Networks of Knowledge: Ethnology and Civilization in French North and West Africa, 1844-1961

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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The views expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.
Abstract

The second French colonial empire (1830-1962) challenged soldiers, scholars, and administrators to understand societies radically different from their own so as to govern them better. Overlooking the contributions of many of these colonial officials, most historians have located the genesis of the French social theory used to understand these differences in the hallowed halls of Parisian universities and research institutes. This dissertation instead argues that colonial experience and study drove metropolitan theory. Through a contextualized examination of the published and unpublished writings and correspondence of key thinkers who bridged the notional metropolitan-colonial divide, this dissertation reveals intellectual networks that produced knowledge of societies in North and West Africa and contemplated the nature of colonial rule. From General Louis Faidherbe in the 1840s to politician Jacques Soustelle and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the 1950s, a succession of soldiers and administrators engaged in dialogue with their symbiotic colonial sources to translate indigenous ideas for a metropolitan audience and humanize French rule in Africa. Developing ideas in part from a reading of native African written and oral sources, these particular colonial thinkers conceived of social structure and race in civilizational terms, placing peoples along a temporally-anchored developmental continuum that promised advancement along a unique pathway if nurtured by a properly adapted program of Western intervention. This perspective differed significantly from the theories proposed by social scientists such as Emile Durkheim, who described “primitivity” as a stage in a unilinear process of social evolution. French African political and social structures incorporated elements of
this intellectual direction by the mid-twentieth century, culminating in the attempt by Jacques Soustelle to govern Algeria with the assistance of ethnological institutions. At the same time, Pierre Bourdieu built on French ethnological ideas in an empirically grounded and personally contingent alternative to the dominant structuralist sociological and anthropological perspective in France.

Approached as an interdisciplinary study, this dissertation considers colonial knowledge from a number of different angles. First, it is a history of French African ethnology viewed through a biographical and microhistorical lens. Thus, it reintroduces the variance in the methods and interpretations employed by individual scholars and administrators that was a very real part of both scientific investigation and colonial rule. Race, civilization, and progress were not absolutes; definitions and sometimes applications of these terms varied according to local and personal socio-cultural context. This study also considers the evolution of French social theory from a novel perspective, that of the amateur fieldworker in the colonies. Far from passive recipients of metropolitan thought, these men (and sometimes women) actively shaped metropolitan ideas on basic social structure and interaction as they emerged. In the French science de l’homme, intellectual innovation came not always from academics in stuffy rooms, but instead from direct interaction and dialogue with the subjects of study themselves.
Dedication

For Cara and Katie, who keep me smiling.
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List of Abbreviations

ACG – Archives, Cercle de Goundam
AEF – l’Afrique équatoriale française
ALN – Armée de libération nationale
AN – Archives nationales de France
ANOM – Archives nationales d’outre-mer
ANS – Archives nationales de Sénégal
AOF – l’Afrique occidentale française
AP – Archives privées
APC – Archives privées des colonies
APOM – Archives privées d’outre-mer
AS – Année Sociologique
CNRS – Conseil national de recherche scientifique
CPI – conseil de politique indigène
EHEM – école des hautes études musulmanes
ENS – école normale supérieure
EPHE – école pratique des hautes études
FLN – Front de libération nationale
GGA – Gouvernement général d’Algérie
IE – Institut d’ethnologie, Université de Paris
IFAN – Institut français d’Afrique noire
IHEM – Institut des hautes études marocaines
IMEC – Institut mémoires d’édition contemporaine
JOM – *Journal officiel de Madagascar*

LVB – *Archives Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Collège de France*

MAS – *Archives Marcel Mauss, Collège de France*

MET – *Musée d’ethnographie du Trocadéro*

MH – *Musée de l’homme*

MNHN – *Muséum national d’histoire naturelle*

OAA – *Officiers des affaires algériennes*

OAS – *Organisation d’armée secrète*

REI – *Revue des études islamiques*

SAS – *sections administrative spécialisées*

SAU – *Sections administratives urbaines*

SHD – *Société historique de la défense*

SLNA – *Service des liaisons nord-africains*

TF – *tarikh el-fettach*

TS – *tarikh es-soudan*

UN – *United Nations*

WWI – *First World War*

WWII – *Second World War*
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Introduction

“If Europe, advancing in civilization, could cast a backward glance periodically at Africa trapped in primordial barbarity it could say with faith and feeling: There I go but for the grace of God,” mused literature scholar and post-colonial critic Chinua Achebe in 1977. He continued, “Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray—a carrier on to whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate.”¹ This telling description captured an important aspect of European thought regarding Africa from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. Africans, so distant and mysterious, stood for many in the West as anti-Europeans. Africans, barbarous and stooped, had ceased to move forward, to progress; by the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans depicted them as backwards and trapped in an arrested state of human evolution. In this conception, which lay at the heart of much colonial civilizing rhetoric, Europeans occupied the highest rung of development by virtue of their technological, intellectual, and moral achievements. Physical measurements of people added data to this supposition, placing Africans as inferiors along a linear evolutionary chain, chronologically coded as “primitives.”²

European portrayals of an Africa frozen in time justified colonial conquest and rule, particularly after the 1830 invasion of Algiers ushered in a new era of colonial expansion for France. French soldiers and administrators, in day-to-day contact with


African groups, found that governing African subjects required a much deeper understanding than the shallow descriptions offered by ideologues. Colonial functionaries, most of them initially untrained in ethnography, sought to understand their surroundings in what historian Michel Foucault has described as a new mode of thought focused on “identity and difference” instead of the long-dominant search for “resemblance.”

French colonial thinkers anchored their conceptions of African civilization in a political, social, and economic comparison with Europe. The French method, which contemporaries dubbed the “civilizing mission,” in particular offers insight into this accumulation of knowledge of the African condition, an understanding of people and things that were “distant” for Europeans both in terms of time and geographic location. These efforts ultimately fell under the rubric of “ethnology,” a social science devoted to understanding distinctions between civilizations or races and employing historical, linguistic, and ethnographic tools of analysis.

Certain soldiers and administrators employed ethnology, conducted in the field among African natives, in an effort to inform and, in some cases, reform the techniques of colonial rule. Their conclusions often worked against a widespread colonial and academic vulgate that essentialized Africans. Consequently, this particular group of scholars encountered resistance from the military, the French colonial state, and colonial settlers. Previous research has tended to overlook or downplay the importance of their efforts and their impact on intellectual and colonial history. French soldiers, scholars,

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and their native African correspondents created the language that served as the foundation for colonial policy. Through a contextualized examination of the published and unpublished writings and correspondence of the key thinkers who both articulated this colonial approach and spread their view to metropolitan social scientists, this study reveals the intellectual networks that produced knowledge of societies in North and West Africa. Thinkers in Africa thus influenced not only the nature of colonial rule, but also metropolitan efforts to scientifically describe the fundamental building blocks of human social interaction.

From General Louis Faidherbe (1818-1889) in the 1840s to politician Jacques Soustelle (1912-1990) and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) in the 1950s, a succession of soldiers, scholars, and administrators cultivated colonial sources to translate indigenous ideas for a metropolitan audience and humanize French rule in Africa. The resultant ethnological networks considered Africa in terms different from those current in Great Britain, Germany, or even metropolitan France. Developing their ideas in part from analysis of native African written and oral sources, French Africanist thinkers conceived of social structure and race as markers of civilization, placing peoples along a temporally-anchored developmental continuum that promised advancement along a unique pathway if nurtured by a properly adapted program of Western intervention. This perspective differed significantly from theories proposed by social scientists such as

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5 My work here builds on a new and interesting vein of scholarship regarding the role of soldiers as knowledge producers. See, for example, Mary Renda, Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of US Imperialism, 1915-1940, (Chapel Hill, 2000); Paul Kramer, The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines, (Chapel Hill, 2006); and Paul W. Foos, A Short, Offhand Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict during the Mexican-American War, (Chapel Hill, 2002).
Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) that described “primitivity” as a stage in a unilinear process of social evolution.

At the same time, the findings of French ethnologists also influenced colonial policy. By 1955, for instance, Soustelle adopted ethnological institutions and principles in an ultimately incomplete and failed effort to govern Algeria and stamp out the nascent nationalist revolt. At the same time, in the work of Bourdieu and his associates, French Africanist ideas formed the core of a new, empirically grounded and personally contingent alternative to the dominant structuralist sociological and anthropological perspective in France advocated by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), among others.

Colonial Algeria provided a common physical and intellectual anchor for the French African scholars profiled in this study. Most of them served in Algeria as soldiers or administrators; ethnologist, Arabic linguist, and soldier Paul Marty (1881-1936) grew up in the area as part of the settler population. Following on the heels of the first French colonial effort that, except for the Caribbean, largely ended in 1763 with defeat in the Seven Years War, the conquest of Algeria in 1830 placed North Africa at the center of subsequent French colonial thought. Positioned along the Mediterranean clime deemed by French scientists and theorists as the most suitable for “civilized” habitation, Algeria was a vast space inhabited primarily by what French explorers, travelers, and soldiers saw as nomadic Arabic bands. Thus, Algeria was suitable for Europeans due both to climate and its status as relatively uninhabited, at least by those of “civilized” manners.⁶ Although largely ignored by French colonial propaganda, the North African territory was

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⁶ On the approach to conquered territory as empty, particularly in the early modern new world, see Patricia Seed, *American Pentimento: The Invention of Indians and the Pursuit of Riches*, (Minneapolis, 2001).
also home to a wide variety of Arab, Berber, Turkish, European, and sub-Saharan black African groups. The colony became three French departments after 1848, but still served at its heart as an exploration of difference. It was in Algeria that French colonial thinkers first encountered and learned to rule a “free” African population, not an enslaved group transplanted to the Caribbean. Even Fernand Braudel, the great *Annales* historian of the Mediterranean, could not escape the pull of France’s most important colony, an area that “fascinated” him. He later recalled of his time teaching in Algeria (1923-32): “I believe that this spectacle, the Mediterranean as seen from the opposite shore, upside down, had considerable impact on my vision of history.”

A select group of influential French scholars and soldiers had a similar experience with and in Algeria, encountering the importance of ideas generated from the “bottom” of the colonial edifice and moving “up” to the French rulers themselves.

All of the French ethnologists in this study expected Africans to “progress” towards a far-off goal: European “modernity.” In observing this civilizational movement through time, which each of these thinkers (until Bourdieu) expected to occur rapidly given France’s salutary influence, this group of French ethnologists perceived fundamental social structures as reflections of more than the teleology of the linear evolutionary models advanced by their peers. Historian and anthropologist James Clifford has framed this thought process in useful terms. “The ethnographic modernist searches for the universal in the local,” he wrote of Western social science.

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Africanist scholars likewise spent significant time examining local histories, origin myths, and migration patterns in hopes of discerning distinct macro-civilizations. From there they sought to rediscover and describe a lost moment of achievement. The French Africanists in this study hoped these moments would serve as the point of departure for new progress, pushing African groups rapidly along a unique developmental continuum towards the European position in the modern world. Civilizational advancement outside of Europe, particularly in the eyes of important French Africanist scholars Maurice Delafosse (1870-1926) and Paul Marty (1881-1936), was best found in the writings of fourteenth-century North African writer Ibn Khaldun (d. 1408), who had described the cyclical rise and fall of societies in a process of decay and rejuvenation. African rejuvenation, many of these ethnologies predicted, would take the form of a near-European level of intellectual, technological, and industrial achievement brought on by the leadership of what they perceived as an African intellectual class. In this respect French Africanists took inspiration from the philosophy of Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and Auguste Comte (1798-1857). The resultant European-African civilizational contact, several of these thinkers believed, would also revitalize stagnant European societies.

For nineteenth and early twentieth-century commentators, technological modernity represented a new stage in the development of mankind. European academics, including the ethnologists in this study, believed Africans were trapped in an underdeveloped state, behind what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has described as the rupture between past and present; modernity thus became an absolute, a singular
achievement to which all others could only aspire.⁹ French Africanist thinkers wanted to lessen the impact that an African transition to European-style modernity would have on “traditional” societies. They did not seek to eliminate colonialism, a practice that they saw as helpful to Africans in numerous ways. Instead, they desired perfection of that system, building on centuries of European philosophy to arrive at a more refined, benevolent, and dialogic form of rule. Their desire to study their subjects in full social context did not emerge from nowhere. Indeed, the study of man had been building as a discipline in Europe since antiquity. Before delving too deeply into the civilizational paradigm advocated by French Africanists and its implications, it is perhaps useful to briefly examine the intellectual lineage that helped to produce the developmental paradigm espoused by the thinkers in this study.

**Ideas of civilization, race, and progress into the early nineteenth century**

European racial thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries developed from a variety of sources. While the Western study of the human race has existed at least since Aristotle, the beginnings of European distinction between discrete regional or physical groups began in the Renaissance and the encounters between Europeans and indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas. For fifteenth and early sixteenth century commentators such as French jurist Jean Bodin (1530-1596) and the Spanish Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas (1474-1566), “race” signified distinct family lineages and formed the basis of class distinction. Exploitation of native groups, however, led some of these theorists to reach back in time for descriptions that fell outside any known categories.

Las Casas, for one, turned to Aristotle to describe American natives who he felt were not “slave by nature” but rather led the “good life.” As fellow members of an Aristotelian “civil society,” Christian Europeans must therefore gain an “extensive as well as compassionate” grasp of the social and cultural norms of the Americans so as to better respect these values for their intrinsic worth. The Indians, he argued, were part of a society quite different from European models. In this way Las Casas and several of his peers attempted the first comparative ethnologies, arguing that human societies differed due to local conditions, not biological distinction. Much like their French inheritors centuries later, they wanted to help native groups to develop along European lines, civilizational movement best achieved through the instillation of Christian morals.

Bodin took this argument one step further. His humanist analysis considered all peoples as important and distinct, but with cultural and social differences emerging from the environment, an idea with a long history in its own right. In his model, different climatic zones corresponded with distinct types of societies; understanding the environment meant understanding the society, and vice-versa. Bodin’s “scientific” approach thus opened the door to a new view of human difference, the notion of “race as type,” based on physical differences rather than cultural variation. However, that

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manner of thought took a backseat at first as Enlightenment thinkers in France, particularly Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755), applied the scientific method to studies of social groupings.

British anthropologist Edward Evans-Pritchard has described Montesquieu as the father of sociology, his work serving as the roots of the “scientific, comparative study of society.” For Montesquieu (and successors such as Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794)), human development moved through distinct stages, from hunter-gatherer to urban. These philosophers called for examinations of “savage” groups in order to gain insight into the basic building blocks of society and an understanding of the process by which “primitive” groups could hope to advance. Depicting human collectivities in these civilizational brackets enabled more precise classification, an important goal for European scientists focused on understanding natural laws. Government and social order, in this view, operated according to scientific precepts that humans had yet to uncover. In the minds of Montesquieu, Condorcet and peers such as the encyclopedist Denis Diderot, classification was all-important not only in zoology or botany, but also in the nascent social sciences.

Eighteenth-century French scientist Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) in particular took up the challenge of categorization of human types. Buffon combined the ideas of Las Casas, Montesquieu, and Bodin into a larger scientific-
philosophical method. He described civilizational groups as distinct races, all descended from a pre-historical unitary human species. However, these races were not immutable; they changed with differences in environment. “Savages,” in this view, were not bad or even necessarily backward. Instead, non-European groups were “children” when compared to those on the continent. It was the responsibility of Europeans to aid “savages” in advancing naturally towards adulthood.¹⁴

By this time, the concept of “race” was muddy at best in French thought. The term carried both notions of physical and cultural difference. However, it was difficult for European scientists to measure these variations, much less to discern what caused them. The idea of human progress linked to the influence of Europe gained hold over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as academic societies and imperial governments adopted the language of development to justify their colonial efforts.¹⁵ Implicit in these descriptions was a basic racial ordering that placed the “white” or European race at the top of a pyramid with the others below them. This hierarchy would not find full expression until the nineteenth-century. Before the rise of that depiction, however, the idea of race as lineage or civilization reemerged, providing the background for the larger European “civilizing mission.”


¹⁵ The first French ethnological academic group emerged in 1799, the short-lived société des observateurs d’hommes (it folded in 1805). It was followed in 1839 by the société d’ethnographie de Paris and, in 1859, the société d’anthropologie de Paris.
Michel Foucault has said that “everyone knows that ethnology was born of colonization, but that does not mean it was an imperial science.”

This insight frames the difficult interrelationship between ethnological ideas of civilization and the colonial enterprise. While the basis of ethnology, the classificatory schemes of the natural sciences, existed before colonial conquest, the understanding of race as a civilizational descriptor owes much to the requirements of overseas domination. The confrontation with foreign groups necessitated a detailed investigation of peoples previously unknown to Europeans. Colonial scientific examinations in the seventeenth century were directed from the center of the colonial political and scientific edifice in Paris, London, or Amsterdam. In the French case, Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) established royal scientific institutions in the 1670s. These organizations engaged in correspondence with, and received direction in many cases from, European scientists and administrators in France’s early American and Caribbean colonies. Science thus buttressed colonial conquest and rule, permitting the continued contact of colonial officials with their metropolitan academic and political peers in efforts to “civilize” the subjugated populations. Study of these groups by their civilizational superiors, theorists reasoned, made rule easier and better adapted to local circumstances. Nineteenth-century political

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pundits took this thought to the next logical step, deploying it as the backstop to liberal justifications of empire.

French statesman and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) and other European thinkers took up this call in the early nineteenth century, advocating individual freedom even as Europeans subjugated much of the world. In justifying France’s move into Algeria in 1830, Tocqueville reasoned: “there is something more necessary in the African affair...an affair that...is the country’s greatest task...at the forefront of all the interests France has in the world.”18 Africa, it seemed, needed France; the civilizing mission was the most important charge to which the French could dedicate themselves. Tocqueville and his liberal colleagues (both British and French) advocated expansion and subjugation as a necessary part of civilizational and human progress. In short, European nations needed to increase their imperial reach so as to help those at lower levels of development while also enhancing national pride. The resultant “enlightened” imperial structure would then govern their new subjects “naturally.”19 Colonial rule placed the more advanced Europeans in the position of benevolent governors, an arrangement that appeared part of the natural order. By this time, the techniques of anatomy and zoology had advanced significantly. French and German scientists in particular felt they could accurately describe long-held racial classifications


19 Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, (Princeton, 2005), 11; Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 223. Pitts considers the writings of Adam Smith (1723-1790), Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Edmund Burke (1729-1797), Benjamin Constant (1767-1830), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), and Tocqueville in her analysis. See also Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination*, where he considers a different generation of writers, both British and Indian, and their efforts to justify and/or condemn colonial rule.
in purely physical terms. The civilizing mission thus gained a new component and justification, one presaged by Bodin centuries earlier.

The physical anthropologists who emerged to conduct measurements of skull shape or size as indicators of intelligence and “race” built on the ethnological ideas of their predecessors. Many of them concluded that the races were divided into separate species or sub-species. The conflict between these races acted for contemporary political and social analysts as the “motor of historical change.” The hierarchy of the races, previously implicit and somewhat plastic as non-Europeans had at least some opportunity to advance, now hardened. Social theorists Henri Saint-Simon and his students Auguste Comte and Prosper Enfantin (1796-1864) grabbed hold of this pseudo-scientific classificatory scheme, proposing that Europeans were the superior “race” among all other varieties. In Saint-Simon’s view, no other civilization was the equal of Europe.

Denied a platform in metropolitan France due to their subversive efforts to establish utopian communities, some Saint-Simoniens sought an outlet for their reforming impulse. They turned to the colonies as a logical site for social experimentation. In so doing they hoped to demonstrate the possibility of industrial

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progress even for those of “oriental” origins, culminating in the European present.21 The ideas of Saint-Simon and Comte in particular were enormously important in the civilizational model followed by Faidherbe and his successors in Africa. The notion of progress through scientific examination continued in this segment of the French colonial project, furthered by dialogue with the subjects of study.

Saint-Simon, however, demonstrated little respect for non-Europeans. In his mind, the “philanthropic institution” of slavery had actually saved those sold from a life of backwards decrepitude. Even if enslavement was no longer politically expedient, Saint-Simon believed that France and Europe had reached “the highest possible vantage point on the road to civilization” that enabled them to “discern, on the one hand, the remotest past and, on the other, the most distant future.”22 Europeans, in his view, had advanced far beyond the civilizational state of any other group. France in particular had a unique opportunity to shape the future of human existence through the export of “liberty” and the power of industry. The French, near the top of the “ladder” of development, could pull the rest of the world along with them, thereby eliminating the archaic feudal socio-political forms that he saw as predominant outside Europe.23 Much like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels a few decades later, Saint-Simon saw industrialization as the single most important trend in European history. However, he took his analysis in a different


direction, proposing not a form of industrial class warfare but instead a new social organization, one that made full use of the historical perspective he thought came from a high civilizational perch.

Intellectuals must lead this new order, according to Saint-Simon. These “men of genius” held the key to Europe’s future, as they could ensure the “progress of knowledge” that was so vital to the maintenance of Europe’s position atop the global order. He thus proposed a new socio-political structure, one that had scientists and artists, “those who hold liberal ideas,” at the top. This ruling class, which “marches under the banner of the progress of the human mind,” would then control the business interests that tended to stifle innovation and provide a glowing example for the massive underclass that “rallies round the slogan of ‘Equality.’” Saint-Simon left the precise nature of this “knowledge” vague, perhaps in an effort to accommodate future technological advancements he could not yet foresee. However, he did propose a new vision of the European future based on an expectation of intellectual and moral “progress,” an effort Europeans would then extend to the less fortunate, i.e. Africans. This conception formed the basis of the approach taken by the French colonial officials and ethnological thinkers featured in this study. For all of that power, though, Saint-Simon’s ideas did not find an enormous contemporary audience, as he published little and focused largely on teaching in seminar-style gatherings. It was his successor Auguste Comte who provided a framework for the study and reform of societies, profoundly

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influencing French social science and the ways in which colonial officials approached subject populations.

Comte followed his teacher’s belief in the power of the intellectual class to lead France and Europe in a new, enlightened, and progressive form of government. The young philosopher saw natural order in society. In his mind, observation and categorization were all-important in comprehending social constructions; from this understanding he expected humans to perfect their organization. He wrote of his new approach, a philosophy he labeled as positivism, “The positive philosophy, in its political form, will necessarily lead the human race to the social system that is most suitable to the nature of man, and that will greatly surpass in unity, extension, and stability all that the past has ever produced.” Some civilizations, he argued, were simply closer to this natural, perfected social state; they were better adapted to their physical circumstances. Europe stood at the top of this developmental movement. The progress and change over time of European societies must serve as the subject of intense study so as to understand its unique progress and then extend those benefits to other civilizations.

Unlike Saint-Simon, Comte saw some value in the study of non-European groups. While they might not exist at an equal position on the developmental ladder, these groups did present a view of Europe at an earlier moment. Comte depicted social systems as natural


26 Auguste Comte, “Cours de philosophie positive [1830-1842],” in *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, 52, 279, 305
phenomena, part of a linear sequence. Understanding the culmination of that progression required deep study of all the stages along the way.

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), sociologist colleague of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) in early twentieth-century France, saw Comte as the founder of the modern study of human societies. Lévy-Bruhl believed that “the essence of metaphysical philosophy is to tend towards the absolute, whilst positive philosophy only seeks the relative.” Comte's relativist philosophy allowed Lévy-Bruhl and his peers to escape the trap of absolute laws; societies in their view developed according to local conditions.27 The Africanists in this study took this view a step further, viewing colonial natives themselves as qualified to comment on their own social reality. Despite protestations of European superiority, even Saint-Simon had found value in non-European writing. He mused that “the Arabs guided the human spirit in the realm of discovery until the fifteenth century, the era when the Europeans chased the Arabs from Spain and surpassed them in intelligence by the efforts they made to discover a single universal law [of political and social organization].”28 While still holding up France as the defining example of civilizational achievement from an ethnocentric and racist perspective, Saint-Simon and more importantly Comte provided an opening for the thinkers who would follow them.

Africans ultimately provided French scholars with important data, and even theoretical models, for comprehending the social forms they encountered in Africa. The

27 Lévy-Bruhl, Philosophy of Auguste Comte, 352, 362-363.
group of historians currently probing the interaction of these groups in the colonial sphere is relatively small, and draws much from post-colonial and subaltern studies. A brief examination of this literature, with its attendant strengths and weaknesses, will help to shed light on the immense ground still to be explored in ethnological interactions in French Africa.

**Review of the literature**

Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, colonial (or imperial) history received a much-needed jolt from the Subaltern Studies group, composed at first of Indian intellectuals commenting on the recently departed colonial order. These scholars effectively decentered the histories of the West by restoring the voices of those oppressed and marginalized by colonial power structures.\(^\text{29}\) Advancing a field of study popularized in part by Edward Said, these thinkers tried to remove Western bias from historical and literary examinations of the colonial period, particularly the Anglo-Indian experience. Led by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, among others, the group did much to expose the artificiality of Western views and recorded history of the “Orient,” particularly South Asia.\(^\text{30}\) Chakrabarty, in particular, has emphasized the overwhelming importance of a “hyperreal” Europe in

\(^{29}\) See, most famously, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, (London, 1988), 271-313; where she concludes that the subaltern cannot speak, as the assumption of voice removes the silent from the category of complete marginalization.

\(^{30}\) The papers of the Subaltern Studies group are collected in ten volumes as of this writing, published by Oxford University Press beginning in 1986. Edward Said provided some popular impetus to the movement with his landmark *Orientalism*, (New York, 1978), which called into question the Western depiction of the Orient as exotic and different—a literary and sometimes romantic view ultimately, in his analysis, accepted as scholarly gospel by Europeans desperate to define themselves against an imagined “other.”
virtually all written history, describing that social and cultural entity as a central reference for definitions and comparisons of relative “modernity.”

The Subaltern Studies group thus continued an important conversation opened by Said, calling for a re-examination of the roles played by non-Westerners in the colonial project. However, as Christopher Bayly has argued, it is important to temper the focus on the experiences of the oppressed with a thorough exploration of the motors of historical change, combining “other types of history” with studies that stress the “autonomy” of those in subject status.

Bayly criticizes Said as “too extreme” for his depiction of Orientalism as a one-way, European-driven system of representation. Bayly has found in the British case that colonial agents worked with pre-existing native informational structures in developing a localized understanding. In his words, “Colonial officials, missionaries, and businessmen were forced to register the voices of native informants in ideology and heed them in practice even if they despised and misrepresented them.”

This study works from Bayly’s example in viewing colonial efforts at ethnological and ethnographic information gathering as growing from locally-held ideas and pre-existing networks. French colonial officials did not value African voices above those of other Europeans, but they were forced to make use of data provided by their subjects to describe and reform socio-economic and political systems in Africa in particular.

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31 See his Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference, (Princeton, 2007 [2000]).


33 C.A. Bayly, Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870, (Cambridge, 1996), 2, 7, 142, 366 (quote on 142).
This is not to say that colonial rule was anything less than exploitative. French colonial officials, in most cases convinced of their own superiority, tried to “Westernize” Africans even as they maintained the rhetoric of development and progress. At the same time, they remained attentive to the importance of racial and civilizational categories as tools of control. Ann Stoler has probed this racial and sexual dynamic, exposing the close regulation of domestic “intimate” affairs by the Dutch colonial state in modern-day Indonesia, a theme since applied to the French case by others.34 However, Stoler did not stop at that level of control. Instead, she traced the origins of European racial-sexual ideas back to native cultures themselves. She concluded that both colonial and post-colonial theorists, in particular Michel Foucault, owed at least part of their views to a long colonial “genealogy” conveyed in a complicated process of recoding and appropriation.35

Stoler’s analysis of the genesis of Foucault’s theories of sexuality provides an important example for the study at hand, as she superbly traced the prominent French scholar’s ideas back to their source in the colonial encounter, a method followed here in an examination of the influence of colonial thinkers, and their interpretations of African sources, on French sociological theory in the metropolitan center. French social theorists such as Mauss, for all their claims to distant objectivity and personal brilliance during a life spent in Parisian study, were in reality influenced heavily by the colonial empire in


which all Frenchmen, regardless of location, played at least a symbolic part. French scholars, colonial administrators, and soldiers participated in efforts to understand African difference. Only through the acquisition of ethnological knowledge, they thought, could they properly rule African societies. The links between this sort of anthropological information and colonialism have been the subject of historical inquiry since the 1970s, and offer an important base from which to work.

Nicholas Dirks has contributed significantly to historical understanding of the interrelationship between science and social policy in the colonies. Dirks has described colonial domination as concerned with the control of representation and the reordering of social space to a form more easily managed by Western rulers. In examining Indian society, Dirks found not ancient forms of religious hierarchy, but the reappropriation and, in some cases, invention of these social divisions by the colonial state in an effort to shape, perhaps unconsciously, the very makeup of the Indian polity. In other words, he found that caste was not without historical antecedent. It did not appear purely as a Western invention. Rather, caste under British rule became emblematic, representative of all social, political, and religious structures in India. It “systematized” Indian

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36 Dirks, of course, is hardly alone in this regard. Bernard Cohn is among the founders of this school of thought, culminating in his seminal Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India, (Princeton, 1996), where he considered everything from the cloth trade and legal forms to the power of language and translation in the construction of colonial domination. Ronald Inden also contributed significantly in his Imagining India, (Cambridge, MA, 1990), where he posited the construction, like Dirks, of Western conceptions of caste and social order which in turn crippled Indian attempts at self-government and assisted further Western attempts at control and manipulation. Timothy Mitchell added a non-Indian analysis of colonial imaginaries, portraying Egypt as ordered by British representations and affected by views of modernity and the failure of the “Orient” to attain that mythical standard, in his Colonising Egypt, (Berkeley, 1991).

collectivity. Caste, while an important category prior to British arrival, became a unitary symbol of social place to the exclusion of other factors in the colonial understanding.

While focused primarily on the extraction of wealth and the development of a global trading network, British colonial officials also realized the immense importance of knowledge regarding local populations. Through the collection of ethnology Europeans hoped to master their subjects through intellectual as well as martial force. Insight into Indian social structures, though, necessarily flowed through the locals to their overlords. Dirks portrayed the relations between natives and the British colonial state as “culturally constructed” to “assert the precolonial authority of a specifically colonial form of power and representation.” He considered the inputs of a variety of groups to this process, from soldiers to missionaries to administrators. “Caste was converted into a primary concern of the colonial state…And the state took on an anthropological mission both as justification and as the basis for rule.” Thus, Dirks portrayed an enterprise dominated by a “colonial state” controlling modes of interaction, from proselytization and conversion to demographic representation.

Dirks’ deployment of empirical evidence, particularly colonial archival research, was quite impressive. However, his reading of the sources stopped in the archive itself. He spent much time discussing British expressions of social structure and race, but did not consider an important question: How was ethnological knowledge produced? Most

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40 Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 148.
of Dirks’ book focused on colonial constructions of native social categories, considering British archival records and the occasional communication with Brahman elites to explain cases such as the “hookswinging” controversies of the nineteenth century. He spent significant time describing the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “ethnographic state,” but only through discussion of the publications and correspondence of British officials. Even in his most revealing chapter, in which he considers the career and method of Colin Mackenzie, he characterized native participants as passive, largely faceless automatons: “Despite Mackenzie’s relative agnosticism, however, under the colonial regime ‘natives’ could only be informants, ‘native’ knowledge only the stuff of anthropological curiosity. Mackenzie’s Indian assistants were not to be allowed to carry on his project after his death.” These Indians, apparently, existed only in the window McKenzie provided for them; they disappeared following his departure from the scene. Their absence perhaps stems from an archival lacuna; Dirks, though, described this erasure as the work of a monolithic colonial state in full control of science with an interest only in erasing the evidence of Indian ethnological work. In contrast, examination of the methodologies of Faidherbe, French general and colonial governor Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934), Marty, or Delafosse reveals important roles for African informants and even the development of important African scholars as their French sponsors moved on.

41 Ibid., chapter 8, for instance his conclusion that “forms of knowledge were produced by regulative contexts and concerns...Regulation and knowledge thus collaborated in the fixing of tradition,” 170.

42 Ibid., 83 (see chapter 5 in general for discussion of McKenzie).
Dirks left little room for dialogue in Anglo-Indian colonial anthropology. His analysis thus loses the nuance introduced by personal connection, by the networks of information generation in which colonial ethnologists participated. For example, Dirks critiqued the opaque description of sources by Edgar Thurston, director of the Madras museum, for “the absence of argument and contextual provenance” that acted to “conceal the nature of the genealogical connection between the work and its sources.”\textsuperscript{43} Much the same critique could be made of Dirks’ study—he read the sources, but often did not consider the full context and dialogue that produced each one. His work exposed one side of the dynamic of colonial knowledge production, at least in the case of Anglo-Indian affairs. However, it is also important to consider the deeper instances of two-way communication occurring in the middle of the colonial structure. Colonial ethnography was rarely a monolithic, top-down imposition of cultural norms or traditions. Instead, it functioned more often as a continuous give-and-take between overlord and subject via overlapping, often three-dimensional networks of scholarship, administration, and conquest. These processes involved not only the metropolitan state, very much a factor, but also the people engaged in daily negotiations with all aspects of the colonial enterprise. Individuals, and the networks they create, can and did have important impacts on colonial governance and intellectual development in the metropole and abroad.

In the French colonial world, historian George Trumbull took up Dirks’ depiction of one-way impositions of ethnographic norms. He described an almost monolithic “discursive” power that shaped French ethnographic representations of Algeria under the early Third Republic (1871-1914). In Trumbull’s analysis, colonial investigation worked

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 190.
in only one way: “Cultural descriptions articulated with an eye toward the maintenance of power represented the fundamental means through which agents of French colonialism conceived of Algerians and analyzed potential unrest.”

In short, Trumbull’s French ethnography served as both language and coin of the realm. Trumbull saw little reformist impulse in this powerful discourse that shaped the decisions and opinions of policymakers: “Personal interactions enshrined in texts governed how French administrators governed, producing generalizations and explanations that determined practices.”

The Algerian colonial enterprise, in this analysis, found its core in scientific representation and examination. The results of these examinations shaped policy-making, lending credence to stereotypes based on limited data.

Thus, the discursive edifice exerted a hegemonic hold on representations of Algerians.

Trumbull’s notion of dominance echoed Dirks’ grafting of Western structure on to a disordered local political and social scene. Trumbull even quoted Dirks’ remark on Algeria: “Ethnography became the primary colonial modality of representation, linking politics and epistemology in a tight embrace.”

Trumbull found that French ethnography followed several basic concepts in understanding the North African population. Algerians were bifurcated as Arab and Berber; nomad and sedentary; uncivilized and civilized. All Algerians were Muslim and hostile to French rule. These ideas, first


46 This theme is also explored by Patricia Lorcin in Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria, (New York, 1995), where she examines the process by which the French constructed and enacted the “Kabyle myth” before 1871.

47 Trumbull, Empire of Facts, 13.
apparent during Thomas-Robert Bugeaud’s “pacification” of northern Algeria from 1842-1847, aided in efforts to “divide and rule” Algeria against itself. In Trumbull’s analysis these invented divisions formed the basis of virtually all subsequent French policy, designed to deny citizenship to a large and restive group of inferiors.

That a link existed between the “human sciences” and political control in the colonies is not at issue. On the contrary, an examination of the process by which French colonial administrators and soldiers gained an understanding of subject populations, even if only to better tailor the form of political rule, delivers a more interesting and productive discussion of the way in which colonial science actually operated. Trumbull pays homage to the potential for individual deviation from established ethnographic norms through brief biographies of key players mixed with a more typical intellectual history of ethnographic writers, both amateur and professional. However, he neglects to follow these links to their logical conclusions, instead portraying each colonial actor as in thrall to a larger process. Each man, in Trumbull’s depiction, produced ethnography that shared in the larger discursive edifice. Such analysis misses the power of Richard White’s “middle ground,” a “realm of constant invention” where all actors could employ the “reasoning of others” and “put it to their own purposes” in an endless game of give-and-take.48

In the end, Trumbull provides an illuminating and thoroughly researched survey of nineteenth-century French ethnography, culling from hundreds of works a generalized view of science as tool of control. He clearly had some interest in the networks of

knowledge generation, but chose not to follow them in favor of a somewhat heavy-handed sweep encompassing virtually all French studies of Algeria of the early Third Republic. In so doing, he omitted out many of the localized considerations that impacted such work. He left out analysis, for the most part, of the circumstances and human interactions at all levels of the colonial state that produced each study. Algeria was far more than a discursive center; it served as the inspiration for several generations of French scientist-administrators. These men and women did not fall victim to a monolith. Rather, they often employed Algerian exploitation as a counter-example, a position from which to deviate, not emulate.

French ethnological knowledge, in contrast to Trumbull’s presentation, emerged neither entirely, nor even primarily, from the superimposed suppositions of colonial and metropolitan officials. Instead, French ideas of difference grew from extensive contact between native Africans, French colonial officials, and soldiers invested in understanding the local mechanisms of social interaction. Networks are rarely neat—perhaps the most interesting avenues of exploration lie not in Foucault’s “microphysics” of power, but in probing these networks as places for contestation and relation between members outside the seemingly dominant discussion. Such an examination yields a greater understanding of the role of individuals, of the development of alternate locations and modes of discussion in the colonies themselves.

49 Trumbull’s bibliography, and his analysis in general, works through the chronological sequence of ethnography in Algeria over the Third Republic’s early history. Notable exceptions are his treatment of Louis Rinn, Xavier Coppolani, and especially Henri Duveyrier in which he does present some biographic information. In general, though, the work moves through an enormous amount of material in relatively short order. See Empire of Facts, 265-286 for his list of published ethnographic sources.
Understanding the processes by which French colonial officials generated ethnological knowledge, and thus the technologies of rule, requires a move beyond the directives of metropolitan government or even colonial governors in African cities.\textsuperscript{50} Gary Wilder analyzed the dialogue that undergirded much colonial science in \textit{The French Imperial Nation-State}. Wilder aimed high in his work, setting as his goal the combination of literary theory (post-colonial thought), historical anthropology, and social theory in a startling amalgamation of empirical and theoretical axes.\textsuperscript{51} He approached the French imperial state as composed of mutually supportive colonies and metropole. His depiction stands as both important and different; without an understanding of the French state as a political and social entity composed of coursing channels of communication it is impossible to conceive of a metropole intellectually impacted by its colonies. Wilder did not specifically trace the growth of French ethnology under the Third Republic; rather, he focused on the form of rule that emerged in the period. The unique strain of republicanism in France was neither pure nor universal in Wilder’s analysis; rather, it was an outgrowth of the colonial project.

Wilder’s formulation attributed some epistemological agency to the colonies. He considered the contributions of scientists and particularly administrators in formulating

\textsuperscript{50} Alice Conklin’s work, \textit{A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930}, (Stanford, 1997), is an important example of this “great man” style of analysis anchored in Parisian policy circles. She broke new ground in exposing the contributions, even if depicted as relatively minor, of ethnologist-administrators in the colonies, particularly Maurice Delafosse. However, she stopped at the level of the governors-general for the most part, never tracing the genesis of republican ideas of African reality back to practitioners in the field.

\textsuperscript{51} Gary Wilder, \textit{The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars}, (Chicago, 2005), 20-1. He described his work as an incorporation of Marx, Arendt, and Foucault “into a modified Marxian framework for understanding the noneconomic dimensions of our political modernity through an imperial optic,” 14-15.
conceptions of the colonies while also noting the impact of those views on national self-identity. In this area, Wilder located a proving ground for the growth of what he termed “political rationality,” an effort to legitimately understand and apply new concepts of state formation outside of an idealized view of republicanism.\footnote{Gary Wilder, “Colonial Ethnology and Political Rationality in French West Africa,” \textit{History and Anthropology} 14, 3 (2003), 220-21. This article came to form a chapter of his book, but he more clearly expressed his understanding of “rationality” in this rendering. It is on this point that Wilder excoriated Conklin, whose analysis he felt “functions to protect the purity of republican universalism, scientific knowledge, and improving gestures from the contaminating influence of racism, self-interest, and instrumental politics,” \textit{Imperial Nation-State}, 6-7.} This reform movement, particularly in the AOF, he also expressed as “colonial humanism.” The actors in this new conception of governance operated at the interstices of the colonial project. They “transcended the opposition between disinterested science and instrumental action not so much by finding a middle ground between them as by exploiting their intersection.”\footnote{Wilder, \textit{Imperial Nation-State}, 68.} Wilder’s network attempted to reconceptualize the colonial project from the inside to justify domination within a mutating rubric of civilization and republic. French reformers desired an idealized colonial space, one that incorporated both the universal human rights of early twentieth-century republicanism and the more heavy-handed developmental approach of the modern, expansive imperial state.

Working both with and against this “humanist” movement were the founding \textit{négritude} poets—Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas. Wilder followed the intellectual circulation of these African and Caribbean subjects through the French colonial structure, locating in that movement the origins of a more unified form of intellectual network, one struggling against French colonialism. This resistance incorporated both Black/African cultural (non-national) and republican
The French state, composed of disparate entities, thus generated two distinct efforts to challenge its basic “antinomy.” The first, constructed by administrators and ethnologists, used scientific categorization to work within a paradigm of domination. The second, built by black emigré intellectuals, used literature to posit a new way forward where universal citizenship eschewed national and racial boundaries.

Wilder thus contributed an important view of the French colonial state in which he focused on the interplay between the colonies and the metropole. His depiction of the growing network of négritude stands as particularly compelling and an important theorization of the genesis of a vital intellectual movement. Négritude, in this analysis, emerged not from the simple conception of a few men; instead, it grew from a confluence of events and ideas unique to the French colonial world. Although his description of the nature of “humanist” reform at times appears theoretically overwrought, his analysis of the intellectual movements resident within the structure remains quite useful. He considered the full range of social and cultural influences on the founding members as contributions to their writings and political choices. Colonialism itself, though, ultimately emerged in Wilder’s work as a disembodied structure atop these movements. Wilder’s discussion of colonial rule and social investigation thus leaves room for a more human story that probes how and why individual men and women in the colonies built and shaped systems designed to categorize and study local populations.

Emmanuelle Sibeud’s remarkably researched study, Une science impériale pour l’Afrique, stands as an important effort in that direction. In studying the education of colonial savants, Sibeud broke new ground, finding powerful connections between

\[54\] Ibid., 171.
metropolitan and colonial scientists. She acknowledged the importance of the knowledge-power dynamic, but in general focused on the intellectual development of French Africanist scholars in Paris. Sibeud described herself as most interested in the “publication strategies” of French savants, as in her mind such analysis decentered the traditional narrative of French academic development as emanating from the metropole. Sibeud thus agreed with Wilder’s conception of colonial thought as constitutive of imperial conceptions. However, she stopped short of heavy consideration of the political implications of French science. In her view, colonial thought became increasingly important with the encroachment of “modernity,” particularly as Lévi-Strauss and others participated in the “reconstitution” of anthropology as a science anchored first in empirical examination in the field.

