared Algeria to be officially a part of France, the settlers in Algeria were creating a new, distinctly Algerian identity for themselves. As scholar Lizabeth Zack argues, “By 1902, ‘Algerian’ political identity was deeply embedded in the settler political culture of Algiers, and clearly distinct from ‘French’ political identity.”¹⁵¹ This Algerian identity was shared by a group of settlers from various parts of Europe, not only France. These settlers, according to historian David Prochaska, were a mix of “native and naturalized French . . . Spanish, Italians, and Maltese” who were creating a new “collective identity” in Algeria.¹⁵² Indeed, in 1921, there were nearly 200,000 “foreigners” living in the colony, according to the General Government of Algeria.¹⁵³ Interestingly, as Prochaska notes, “[n]ot only did the various Europeans refer to themselves as ‘Algerians’ [as noted above], but they created their own language, or rather dialect.” This dialect, known as *pataouète*, “reflects the disparate backgrounds and demographic characteristics of the European settlers, and at the same time expresses the experience of the nascent *pie'd noir* community.”¹⁵⁴ The creation of this dialect, which included words from the various languages spoken by the European settlers, strengthened the Algerian identity. Indeed, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Algerian political identity was a distinct imagined community.¹⁵⁵ This community included literature in its unique dialect; both newspapers and books were published in *pataouète* as early as 1898.¹⁵⁶ The creation of literature in *pataouète* is significant in that it indicates the strength of the Algerian community, as well as clearly defining it as separate from both the French and the people of Algeria by excluding both groups linguistically. Printed commodities also lead to codification of language, standardizing it and creating definite rules of usage that distinguish it

¹⁵⁰ Robert Aldrich, “Colonialism and Nation-Building in Modern France,” in *Nationalizing Empires*, eds. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 2015), 156.

¹⁵¹ Lizabeth Zack, “French and Algerian Identity Formation in 1890s Algiers,” *French Colonial History* 2, Colonial French Encounters: New World, Africa, Indochina (2002): 116, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41938125>.

¹⁵² Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 224.

¹⁵³ Gouvernement Général d’Algérie, *La Colonisation en Algérie*, 8, my translation.

¹⁵⁴ Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 224.

¹⁵⁵ This discussion relies on Benedict Anderson’s work on imagined political communities; see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁵⁶ Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 228-229.

from other languages.¹⁵⁷ As such, the Algerian identity was not merely a loose amalgamation of various foreigners but a well-defined, distinctive community whose members had more in common with one another than with their countries of origin.

It is ironic that as the French government made Algeria officially French, the settlers of Algeria separated themselves from the French by creating their own Algerian identity. Even as the French were beginning to integrate Algeria into their conception of France, the settler community was clearly distinguishing itself from its French and/or European origins. This indicates the constant ignorance on the part of the French government of the views and opinions of the French in Algeria. The continued failure of the French government to recognize both Algeria's potential value and the difficulty of life there, despite such recognition from the French there, necessitated the creation of an Algerian identity, which would be in opposition to a government that finally acknowledged Algeria as an integral part of France. In fact, it is possible that the creation of this Algerian identity was a factor in the institution of French policies in Algeria. Chatrieux's work asserted that Algeria was "for neither the Arabs, nor the foreigners, nor the Jews; but *for the French*."¹⁵⁸ In including this reference to "foreigners," Chatrieux indirectly expressed the concern that there was too much influence from other Europeans in Algeria, as well as the desire to ensure that it remained undeniably French. Having lived in Algeria himself, it is likely that Chatrieux was aware of the formation of the Algerian identity as separate from French identity, and thus likely that this was one factor in his recommendation that the French pay more attention to Algeria and institute French policies there. However, it is also apparent that his main concern was the cultivation of Algeria, as this statement is one of only a few where he directly mentions "foreigners" in a negative light. Thus, the French conception of Algeria as French, though perhaps influenced by the creation of a colonial identity, was rooted mainly in the perceived value of the Algerian land. Indeed, the decision to use French policies in Algeria came at the same time that the Algerian political identity was definitively forming. The two processes were parallel to one another, both rooted in France's lack of unity on Algeria throughout the nineteenth century, as well as its belief in the value of the Algerian land and the lack of value of the people of Algeria.

Long-Term Consequences: The War of Independence

Ultimately, the distinction between the land and the people of Algeria played an important role in the Algerian War of Independence. In response to the beginning of the rebellion in 1954, Pierre Mendès-France, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated, "The departments of Algeria constitute a part of the French Republic. They have been French for a long time and in an irrevocable manner...Between them and the metropole there is no conceivable secession."¹⁵⁹ Thus, the view of Algeria as truly a part of France persisted until the 1950s. Mendès-France spoke of a "secession," suggesting that a war between France and Algeria would be a civil war,

¹⁵⁷ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, "Chapter 3: The Origins of National Consciousness," for a discussion of the importance of print capitalism to the creation of imagined political communities.

¹⁵⁸ Chatrieux, *Études Algériennes*, 41-42, my translation, original emphasis, my underline.

¹⁵⁹ Speech of Pierre Mendès-France, National Assembly, 12 November 1954, in "Créateurs d'utopies" [Creators of Utopias], ed. Yves Michel, 2012, annex to ch. 1, PDF, http://genepi.blog.lemonde.fr/files/2012/11/1.12_Algerie_-discours-Mendes-France_nov.1954.pdf, my translation.

not a war of independence. With this view of Algeria, the French government was not inclined to accept the demands of the National Liberation Front (Front de libération nationale, FLN) for Algerian independence, in large part due to Algeria's place in the French imaginary.