While Sibeud conceded the importance of colonial officials in the development of Lévi-Straussian anthropology, she anchored her analysis of the “formation” of French social scientists in the metropole. She concluded that intellectual conceptions, regardless of place of writing, were generated in the metropole among white Frenchmen. She admitted that her work paid little attention to non-Europeans as she focused on the impetus provided by metropolitan requirements in shaping the techniques used to gather information on the colonies. In other words, Sibeud portrayed a colonial science

56 Ibid., 16.
57 Ibid., 275-6. While Sibeud discussed some of the “combat” that surrounded the slow change in knowledge generation, she still described the metropolitan scholars as the “masters” of the “intermediaries” in the field, 274. See chapter 7 of this study for a more detailed examination of Lévi-Strauss and his eventual turn away from field studies and the importance of the individual.
governed by the educational system in France. That system operated not based on colonial requirements, but on the perceptions of administrators in the metropole. Sibeud spent little time on theoretical constructs to explicate the practice of colonial ethnology. For her, the cultural and social background of savants was far more important. Her emphasis on empirical exposition set an excellent example for further study, but left room for additional examination and explication of constituent networks in colonial systems of knowledge production. For all the power of Sibeud’s empirical data on the metropolitan edifice of colonial ethnology, her work does not consider the role of Africa and Africans in the creation of what ultimately became the colonial ethnological canon.

Indeed, native Africans themselves supplied views of race, civilization, and history that were vital in the development of European colonial concepts of progress and development. Bruce Hall offered an important analysis of this process in the West African Niger Bend in his *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa*. Hall moved beyond simple colonial depictions of race to instead trace those concepts back to African sources themselves, particularly written documents produced in Arabic from the sixteenth to twentieth century. He described the contingent and varied nature of racial thoughts as a process of continued negotiation along the Saharan edge that had existed since long before the arrival of European colonizers. He wrote, “Ideas about race did not exist as some kind of ahistorical discursive denigration of blacks, or of blackness; instead, racial ideas had to be inhabited, used, and reproduced. They were always, by definition, dialogical.”

Categories in the Sahel were not imposed. Instead, divisions emerged as

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expressions of class, occupation, or lineage. These ideas grew organically from interactions in the local area.

Africans continued to negotiate descriptions of their social structures even under colonial rule, Hall found. African writers described lineage and race in their own terms. Locally produced historical interpretations were vital to claims for political power and prestige of all groups in an area torn by massive social upheaval brought on by complicated environmental, economic, and political forces. Hall found that these groups passed their ideas of racial distinction to the French colonizing forces. However, many of the French ethnographers of the area misinterpreted what they saw or were told, ultimately leading to warped policies that targeted, in particular, Sufi devotional brotherhoods as dangerous threats to the colonial order. However, Hall argued that even these types of misinterpretations were manipulated and exploited by intelligent Africans intent on achieving some measure of prominence, prestige, and political stability for their families in an uncertain world. These intelligent subjects, far more than passive recipients of a discursive formation, managed depictions of lineages so as to elevate some while pushing others to the background. In the process, they contributed to French ideas of the “potential” of Africa for real political progress.

Hall’s work, while an important exposition of the origins of Sahelian racial ideas, does not follow African racial ideas as they moved into French colonial governance across Africa and even to theoretical conceptions developed in the metropole. Hall’s methodology serves as an important spring-board for an examination of the further spread

59 Ibid., 208, 316-317.
60 Ibid., 173.
of African racial ideas into both the political structure as well as the intellectual debates on the very nature of social structure going on across Wilder’s “imperial nation-state.” By following the movement of these ideas across the time and space of the French colonial presence in Africa, this study examines the emergence of “civilization” and “development” from native origins through colonial interpreters such as Louis Faidherbe and on to his successors.

**A networked methodology**

The French colonial state, seemingly directed at all times by policymakers in Paris, appears at first glance easy to categorize as a monolithic entity. It is easy to paint “French colonial policy” with a broad brush, leaving out the individual players in favor of a description of the larger movement of process, a sort of Annalist approach to history as shaped by almost climatic forces. However, French activities in the colonies did not occur at this high level of abstraction. The colonial project was composed of numerous individuals, each acting in ways consistent with his or her background and the surrounding environment. The French scholars, soldiers, and administrators who practiced African ethnology created networks to gather information on native populations in order to improve their own political, social, and economic positions as well as those of their subjects and subordinates. The French empire, as Charles-Robert Ageron has argued, was not a monolithic entity. It was composed of small groups or bands of individuals who shaped governance according to their own needs and desires.61 It is one

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such network of networks, that of French African ethnology, that serves as the subject of this study.

Tracing interpersonal connections, however, poses a significant challenge. Each important thinker communicated with thousands of people in his or her lifetime. It is therefore important to isolate these experiences while remaining sensitive to their context, as Thomas Kuhn has suggested. No study could hope to include full biographical detail of every person that ever came into contact with another regarding a specific subject or place. However, in the case of French African ethnology, several figures emerge as important nodes. Thinking through their shared experiences reveals one important item they had in common beyond their professions: a relationship with French colonial Algeria. Narrowing the channels in which the ethnological ideas of these men moved requires even more detail on their individual experiences.

Pursuit of a single idea, in the manner proposed by historian Arthur Lovejoy, offers a path through the seemingly infinite connections of any single human life. This approach offers a perspective that transcends national or racial divides, appearing in multiple times, places, and voices. Detailed examination of these networks of scientific investigation (in this case social scientific) reveals that important ideas emerge from, as sociologist Bruno Latour has described it, a small group of isolated people “so powerful and yet so small, so concentrated and so dilute.” This study considers the power of the concept of civilizational progress as it ran through the French African colonial project.

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As it moved through time, the idea took on a life of its own, incorporating notions of religion, ethnicity, race, and intellectual ability in a colonial and scientific quest to understand, categorize, and to a certain extent regulate difference. This scheme, though, did not move of its own accord. It propagated and mutated as different thinkers, each bringing a different skill, encountered and interacted with the basic notion of civilization. While each individual’s contribution to the advancement of this progressive style of colonial comprehension was important, the full impact of this idea on the French colonial and academic worlds emerges only when considered as a product of networks of like-minded people. As anthropologist Matei Candea has suggested with respect to Corsica, knowledge exists in the ties between people, places, and stories. The resultant “thick web of relations” stands as the most important object of study for any scholar hoping to describe the ways in which people understand themselves and each other.64

Consequently, this study of French colonial ethnology moves between individual biographies and the networks in which important thinkers participated. In this case, the view from the “middle” of the colonial project offers more critical insight into the lived experience of colonial policy, particularly its interaction with French social theory. Intellectual history, in this case, is composed of interrelated systems of interpersonal connection. Understanding these associations requires a combination of microhistory, biography, and larger imperial history.65 This study strives for what David Hackett

64 Matei Candea, Corsican Fragments: Difference, Knowledge, and Fieldwork, (Bloomington, 2010), 6, 80-81.

65 This approach appears most recently (albeit in the British case) in Koditschek, Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination. Microhistory has served as a useful counterpoint to some of the beautifully wrought metastudies pioneered by, among others, the Annales School. Carlo Ginzburg’s The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi, (Baltimore, 1980) is
Fischer has termed a “third way” that combines detailed social analysis with the enlivening details of individual stories. The resultant “braided narrative” is intended to make material instantly more understandable for a reader accustomed to his or her own life as a story.66 Gaurav Desai, in his illuminating discussion of colonial literature in British Africa, termed this approach “post-foundational,” arguing that the world is best understood through the lived experience of individuals. This construction enables scholars to reconsider meta-categories such as “empire,” “nation,” or “race” in specific individual, contextual, and historical terms.67 Threads of personal interconnection and conversation, when considered in their full social and cultural context, reveal the important influences that shaped the views of these scholars and their colleagues. Following the growth of descriptions of civilization and development among French colonial scholars probes the manner and source of French governance while also delivering significant insight into the contested nature of French social thought throughout the period.

Such an approach also produces difficulties. Describing the appearance and function of these overlapping webs of connection remains problematic; indeed, this requirement has bedeviled most historians of colonial networks. Among the most


commonly employed metaphors stand the wheel-spoke and the web. The wheel and spoke model locates a significant point, a physical, ideological, or imaginary center around which the other individuals or ideas in the network revolve. Implicit in this idea is the notion of return, with the peripheral players moving between center and exterior regularly. These same players also move between exterior points; thus, the model is dynamic, featuring transit both linearly and centripetally. This wheel is useful for diasporic representations, particularly in cases where traders send tribute back to a central location. In the case of efforts by French colonial administrators, soldiers, and scholars to comprehend African social constructions, however, the wheel fails to convey the overlap and interconnection wrought by the colonial enterprise. While it is dynamic, it is also two-dimensional and lacks possibility for growth. A wheel, whether composed of wood, rubber, or aluminum, leaves little room for change.

The web, on the other hand, offers an interesting alternative. It can grow almost infinitely; while it has a notional center, that location is not vital to the stability of the structure. Webs, in fact, are most often constructed from the outside to the inside. Ideas

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69 The idea of trade diaspora remains controversial. It was first theorized for Africa by Abner Cohen in his *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*, (Berkeley, 1969) and expanded to the Indian Ocean by Philip Curtin in his landmark *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, (Cambridge, 1984), which opened a new field in understanding the Indian Ocean. Markovits very specifically set his work against that of Curtin, arguing for a realm of exchange and return. Among others, Engseng Ho offers an alternative view, based in regionalized Islamic identity, in his *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, (Berkeley, 2006). The Atlantic has been the site of fewer studies of cross-cultural economy (outside the slave trade), but the development of Black identity across the ocean was theorized by Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge, MA, 1993); while John Thornton saw such movement more as the maintenance and mediation of culture in *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*, (Cambridge, 1992).
or people can move in an almost infinite number of possible directions, increasing the possibility of exchange and offering the explosive opportunities of rapid contact between elements on opposite ends. In the final analysis, though, this model also fails to adequately describe colonial ethnology due to its lack of movement. The web itself rarely stirs (except by the vagaries of external wind), and most items that touch the structure are mired in place. Indeed, the networks of knowledge production in French Africa, incorporating both native and Frenchman, require a more organic description, one that considers human systems as living entities that move and mutate according to the unique logics of the participating individuals.

French post-structural theory offers the most appropriate depiction of these types of networks. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in describing their approach to social and psychological examination as a series of seemingly isolated plateaus connected in almost imperceptible ways, used “rhizome,” a term borrowed from botanical descriptions of root systems. Their application of the term, however, went far beyond the relatively static and hardened nature of tree roots. They wrote, “There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines.” In the case of French African ethnology, soldiers and administrators moved along such lines, at times acting as moving nodes that then drew connections to other locations or people. The networks of African knowledge production were much larger than any one individual; only when considered collectively, in what Matei Candea has described as

“interconnaissance,” does the power of the connections to produce a larger ethnological worldview emerge.

Deleuze and Guattari took the rhizome metaphor further, adapting it to the requirements of human scientific arts. They wrote, “A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.” French African intellectual networks made use of pre-existing “organizations of power” to further both the reach of their understanding and their places in the colonial structure. The ethnological systems thus moved of their own volition, driven not by “the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer” in the centers of power in Paris or Dakar, but rather by “a multiplicity of nerve fibers” both independent and interconnected.71 Understandings of human reality in Africa did not result purely imperial domination. Rather, they grew from the overlaying of the French imperial state on scholarship and concepts present in Africa for centuries. French colonial officials did not control these systems; rather, they described the results in civilizational terms.

Much like the British colonial networks in India described by Christopher Bayly, the systems of intellectual exchange analyzed in this work lay on top of, beneath, and inside of extant African constructions. As Deleuze and Guattari explained, “A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo...the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance.”72 French colonial scholars were firmly “in the middle” of the metropolitan-African relationship. In many cases,

71 Ibid., 7-8.

72 Ibid., 25. For Bayly’s description of information networks in India, see Empire and Information.
particularly for Delafosse and Marty, they served as the interpreters and translators of African history and social construction. They formed “alliances” with African thinkers and their written chronicles to convey civilizational ideas conceived in Africa. Many of these connections grew purely from personal contacts—Delafosse and Marty were hardly anti-colonial agitators. However, intellectual exchanges enabled the individuals involved to better conceive of the colonial condition. This information often flowed back into the colonial power structure, as these men and women were intimately involved with governance from their positions as conquering soldiers, administrators, advisors, and governors.

The French men and women conducting ethnological research in tandem with Africans brought a strong desire to reform; many of them published prolifically through professional societies or colonial presses to further their views on the proper form of French interaction with Africans. Participation in the “alliances” of French ethnology did not come automatically to colonial functionaries. Membership came from expertise, experience, and a shared, idealized conception of the colonies. Most importantly, the French scholars moving along the lines of the Deleuzian rhizome shared an interest in African social descriptions generated by Africans themselves. The networks that formed his system of systems were dialogical; none existed purely to service the exchange of ideas among European intellectuals themselves at the expense of native groups. French ethnology in Africa was far more than a repression-resistance binary or a top-down push for information useful in exploitation. The ethnological information that shaped colonial
governance lay in what historian Richard White has termed “the middle ground,” where the subject met the administrator or the soldier in a negotiated reality.\textsuperscript{73}

**The argument in detail and chapter outline**

French Africanist scholars by the middle of the nineteenth century met African subjects and their ideas in large part through texts, aided by the manuscript acquisitions of French Orientalists in the metropole. Ibn Khaldun, the prominent medieval North African polymath, diplomat, and jurist, stood out to colonial thinkers as the greatest Arab-Islamic philosopher, an important source for knowledge of African civilizations. His universal history of the Islamic world, particularly his introduction, the *Muqaddima*, in some ways presaged the work of Comte for its efforts to retain objectivity while presenting facts in a chronological, rational order and avoiding many of the religious tropes that dominated both Christian and Muslim writing of the period. Comte himself may have been aware of Ibn Khaldun’s writing thanks to the translations of European Orientalists that appeared as early as 1636. Ultimately, Ibn Khaldun’s theories on the cycles of civilizational rise and fall appeared in European publications in the early nineteenth century, earning him the moniker “Montesquieu of the Arabs” in some circles.\textsuperscript{74}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{73} White, *The Middle Ground*, XI.
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French colonial employees and scholars elevated Ibn Khaldun to a position atop the imagined medieval scientific scene as the font of African knowledge. Ibn Khaldun thus became an important point of departure for any consideration of the worth of African social analysis. French Africanists looked for similarly sophisticated and philosophical written histories as they searched for “authentic” African history. The authors of these texts would, scholars hoped, provide a deeper understanding of the complex African social and political reality. At the same time French administrators wanted to groom men capable of taking over direction of African developmental efforts after the European departure at some imagined point in the future. In short, the historical ideas produced by Africans themselves became enormously important in the depictions of African civilization by French scholars, soldiers, and administrators involved in the colonial project. The “colonial library” employed by these thinkers was not selected purely by Europeans; it emerged rather from a dialogue, one negotiated by the two sides in a continuous, though sometimes unequal, process.

Without question, the French retained the preponderance of military and economic force in the colonies. Native Africans, on the other hand, retained control over the ethnological knowledge so dear to the form of “indirect rule” desired by both the French and British by the early twentieth century. Africans actively shaped French ethnographies and the resultant ethnological depictions of the development of African

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75 Ibn Khaldun’s actual importance in Arabic scholarship remains a matter of significant debate. Bruce Lawrence has argued that he is known largely due to interest from Orientalist scholars. See Bruce B. Lawrence, “Introduction: Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology,” in *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology*, ed. Bruce B. Lawrence, (Leiden, 1984), 5. More recent scholars have tried to position Ibn Khaldun firmly in his own context. For a summary of this approach, see Mohammed R. Salama, *Islam, Orientalism, and Intellectual History: Modernity and the Politics of Exclusion since Ibn Khaldun*, (New York, 2011), 88-89.

76 Desai, *Subject to Colonialism*, 4.
civilizations in an effort to gain greater social and political power, in the process informing the conclusions reached by French metropolitan sociologists. Although overlooked by many recent scholars, this process of interaction and exchange with native intellectual elites was relatively common in the French colonial system, particularly in West Africa. Ethnology, denigrated in the early nineteenth century by physical anthropologists interested only in visible distinctions between races, provided important information to an emerging form of colonial administration designed to adapt to and incorporate native political and social structures.

Louis Faidherbe (1818-1889), then a major in the French army, adopted this ethnological approach during his tenure as the governor of Senegal in the 1850s and 1860s; his work in Africa, both Senegal and Algeria, serves as the basis for chapter 1 of this study. Following Faidherbe’s contacts with local African informants and French colonial officials reveals networks that influenced and incorporated both colonial policymakers and social scientists in France. He corresponded with Senegalese observers and translators such as Bou al Mogdad Seck (1826-1880) and French soldier-administrators such as Joseph Gallieni (1849-1916) in developing what he believed was a more complete, and thus more useful, view of native societies. With this knowledge he advocated a new form of colonial rule, one opposed to the French Algerian-style direct governance. Instead, he governed in a manner reminiscent of British “indirect rule,” maintaining native African political and social structures with an overarching French

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77 See chapters 3 and 4 of this study in particular for a view of this African manipulation of French ethnology, and chapter 5 for the movement of these ideas back to metropolitan French science. On the German case, see Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, (Chicago, 2001). On the British case, see Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination*. 44
presence. At the same time, he corresponded and collaborated with the most prominent French social scientists of the mid-nineteenth century, in particular offering a more relativist, ethnological viewpoint to physical anthropologists who, in many cases, proposed “races” as separate species.

However, Faidherbe’s ideas found little traction in metropolitan science at the time, as scientists tended to look at the officer as the exception that proved the rule of colonials as unimportant contributors to serious science. His concepts and techniques instead gained hold among a select group of military officers trained in Faidherbe’s techniques, particularly Gallieni and the most prominent French colonial leader of the early twentieth century, Hubert Lyautey. The careers of Gallieni, and more importantly Lyautey, ranged from Algeria to Indochina, Madagascar, and ultimately Morocco in reforming the colonial system, events described in chapter 2 of this study. In the process, the “proconsuls” instituted a Faidherbe-style political association, one founded on ethnological examination geared towards a policy of “divide and rule” of native social groups. Most notably, these men employed (and exploited) African savants in French Soudan, Madagascar, Algeria, and Morocco in gaining the information necessary to widen these cracks in native social and political structures.

For Lyautey, though, ethnology served as more than a simple instrument of rule. He harbored humanist beliefs in the value of all civilizations, and had a particular affinity for Arabic scholarship. Like Faidherbe, he read Ibn Khaldun and tried to understand African development through an African lens, going further than his forebear in establishing local scientific institutions to further French knowledge. Although lacking in
advanced academic degrees, Lyautey climbed to the highest rungs of French academia and offered an important counterpoint to the Algerian method of colonial governance that he saw as unnecessarily harsh.\(^7\) For many contemporaries in France, Lyautey symbolized France’s overseas rule, the heights to which that nation could aspire in the imperial competition with Great Britain and, to a lesser extent, Germany. The colonies, Lyautey and others thought, generated men prepared to lead a moral renewal of the metropole.\(^7\)

Lyautey’s respect for African-created knowledge found a new home in West Africa (Afrique occidentale française, or AOF), the newest French colonial political federation and home to numerous French linguists and ethnological scholars, foremost among them Maurice Delafosse and Paul Marty. Marty, a former subordinate of Lyautey in Morocco, led the AOF Muslim Affairs bureau while Delafosse served as a special advisor to the French governor-general from 1915-1918. The two scholars developed vast networks of French colonial and native informants, chronicled in chapter 3 of this study, to gather African-generated documents and the accounts of prominent native savants. In the process they developed important views on black African social structure and religion, as described in chapter 4 of this study, depictions that served as the basis for West African political and social policy for the remainder of the colonial period. In

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\(^7\) This is in contrast to the state of affairs proposed by Lucette Valensi, who has argued that the colonies offered no scholars of Islam or North Africa who could be considered part of the “intellectual elite.” Lucette Valensi, “Le Maghreb vu du centre: Sa place dans l’écologie sociologique française,” in Connaissances du Maghreb: Sciences sociales et colonisation, ed. Jean-Claude Vatin, (Paris, 1984), 230.

selecting and reading native-generated sources for evidence of African historical strength, the scholars worked to show the great social, political, and intellectual heights reached by Africans in the past and the potential for future greatness with limited Western intervention. They took up the mantle of Saint-Simon and Comte but infused their frameworks with information collected locally. Although shaped by colonial preconceptions of African capabilities, these men nonetheless described African societies as developing along their own unique paths. Europe, in their view, could aid and accelerate this advance, but Africans did not exist simply as models of earlier European achievement.

The efforts of Delafosse and Marty to understand African societies also struck at a more fundamental requirement of colonial governance. From its origins in the seventeenth century, the French colonial system, whether royal or republican, had sought to make natives Frenchmen. This concept, also known as assimilation, remained the standard French practice into at least the early twentieth century. The rise of Faidherbe, Lyautey, and ultimately Delafosse and Marty brought a new emphasis on maintaining African structures in a state of quasi-independence, a form of rule known as association. The association-assimilation debate played out in colonial policy-making circles both in the metropole and in the colonies themselves. In this milieu, the voices of colonial administrator-scholars such as Delafosse rang loudly, advocating a system echoing the “hands-off” policy of the British. This approach, colonial thinkers argued convincingly, gave native Africans the tools to develop economically and socially while enabling profit in both directions, allowing for the intellectual and industrial advancement of both France
and Africa. Africans, they thought, could and would serve as productive members of global society if given the opportunity to develop with the assistance of Europeans. Ethnology and ethnography were more than just social science; they provided important inputs to the policy-making process in the colonies themselves.

For all of their ability as informed colonial officials to influence policy while gathering and interpreting ethnographic data, Delafosse and Marty lacked the bully pulpit from which to change French sociological theory. Most Parisian sociologists and social scientists remained unwilling to seriously consider the theoretical or interpretive inputs of colonial savants. Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), however, departed from this metropolitan intellectual snobbery by collaborating widely with French colonial scholars and administrators; his ethnological efforts are the subject of chapter 5 of this study. A colleague of Delafosse in numerous French and international scientific organizations, Mauss stood atop the international ethnological establishment, viewed with reverence even by leading cultural/social anthropologists such as Franz Boas (1858-1942) in the United States and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) in the United Kingdom. The famed French sociologist notably emphasized fieldwork despite his own lack of field knowledge. He also advocated the idea of separate civilizational development first advanced in Africa by Faidherbe and Lyautey and further refined by Delafosse and Marty. In the process he countered the prevailing theoretical sentiment, espoused most prominently by his uncle and mentor Emile

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Raymond Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914, (New York, 1961), 45-46, 107. See also Raoul Girardet, L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962, (Paris, 1972); and Ageron, France coloniale, for more discussion of the parliamentary intrigue surrounding this policy change.
Durkheim, of “savage” or “primitive” social forms as precursors in the unilinear social evolution that culminated in the European form. Mauss’ relativism, informed by colonial ethnographic data, thus reshaped French social theory and pushed it in a new direction, away from the metropole and towards the colonies themselves, a process overlooked by some recent scholars. More than just an influential academic, Mauss disseminated the civilizational perspective via his students, many of whom became influential colonial thinkers, administrators, and political leaders.

Mauss’ ethnological students, such as Jacques Soustelle (1912-1990), returned as academics and politicians to rule French Africa in the dying light of colonialism. Soustelle’s efforts in Algeria from 1955 to 1956 serve as the basis for chapter 6 of this study. During his twelve months in office Soustelle tried to reverse more than a century of French Algerian rule by employing a government founded on ethnological principles and investigation. Soustelle, with fellow Mauss disciple Germaine Tillion (1907–2008) and other like-minded staff ethnologists, tapped into networks of French and native knowledge developed over centuries, in the process hoping to understand and thus eliminate the causes of the revolt ignited in 1954. Like Mauss and other preceding Africanist thinkers, Soustelle imagined Algeria as a place of overlapping civilizations, each resident in a unique developmental period that did not coincide with Western standards. He and his staff, much like Delafosse and Marty, saw Ibn Khaldun as an important contributor to any understanding of African life; the great Arab’s model of

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development and decay seemed to Soustelle and his subordinates to fit perfectly with the gross inequities of contemporary North Africa.

Soustelle’s government deliberately modeled itself on the Moroccan protectorate of Lyautey in Morocco, employing military officers as ethnographic fieldworkers and administrators. Soustelle and his staff also created quasi-permanent ethnological structures, worked to enhance the linguistic overlap of the resident cultures, proposed increases to native political participation, and suggested land reforms designed to accelerate industrialization. Like those before him, he tried to consult native intellectuals as important sources of the social reality in the colony. In the end, his efforts were not enough. The ethnological techniques he applied descended from the findings of Marty and Delafosse in West Africa forty years earlier. In the process, he ignored the radically different context presented by Algeria. Thus, he underestimated, and at times dismissed, the young, largely secular elites who had developed a sophisticated rhetoric that refused colonial cooperation in terms appropriated from nationalist, pan-Arab, and pan-Islamic movements. Ultimately frustrated with the lack of Algerian progress, Soustelle fell victim to temptation, permitting his forces to use torture and increased military force in a doomed effort to quell the rebellion.

Even as Soustelle’s efforts to forge an ethnological government in Algeria met with defeat, a new generation of scholars emerged who rejected the colonial state as the consumer of ethnology. Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) in particular turned French ethnological and sociological theories, developed in great measure in the colonies, on their heads. He proposed that context was all-important in understanding any society;
sociologists in his view could discern basic structure only through an examination from the inside-out. In so doing he challenged the dominant theoretical paradigm of the period, the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Their intellectual, intertextual combat in the 1960s forms the core of chapter 7 of this study. Whereas Lévi-Strauss saw all societies as founded on fundamental oppositions, organized around the polarity between nature and culture, Bourdieu theorized that human interactions were shaped in large part by a storehouse of history, genealogy, environment, and social convention in each individual, an accumulation he called *habitus*. Bourdieu’s basic concept, however, was not intelligible to individuals; no person could articulate his or her own habitus. However, ethnologists conducting on-the-ground observation could discern the rules and strategies that bounded behavior, as habitus functioned as a flexible guideline, leaving some room for human agency.

At the same time, Bourdieu took up the civilizational, developmental model advocated by French colonial thinkers and turned it against itself, offering native Algerians the opportunity to act as social investigators in their own right. Western modernity, he theorized, had crushed much of Algerian society beneath its weight; non-European residents had to reclaim, as best they could, their unique developmental path from their colonial overlords. Through a close African-European scientific collaboration, a method long removed from Lévi-Strauss’ “view from afar,” Bourdieu hoped to achieve a more comprehensive depiction of non-European societies, in the process gaining insight into the epistemology of European sociology. This “reflexivity” required a deep consideration of the role of the ethnographer him or herself in the social interactions
occurring among observed populations. Thus, Bourdieu took ideas born in the fires of colonial domination and twisted them to force Lévi-Strauss’ emerging French anthropology, not to mention the similar disciplines in the United Kingdom and United States, to reconsider their methodologies and preconceptions. Contingency and context, as Faidherbe had argued more than a century before, were important in the generation of any thought, be it anthropological analysis or colonial policy.

**Note on terminology, translation, and transcription**

Writing colonial history in a post-colonial world concerned with the implications of specific terms can be challenging. In particular, it is difficult to choose the proper word to represent the Africans subject to colonialism. In the case of this study, I have chosen to employ the word “native” to mean those Africans (usually black sub-Saharan, but also at times including residents of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, or Madagascar) born locally and subject to colonial domination when the specific group described by the French colonial author is not clear. The term “Africans,” while perhaps preferable to “native” as lacking in pejorative colonial meaning, carried a different meaning in the French colonial world, as French colonial soldiers were collectively and colloquially known by that same moniker. Likewise, the word “Algerian,” particularly in the nineteenth century, often denoted French soldiers in Algeria. Arab or Berber groups in Algeria were generally known as “Muslims,” but that term failed to capture the full range of socio-religious constructions actually in use at the time. The terms “autochthon” and “indigenous” are far too fraught with meaning, as they overlook the swirls of migration.
across Africa, themselves so important for the ethnologists profiled in this study.

“Local,” while perhaps a useful descriptor in some ways, overlooks the important colonial distinctions, especially in Algeria, between French settlers, many of whom were born in Algeria by the late-nineteenth century, and Arabs, Berbers, and Jews, to name the three largest non-French appellations. I have done my best to use “African” or more specific terms, such as “Kabyle” or “Peul” when the context makes it clear that the actors are in fact those people from Africa, not European settlers or soldiers.

The spelling and transliteration of literary Arabic words, proper names, and places follows the system used by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. I have avoided the use of diacritics to the greatest extent possible. I have left the original French transcriptions and accent marks, which differ at times from more recent usage, only when to change it would alter the flow of the phrase or change the spelling in the title of a published work. All translations from the French are mine unless otherwise indicated in the footnotes. Any errors that remain are my own.
Figure 1: North Africa in 1854
Adam and Charles Black; Sidney Hall; and William Hughes, (Edinburgh, 1854).
Accessed 7 February 2012 at www.davidrumsey.com
Figure 2: West Africa in 1889, as depicted by Louis Faidherbe

Chapter 1: Louis Faidherbe and the Construction of a Civilizational Paradigm

L’honneur: tu l’emportas en tous lieux, Général
C’était ton bien sacré, c’était ton ideal,
Il te guidait comme une étoile
Et tu le gardas là, cet honneur pur et cher,
Ainsi qu tu l’avais gardé dans le desert
Sous ta rude tente de toile

Lille, 25 October 1896. A new statue to a hero of France was unveiled, and poet Charles Manso had found the words to honor him. General Louis-Léon-César Faidherbe (1818-1889) had died seven years before, but now stood resurrected in stone. His legacy, however, did not end with carved granite; rather, he stood as the progenitor of a network of colonial information transfer that began in Algeria and extended through Africa and beyond, as far as Indochina and Madagascar, across the vast majority of the French colonial world. His 1854-1865 governorship of Senegal, France’s first sub-Saharan African colony gained rather informally in the early nineteenth century, earned him a similar colonial statue in Dakar in the early twentieth century. Faidherbe’s influence extended into science, particularly ethnology and the short-lived discipline of physical-racial anthropology, and into the role of military officers in a new, colonial conception of military responsibilities in which civilian explorers moved to the background as Faidherbe and others like him found such efforts useful in gaining

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{Charles Manso, “A la statue du general Faidherbe, inaugurée à Lille, le 25 Octobre 1896,” (Lille, 1896). Original produced as part of pamphlet to accompany statue dedication in Lille. Translated as “Honor: you carry it everywhere, General/it was your sacred good, it was your ideal/it guided you like a star/and you kept it there, this pure and costly honor/just as you kept it in the desert/under your rough canvas tent.” Lines refer, in particular, to Faidherbe’s service in the north of France during the Franco-Prussian War.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{Letters between William Ponty (Governor-General Afrique Occidentale française), sculptor Georges Bareau and Minister of Colonies (Georges Trouillot) beginning 6 November 1909 and continuing into 1911, FM/SG/AOF/X/4, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (hereafter ANOM). The government of Senegal removed the statue in 1983.}\]
These officers became part of a knowledge-oriented method of colonial governance. In so doing, they fostered an environment of increasing openness featuring opportunities for advancement not only in the military realm, but also in academia and politics. By focusing on native contributions to ethnological and civilizational understanding, Faidherbe introduced a new sort of colonial administration, one that favored the maintenance and respect of native structures in a policy known as association, rather than their assimilation to the French state and its culture. Implicit in this paradigm was a basic respect for native intellectual capabilities; more than simple savages, Faidherbe saw natives as intelligent interpreters and agents of their own social reality. They were thus worthy of dialogue with the French on this social state of affairs and the way forward in improving their condition.

Faidherbe did not exist apart from the colonial structure. He was very much a part of French efforts to classify (racially) and dominate native groups in Africa. From his earliest moments in Algeria the young officer tried to apply the racial-determinist models of his anthropological peers. He saw his participation in anthropology as a crusade of sorts, an effort to “remedy the bad that compromises the future” for Africans trapped in an undeveloped past. A former president of the prestigious Société d’anthropologie de Paris, Faidherbe pointed to the importance of the crusade for “courageous truth.” For his contemporaries, Faidherbe’s work “was not confined to

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4 “280eme séance, 8 Jan 1874,” Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris, Ile série, 9 (1874), 4.

5 “301eme séance, 7 Jan 1875,” Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris, Ile série, 10 (1875), 1. This devotion extended even to Faidherbe’s will, when he donated his skull to the Broca physical
military labors” but found in the realms “of science, of letters, of philosophy…new ways to honor [his] nation.”

From his position as the father of a network of information transfer, of circulation, Faidherbe stood astride the anthropological and military communities, exerting an influence in both “the nation and science.”

He was not only a “military man and administrator who also found the time to interest himself in science,” but an academic noted for his contributions to “historical, linguistic, geographical, and anthropological knowledge.”

Anthropology, as practiced at the time, did not officer sufficient data to the colonial project in his mind. He thus devoted himself to ethnology, the comparative study of societies (often known as races) that employed ethnography as an important tool. This form of study avoided the physical measurements so important to the zoologists and anatomists who dominated anthropology in the mid-nineteenth century.

The French colonial empire offered avenues for military and academic advancement that simply did not exist in Europe. France’s previous effort at colonial expansion from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries had ended in catastrophic failure. Defeated by the British in the Seven Years War, France lost all of its North American colonies, holding on to the islands of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Saint-Domingue (Haiti) in the Caribbean as the sole talismans of lost preeminence and global rivalry.

While the American Revolution offered a brief hope of the end of British overseas


7 Ibid., 452.

8 “280eme Séance, 8 Jan 1874,” Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris, IIe série, 9 (1874), 2.
domination, in truth France spiraled downward into an inescapable cycle of debt and discontent culminating in the chaos of the French Revolution in 1789. After losing Saint-Domingue (Haiti) to successive revolts in the early nineteenth century, the glory of French overseas civilization seemed past to many observers. Further expansion, inspired in part by the revolutionary fervor of the Napoleonic period, recommenced outside of Europe only in 1830 in Algeria as the dying Bourbon regime of Charles X tried to hold on to domestic legitimacy through foreign conquest, ultimately failing as it was replaced by Louis-Philippe’s new monarchy. Into this wide-open environment strode French colonial soldiers and administrators freed from the restraints of generations of European social and military norms. Imbued in many cases with utopian expectations of new societies in Africa, these soldiers sought both to understand and govern their new territory in Algeria, a conquest begun in 1830 and contested especially from 1832-1847.

It was this period of colonial conquest and possibility that Faidherbe entered on his graduation from school in France.

Faidherbe did not create ethnological networks from scratch. In truth, he tapped into the existing networks of ethnographic knowledge created by the soldiers, scholars, administrators, and native intellectuals already resident in Africa to develop his view of conditions on that continent. This effort led him to deliberately grow these networks of organic intellectual life, linking them with each other and the metropole through a skilled manipulation of publication outlets, military and colonial communication channels, and scholarly societies. He endeavored to generate a sort of ethnological “truth” regarding the movement and interaction of civilizational groups. However, he also acted out of a
belief in social reform, the need to push African civilizations to a higher level, to watch them “progress” by recovering the glory of their past and combining it with the salutary influence of France. In the conduct of such study he looked for inspiration to the bureaux arabes, founded in 1844 by General Thomas-Robert Bugeaud in Algeria. These military-led offices conducted ethnological investigations of the countryside and aided in communication with native groups at the grassroots level. Accused by some French settlers of Arabophilia, this cadre of native affairs officers, by and large, advocated for a form of “indirect rule” similar to the associationist ideas of Faidherbe. By 1871, however, these officers had lost the battle in Algeria, overcome by civilian settlers and politicians who argued that the maintenance of pre-existing “tribal” structures went against the egalitarian spirit of the French Revolution and disadvantaged settlers as a group. The institution nonetheless served as an example for Faidherbe of social reform via military ethnological investigation and management.9

From its temporal and physical primacy as the first permanent French African colony in 1830, Algeria remained the example for the entirety of this second wave of French colonialism that continued in the 1850s as Faidherbe pushed the French further into West Africa, a process that accelerated in the 1880s further into North and West Africa as well as Indochina and numerous Indian and Pacific Ocean islands. Algeria

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9 Kimberly Bowler offers strong analysis of these bureaux, in particular demonstrating their position as opponents of civilian settlers on land reform and the form of political rule: K.A. Bowler, “‘It is not in a day that a man abandons his morals and habits’: The Arab Bureau, Land Policy, and the Doineau Trial in Algeria, 1830-1870,” (PhD Dissertation, Duke University, 2011). For a wider political and intellectual history of the tortured path of the bureaux, see Osama Abi-Mershed, Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria, (Stanford, 2010); or an older example, Xavier Yacono, Les Bureaux arabes et l’évolution des genres de vie indigènes dans l’ouest du Tell algérois (Dahra, Chélif, Oursenis, Sersou), (Paris, 1953). For a first-hand account see Ferdinand Hugonnet, Souvenirs d’un chef de bureau arabe, (Paris, 1858).
occupied this position due to its political centrality, as the proving ground for the debate of association versus assimilation, and also as a site of intellectual and academic development. Faidherbe emerged from his early experiences in the colony with a view of Algeria as central to all questions of colonial governance. Algeria did not necessarily provide a guide map to follow, but it did serve as an essential reference point for all decisions regarding the best methods of dealing with subject populations. Both ethnologist and soldier, Faidherbe’s view of colonial governance and social investigation remained grounded in his Algerian experience for the remainder of his life. His views and perspective on native involvement continued long past his death as several generations of ethnologists also schooled in and on the Algerian example formed a network founded on social investigation via a dialogue with native populations. This network found its center physically, intellectually, and imaginatively in France’s oldest official African colony. The French ethnologists who inherited Faidherbe’s approach to African populations attempted to humanize French colonial rule through the maintenance of native African political and social structures. In the process, however, they disregarded contemporary African forms in the quest to reinstitute those that had existed at some high moment of the past, adding further justification to the French “civilizing” presence among “underdeveloped” African societies.

While hardly a proponent of basic human equality, Faidherbe showed significantly greater interest in the plight and views of native groups than did many of his contemporaries. He operated in an era dominated by the colonial doctrine of assimilation, of adapting local customs, laws and basic ways of life so that they mirrored
practices in France. In following a more ethnological view, however, Faidherbe pushed not only for an examination of local standards, but for their maintenance in a larger colonial system that considered native populations as stagnating at a lower developmental stage. Faidherbe proposed that only the spark of French involvement in the colonies would reignite the cycle of development that had stopped over centuries of endemic warfare and colonial incursions. Through this parallel development Faidherbe hoped to allow for civilizational progress, for admittedly distinct paths of growth to move in concert, but always towards a more “civilized” vision of the future with an ultimate goal of European (French) industrial and intellectual modernity.

Like the ideas of civilization that he cultivated, Faidherbe moved and interacted with native and colonial networks. He lived comfortably in the colonial world. During his tenure as the governor of Senegal, he found ways to participate not only in the development of local colonial power, but also in discourses occurring in Algeria, in Paris, and among Frenchmen and natives elsewhere in Africa. These conversations are best located through an examination of Faidherbe’s correspondence and the academic journal articles and monographs authored by the soldier-scholar and his peers. Published not only in Paris but also in the African colonies themselves, these articles reveal ethnological discussions emanating from the colonies themselves and led by soldiers and administrators. Such study yields not only Faidherbe’s words, but his audience and his impact on those around him. Each contact added to the size of the Faidherbe’s vast network of networks, creating connections across and below the surface of the colonial enterprise.
Birth of a reformer

Louis Faidherbe grew up in an industrializing town in the north of France. His father served as a sergeant major in a revolutionary national guard regiment and later settled into life as a haberdasher.\(^\text{10}\) By some accounts, the family recognized Faidherbe’s potential early and dedicated funds to ensure his proper schooling at the best institutions of France.\(^\text{11}\) Young Faidherbe’s significant aptitude in mathematics earned him a place at a prestigious preparatory school in 1837 at the age of 18, a standard developmental phase for those destined to find a place in France’s intellectual elite.\(^\text{12}\) He parlayed this opportunity into an application to the *école polytechnique*, the center for “diffusing Cartesianism throughout French society.”\(^\text{13}\) Faidherbe’s mother seems to have driven him through this process, as she (and their local political representatives) led a campaign to gain Faidherbe’s admittance to one of France’s finest engineering schools. She sought to give her son an opportunity to escape their lower middle-class status; from the *école* young Faidherbe could gain entrance to the military field previously inhabited by his father, but in the son’s case from the officer ranks, imbued with the prestige of an elite engineering education. He could gain an appreciation for a scientific approach to

\(^{10}\) “Certificat de Service” dated 21 Germaine An X (11 April 1802), AP/113APOM/1, ANOM.


\(^{12}\) Hardy, *Faidherbe*, 11.

\(^{13}\) Terry Nichols Clark, *Prophets and Patrons: The French University and the Emergence of the Social Sciences*, (Cambridge, MA, 1973), 34.
problems of all sorts, be they material, political or sociological, the background of a future political and military leader.

Young Faidherbe’s matriculation at the école resulted from his own intelligence assisted by a network of local supporters and patrons, activated by his mother, who recognized his potential and used the connections of local notables to advance his career.14 Faidherbe entered the school during a transitional period. In the forty years prior to Faidherbe’s arrival at the school, it had been the primary site for discussion of the utopian ideals of Henri Saint-Simon and his disciples, Prosper Enfantin and Auguste Comte. In 1826, Enfantin had written to a colleague on the importance of the école to the Saint-Simonian movement, referring to the school as the “channel by which these ideas [of positivism and industrial advancement] reproduce in society; it is the milk that we have sucked from our dear school that will nourish the generations to come.”15 While many of the proponents of these philosophical currents had moved on by Faidherbe’s entrance in the summer of 1838, their influence was still strong in the military at large. In fact, Faidherbe would cross paths with several Saint-Simonians in Algeria in his early

14 He entered as 57/130 students. Faidherbe’s application for scholarship, based on financial need, gained personal support from the Mayor of Lille and the Deputy of the North Region (who also served as the Minister of Public Works, Agriculture, and Commerce). The family claimed only 2500 francs income/year to support 5 children and the two parents. Préfecture du Nord to Minister of War, 10 June 1838 and 17 October 1838; “Demande de bourse,” n.d.; “Renseignements concernant la demande d’une bourse à l’École polytechnique faite en faveur du jeune Faidherbe, Louis Leon César,” 29 May 1838 in Faidherbe Dossier 7Yd1515, Société Historique de la Défense, Chateau de Vincennes, Paris, France, (hereafter SHD); and Section des Ecoles militaires of the Minister of War to Faidherbe family, 24 October 1938 in AP/113APOM/2, ANOM. See also Barrows, “General Faidherbe,” 89-92.

career. While not imbued with the revolutionary sentiment of some of these theorists, Faidherbe did place great value in progress and firsthand observation, core ideas in Comtean positivism. Faidherbe also imbibed the principles of liberal republicanism that he would try to spread to non-Frenchmen throughout his career.

By all accounts, Faidherbe was not an exceptional student at the Ecole, graduating 98th of 120 in his class with a reputation as “misbehaving.” Despite these negative reports, he became one of twenty graduates to enter military engineering, one of the most demanding and sought-after fields of specialization. His graduation in 1840 placed him in an elite group of alumni positioned to act at the highest levels of government and in its most important military positions. Many leaders of the early stages of African colonial conquest were polytechniciens who made use of the “versatility” of their academic training to develop and manipulate scholarly networks in the colonies. For example, prominent alumni founded the Société archéologique de Constantine and the Société historique d’Alger. From his time in Algeria forward, Faidherbe participated in many of these organizations founded by fellow école graduates and military officers. Through this involvement he encountered the long history of North Africa. At first a mystery to

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16 In particular, Faidherbe encountered the explorer Henri Duveyrier (whose father was an ardent Saint-Simonian), and the physician/politician Auguste Warnier, who drafted the 1873 law that encouraged increased colonial seizures of native land. See Michael Heffernan, “The Limits of Utopia: Henri Duveyrier and the Exploration of the Sahara in the Nineteenth Century,” The Geographical Journal 155, 3 (1989) for a discussion of the connection of these Saint-Simonians in Algeria. See Abi-Mershed, Disciples of Modernity, 26-27 and passim; and Marcel Emerit, Les Saint-Simoniens en Algérie, (Paris, 1941) for a discussion of the Saint-Simonian efforts in France, Algeria and Egypt.

17 Barrows makes this point explicitly, “General Faidherbe,” 52.

18 General Vaillant, Ecole Polytechnique Evaluation, 15 October 1840 in Faidherbe dossier, SHD.

the young officer, the area would become central to Faidherbe’s understanding of civilizational development and colonial rule as he gained contacts throughout the region. Networks of information did not readily appear to young officers. Indeed, Faidherbe had first to follow the arc laid out for him by professional military requirements. His early military personnel reports were not particularly glowing; his supervisor reported his academic abilities as minimal, remarking that Faidherbe “knows no foreign languages.” He would soon improve.

**Early colonial experience: Construction of an understanding**

Following engineering training in France, Faidherbe moved on to his first military assignment in Algeria. By the 1840s, Algeria was still in revolt against the initial 1830 French occupation. From 1832-1847, the Arab leader Abd al-Qadir resisted French efforts to extend control from Algiers along the coastline. The years 1844-46 saw Faidherbe serving as part of a historic suppression campaign under the command of General Thomas-Robert Bugeaud. While he and his commander likely had very little direct contact, Faidherbe ultimately developed views similar to those of his military superior. Bugeaud was famed for his willingness to consider what would later become known as the “hearts and minds” of the Arabs, attempting to win them over even as he ordered mass executions of rebel bands and the burning of entire villages. He famously raced into the street, undressed and unshaven, to subdue and arrest a Maltese he saw

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20 Report of 15 August 1843, Arras, in Faidherbe dossier, SHD.
mercilessly beating an Arab. Likewise, Faidherbe, in letters to his mother, contrasted the “majesty,” “gravity,” and “intelligent bearing” of the Arabs he encountered with his understanding that Algeria required a “war of extermination,” as “one dead Arab means two fewer Frenchmen assassinated.” Algeria thus presented Faidherbe with the impossible duality of the colonial situation. He could see both the humanist possibilities of a colonialism that considered native methods as useful and valuable in their own right and the terrible brutality required to “pacify” a hostile population.

Scarred by the near-genocide in Algeria, Faidherbe, now a captain, received a remarkable reception on his arrival at his next assignment on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe on 26 March 1848, as the residents were celebrating the news of the new French Second Republic’s abolition of slavery. One of the oldest French colonies dating to the seventeenth century, Guadeloupe was an integral part of France that would become a full department in 1946. In the nineteenth century, however, the territory was the site of frantic French efforts to rein in discontent among the black population, particularly in light of the slave revolts on Saint-Domingue in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was thus politically (and economically, given the importance of sugar and coffee production) expedient for the French to abolish slavery on the island as soon as they could; the appearance of the more liberal Second Republic in 1848 (overthrowing Louis-Philippe) offered just such a chance.

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22 Faidherbe to mother, n.d., quoted in Barrows, “General Faidherbe,” 92-3. I was unable to find these letters in ANOM.

Victor Schoelcher, famed abolitionist and senator in the new French government, likely visited the Caribbean in this period. At some point, whether here or later in his career, Faidherbe met the reformer and began to share his views, dedicating his last work (1889) to “Mister Schoelcher, Senator, ex-member of the Provisional Government of 1848…beloved teacher and old colleague.” Like Schoelcher, Faidherbe was becoming a colonial humanist. The young officer saw the joy of a people still subject to colonial rule but thankful for the ability to live with their personal freedoms intact. Brutal repression and exploitation, whether in the form of slavery or a war of extermination, seemed only to reproduce hatred. No longer simply the Arab assassins of Algeria, colonial peoples began to seem valuable to him. He saw them as members of distinct societies worthy of both respect and study.

Faidherbe, the experienced veteran of counter-insurgency warfare and budding humanist, began to care for the welfare of the subjects he was helping to “civilize” in the French manner. No doubt influenced by the celebration he witnessed on his arrival, Faidherbe made a rapid transition from unremarkable officer to one with significant insight on native populations. Although listed as having no discernible linguistic skills in 1847, Faidherbe’s evaluation in 1848 described his knowledge of languages, which he “studied voluntarily,” indicating that he “knows a little Italian and Spanish.” He also impressed his superior with his learning in “geology and natural history,” though the

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24 Louis Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal: La France dans l’Afrique occidentale*, (Paris, 1889), dedication page. Hardy and other biographers offer little information regarding the possibility of a meeting during this period, although Barrows remarks that no evidence exists either way. Barrows, “General Faidherbe,” 94-97. Interestingly, Schoelcher also had links to Saint-Simonians, particularly Michel Chevalier, through discussion in the Paris société d’ethnologie (founded 1839), where Schoelcher argued that racial deficiencies stemmed from a history of oppression, not biological characteristics, a counter to the European racial supremacy advanced by Chevalier. See Philippe Regnier, “Du côté de chez Saint-Simon: Question raciale, question sociale et question religieuse,” *Romantisme* 4, 130 (2005), 31-32.
supervisor felt he had been delinquent in his advanced engineering training. This 1848 report also reflected the superior’s perspective on Faidherbe’s political views: “Inclined towards socialism...can be easily impassioned by radical opinions—must be kept on the straight path by good advice.” The young captain, far from toeing the party line, had undergone a transformation seemingly overnight. He saw language as the gateway to a deeper understanding of native societies, insight that would enable better, more human colonial rule. No longer so interested in the mechanics of military officership, Faidherbe instead pointed himself towards social change. His superiors had come to see him as a potential opponent of conservative colonial institutions.

Faidherbe’s expansive mind grew beyond basic improvement and trendy theories of social reform. At some point in his early career, the young officer compiled an extensive notebook with translations of poetry into thirty-one languages and dialects, including Berber, Arabic and Guadeloupian Créole. These notebooks do not reflect fluency in all of these languages; however, they do show an increased interest in and familiarity with foreign cultures. It seems unlikely that Faidherbe acquired this language skill in a single year; rather, his earlier work had probably not attracted the attention of his superiors, who focused more on his shortcomings. Maturing rapidly both professionally and intellectually, he developed a taste for new ideas on social

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25 Evaluation of 1847 (n.d.); Evaluation of 31 October 1848, Basse Terre, Faidherbe dossier, SHD.

26 Language Study Books (black, blue, looseleaf), AP/113APOM/5, ANOM. The languages included in the books (as labeled by Faidherbe): Arabic, Spanish, Italian, English, Latin, Portuguese, Greek, German, Hebrew, Breton, Corsican, Aramaic, Patois Créole, 15th/16th century French, Mallorcan, idiome Barbaresque, Romane of Richard the Lionheart, Languedocien, Normand, Guadeloupian Créole, Limousin, Picard, Bressan, Bourguignon, Béarnais, Dauphinois, Lorrain, Bourbonsais, Gascon, Auvergnat.
composition and order even as he worked hard to expand his ear for languages, ideas he would combine later in his career, particularly in Senegal.

When illness forced his return to France in 1849, Faidherbe was a knowledgeable colonial engineer and officer with service in two different theaters and some ability in at least three (Arabic, Berber, Créole) different languages. He was poised not only to develop natives in the style of French colonial governance, but also to assist other officers and academics as they worked in the colonies. Now speaking “a little Arabic,” the young officer spent much of his time “in the study of languages.” After his recovery, he returned to the center—for him—of all things ethnological and political, Algeria. While there he could apply both his new-found language skills and his broader perspective on colonial civilizations. His subsequent experience in Algeria, followed almost immediately by prominence in Senegal, allowed him to mold a number of individuals ready to follow his leadership. In the process he would reorient the production and sharing of colonial knowledge in and from Algeria, encompassing groups both in the metropole and in Africa.

**Algeria: An early centrality**

Faidherbe’s return to Algeria in 1849 coincided with the explosion of a new revolt. This time the resistance came not from the traditionally demonized Arab tribes, but instead from the respected Berbers of the Kabylie region in the Aurès mountains. The revolt would serve as the centerpiece of Faidherbe’s tour in the colony, as he would

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27 Evaluation of 3 September 1849, Faidherbe dossier, SHD.
spend much of his time fighting in the mountainous area. French Algeria had also become intellectually vibrant, as the **Faculté de Lettres** in Algiers developed new colonial scholars in following the lead of General Bugeaud, who had founded the first Algerian society for arts and letters in 1847. Now more senior and with considerable colonial experience, Faidherbe found himself a valued member of the French effort in an area that offered opportunity for academic study. In fact, he was given command of the construction of an outpost at Bou Saada in late 1849, earning praise from General Jean-Baptiste Philibert Vaillant (formerly Faidherbe’s commandant at the **école polytechnique**, now Inspector General of the army in Algeria) in an 1851 report. Vaillant cited Faidherbe for “true valor” for his role in combat operations where he had engaged in direct clashes with the rebellious Berbers despite his nominal role as a rear-echelon engineer.

For the first time, Faidherbe participated personally in the counter-insurgency, as he chased Kabylie rebels from 1850-1852. He gained the notice and praise of his superiors during these campaigns, personally taking part in cavalry charges against rebel positions, sometimes against significant numerical odds. At one point, stranded by snowfall on a high mountain path in the Aurès, Faidherbe suffered from frostbite and

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28 This “Kabyle Myth” or “Berber Vulgate” held up the Berbers as more ready for assimilation to the French way by virtue of democratic political institutions and only superficial adherence to Islam, and was a critical component of efforts to “divide and rule.” The best study of this effect in Algeria specifically is Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, although like most such studies it offers little insight into the role played by Arabic or Berber notables. See also Marnia Lazreg, “The Reproduction of Colonial Ideology: The Case of the Kabyle Berbers,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5, 4 (1983): 380-395; and the histories of Jacques Berque, for example *Maghreb, Histoire et Sociétés*, (Gembloux, 1975). On the role of Algerian Islamic intellectuals in the perception and the shaping of colonial policy, see James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, (Cambridge, 2006).

29 Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 140.

30 Nomination for Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur, 20 August 1851, Faidherbe dossier, SHD.
numbness in his legs and survived only with the help of several subordinates.31 Now viewed as courageous and “honorable” in both bourgeois and military circles, Faidherbe escaped the marginal ratings he had received earlier in his career. He was living an “honorable life” according to the French bourgeois customs of the time. In the colonial milieu, that distinction became all the more important as a mark to set himself apart from both his subordinate soldiers and the supposedly “primitive” natives against whom he fought. He thus began to compile the “charisma” that would later enable him to reach great heights in the French colonial bureaucracy.32 Now judged as a competent and perhaps even above-average soldier, Faidherbe was able to spend more time on native study. He could work harder to understand native social constructions because he had covered himself in what his contemporaries saw as heroic glory. Martial success gave him a buffer from close oversight; he was free to develop his intellectual capabilities and discover those of his subjects.

Faidherbe applied this freedom to work toward a better understanding of what was required to truly pacify the restive region. His experience had shown him both sides of the colonial method. He concluded that subjugation of rebellious natives required a combination of local ethnic and linguistic understanding on the one hand and the iron will to impose harsh sanctions on the other. Bugeaud’s brutal methods in Faidherbe’s first

31 Faidherbe to mother, 22 September 1851 and 25 February 1852, AP/113APOM/3, ANOM; and Evaluation of 1854, Faidherbe dossier, SHD. Faidherbe appears to have had two such episodes involving snow emergencies, one in February and another in April of 1852, although only the February incident appeared in a letter to his mother.

Algerian campaign had convinced the young officer of the need for a light touch, an approach that became possible only with significant local study and a tailored program of development intended both to capture native hearts and control them sufficiently so as to cause them to progress towards an idealized form of European modernity. However, this approach could not work entirely on its own. Faidherbe recognized that the suppression of elements that offered initial resistance would sometimes require harsh measures that should nonetheless be kept to a minimum.

These opposing methods appeared in Faidherbe’s correspondence much as they characterized the action in his first Algerian tour in the 1840s. In March of 1850, Faidherbe described Bou Saada as “rather debauched like all the towns of the desert,” but presented a nearby valley in 1851 in very different terms: “I have not yet seen an area as beautiful and rich as this one, even in Europe...one finds a beautiful village at each turn.” Faidherbe was torn by these two seemingly contradictory approaches to colonialism: benevolent humanism and violent repression/destruction. Algerian villages like those depicted in Faidherbe’s correspondence would at times fall victim to military necessity as they were burned and the residents executed in summary fashion by Algerian natives fighting for the French, known as tirailleurs. These same soldiers on other occasions let prisoners escape with only weak justifications for their actions. Faidherbe appears to have avoided discipline for the excesses of such troops under his command. He appreciated the possible risks and rewards of using locals as a conquering force against civilian populations. On the one hand, native soldiers offered insight into native

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33 Faidherbe to mother, 18 March 1850; 30 June 1851; 22 September 1851, AP/113APOM/3, ANOM; and also Faidherbe to mother, 11 May 1851 and 11 September 1851, quoted in Barrows, “General Faidherbe,” 103 (I could not locate these letters in ANOM).
populations and knowledge of local terrain that no Frenchman could ever approach. At
the same time, these natives were not yet, in Faidherbe’s mind, at the intellectual or moral
level of French soldiers. They were thus more likely to commit atrocities when
confronted with a difficult situation. Worst of all, these forces had the potential to work
against French rule by aligning themselves with native groups against the colonial state.

In the end, Faidherbe initiated a new era of French colonial warfare by deciding in
favor of the use of African troops. His employment of native soldiers did not end in
Algeria; indeed, he formed similar units in his time as governor of Senegal (see below).
In this way, Faidherbe brought Algeria with him to West Africa where he made use of
military campaigns into the countryside. However, Faidherbe’s use of violence differed
with location and circumstance; he believed that his combination of local knowledge and
commitment to understand tempered the need for the destructive razzia raiding parties
favored by many French officers in the conquest of the Sahara. Instead, he understood
the value of the show of force, employing small military parties to travel into the interior
and speak to native leaders. He rejected the implicit assumptions of his peers in Algeria
and the Sahara who saw native groups as simple and unsophisticated obstacles to rapid
conquest. Small expeditions, Faidherbe believed, would deliver native political

34 Barrows, “General Faidherbe,” 924. The French use of African troops continued to grow into the
twentieth century, reaching a peak in the First World War when Africans fought for the French in all
theaters of that global combat. For an overview of the political repercussions of the use of African troops,
see Richard S. Fogarty, Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918,
(Baltimore, 2008). For a finely grained analysis of the dialogue between France and its African soldiers,
see Gregory Mann, Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century, (Durham,
NC, 2006).

35 For more on French raiding methods, often employing native troops, see Douglas Porch, The Conquest of
the Sahara, (New York, 1984); Benjamin Brower, A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France’s
Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844-1902, (New York, 2009); and Julia Clancy-Smith, Rebel and Saint:
Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904), (Berkeley,
1994).
allegiance to the French colonial state by displaying the humanity and knowledge of the colonial occupier. Expanding these contacts would also help Faidherbe to increase his store of local information. From this localized data he could discover, exploit, and then resolve intra-native political disputes in favor of expanded French mediation and control.

Local understanding grew not from abstract study, but from dialogue in the native language, a pursuit to which Faidherbe dedicated himself in Africa. Faidherbe worked hard on Arabic during this period, remarking to his mother that he “every day made new progress in Arab as I do not hear anything else spoken.” At the same time, the young officer developed a rudimentary ethnographic method that involved basic observation. He infused this system of observation with value judgments based on the perceived developmental position of native groups. He spent time at a “Moorish café” near Bou Saada, observing the “savage” activities of the local tribesmen and their dancing girls. He defined savagery, in this case, as the stunted moral development that enabled these nomads to consider women as dancing possessions and sexual objects (a view that has, ironically, been reversed in more recent discussions of the moral turpitude of the West in the eyes of conservative Arab-Islamic thinkers).

Faidherbe’s views of nomadic Arab tribes as backwards did not emerge in a vacuum. Indeed, this perception was widely held by French scholars who depicted the sedentary Berbers as closer to French civilization and the nomadic Arabs as inveterate foes of European modernity. However, this idea had a longer genealogy running back to the medieval period. Faidherbe’s tenure in Algeria coincided with the first full French translations of Ibn Khaldun’s universal history, the greatest exposition of medieval

36 Faidherbe to mother, 18 March 1850, AP/113APOM/3, ANOM.
Arabic political philosophy and development that considered nomadism a necessary precursor to more developed and sedentary “civilization.” The text offered an Islamic perspective on civilizational development informed by Arab and Berber interaction, concluding that groups rose and fell in cycles of rural rejuvenation and urban sophistication that ultimately disintegrated due to decay and excess. True civilization lay not in military success for Ibn Khaldun, but in the ability of intellectuals to understand their environment.

Faidherbe saw himself as an important conduit in this Khaldunian cycle of intellectual advancement. In collaboration with like-minded native and French intellectuals engaged in the colonial project, he sought to push African civilizations to higher levels of economic and social modernity as well as intellectual sophistication. Algeria offered fertile ground for the application of this developmental model. The colony remained central to Faidherbe for the remainder of his career both as an intellectual source and as a place of assignment. He returned periodically for both scholarly and military reasons. As a colonel, he served as the Commandant of Sidi-bel-Abbès from September 1861 to May 1863, and again, this time as a brigadier general, as

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37 The first full European translation of one component of Ibn Khaldun’s universal history, the *kitab al-libar*, appeared as *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties Musulmans de l’Afrique septentrionale [kitab al-libar]*, 4 vol., ed. Paul Casanova, trans. Baron de Slane (Algiers, 1847-1851). Ibn Khaldun’s more detailed depiction of civilizational movement, which also served as a methodological introduction to his seven-volume work, was translated as *Les Prolégomènes*, ed. and trans. Baron de Slane, (Paris, 1863), and appeared later in Faidherbe’s career (see below). For more on Ibn Khaldun, see chapter 3 of this study. Faidherbe’s first oblique references to consultation of Islamic sources occur in an 1854 notebook hand-titled *Notice sur les Maures du Sénégal et sur les noirs de la Sénégambie*, Number 58, AP/113APOM/6, ANOM. This notebook contains a printed article entitled, “Les Berbères et les Arabes des bords du Sénégal,” *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (February 1854), where he provides credit (written in the margins) to early modern Arab geographers such as Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Battuta as sources of information on the Senegal River valley. He also cites Muhammad Bello (to whom he refers as Sultan Bello), the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate in West Africa in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and numerous others.
the Commandant of Amaba (Bône) from December 1866 to September of 1870, a period that also saw him act as the Commandant of Constantine from mid-1869, the highest position he would achieve in the colony.38

A large majority of Faidherbe’s publications for anthropological and geographical societies in some way pointed back to North Africa or the Arab influence on Sub-Saharan Africa. His time in Algeria saw the rise and at least the beginning of the fall of the bureaux arabes, offices and officers dedicated to understanding Algeria in ethnographic and geographic terms. These local native affairs offices, officially eliminated with the rise of civilian government in Algeria after 1870, persisted until the early twentieth century in outlying regions despite accusations of corruption. Officers of the bureaux, focused on direct observation and the outlining of “moral topography,” in particular conducted detailed studies of the Sufi Islamic brotherhoods so central to later French scholarship.39 Religious brotherhoods could both aid and hinder colonial development efforts in Faidherbe’s mind. Closer examination of their interconnections and roles would show French administrators, he thought, how to unleash the enormous native potential for education while limiting the nefarious influence of religious orders on political participation.

38 “Rapport au Ministre 1861”; Minister of War to Faidherbe, 30 September 1865, 27 December 1866; Evaluation of 1867; Minister of War to Commander, Algiers, 17 September 1870; in Faidherbe Dossier, SHD.

Although the *bureaux* studies were somewhat limited in their scope and insight into religious institutions, they still proved valuable to Faidherbe. Conducted largely by untrained French soldiers, these writings offered Faidherbe important insight into the social and political landscape, key in his mind to the promotion of “controlled association.” This concept depicted societies at different stages of development and deserving of independent, progressive structures that suited their place along the developmental continuum.\(^{40}\) Faidherbe’s view grew in importance in the 1850s and 1860s in light of the accession of Napoleon III and the declaration of the Second Empire in 1851. The emperor’s conception of an “Arab kingdom” in North Africa jibed closely with Faidherbe’s ideas of association and lent credence to his calls for administration by local political and administrative structures.\(^{41}\)

Convinced of the effectiveness of the intellectual interaction of military ethnologists and native savants but hoping to avoid the excesses of soldiers hungry for power away from the French Algerian center of military and political authority, Faidherbe instituted the *bureau* model in Senegal. He hired officers with language ability in the *Direction des Affaires Politiques* (DAP), an organization that conducted detailed ethnographic surveys of the local area with the assistance of Muslim scholars.\(^{42}\) While Faidherbe did not model Senegal on Algeria politically, he viewed the North African

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\(^{42}\) Tamba Eadric M’bayo, “African Interpreters, Mediation, and the Production of Knowledge in Colonial Senegal: The Lower and Middle Senegal Valley, ca 1850s to ca 1920s,” (PhD Dissertation, Michigan State University, 2009), 130.
space as a point of reference, important in understanding all other colonial undertakings. In that way, he set the standard for those who would follow in his footsteps.

**Faidherbe N’Diaye: Building an ethnological colony in Senegal**

In 1852, on the heels of his early Algerian deployments, Faidherbe gained transfer to Senegal. He had written the Minister of the Marine and Colonies, an acquaintance from Guadeloupe, to request the move. Senegal offered an opportunity to develop his anthropological acumen in a more natural environment while avoiding the prying eyes and increasingly long reach of the French colonial Algerian administration. Senegal offered a nearly blank slate in Faidherbe’s mind, the perfect location to implement and test his ideas on colonial rule that respected and incorporated native institutions. The area, first frequented by Portuguese traders as early as the fifteenth century, had slowly come under French control by the early nineteenth century. Saint Louis, where the Senegal River emptied into the Atlantic Ocean, served as the primary base for French trading into the interior. However, few French administrators of the area had considered further conquest; it seemed enough to participate in and correspond with the existing local trade networks. Faidherbe, searching for a greater name for himself and expanded commercial territory and political control for France, saw the area as ripe for colonial growth. The region had not suffered the privations of the French conquest of Algeria in 1830; it was relatively untainted by the stain of colonial warfare, offering native populations still employing their own unique political and social forms.
Faidherbe’s first Senegalese residency culminated in assignment as Chief of Engineers in Saint Louis. From this position of authority, and drawing on his previous combat experience, Faidherbe participated in a number of expeditions into the interior, also concluding some rudimentary ethnological studies. At some point in this period, Faidherbe came to the attention of the Maurel family, a powerful Bordeaux trading clan that held a controlling interest in French Senegalese trade. Interested in a man willing to venture into the interior in search of developmental contacts, the Maurels saw Faidherbe as a potential ally. Following him into the interior, they reasoned, could yield significant new opportunities for economic growth (and exploitation). Influenced by these business interests, the new Minister of Marine and Colonies recommended Faidherbe for the governorship in 1854. In his note to the Minister of War, the colonial director pointed to Faidherbe’s “remarkable intelligence” and “special experience” in Algeria as important factors in his selection. Although Faidherbe was relatively junior, the Minister of War, his old commandant and commander, Jean Vaillant, ultimately granted the request in August of 1854, making Faidherbe a major and the governor of the French colony.43

By all accounts, Faidherbe was quite pleased to find himself in Senegal, particularly in a position of such power. In a break from his predecessors, he fashioned himself as a native of sorts, going to ceremonies such as weddings or baptisms in local dress, eventually earning a nickname employing a common local surname: “Faidherbe

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43 Minister of Marine and Colonies (Théodore Ducos) to Minister of War (Jean Vaillant), 23 October 1854, Faidherbe dossier, SHD and Barrows, “General Faidherbe,” 104, 202. Barrows provides the only complete discussion of the patronage process that went into Faidherbe’s assumption of control in 1854, which he developed from a close examination of the papers of the Maurel Company in Bordeaux.
He also took a local wife, in the fashion of some colonial administrators, learning several languages from her, including Wolof. Diokounda Sidibé likely bore several children to Faidherbe, and certainly served as a key player in the network of local informants the governor would develop to facilitate the growth and consolidation of French rule in the area. At the same time, their relationship symbolized the power Faidherbe exercised over both the colony and his ethnographic informants, leaving his Senegalese subjects as virtual servants to his political and sexual power.

Faidherbe did not build his connections from scratch. Instead, he made use of some individuals present before his arrival, reorienting them towards his vision of an anthropological understanding of the colony. He called for young military officers (like him) with local experience, eventually acceding to the need for civilians as well. Nearly all of his prime subordinates had significant previous colonial experience, several in Algeria; at least one was also a polytechnicien. In fact, several of his officers went on to great political success in metropolitan France as ministers or senior elected officials.

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44 Oumar Ba, *La Pénétration française au Cayor*, (Dakar, 1976), 24. “N’Diaye” is a common surname in Senegal among the Wolof community. Interestingly, it is translated as “commerce, sale, or merchandise,” perhaps a reference both to Faidherbe’s commercial sponsorship as governor and his belief in progress as linked to economic development. Jean-Léopold Diouf, *Dictionnaire wolof-français et français-wolof*, (Paris, 2003), 255.


46 On the power of sexual concubinage in the colonial world, see in particular Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, (Berkeley, 2002).


He employed these talented and experienced individuals not only as administrators but also as budding intellectuals.

Networks of like-minded intellectuals, both French and native, contributed greatly to the success of Faidherbe’s tenure as governor. He later listed the greatest accomplishments of his first five years as governor (1854-1859) as the creation of a government printing office (1855); the founding of the Moniteur du Sénégal (1856); the creation of a battalion of tirailleurs sénégalais (1857); and the organization of an interpreter corps (1857).49 Not surprisingly, Faidherbe placed great weight on any measure that expanded the French power base and aided in administration. Successful governance required talented subordinates from all corners of colonial society, both native and French. These thinkers could grow in capability and stature through intellectual interaction both in the colonies and the metropole itself. Through these networks Faidherbe thought to solidify the regime in Senegal while gaining an empire-wide dissemination of his ideas on colonial association. He promoted the intellectual growth of his subordinates by pushing them to publish in the daily Moniteur du Sénégal or in the more prestigious Revue Maritime et Coloniale, published by the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies in Paris and running from 1861-1868. Most of the articles printed in this journal included ethnographic descriptions completed during military campaigns or

26. Faidherbe’s principal subordinate, Louis Flize, was an experienced colonial administrator with time in Indochina. Pascal de Negroni, an Arabic and Wolof speaker, had time in Algeria and commanded a river post for Faidherbe. Paul Brossard de Corbigny, a graduate of the école polytechnique, served as an expedition leader for Faidherbe. Hyacinthe Aube later became the Minister of the Navy and Aristide Vallon the Senegalese representative to the French assembly.

voyages of exploration and/or diplomatic negotiation with native political elites.\footnote{Saint-Martin, Sénégal sous le Second Empire, 241. The Minister of the Navy also served as the Minister of the Colonies during this period. For a full list of the articles published under Faidherbe’s watch, including those by native subordinates such as Bou al Mogdad, see “Table alphabétique et analytique des matières contenues dans les 24 volumes de la Revue maritime et coloniale de 1861 à 1868 et dans les 3 volumes de la Revue algérienne et coloniale, 1859 et 1860,” (Paris, 1870).}

Publication in the journal brought the Senegalese exploits of Faidherbe and his officers to the attention of French political leaders both at the ministerial level in Paris and across the colonies as a whole. The African descriptions they provided in the journal, notionally mediated by colonial ministry officials in Paris, thus gained official sanction. Faidherbe thereby grew his network beyond the bounds of the Senegalese colony, beyond even the African continent. He gained support for his form of investigation and rule through the tacit governmental support of his techniques conferred by official printing.

His efforts to grow a strong group of subordinates did not end there. He expressly included natives in his administration, giving them publication and educational opportunities as well. He planned to spread French in the Senegalese interior, hoping to supplant Arabic as the second language by creating a Francophonic or Francophilic elite. Arabic, by the 1850s, was the language of revolt, employed by the jihadist states that had emerged to challenge his authority. Despite his Arabic language abilities and the power of the histories encoded in Arabic-language writings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Faidherbe actively sought to minimize the language’s reach and importance. To that end, he published the Moniteur du Sénégal and the Annuaire du Sénégal, both focused on history and anthropology, entirely in French.\footnote{Barrows, “Louis Faidherbe,” 65, 68.} In order to make these publications successful, though, Faidherbe had to create an elite group of native
administrators and scholars capable of publishing in French and appealing to a readership composed of other French-speaking colonial elites, both native and French. He necessarily turned to education as the first step.

Faidherbe saw Islam as a progressive force with some potential for modernizing rural Senegal. While decrying “cruel and intolerant fanaticism,” Faidherbe provided funds to Qur’anic schools in the hope of improving primary education for Muslims.\textsuperscript{52} He thus countered Islamic elements that sought to reestablish a Caliphate and reject the French. The Islamic model of education provided a point of entry to the African intellectual world and had to be incorporated into any educational initiatives. Islamic teachers were already in place and spread widely; their techniques and curricula needed only the impetus added by the inclusion of French perspectives on the modern world. Faidherbe held up Algeria as an example of his recommended system, proposing a primary education structure that would “imitate that which is done in Algeria.”\textsuperscript{53} The Algerian educational system was slowly moving towards a new paradigm of combined Franco-Islamic schools that built on the foundation of Islamic education, adding to it a modern, French message. Faidherbe thought that graduates of these schools, imbued with the spirit and language of the modern European world, would then go on to serve as important interpreters of social reality and leaders of a new colonial order.

From this strong foundation Faidherbe could pick and choose the members of his network. In that spirit he took over Saint Louis secondary education from a missionary


order and created the *école des otages*, an effort to discourage anti-French revolts by holding sons of local chiefs in French territory as educational “hostages.” Faidherbe said he hoped to “create some elite locals to aid us in our civilizational work and to ensure at the same time the recruitment of interpreters for the diverse languages of the country.” These new elites could serve two purposes in his mind: the furtherance of French occupation and colonization and the growth and dissemination of a body of ethnographic knowledge of the area that would feed back into the colonial effort. From this historical and ethnographic understanding Faidherbe believed that French administrators could devise the proper developmental program to bring Africa into the modern world, thereby infantilizing Africans as incapable of any form of modern civilization. The study of history, in this view, would reveal past moments of high civilizational achievement in Africa. From this originary starting point the French could discern the Khaldunian path of decay followed by each of these groups. Reversing that decay and reigniting progress took not the overlay of French cultural and social norms, but increased French support of the pre-existing African institutions. The distinction, to be sure, was a fine one, but colonial thinkers such as Faidherbe thought the inclusion of this local detail would enable and deliver a more human and humane form of governance, contrary to the violent excesses Faidherbe had seen in Algeria.

Faidherbe claimed immediate success in this venture, as his school boasted graduates or students from virtually all of the French-controlled areas of the Senegal

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River basin by 1859. The school did more than teach; in Faidherbe’s words, it transformed students “in terms of education, ideas, [and] tendencies,” particularly those who had lived “without having developed a full understanding and feeling of affection for France.” Alumni would then serve as catalysts of progress as well as colonial functionaries. They were vital in countering the complaints of urban and detached French colonial administrators in Saint Louis who lamented that “certain locals desired that the French authorities remain ignorant of things in the country.” Native elites, in Faidherbe’s mind, desired the progress that came with Western tutelage; the success of the school and their willingness to send their children to the French stood as proof of that fact. These local schools were critical in understanding and thereby manipulating the social and political structures found in Senegal. He reported that 103 students attended the school during his tenure, with 56 proving “useful” to the colony. Eleven became local chiefs, while nine served as interpreters, two died in French military uniform, and numerous others served on merchant vessels, in colonial government, or as local leaders.

Joseph Gallieni, director of Faidherbe’s effort to duplicate the bureaux arabes in Senegal, the aforementioned DAP, in the 1870s, did his best to continue the language instruction without official sanction. He worked with the Alliance française, which aspired to spread French culture and language peacefully through the world, to teach French at all garrisons in the countryside while calling on other colonial functionaries to

56 Faidherbe, Le Sénégal, 370.
57 Ibid., 369.
collaborate with native elites to do the same in the 1880s.\textsuperscript{58} While some of Faidherbe’s reporting on the school seemed to aim at burnishing his own legacy, the success of several of these measures in gaining access to previously unknown sources of ethnological knowledge is undeniable. He created a combined network of Frenchmen (like Gallieni) and natives willing to spread his ideas even after the French metropolitan state rejected his recommendations.

Faidherbe’s African network included a number of native administrators who contributed to his governorship and his ethnological knowledge. In particular, Faidherbe relied on his corps of interpreters not only for their language skill, but also for diplomatic know-how and access to local intelligence. Faidherbe’s chief translators worked closely with local officials on ethnological research and administration. Each had enormous Islamic credibility as local *tamsir* and *marabout* with experience in the Sahara (particularly Morocco and Algeria), in Arabia, and even in continental Europe.\textsuperscript{59} These men played key roles in the development and maintenance of contacts between the French government and local religious and political leaders. They were so successful and well-connected that they continued as government translators beyond Faidherbe into the tenure of his successor. African intellectual middlemen informed the expansion efforts of the governor, and were critical to Gallieni’s efforts as the director of the DAP.\textsuperscript{60} Faidherbe exploited these native contacts to expand French political control as well. In

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 474-5.


\textsuperscript{60} M’bayo, “African Interpreters,” 134.
an effort to quell disturbances in the neighboring area of Cayor, Faidherbe directed local chiefs to act as intermediaries. He successfully used these notables to strong-arm others into brokered peace deals through the threat of colonial military intervention. Through this mechanism Faidherbe made use of his native contacts to expand French power, all the while employing his own language ability and the developing French language skills of the colonized native groups. At the same time, Faidherbe’s methods provided a window of opportunity for Senegalese French-speaking elites who engaged in a sort of *quid pro quo* with colonial officials, offering information and influence in exchange for political and economic strength.

Faidherbe’s efforts to reach out to the local chiefs also included an academic component. Yaro Diao, among the first graduates of the *école des otages*, left his position as a chief to compile the first study of Wolof oral traditions for the *Moniteur du Sénégal*. Descended from an old noble family, Diao worked initially from notes compiled from his father’s oral sagas. He intended these notes purely as mnemonic devices, but ultimately recognized their importance as a general history of the Senegal River basin from 1200-1800. His work came to form the basis of twentieth-century academic work on Senegalese history; his studies were published in numerous journals with the assistance and editing skill of acclaimed French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep as well as French colonial academics and administrators Henri Gaden

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62 See chapter 3 of this study for a more detailed examination of native intellectual efforts to manipulate French ethnological research.

and Maurice Delafosse.⁶⁴ Even as early as the 1850s, native African savants contributed to the generation of ethnological knowledge in West Africa. From such information Faidherbe began to piece together the history of the area, allowing him to see the swirling interconnections of peoples and what he thought of as civilizations. As he understood it, comparison of African groups relative to the West and to each other revealed their unique developmental arcs and suggested the best path for each to follow towards European industrial modernity, the only possible end-state Faidherbe could conceive. Railroads, in his mind, were only the first step in the inevitable march towards an industrial future.

Dating back to his time in Algeria, Faidherbe had conceived of the Sahara as the key to African economic and social development as an ancient site of transport and exchange. The desert and its southern borderlands, known as the Sahel, hosted a remarkable mix of groups coded by the natives themselves as “white” and “black” according to a long-standing calculus of genealogy, Islamic heritage, and socio-economic class.⁶⁵ Once in place in Senegal, Faidherbe saw the border between his new and old duty location along the Sahel as offering an important view into the socio-economic complexity of African societies.

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⁶⁵ On the native-generated rubrics of “white” and “black” distinction along the Sahel, particularly in what would become Mali and Mauritania (but also applying to similar areas in Senegal), see Bruce S. Hall, A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960, (Cambridge, 2011), chapter 1; and chapters 3 and 4 of this work.
To that end he wrote to the Paris geographical society in 1853, his first year in Senegal, to request the body’s support to take “several steps in geography and ethnology,” an interest he indicated as “one of the principal motivations that drove me to request assignment in Senegal.” He took a particular interest in the “Moors” of the right bank of the Senegal river (then the northern edge of French advance in the area), describing them as an “Arab-Berber mixture.” He requested help from the society in formulating a research agenda dedicated to understanding what he thought of as an odd cohabitation of “victors and vanquished” in the area, a reference to the centuries-old story of Arab conquerors from North Africa subjugating the Berbers, who then developed new positions as a clerical class. This view, descended from a generation of French Algerian scholarship and based in part on the medieval analysis offered by Ibn Khaldun, missed much of the nuance of this process. The descriptions offered by Faidherbe and his contemporaries of Sahelian society as cut in two by simple distinctions between warrior Arab and religious Berber missed much of the dialogue that had occurred for centuries.66 Nevertheless, Faidherbe did commit himself to detailed study of the populations near the Senegal River even before the political machinations that led to his appointment as governor; he acknowledged that French observers simply could not understand the complexity of Sahelian societies without more detailed information. They were the

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product, in his mind, not of isolated changes but of a long history of civilizational intersections.

This same 1854 issue of the geographical journal hosted Faidherbe’s first scholarly contribution regarding the Moors, who he saw as an “errant and miserable” combination of Arabs and Berbers. He portrayed the mix as unnatural in a linguistic sense and with respect to the Berber conversion to Islam, an event he painted as superficial and expedient. He did not stop with a basic analysis of these “white” groups. Over the next ten years he spent much of his time in deciphering the results of black and white interaction. He paid particular attention to the migrations of “whites” and “blacks” in sub-Saharan Africa. Like many of the French savants who would follow, he attempted to understand the Peul (Fulbé) people, who seemed to sit astride the black/white divide. He attributed their presence in the West African Sahel to a long-ago migration from Egypt while also describing them as “more open to civilization.” The mixing of white and black civilizational groups, north and south, occurred for several reasons in Faidherbe’s analysis: the caravan trade, which enabled movement between North and West Africa across the Sahara; the commerce in black slaves; and the repeated military conquests of the North African littoral, from the Phoenicians to the French.

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67 Faidherbe, “Les Berbères et les Arabes,” 90. See chapter 4 for more discussion of the evolution of the term “Moor,” which at times meant urban Arabic populations or even all “white” nomadic, Arabic groups of the desert.

68 Louis Faidherbe, “Populations Noires des bassins du Sénégal et du Haut Niger,” in 1854 notebook hand-titled Notice sur les Maures du Sénégal et sur les noirs de la Sénégambie, Number 58, AP/113APOM/6, ANOM, 288. Article was written 30 August 1855 and may have appeared in the May-June 1856 edition of the Bulletin de la société de géographie.

Far from a negative, Faidherbe viewed the product of these civilizational liaisons as useful, stating that the Moors could survive only with “an infusion of blood of a young and vigorous negress” as the “star of the Berbers and the Arabs” fell. These unions produced “moral and intellectual progress” as the blacks converted to Islam, maintaining “good native qualities” while rejecting the “inherent vices of Islamism.” The “neophyte blacks” had more of a chance for civilizational advancement if the French assisted them in battling the Tuareg and other “savage and ferocious hordes of the desert” who, in Faidherbe’s mind, wanted only to convert and radicalize their southern neighbors.

Blacks in this case had not been tainted by radical Islam. They were like children in this model, free of the weight of centuries of decay and existing seemingly in a state of suspended animation. In Faidherbe’s analysis the blacks could and should mix with the corrupted Arabs of North Africa and the desert. Formerly host to a powerful civilizational group, the desert now featured Arab-Berber “Moors” who had fallen into a “savage” state from which they could not recover. Like Ibn Khaldun, Faidherbe felt that the revival of the sagging fortunes of all involved could come from racial mixing.

Blacks, simple but full of potential, would restore prominence to decadent North and West African groups.

Faidherbe believed that the social and intellectual elites who emerged from this racial mixture would lead Africans in an accelerated process of economic and social development with guidance from the French. Islamism, which Faidherbe saw as juridical and political rule by Islam, was employed only by those without the imagination to seek a

70 Faidherbe, “L’avenir,” 230, 244-245.
better form of governance. French-educated blacks offered him a way out of this conundrum, combining the simplicity of a socio-political *tabula rasa* with the willingness to accept the salutary influence of Faidherbe’s exemplar of modernity, Western European civilization.

Islam was not inherently wicked in this view; indeed, Faidherbe saw much social and political value in adherents of Islam who were open to negotiation with other cultures and civilizational groups. He employed native informants, including military veterans, to gather information on West African history and society. Faidherbe gave exceptional mention to one of these veterans, who he saw as a “very educated Muslim” because he had resisted the urge to join the West African jihadist cause in the 1850s and for providing outstanding oral accounts of the histories he read and overheard.72 Natives were capable of both understanding and relating complex histories; they could be counted on, assuming a basic level of education, to act as intelligent interpreters of social reality. Thus, they could eventually be expected to control their own political destinies. Islam, despite the presence of reactionary jihadist states, could serve as a civilizational force, as it had reached great heights of learning, particularly in understanding the history of West Africa and its relationship with the Arabs and Berbers of North Africa.