Algeria was French soil, but the inhabitants of Algeria remained different in the eyes of the French people. Nearly ten years before the beginning of the war, in 1945, there was a smaller revolt in Sétif, which prompted the French government to make minor changes to satisfy the revolutionaries. The most important reform, in 1947, created an "elected Assemblée Algérienne [Algerian Assembly] composed of 120 members...with powers to modify metropolitan laws applicable to Algeria...[however,] the European minority were balanced against the entire Muslim population [in the Assemblée]." ¹⁶⁰ During a debate in the Algerian Assembly, one delegate stated, "If you consider the Muslim Algerians as French, give them all the rights of the French!" ¹⁶¹ Clearly, the people of Algeria were still not considered French, and still lacked French citizenship rights, though Algeria was by this time considered to be part of France. This continued lack of rights, as well as its disparity with an Algeria considered to be "a part of the French Republic," was one of the major points of contention between the FLN and the French government.

In 1955, just after the official beginning of the War of Independence, the French government instituted a policy of "collective responsibility" in regards to revolutionaries. When an act of terrorism was committed against the French, authorities arrested all the male people of Algeria in the area and sent them to internment camps. ¹⁶² It did not matter to the French whether those rounded up were guilty or not; they were arrested solely for being people of Algeria. This policy emphasized that the French did not accord any importance to the people of Algeria, even as they fought them (again) for possession of Algeria. The injustice of this policy inspired many of the people of Algeria to join the FLN: "[B]y May [1955, the FLN] had been reduced to two hundred men...Yet -- as a direct consequence of 'collective responsibility' -- by August they had risen again to five hundred..." ¹⁶³ The indifference of the French to the people of Algeria, and their willingness to arrest innocent people simply for being people of Algeria, aided the FLN. As such, "collective responsibility," which continued more than a century of orientalist views of the people of Algeria, made the war more difficult for the French by enlarging their opposition.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Algeria was inhabited by around 500,000 Europeans and 4 million people of Algeria, while France itself had a population of close to 40 million. ¹⁶⁴ Despite this disparity in population, Algeria was widely understood to constitute an integral part of France, a view that persisted until the Algerian War of Independence in the 1950s. This view of Algeria was problematized during the war, creating a difference in its definition: for the FLN, it was a struggle for independence, but the French fought a civil war, even if it was against people who were less than citizens, and therefore had less value. This

¹⁶⁰ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (New York: New York Review Books, 2006), 69-70.

¹⁶¹ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 70, his translation. Horne does not specify the identity of the speaker.

¹⁶² Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 114.

¹⁶³ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 119.

¹⁶⁴ Figures on Algerian populations are for 1892, as cited in *Algeria: A Country Study*, 4th ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, D.C.: United States Government, Department of the Army, Foreign Area Studies, The American University, 1985), 40. Figures on French population in 1900 from William F. Edmiston and Annie Duménil, *La France Contemporaine [Contemporary France]*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2016), 155.

ultimate discursive difference was the result of more than a century of differentiation between the people and the land of Algeria.

Conclusion

Though an oriental view of the colonized is common in colonial relationships, the privileged place that Algeria held in the French imaginary as an extension of France itself is quite unusual. The French view of Algeria, though comparable to other colonial situations, nevertheless remains remarkable. The British, for example, valorized their West African colonies for their “agricultural wealth”¹⁶⁵ and believed that “it is not necessary to turn up the earth more than two or three inches, with a light hoe, in order to cultivate any kind of grain.”¹⁶⁶ However, there was no equivalent view of these colonies as forming a part of Britain; they were part of the British Empire, not the nation itself. In Portuguese Mozambique, on the other hand, the government used the slogan “*Aqui é Portugal*” to entice Portuguese settlers and tourists to the colony in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁶⁷ In this case, the rhetoric of Mozambique as part of Portugal was a conscious public relations effort designed to increase Portuguese presence in the (major cities of) the colony. In French Algeria, however, the government did not consistently recognize Algeria as part of France until the turn of the twentieth century, *after* the settler population had already established itself and following governmental attempts at colonization. Though efforts at official colonization throughout the late nineteenth century focused on the Algerian soil and its potential, it did not speak of the land as being part of France. Thus, though French colonial discourse on Algeria shared some similarities with other European colonial rhetoric, it remained distinct in its implications.

In examining the nineteenth-century government discourse on Algeria, it becomes clear that the understanding of Algeria as part of France had its roots in both the colonial and governmental discourse on Algeria in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the policies it engendered. Throughout France’s initial half-century in Algeria, French soldiers, settlers, and finally politicians consistently created a discursive distinction between Algeria and its people. This distinction influenced policies such as attempting to tie the people of Algeria to their land. However, despite such policies, the French government often ignored the experiences of French settlers and soldiers in Algeria, consistently failing to recognize both soldiers’ and settlers’ suffering, as well as the land’s potential. Ultimately, just before the turn of the twentieth century, the French government began to view Algeria differently, as a place in need of French policies, not Algerian or colonial ones, even as settlers in Algeria ceased defining themselves as French. The distinction between the land and its people was an important factor in Algerian policies up to the turn of the twentieth century, heavily influencing the government’s perception of Algeria and thus its management of the colony, which failed to take into account the Algerian perspective.

¹⁶⁵ Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 61.

¹⁶⁶ William Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa, a Poem* (London, 1787), 9, quoted in Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 61.

¹⁶⁷ Jeanne Marie Penvenne, “Settling against the Tide: The Layered Contradictions of Twentieth-Century Portuguese Settlement in Mozambique,” in *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies*, eds. Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen (New York: Routledge, 2005), 91.

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