Tribal affiliations and genealogies served as vital sources for this history in Faidherbe’s view, particularly if they displayed connections to groups in Algeria “of

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72 Faidherbe, “L’avvenir,” 221. The specific reference is to Spahi sub-lieutenant “Alioun-Sal” for his work resisting the West African jihadist el-Hajj Umar Tal. See also Louis Faidherbe, “Renseignements géographiques sur la partie du Sahara comprise entre L’oued noun et le Soudan,” *Nouvelles annales des voyages, de la géographie et de l’histoire* Série 6, 19 (August 1859), 129, for specific attribution of native oral sources.
whom we have an intimate knowledge today.”73 Faidherbe’s early articles on the
interactions between Berbers, Arabs, and blacks served as continuing references for him;
over time, he made marginal notes on many of them. In some of these scribblings he
credited the Arab writers Ibn Battuta, Ibn Khaldun, and Muhammad Bello with providing
useful information on the chains of political leadership and academic learning that shaped
social life in the Maghreb.74 As early as 1855 he discussed his time spent in “researching
geographical and historical ideas on Central Africa in the Arab authors of the middle ages
in order to reconstitute the history of these countries.”75 He quoted from Ibn Khaldun in
numerous instances, particularly regarding the Yemeni origins and movement of Arab
tribes and the intermixing of the Hassanid Arabs and the Senhadja Berbers.76 Locally
authored manuscripts served an important role as well, as they could assist in isolating
and eliminating the bias of Christian and Muslim sources. Faidherbe saw value in the
maintenance of knowledge “lost from view in Europe” but maintained in the “manuscript
chronicles of the marabouts of the Adrar.” He particularly respected the works
referenced by Heinrich Barth and other European travelers that would serve in translation
as a central account for twentieth-century French African ethnology.77 The earliest

74 Handwritten comments in Ibid., 104.
75 “Populations noires des bassins du Sénégal et du haut Niger,” in notebook Notice sur les Maures,
ANOM, 281.
77 Faidherbe, “L’avenir du Sahara,” 227-229. Faidherbe erroneously attributed, as did Barth, the authorship
of several of these chronicles to the famous Timbuktu scholar Ahmad Baba. See chapter 3 of this work for
more detail on the work of Octave Houdas, Maurice Delafosse, Paul Marty, and Ismael Hamet on these
texts.
came not from fellow French scholars, but from native oral and written histories. His efforts to suppress the Arabic language, however, threatened the existence of these chronicles and, perhaps more importantly, the oral sagas on which many local histories were based. The contrast between academic and politico-linguistic policy, though, never occurred to him while serving as governor.

Indeed, Faidherbe made use of knowledge derived from Arabic-language histories in a political sense as well, understanding so as to better govern. In this way, his governorship stands out as a striking departure from the assimilationist policies of his contemporaries. While he acknowledged the primacy of Algeria, he did not blindly follow the example of Bugeaud by using indiscriminate terror and violent raids to suppress the local population. Instead, Faidherbe followed a more nuanced approach that emphasized association with the natives. In other words, he believed that French colonial authorities needed to develop local forms of government built on native social and political structures. This technique offered an implicit guarantee of institutional progress and eventual independence once the subject societies had reached modernity, a stage generally seen as reflected in the European present but also, it should be said, in the distant future for African groups expected to remain under French control until that seemingly unreachable date. This model differed significantly from the orthodox assimilation, a technique that favored reshaping the natives to be French through the almost continuous exposure to French culture and the hewing of new modes and methods of jurisprudence and political life.

78 Sullivan, Bugeaud, 167.
In contrast to Faidherbe’s ideas stood the more explicitly racialized concepts (cloaked as physical anthropology) advocated for Algeria by scholars such as Paul Topinard, who believed that French problems in North Africa stemmed from a fundamental mistake. He felt the the French needed to “appropriate the indigenous race of Algeria, the Berbers.” In doing so, they had to remember to avoid “treating them like the Arab race.”

This basic bifurcation, an effort to divide and conquer, treated the colonies as a Manichean space with “good” Berbers and “bad” Arabs. Berbers could assimilate quite easily to French political, legal, and social forms due to their perceived proximity to the extant French model. Arabs, on the other hand, had little to offer and a long way to go, perhaps inherently incapable of equality with the French.

Faidherbe, on the contrary, favored a more nuanced approach. In a Saint Louis speech given on Bastille Day in 1860, Faidherbe acknowledged the differences between these civilizational groups, but did not favor one over the other. Instead, he recommended to his native audience that they model their views on those of the British subjects in the Congo who had gone from “savage” to “administrator or magistrate” in twenty years of colonial rule. They should look not to the “Moors of the desert, an intelligent and energetic race” completely dissimilar to “us, who like peace and order, who are sedentary, productive, commercial traders liking prosperity, pleasure, and luxury, like you.” Any failure to “listen to this counsel” would lead to “conditions of humiliating inferiority vis-à-vis the other black nations” that rejected the Arab-led assimilation policy.

resistance in Algeria. Faidherbe believed that only a close association with French ways of life and governance would bring peace and prosperity to Senegalese political groups. He did not reject Islam as a force for civilization, but rather its extremist proponents. The blacks, at a lower level of civilization, nevertheless stood a great chance of gaining a level nearer to the French due to their simplicity and potential for rapid advancement.

Faidherbe could make such pronouncements because, in his view, his unique experience in Algeria and Senegal coupled with ethnological understanding qualified him to govern. He wrote, “Having served in Algeria, I can be nothing but a proponent of a more serious occupation of Senegal.” The major even went so far as to recommend in 1859 the inclusion of Senegal in a larger Algerian colony, justifying the change by comparing the needs of Senegal to those of Algeria. In a more general discussion, Faidherbe commented that the young colony would rival Algeria in importance within twenty years due to its potential for significant commerce and mining, explosive profit for approximately 1/100 the cost of the Algerian conquest.

Still, Algeria retained primacy over Senegal or any other colony by virtually any criterion in Faidherbe’s thought. Perhaps in an effort to give comparative context to his

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82 Faidherbe to Minister of Marine and Colonies, 11 Oct 1859 and 14 Oct 1859, cited in Barrows, “General Faidherbe,” 595. Faidherbe, at least in part, also wanted to move under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War, which controlled Algeria, and away from the Ministry of Marine, with whom he had a variety of bureaucratic problems during his time as governor.

readership, when discussing the growth of a specific fruit in Senegal, he judged it “a little bit heavier than in Algeria.” He also donated a leopard skin to the Museum of Algiers, one gathered by an Algerian tirailleur in Senegal. While Algeria remained central in his thought, it served him in a purely academic sense as well. He made use of the significant Algerian journals and scientific societies resident in Algiers or other Algerian cities such as Constantine; prominent metropolitan historical publications offered little outlet for African information beyond brief exchanges in the minutes of meetings of anthropological societies. In the process, Faidherbe made use of the small but flourishing intra-African intellectual network, one that he would take great pains to expand.

Following his final departure from Senegal in 1865, he spent much of his time on scholarly ethnology, ruminating on civilizational migrations, movements, and mixing.

**Encountering metropolitan anthropology and spreading a civilizational paradigm**

Even as he conducted ethnological investigations in Algeria and Senegal, Faidherbe remained a military officer. He took advantage, as did some of his military peers, of the fluidity of academic groups in Paris to gain entry despite his limited academic qualifications. After all, he had only an undergraduate engineering degree to his credit. Most importantly, he parlayed his field experience and significant history of publication to gain entrance to the most prestigious anthropological group in the world of the time, the Société d’anthropologie de Paris, founded by the prominent biologist, physician and physical anthropologist Paul Broca in 1859. The organization and its

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founder were part of a larger European-wide effort to employ physical distinction as racial markers. According to this school of thought scientists could classify the potential and capabilities of populations according to their perceived locations not only along a linear evolutionary system but also on a hierarchy of races.\textsuperscript{85}

Broca specifically sought to distinguish the newly developed “anthropology” from its older predecessor, “ethnology.” Broca pointed to the “primacy of the study of the physical characteristics of man” as vital to understanding “the human races.” Ethnology, in his eyes, lacked “cohesion,” as it was not “built on the solid base of anatomy, the most positive fundamental of natural history.” Ethnology, while rigorous in its study of societal custom, remained subject to analysis “outside the scientific method, opening itself to the most venturesome speculation unless grounded in reality by the guiding hand of observation.” Physical anthropologists rejected just the sort of examination advocated by Faidherbe as lacking in science. In Broca’s discipline, only scientific measurements, such as cranial capacity or the length of the brow, could differentiate races or, as Faidherbe would have it, civilizations.\textsuperscript{86}

In joining this particular group, Faidherbe gained professional connections, credibility, and a larger publishing opportunity. The group had long-standing ties to the French overseas academic community, corresponding regularly with societies in Algeria...

\textsuperscript{85} For basic discussion of this intellectual trend across Europe, see Carole Reynaud-Paligot, \textit{De l’identité nationale: Science, race et politique en Europe et aux États-Unis, XIXe-XXe siècles}, (Paris, 2011), chapters 1-5.

by the 1860s.⁸⁷ Although his views on the importance of ethnography and socio-cultural
distinction did not jibe with the biological bases of the society’s founders, Faidherbe saw
the group could provide him with the academic legitimacy necessary for him to influence
both intellectual and policy-making circles in the metropole and in the colonies. He
adapted well enough to the society’s message that within seven years of membership,
Faidherbe had gained the society’s presidency. Upon his inauguration, Faidherbe even
paid homage to Broca, who he felt had presided with a “paternal solicitude” over the
prosperity and expansion of the Society, creating an environment of intellectual exchange
and freedom.⁸⁸

By this time, now-General Faidherbe’s network of contacts extended far outside
Africa to the highest reaches of the French academic community. Indeed, Faidherbe’s
relationship with Broca and another of the founding members of the Society, Armand de
Quatrefages, ran sufficiently deep that they joined him in sponsoring a new candidate for
society membership during Faidherbe’s presidency.⁸⁹ He could count prominent
scientists of the day as his close collaborators, delivering to him greater access to the
most advanced anthropological theories of the day while also providing an outlet for him
to spread his basic ideas on civilizational development. The anthropological society had
ties not only to the academic community but also to colonial political support and funding

⁸⁷ Ibid., cxxiv.
⁸⁸ “280ème Séance, 8 Jan 1874,” Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris, Ile série, 9 (1874), 3.
⁸⁹ “283ème Séance, 19 Feb 1874,” Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris, Ile série, 9 (1874), 141.
tied to the French state’s 1864 recognition of the group as an “establishment of public utility.”

Much of Faidherbe’s success stemmed from his association with Algeria, viewed generally by this time (as Faidherbe had seen it since the 1840s) as the central French colonial site for understanding the human condition. Many French Algerian scholars gained honorary inductions into other societies. Faidherbe parlayed these associations, particularly his long-standing correspondence with the Paris geographical society, into publication opportunities. His study of the neolithic carvings in the Canary Islands stemmed from an initial report to the geographical society, gaining him the notoriety necessary to gain a place as correspondent of the prestigious académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres (part of the Institut de France, also home to the académie française) and the resumé to publish in the exclusive Revue d’anthropologie. Faidherbe made great use of the professional connections he cultivated in Paris. He gained entrance to new avenues of publication while also locating more extensive sources of financial support for his research that did not rely on his position as a military officer. Enhanced funding enabled the now senior officer and scholar to develop new ethnological sources both within French academia and in native societies encountered while on more extensive and

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91 Faidherbe, explorer Henri Duveyrier and naturalist Adrien Berbrugger gained entrance to the Royal Geographic Society of London in 1864. Lorcin, Imperial Identities, 143.

focused research trips. He could then expose that history to a greater audience, thereby revealing the past achievements of North African groups while displaying the possibility for future advancement.

Faidherbe’s most prominent contribution to French anthropology was, with Paul Topinard, the *Instructions sur l’anthropologie de l’Algérie*, first published in 1874.93 This document presented an interesting combination of the two modes of inquiry that Broca had previously characterized as oppositional. Faidherbe presented the ethnological or ethnographic view while Topinard wrote as a physical anthropologist in search of more materials to measure. Continuing earlier conclusions, Faidherbe remarked in these instructions: “the Berber and the Arab are both white at birth.”94 The Arabs “will not rally” to the French “mode of civilization.” The Berbers, on the other hand, displayed great similarity to the French, including “perhaps a community of origin.”95 Faidherbe argued that the Berbers originated in the tribes of Northern Europe, as witnessed by “the continuous line of stone markers that one finds from the shore of the Baltic all the way to Tunisia.”96 Faidherbe’s civilizational model placed a past version of these native blond-haired and blue-eyed Algerians on par with the Franks, who shared these physical traits. The Berbers could progress to the level of Europeans by moving forward through time, recapturing their lost glory and the connections to their European origins.


95 Faidherbe and Topinard, *Instructions*, 32.

96 Ibid., 5.
Despite his efforts to establish some ethnographic distance, Faidherbe could not escape the Eurocentric and racist views so prevalent at the time. Arabs and Berbers were distinct groups for him; the violence of Arab resistance to the French colonial presence had convinced him that the nomadic Arabs were not ready for advancement into modernity. As he had previously discussed, Arabs could initiate forward movement on the civilizational continuum only by mixing with the blacks or at least the Berbers in a Khaldunian cycle of decay followed by development, delivered by the introduction of an external group.

Faidherbe’s research agenda thus existed on the line between the relativist views that would emerge from French African ethnology in the twentieth century and the biological determinist views of many prominent physical anthropologists. He pressed for dialogue among French scholars-administrators, natives, and native oral and written sources to determine the historical origins of civilizational groups. Still very much part of the colonial enterprise, Faidherbe hoped to use the evidence thus collected to better comprehend native positions along a unique developmental arc that would lead to modernity under the guiding hand of French administrators. He sought to reform the method of French colonial governance, not eliminate that rule altogether. His scholarship thus aimed to reform the system from the top-down and inside-out by offering a better-informed and consequently more effective form of rule.

To gather this data he turned to the ethnological networks he knew in North and West Africa. For instance, he employed “4 Moroccan informants” to describe the writing on the stone monuments of Demnat and Makech. Bowing to both his desire for
unadulterated truth and a bit of ethnocentrism, he hedged his bets and “recognized the necessity to temper them with information gathered by a European.” Thus, he also consulted reports provided by the French Minister to Morocco, “who does research in geography and archaeology.” These records, once deciphered, offered a glimpse into the long-lost civilizational height of North African groups.

African residents and researchers remained important to Faidherbe’s research long after his permanent return to France in the 1870s, providing the empirical basis for his theories of civilizational movement and mixing. In his work retracing the writings of Herodotus in Libya, he consulted the definitive grammatical studies of Kabyle and Arab dialects in the area, produced by a soldier-scholar like himself, along with reports from explorers. He did not settle for the explanations of those who had never been there. Progress would be achieved in Faidherbe’s view only after analyzing ethnographic observations in conjunction with a recovered past. The ethnographic present, simultaneously primitive and reflective of the powerful influence of the past, revealed the potential for future advancement. The African colonies stood apart from Europe both in the mind of Faidherbe and in practice. The originality of his work won him some measure of academic acceptance in France perhaps in spite of his use of non-metropolitan sources. Few other “amateur” scholars of the period held such a position “between two

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worlds.” He had risen to great heights in both colonial governance and metropolitan academia, thereby connecting the worlds even as he remained outside of both. A full resident of neither Parisian academic circles nor colonial policy-making, Faidherbe could investigate and influence both from the margins, from their points of overlap. It would be several generations before other colonial ethnologist-administrators would be able to recapture his impact. Maurice Delafosse, prominent French colonial academic of the early twentieth century, eventually took up that mantle and influenced both policy-making and metropolitan social theory.  

Continuing connections and a forgotten legacy

In 1870, Faidherbe’s ethnological career halted as France entered war with Prussia. Despite the humiliation of France in the conflict, Faidherbe was lionized by the French public for his role as the heroic defender of the north against the invading Prussian forces, the only French general to find any real measure of success in the war. With his newfound celebrity, Faidherbe found himself bombarded by requests to enter politics. He twice turned down calls to run for a position in the General Assembly following his post-war military retirement; he finally accepted election as the Deputy

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99 See Chapter 7 of this study for Bourdieu’s views on the importance of liminality in ethnological examination. Sibeud has described metropolitan opinions of ethnographic narratives as “easy to write” and thus not worthy of serious consideration in Une science impériale, 43-44.

from the North in 1871. In this final phase of Faidherbe’s life he continued to publish prodigiously while also declaring himself a “radical” in political circles. Faidherbe’s connections reached to the top levels of government by the end of his life, high enough to earn him a permanent place in the army staff and the prominent position of Grand Chancellor of the French Legion of Honor in 1883.

Although Faidherbe’s health failed him (he could no longer walk by 1876), he continued to study Africa vicariously through his connections. His position in the Legion of Honor permitted him to direct young colonial officers to visit him in his offices or at his home. Through one of these visits in 1886, Faidherbe met young Henri Monteil, recently returned from Senegal. Faidherbe, in the imperious style of a man used to power and fully cognizant of the approach of death, told the officer that his recent journey up the Senegal River was the culmination of the general’s work. Flush with the excitement of the “Scramble for Africa” among the great European powers of the late nineteenth century, Monteil enjoyed his time with Faidherbe and returned periodically to check in with the patriarch of the French network. The system of connections established by Faidherbe had already paid great dividends for the young explorer, who had worked with (under the guidance of Joseph Gallieni at the DAP) two native chiefs, one a graduate of

101 Minister of War to Commander, Algiers, 17 September 1870; Minister of War to Faidherbe, 24 April 1871, Faidherbe dossier, SHD.


103 Note of 26 May 1883, Faidherbe dossier, SHD.

104 Faidherbe dedicated his final work to several of these officers: Ancelle (who edited a book on him), Bizard, and his son-in-law Lieutenant Brosselard. Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal*, 10.
the école des otages and the other a former guide and translator for Faidherbe, while on expedition.\textsuperscript{105}

Monteil did not stand alone in accepting the wisdom of the now frail Faidherbe. Administrators and governors visited him on several occasions and made specific reference to his example in developing policies. Faidherbe’s legacy of close collaboration with native intellectual and political elites set the standard for the French colonial service, both military and civilian, with an increasing willingness for open intellectual discourse. This was a rare achievement in the dark years surrounding the Dreyfus Affair. Gallieni, in fact, based much of his West African ethnological understanding on the work of Faidherbe, particularly the “origin and history of the population.”\textsuperscript{106} He first interacted with Faidherbe while still a lieutenant, working to develop the West African railroad Faidherbe had long labored to bring to fruition, a project Gallieni would advance through the use of a corvée system of forced labor.\textsuperscript{107} Ultimately, Gallieni saw Faidherbe’s efforts, both intellectual and military, as foundational. Gallieni felt that without Faidherbe’s example, the French could not have expanded their rule over West Africa.\textsuperscript{108}

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\textsuperscript{105}Henri Labouret, \textit{Monteil: Explorateur et Soldat}, (Paris, 1937), 23-24, 105. \\
\textsuperscript{106}Joseph Gallieni, \textit{Voyage au Soudan français (Haut-Niger et pays de Ségou), 1879-1881}, (Paris, 1885), 464. \\
\end{flushright}
Faidherbe and his ideas linked North and West Africa and formed a bridge to Gallieni, Lyautey and the leaders and theorists to follow. Parisian ethnology courses attended by Maurice Delafosse in the 1890s, for instance, relied heavily on Faidherbe’s writing regarding civilizational groups in West Africa. Early twentieth century colonial Arabic scholar Ismael Hamet cited Faidherbe’s 1859 work on Senegal as setting the standard for unearthing the “secrets of Central Africa” by initiating the acquisition of important documentary and oral evidence of group origins. Hubert Lyautey, a direct disciple of Gallieni in Tonkin and Madagascar, applied the principles of local understanding to his time in Africa, from Algeria to Morocco. Natives also connected French intellectuals and colonial functionaries in a common conversation and realm of experience. Descendants of Faidherbe’s chief translators worked with French ethnologists and soldiers in Mauritania and along the Sahel studying Sufi brotherhoods under funding from the Algerian and West African governments.

Far from backward, Faidherbe saw a long-running developmental cycle playing out in Africa, one that grew from a lost civilizational greatness on the southern edge of the Mediterranean enhanced by long contact with Europe. Unlike some of his ethnological successors, Faidherbe struggled to see African historical development as


111 Xavier Coppolani was the most prominent inheritor of this tradition spanning North and West Africa, although Robert Arnaud also participated. See chapters 3 and 4 of this study; Robinson, “‘French Africans,’” 32-35; Trumbull, Empire of Facts, 26; and FM/SG/MRT/IV/1 and FM/SG/SOUD/III/4, ANOM for details of Coppolani’s efforts, which ultimately included the 1900 foundation of the Revue Franco-Musulmane et Saharienne as an additional outlet for French and native studies.
important in its own right. Rather, all such change occurred for him on a scale relative to that followed by Europeans. However, he did have hope for North Africa; a civilization capable of magnificent archaeological, scientific, and literary achievements could recapture that lost grandeur. French archaeology and history could aid in rediscovering that past and using it to stoke rapid advancement in the present by delivering a developmental form of colonial rule tailored to the particularities of African societies.

Detailed ethnography opened a window on the subject societies. The colonial state both sustained and was sustained by these techniques, as ethnologists made use of the inequities of power in the colonial world to gain access to sources even as their findings informed the techniques of rule.

Faidherbe stood alone in his time as a man thinking about informational networks in the colonial sphere. He placed himself in many camps, from native to metropolitan academic in an effort to influence the flow of information in, to, and from the colonies. In so doing, he founded a network of transfer reliant on men (and some women) with significant impact on the direction of France in the colonies and, in some cases, in the metropole. His recognition of the importance of Algeria established a center for these networks, the point from which his successors would emerge. While the bureaux arabes disappeared from Algeria, their essence remained in the successive Muslim policy organizations in West Africa manned by Joseph Gallieni, Maurice Delafosse, and Paul Marty, among others. Faidherbe’s death on 29 September 1889 did not destroy the

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112 Finally eliminated with the advent of a civilian governor general in 1870, the bureau concept began to reemerge only in the mid-twentieth century in Algeria, and would truly appear again only under the administration of Jacques Soustelle from 1955-1956. See chapter 6 of this study for further detail. For a helpful timeline of the history of the bureaux to 1871, see Abi-Mershed, Apostles of Modernity, 213-218.
network he helped to create. Instead, the reach of ethnological knowledge grew only larger, flourishing among the subterranean connections encouraged by Faidherbe and now including native intellectuals as well as French scholars. Ethnological knowledge, informed by a hearty dose of racial paternalism, nevertheless grew increasingly from contact and dialogue with native idioms of race and distinction as French colonial domination continued in Africa. This growth was far from singular; instead, it was made up of individual entities connected by their personal research and networks. Civilizational knowledge became a primary concern of these chaotic systems, ordered only by the possession, retention, and dissemination of information deemed “local” and often considered apart from the metropole.
Figure 3: Indochina in 1895, as depicted by Jean-Marie de Lanessan

Figure 4: Madagascar in 1901
Figure 5: North Africa in 1913
Chapter 2: Martial Ethnology: Hubert Lyautey, Moral Renewal, and Soldiers as Agents of Reform

During an 1881 assignment to Algeria, French Captain Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934) tried to learn from conversation with locals and journeys into the interior. After returning from his detested job as an aide in the office of the commanding general of French forces in Algiers, he spent two hours each day at the café of a Muslim notable. While there young Lyautey learned the language and discussed Arabic scholarship, including the work of fourteenth-century philosopher Ibn Khaldun, with religious and political luminaries of Algiers.1 His mind spinning from these interactions, he returned to his Algiers apartment and dressed “in the Arab manner, which is to say in shirt and burnous,” spending the rest of the night “surrounded by my beloved books, my pencils, [and] my Arabic notebook,” the primary tool for his regular language studies with the secretary of the local bureau arabe.2 Desperate for field experience to combat the daily drudgery in Algiers, the young officer took part in desert expeditions and conducted anthropological and archaeological expeditions with local French academics.3

In the evening of one such trip, Lyautey heard the strains of music in the distance. Straying from his campsite, he found a wedding that he described as “rather poor and primitive, but what color!” Continuing his nighttime walk, he soon found himself in a village of non-Arab blacks, where he gained the assistance of a former tirailleur (native

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1 Hubert Lyautey to father, 10 July 1881, in Hubert Lyautey, Un Lyautey inconnu: Correspondance et journal inédits, 1874-1934, ed. André Le Révérend, (Paris, 1980), 104-105. Lyautey reported the café owner as one Sidi Abdallah.

2 Lyautey to mother, 1 July 1881, in Lyautey, Un Lyautey inconnu, 100-101.

3 Ibid., 101. Lyautey names a Major Coyne, who he describes as “an archaeologist, an artist and a savant” with significant expertise on Saharan Algeria and who served as the chief of the political affairs bureau for southern Algeria, as his primary colleague in these expeditions.
African soldier enlisted in the French army) as his translator. His lack of scientific training, though, did not stop him from offering his own take on social roles among the native population: “We never see anything like it among the Arabs, but among the good blacks, the women are something.”\(^4\) Even in his youth, Lyautey sought to understand civilizational groups in a comparative frame, viewing the treatment of women as a key marker. The way a society treats its women, in his eyes, served as a guide to its developmental status. In some ways replaying the ideas of Louis Faidherbe, he believed that the “simple” blacks offered more opportunity for rapid advancement into European-style modernity. Arabs, on the other hand, had become set in their decrepit ways; in the minds of Faidherbe and Lyautey, it would take much more to move them from this stunted position.

At times a romantic,\(^5\) the young Lyautey saw the need for social reform, not only overseas but also in France. Although he was absent from the colonies from the end of the tour above (1882) until 1894, he saw them as a source of renewal, a potential mine of energy for use in altering the path to decay and degeneration he saw France traveling.\(^6\) For Lyautey, colonization served as a “resurrection, the return to a life nourished by fallow land...[where] the population rushes to gain the shelter of our colors knowing they

\(^4\) Lyautey to Joseph de la Bouillerie, 1 May 1882, in Lyautey, *Un Lyautey inconnu*, 120-121.

\(^5\) See André Le Révérend, “Lyautey écrivain, 1854-1934,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Montpellier III, 1974) for detailed analysis of the romanticism in certain elements of Lyautey’s writings, which included correspondence with as many as 600 different people and organizations.

will liberate them and provide them with peace and protection.”

7 Lyautey thus adapted Ibn Khaldun’s notion of urban-rural connections in a cycle of advancement and decay for his own use. In Lyautey’s version of this Khaldunian model the sophisticated and urban, in this case in France, stood at the top of the developmental arc. Already in intellectual and moral decline, it could not sustain that position as it sank into decrepitude. It took the influence of the rural, in this case infused via the less-developed African countryside, to reinstate the former vigor of the higher civilization, leading once again on an upward arc to greatness for both civilizations.

Once described by his superior during assignments to Indochina and Madagascar, General Joseph Gallieni, as “the perfect colonial officer,” Lyautey believed in the need for study of subject populations in order to better develop them. 8 This development would deliver Africa and Africans into a locally adapted form of social and industrial modernity that would be more productive economically and intellectually for both the French colonial project and African populations themselves. Such study could not occur in the confines of an office in this view; it required constant movement and examination of the populations in their environment. Because the colonial enterprise in the era of Gallieni and Lyautey still involved significant conquest, the two leaders focused on the use of military officers as the prime operators of ethnology. Lyautey often repeated Gallieni’s dictate of “right man in the right place” and emulated his reliance on an


“organization on the march,” avoiding the nefarious influences of the “killer bureaucracy” in Algiers and Paris.⁹

By the time of Lyautey’s entrance into full-time colonial service (1894), the French colonial system spread across the globe, from Indochina (where conquest began in earnest in the 1880s) to French Polynesia, the Indian Ocean Seychelles and across the African continent to Senegal. Governed by the French Third Republic, a democracy dominated by legislative in-fighting and the regular collapse of coalition governments, colonial leaders understandably grew tired of bureaucratic inertia in the metropole. Lyautey joined Gallieni and their peers in colonial leadership in battling against governance dictated from the center, played out according to some universally applicable checklist or playbook. Lyautey, a member of the intellectual class in France since his secondary education (see below), saw these theories of colonial governance based on racial or bureaucratic absolutes as fundamentally misguided. Some scholars have depicted this stance as evidence of anti-intellectualism.¹⁰ However, a close examination of Lyautey’s correspondence indicates that he remained very firmly an intellectual himself. He advocated not for the elimination of theory or the conduct of colonial science, but for ethnological examination conducted in full view of the surrounding environment; theory could follow from work done in the field.¹¹

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¹¹ Raymond Betts argues that Faidherbe, Gallieni, and Lyautey served as the greatest proponents of the political notion of “association” with natives, particularly in that their “practice seemed to be preceding
Most recent scholarship on Lyautey has overlooked his emphasis on ethnological investigation, instead focusing on his career as a colonial soldier and overlord. Most such studies proceed along almost hagiographic lines, depicting the French officer as a nearly flawless visionary well ahead of his time. Because of the centrality of Morocco to the events surrounding the First World War as well as the length of time Lyautey spent in the area, his tenure as governor-general of the protectorate has been central to many historical analyses of his work and influence. Among these, the most detailed analysis remains that of Daniel Rivet, who devoted three volumes to an exhaustive description of Lyautey’s policies in Morocco. Rivet’s work, particularly when coupled with William Hoisington’s *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco*, offers significant insight into the failures of Lyautey’s efforts to apply the tenets of indirect rule or association. These scholars propose that Lyautey’s administration suffered from the inability of French officials (other than the resident general himself) to truly “understand” and consider the inputs of native elites in policy-making, thereby rendering them unable to “stop the resistance to France.” For all the power of this description, however, it fails to take into account the diversity of methods by which natives themselves interacted with Lyautey’s colonial state, beyond the simple repression-resistance binary that cast French colonial

\[\text{theory.} \]


officials as diametrically opposed to their Moroccan subjects without any conversation across hardened lines.

Spencer Segalla offered a useful addition to this literature in his depiction of French Moroccan education, *The Moroccan Soul*. Segalla focused on the policies outlined and implemented by Georges Hardy, director of education during a stretch of Lyautey’s time as resident-general and an important colonial theorist in his own right. Segalla painted a compelling portrait of a Franco-Moroccan state unable to resolve the problematic mixture of colonial republicanism and humanism identified previously by Gary Wilder in West Africa. In the process, he located a “nativist synergy” that ultimately placed Moroccan political and social elites in position to assume the language of traditional values in rejecting the French colonial state and creating a new nationalist identity.  

His focus on Hardy and the educational process in Morocco, however, forced Segalla into a simplified depiction of Lyautey’s complex thought. He thus omitted the origins of Lyautey’s ideas, and the impact they continued to have across the colonial project and in French science in general. This study builds on the work of Segalla and the analysis by André Le Révérend and Pascal Venier on Lyautey’s writings to determine not only what views Lyautey held, but what those ideas did and from whence

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they came. Lyautey was far more than a soldier; he was an intellectual, but one focused on detailed ethnographic and ethnological understanding of native populations.

Scientific investigation, a category into which Lyautey placed ethnology, gave the officer, particularly in his role as resident general in Morocco, more tools by which to develop subject populations. Delivering the best possible form of colonial rule, with an eye towards eventual handover, required a detailed understanding of social life, something he felt was best achieved via close cooperation. This ethnological partnership, particularly as he installed it in Morocco from 1912, was “above all intellectual, that of the spirit and that of the heart. I believe that it is the true means by which to safeguard the cooperative regime of France and the Muslim nation of Morocco.”

Ethnology was nothing less to Lyautey than the full intellectual cooperation of two very different peoples in a quest to understand difference. Descriptions of distinct groups, in Lyautey’s mind, had to be fully relative, respecting and depicting each society in its own light. He hoped that the understanding that came from collaborative scientific study would restore “the order, the security and the unity of the Sharifian empire” while also leading to “economic development and social progress to an extent the old Morocco never knew.”

Lyautey, despite his calls for relativism, thus built an ethnocentric political structure. As Paul Rabinow has pointed out, Lyautey believed that a European-style “technical modernity” would restore Morocco’s luster while retaining its local institutions. When applied,

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however, this approach did not include infrastructural improvements in “Muslim” areas of Moroccan cities, districts that became islands void of French influence.\(^\text{18}\) Scientific modernization operated in a number of different ways across locales, a direction that, while certainly descended at least in part from unequal relations of power, also reflected Lyautey’s basic insistence on protectorate rule as a collaborative process.

Following the example of Faidherbe, and serving as an important influence on future French Africanist scholars such as Paul Marty and Georges Hardy, Lyautey envisioned native intellectual elites as the best partners in this developmental process. He recognized that many of these individuals lacked formal education in anything approaching the Western example. Thus, he sought only to find what he would later term simply the “best” people a society had to offer. He looked for individuals with backgrounds similar to his, reasoning that people of “aristocratic” descent were better fit for rule. Power “exercised by the best” promised stability through intellectual capability. A deliberate educational process that provided higher education for native “social elites” would deliver to them the full range of knowledge necessary to understand and effectively rule their inferiors. All of Morocco, and people more generally, possessed an “‘ingrained’ sense of social hierarchy”; they sought order and rule by their betters, he thought.\(^\text{19}\) Lyautey thus promised a French colonial project that “formed elites who take in their hands...the future of the state.” They could arrive at this position, he imagined, only after significant French assistance; once ready, natives themselves would take


over. Intellectuals, then, came from the social elite by definition; the categories for Lyautey were mutually constitutive. Most important, though, for Lyautey was the collaboration with natives themselves on the local level; the process could not emanate from Paris.

Lyautey’s sometimes “explosive opposition” to metropolitan requirements grew from his basic conception of governance generated by local conditions. Soldiers, the colonial representatives who provided the best access for effecting social and moral change, could act in Lyautey’s view as catalysts aiding foreign “races” in their goal to rise to a “higher moral life, to a more complete life.” These soldiers, “attached to local work, detached from the noise of the metropole” could engage local populations first on their level, and then hope to enhance their standard of living in all phases. Race, an imprecise term since its first employment in the seventeenth century, became shorthand for civilization and difference, distinctions shaped and influenced by native intellectuals with whom Lyautey remained in contact throughout his career. Ultimately, Lyautey saw his role, and that of his army, as elevating these newly conquered groups to the level of France. Civilizational communication and advancement could best take place through elites; natives could and should serve as the interpreters of their own social reality with the assistance of French soldiers and scholars. Colonial rule occurred, in Lyautey’s model, through native institutions with an eye towards the promotion of social, moral,

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22 Lyautey, “Rôle colonial,” 318, 328.
and political development and ultimate independence, not an effort to force French norms on to native populations developing along a different arc.

As a successor to Faidherbe and Gallieni, Lyautey became France’s foremost colonial soldier and expert on political rule of foreign populations. Gallieni, a disciple of Faidherbe in West Africa, had conducted important and successful campaigns of conquest both in the French Soudan (modern-day Mali) in the 1880s and Indochina in the 1890s; it was during this last assignment that Major Lyautey encountered then-Colonel Gallieni, the most important figure in his military and ethnological development. Lyautey said of his conversations with Gallieni: “I drink in his Soudanese stories and his vast and supple notions of organization and administration,” tales that made Lyautey see the “joy of action that destroys the bitterness of stagnant garrisons in the suburbs.”

Gallieni’s depiction of the French African and Asian colonies rang true for Lyautey. He agreed with his mentor that only through an administration that adapted and changed according to local requirements could the French could effectively govern and cause the progress of their colonial subjects. Gallieni, at once soldier and ethnologist, stood as the embodiment of this technique for Lyautey.

Lyautey thus tried, throughout his colonial service (1894-1925), to use his experiences as the foundation of a wide-ranging network bent on understanding all the complexities of conquest, colonial rule and native social structure. He proposed strategic alternatives to the brutal and costly methods of colonial expansion employed in the first half of the nineteenth century in Africa, rallying against the “anti-militarism” in a fin-de-siècle France rocked by the divisions of the Dreyfus Affair. The young officer did so

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23 Lyautey to sister, 20 February 1895, in Lyautey, Choix de Lettres, 69.
first by developing techniques that reconceived the military as a force for peace and progress, echoing many of the forgotten notions of Faidherbe in an environment that also fostered the growth of a powerful pro-colonial lobby in Paris.\textsuperscript{24} Taking his cue from Faidherbe’s call to respect local political and social structures, Lyautey advocated for “associating without absorbing, guiding without administering, moving towards progress without altering.”\textsuperscript{25} Lyautey’s version of association involved not only the maintenance of structures, but a genuine inclusion of native elites, particularly what he and his staff perceived as the pre-colonial political leadership, in the process of creating new and better social and political forms. This model of governance required Lyautey and his subordinates to work in harmony with native intellectuals, who he saw as the inheritors of the post-colonial state following France’s departure.

According to Lyautey, the colonial administration, and most importantly military officers, must study societies so as to best adapt to their structures. Assimilation could not and should not occur, as it fundamentally altered a perfectly useful extant form. For Lyautey, people, regardless of origin, were of value as humans and deserved the opportunity to climb to a higher rung of civilization. A contemporary of Lyautey in Morocco described this “radical humanism” as focused on “reciprocal and voluntary cooperation” that would inevitably cause societal evolution and require a fundamental


\textsuperscript{25} Quoted in Durosoy, \textit{Avec Lyautey}, 92.
change in the colonial relationship. From aristocratic origins through thirty years of colonial thought and action, Lyautey further expanded the colonial ethnological network, building connections both below and above the colonial surface, stretching even to Paris.

**Origins of a colonial mind**

Born on 17 November 1854 in eastern France, Louis-Hubert-Gonzalve Lyautey did not spring from a humble peasant family. Rather, his mother’s family claimed descent through 22 generations from Saint Louis, and Louis XIV had ennobled his father’s ancestors. Both families had significant traditions of military service, as Lyautey’s maternal grandfather graduated from the *ecole spéciale militaire* at Saint Cyr, and his paternal grandfather served under Napoleon I in Russia and commanded an artillery corps under General Thomas-Robert Bugeaud in Algeria. His father, a military engineer in Lorraine, wished for his son to follow in his footsteps by attending the *école polytechnique* and entering the military.

Drawing on his noble and military background, Lyautey eventually fashioned himself into a provincial intellectual. He gained access to some of France’s best secondary and university schools, in the process coming into contact with social reform movements swirling around ideas of religious-moral regeneration, workers’ rights, and

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27 Le Révérend, *Lyautey*, 11-20. The best Lyautey genealogist was Hubert Lyautey himself, who did exhaustive research on his family. See 475AP/1-9, Archives Privées Lyautey, Archives Nationales, Paris, France (hereafter AN).


29 Hardy, *Portrait de Lyautey*, 185.
toleration of difference. He emerged from these experiences as a military man with very clear ideas about the future of France. The young officer wished for a homeland not led by relatively mindless bureaucratic automatons. Rather, he envisioned a future where France and its colonies existed as a politically homogenous group led by a benevolent intellectual class intent on ensuring the continued moral, economic, and intellectual development of all its subjects. He thus picked up the bits of Saint-Simonian and positivist thought left by Faidherbe and parlayed them into a new rationale for colonial ethnological investigation: the need to understand difference so as to fashion a better form of rule while simultaneously reviving the sagging fortunes of both the subject people and the French.

In some ways reflecting the colonial military and social space he would later dominate, Lyautey grew up in the borderlands. Hard on the line between the German states to the east and the French state to the west, Lorraine and its sister province Alsace often provided the fodder for conflicts between political and ethno-linguistic groups. With the devastating defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, parts of Alsace and Lorraine passed under the control of the ascendant German state. While spared the transition to a new German citizenship, Lyautey the teenager surely felt the repercussions in the area torn by war and the subsequent campaign of French guerrillas resisting the Prussian invaders.

In 1872, Lyautey left Lorraine to attend a year of preparatory school in Paris. While not happy as a boarding student, Lyautey fell under the spell of a brilliant teacher at the school. Recognizing the student’s potential for study and leadership, the priest
pushed him not to France’s leading school for the preparation of engineers and
government functionaries, the *école polytechnique*, but instead to the military academy at
Saint-Cyr.\(^{30}\) The military institution, second only to the *école polytechnique* in terms of
prestige as a preparation for service in the army, better fit the intelligent young student
not quite willing to accede to the bourgeois standards of his Parisian peers.

Entering the school as 93rd of 291 attendees, the young Lorrain moved up the
ranks during his time at Saint-Cyr, earning corporal and sergeant positions in his second
year and graduating a respectable 29th of 281 in 1875. He showed a significant aptitude
for language study, not surprising given his origins, earning 18 out of 20 on his final
German exam.\(^{31}\) He thus parlayed his origins on the margins of France, along the
German borderlands, into both intellectual aptitude and academic/military success.
Though cast as a provincial outsider in a world dominated by Parisian bourgeois elites,
the cadet emerged as an accomplished student of both languages and military art and
science.

Captain Count Albert de Mun, a crusader for “social regeneration” in France and
member of the *Cercles Catholiques d’ouvriers*, influenced the young Lyautey
significantly during his time at the military college.\(^{32}\) De Mun’s organization
reconnected Lyautey with both Catholicism and his aristocratic roots. While spending

\(^{30}\) Singer and Langdon, *Cultured Force*, 183.

\(^{31}\) Final evaluation at Ecole Speciale Militaire, 1875, Lyautey dossier, SHD.

\(^{32}\) While these early periods with Lyautey were prior to his publishing career, de Mun was later quite
productive and entered the Académie française in 1897. He authored, among other works, *La question
Besides his own testimony, the Lyautey papers contain an invitation to a meeting of de Mun’s *Cercle* from
March of 1876. 475AP/10, AN.
time on weekends with workers’ groups, Lyautey discerned the class divisions in French society. Everything appeared hierarchical, from the structure of the Catholic Church to the social inequalities inherent in the industrial-capitalist system. From his position in a traditionally aristocratic family, he saw lineage as important, a view that would greatly assist him in his more than twenty years in North Africa as he dealt with the local emphasis on Arab and Islamic descent. At the same time, genealogy enabled him to see the importance of time, of the improvement of successive generations as they advanced morally and politically. In his mind, the privileged upper classes had the responsibility to help those below them progress. This idea applied not only to France, his immediate target, but ultimately to the colonies, particularly Madagascar and North Africa, his longest-running colonial tours.

Following his graduation from Saint-Cyr in 1875, Lyautey entered staff college in France, an unhappy time for a man ready for reform and adventure. He lamented his plight, remarking that the soldier’s life did not agree with him and declaring his existence based on “protest against all that is the object of my profession.” Subject to sometimes mindless repetition and incomprehensible administrative guidelines, staff work in the late nineteenth century French army hardly inspired the young provincial, already hungering for a novel way to approach social reform. Lyautey remained optimistic, though, in seeking the possibility of true change. He mused, “Do not say that social reform is impossible, that societies develop circularly and that which was their organization will

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always be so.” The young reformer could not fathom a world of immutable social positions. Progress could occur only outside extant structures in his mind. In an effort to reinvigorate his perspective and perhaps to discover ground for reform following the drudgery of military education, Lyautey and fellow de Mun collaborator Prosper Keller traveled to Algeria as tourists in 1878. Their fires stoked by conversations with de Mun just prior to departure, Lyautey and Keller met with workers’ organizations in Tlemcen and sought such opportunities throughout their travels. In an effort to better understand the groups he purported to reform, Lyautey conducted ethnographic studies and began to learn Arabic, both written and spoken. He sought individuals among the working classes that could converse with him about social life, about the prospect for the remaking of Algerian society along Western lines on an Arab-Islamic foundation. Natives capable of understanding and explaining their own social organization were those best poised, in the young officer’s opinion, to act as the vanguard of social reform, the new intellectual elite.

In his explorations Lyautey delighted in the “swarming” crowds in Constantine who emitted “an odor that was sui generis.” He discovered a taste for Arab clothing on his visit to a Moorish bathhouse and exulted in the experience of “the city of Jugurtha” and its “teeming and colored” casbah alleyways. He felt the residue of what he

34 “Notes Quotidiennes,” 18 November 1876, in Lyautey, Rayonnement de Lyautey, 74.
35 Venier, Lyautey avant Lyautey, 32-33.
36 “Notes de voyage en Algérie,” in Lyautey, Un Lyautey inconnu, 42.
37 Notebook entitled “Algérie 78” in 475AP/230, AN.
believed was a great Arab-Berber civilization of the past via archaeology. The great and
cient cities of the Mediterranean littoral reflected for him a civilization that had once
rivaled and even at times defeated Europe in antiquity. Lyautey ultimately found that
modern urban life, in Khaldunian fashion, had become decayed and decrepit when
compared with its illustrious past. Algiers in particular demonstrated that the vitality had
gone out of North Africa. He concluded that the area had ceased forward movement,
falling well behind Europe. The large city possessed architecture “but little style,” left as
a place “civilization has gone past.”

He felt Algiers had lost most of its character,
blending with French fashion and style and in the process losing its Arab character. For
Lyautey, history served as an important tool in understanding natives and the difficulty
that would come in elevating their civilizational level. Through a return to an originary
state he expected Algerians to regain the momentum lost by the descent into urban decay
and Ottoman excess. Lyautey believed detailed study would reveal this lost history and
thus present an opportunity to dissect and rectify the social problems retarding North
African development.

Two years after his tourist visit, Lyautey returned to Algeria as a staff officer
from 1880-1882. Still focused on studying the local populations, he impressed his
superiors with his “love of study” and his willingness to study Arabic, all in an effort to
“perfect himself.”

In what he termed the “land of sunlight,” Lyautey conducted further
language study, finding even the ability to converse in flowering terms with a local

39 Ibid., 57.

40 Evaluation of 1 August 1881, Lyautey dossier, SHD; Lyautey was inducted into his first scholarly
society, the Société Dunoise d’archéologie, histoire, sciences et arts on 6 January 1879 while still a
lieutenant. Certificate of induction, 475AP/13, AN.
regarding the loan of a horse.\textsuperscript{41} This is not to suggest that Lyautey saw Algeria as simply a language learning laboratory. Rather, he viewed it as the ultimate area for ethnological examination. Exposed at an early stage to men such as the famed ethnographer, hermit and ultimately Catholic saint Charles de Foucauld,\textsuperscript{42} Lyautey enjoyed his “daily contact with a proud, feudal, artistic people,” in the process remaking himself as a colonial intellectual. Lyautey considered several different paths for this refashioning: the emulation of famed French explorers such as Lieutenant Colonel Paul Flatters, lost in the Sahara; conversion to “the intellectual life of the bureaux arabes”; or even a journey into Tunisia to “create something completely new.”\textsuperscript{43} The young officer ultimately chose the path of the bureaux, spending significant time at those offices in his last year in Algeria. This informal apprenticeship brought him into contact with native political and intellectual elites (and the writings of Ibn Khaldun, among others). Lyautey saw in these groups a reflection of the corresponding French classes of an earlier, less-developed era. Like Faidherbe, Lyautey could not escape Eurocentric thought. While he thought of native civilizations as developing along unique arcs, he could not imagine that development deviating much from the European example. Thus, he recognized the possibility of progress when he saw commonalities. The presence of groups similar to


\textsuperscript{43} Lyautey to Antonin de Margerie, 30 November 1882, in Lyautey, \textit{Choix de lettres}, 6-7.
those he had encountered in France made him hopeful of his ability to effect change; he could improve the state of native society by relocating its historical height and pushing it to reach Western developmental milestones.

The bureaux arabes, as discussed in the previous chapter, were founded by General Bugeaud in the initial occupation of Algeria in the 1840s. They operated under the control of a military officer who exercised direct administrative contact with the subject populations through both his own Arabic ability and a network of native employees including translators and soldiers. These officers interpreted and applied French colonial administrative and legal measures for the surrounding populace, often rural and illiterate. The bureaux began to disappear with the arrival of civilian control of Algeria after 1870, in part due to the engagement of some officers in power negotiations with local chiefs and religious notables. These sites were nonetheless perfect for a young officer hoping to better understand the social and political world of Algeria.

“The bureau arabe [in Orléansville] gave me carte blanche and I made use of it: I spent three hours a day there...I listen and I watch, ensconced in a corner of the captain’s office, not opening my mouth but opening my eyes and ears to absorb this process,” recalled Lyautey. From his vantage point he could interact with local Muslim leaders there for a myriad of administrative purposes, becoming “the friend of all the caïds [native Algerian political leaders] within ten leagues.” He made use of the interpreter, “increasing my Arab vocabulary each day,” also accomplished by spending many hours in the local café.44 First and foremost, Lyautey recognized these bureaux as a “marvelous

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44 Lyautey to father, 14 December 1880, in Lyautey, Un Lyautey inconnu, 74. The bureaux had been officially suppressed as of the accession of civilian control of Algeria in 1871, but change took time, as
instrument of conquest and administration,” founded in Algeria to better conduct the “incessant and ill-defined conquest of barbarism by civilization.” In this model, the French army would conquer and pacify all of Algeria only through a continuous and comprehensive study of the population. Such examination ideally permitted better rule that would slowly withdraw in the face of civilizational development. Lyautey thus fully appreciated the unequal power relations resident in the concept of the *bureaux*. He adopted a paternalist attitude similar to that of Faidherbe, studying the natives so as to better develop a colonial policy that could improve their lot, as native Algerians, in his view, had difficulty in seeing the proper way forward. Lyautey would not return to Algeria until 1903, but the memories of the local *bureaux* and the intricacies of North African life remained with him throughout his career, acting as both example and foil.

The young staff officer carried his love of learning back to France in 1882, where he worked as an aide-de-camp and eventually commanded a cavalry squadron outside Paris. In the early 1880s the Minister of War recognized him twice for excellent work, each time gaining him a prize and mention in the military journal, the mark of a budding military intellectual. For his study of Italian cavalry, undertaken while on leave, many of these officers remained in place in the 1880s. Lyautey maintained correspondence with several of these local Arab notables until as late as 1888, exchanging holiday wishes and brief postcards. See 475AP/261, AN, and Lyautey to Joseph de la Bouillerie, 12 March 1883 in Hubert Lyautey, *Lettres de jeunesse: Italie-1883, Danube-Grèce-Italie-1893*, (Paris, 1931), 17.

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46 On the centrality of Algeria for Lyautey, see “*Ouverture de la première conférence nord-africaine,*” Algiers, 6 February 1923, where he describes the colony as a place to which he had “so many links, so many work personal friendships,” in Lyautey, *Paroles d’action*, 383. Lyautey’s departure from Algeria came at the behest of his family; he presaged that end in a letter to his grandmother, 4 December 1882, when he lamented his parents’ lack of appreciation for a potential colonial career. Lyautey, *Un Lyautey inconnu*, 147.
Minister lauded him for his “careful method” and his willingness to use free time for “personal instruction.” Lyautey had thus gained the attention of his superiors by virtue of his intellectual achievement; he realized that his emphasis on learning had not been misplaced, and could indeed serve as the pathway to further advancement and opportunities to pursue his goal of social reform. By the time of his cavalry command in 1890, Lyautey had gained entry to the Saint-Germain-en-Laye (a Parisian suburb) chapter of a social reform group founded on the teachings of Frédéric Le Play (d. 1882), who advocated social reform based on careful positivist study. Lyautey had developed a reputation as one of the leading intellectuals of the French army by this time, even visiting numerous salons in Paris.

Through contact with this Le Playist group Lyautey gained contacts that enabled him to pursue even greater efforts for metropolitan social reform. Although he often complained of the stagnant life in the Paris suburbs, in reality he found great intellectual comrades while serving in the area. In particular, he met Viscount Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, author, intellectual and member of the Académie française since 1888. Famed for his writings on the Orient and a prominent member of the powerful pro-colonial

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47 Chief of Staff, Ministry of War to Lyautey, 17 February 1881, Lyautey dossier, SHD; Chief of Staff, Ministry of War to Lyautey, 24 December 1883, 475AP/13, AN.

48 See La Réforme sociale 1, 1 (1881), I-III for a discussion of the group’s goals and founding ideas. On Le Play, see Frédéric Le Play, Frédéric Le Play on family, work, and social change, ed. and trans. Catherine Bodard Silver, (Chicago, 1982); and Maguelone Nouvel, Frédéric Le Play: une reforme sociale sous le second empire, (Paris, 2009).

49 La Réforme sociale, Bulletin de la sociéité d’économie sociale et des unions de la paix sociale (January 1892), 32 lists Lyautey as group member for “Seine-et-Oise, sub-section Saint-Germain-en-Laye,” while a captain in the 4th Chasseurs regiment. Venier, Lyautey avant Lyautey, 44, discusses Lyautey’s presence at numerous Parisian salons run by influential women in the 1890s. See also Lyautey to Henry Bordeaux, 16 July 1924, where he describes his early development “nourished by Le Play,” in Lyautey, Les plus belles lettres, 134.
comité de l’Afrique française, de Vogüé encouraged Lyautey to make use of his intellectual connections outside of France, to encourage reform from without. He provided introductions for Lyautey at many of the major journals of the day, using his influence to let the soldier write anonymously so as not to sacrifice his career through direct critique of the conservative opinions of some senior officers. Lyautey, while disenchanted with the boredom of stagnant military garrison life, did see the army as a vehicle for social change; dismissal or censure for criticism of superiors would not help him alter social structures in France. In his view, military officers such as he and de Mun represented the vanguard for a social regeneration that would sweep the French empire and aid in recapturing the same lost glory that Lyautey hoped to find in the colonial past.

Deeply impressed by his time in Algeria, Lyautey found a like-minded individual in de Vogüé, a former resident of Constantinople. The young officer drew on the “echo” of his intellectual mentor’s writings for inspiration. De Vogüé’s example compelled Lyautey to seek change first in France. To that end he anonymously published “Du rôle social de l’officier,” in the Revue des Deux Mondes in 1891. This journal, the most influential site for the discussion of matters outside of France for an educated metropolitan audience, delivered Lyautey’s ideas to groups outside the military. Through

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52 Lyautey describes de Vogüé as instrumental to the anonymous publication via his intervention with the editor, M. Brunetière. See Hubert Lyautey, “E.M. de Vogüé,” in Le livre du centenaire: Cent ans de vie française à la Revue des Deux Mondes, (Paris, 1929), 430.
this mouthpiece he spoke to his desired audience, the intellectual class (in his conception led by like-minded military officers) who would take up the task of moral regeneration in France. In this work, Lyautey presented young army officers as the leading edge of change on the “large and noble path of social progress.” These officers had to be “inspired by the personal love of the humble classes...convinced of [their] role as educator[s].”\textsuperscript{53} In contact with populations and ideas outside of France, the army offered a convenient vessel to carry the fires of social regeneration to France from abroad. Thus, even before his time as a colonial commander, Lyautey conceived of the army as a force for change, for education of those lower in the social hierarchy.

Lyautey’s vision of change required officers to adapt to circumstances while also perceiving change as valuable and incremental. Too many officers were “disposed to treat as decadence that which is evolution, to compare things that are not comparable...in order to judge a present of unknown origins from the point of view of a past forever lost.”\textsuperscript{54} Change, in this model, did not occur in a linear fashion. Lyautey felt that reformers needed to recognize societal mutation as subject to a Khalednian cycle of decay and development. Within four years of the publication of Lyautey’s call for soldiers as instruments of reform, he found an opportunity to make such change possible in grand fashion. He accepted assignment to Indochina in 1894. From this new place and perspective, on the margins of the French world, he could show the “effectiveness of

\textsuperscript{53} Hubert Lyautey [listed as anonymous in journal], “Du rôle social de l’officier,” \textit{Revue des Deux Mondes} 61, 3 (15 March 1891), 444, 446.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 454. Italics in original.
moral force” in reforming wayward, backward social groups abroad. From this example he hoped to show the possibilities for France itself.

**Reforming colonial populations in Indochina and Madagascar**

In letters from Indochina Lyautey made clear that the intellectual currents in France remained important to him. “Do not forget me,” he wrote to de Vogüé in 1895, “as I am very far away and also far from the movement of ideas among which I so passionately lived these last years; I do not want to lose all contact.” While still fascinated by the social reform pursued by his metropolitan intellectual partners, Lyautey dedicated himself to a new endeavor, one that could sound the death knell on his military career: an assignment in the colonies. Despite the best efforts of officers such as Faidherbe and Gallieni, colonial service remained the least sought-after assignment in the French military. Distance from the metropole, in the view of some military officers, meant distance from the political sponsorship that could bring elevations of both rank and social status. The action, it seemed, was in Europe in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. The Third Republic, ostensibly committed to support of the growing colonial empire, focused its military attention on the eastern border and the possibility of another conflict with the powerful German state. For the moment, French strategic thought focused on the defensive. Colonial service, while exotic, lacked in the direct prestige of the preparation for renewed continental warfare, as it focused on small-unit,

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offensive measures at the expense of the large-scale defense expected by many planners.\textsuperscript{57}

Other than his brief stint in Algeria in the early 1880s, Lyautey had avoided colonial service. While some of his early biographies have held that his move to Indochina came as some form of punishment, or even as an accident, the preponderance of the available evidence in correspondence and official records shows the move as firmly in Lyautey’s control. General Edmond Bichot, Lyautey’s cousin and regimental commander in Indochina, proposed adding the young officer to his headquarters staff as early as 1889.\textsuperscript{58} However, it took the army chief of staff, General Raoul de Boisdeffre, to make the move official in 1894. Lyautey may have exploited his connections with Boisdeffre in gaining the transfer, as he had corresponded with the more senior officer since their initial meeting in Algeria in 1878, where Boisdeffre served as the chief of staff to the commanding general. At that early moment Lyautey found Boisdeffre “altogether friendly...a funny guy.”\textsuperscript{59} A friendship between these two men, the powerful chief of staff and the prominent but junior cavalry officer, makes it less likely that the transfer occurred as a punitive measure.

\textsuperscript{57} For more detailed exposition of French defense policy and the looming specter of German defeat and future combat, see Allan Mitchell, \textit{Victors and Vanquished: The German Influence on Army and Church in France after 1870}, (Chapel Hill, 1984), especially chapter 5 where he discusses the almost oxymoronic state of military education (offensive emphasis) and strategic thinking (entirely defensive) until 1900; and Robert A. Doughty, \textit{Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War}, (Cambridge, MA, 2005), chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{58} Le Révérend, \textit{Lyautey}, 137.

\textsuperscript{59} “Notes de voyage en Algérie,” in Lyautey, \textit{Un Lyautey inconnu}, 58. See also Venier, \textit{Lyautey avant Lyautey}, 54.
Historian Pascal Venier lists a number of reasons that contributed to Lyautey’s
decision to depart for the colonies, many of which Lyautey himself spelled out in a letter
to a friend in 1901. Lyautey’s rationale included the 1894 failure of the *Union pour
l’action morale* that he had co-founded with fellow intellectual and social reformer Paul
Desjardins; a growing debt problem; political disagreements with the former Minister of
War, Charles de Freycinet; and interestingly, his tortured relationship history with a
Parisian woman, Louise Baignères.60 The intellectual distinctiveness of foreign societies,
including their ability to act as the source of de Vogüé’s mandate for “reform from
without, must also have been an enormous draw for the young scholar regardless of
metropolitan intrigues. He ultimately landed in Indochina, immediately finding life and
work that suited his intellectual and moral needs.

Indochina recalled Algeria for Lyautey. France’s largest Asian colony was very
much like the Algerian Kabylia, in Lyautey’s opinion, particularly in terms of the
topographical features and the population, composed primarily of a “good aboriginal
race, [the] Thô.”61 Indochina thus offered an important example of a colony that
appeared backward. However, it contained, as did all other colonies in Lyautey’s mind,
distinctive intellectual classes capable of directing progress following the installation of

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60 Venier, *Lyautey avant Lyautey*, 55-63. Details remain sketchy, but Freycinet may have accused Lyautey
of espionage. Venier also acknowledges several “deep” long-term reasons for reassignment, including
Lyautey’s desire to leave the metropolitan service and a long-standing attraction to the colonies. On his
relationship history, see Lyautey to Louise Baignères, 23 April 1893; 1 January 1894; 9 September 1897;
and 17 September 1909 in Hubert Lyautey, *Un Lyautey inconnu*, 184, 186, 206-207, 241-242. See also
Certificate of Marriage, Préfecture de la Seine, 1 October 1934 (produced for pension request) in Lyautey
dossier, SHD, from his 1909 marriage to Ines Bourgoing. In his return to North Africa, beginning in 1903,
Lyautey was romantically linked to Isabelle Eberhardt, the famous Russian emigrée and Islamic convert
married to a spahi sergeant in the desert and drowned in a flood in October 1904. See Singer and Langdon,
*Cultured Force*, 201; and Lyautey to Victor Barrucand, 2 April 1905 in Hubert Lyautey, *Vers le Maroc:

systematic colonial ethnological study and influence. Lyautey saw real possibilities both in Asia and Africa for what the governor-general of Indochina termed the “protectorate,” shorthand for political association with an eye towards progressive political independence.\textsuperscript{62} The protectorate method, Lyautey reasoned, had succeeded in Tunisia while Algeria remained in a “vegetative” state. “A new colony must have a proconsul who can put down the metropole,” he realized, “and that the parliamentary regime will not take well.”\textsuperscript{63} Lyautey’s vision thus placed colonial administration outside the hands of meddling Parisian politicians. A failure to grant some autonomy to French colonial government risked the reinstallation of the Algerian bind, where the interference of the metropole had precluded sufficient ethnological study of the population and led to the establishment of a directly governed colony. Without ethnology, Lyautey feared that French officials would not discover and understand the vast store of native knowledge and capability resident under the surface, waiting only for the proper intellectual, moral, and administrative cultivation and dialogue. With the acquisition of this new knowledge, Lyautey thought, French colonial administrators could develop a developmental plan tailored to the sophistication of the native intellectual elites to whom they hoped to hand control of the colony at some undetermined date in the future. French Africanists, from Lyautey onward, rarely discussed a timetable for handover to the natives, always placing


\textsuperscript{63} Lyautey to sister, 16 November 1894, in Lyautey, \textit{Choix de lettres}, 41.
that date sometime in the distant future, a possibility only after a comprehensive study and education of the population.

Discovering these native capabilities required direct contact with the population, a need Lyautey filled while serving as the chief of staff for a number of different field commanders in Indochina. He spent significant time with locals in 1894-5, collecting oral histories of Thai and Viet dynasties of the past and developing a deeper grasp of the complicated local religious fabric. Unlike his preconceived notions, he found “pantheist proto-philosophies alongside almost complete ignorance of Buddhism, [a religion that] for them is nothing more than a social convenience.”64 Lyautey thus began to question the role of religion as a cornerstone of societal construction. He found that the native Indochinese political elites with whom he interacted treated religion as an instrument of power, employing it only to gain political or social prominence and not from any deep spiritual need or ingrained way of life. He would refine this view later in his career as he confronted Islam, which he saw as woven much more tightly into the daily realities of social life, particularly for intellectual classes who drew their legitimacy from links into chains of Islamic learning. In the Indochinese moment, however, Lyautey saw native elites as fully capable of grasping and manipulating social reality, shaping both religion and interpersonal interaction to their needs. They were not governed by structure; rather, they actively influenced those forms.

In this time, Lyautey made perhaps his most important colonial connection.

While working as the chief of staff for Joseph Simon Gallieni (1849-1916) on campaign

64 Lyautey to Commandant de Margerie, 12 March 1893, in Lyautey, Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar, 163-164.
in the summer of 1895, a period in which Lyautey learned many of the fundamentals passed on from Faidherbe in West Africa.65 Famous in France after his escape from captivity in West Africa in 1881, Gallieni spent much of his early career following in the footsteps of Faidherbe.66 The rising colonial officer gained command of all French forces in the West African Soudan in 1886, in part through the intervention on his behalf by Faidherbe, still influential despite his failing health.67 Contemporaries found the officer quite similar to his famed mentor: “His traits brought to mind those of General Faidherbe, or at least those captured in engravings and portraits of Faidherbe, who himself never fit the classical type of general of his time.”68 Like his illustrious predecessor he quickly discovered the utility of ethnographic study, engaging in detailed examinations of local groups near Dakar as early as 1877. Gallieni’s Saint-Cyr classmate Louis-Parfait Monteil lauded his ability, even when leaving on an 1878 campaign, to use “his free time and all the hours of rest to increase his understanding of all things.”69 He ascribed his need to collect documents from his campaigns and commands to the

65 Evaluation of 1896 signed by Boisdeffre (although apparently written by General Duchemin), Lyautey dossier, SHD. Lyautey worked as chief of staff for Boisdeffre, the former army chief of staff and now governor-general of Indochina, from June 1896.

66 Gallieni had led an expedition to negotiate with and/or pacify the resistance that remained from el-Hajj Umar Tal’s jihadist movement of the 1850s. He and his team were held captive for almost a year by Shaykh Ahmadu, Sultan of Segou, Umar’s son and successor. Gallieni describes the event in Voyage au Soudan français (Haut-Niger et pays de Ségou), 1879-1881, (Paris, 1885).


69 Michel, Gallieni, 71, 74-5 (quotation on 75).
importance of subsequent review, discussion, and debate. He learned this lesson from Faidherbe, who had taken such an approach “when he created our Senegalese colony.”

Experience in the French Soudan convinced Gallieni of the importance of continual learning. He employed a “network of secret agents” to understand and control public opinion among groups along the Niger bend, and put special trust in his interpreters and clerks to gather valuable information on local alliances and ethnic divisions while on campaign. In the final 1886 campaign against a West African Islamic caliphate, Gallieni gave special credit to his senior clerk and interpreters for their care of valuable documents, crediting them for the “favorable results of my mission.” The commander similarly instructed his officers on campaign to conduct detailed ethnographic studies of surrounding groups in hopes of understanding their social, cultural, and linguistic links, connections and disputes he could then manipulate to France’s advantage. Optimum local study and rule occurred in tandem with, rather in spite of, local elites and those knowledgeable of African social forms. Only through their assistance could the French hope to both understand and advance native interests in Gallieni’s mind.


71 Letter to Governor of Senegal, 17 April 1887 and Rapport, 10 May 1887 cited in Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest of the Western Sudan*, 150.


Climbing rapidly through the ranks, Gallieni brought these ideas and methods with him to Indochina, striving to duplicate the “penetration” of civilization he had helped to achieve in Africa by permitting the “slow and progressive action of principles.” Much like Lyautey and owing much to Faidherbe, Gallieni felt the French would best achieve progress through moral and intellectual contact, not political domination or violent conquest. Lyautey admired this direct intellectual approach to development from the beginning of their almost ten years as colleagues. He took Gallieni’s dictate to heart that “it is on the ground, in handling men and things, that you learn your job.” Men with experience in far-away places were best suited not only to colonial understanding and rule, but also to assist in the moral regeneration of France. Lyautey saw the need for colonial officers to get together and “establish a regenerative circuit between outer and inner France that will serve as a wakeup call...of vast needs and large judgments of the world and on the nations that inhabit it.” Lyautey had moved past the racial conclusions advanced by Faidherbe. In this refined model, France would benefit not from racial mixing but instead from the infusion of new social techniques pioneered in the colonies. At the same time, this contact would force French intellectuals to reexamine the basic inequities and inefficiencies in France itself. The colonies formed an important part of Greater France in this vision; without them, the metropole had little chance of successful change. Colonial officials could and should serve as the leaders of

74 See the account of J. Vallière, “Notice géographique sur le Soudan français,” Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Paris 8, 4 (1887), 486-521 (quote on 520).

75 Lyautey to brother, 7 February 1895, in Lyautey, Choix de lettres, 61.

76 Lyautey to sister, 20 February 1897, in Lyautey, Choix de lettres, 144.
this change by employing ideas and knowledge gained in the colonies themselves. With this new realization of the political and social possibilities of colonial experience, Lyautey followed his mentor and exemplar, now-General Gallieni, to Madagascar in 1897.\textsuperscript{77}

As these colonial thinkers moved to another area that appeared to them ripe for conquest and development, French society suffered through the drama of the Dreyfus Affair. This conflict, which sprang from largely fabricated accusations of espionage against a French army captain, Alfred Dreyfus, saw people divided into ideological camps that hardened along views on religious toleration, military reform, civil rights and the role of intellectuals. During the height of this struggle in 1899-1900, as Dreyfus suffered through repeated trials and incarcerations, Lyautey and Gallieni returned to Paris to drum up financial and political support for the final conquest of Madagascar. As military officers, they did their best to remain strictly neutral in the political machinations in the capital, as Gallieni indicated: “I climb into the car of my commander, the Minister of Colonies, and I ask him for his orders.” Lyautey added, “I know only one commander, General Gallieni, under whose orders I serve,” expressly removing himself from the Dreyfusard battles except to proclaim himself opposed to basic anti-Semitism.\textsuperscript{78} Staying above the fray, the colonial officers spent much of their time visiting academic

\textsuperscript{77} Lyautey to sister, 17 November 1900, in Lyautey, \textit{Lettres du sud de Madagascar}, 43.

\textsuperscript{78} Pierre Lyautey, \textit{Gallieni}, 178-179. Lyautey expressed this reluctance in a letter to “A Parisian friend,” 2 February 1899, in Lyautey, \textit{Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar}, 625. Lyautey’s friend and mentor, Albert de Mun, also an ardent Catholic, emerged as a leading anti-Dreyfusard during this event, likely leading Lyautey to keep some public distance between them. See Ruth Harris, \textit{Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century}, (New York, 2010), for more discussion of de Mun’s place in these events.
societies, universities, pro-colonial lobby groups, and even city chambers of commerce. The voyage to France put them in contact with other reform-minded thinkers, including those with ties to the nascent pro-colonial movement in the legislature. Thinking pragmatically, Gallieni and Lyautey sought the financial support that came with political sponsorship.

While their mission was first one of fundraising, they also strove to raise the profile of French colonial efforts and their potential to enhance the civilizational level their subjects. These powerful colonial thinkers stressed the importance of local understanding, of research on the ground to the pro-colonial lobby in Paris. Gallieni was dismissive of theory, finding it best located in metropolitan salons while true reformers conducted research in the colonies. He concluded that “in colonial matters, one must always practice and understand things above theories, which should find a place in congresses or geographical societies, but that become inapplicable as soon as one tries to use them on the ground in our overseas possessions.” This approach required that colonial officials gather information on subject populations at the source and in dialogue with natives themselves. Raw ethnological information when adapted to colonial policy could then inform more abstract musings in the metropole while also finding application in efforts to reform the populace on the continent.

79 They visited the Société de géographie commerciale de Paris and of Marseille; the Sorbonne; the Comité de Madagascar; the Union colonial française, the chambers of commerce of Marseille, Lyon, and Rouen; and the Ecole de la paix sociale, a Le Play group in Paris. The two officers gained induction into a number of geographic societies at the same time. See Venier, Lyautey avant Lyautey, 128; Hoisington., Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco, 17 fn 83; and 475AP/13, AN.

80 Gallieni to M. Depincé, Chief of Africa section at Union française, 12 January 1901, in Gallieni, Lettres de Madagascar, 67.
In pushing this agenda Gallieni and Lyautey visited (perhaps at the instigation of the junior partner and through his old contacts), a group of Le Play disciples, emphasizing to the assemblage the important role of colonial soldiers in generating knowledge about foreign peoples, particularly in learning local customs and languages. Lyautey described himself and similar “agents of civilization in close contact with the population” as in the best position to enhance the moral and political state of foreign societies. The model of colonialism promulgated by Lyautey and Gallieni, involving detailed study of subject groups so as to develop close political cooperation, coincided with the rise of metropolitan associationist theories and a pro-colonial lobby. Gallieni and Lyautey influenced policymakers, intellectuals and political interest groups in the metropole through their compelling discussion of the benefits of study by soldier-scholars. In their eyes, native study by skilled soldier-scholars not only enhanced colonial political rule, it added to the growing literature on non-European social structures.

Gallieni and Lyautey applied this socio-political approach in Madagascar. The senior officer labeled this technique the “progressive method” or “oil spot,” in which his formations moved against forces of resistance only with the help of locals in translation.

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81 Hubert Lyautey and Joseph Gallieni, “La France à Madagascar,” *La Réforme sociale* 4ème série, 9 (16 January 1900), 113-139 (quote on 131). The meeting included a number of intellectual luminaries such as colonial theorist Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu; fellow members of the Institut de France Georges Picot and Eugène Rostard; Senator Albert Le Play; and a number of government officials. Leroy-Beaulieu, in his introduction remarks, described the group’s mission as handed down by Le Play: “To show an interest in all peoples, all races, even to peoples that we call primitive, that some treat as barbarians. We believe that the study of human races is profitable for social science,” 114.

82 Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 5, 7-8; Ageron, *France coloniale*, 137. By this time the Chamber of Deputies in Paris included a powerful pro-colonial group headed by the deputy from Oran (Algeria), Eugène Etienne, who rejected the idea of assimilation and instead pushed for association. See below for more details, but Etienne remained a confidant and correspondent of Lyautey throughout the early twentieth century, particularly during Lyautey’s time in the Algerian-Moroccan borderlands.
guide services, and the collection of ethnographic information. The detailed understanding of the local area offered by the natives ideally permitted Gallieni to apply military force only as needed, slowly spreading across the countryside like a creeping oil stain on a hard surface. After this initial conquest and close study, Gallieni expected to apply the *politique des races* that called for the administration of native elements by others of the same social group to the greatest extent possible.

Conquest and pacification thus reintroduced an important aspect of Faidherbe’s method: dialogue with the natives. Gallieni, however, lacked detailed knowledge of the area of conquest. He came armed with two primary weapons: overwhelming military force and a belief in social evolution. In his mind, natives would spring to the French colors once they realized that France stood at the height of development, offering a window into their future. In contrast to Lyautey, he did not believe in the importance of native societies as aids to moral renewal in France or anywhere else; non-Europeans existed for him at a more primitive state and would advance only through stages previously experienced by France. This simple unilinear developmental model depicted ethnicities as easy to observe and differentiate, a problematic expectation at best that Lyautey would reject later in his career in Algeria and Morocco. While Gallieni stressed

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84 “Conclusions d’une tournée autour de l’île: la politique des races,” JOM, 25 February 1902, in Gallieni, *Gallieni Pacificateur*, 325. Gallieni referred to these social groups at times as “races,” at others as “ethnicities.”

the importance of local information gathering, he saw the information, in large part, as instrumental. Lyautey would later refine that doctrine, respecting native societies (insofar as he could do so in a model of colonial domination) for their unique contributions to the world. The realization of distinct paths of development for each civilization set Lyautey apart from Gallieni and placed him as more of a direct heir to Faidherbe. Vital to all these players, though, was the collection of ethnographic information so useful both in conquest and the subsequent colonial rule.

Both Gallieni and Lyautey realized that the information gathering so important to these processes must not occur in an office. In Gallieni’s eyes colonial commanders would achieve “physical and intellectual development of the conquered race [and] social improvement” not through static study and interviews, but via yearly tours of the colony, discussing and assessing the results of development efforts with all concerned.\(^8^6\) He made some efforts to improve the quality of this discussion by generating a new class of Malagasy (native of Madagascar) intellectuals. He founded the Académie malgache, consisting of both French and Malagasy scientists, in 1902 to conduct historical, ethnological, linguistic, and sociological studies of local populations. He charged the new organization to understand “the mentality of the populations and the evolution of their social state.”\(^8^7\) Gallieni thus remained locked in his belief in social evolution; change would occur with continued exposure to the French. However, he conceded the possibility of intelligent natives interested in improving and describing their social

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\(^8^7\) The academy included 18 titular members with 2 of them natives. The group also numbered 30 associates. Gallieni, *Neuf ans*, 217; and Gallieni, *Gallieni pacificateur*, 343 fn 2.
condition. Intellectual cooperation made sense in his mind both for the stability of colonion rule and the development of the colony.

After 1900, when Gallieni assigned him the role of pacification of the southern half of the island, Lyautey emerged as an even greater partner in this project of social reform. He developed a cadre of Malagasy natives that could not only understand their own society and help it to progress, but also comprehend the French way of life. To this end he established the école François de Mahy in Fianarantsoa as a “center from which will emerge...agents educated to love France with knowledge of our language and with an understanding of the progress we can help their race achieve.”88 Lyautey here employed not the language of evolution favored by his mentor, but instead discussed the future in terms of progress, giving at least tacit acknowledgement to the importance of extant native structures. Like Faidherbe, Lyautey expected this new corps of French-educated natives to assist in understanding Malagasy life while acting as the proponents for a return to great civilization. French officers in this view could not assimilate Malagasy groups fully into the French way of life, as they were at drastically different levels of development; thus, Lyautey instructed his commanders to “deliver maximum civilization” to subject populations in hopes of moving them along the developmental continuum. His mandate stood as a true challenge, as many of the populations in the far south of the island remained, in his own words, in the “iron age, at a social state equivalent to that in Europe in the prehistoric era.” People so unsophisticated in economic, social, and moral terms would not develop overnight into Frenchmen; instead,

88 Speech at the inauguration of the French state school at Fianarantsoa, October 1901, in Hubert Lyautey, Paroles d’action, 23.
they had to move along a parallel developmental path, ultimately reaching an equivalent, though not identical, stage through the deliberate efforts of French soldiers and the small but growing group of French civilian settlers.\textsuperscript{89} Like most French colonial thinkers, Lyautey could not escape the trap of Eurocentrism as he struggled to define a relativist standpoint. While he advocated for parallel streams of development, his expressions of native progress did not move much beyond the terms of the Western experience and historical course.

While he saw folly in application of a uniform method of development with respect to foreign peoples, Lyautey had difficulty visualizing Madagascar in other than European terms. For example, he described the civilizational-geographic arrangement of people in southern Madagascar relative to an epoch of human (European) social development. The Antanadroy in the extreme south, mentioned above as “prehistoric,” possessed only “the most rudimentary social organization” and “no indication of civilization.” Their northern neighbors the Baras remained “ten centuries” in the past, still living in a “feudal” social structure. To the north lay the Betsiléos, a “rural” group that began to approach some Western societies. Finally, nearest the capital, Fianarantsoa, lived the Hova, who by lifestyle and intellect were the nearest by far to “modern civilization.”\textsuperscript{90}

In analyzing the levels of Malagasy civilization, Lyautey reached for the only historical reference available to him—that of Western Europe. Consequently, he


compared each group he encountered to notional developmental stages of what he viewed as the world’s greatest civilization in almost geological terms. While not expecting each to develop in the same way, their relative temporal position indicated to him the amount of work still to be done to acquire fully “modern” social, political and economic structures. History served him as an analytical anchor, providing both start and end points for development. Ideally, Malagasy natives would eventually achieve the intellectual and industrial modernity then in evidence in Europe, reaching that point along a unique trajectory that began from a recovered moment of political and social sophistication. Seeing the varied levels of technological and cultural development present just in southern Madagascar, Lyautey realized the impossibility of assimilation into French culture and society.

The conquest of Madagascar now complete, Lyautey moved on to a new assignment, recommended by Gallieni for promotion to brigadier general and an assignment on the volatile borderlands of Algeria and Morocco. Through the remainder of his career, Lyautey remained mindful of Gallieni’s advice to “give to these people, in effect, a political organization appropriate to their political and social state.” Madagascar had proven to him that variations in human civilization were nearly infinite even on a relatively small and homogenized island. Reassignment to Algeria in 1903 offered him an opportunity to apply these lessons on his own, infused with his own brand of social reform and regeneration.

91 Gallieni to Lyautey, 2 May 1902, 475AP/13, AN.
Applying colonial lessons: command in Algeria and Morocco

Lyautey assumed command of the French army subdivision at Aïn Sefra, in Algeria along the border with Morocco, during a turbulent period for both European states and their colonies. Conflict in the Balkans threatened to spill over into European war as Russia sided with Serbia in disputes with Austria-Hungary and other regional states. Germany, Britain, and France engaged in a naval arms race as each developed newer and better vessels geared for combat. This growing rivalry passed overseas as well, as Germany remained jealous of the profitable colonies controlled by France and Great Britain in Africa. While the Germans exercised some control over colonies in southwest and eastern Africa, they could not match Algeria, Egypt, Senegal, or Kenya. Morocco, the most appealing African state not yet under European control, offered a tantalizing option. It stood across the Mediterranean from Gibraltar and could aid in future German efforts to dominate or at least choke Mediterranean trade routes from the Atlantic. Conquest and control of the large and prosperous urban population of Morocco offered a counterpoint to the British hold in Egypt and the prospect of greater international prestige while threatening France’s North and West African empire.

By 1904 (only a year after Lyautey’s arrival in Algeria), the British had granted the French exclusive access to Morocco as a “zone of influence.” Disputed by the Germans, the agreement led to a series of conflicts between the European powers. International attention remained riveted on the area for the next five years as Germany, France, and Britain nearly engaged in military combat in 1906 and 1911, each time
averting outright warfare as the French maintained some political control in exchange for territorial concessions to the Germans elsewhere.\textsuperscript{92}

In this charged atmosphere Lyautey quickly drew the ire of metropolitan colonial politicians. Worried over the potential international repercussions of any French missteps on the border, political leaders demanded restraint from military forces in the area. Lyautey’s first concern, however, was not for international political intrigue; he had little desire to serve as a “French tri-color pennant” that did little more than sway with the winds of distant metropolitan policy decisions, a chip in the grand bargains going on across the continent.\textsuperscript{93} In concluding an early report on this “border region,” Lyautey described that “due to our progressive contact, to our political actions and our military operations, the rebellious elements were reduced to a minimum in this region that forms the \textit{glacis} of our Algerian territories.”\textsuperscript{94} The Moroccan border stood out as a place for colonial change, the forward edge of Lyautey’s plan to reform and revitalize France and its colonies. From that culturally fortified position he sought to accelerate the civilizational development of the natives. He wanted to protect the French Algerian territory by halting what he saw as socially and economically destructive raids across the

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\textsuperscript{93} Lyautey to Eugène Etienne (Senator from Oran), 27 October 1904, in Lyautey, \textit{Vers le Maroc}, 124-125. On strategy formulation in Morocco during the First World War, see William T. Dean III, “Strategic Dilemmas of Colonization: France and Morocco during the Great War,” \textit{The Historian} 73, 4 (December 2011), 730-746.

\textsuperscript{94} “Rapport d’ensemble sur l’organisation de la zône limitrophe Algéro-Marocaine,” n.d., 475AP/66, AN. A \textit{glacis} is a slope in front of a traditional European fortress that leaves invaders exposed to fire.
border by Moroccan tribes. As France gained its “zone of influence” in Morocco in 1904, Lyautey launched a raid across the border into that state to strike rebellious tribes, hoping to deter future attacks. The action, which Lyautey thought had been conducted with restraint, drew criticism from metropolitan officials.

Forced to defend himself against Parisian political critics, particularly the socialist Jean Jaurès, Lyautey cited the “pacific and civilizing character” of the force, in his mind “certainly the first military column to act thusly.” His policy, he explained, was “deference in principle” to the requirements of the Moroccan administrative organ, the Makhzen. The newly-minted brigadier general felt colonialism would not work without the right of commanders to operate on their own, to make decisions with the local knowledge that could only come from residence and study in the area in question. In his mind, the actions were not rash, but the product of a dialogue with the Moroccan government and the peaceful influence of the French along the border.

Lyautey ultimately concluded he could rely on only one ally in his struggle to gain the right to make policy locally: the Governor General of Algeria, Charles Auguste Jonnart. “He understood that one should not treat the natives as the vanquished, as an inferior race, but to elevate them to us, associate them with the work we were doing there,” Lyautey later recalled. Lyautey appreciated that Jonnart, who had been in France at the time of the 1904 incursion, stood up for him at the colonial ministry by claiming Lyautey operated under his orders and with his full confidence. In the eyes of the subordinate officer, this made the governor-general one of the greatest French

95 Ibid.

96 Address at Ecole des sciences politiques, 31 December 1912, 475AP/226, AN.
colonial officials and a citizen of the world.\textsuperscript{97} Jonnart’s support enabled Lyautey to work directly with the natives in better understanding the social dynamics of the border area, so vital in his opinion to the formulation of policy that would incorporate the nomads of that region into the French colonial structure. Lyautey had grown tired of contradictory metropolitan policy choices. In his view, violence at times became necessary, but only as a last resort. His primary objective remained working closely with the natives, in particular intellectuals, in rebuilding Algeria and Morocco in the shape of their past glory.

Shielded by Jonnart, for the most part, from further direct interference from Paris, Lyautey set his sights on a proper study of the Algerian border regions, an area that previously held little scholarly interest for the French. He lobbied for a new \textit{bureau arabe} in Aïn Sefra served by two officers, an interpreter and numerous local soldiers to serve as a “political and administrative service” for French soldiers and natives alike.\textsuperscript{98} Lyautey argued that any effort to bring peace, prosperity, and progress to the region must include a more complete understanding of local affairs, particularly the movements and motivations of what French officials referred to as “tribes.” He and his team of geographers and ethnographers thus developed maps showing French descriptions of tribal and racial or ethnic divisions in the area. The information present in these maps did not emerge from academic study in Algiers; rather, he and his staff gathered it through direct contact with native elites themselves.

\textsuperscript{97} Hubert Lyautey, excerpt from interview regarding candidature of Charles Auguste Jonnart to Académie française, 475AP/226, AN. Jonnart gained election to the académie in 1923, induction in 1925, and died in 1927.

\textsuperscript{98} Hubert Lyautey, “Bureau arabe subdivision d’Aïn Sefra,” 475AP/58, AN.
Following the methods prescribed by Gallieni and Faidherbe, Lyautey set out on an expedition to meet with tribal leaders in 1905, accompanied by a young bureau arabe officer from Géryville. These offices, although legally eliminated in 1871 with the arrival of civilian administration in Algeria, had somehow managed to survive in some locales as sources of local expertise for French military leaders. Local bureaux officers could assist Lyautey, he believed, in understanding the class structure of Arab tribes who he coded with racist language as the “most feudal” or “most warlike.” He found most disturbing the continued practice among some border tribes of black slavery, an institution that he characterized as rendering the servants “subject to caste like the janissaries of the sultan.”

Lyautey saw border tribes in terms similar to those he used in early descriptions of decaying Europe. In particular, Lyautey described the powerful Ouled Sidi Cheikh as a feudal entity, thus acting as an impediment to progress. Much as Lyautey felt that the hardened socio-economic divisions in France had killed the vitality of European social and economic life, so too did these feudal lords hinder forward movement in Algeria and Morocco. Even their dress seemed to him straight from the “middle ages,” as they wore long robes with gold decoration while on horseback. As the first French general to visit the tribe in seven years, Lyautey found the going difficult as he fought their “racial pride.”

It appears that Lyautey saw this intransigence emanating from several directions. First, long periods without contact with the West had hardened the resolve of the Sidi Cheikh to resist French civilization despite its salutary effects. As

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99 Ibid., and letter to sister, 14 June 1905, in Lyautey, Choix de lettres, 238-245. Lyautey refers to the large and prosperous Ouled Sidi Cheikh tribe in this discussion.

100 Lyautey, “Bureau arabe,” 475AP/58, AN.
he had discovered in Indochina and Madagascar, it took long periods of intense conflict for two civilizations to understand each other. Conversation between groups would result, from his experience, in a better understanding of native society for both the participants and French colonial officials. Such mutual comprehension forced the natives to conclude that their developmental target was modern France, a colonial empire that was conveniently helping them along their unique course.

Also standing in the way of civilizational communication for Lyautey was Islam. While he viewed Islamic education and science as sophisticated and in general a good influence, Lyautey also perceived the corresponding social structure as mired in place and resistant to change. Religion, he feared, impeded scientific and administrative access to the basic structures of society. Lyautey considered Arab-Islamic groups on the borderlands isolated “in time, in space...enveloped in the same shroud, defying life, movement and thought.”101 Trapped in the way of life practiced by the medieval Arab invaders of North Africa, the Sidi Cheikh seemed to Lyautey to refuse the helpful influence of contemporary Europe. Islam, once a progressive force, ceased to act in that way in the isolated desert, instead becoming “immutable...petrified in its implacable dream.”102 The tribe thus stood for Lyautey as a perfect example of a civilizational group in need of a developmental spark, one delivered by force if necessary. Only the jarring arrival of the French military, he mused, had the potential to push these people out of

101 Lyautey to sister, 14 June 1905, in Lyautey, Choix de lettres, 246. This letter also indicated Lyautey’s receipt of Paul Desjardins’ latest work, Catholicisme et critique, which he considered “le plus évolutif” in full contrast with his surroundings.

102 Lyautey to E.M. de Vogüé, 10 October 1907, in Hubert Lyautey, “Lettres de Rabat,” Revue des Deux Mondes 6, 64 (15 July 1924), 283.
their cage in the deep past. Until the French found a way to force societies to move through time again, he thought, they had no chance to change things for the better.

Lyautey’s reified vision of Islam as a cultural essence did not permit him to grasp either the potential influence of other Islamic groups or the importance of nomadic lineages in North and West African history. As Paul Marty and Maurice Delafosse would later discuss (see chapters 3 and 4 of this study), African Islam existed in multiple forms. While Lyautey had spent significant time in conversation with native elites, he had not truly absorbed the importance of religious scholars in virtually all the French African societies. Islam played host to a vibrant intellectual community concerned about matters from science to jurisprudence. North Africa alone had seen the exchange of intellectual currents from Morocco and Algeria across to the Arabian peninsula and back, a process that in truth had been harmed most by the colonial incursion itself. Although he was a lay reader of Ibn Khaldun, he paid little attention to the historical examples laid out by the great scholar. Lyautey failed to consider Ibn Khaldun’s conclusions on the adaptation of societies to their physical environment and nomadism as a necessary antidote to urban decay and excess in his analysis.\textsuperscript{103} Revitalization of French culture seemed within the general’s grasp; in his mind, he needed only press for continued contact between Frenchman and Arab. This process carried only one possible result: two societies with significant overlap, each improved by contact with the other.

\textsuperscript{103} This is not to suggest that Lyautey was alone in this misinterpretation, which was typical of Western scholars who considered Ibn Khaldun’s work as theoretical rather than grounded in specific historical circumstances. Aziz al-Azmeh, \textit{Ibn Khaldun in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism}, (London, 1981), 180-181.
He hoped to accomplish this improvement through joint French-native ethnographic study and a slow fusion of the educational apparatus. While operating largely à l’Arabe as he had 25 years before, Lyautey focused on the “civilizing culture and human solidarity” that could come from study of the human condition, knowledge passed on through soldiers and teachers to area youth. “What better terrain than this soil of Algeria...to glorify the fusion of intellectual culture and energy...Algeria is an extension of France...it is a rejuvenated and superior France,” he thought.104 The general and social theorist believed that by understanding Algeria, the French could hope to better understand and regenerate themselves. The creation of ethnographic and social knowledge would initiate this renewal and progress for both metropole and the colonies.

To accomplish this change through scientific examination, Lyautey required control of both a colonial population and a military force. Geopolitical events, as mentioned above, gave him this chance. Lyautey (now a General of Division) began the relatively slow conquest of Morocco in 1907, moving from his base along the border to occupy the Moroccan area of Oudja (near Marrakech) that he and his superiors believed was a base of raiding activity. Reassigned in 1908 to command the military region around Oran in Algeria, Lyautey had nonetheless earned the support of political leaders in Paris through the efforts of both the Algerian governor-general Jonnart and the powerful senator from Oran (Algeria), Eugène Etienne, also a leader of the pro-colonial party in Paris. The Agadir crisis of 1911, prompted by the arrival of a German warship in

the Moroccan port city of that name and the deployment of a British force in reaction, brought the European conflict over the area to a head. French diplomats helped to resolve the crisis by passing control over some Central African territory to the Germans in exchange for total rights to “protect” Morocco from further international manipulation. In 1912, the French signed a new treaty with the Moroccan sultan recognizing the need for a French protectorate (modeled on that in place in Tunisia since 1881) that maintained the Sharifian (implying descent of the Sultan from the Prophet Muhammad) government as titular head enjoying the support of the French resident general.

French political leaders, swayed by years of lobbying from Etienne and Jonnart, turned to their most experienced local commander to lead this new government—Lyautey, who had been in command of a French army corps at Rennes since 1909. The Franco-Moroccan administration, though ostensibly modeled on the protectorate put into place in Tunisia in the 1880s, nonetheless required a new approach to colonial governance. In this new method, Lyautey paid homage to the Sultan even as he dictated and controlled political, military, and educational policy. As Resident General from 1912-25, the officer had his desired opportunity to experiment with change in a contained social, political, economic, and military environment. Indeed, Abdellah Hammoudi has described the enormous power of the Arabic translation of “Resident-General,” a term that implied an omniscient, omnipresent leader who not only gazed down on his subjects from a position of authority, but inhabited their political, economic, social, and intellectual lives. Lyautey certainly grasped the power of his position, but hoped to use

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it to improve both Morocco and France. As he remarked to de Vogüé at the time, the protectorate hosted “the salutary reserves of national energy” of which France was in such great need.106 Much like Faidherbe in Senegal, Lyautey realized that Morocco was a complex skein of disparate cultural and social threads and conceived of himself as the person to combine them into a unified Franco-Moroccan fabric.

Blessed with a long history of centralization and a powerful state, Morocco lent itself to a simpler “social reconstruction” than the French had experienced in Algeria, Lyautey believed. Very few metropolitan French people lived in the area; it was far from a settler colony. Governance thus stood as a radically different task from that faced in Algeria, as Lyautey’s efforts in Morocco became more of an alien management of a subjugated people rather than the creation of a juridical meeting ground between two large populations. He argued for a protectorate based on “association, the collaboration of two races.” Such a system protected “all the things that make up the soul of these people, their traditions, their customs, their beliefs, their hierarchy, their religion,” an approach particularly important in light of what he perceived as the inextricably linked threads of Islamic religious, political, and legal practice.107 He intended to maintain parallel political systems, reinstalling the Sultan (briefly displaced in the confusion surrounding the 1911 events) in 1912 with a promise to “bring him the pacification of his empire, the development of his resources and the progress of his institutions with the

106 Lyautey to de Vogüé, 4 March 1912, in Lyautey, *Choix de lettres*, 281.

most complete respect for his beliefs and his religion.”108 Lyautey and his staff intended to convey this respect in the form of close study and cooperation with native populations.

Lyautey spent the bulk of time between 1912 and 1925 in Morocco, departing annually to argue for budget appropriations in Paris or on rare occasions for medical treatment. Most importantly, though, he left Morocco in December of 1916 to take on the position of Minister of War, as the First World War was in full-swing. With the European theater now settled into a frustrating stalemate along the trenches of France and the Low Countries, the French political leadership sought new blood to revive their sagging fortunes. Gallieni, Lyautey’s mentor, had resigned the position in early 1916, dying shortly thereafter. Like his predecessor, Lyautey lasted only a few months in the position. Even during that short tenure, which ended in March of 1917, he found himself unable to stop the disastrous offensives ordered by General Robert Nivelle on the Western front, permanently tarnishing his legacy as a war-time leader.109 When in Morocco, his only real interaction with the war had been to send off several of his subordinates as senior officers as well as a steady stream of native Moroccan soldiers. His failure to gain recognition for Moroccan soldiers for the highest French military honor, the *croix de guerre*, forced him to warn his superiors of the “disillusionment” their disavowal by metropolitan officials would spread in the protectorate.110 Even as Minister of War he found himself powerless to rectify what he perceived as an injustice. He


yearned for the greater authority he wielded in Morocco, oblivious to the fact that the
“disillusionment” that he felt in himself and his Moroccan subordinates grew from
stifling rule, a category that certainly included the inequalities of representation enhanced
by his own Moroccan bureaucracy. Lyautey remained adamant about the need for close
cooperation and dialogue with natives for the rest of his time in Morocco; during that
time, though, resentment against the regime only grew.

Back in Morocco in 1917 after his abortive stint in metropolitan leadership,
Lyautey found that reuniting (as he saw it) Morocco would prove a difficult task. The
resident general addressed this problem by implementation of the policy of the grands
caïds, or reliance on native political chiefs to lead pacification and governance efforts at
the local level. Lyautey saw these political chiefs, some of them intellectuals in their
own right, as the best class to govern the more modern Morocco he was fighting to
create. Many of these leaders were from the Moroccan aristocracy; Lyautey had no
desire to challenge this social order, one that he saw both in his own background and in
the medieval Europe to which he compared his new nation.111

He and his staff, in an effort to both control and understand the social
complexities of Morocco, examined extant Sharifian legal and political records while also
consulting with the political elites themselves. He felt that only detailed documentary
and ethnography study enabled colonial officials to bypass the “incoherent” approach that
had ruined Algeria, “sabotaged by an absurd native policy.”112 Development of this
coherent native policy required a full consideration of Moroccan history. Given the

111 Rivet, Lyautey et l’institution du protectorat, I, 184-186.
112 Lyautey to Gallieni, 20 November 1915 in Lyautey, Les plus belles lettres, 121.
medieval achievements of the Sultanate, a state that in Lyautey’s understanding of history competed on equal footing with Europe, the resident general hoped to reignite forward progress. Many things were missing from Lyautey’s conception of Moroccan history and society. Crucial for his own successes and failures as resident general, however, was his failure to appreciate the inequities of the current Moroccan political system. Lyautey’s associationist policy propped up those individuals who appeared to him legitimate heirs to power. He never considered the possibility that his choices for leaders reflected the manipulations of Moroccan natives themselves looking for an increase in power under the paternalistic French administration. This failure to appreciate the unpopularity of the Moroccan bureaucracy as part of the French colonial effort contributed significantly to Lyautey’s failures later in his Moroccan tenure, revealed particularly by his inability to control the revolt of Abd al-Krim in the inhospitable Rif region.113 The general felt he could solve Morocco’s problems through the conduct of a series of academic studies on Moroccan social life.

Conducted by native and Frenchman alike, Lyautey believed these studies could of themselves help to pacify the country. The general, since his time at Aïn Sefra, had periodically led campaigns into the Moroccan countryside to protect French citizen. In one such instance in 1903 near Casablanca, Lyautey received letters in both Arabic and French from rebel leaders seeking peace. Lyautey interpreted these gestures as natives expressing their admiration for the general’s facility and interest in the Arabic language and Moroccan culture. In his mind, these leaders saw the possibilities afforded by closer

113 On this point see Hoisington, Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco, 206; and Rabinow, French Modern, 317-318.
cooperation with the French (via the policy of the grands caïds) and in working with a general willing to consider their particular cultural, social, and political conditions. He does not appear to have considered, either then or in his later efforts to edit his correspondence and shape his image in the 1920s and 1930s, the possibility that these leaders might have been manipulating his not insubstantial ego and belief in the power of learning. Indeed, he felt that knowledge could cure nearly all ills. Lyautey reported a 1915 conversation with a northern rebel leader who, overcome by “an irresistible curiosity,” requested safe passage to see the Casablanca Exposition. Presumably seeing the power of French knowledge and arms, Lyautey characterized the rebel leader’s realization in dismissive terms as “he could do no better than to submit.” Scientific and ethnographic knowledge offered Lyautey power in the colonial context, however, only when its legitimacy stood beyond reproach. Scientific legitimacy and trustworthiness were vital to establishing his credibility as a colonial leader knowledgeable of and interested in his subjects. He tried to attain this level of legitimacy through one primary method: widespread and highly publicized ethnographic study in tandem with natives.

114 On the implications of Lyautey’s editing of his letters, see Edward Berenson, Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa, (Berkeley, 2011), 232; and Rabinow, French Modern, chapter 9.

115 On native communication, see for example, Bou Amana to Lyautey, 27 October 1903, in 475AP/58, AN. This file contains numerous other letters in similar condition, with both Arabic and French writing intended for Lyautey while he still commanded the sub-division on the Algerian-Moroccan frontier. Lyautey regularly took part in Moroccan campaigns of “pacification” from 1903-1911 from his positions in Algeria. On Lyautey’s belief in the power of French academic achievement, see “Ouverture de l’Exposition de Casablanca,” 5 September 1915, in Lyautey, Paroles d’action, 143. Hammoudi agrees with Lyautey’s assessment of the power of French scientific achievement, as he documents numerous examples of rebellious nationalist cadres who nonetheless admired the intellectual achievements of the protectorate; Hammoudi, Master and Disciple, 122.
For the new resident general, political and social stability and progress came with detailed study in the location of interest. He ordered his experienced subordinates to conduct surveys of Morocco, moving “in automobile, without escort, from Rabat to Fez, from Casablanca to Marrakech,” voyages he expected to enable them to “tell what they think of the state of the country and its inhabitants.” Implicit in these directions was the requirement to learn from the local populace, to converse with natives fluent in the language of their own social and cultural constructions. Such information could also come from cooperation with the colonial neighbors to the south in French West Africa, or Afrique occidentale française (AOF), formed as a unified colonial political entity in 1903. Since the combat of Faidherbe against the Islamic state of el-Hajj Umar Tal in the 1850s, governors in West Africa had dealt with local insurgencies in Senegal, Mauritania, and Côte d’Ivoire, to name a few. Drawing on the sometimes deeper understanding of “black” African-Islamic writing compiled by French Africanist scholars in West Africa, Lyautey’s staff sought to develop more insightful ethnological institutions and policy in dealing with native practices.

Lyautey turned to several prominent AOF Islamic and educational scholars to aid him in developing a systematic approach to understanding Moroccan social constructions. Paul Marty, former director of the native affairs bureau on the AOF staff in Dakar, moved to Morocco in 1921 to work for Lyautey in Islamic education and Muslim policy. Georges Hardy, former director of education in AOF, led the directorate


117 Rivet, Lyautey et l’institution du protectorat, I, 195-196. For more on this history, see chapters 3 and 4 of the present study.
of public education in Morocco, an effort that also incorporated heavy ethnological study. Hardy, long a collaborator of Marty, Maurice Delafosse and other scholar-administrators in West Africa, brought the idea of administration by ethnological examination to Morocco. Hired at the end of 1919, Hardy carried an educational background focused on history and geography. He applied the principles of those disciplines to education, searching for “authentic” Moroccans frozen in time, an effort that privileged local Arabic sources sometimes at the expense of *evolué* natives capable of speaking, reading, and writing French. These “evolved” francophonic Africans had enjoyed French legal and political rights in the so-called “Four Communes” of Senegal since the nineteenth century. In Algeria, where early French experiences had convinced administrators that Islam was ingrained, French-speaking elites gained French citizenship only if they renounced the political and legal institutions of Islam. French ethnological administrators such as Hardy or Delafosse distrusted, in general, these groups for what the French scholars believed were efforts to gain French favor through a superficial assumption of French norms.

Hardy presented his idealized vision of “traditional” societies in North and West Africa as *sui generis*, each requiring specifically tailored political, racial, or civilizational policies. According to this approach, French scholars had to conduct ethnography with

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118 Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul*, 28, 59. Hardy was reportedly dismissed from the AOF staff in 1919 for a conflict with the assimilationist camp of Blaise Diagne and others, a conflict that also involved Delafosse. See also Spencer Segalla, “Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology in French Morocco, 1920-1926,” *French Colonial History* 4 (2003), 172, 182; and chapter 4 of this study. Segalla’s work remains the only substantial biography of Hardy, but see also the short discussion by Albert Charton, “Georges Hardy,” *Annuaire des anciens élèves de l’école normale supérieure*, 1974, in 684Mi (Correspondence of Hardy and Lyautey), AN.

care, avoiding the pitfall of “fixing, crystallizing customs without the color of adaptation.” Instead, Hardy advised colonial administrators to “take the continuing process of evolution into account.” In other words, Hardy had little use for a basic synchronic approach to ethnography. Change over time was at least as important as the social or cultural norms analysts could discern from a contemporary observation. For Hardy, only comparative analysis across time offered a chance to grasp the shape and course of progress.

In line with the concepts outlined by the French Africanist scholars of West Africa, civilizational comparison yielded a relatively sophisticated conceptual scheme for Hardy. Ethnology in his view produced a “sense of collective psychology,” perhaps better referred to as “psycho-geography.” Hardy thus presented his case for the depiction of native peoples in collective terms. Scholars could distinguish, and thus better develop policy for, these groups through an appreciation for their unique modes of collective thought, tied to their geographic location. He sought to understand African groups as discrete civilizational blocks. A full grasp of their physical and social landscape in his view could come only from reading and hearing histories of the era as conveyed and interpreted by native savants themselves, with the additional analytical tools afforded by Western sociology and psychology.

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120 Georges Hardy, “Le congrès de la société indigène,” *Outre-Mer* 3, 4 (December 1931), 472.

121 Georges Hardy, *Mon frère le loup: Plaidoyer pour une science vivante,* (Paris, 1925), 52.

122 For more detailed examination of Hardy’s brand of collective psychology, see Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul* and “Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology.”
As Lyautey had seen early in his career, information on social groups and the impetus to effect change came not from the top, but from those in daily contact. He saw consulate personnel and other French functionaries, even settlers, as “the best source of information and the best catalyst for action.” With that said, Lyautey recognized the need for a deliberate information gathering process. He had long recommended, echoing Faidherbe and Gallieni, soldiers for such tasks. To that end he developed a new service de renseignements, run by the native affairs bureau of his staff, an organization he described as “a political service made up of intelligence officers and native people.”

Drawn from the colonial service, Lyautey expected these French officers to possess some Arabic language ability and a willingness to serve in remote locations among native social and political groups. He hoped for officers modeled after the service’s first director, Colonel Henri Berriaud, who Lyautey regarded as having not only knowledge of literary Arabic, but also “the affective comprehension of the race.” Lyautey hoped that this deep level of mutual understanding, which his language implied extended to the emotional realm, enabled these French officials to interact with natives on the same plane as if “they came from the same race.” In his mind, all officers working with and among natives needed “the most modern, most practical, most audacious sense of the evolution

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123 Lyautey to Albert de Mun, 16 June 1912 in Lyautey, Choix de lettres, 290.

124 “Au lendemain de la libération de Fès: programme politique,” 10 June 1912, Lyautey l’Africain, I, 183. For a first-hand account of service in these units, see Jean-Dominique Carrère, Missionaires en burnous bleu: Au service de renseignements durant l’épopée marocaine, (Limoges, 1973). Much of Lyautey’s language in developing these institutions would reappear in Algeria under Jacques Soustelle in 1955. See chapter 6 of this study.

125 Lyautey to Minister of War, 24 January 1913, 475AP/137, AN.
that these people can accomplish,” information best attained by ethnological and historical studies conducted in conjunction with the population. While never as widespread as the original *bureaux arabes* model, Lyautey employed 194 such officers in 1913. By the time of his 1925 exit from Morocco, Lyautey had convinced Parisian officials to increase the service to 273 officers. The officers came from wildly varied backgrounds, some like him from aristocratic families. Only one native Muslim North African commanded an office—Saïd Gueman in 1925 in Kebab. Regardless of background, Lyautey expected these experts in native affairs to expand their knowledge by any possible means, from manuscript study to conversations with native elites.

In the style of most Western military administrations, Lyautey and his staff also worked to issue, to a certain extent, this native understanding to the officers charged with that day-to-day interaction. By controlling the tone and range of French officer knowledge on Moroccan society Lyautey ensured their efforts stayed in line, avoiding the problems that had beset the *bureaux arabes* in Algeria. The program for officer education initiated by Hardy under Lyautey’s watchful eye focused first on language ability. Responding to calls for more study of groups viewed by his subordinate commanders as not subject to “Arab civilization,” Lyautey created an institute of Arabic and Berber language study in Rabat and a Berber studies center at Meknes in 1915. The resident general chartered the Berber studies center to focus on the reeducation of soldiers with experience in Algeria, including study of “a collection of works relating to

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By 1921, the Arab-Berber school hosted courses and conferences for native affairs officers, including material from studies generated by the Berber studies institute. This effort demonstrated Lyautey’s simultaneous admiration for and discarding of the Algerian colonial method. He recognized the importance of the bureaux arabes as models for effective colonial ethnography conducted by soldiers in the field. However, the excesses of colonial rule in Algeria, by this time developed over more than eighty years, caused soldiers to grab on to the easy stereotypes that existed in that colony. Removing the stain of the sometimes brutal and certainly essentializing mode of conquest employed since 1830 gave Lyautey an opportunity to employ a more balanced approach to governance in Morocco. Unlike the basic colonial policy in Algeria that treated Berbers as proto-democratic and the Arabs as inveterate foes, Lyautey saw both stark division and overlap. Berbers and Arabs were distinct groups brought together over time by dramatic invasions in his view. The only remedy he could see lay in more detailed study in both languages; from this new emphasis he hoped the French colonial project in Morocco would overcome these problems of categorization.

Conferences intended to explore these categories revolved, not surprisingly, around the civilizational model favored by Lyautey and Hardy. At a 1921 instructional course, native officials from the Direction des affaires chérifiennes (the bureaucratic arm of the Sultan’s government embedded in the French protectorate political structure), and

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128 Henrys to Lyautey, 12 December 1914, 475AP/109, AN.

129 “Horaire des cours et conférences,” Cours de perfectionnement des officiers de renseignements, 1 November 1920-31 January 1921, Direction des affaires indigènes et Service des renseignements, 475AP/137, AN. See also Segalla, “Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology,” 172.
French officials from the service of antiquities, arts and historic monuments delivered a lecture on preservation of archaeological artifacts. The lecturers instructed native affairs officers in the importance of conservation even as the war of conquest continued, working together to avoid any repeat of the destruction in Algeria and Tunisia. The officials portrayed Moroccan cities as the beautiful “frame of Arab life” that reached back to the sixteenth century when “the degree of civilization was basically the same in France as in Morocco.” Hewing to Lyautey’s developmental doctrine, the instructors described North Africans who fell behind “the march of progress” as they failed to grasp the importance of new technologies, remaining tied to “tradition.” Lyautey’s staff thus directed the new French officials “to protect” as well as “a bit paradoxically, to civilize them [Moroccans].” Officials engaged in the service de renseignements and deeply concerned with native affairs were critical, lectured the bureaucrats, in maintaining the “long chain that links the country across the ages...the poetry of the past.” Lyautey’s subordinates thus passed on his vision of a glorious Moroccan past, one that remained beneath the veneer of underdevelopment and poverty. In the resident general’s view, French officials could accelerate the Moroccan developmental process not by scrapping that past, but by embracing it and molding new political, economic, and social structures to fit atop and make use of pre-existing forms.

During his tenure in Morocco Lyautey also created political organs to promote more direct intellectual transfer between the French colonial and native Moroccan structures. The Native Policy Council (conseil de politique indigène, or CPI), created in

130 “Le service des Beaux arts au Maroc,” Cours de perfectionnement des officiers de renseignements, 1 November 1920-31 January 1921, Direction des affaires indigènes et Service des renseignements, 475AP/137, AN.
1921 to give equal voice to both the native affairs bureau and the Moroccan Sultanate, included Paul Marty as secretary.\textsuperscript{131} Marty’s long colonial career included significant experience in developing native contacts, particularly along the southern Saharan edge, the Sahel. Over time, he had grown these networks to gain ethnological knowledge on social divisions and the reach of Islamic scholarship in West Africa. Marty thus brought important techniques on developing close relationships with Islamic elites, a vital skill in the process of civilizational communication that Lyautey proposed.

Georges Hardy, also a member of the council in his role as Director of Public Education, contributed an additional ethnological perspective. His bureau ultimately included the Institut des hautes études Marocaines (IHEM), a scholarly research organization, and the école des hautes études musulmanes (EHEM), focused on the creation of a new educational track for professional Moroccans.\textsuperscript{132} However, education offered more than a new core of colonial functionaries for Lyautey. Departing from the original and more instrumental ideas of Faidherbe, the resident general proposed a more even discussion that involved both natives and Frenchmen developing a new ethnological and historical understanding of the area and its people. Lyautey often attended conferences, lectures and courses at IHEM and EHEM, making it clear that research drove policy decisions. Lyautey’s scholarly organizations put together a journal, \textit{Les


archives berbères, which offered publication opportunities for both native Moroccan and French scholars, and numerous conferences on languages, ethnography, and folklore.  

At one such CPI conference in 1921 Lyautey spelled out the importance of links between past and present for modern study of Morocco. He remarked, “We found here the crumbling vestiges of an admirable civilization, a great past...Do not forget we are in the country of Ibn Khaldun, who arrived in Fez at the age of 20.” The resident general thus reminded his charges that Morocco, and Arabic intellectuals more generally, had much to contribute to the world, particularly through the remarkable insights of their intellectual class, a group that had numbered (in the case of Ibn Khaldun) one of the world’s greatest social scientists, living or dead. In close cooperation with this intellectual class, Lyautey thought, the French stood a chance of developing a better understanding of local events. They could accomplish this, in his view, not through paternalism but mutual admiration.

Lyautey’s charge, however, overlooked the actual practice of his colonial administration, as William Hoisington has demonstrated. Despite Lyautey’s calls for indirect rule and political administration by native Moroccan officials, the day-to-day operations of the protectorate functioned only at the behest of French officials themselves. Despite years of educational reform and bureaucratic expansion, decision-making in the end laid only with French officials. The French presence, resented by Moroccans since the early twentieth century, prior to the protectorate, never provided avenues for political advancement for educated native leaders. Consequently, these

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elites, the only real hope for a continued French hold, disliked and worked actively against the French state in greater numbers, culminating in the Rif rebellion of the 1920s.\textsuperscript{134}

France’s resident general operated from a basic assumption: Morocco was in need of assistance that France was in the best position to provide. For example, he introduced French as the basic language of Moroccan schools, in the process bypassing Arabic in hopes of conveying developmental ideas through a common European idiom. Rather than use the shared language to better understand Moroccan social and political norms, though, many of Lyautey’s subordinates, particularly civilian administrators in the cities, instead saw French language as a mark of distinction, further solidifying the division between the superior French and lowly native Moroccan.\textsuperscript{135} He expected, perhaps naively, that his subordinates shared the same passion to preserve, respect, and assist Moroccan society. He honestly believed that social knowledge would stoke the fires of reform that burned, in his view, in all intellectual classes. While France was in need of reform itself, he believed that Morocco stood in dire straits, locked in the sixteenth century. Although an impossibility in any real sense, Lyautey nonetheless presented the rediscovery and revitalization of the Moroccan past as a joint effort.

\textsuperscript{134} See Hoisington, \textit{Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco}, chapters 6 and 7, for strong analysis of the failure of indirect rule in Rabat, Casablanca, and among the Chaouia. See also Alan Scham, \textit{Lyautey in Morocco: Protectorate Administration, 1912-1925}, (Berkeley, 1970), 195-202; and Rivet, \textit{Lyautey et l’institution du protectorat}, III, 195-197, 203-212, where he describes the French administration as a “leviathan.”

\textsuperscript{135} Hoisington, \textit{Lyautey and the Conquest of Morocco}, chapter 7. Jacques Soustelle took this effort a step further in 1950s Algeria, where he pressed for Arabic language education for all residents regardless of background; his reform efforts also failed—see chapter 6 of this study.
He reminded his subordinates that Franco-Moroccan cooperation held the key: “The secret is the offered hand, not the condescending hand but the loyal man-to-man handshake made to understand one another.”

This handshake, conducted in particular through the IHEM, could occur both in person and through a careful translation and analysis of archaeological and documentary evidence of the past. The work of Delafosse, Marty, and colleagues such as Ismael Hamet was vital, in Lyautey’s depiction, to understanding the documentary links between past, present, and future. Lyautey pushed this agenda at all levels of his administration; even the newest members of the interpreter corps in this period cited “Arab authors” in their ethnological-historical studies of the local countryside. Attracting even French metropolitan academics, Franco-Moroccan conferences featured presentations by native intellectuals.

In saluting the work of native scholars on education in 1922, Lyautey commented on the importance of close intellectual collaboration in Morocco, an effort that “had never before been achieved in such a skilled and even fashion.” These exchanges were vital in his opinion to the advancement of the French cause, important enough to necessitate a

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137 Hamet was cited specifically by the IHEM for his pioneering work with 18th and 19th century Sultanate documents. See “Séance du 27 Mai 1921,” Hespéris: Archives Berbères et bulletin de l’Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines 1, 4 (1921), 441-442. Hamet also worked heavily with similar documents in West Africa, collaborating in particular with Delafosse. See chapter 3 for further detail.

138 “Aperçu historique,” submitted as part of voyage d’étude 24 March 1921, 475AP/137, AN.

139 “Séance du jeudi 20 Octobre 1921,” Hespéris: Archives Berbères et bulletin de l’Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines 1, 4 (1921), 469. This particular visit included Ch. Diel and E. Mâle, members of the Institut de France; Stéphane Gsell, prominent Orientalist at the Collège de France; and Augustin Bernard, a professor at the Sorbonne.
mandated “purely native” group of presentations at each gathering of the IHEM. Study and learning formed the crux of social advancement, of regeneration both in the colonies and the metropole in Lyautey’s approach. For the resident general, the French would rediscover and revive their own social and cultural vitality only by accompanying the Moroccans on their own quest.

As the revolt of Abd al-Krim in the Rif grew worse in the 1920s, Lyautey’s program slipped further into disrepair. His failure to contain the revolt led the Minister of War to send Marshal Philippe Pétain, the great French hero of the First World War, to intervene. Stripped of his all-encompassing powers, Lyautey left Morocco in 1925 for retirement in France. His efforts to understand Morocco from a collaborative French-native perspective had failed, brought down by a revolt that he could neither defeat nor understand.

**Conclusion: Leaving a legacy of colonial humanism**

Following his departure from Morocco, the almost-septuagenarian moved into retirement as the greatest surviving French colonial military officer (Gallieni had died in 1916, shortly after leaving the office of Minister of War). He received the highest honors France could bestow on both intellectuals and military officers of the time, gaining induction into the *Académie française* in 1912 (induction delayed until 1920) and the

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The old soldier now stood as a paragon of strength and manliness for having conquered and reformed colonial populations across the globe, even in what the public perceived as the most primitive place on the planet, Africa. Hoping to capitalize on the power of Lyautey’s name, the French president named him Commissioner of the Colonial Exposition in 1927, an event initially planned to take place prior to the First World War, beset by numerous delays and leadership problems, and ultimately executed only in 1931. Held in the early years of the Great Depression, the exposition captured many of the ideals of international cooperation encoded in the mandate of the League of Nations, a multi-national organization that also maintained that only certain, inherently peaceful nations (the victors of the First World War) could engage in colonial governance.

Lyautey enlisted the help of French ethnologists to aid him in putting together the exposition, including representations of not only French colonies, but also those of Great Britain, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and the United States. He called on the Institut international d’anthropologie to manage the scientific presentation of foreign peoples, named Marcel Olivier, the former Governor-General of Indochina, his prime assistant,

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141 Lyautey earned election to Seat 14 of the académie française on 31 October 1912 with 27 votes, but did not receive induction until 1920 due to war and his position in Morocco. See www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/index.html. He was named Marshal of France by President Alexandre Millaud 19 February 1921, receiving his baton on 14 July 1922. See Minister of War to Lyautey, 12 July 1922 and decree of 19 February 1921, Lyautey dossier, SHD.

142 Berenson, Heroes of Empire, 10.

and recruited Georges Hardy to the arts commission. Not surprisingly, the exposition took an ethnological form, as it reflected Lyautey’s long-held beliefs in the importance of a deep, cross-civilizational study of foreign peoples.

In discussing the exposition in 1928, Lyautey encapsulated his version of colonial governance: “There are other fields of action for our civilization than the fields of battle...in the pursuit of peace and progress.” In his mind, soldiers and administrators needed to observe “their different brothers” in order to learn “to adapt ourselves to their traditions, to their customs, to their beliefs, in a word to understand them.”

Lyautey wanted to expose the international public to the “simple and salutary truths” of the colonial effort that operated, in the words of his immediate deputy, Governor-General Olivier, to “adjust the particular needs of each race to the general needs of humanity.” With this humanist goal in mind, Lyautey set out to educate the attendees of the exposition, as many as 800,000 a day. He created the cité des informations to convince the viewing public that the “evolution of colonial peoples” involved much more than simple “algebraic equations.” Colonial development, he tried to explain, took a detailed understanding of native societies generated by dialogue with the natives themselves.

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144 Herman Lebovics, True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945, (Ithaca, NY, 1992), 99-100; Lyautey to Hardy, 4 March 1929, 684Mi, AN. Both Paul Rivet and Jacques Soustelle also played roles in the exposition; see chapter 6 of this study.

145 “Mon discours du 5 Novembre 1928,” handwritten, 475AP/208, AN.


147 Ibid.; Le Révérend, Lyautey, 448-449
In terms of attendance and profit, the 1931 exposition stood as a ringing success. However, Lyautey felt his efforts at colonial propaganda had failed. In his mind, the exposition should leave behind a “Center of Colonial Action” available to all people interested in learning or collaborating regarding “lands of overseas France and other nations.” The center would stand as “the most beautiful and practical future that the International Colonial Exposition could leave behind.”148 He recognized that his own contributions had limits; it would take others to continue the study of native populations and enhance the moral and intellectual development of both the colonies and France itself. Lyautey was thus disappointed in the exposition as his final real contribution to the colonial world, his final effort to spread his message of social reform and regeneration through his brand of colonial humanism.

Lyautey’s death from kidney disease in 1934 did not end his influence. He had maintained strong intellectual links between North and West Africa, working from the example of Faidherbe and Gallieni through his own experiences along the Mediterranean and in the Sahara, finding common ground in developing a strong, locally-instructed understanding of social creation, composition, and regeneration. The colonies served as inspiration, both intellectual and social, for the metropole through his efforts. Maurice Delafosse, though he preceded Lyautey in death by eight years, also contributed to the networks maintained by Lyautey. Like the renowned colonial general, he saw native institutions as entities that “needed protection and preservation,” linked to a more glorious past that, with the proper intervention, could regenerate in the future. Delafosse

148 Draft of remarks for closing the Colonial Exposition and Letter to Minister of Colonies, 14 October 1932, 475AP/208, AN.
was inspired by Lyautey’s willingness to “administer the country in accordance with its institutions.” Later cited by Charles de Gaulle as a “man among men” working tirelessly on a “human project,” Lyautey was buried in Rabat in October 1935, where he had been “profoundly respectful of the ancestral traditions of the Muslim religion held and practiced by the inhabitants of the Maghreb, beside whom he wanted to rest, in this earth he so loved.”

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Figure 6: Africa in 1922, as depicted by Maurice Delafosse

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Figure 7: Official French Map of West Africa in 1922

Chapter 3: Maurice Delafosse, Paul Marty, and the Acquisition of Knowledge in West Africa

“Haunted by the idea of far-away Africa”¹ even in childhood, Maurice Delafosse (1870-1926) dedicated his life to understanding “the steps by which one continuously transforms himself [and] his intellectual and moral being.”² Escaping from the political turmoil of fin-de-siècle France, Delafosse spent the last thirty-five years of his life developing an understanding of Africa. Although cast as a colonial administrator and scholar, Delafosse positioned himself in accordance with a Peul (Fulbé) aphorism he published: “Each time that men argue, we ask for a witness. If there is no witness, there is no [means of establishing] truth.”³ He saw himself as both witness to and advocate for native development, the rapid mutation of intellectual, social, and political reality in the colonies into a more modern form. Truth in this scenario came not from metropolitan academic credentials, but from the observed natives themselves. Only people on the ground in Africa could hope to gain this level of understanding. Delafosse and his colleague, Paul Marty (a French Africanist scholar born in Algeria), together worked to understand the civilizational distinctions among African and European societies by tapping into pre-existing networks of ethnological scholarship in and on West Africa. Both men served on the staff of the French colonial political federation, l’Afrique occidentale française (AOF) as advisors on Muslim affairs before and during the First

¹ Quoted in Louise Delafosse, Maurice Delafosse, le Berrichon conquis par l’Afrique, (Paris, 1976), 62.

² Maurice Delafosse, Les états d’âme d’un colonial, (Paris, 1909), 5. This work, ostensibly about a fictional colonial official named “Broussard” is in many ways autobiographical. See chapter 4 for more discussion.

³ Phrase recorded in Haute-Volta by a Dr. Cramer, brackets in original. Maurice Delafosse, L’âme nègre, (Paris, 1922), 104.
World War. Their ethnologies of French West Africa ultimately shaped the official
depiction of Islam and African societies while also informing the more theoretical
sociological studies emerging from the French metropolitan center.

Unlike their predecessors Louis Faidherbe, Joseph Gallieni, and Hubert Lyautey,
Marty (1881-1936) and Delafosse brought highly-developed language skills and an
ability to work in direct concert with both local French officials and native informants in
developing their conclusions. Such close contact with native sources permitted Marty
and especially Delafosse to insert what they regarded as the native voice into discussions
of development and political association occurring both in the colonies and in France.
Although shaped by colonial circumstances, these scholars believed in a more human
form of colonial rule informed by the words and methods of the natives themselves,
notions best preserved in written and oral traditions reaching back to the medieval period
when they believed African civilizations existed on the same plane as those in Europe.

This chapter examines the process and methodology followed by Marty and
Delafosse in gaining and employing ethnological knowledge as colonial administrators.
It is important to first understand the sources of their views, both native African and
French colonial, before conducting a detailed examination of their findings and political
impact. These scholars, and their conclusions on African civilization, were far more than
the simple results of a genealogy of Western thought. Instead, they tapped into a long-
running African conversation on the relationship between religion, politics, and social
interaction that employed language specific to the unique history of West Africa. Marty
and Delafosse communicated with local elites in formulating a new portrait of African
societies as diverse and complex, in the process developing extensive networks of ethnographic informants. These individuals, most of them prominent Islamic scholars, stood for Delafosse and Marty not only as intelligent social interpreters but also as representatives of political factions whose exploitation and division were critical to the strengthening of colonial rule.

Marty and Delafosse conversed with African intellectual elites both in textual and oral form. These conversations came to form an important component of French colonial rule, as both sides exploited those connections to their advantage. The French tightened political control through the manipulation of African alliances and rivalries discerned through ethnological examination even as African elites solidified their political and social positions in the unequal power distribution of the colonial world by, in part, appropriating the colonial language of civilization and development. This chapter thus focuses on the relationships that drove and constituted this uneven dialogue. The succeeding chapter follows this discussion by focusing on the publications developed by Marty and Delafosse as a result of these conversations. These publications proved enormously influential in both metropolitan sociological and colonial policy circles. Employing methods advocated, but only partially achieved, by Faidherbe and Lyautey, Delafosse and Marty provided the empirical and political core that would fuel the ethnological theories of Marcel Mauss into the 1930s and the machine of Algerian governance run by Jacques Soustelle in the 1950s.

Basing their conclusions on readings of Arab-Islamic sources from fourteenth-century North African writer Ibn Khaldun to nineteenth century Islamic scholars, Marty
and Delafosse wrote, spoke, and taught prolifically in Africa and back in the metropolitan center. They served, with their colleagues Octave Houdas and Ismael Hamet, as the principal translators of the small but important trove of Arabic-language documents emerging from West Africa and reaching as far back as the fifteenth century. In selecting, translating, and reading these sources for evidence of African historical strength, the scholars worked to show the great social, political, and intellectual heights reached by Africans in the past and the potential for future greatness with limited Western intervention. They acted as the gatekeepers to native-generated knowledge on Africa. Their demonstrations of the power of African learning influenced their peers in the colonies and the metropole, not to mention the next generation, to privilege information originating not in France but in the field. Ethnological knowledge generated in Africa could shape the metropolitan conversation regarding colonial governance; with it Marty and Delafosse could claim to better understand the truth of African existence and the prospect of progress, thus offering an important input into the policymaking process and the academic discussions occurring in Paris.

An examination of the lives of Marty and Delafosse up to their overlapping service (1915-1918) on the staff of the governor-general of AOF reveals the influences that shaped their opinions on civilization and colonial development. Early experiences in Algeria, for example, exposed both men to French ethnographic traditions equating

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5 I owe the use of the term “gatekeeper” to conversations with my colleague Fahad Bishara.
Berber, Arab, and black with descending levels of intelligence and adaptability to Western culture, views they would later reject. In searching for civilization Marty and Delafosse tended to look at the writings and communication of elites and intellectuals with little consideration for the thoughts of the unlettered or illiterate who of course would produce no “writing.” They saw the reconstruction of historical greatness as possible only with the assistance of others like them, professional religious or academic intellectuals who could offer an air of legitimacy to any historical record or interpretation of social or religious practice. Like Ibn Khaldun, they equated high intellectual achievement with advanced civilization. Finding such achievement in the African past gave them hope for the future. In weighing the strength of this civilizational achievement, they gave more credence to written than to oral sources that in their minds introduced significant uncertainty in efforts to understand the fundamentals of native society. However, the limited availability of textual sources forced Marty and Delafosse to construct networks of correspondents who put oral histories into writing, thereby lending those correspondents and their interpretations some permanence and increased credibility.6

Unable to completely break with their personal trajectories, Delafosse and Marty saw Africa through a Western developmental prism. Sometimes conceived as “race,” colonial shorthand for a poorly understood social, political, or ethnic division, their key concept is perhaps best described as “civilization.” A great civilization first demonstrated a high literary culture, one with significant artistic and scholarly output.

6 Marty included appendices of such writings, often copies of letters with ethnographic information or transcriptions of genealogies, in most of his larger works, particularly *Etudes sur l’Islam au Sénégal*, (Paris, 1917); and *Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan*, 4 vol., (Paris, 1920).
Such a culture could exist only with a strong and widespread educational system that pushed people to look outside their immediate social and political boundaries. This advanced civilization likely had a monotheistic religion; in the case of West Africa, Marty and Delafosse saw Islam as a force that combined many of these requirements, bringing education and scholarship with extensive networks extending to the Middle East. Finally, they expected an advanced civilization to have a coherent and well-developed sedentary, urban socio-economic and political structure.

Their civilizational model was attentive to the enormous changes wrought by the explosive arrival of industrial modernity in Europe, but did not focus on Africa as ripe for exploitation. Rather, it saw history as opportunity, a window into the past greatness of a civilization and thus its possible future given the correct influence. By understanding the last moment of African equality with Europe, the scholars hoped to blaze a new and unique path for accelerated development from this originary position, one closely modeled on Europe’s path but with allowance for the contingencies and specificities of native African life. The scholars saw West Africa in particular as a dynamic space, contrasting sharply with typical ethnographies that depicted Africa in a synchronic snapshot of social structure and practice. This method, which permitted a detailed exposition and isolation of social events, locked African groups in the present time, thereby rendering them static. French ethnographers of the early twentieth century had, in the opinion of Marty, Delafosse, and their peers, omitted the influence of the past on current native social interpretations and as an indicator of the potential for future

7 Timothy Cleaveland describes this typical synchronic approach in Becoming Walata: A History of Saharan Social Formation and Transformation, (Portsmouth, NH, 2002), 196-197.
progress. Colonial scholars such as Marty and Delafosse broke with this ahistorical approach in studying native-generated histories. The ethnological understanding that resulted from research across time, in their minds, gave colonial officials better tools to channel the process of modernization and development in a productive and progressive direction.

Ibn Khaldun offered the most comprehensive and insightful model for dissecting African groups. His monumental history of the peoples of the Near East and North Africa focused, in the interpretation of these French Africanist scholars, on a continuous cycle of development and decay in a process described by the original French translator as “tracing the progress of civilization.” Working from a similar background in both government and scholarship, Ibn Khaldun’s approach appealed to the French scholars, particularly his emphasis on the importance of academic study as a marker of civilization: “We see that all civilized peoples devoted themselves to study and knew, one as well as the other, the principles and questions with which they were dealing.” This viewpoint considered natives as intelligent interpreters of their own world, an important insight for officials working to alter the very nature of colonial political and social structure.

Marty and Delafosse approached native intellectual elites as knowing partners in discerning social reality. As the most important of African historical writers in their opinion, Ibn Khaldun provided not only a remarkably detailed and insightful empirical base of the social and political state of Africa in the fourteenth century but also a

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9 Ibn Khaldun, Les Prolégomènes, III, 121-122. See also I, 71, for a discussion of civilization as “the social state of man.”
powerful model for understanding the way groups interacted and changed across time and space. A brief examination of Ibn Khaldun’s civilizational precepts should thus precede discussion of the methods and networks of Delafosse and Marty.

**Understanding the civilizational model of Ibn Khaldun**

Abu Zeid Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (d. 1408), a Tunis-born political consultant, prime minister, and ambassador for several of the North African governments of the fourteenth century, completed his masterwork, *kitab el-ībar* or “Book on the Origins and History of Peoples,” in 1377.\(^\text{10}\) He presented this “universal history” in seven volumes. The first, known in French as the *Prolégomènes* or introduction, remained the most important for subsequent scholars as it contained the author’s background and philosophical view as well as an entrée to the theoretical framework for his entire study. The next four volumes focused on the history of the Islamic east, including the Arabian Peninsula and the dynasties of Persia, Syria, the Levant and Egypt. The final two volumes focused on the history of what he saw as the native peoples of Africa, the Berbers.\(^\text{11}\)

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French Africanist scholars considered Ibn Khaldun “the most complete and most interesting” of all the classical Arab writers on Africa. It only made sense for them to follow his model of urban sophistication in working out the process of African civilizational change in native terms, especially since West African intellectuals themselves recommended him as a source. They appropriated his fundamental concepts, such as civilizational rise and fall, as well as his accounts of medieval African populations without deeply considering the full historical and philosophical background of his work. As a fellow intellectual, Ibn Khaldun served as a kindred spirit with insight into the political, social, and religious structures of African civilizations. He fit squarely into the tradition of literate, urban elites admired by Delafosse, Marty and their colleagues at the expense of the significant Islamic scholarship occurring in pastoral and small agrarian communities.

The emphasis placed on urban intellectual elites by Ibn Khaldun as well as Marty and Delafosse thus limited their reach and stands as an important weakness of the work of the French Africanists. Recent scholarship has shown that rural Islamic scholars, 

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12 Ismael Hamet, introduction to Chroniques de la Mauritanie Sénégalaise, Nacer Eddine, ed. and trans. Ismael Hamet, (Paris, 1911), 1. French Africanists since Faidherbe had consulted the works of Arab geographers such as Ibn Hawqal, al Bakri, Ibn Battuta and Leo Africanus for basic reference information on medieval Africa - see chapter 1 of this work. However, they generally saw the conclusions (if any) of these observers in line with Delafosse’s view of a related scholar, Muhammad al-Idrisi, who he described as “a mediocre compiler lacking a critical view”; see his “Le Gâna et le Mali et l’emplacement de leurs capitales,” Bulletin du comité d’études historiques et scientifiques de l’AOF 7 (1924), 479. For an example of a native intellectual recommendation of Ibn Khaldun as source, see “Lettre de Cheikh Sid Mohammed ben Cheikh Ahmed Ben Soleimane à M. Thévenaut,” in Chroniques de la Mauritanie Sénégalaise, 157. Bruce Lawrence has argued that Ibn Khaldun has remained important as an analytical and historical source due to the attention paid him by Orientalist scholars, sometimes at the expense of equally deserving Arabic scholars that preceded him. See Bruce B. Lawrence, “Introduction: Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology,” in Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology, ed. Bruce B. Lawrence, (Leiden, 1984), 5. The opposing stance is taken by Mohammed R. Salama in Islam, Orientalism and Intellectual History: Modernity and the Politics of Exclusion since Ibn Khaldun, (New York, 2011), 88-89, where he proposes, similar to Franz Rosenthal, an examination of Ibn Khaldun’s writings in the context of his time without reliance on predecessors or successors for comparative analysis.
hardly passive recipients of Islamic doctrine, were by the late nineteenth century actively challenging the roles assigned to women and lower social classes. Many of them poorly educated, these thinkers nonetheless led efforts to reimagine the place of ex-slaves in Sahelian and Saharan societies, slowly remaking the social order from the ground up. French Africanists, though, had little interest in grassroots social activism. They instead valued the ideas of urban intellectual elites with a broader understanding of native societies and their interaction with the larger world, particularly since these elites offered the prospect of enhanced political control and reach for the French colonial state.

Understanding history and thus the possibility of progress for these scholars stood first as a matter of reading and comprehending Ibn Khaldun, who in their eyes offered the finest example of scholarship from the urban intellectual elite. Delafosse relied on the North African’s work in composing his authoritative ethnological study, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, remarking that the medieval writings when combined with later, derivative works “provided me with the greatest assistance.” In some cases, Ibn Khaldun’s study

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13 Jeremy Berndt, “Closer than your jugular vein: Muslim intellectuals in a Malian village, 1900 to the 1960s,” (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2008), 59 and passim. See also Sean Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa: History of an Emancipatory Community*, (New York, 2009), for a study of a small religious movement that radically reconsidered the role of women and the extant social order.

provided the only critical depiction of medieval African history, when Delafosse and Marty believed local civilizations were at their peak. French scholars could not study Arabic and Islamic histories, even of non-Islamic peoples, without consulting Ibn Khaldun, as Songhay and Mandé accounts relied on his work so heavily (and he on the oral accounts of their ancestors) that they constituted a sort of feedback loop. Since this history relied on the oral accounts of fourteenth-century natives of North and West Africa in describing the state of civilizations, all subsequent and derivative studies made use of those same sources. An informed examination of the West African past thus could not exist without these original African contributions, a fact that also reintroduced the biases of those sources and Ibn Khaldun himself. His depiction of the Arabs as a destructive nomadic force that both eliminated the high civilization of the Berbers and introduced the sophistication of Islam shaped the conception of French Africanist scholars of the movement and interrelationship of peoples in the long history of North African invasion. They ultimately viewed religion, race, and ethnicity in much the same way.

A similar loop existed for Marty and Delafosse as they emerged from a French Arabist and Islamist tradition long interested in examining documents from historical Islam. The province of a small group of Orientalist scholars in France since the sixteenth century, the “universal histories” of Islam became important for the entire colonial enterprise following the French conquest of Algeria. With the rise of the Algerian colonial government as a sponsor for publication, scholars witnessed a large increase in the translation of prominent Arabic works into French. Studies such as those authored by

Ibn Khaldun, valuable as both factual histories and philosophical treatises, could now serve as inputs to the larger discussions of social construction and development occurring in France and across Europe. By choosing the works to translate from among the vast store of manuscripts available in French academic institutions, French Arabic scholars shaped the conversations occurring in the metropole.

The translation and publication of Ibn Khaldun by prominent Orientalist Baron William MacGuckin de Slane beginning in the 1840s opened the door for subsequent French scholars of Arab societies (in particular Houdas and Delafosse) to gain easier access to these materials. These collections contained a large number of “universal histories” describing the evolution and interaction of societies within the arc of the Muslim world as well as several manuscripts relating to the conquest of the Sahel (the southern edge of the West African Sahara).\(^\text{16}\) Such wide availability of sources suggests prominent French scholars of Arabic encountered at least the French translations of de Slane early in their career, and they likely saw Arabic versions of other universal histories as well. Delafosse, Marty and their colleagues were thus well acquainted with these works and their derivatives.

They drew on Ibn Khaldun’s description of the world from a sociological standpoint. In his analysis, only science could distinguish between truth and lies by

\(^{16}\) Baron de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits Arabes: Bibliothèque Nationale Département des Manuscrits*, (Paris, 1883-1895), 281-295. Ms. 4620 was listed as a seventeenth century description of the Mauritanian conquest, and mss. 1880 and 1881 were copies of Abu Hassan al-Bakri’s novel, *Conquete de la Mauritanie*. de Slane’s catalog lists 101 works under the title of “Universal History,” manuscripts 1465-1565, including the work of al-Schatibi, al-Soyuti, al-Masudi, al-Taburi, and Ibn Kathir, among others; Ibn Khaldun’s work provided more entries than any other. Dozens of other documents were available at the *Institut de France* and one of its components, the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*. See Charles Grémont, *Les Touaregs Iwellemmedan, 1647-1896: Un ensemble politique de la boucle du Niger*, (Paris, 2010), for a detailed discussion of some of these manuscripts.
“examining human society, which is to say civilization.” It is important here to understand Ibn Khaldun’s use of the word “science” not in the anachronistic modern Western sense. Rather, Ibn Khaldun meant that he was responsible for the invention of a thorough, objective study of social bodies not directly influenced by Islamic jurisprudence or mystical Prophetic genealogies, something that had not been attempted by Islamic scholars to that point. He described his approach as a new discipline: “It is a unique science as it firstly has a special object, civilization and human society, and then it works with several questions in order to explain in turn the facts that make up the essence of society itself.”

Through an examination of the cycles of development and decay, scientists could discern not only the interaction between societal groups but the very structure of those societies themselves. This same question served as the motivation for Delafosse, Marty, and the entire generation of French Africanist scholars dedicated to understanding difference and improving African societies.

Khalidunian societies took their form, in part, from geographic location. Borrowing to some extent from earlier Arab scholars, Ibn Khaldun described the world as composed of seven climatic zones of habitation. A society’s civilizational state depended on its proximity to the fourth zone of habitation, roughly equivalent to the Mediterranean clime. Those in the first (equatorial) or seventh (polar) zones were thus the furthest from civilization. Societies took their form in part from their area of habitation; environment was important in understanding these constructions. Sahelian and sub-Saharan blacks, as inhabitants of the equatorial zone, were “living in savage isolation and devour each

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17 Ibn Khaldun, Les Prolégomènes, I, 77. See also his description on I, 88: “Men are thus obliged to live in society. Without it, they cannot be assured of their existence or of their ability to accomplish the will of God.”
other.”

This isolation, in part, explained their primitivity; they were far from the civilizing effects of Islam and the urban lifestyle of the littoral. They could hope to advance only through mixing with other groups. As an example, Ibn Khaldun pointed to the Arabs, originally “a race of looters and brigands” living a nomadic lifestyle and acting as an obstacle to the “progress of civilization.” They advanced to a higher developmental level only by a total change in societal construction, as “the sedentary lifestyle is favorable to the progress of civilization.”

Arab genealogists could make important claims to descent from early Islamic families, but they could not deny the importance of the infusion of non-Arab blood. True progress in this construction would result only from the salutary mixing of Islamic science, knowledge, and faith with the sedentary lifestyle of Berber and even black Africans. Even the supposed “savage” black Africans could add a much-needed spark to stagnant North African groups.

Ibn Khaldun thus presented what he saw as the fundamental division in human societies, one that pitted the rural against the urban. They were inextricably intertwined, as the urban represented the highest form of habitation, one nurtured by the spirit of the rural. “Let us look at civilization, born in the fields and ending with the foundation of cities and trending strongly towards this end. As soon as the people of the country acquired this level of well-being and luxury...they allowed themselves to adopt the sedentary lifestyle.”

Rural life preceded urban life, but could not withstand the allure of greater leisure, wealth, and prestige eventually offered by cities. The nomadic desert-

\[18\] Ibid., I, 169.

\[19\] Ibid., I, 273, 310-312.

\[20\] Ibid., I, 258.
dwellers possessed a war-like spirit; their bravery gave them the ability to conquer others. These “savage peoples,” for all their martial strength, improved when they came into contact “with a more advanced civilization” and eventually abandoned the pastoral lifestyle. A sedentary existence remained far superior to its nomadic equivalent.  

However, no achievement ensured permanent strength. The agricultural lifestyle over time created occupational social classes that eventually hardened into immutable castes unable to mix with each other. Inevitably these advanced urban centers crumbled with the onset of decay and excess. While it represented the height of human development, urban life could not last, as it also caused civilizations “to stop and to become corrupted.” Societal progress halted with the assumption of a life of luxury; in a cyclical fashion, the civilization “began to retrograde...to fall into decrepitude” and returned to its natural state, ready to reinitiate the developmental cycle.

Delafosse, Marty, and their colleagues saw similar cycles recurring in West Africa. Interrupted by the initial colonial arrival and the onset of seemingly systemic warfare in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, African civilizations were caught in the debilitated state at the bottom of the developmental cycle. With the reintroduction of “civilization,” in this case Western, the French scholars hoped to reignite the fires of progress in West Africa from the point at which they had ceased. Modern European life, urban, sophisticated, and industrial, offered the ultimate source for this new mixing. Brought into contact with French Arabic scholarship from their early years, Delafosse

21 Ibid., I, 256, 290-291.
22 Ibid., II, 294.
23 Ibid., I, 260; II, 300, 306.
and Marty embarked on developmental paths of their own that pushed them to consider Africa from a perspective quite similar to Ibn Khaldun’s, one focused on the progress of Africa and built from increasingly sophisticated networks of contacts both inside and outside their academic experiences.

**Embracing Africa: Early influences on Delafosse and Marty**

Although from decidedly different backgrounds, both Delafosse and Marty became scholars of Africa in part due to early associations with Algeria. Hardly an idyllic place, Algeria provided both men with an introduction to the good and bad of the French colonial system. When combined with their academic programs, this field experience caused each man to reconsider the place of native Africans in understanding the “dark continent,” a place that remained mysterious for many Europeans.

The product of lower bourgeois parents, Ernest-François-Maurice Delafosse was born on 20 December 1870 in a small town south of Paris. Delafosse’s family, which included a historian grandfather, exposed him to a wide variety of literature and travel works, from Molière to Rousseau. From these early moments he showed an aptitude for non-Western languages that would serve him well in his future career. Rousseau and other *philosophes*, in the absence of detailed, scientific studies, offered the only avenues by which to see life from non-Western perspectives. The lack of non-European views drove Delafosse to seek out alternative angles, ultimately leading to his work on African languages and societies. His formal education began in adolescence, when he received
high marks at a local school.24 Outstanding academic achievement led him to finish his secondary education in Paris, where he focused on philosophy and even considered applying to Saint-Cyr where he passed the initial physical examination for entry, a career path that would potentially have put him on an arc similar to that followed by Louis Faidherbe fifty years before.25 However, his academic interest in Africa ultimately proved greater than the allure of a military career, and he moved instead towards an administrative future in the French colonies.

Paul Marty had no need to dream of African or French service; he was born near Algiers on 6 July 1882, the product of French settler parents. He had early exposure to martial life as well, as his father worked as a mounted police officer.26 He enlisted in the colonial French zouaves regiment in 1901 and earned rapid promotion to officer-interpreter due to his Arabic language skills in 1902.27 Military service offered the young officer the opportunity not only to assist in strengthening France’s place in the world but also to experience foreign cultures. He could employ his skills in both literary Arabic

24 Louise Delafosse, *Le Berrichon*, 2, 18-19, 60-61, 65-66. Maurice’s grandfather was Jules Bidault, a popular historian whose primary work was, with Paul Hennequin, *Histoire populaire de l’empire napoléonien depuis son établissement jusqu’à nos jours, livre de lecture courante à l’usage des écoles primaires*, (Paris, 1854), a primer for primary school students on the Napoleonic legacy. He was also something of an amateur horticulturist, penning *L’horticulture dans les écoles primaires*, (Paris, 1864).

25 Louise Delafosse, *Le Berrichon*, 71. Louise Delafosse reports her father received a “certificate of aptitude” for the physical examination on 6 April 1888, but never completed the full application process. Her work remains the only true biography of Delafosse, although some biographical details are also available in Maurice Delafosse: Entre orientalisme et ethnographie—l’itinéraire d’un Africaniste (1870-1926), ed. Jean-Loup Amselle and Emmanuelle Sibeud, (Paris, 1998).


(see below for more on his formal academic training) and the colloquial dialects he heard during a childhood in the Algerian countryside. During this time he saw the full range of French scholarship and political stewardship of the Algerian colony. He admired efforts of scholar-administrator-soldiers to understand native perspectives, particularly when they informed a political policy that he thought was to be “envied” for its liberal approach to native affairs. Raised in an Algeria simmering with political and social tensions, Marty equated ethnological examination with good governance. In reading the works of other ethnographers he could see the applicability of Algeria to other colonies, a realization that put him in company with Faidherbe, Lyautey and Delafosse.

Delafosse’s early academic and colonial career also revolved around Algeria in a variety of ways. Delafosse’s teacher at the école des langues orientales beginning in 1890, Octave Houdas, served as his most important influence in this direction. A resident of Algiers from age six, Houdas grew up studying Arabic in the Mediterranean city. Initially a military interpreter, he took up a position as professor of Arabic at an Algiers lycée (secondary school) in 1863 and saw the birth of his daughters in that town before relocating to Paris in 1884. Delafosse thus gained an appreciation for Algeria and the centrality of French Algeria to the colonial effort through his teacher, a man with an approach and background similar to those of Faidherbe, Marty, and even Lyautey.


29 David Robinson, Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920, (Athens, OH, 2000), 96. Robert Arnaud and Xavier Coppolani, both administrators in Algeria, bridged the gap between Algeria and West Africa by working in both spaces as ethnographers at times as the colonial governments became aware of close connections across the Sahara.

30 Ibid., 77, 186-187.
Houdas also passed to his pupil the need to assemble a large “corpus” of native sources before reaching any conclusions; in particular he emphasized the importance of textual recordings as central to any analysis of native civilization.\textsuperscript{31} From these early teachings Delafosse began to form his outlook on native intellectual life, and perhaps even had a first opportunity to read Ibn Khaldun.

In May 1891, too impatient to complete his Arabic studies with Houdas, Delafosse followed the anti-slavery Institut des frères armés du Sahara (Armed Brothers of the Sahara) to Algeria.\textsuperscript{32} He participated in efforts to destroy slave markets at El Goléa in central Algeria on the leading edge of the French colonial effort: “Our goal is to march forward in the Sahara, working together with the French government to coordinate our actions with those of the troops.”\textsuperscript{33} In collaborating with French colonial soldiers and administrators, Delafosse experienced Algerian life far from the Mediterranean littoral and its cosmopolitan cities. The cities, he felt, were corrupt caricatures of the North African existence that in his opinion existed in its purest form among the nomadic groups of the desert.

In the young reformer’s mind, the “true Arab life” existed only in the Sahara itself, where Delafosse could see evidence of ancient Arab invasions in the form of “their language and their religion.” He continued, “All are Berbers, some pure Berbers...the

\textsuperscript{31} On the relationship between Delafosse and Houdas, see Maurice Delafosse, “Le Gâna et le Mali,” 482. On Houdas’ call for documentation, see for example, Georges de Gironcourt, “Les inscriptions de la nécropole de Bentia (avec extraits d’une note de M. Houdas),” Comptes-rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres 55, 2 (1911), 202-203.

\textsuperscript{32} Louise Delafosse, Le Berrichon, 77-80. The group was affiliated with the missionary “White Fathers” and was founded by the renowned abolitionist Cardinal Charles Lavigerie.

\textsuperscript{33} Delafosse to sister, 7 June 1891, in Maurice Delafosse, “Une Vocation coloniale,” Outre-mer 1, 3 (September 1929), 278.
others R’ouara, (which is to say of the Oued [tribe] R’ir), and are remarkable for their black color.”

Tribal genealogies dominated the social landscape for the young scholar, “a chain of Moors with true Moors” tempered by “true Africa” found in “the desert, that of the blacks.” In short, the desert, so pure and far away from European influence, demonstrated the mixing of Arab and black, where descent and kinship was all-important. Even at this early stage Delafosse stumbled on to the complex urban-rural interrelationship that was central to Ibn Khaldun’s theory of history. Mediterranean cities, corrupted by centuries of luxury, had lost spirit and vigor in this view. The young advocate for change, in this case the elimination of desert slavery, saw that societies changed over time as they absorbed others or combined with neighbors. The Sahara and the Sahel offered the perfect opportunity for such study, for escaping the decay of cities and finding a place where “the view makes one forget his fatigue.”

Delafosse, however, did not remain in this idyllic Saharan environment. Disillusioned by a brief stint as an army conscript and the intrigues of the anti-slavery movement, the young thinker turned his attention back to more scholarly pursuits. He hoped that his study of the linguistic and anthropological origins of African civilizations would make his quest for colonial reform easier.

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34 Delafosse to sister, 13 August 1891 in Delafosse, “Une vocation coloniale,” 282-283. Parentheses in original. In this case Delafosse is referring to what the French called the “Oued R’ir” tribe, which lived in the Algerian Sahara between the Mzab and Ouargla.

35 Delafosse, Les états d’âme, 7.

36 Quoted in Louise Delafosse, Le Berrichon, 82, 89. Delafosse spent an additional year in Algeria as a private in the same unit in which Marty would later serve. Georges Hardy indicated Delafosse served as a nurse during this time, which he called a “nightmare.” Georges Hardy, “Maurice Delafosse,” La Revue indigène (1930), 206-207.
Delafosse returned to Paris in 1892 to renew his studies with Houdas. He had witnessed firsthand the divisions between groups in Africa, from what he saw as distasteful and decayed coastal cities to the more dynamic settlements across the desert in black Africa. He could contrast these views, built from field observations, to the teachings of armchair anthropologists at the Muséum d’histoire naturelle. Museum anthropologists depicted Africa as shaped by the movement of the “Hamitic [African descendants of Noah’s son Ham] and Semitic [Near Eastern descendants of Noah’s son Shem] groups” of people. The migration of Arab-Semitic people into North Africa, a movement advanced by many French physical anthropologists who saw races as separate sub-species, became the motor of historical change in this model. For those who ascribed to this theory, “few Arabs” remained in the area, as the Berbers remained the predominant racial group with an overlaid Arab civilization: “the Arabs succeeded the Greco-Latins, and that is it.” Delafosse evaluated this approach as overly simplistic when compared with the great variety of African “civilizations” he had seen in person.

Once the home of societies boasting the highest levels of social, political, and intellectual development, Delafosse believed Africa would again play host to such advanced groups.

The young scholar made his first foray into the academic publishing world by tracing the non-African origins of groups, trying to explain the differentiation and sophistication of some West African societies, in particular the Peul (Fulbé) through their

37 René Verneau, the celebrated physical anthropologist focused on physiometric measurement in the style of Paul Broca and Paul Topinard taught Delafosse at the Muséum, as did the director of the anthropology lab, E.T. Hamy. See René Verneau, “Nécrologie – Maurice Delafosse,” L’Anthropologie (1926), 595.

ties to Hadrami Arabs in Somalia. Although not cognizant of the implications at the time, Delafosse had entered one of the most sophisticated debates among native West African intellectuals. The Peul had long seemed outsiders to the area; their language and appearance simply did not fit with those of their neighbors. Peul intellectuals, anxious to depict their society as more developed and thus more capable of assuming leadership over neighboring groups, pointed to their status as white outsiders linked either to long-ago migrations of pre-Islamic Arabs from Yemen or to the original Muslim conqueror of North Africa, ‘Uqba. This discussion, similar to the musings of Faidherbe on the Berbers, ultimately grew to include French Africanists who recounted and analyzed these Peul origin stories. Certainly not limited to sub-Saharan Africa, oral sagas tying lineage origins to peoples outside Africa were central to claims of religious, social, and political prominence of groups in the Moroccan-Soudanese Sahel. Conversing in this African language of race and origins gave both Delafosse and Marty credibility to expand their networks of contacts in the region.


40 Both Delafosse and Marty spent significant time decoding and unraveling these myths. See, for instance, Delafosse’s discussion of Peul origins in Missions de Gironcourt en Afrique occidentale, 1908-1909; 1911-1912: Documents scientifiques, ed. Georges de Gironcourt, (Paris, 1920), 105-108; Maurice Delafosse, “Traditions Musulmans relatives à l’origine des Peuls,” Revue du monde musulman 20 (September 1912), 242-257. For discussions of other origin myths (particularly flowing through Egypt) and their sources, see Marty, Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan, III, 3; and Maurice Delafosse, Sur des traces probables de civilisation égyptienne et d’hommes de race blanche à la Cote d’Ivoire, (Paris, 1901), 53-54. For examples of the native inputs to this discussion, see the discussion of the Tarikh es-Soudan and the Tarikh el-Fettach below as well as M’hammad ibn Ahmad Yura al-Daymani, Ikhbar al-ahbar bi akhbar al-abar (Renseignements des lettrés sur l’histoire des puits), trans. Paul Marty, (Rabat, 1991), 9-11; Siré-Abbas-Soh, Chroniques du Foûta Sénégalais, ed. and trans. Maurice Delafosse with Henri Gaden, (Paris, 1913), 15; Cleaveland, Becoming Walata, 37-38, 58, 64-65, 193; and Bruce S. Hall, “The question of ‘race’ in the pre-colonial southern Sahara,” Journal of North African Studies 10, 3 (2005), 348-349.
With significant linguistic expertise and the support of metropolitan academics and powerful colonial officials, Delafosse earned his first position as a deputy regional administrator in Côte d’Ivoire in 1894. Working in the areas of Baoulé and Toumodi, Delafosse continued his ethnographic/linguistic research into 1895, establishing close ties with French academics who could give him access to networks of local African informants and their manuscripts across the Niger River region. Throughout this time Delafosse cultivated local ethnographic sources in developing his understanding of the area, finding significant time to conduct research in Côte d’Ivoire under the sponsorship of both Parisian academics and colonial administrators. Like Faidherbe, Delafosse lived with a native woman, Amoïn Kré (called Amoui) who bore him two sons: Henri Kouamé (b. 1903) and Jean Kouassi (b. 1906). He lived with his native family on and off from 1900 to 1907, officially recognizing his sons just before his Parisian marriage and arranging for their education by missionaries. This lifestyle enabled Delafosse to expand his networks of native contacts and potential ethnographic and historical sources.

41 Louise Delafosse, *Le Berrichon*, 95-96, 106, 116-117. Delafosse owed his new position to the sponsorship of both Houdas and E.T. Hamy, who provided him with a new boss and a future mentor in Louis-Gustave Binger, then the governor of Côte d’Ivoire and a former guest lecturer at the Sorbonne. Delafosse made contact in the colony with Colonel Louis-Parfait Monteil, a colonial officer and commander; and his brother Charles (father of later Ibn Khaldun scholar and Soustelle collaborator Vincent), a colonial administrator and linguist who assisted in the collection of local documents and oral interviews. Delafosse also served as the administrator of the cercle of Baoulé in 1896.

42 In 1899 Delafosse actually turned down a grant from the école des langues orientales vivantes, as he had left his brief assignment in Liberia to return to Côte d’Ivoire, finding significant local support in that colony. See Administrator, Ecole spéciale des langues orientales vivantes to Minister of Colonies (Antoine Guillain), 15 March 1899; Minister of Colonies to Governor, Côte d’Ivoire, 20 March 1899; Delafosse to Governor, Côte d’Ivoire, 21 March 1899; and Governor, Côte d’Ivoire to Minister of Colonies, 22 March 1899 that show the full sequence of events. FM/SG/CIV/III/4, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (hereafter ANOM).

His position of power as a regional administrator enabled him to dictate to his native family, using them as instruments to better acclimatize to life in Africa while cementing his ties to the area.⁴⁴ Family life thus served as a measure of domesticity while also permitting Delafosse to grow professionally, enhancing his reach as an ethnologist.

While Delafosse was gaining a personal and professional foothold in Africa, his future colleague Paul Marty was just entering military service in Algeria following his 1902 promotion to officer. Stationed in Tunisia from 1902-1907, he earned degrees in Arabic, history, and secondary education, expertise that set him apart from many of his colleagues and enabled him to delve deeply into the intellectual heritage and potential of Africa.⁴⁵ The young interpreter quickly earned recognition for his “perfect knowledge of the language” that included “idioms and customs of the region,” even prompting a 1909 evaluation as “a perfect observer who deeply understands the native mentality.”⁴⁶ This evaluation, written during Marty’s time in Morocco (1908-1912), found him seconded to Lyautey’s Oran division. He thus found himself in contact with a tradition that approached native civilizations as distinct and worthy of study and envisioned a humanist form of rule that adherents expected to dissolve in the face of native progress. Lyautey praised Marty’s “tact and great enthusiasm for work,” as the junior officer pursued a

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⁴⁵ Certificates of study and Evaluation of 1907, Marty dossier, SHD. His Arabic degree came from the Ecole des Lettres d’Alger (later the University of Algiers), his history degree from the Faculté d’Aix-en-Provence and his certificate in secondary education from the Académie d’Alger.

⁴⁶ Evaluation of 1908 (signature illegible, possibly Cuisset); and 1909 evaluation (unsigned), Marty dossier, SHD.
deeper knowledge of local history. Marty, now seen as “in the first rank of Arabic-speaking authorities,” saw his military superior as “the great organizer, the genius leader who kept a finger on the path to the future.” In other words, Marty believed that Lyautey’s approach centered on a strong appreciation of potential, of what could and would happen. History offered the clearest path to a reasonable assessment of that future in Marty’s eyes, a sentiment on which he would expand in his writings on Africa over the next thirty years.

From his time in Morocco working for the most famous French colonial soldier Marty learned not only to value his deepening familiarity with local language and custom for its own sake, but also to use it for political ends. Study of local populations was critical to good governance but not necessarily tied to exploitation in his view. Marty, like Faidherbe and Lyautey before him, believed that these non-European societies could develop in a parallel track, pushed along by a colonial power with detailed knowledge of local conditions and beliefs. This notion of association found strong footing in AOF, the French colonial federation that controlled West Africa and inherited Faidherbe’s Senegalese legacy. Marty found AOF circulars of 1909 and 1911 particularly revealing of this approach: “Absolute and equal respect for all peoples, our subjects, their religious faith, their religious liberty and their customs and traditions as they are not at all contrary

47 Evaluation of 1909, Marty dossier, SHD.

48 Evaluation of 1911, Marty dossier, SHD.

49 Paul Marty, “Les institutions israélites au Maroc,” Revue des études Islamiques 4, Cahier 3 (1930), 329. For more on Lyautey’s views on progress and renewal, see chapter 2 of this work.
to the principles of our civilization.” Soon, Delafosse would join him in this mission to promote colonial governance through “association” as they both moved to Dakar, Marty in 1912 and Delafosse in 1915, to advise the French AOF governor-general on native affairs. The two French Africanist scholars remained committed to a policy of association informed by an understanding of civilizational distinction, one founded on a close, comprehensive study of ethnology generated in the colonies. This study began with the documentary sources produced by Arabic intellectuals with a similar vision of the world beginning in the fifteenth century.

**Employing the colonial system as source of civilizational data**

Mining a deep reserve of sources that reached back to the rise of Timbuktu in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Marty, Delafosse, and their colleagues collected, analyzed and propagated the historical accounts of native African scholars for the scholarly and colonial administrative communities. Infused with ideas derived from Ibn Khaldun, these sources wrestled with notions of genealogy, race, and civilization, and their expression as social structure and religion. Early European explorers had described this intellectual world but provided little analysis. Only with the arrival of Delafosse, Marty, Ismael Hamet, and select other colleagues did the French realize that “Arab authors...as well as Westerners of the middle ages...have been ignored until

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51 See Hall, *A History of Race*, Chapter 2 for a thorough discussion of Ahmad Baba and the local struggle over the definitions of civilization and race, particularly as they related to Islam, slavery and the “ladder of ascent.”
This new generation of French scholars sought to recover these lost accounts, delivering them to the political and academic worlds so as to shape conversations on colonial governance and basic social construction. These sources, the scholars thought, would contribute significantly to a full understanding of the interaction and progress of civilizational groups and geography across the ages, before the arrival of European observers. Without this perspective, Marty and Delafosse believed French colonial leaders had little chance to effect real change in Africa, as they would not fully understand the power of the past. By collecting evidence of past African greatness, Marty and Delafosse hoped to bring to light the civilizational strength of Africans while also exposing potential commonalities and thus areas for a rapid progression.

Arabic accounts themselves shaped the very boundaries of study for Marty, Delafosse, and their colleagues. Medieval and early modern Arabic documents described the region bounded by the Sahara, Senegal, and Niger rivers as takrur (or tekrour), the former reach of the Malian empire. Marty and his colleagues employed this historically constituted term to define modern French Soudan, by extension invoking the great political reach and sophistication of the Malian state. Ismael Hamet, a translator in the employ of the French colonial government in Algeria and AOF, found that “the culture of

52 Paul Marty, “L’Islam et les tribus dans la colonie du Niger,” Revue des études Islamiques 4, Cahier 3 (1930), 337. The full article is in REI 4, 3 (1930): 333-432 and 5, 2 (1931): 139-240. This work on AOF, done well after Marty’s departure from the region, perhaps offers more perspective on African affairs than his earlier works which were prepared “in the breach” of his position on the AOF staff.

53 Chouki el Hamel, La vie intellectuelle Islamique dans le Sahel Ouest Africain: Une étude sociale de l’enseignement Islamique en Mauritanie et au Nord du Mali (XVIe-XIX3 siècles) et traduction annotée de Fath ash-shakur d’al-Bartili al-Walati (mort en 1805), (Paris, 2002), 75. Delafosse and Marty set out to translate the fath ash-shakur in the early 1920s but never completed the work, likely due to Delafosse’s 1926 death and Marty’s 1921 departure from West Africa for Morocco. Discussion of the Soudanese area reached at least as far back (in print) as the Tarikh el-fettach. See below for more discussion on the use of this chronicle and others like it.
Arab letters climbed to a level of significant distinction” as chronicles and genealogies slowly replaced and recorded oral traditions. The lack of early texts made those that did survive all the more important. However, he advised that French scholars must not overlook the importance of oral transmission “from age to age, from generation to generation” of important historical facts. Hamet wondered, “Is there not, in these truly human documents, more scientific veracity than in the most authentic and carefully decoded parchment?” Indeed, in the difficult environmental conditions of the Sahara and Sahel written information was precious, as a Marty informant commented: “I had old books belonging to my ancestors; the termites ate them. I have only those I copied myself.” The line between textual accounts, still the favored medium by Western scholars interested in literacy and high culture, and oral stories thus dimmed. African intellectual elites were more than capable of representing historical reality, but the truth of that history, so important in discerning the proper future developmental path, existed somewhere between the written and spoken word for French Africanist scholars. A full view of the African social and political landscape required a concerted effort to reclaim all accounts of that history.

AOF governors-general, guided at least in part by French Africanist scholars, thus sanctioned numerous expeditions to gain raw ethnographic data, including documents, in the early twentieth century. As early as 1903, AOF and Algerian governors collaborated closely on ethnographic examinations along the shared border between the colonial

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zones. All such expeditions necessarily focused on utility to the colonial enterprise, particularly the relationships between West African Sufi brotherhoods and the colonial state. French administrators viewed these brotherhoods as both a possible avenue into native political structures and a block to that access even as they acted as significant repositories of Islamic knowledge. The empirical information gained by these expeditions served as fodder for the analyses of academics and scholarly colonial officials such as Marty and Delafosse, although their continuing value as ethnographic sources is dubious due to the colonial circumstances of collection. Ultimately, the strong developmental policy recommendations made by the colonial scholars pushed governors to sanction more expeditions with a specifically academic intent, expecting that such efforts would also yield fruit in terms of better-adapted governance. One of these missions, from 1908-1909 and 1911-1912, netted 812 inscriptions and 223 manuscripts totaling over 4,000 pages under the sponsorship of both colonial governors and academic institutions in the metropole. Another, smaller trip to the Timbuktu area

56 See Alice Conklin, A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1920, (Stanford, 1997) for discussion of the interaction of these governors-general with metropolitan officials and their staffs regarding ethnological investigation and the implications of republican governance. On the official relationship between the colonies, see AOF Governor-General (Ernest Roume) to Algeria Governor-General (Charles Jonnart), 21 November 1903 in ALG/GGA/28H/2, ANOM.

57 For example, Xavier Coppolani conducted expeditions to the Mauritanian Sahel and was eventually tasked with the conquest of the area before his 1905 assassination. On the Coppolani expeditions, see his reports and correspondence contained in FM/SG/MRT/IV/1, ANOM, and also the discussion in Democracy and Development in Mali, ed. R. James Bingin, David Robinson and John M. Staatz, (East Lansing, 2000). Robert Arnaud, administrator in Algeria, also conducted an expedition to West Africa. See AOF Governor-General (Roume) to Minister of Colonies (Georges Leygues), 29 March 1906 and Roume to Robert Arnaud, 24 March 1906 in FM/SG/AOF/III/3, ANOM. Arnaud also had a profitable career as a colonial novelist under the nom de plume Robert Randau, most notably Le chef des porte-plum: Roman de la vie coloniale, (1922) and Les colons: roman de la patrie algérienne, (1907).

58 Missions de Gironcourt en Afrique occidentale, 1908-1909; 1911-1912: Documents scientifiques, ed. Georges de Gironcourt, (Paris, 1920), 1, 2, 150. See also the discussion and reproduction of several of these documents in Grémont, Les Touaregs Iwellemmedan.
in 1911-1913 found numerous obscure manuscripts and fragments that later became critical in the efforts of French Africanists to piece together the history of population movements in the area.  

Not explorers themselves, Delafosse, Marty, and Hamet relied on these sorts of expeditions to acquire documents for their use in translating and disseminating native African ideas to a larger political and academic audience. These scholars served as critical figures in changing views of Africa held in both academic and policy circles. Their choices of manuscripts for translation fundamentally altered the canon of West African histories available to non-Arabic speakers, certainly the bulk of the population in both the academic and administrative communities. In general, they attempted translations of documents that appeared significant on their face due to title and length. For example, the *tarikh es-soudan* (TS) appealed to these men for its claims to be a “history of the blacks” with a detailed examination of the powerful and geographically extensive Songhay state and its successors. Choice in translation also depended at least in part on the availability of supporting documentation. They searched for texts that had served as the basis of rumors in the years of exploration, hoping to match up partial fragments with one large, complete manuscript that could be seen as definitive.  

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59 See note by Bonnel de Mezières, 13 April 1913 in FM/SG/AFO/X/6, ANOM regarding his acquisitions in Timbuktu. See also Maurice Delafosse, “Découvertes de M. Bonnel de Mezières dans la région de Tombouctou,” *Revue d’ethnographie et de sociologie* 5, 5-6 (May-June 1914), 203-205. See, for example, Marty, *Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan*, II, 88-89 and I, 352-354 for discussions relating to the importance of these sources.

60 Houdas and Delafosse provide an excellent view into this process in their preface to Mahmoûd Kâti ben el-Hâdj el-Motaouakkel Kâti, *Tarikh el-Fettach, ou chronique du chercheur pour servir à l’histoire des villes, des armées, et des principaux personnages de Tekrour*, (TF), ed. and trans. Octave Houdas and Maurice Delafosse, (Paris, 1964 [1913-1914]). Explorers such as Mungo Park and René Caillié made vague references to the documentary history of the area, but German explorer Heinrich Barth reportedly
Multiple, supporting versions of a manuscript aided them in their efforts to gain a deeper understanding of both the texts themselves and the areas they described.

Ultimately, the most important factor in choice of translation was the scope of the work itself. French Africanist scholars looked for references, both direct and indirect, to Ibn Khaldun as one important measure of the quality of West African histories. French Arabic scholars thus gravitated towards studies that purported to belong to the “universal history” class of writing. They desired broad discussions of migration, racial and ethnic mixing, warfare, and genealogy as well as lists of political successions. The translation of these works allowed them to present one particular view of the developmental arc of West African societies. By pointing to the sophistication of past African civilizations these French scholars provided a compelling portrait of the potential for future achievement. More than just a tacit agreement with the basic historical and civilizational conclusions contained in the works, translation gave scholars an important avenue to express their political and social views, in the process working to change the style of rule in Africa and gain for themselves greater academic and political voice and place, as evidenced by the notoriety and high administrative positions ultimately gained by Delafosse and Marty.61

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61 See below and chapter 4 for more on these political positions, particularly Delafosse’s eventual governorship in Central Africa.
Selection and location of sources depended on the extensive ethnological networks manipulated by Marty and Delafosse. Both men deliberately cultivated vast systems of contacts, both French and native, to augment and replenish the supply of information, connections they maintained both officially and unofficially across the region, above and below the surface of colonial governance. Delafosse, who governed with an ethnographic eye during his tenure as commandant de cercle in Korhogo, Côte d’Ivoire in 1904-05, later occupied a position as advisor to the Governor-General of AOF from 1915-1918. Delafosse and Marty, who served as Director of the Native Affairs Bureau from 1912-1921, thus served together closely on the staff in Dakar from 1915-1918, an important moment for French ethnological production on West Africa as they remained in place with little oversight as much of the colony’s staff focused attention elsewhere during the First World War. The two scholars enjoyed significant monetary and investigative support from the colonial administration and the military during the period as well. At the same time, these colonials constructed links with other French


63 See the very explicit instructions Delafosse gave his subordinates in two notebooks entitled, “Instructions générales du 1er Aout 1904 mises à jour au 30 Juin 1905 par M. Delafosse, administrateur de la cercle de Korhogo,” in 2AP8B2, MNHN. He ordered his subordinates to perform systematic studies of “local customs” by talking to “old men” in particular. The administrators should retain detailed written archives and conduct their investigations by employing the questionnaire developed by François-Joseph Clozel, local administrator and governor. See François-Joseph Clozel and Roger Villamur, Les Coutumes indigènes de la Côte d’Ivoire, (Paris, 1902), XIII-XX.

academics, soldiers, administrators and even missionaries. Interested in linguistics and ethnography, some of these individuals emerged from relative obscurity to assist Marty and Delafosse on the Comité des études historiques et scientifiques de l’Afrique occidentale française, an important advisory body to the governor-general of AOF. For example, Delafosse saw Timbuktu-area Christian missionaries as responsible for “almost all” French knowledge on the social makeup of the area. These unconventional sources served as important correspondents for Marty and Delafosse; many of them were teachers, viewed by the scholars as having the most success at “penetrating the native mind” as they maintained notebooks of these oral histories side-by-side with linguistic primers.

Marty, as Director of the Native Affairs Bureau, did not invent the process of correspondence with sources across the colonial enterprise. Rather, he inherited a long-standing French West African colonial tradition that collected written evaluations of prominent Islamic figures. Dependent on personal abilities and the administrative pressure emanating from Dakar, the bureau’s information gathering on Islamic elites ebbed and flowed with changes in political leadership. Marty brought renewed energy to updating these fiches de renseignements (information cards) on Islamic leaders via

Hamet, “La civilisation Arabe,” 6 fn 1. An example of the items collected by Henri Gaden is “Fétoun de Ahmadou Bamba,” translated by Bou el Moghdad 29 December 1910 in Saint-Louis, which argued that the French were indeed a civilizing force (as Saad Buh also argued in his contemporary letter to his jihadist brother Ma’ al-‘Ainin). See AP/15APC/1, ANOM (fonds Gaden). On a particular alliance with missionary Auguste Dupuis-Yakouba in Timbuktu, see Owen White, “The decivilizing mission: Auguste Dupuis-Yakouba and French Timbuktu,” French Historical Studies 27, 3 (2004), 545-546, 553-554 fn 66 and 556. White quotes Delafosse from his preface to Dupuis-Yakouba, Les Gow, (Paris, 1911), i-ii.

communication with the French commandants de cercle, who provided raw data on prominent Islamic leaders. Each fiche contained basic biographical information: habitation, occupation, political disposition (e.g. “to be surveilled”), level of education, students, and any additional notes. Many of these commandants, perhaps current on Marty’s latest publications, worked hard to provide information on Islamic education and the expansion of Sufi brotherhoods in the area.

To illustrate, in the early twentieth century, Marty gathered information on the increasingly powerful Mauritanian Sufi leader Shaykh Hamallah bin Ahmed. He described him as an important mystic distrusted by some other Sufi leaders, but hardly dangerous. However, as Marty’s tenure came to an end and ethnographic collection slowed, ill-informed French administrators saw Hamallah as a powerful anti-colonial leader, a new version of their old adversary, Saad Buh’s brother and jihadist leader Ma’al-‘Ainin. They exiled Hamallah and launched heavy military campaigns against his followers in the Sahel. French colonial administrators, lacking in ethnographic information and still unclear as to the relationship of the religious practices of the unconventional Sufi brotherhood to “traditional” Islam, ultimately targeted Hamallists as an anti-colonial movement. Marty, on the one hand, certainly saw Islam as a potential

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68 See, for example, Commandant de Cercle du Sine-Saloum, Sénégal, 21 June 1915 to Marty where the commandant refers to his desire to read Marty’s latest book (perhaps Marty’s *Islam en Mauritanie et au Sénégal*, first published in the *Revue du monde musulman* in that year), 14MIOM/895 (AOF 13G69), ANS, ANOM.

69 For description of the Hamallist controversy see Harrison, *France and Islam*, 171-180; Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*, (Bloomington,
threat to be contained but did his best to gather sufficient information so as to inform colonial policy. On the other hand, his successors, at times lacking that critical ethnographic eye, tried to keep the colonial peace through the rapid suppression of any possible agitator, in the process alienating those they wished to govern.

Information provided by AOF administrators, while not always completely accurate, did help Marty understand the active networks of religious and social knowledge production in West Africa, greatly aiding in his efforts to correspond with important Muslim scholars and leaders. These studies traced the connections of Islamic teachers to their affiliated Sufi order and even to their initial instructor, while also providing a demographic breakdown of the next generation of students. These networks could yield information vital to the day-to-day maintenance of French colonial authority while also providing a means to access oral and manuscript histories of the local peoples. He could then use these sources to inform his larger analyses of Islam as both progressive and retarding force, particularly in education. By building connections with prominent Islamic intellectuals Marty hoped to better understand the intellectual state of West Africa and improve it through the medium of religion, a key unifying element.

Because most education in West Africa occurred via Islamic teachers they offered a way into the structure, a means by which the French colonial state could enhance the social,

IN, 2001), 33-34, 162; Robinson, Paths of Accommodation, 155, 160; and Hanreta, Islam and Social Change, which gives an excellent description of a related dispute involving Yacouba Sylla, a former Hamallah follower.

70 See typed copies of biographical sketches of Senegalese marabouts in FM/SG/AOF/X/6, ANOM, which also includes collective breakdowns by order, affiliation, number of students and crossover with French schools.
moral and intellectual level of all natives, a role in which most of these French scholars (since Faidherbe and Lyautey) also cast themselves.

Finding civilization in the words of native African elites

For Delafosse, French colonial officers offered only so much; just recording their data amounted to “a simple compilation,” the antithesis of his academic aim. Deep understanding of African societies in his mind required a close examination of sources themselves, both oral and written. French Africanists believed such an understanding came not from a single source but from an analysis that took the time to “compare written documents with oral traditions and to take everything possible from this comparison.”71

While these French scholars stressed the importance of textual sources, they did not dismiss oral discussion. In an environment of few written documents, stories and legends sometimes offered the only chance to see history through native African eyes. These sources were authentically African, never before translated into European languages, completely devoid of “foreign influence” and representing in many cases, in Delafosse’s expression, “a veritable emanation from the negro mind.”72 Pre-Islamic history in particular appeared, for Marty, only after a close examination of literature, art, numismatics and ethnographical data.73 French Africanists sought out what they believed


represented the very best in written and oral sources, those coming from verified scholarly origins and with a critical, not simply narrative or allegorical, intent.

French scholars thus turned first to written sources in building a foundation of West African history. Arabic speakers in West Africa had long referred to an older work, the *Tarikh es-Soudan* (TS), as the most important and comprehensive history of the Sahel into the sixteenth century; many native African scholars sought access to the document themselves so as to better understand the area’s history.\(^{74}\) Dialogue with natives via written sources remained a vital source for Marty and Delafosse throughout their careers. Like most French Africanists, they sought both to recover ancient data and show natives as interested and in control of their own history and development, with limited French intervention. Natives interested in their own history must have a strong capacity for progress, French scholars thought. Octave Houdas, Delafosse’s mentor and the original French translator of the TS, saw the work as demonstrating that “these populations” were not backward, but “had a proper civilization that was not imposed on them by the people of another race and that the disappearance of this relatively prosperous state is due in large part if not solely to the conquerors of the white race.”\(^{75}\) Houdas argued that far from respecting the customs and traditions of the sub-Saharan empires, Arab conquerors had destroyed much of the previous social, cultural and political apparatus in an invasion stretching across centuries.

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\(^{74}\) See, for example, Shaykh Bay al-Kunti, “Notes sur d’anciennes tribus touareg,” in Grémont, *Les Touaregs Iwellemmedan*, 517.

\(^{75}\) Preface to es-Sa’di, *Tarikh es-Soudan*, (TS), IX.
Developed from an examination of three separate manuscripts, Houdas’ version of the *tarikh es-soudan* (TS) focused on the apparent racial conflict between the more sophisticated and war-like “whites” from North Africa and the pure, underdeveloped blacks. By dissecting the TS Houdas hoped to recover some of the originary state of the sub-Saharan black civilizational group, a point from which the French could hope to reinitiate the region’s development, stalled by the appearance of the Arabs. The work appealed to the French scholars as it approached the Songhay empire and the rest of the Sahel through critical intellectual eyes, paying homage to rulers who cultivated academic and literary development in the area.

French scholars such as Houdas and Delafosse approached African history with a similarly critical eye. Consequently, they sought to learn from their intellectual predecessors; written accounts such as the TS offered just such an opportunity. History remained in the past, but they could gather a deeper understanding of events and the motors of change through the eyes of their forebears. French Africanists thus desired communion only with those who shared such a viewpoint; even in gathering oral accounts they rarely discussed matters with villagers or other non-elites. Marty, Delafosse, and their peers ultimately adopted the language of preceding Arabic-speaking Islamic elites in probing social structure. In particular they focused on genealogy as the language of scholarship. Like many writers in the Islamic tradition, they believed that

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76 Houdas acquired partial copies from Louis Archinard, colonial soldier and explorer in Mali, and Félix Dubois, historian of Timbuktu. He received the best copy from Orientalist René Basset of the Ecole des lettres d’Alger, who got the 1792 manuscript copy from a Dr. Tautain. Preface to *es-Sa’di*, TS, XIV-XV.

77 John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa’di’s Tarikh al-Sudan down to 1613 and other contemporary documents*, (Boston, 1999), lxiv.
only those with a sophisticated genealogical knowledge, the mark of deep Islamic learning, possessed sufficient credibility to reconstruct the past and thus influence the future. Part of respecting native societies was to honor their own views on knowledge. Native Islamic elites places significant weight on genealogy; it only made sense to follow their example and employ their modes of communication and analysis. The TS was an important example of this style of scholarship, as it fit squarely into a long tradition of Islamic writing that stretched across Africa and back to the Near East. In considering the work Delafosse, Houdas, and their peers had to reconstruct its place in the genealogy of African learning, in the process uncovering its importance and legitimacy as a source.

Houdas and other French Africanists ultimately pegged the TS as among the most important of Arab-Islamic sources on West Africa. Its depiction of the course of Soudanese history correlated closely with their Khaldunian outlook. According to the African author of the TS, the great Songhay dynasty fell to Moroccan invasion after 1591; by 1603 the Moroccan state in Timbuktu had fallen into a state of “decadence.” The author described the decline of the invading Moroccan empire as it slipped into excess, sacrificing purity as it became increasingly urban. Succeeding Moroccan dynasties, while claiming great power in the region, in truth led the area only further into disrepair in the author’s opinion, in the process diminishing the important intellectual world of Timbuktu and despoiling its place as a center of Islamic learning. Such description made great sense to French Africanist scholars seeking to proclaim the potential of black Africa and the Sahel. If the area had been diminished by the arrival of

78 Ibid., 308-319.
“white” Moroccans, their depictions of African development without external (other than the salutary contributions of French colonialism) rang true.

Houdas’ student, Delafosse, and Marty placed great stock in the historical depictions advanced by the author of the TS. In understanding the Arab-Berber-Black interaction along the Sahel in Mauritania, Senegal, French Soudan and Niger, Marty made extensive use of the TS, in particular the stories relating the origins of Arab tribes and the progress of Islam across the Sahara. From this early modern chronicle Houdas, Hamet, Delafosse, and Marty could begin to make sense of the convoluted relationship among civilizational groups in AOF; by unraveling these links they hoped to restore each group to an original, untainted position so as to accelerate and simplify moral and intellectual development.

The translation of the TS proved so important that French scholars sought similar documents to could aid them in unraveling the region’s convoluted history. French Africanists thus set their sights on a document rumored since the earliest days of European conquest. Explorers had told of an all-encompassing Arabic document on the history of the area, one that could serve as “the fundamental base of all historical documentation of the countries of the Niger delta.” Delafosse and Houdas set out to make the work, known to French Africanists as the tarikh el-fettach (TF), available in

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80 Félix Dubois, quoted in preface to Mahmoûd Kâti, Tarikh el-Fettach (TF), VII.
both French and Arabic in 1912 following its recovery by French explorers. Despite questionable authorship, Houdas and Delafosse saw the chronicle as an important view into the intellectual capacity of people along the Sahel from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, as “blacks of Soninké origin” employed Songhay histories and Arabic script in a unique telling of local events. The work, French scholars believed, offered outstanding insight into the origins of African groups and the genesis of moral laws. These laws, far from a structural given, were generated and manipulated by the people themselves, not imposed from outside.

The mysterious author himself portrayed the work as a vital history of West African peoples. When approached by his king to write the history, the author at first declined. He ultimately undertook the work in part because “there is nothing anywhere else on most of these princes and there is no work dealing with those who took the title of king.” In this telling, Africans were as curious, if not more so, as the Europeans when it came to their origins. This curiosity, though, also complicated

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81 Preface to TF, VIII-XI. Bonnel de Mezières reportedly found a partial copy in Timbuktu in 1911 in the personal library of Sidi Muhammad al-Imam bin al-Soyuti, later a professor at the city’s madrasa. Clozel found a more complete copy in the possession of Abdoulaye Waly Bah, a Muslim scholar in Haut-Sénégal-Niger, in 1912.

82 See preface, TF, XIV, XIX. Nehemia Levtzion has persuasively argued that heavy portions of the recovered TF manuscript were altered under the nineteenth-century direction of Shehu Amadu of Massina, who inserted justification for his imperial claims as the thirteenth Caliph of Islam. See Nehemia Levtzion, “A Seventeenth-century chronicle by Ibn al-Mukhtar: A critical study of ‘Ta’rikh al-fattash,’” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 34, 3 (1971), 571-593. The editors considered the possibility of multiple authors but never considered the prospect of later political manipulation. Levtzion’s conclusion would have seriously undermined Marty and Delafosse’s use of the TF as an accurate historical source, but would perhaps have added to their search for intellectual ingenuity on the part of natives who would not only produce such a forgery, but also pass it to Europeans as definitive.

83 P. Joseph Brun, “Notes sur le Tarikh el-Fettach,” Anthropos 9 (1914), 593. Brun was the first to doubt the Houdas-Delafosse conception of authorship in print, but stopped short of Levtzion’s conclusions.

84 TF, appendix 2, 328.
ethnological analysis. Ultimately, the history added confusion to the effort by French Africanists to understand West African societal origins. The author delved into pre-Islamic history to describe the originary “Kayamaga” and other Berber groups as deriving from non-Negro stock. The author proposed a migration of Himyarian soldiers from Yemen to the Sahel, where they intermarried with local women in the ancient capital of Gâo on the Niger and then spread southward, eventually participating in the conversion of the region to Islam.\(^{85}\) French Africanists thus had more stories to explore, analyze, debunk, or legitimate.

Exploration of these stories required Delafosse and his peers to employ more sophisticated, interdisciplinary techniques. To decode this history he turned to archaeology, reading the Arabic sources closely to lead him to new sites. Medieval Arab geographical and travel accounts, when combined with TF and TS, provided insight on the locations of ancient Malian capital cities and even old Jewish settlements. Archaeological ruins revealed ancient settlements at sites indicated in medieval chronicles. Delafosse further discovered that many of these settlements carried local symbols indicating origins outside the region, including the “wells of Beni-Israël” and the town of Yani or Niani.\(^{86}\) Written accounts thus gained greater credence through a separate but overlapping series of archaeological excavations. From this combination of sources French scholars hoped to better understand the long histories of the civilizational

\(^{85}\) TF, 75-79, and appendix 2, 326-333. The editors proposed that the fragment listed as appendix 2 may have originally formed the opening of the work. Subsequent analysts have agreed that it may have been removed at some point in the later editing/forging process.

\(^{86}\) Delafosse, “Découvertes de M. Bonnel de Mezières,” 305, and “Le Gâna et le Mali,” 486-493, 498, 519-520. Delafosse references Ibn Khaldun as the best of these Arab sources, but also uses Ibn Hawqal, Ibn Battuta and al Bekri.
groups now living in such close proximity. A more complete view of that complicated
history, they thought, would better reveal the historical dimension of African
developmental arcs that had halted just as Europe entered industrial modernity.

Historian P.F. de Moraes Farias, however, has discovered numerous West African
sources that highlight the holes in Delafosse’s historico-archaeological methodology,
however ground-breaking it may have been at the time. The privilege Delafosse
 accorded to written sources skewed his vision of West African history, and ultimately his
findings on the proper developmental path for native African groups. Although Octave
Houdas considered grave inscriptions and epigraphs as sources in that history, Delafosse
dismissed them as ahistorical and of little real value, instead preferring the textual
accounts from the TS and TF.\(^{87}\) In the process, however, Delafosse lost sight of the
specific late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century moment in which the authors
produced the texts. Farias has pointed out that the Timbuktu chroniclers so valued by
Delafosse took little note of the centuries of epigraphy that surrounded them, instead
attending to local political concerns. They wrote in order to negotiate a new status for the
former Songhay ruling classes overcome by the Moroccan invasion of the late sixteenth
century, thereby ignoring or overlooking the contributions of other African groups to
political and social events in the area.\(^{88}\) In his fervor to examine the written words of
what he viewed as true African intellectuals, Delafosse developed a developmental
portrait that privileged the claims of Timbuktu elites at the expense of a more complete


\(^{88}\) Ibid., chapter 2, section 2, lxix-lxxxv.
and composite depiction of local events, an example of the power of African elites in negotiation with French colonial ethnologists, even across the centuries.

This is not to say, though, that Delafosse considered only seventeenth-century chronicles in his work. Rather, he considered accounts from a variety of sources that proved, in at least some measure, the ability of African groups, both “black” and “white,” to achieve great things. In just such an effort, Delafosse collected a series of stories relating to the area of Futa Toro located along the Sahel in Senegal, an area where “whites” and “blacks” frequently came into contact. Locally-produced oral sagas, as opposed to the more traditional efforts to link West African Islamic lineages back through North Africa to the original Arabic conquerors or Yemeni immigrants, extolled black virtue. Delafosse’s source, an African savant from the area, converted oral accounts into written documents and placed words in the mouth of an “ingenious savant”: “I was disgusted by the religion of the whites and I came among the blacks to instruct myself in their religion and abandon the doctrine of those who hardly believe at all.” Blacks thus depicted themselves as capable of high civilization and more advanced religion when compared to their “white” neighbors across the Sahara. All history in West Africa was not dominated by notions of Arab invasion and the arrival of Islam as the key moments in history in this depiction. Blacks extolled their own virtues in song, legend, and text and passed these on to French scholars in deliberate efforts to inject this view

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89 Siré-Abbas-Soh, Chroniques du Foûta Sénégalais, 2, 5, 28, 46. Siré-Abbas-Soh reportedly penned the collection of stories from his memory in only 15 days. Henri Gaden aided the effort by offering translation and orthographic services as well as connections with locals to gain supporting documentation for verification. For a similar methodology, see Aïssa, Traditions historiques et légendaires du Soudan Occidental; and the unattributed Chroniques de la Mauritanie Sénégalaise, Nacer Eddine, ed. and trans. Ismael Hamet, (Paris, 1911).
into the colonial project with an eye towards a more sympathetic and forgiving
government.

Delafosse, Marty, and Hamet saw the preservation of these histories not only as
fortuitous and valuable for their studies, but also as indicative of a past glory along the
Sahel. Hamet reflected, “Not only does the introduction of Arabic literature in the Sahara
reach far back, this literature was wonderfully cultivated there, with success, by the
Soudanese and Berber natives.”90 While many of these chronicles reported origins in
Yemen or among the original Islamic conquest of North Africa by ‘Uqba in the seventh
century, some African authors remained skeptical, a critical marker for Delafosse and his
peers in determining the legitimacy of historical accounts. For example, in examining a
fragmentary history of the Peul (Fulbé) people of West Africa written by Sultan
Muhammad Bello, Delafosse praised the ruler for his “prudent conclusion.” He found
that the “author did not have great faith in the tradition he reported and for which he had
searched, without much success, to clarify.”91 In other words, French Africanists
expected critical analysis in legitimate local African academic writings. Histories, and
historians, who applied their desired critical eye and evidentiary requirements to local
accounts gained significantly in credibility. The existence of critical local histories
proved to French Africanists that West Africans, when held apart from their North
African neighbors, were themselves capable of high literary and intellectual civilization
and a self-critical analysis of origin myths. Because most of these analyses occurred in

The full article is in 12, 10 (October 1910), 194-213 and 12, 11 (November 1910), 380-405.

91 Delafosse, “Traditions Musulmans relative à l’origine des Peuls,” 264. A fragment of this same history
appeared in an appendix of Houdas, Tedzkiret en-Nisian.

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Arabic using Islamic techniques imported from the Middle East, French Africanists ascribed the sophisticated arguments, at least in part, to the influence of that tradition. Islam, at times a restricting or destructive force (as in jihad), could also rejuvenate thought.

One such West African group, the Sahelian Kunta people, had sophisticated written and oral histories of their Prophetic lineage. These accounts, particularly when further substantiated by Ibn Khaldun or other medieval travelers and geographers, provided French Africanists with an opportunity to delve more deeply into links and discontinuities across the Sahara. Through a cross-examination of these origin myths French Africanists hoped to better understand the results of civilizational meetings along the desert edge. Paul Marty strove to find and dissect these oral and written sources in what he called “historical reconstruction.” Kunta elites, who Marty described (at times employing their language) as “white,” “Moor,” or “Arab,” offered a voice similar to that of Marty and Delafosse, a link that appealed to the French scholars as they searched for a more definitive ethnological “truth” of African history. 92

Native intellectual elites often provided sophisticated oral accounts of the past. Delafosse recognized the importance of these griots, which he defined as troubadours or keepers of oral traditions, to modern scholarship: “It is thanks to these traditional griots

92 On “historical reconstruction” using multiple sources, see Marty, Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus Maures, 2. For the appropriation of Kunta language of race, see Marty, Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan, I, 154. Marty found several works particularly useful in understanding the lines between “white” and “black” in the Sahel, among them several so-called Tarikh kounta relating the history of the people from the 6th to 19th centuries; and more importantly the Kitab et-Taraif of Shaykh Sidi Muhammad (d. 1826), found in multiple Arabic language libraries of prominent Islamic clerics in Sahelian communities. See Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan, I, 2-3, 65; and Hamet, “Littérature arabe,” 197, 402-403. For a detailed analysis of this Kunta/Tuareg language, see Hall, A History of Race, chapter 1.
that we have some insight into the ancient stories of numerous native states.”\textsuperscript{93} Much like current scholars, Delafosse worried over the accuracy of such accounts. However, he found some satisfaction in a triangulation of sources: “As there are in general multiple griots dealing with the same task simultaneously it is possible, in consulting them one at a time, to cross-check and arrive at, if not certainty, at least a satisfactory approximation [of the true story].”\textsuperscript{94} A comparative analysis of the oral accounts provided by multiple speakers aided Delafosse in this act of reconstruction by finding commonalities between stories.

Dialogue, in the form of open discussion with native African intellectuals and the interrogation and triangulation of sources, thus served as bedrock of the French Africanist practice of ethnology. As noted briefly above, many intellectual elites, particularly Islamic scholars, appropriated and manipulated colonial language so as to better position themselves in the colonial world. Colonial ethnology, without question, rested on the unequal power relations between colonizers and colonized. French Africanists made use of these inequalities to mine academic sources so as to further the “civilizing” rhetoric so important to the colonial enterprise. At the same time, though, their techniques of correspondence gave some native African elites, at the expense of their rivals, opportunities to gain some voice in the formulation of colonial policy via the scholarly representations of socio-political forms and particularly of Islam. Even the minimal or sometimes implicit respect given to these ethnographic correspondents by colonial ethnologists gave African natives some measure of credibility. In the process, these elites

\textsuperscript{93} Maurice Delafosse, Les Nègres, (Paris, 1927), 68.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 69.
gained some measure of relief from the forms of direct colonial intervention proposed by other theorists. The ethnological approach of Marty and Delafosse thus informed the humanist reform impulse in the AOF and countered assimilationist ideas.\textsuperscript{95}

Efforts to understand the interrelationship between history, genealogy, and Islam brought Delafosse, Marty and their peers into dialogue with local Islamic elites. Delafosse cultivated ties with the Senegalese Shaykh Musa Kamara who provided him with strong insight into Islamic religious practices and history and offered a glimpse of early drafts of his Soudanese history.\textsuperscript{96} Paul Marty maintained a similar association with many native scholars, including their work on genealogy of Sufi brotherhoods in annexes to his work in, at minimum, an implicit endorsement of their religious and political positions. In a telling example of such \textit{quid pro quo} reproduced by Marty as exemplary, a native shaykh wrote to the AOF Governor-General to request “your help and your surveillance” as well as “precise information” on nomadic raiders attacking his people. He offered his political allegiance and information on the local area in the language of the French civilizing mission, calling the French colonial administration the sole entity “who can improve this critical and primitive state.”\textsuperscript{97} The shaykh in this instance called on a French colonial tradition of suppression or control of Saharan Tuareg groups, who they

\textsuperscript{95} This description of colonial reform triangulates between the descriptions of colonial reformers in Gary Wilder, \textit{The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars}, (Chicago, 2005); the “accommodation” model advanced by David Robinson in \textit{Paths of Accommodation}; and the intellectual transmission portrayed by Bruce Hall in \textit{A History of Race}.


\textsuperscript{97} Marty, \textit{Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan}, 336-338. As another example, Marty wrote a section of his earlier work, \textit{Etudes sur l’Islam au Sénégal}, I, 262-279, with the assistance of documentary and oral accounts provided by followers of Amadu Bamba (1853-1927), the founder of the Murid Sufi order in Senegal, to understand the social impact of the order on the colonial state in West Africa. See chapter 4 of this work for more on the Murid order and Marty’s view of the movement.
perceived as destructive raiders of peaceful Sahelian sedentary communities. Native elites thus actively shaped French colonial policy with appeals to administrators and intellectuals couched in the language of civilization and development. More than passive recipients of colonial largesse or even partners in an even dialogue, they participated in a larger discussion on the nature of African civilization.

These elites, more than just intellectuals with similar views of the world, acted as brokers with access to manuscripts and oral histories. In one such instance, prominent West African Islamic scholar Shaykh Bay al-Kunti exchanged access to manuscripts for time with a French explorer’s wide-ranging collection of genealogies. “The view of my manuscripts visibly piqued the curiosity” of the cleric, recalled the explorer, as “he extended an impatient hand, wanting to see with his own eyes the genealogies of sharifs [descendants of the prophetic line] that I possessed.” With the examination complete, the shaykh “opened the centers of learning and before long my baggage grew with [the addition of] interesting manuscripts.” Shaykh Bay was no colonial stooge, however. He expected and received French gifts in exchange for his loyalty. In return, he offered support of the French military and political presence as a necessary evil brought on by power imbalances. He acted as an independent entity physically removed from colonial power centers and manipulating the colonial state as best he could from a position of military impotence. The ethnological exchange, from Sahelian ideas on race to regional histories, involved a dialogue, one that did not always occur on equal terms. Sahelian intellectuals shaped discussions with French scholars regarding lineage, working hard to

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98 The explorer in this case was Georges de Gironcourt; see Missions de Gironcourt, 147-149.

99 See Hall, A History of Race, 225, for description of Shaykh Bay’s views in this regard.
maintain or overturn existing social structures so as to benefit themselves. They could manage such an exchange through the provision of those genealogies and histories that supported their political and ideological goals.  

Islamic scholars had also been interested in the history of the Sahel since at least the Arab invasions of Africa. This interest often led to the production of descriptions of descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Detailed genealogies provided a direct link to the roots of Islam and to the political and religious power that implied. While the enormous importance of these sometimes manufactured genealogies to African elites frustrated French scholars in search of objective fact, French researchers nonetheless appropriated them for reproduction in their studies. Paul Marty considered such genealogies with caution, compiling massive numbers in the appendices of his writings to counterbalance one another, putting special credence on those coming from his closest native correspondents, particularly Shaykh Saad Buh (see below). Delafosse noted the significant discrepancies between Arab and West African accounts, finding that adherence to Islam fundamentally changed the emphasis of descent claims. He found black African groups who, rather than follow the animist “wish to conserve and enhance the memory of divine ancestors,” focused on links to early adherents to Islam through Arab bloodlines. 

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100 See Abdel Wedoud oued Cheikh, *Eléments d’histoire de la Mauritanie*, (Nouakchott, 1991), 38, for discussion of one such example, where Sahelian elites controlled the flow of fifteenth century chronicles so as to suggest to Marty that the warrior-clerical divide in West Africa was of more recent vintage. Depictions of the Arabs as destroyers and remakers of Sahelian society fit better with French understanding of the area descended from Ibn Khaldun’s negative commentary on these conquerors.

Recent scholarship has focused on these genealogies as important for a number of reasons. To a certain extent they became matters of “convenience,” giving an easy linguistic link to pre-Islamic Arabian tribes. North African social groups, in many cases, appeared to “graft” names from ancient epics of invasion and conquest, using these stories to fill historical gaps and claim a more impressive lineage. This refashioning may have begun in the Western Sahara as early as the fifteenth century, when elites began to claim ties to Almoravid conquerors. But the spread of medieval Arabic literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided a simple means to depict contemporary social turmoil as the product of a long-running process. African intellectuals accomplished this new self-description by writing local histories as continuations of famous texts, thereby legitimating the position of present elites. These rulers could claim status as the product of a long history of “arabization” where Berber elites struggled to maintain prominence as they fell under the control of Arab invaders. Claims of descent both constructed and legitimized later hierarchies and made the distribution of social roles seem an historical inevitability. Ties to Islamic conquerors and holy men strengthened political or ideological claims made by later rulers.102

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers of these genealogies and chronicles fit themselves into a much longer line of intellectuals. By claiming ties to early works and thinkers they spoke to a local, Islamic audience while claiming a level of knowledge and

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truthfulness on par with their illustrious predecessors, avoiding any break in the chain of knowledge. Warrior-nobles could link themselves to the powerful Hassan Arab conquerors; clerical groups could gain moral authority, political prominence, and “charismatic capital” from links to sophisticated intellectual movements and religious commentators.\textsuperscript{103} By the twentieth century, Saad Buh, Shaykh Sidia, and other prominent West African religious intellectuals, still mindful of these links, also reproduced genealogies for a new, Western audience seeking an obvious ruling class. This connection to Western scholars provided an additional outlet through which leaders could proclaim their lines of descent. Through genealogical reproduction the kinship group grew in power and credibility as its claims became more widespread and gained the legitimacy that came with reproduction in multiple circles. Native West African elites saw the power of Islam as a marker of their level of sophistication and worked to exploit connections with Westerners so as to better claim the political and religious legitimacy that came with well-developed Islamic genealogies.\textsuperscript{104} With this prominence came risk, however, as French scholars could manipulate the divisions introduced by kinship diagrams to their political advantage.


\textsuperscript{104} Hall, \textit{A History of Race}, 230-231.
Colonialism, no matter how dialogic, ultimately entailed shifting structures of domination and exploitation. Following the martial examples of Faidherbe, Gallieni, and Lyautey; Marty, Delafosse, and other French Africanists sought to “divide and rule” intellectually as well, exploiting divisions between native groups to gain better information on their history and social composition. French scholars justified their existence and grew in prominence from these important inputs to colonial rule, whereby their ethnological investigations revealed fractures in what, from a distance, appeared to be a monolithic Islamic resistance to the colonial state. Intellectual alliances grew into political alliances, aiding the colonial state in its quest to develop and nurture sympathetic African political and social elites so as to make rule and ultimately “development” much easier. At the same time, this technique offered intellectual access to a new realm of knowledge and thus a new era of relative political stability achieved by the conversion of prominent native thinkers to the French cause. Most famously, Marty cultivated a strong relationship with Saad Buh (1850-1917), a prominent Sufi leader in West Africa, gaining from him significant insight into the composition of West African Sufi orders through family genealogies and correspondence. From these items Marty located additional political and familial connections and rivalries ripe for political exploitation. The Sahel in the early twentieth century was ripe for such an intervention. The area had been in turmoil since the rise of the jihadist state of el-Hajj Umar Tal (d. 1868) in the 1850s. This powerful new Islamic movement worked to eject both the French and

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105 Marty, Islam en Mauritanie et au Sénégal, 139, 210-218; he also cultivated relations with Saad Buh’s rival, Shaykh Sidiyya (d. 1926), who he saw as a perfect collaborator, 105. See also Maurice Delafosse, “Le clergé musulman de l’Afrique occidentale,” Revue du monde musulman 11, 6 (June 1910), 183; “Notice de Cheikh Saad Bouh,” in Chroniques de la Mauritanie Sénégalaise, 264-270; and Robinson, Paths of Accommodation, 50.
any remaining animist groups from the Saharan fringes of the Soudan and Mauritania. Saad Buh’s father Muhammad Fadil, a prominent Sufi mystic and political leader, had initially aligned himself and his Sufi brotherhood with Umar, but eventually withdrew his support and retreated to the desert. The jihadist movement split populations along the Sahel into opposing camps, reigniting old debates between Tuareg (Berber), Arab, and black African groups.106 As Umar and his descendants suffered defeats at the hands of the French (led most notably by Faidherbe and Gallieni) in the second half of the nineteenth century, Saad Buh’s brother, Ma’ al-‘Ainin rose as a new leader of the Islamic resistance movement to what he saw as the infidel colonial state. By 1909, still predating Marty’s tenure in West Africa but reflective of the technique of “divide and rule,” the native affairs office worked with Saad Buh to better control the restive population. He was in a unique position to act in this capacity as a long-time correspondent and French ally and the leader of a powerful Sufi order that generally refused to support jihad.

Saad Buh’s letter to his rebellious brother, then moving in the Mauritanian-Moroccan hinterlands, advised him to lay down his arms in the face of a vastly superior foe (the French), a doctrine of non-violence that had been the centerpiece of his father’s political beliefs. In calling for an end to the jihad, the cleric depicted France as the carrier of stability to West Africa, an area torn by internecine warfare: “From the moment of my arrival in the Sahel, I found the entire Soudan region occupied by governments of powerful kings, tyrants, chiefs, savants. Since then France has constantly conquered

106 Muhammad Fadil was the father of both Saad Buh and Ma’ al-‘Ainin. For more details on this period, see Glen McLaughlin, “Sufi, Saint, Sharif: Muhammad Fadil wuld Mamin, his spiritual legacy and the political economy of the sacred in nineteenth century Mauritania,” (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1997), 62-66; and Robinson, Paths of Accommodation, 162-176.
them.” The French were, without question, powerful militarily. However, their ability to defeat even “savants” implied knowledge of local conditions and a respect for Islam and local religion in general. Instead of resistance, Saad Buh advised that native scholars should focus on study and scholarship to develop a program of Islamic education to improve the lives of all people in the area.\(^{107}\) Such a message appealed to Marty and his colleagues for its call to non-violence, the goal since Faidherbe’s alignment with chiefs in the move into Cayor and other Senegalese territories in the 1850s (see chapter 1). French scholars looked to their Islamic counterparts to extol the virtues of French civilization, as men such as Saad Buh, particularly in the early twentieth century, had significant authority and influence over other thinkers and religious leaders without such strong connections to the colonial state.\(^{108}\)

In this context knowledge led to power. Prominent Islamic scholars gained high positions in nearly all of the West African societies in part due to their connections to the wider world of Islamic scholarship. These connections, in existence since as early as the tenth century, became particularly important between 1300 and 1550 as a surge of Islamic writing from outside the region entered local libraries.\(^{109}\) West African intellectuals struggled both to connect themselves to this long line of Islamic learning and

\(^{107}\) Cheikh Saad Bouh to Ma-el-Ainin, 1909 in FM/SG/MRT/VI/1, ANOM. Saad Buh had seen the long conflict initiated by el-Hajj Umar from his father’s side. The letter was reproduced in l’Afrique française, a publishing organ of a French pro-colonial lobby, in November 1909; see Dedoud ould Abdallah, “Guerre sainte ou sédition blâmable? Nasiba de Shaikh Sa’d Bu contre le jihad de son frère shaikh Ma al-Ainin,” in Le temps des marabouts: Itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960, ed. David Robinson and Jean-Louis Triaud, (Paris, 1997), 125-126 and fn 20. See also Governor-General AOF (William Ponty) to Minister of Colonies (Georges Trouillot), 7 September 1909 and Minister of Colonies to Minister of Foreign Affairs (Stéphan Pichon), 30 September 1909, FM/SG/MRT/VI/1, ANOM.

\(^{108}\) Robinson has described such wide-ranging links for Saad Buh, particularly in his influence on religious authorities such as Shaykh Musa Kamara. See Paths of Accommodation, 168.

\(^{109}\) Hall and Stewart, “The Historic ‘Core Curriculum,’” 144.
to show they had something to contribute to the larger discussion.\textsuperscript{110} It was precisely this technique that Marty and Delafosse both pursued and to a certain extent emulated.

As Islamic scholars in the Sahel and Sahara built up large libraries to better develop their knowledge of religion and the world and to demonstrate intellectual sophistication, so too did Delafosse, Marty, Hamet, and others collect Arabic language works in an effort to gain a larger voice in policy circles. They could claim to speak in African terms, employing locally important expressions of social and political reality. In their minds, French governors should model themselves on traditional African methods of rule, where intellectuals were trusted advisors. This view came, at least in part, from African chronicles themselves. These native works described the political and social importance of such knowledge acquisition for Islamic elites: “Nacer Eddine did nothing without having consulted the savants and without their assent. He showed them much consideration, honored them and held them in particular esteem.”\textsuperscript{111} Libraries provided an ostentatious means to earn this esteem and thus political and social prominence. In a story transcribed by Marty, a native Timbuktu madrasa instructor traveled to Oualata in 1914-1915, taking many historic manuscripts back to Timbuktu for use in his personal library.\textsuperscript{112} The depiction of a native intellectual actively pursuing knowledge fit the developmental model endorsed by Marty and Delafosse. These elites appeared ready to act in the vanguard of new efforts to move forward in a civilizational sense.

\textsuperscript{110} See, for example, el Hamel, \textit{La vie intellectuelle}, 154, where al-Bartili works to fit himself into this long intellectual production. See also el Hamel’s analysis on 111-122, 140.


\textsuperscript{112} Marty names this individual as “Ahmed ould Hamouda (Ben Hamouda),” \textit{Les Chroniques de Oualata et de Nema (Soudan français)}, ed. and trans. Paul Marty, (Paris, 1927), 423.
At the same time, the importance of Islamic learning provided insight into the values of the societies in question. Hamet commented that a rare manuscript became a “relic” in the hands of a family who zealously guarded the prestige that came from such a rare gem. Houdas recognized the remarkable fluency of much of the West African writing, “sometimes more developed” than that found in North Africa. “The Soudanese seem to have better understood the task of biography and, as long as the sources do not lead them astray, they do not hesitate to speak with a certain grandiosity.” Delafosse made more significant strides in this regard, working with the director of primary education in AOF to promote publication by native scholars in the AOF scientific and educational bulletins.

French scholars of the Sahel took great interest in the content of native African libraries as a window on to a “center of active literature...important for the complete understanding of its [AOF] history.” Examining the libraries of Islamic scholars with “predominant” influence revealed the growth of an intellectual civilization “even in the


114 Preface to Tedzkiret en-Nisian, VI-VII.


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middle of the Sahara.” Paul Marty and his colleagues worked hard to discern the influences on Islamic leaders so as better to understand both their intellectual origins and the potential far-reaching effects of their teachings. Marty and Delafosse derived models of Saharan and Sahelian genealogies and civilizational interactions from the works contained in these libraries. Following Ibn Khaldun, they corresponded primarily with the “settled elites” of local societies, seeing a reflection of their own intellectual sophistication.

Sophisticated urban writers and thinkers stood at the high point of intellectual culture, but needed an external jolt from French colonial officials and even these rural intellectuals for a renewal, similar to the notion of French rejuvenation proposed by Lyautey. Far from “primitive,” these peoples were capable of great intellectual heights, having strayed from the path of civilizational progress only when they fell behind the European advance on industrial modernity.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun’s masterwork presaged the efforts of French Africanist scholars by almost five hundred years. His notions of rural-urban connection and civilizational progress and decay shine through the writings of prominent French scholars of the early twentieth century. After significant experience with African groups on the ground in North and West Africa, Paul Marty and Maurice Delafosse set forth to empirically


demonstrate the room for development in West Africa. They conducted detailed readings of important Arabic-language texts detailing the history of the region, particularly the Saharan edge. At the same time, they corresponded with and cultivated important native African intellectuals, showing particular interest in select Islamic scholars willing and able to provide access to rare documents outlining the trajectory followed by West Africa.

In the end, Marty and Delafosse exploited the colonial relationship in several ways. Their efforts were important to the form of colonial rule that developed in AOF from the middle of the 1910s, growing particularly in importance during the First World War. Offering insight into the fissures that separated African groups with respect to political structure, social interaction, and religious practice, these scholars contributed to the furtherance of the colonial power imbalance. Simultaneously, they improved their own positions as valued members of the colonial staff by producing analysis offered by no other scholars of the period.

Native African intellectuals, though, were not totally in the thrall of these scholars. The descriptions of what French Africanists came to call “civilization” descended in large part from Arabic-language documents and Islamic notables. These same intellectuals also exploited their connections to French scholars to carve out better socio-political situations for themselves, gaining at least some added measure of autonomy. Delafosse and Marty gave little credence to the possibility that Africans, even the authors of the seventeenth century, might attempt to manipulate perception. The French Africanists disregarded the context of their sources in many cases, maintaining
the view, despite their avowed African-centric perspective, that African intellectual production stood frozen in time, ripe for exploitation by colonial scholars. Very much products of their times, Delafosse and Marty nonetheless contributed to a new view of colonial governance, one that granted small measures of latitude to Africans willing to act as ethnographic informants to the colonial state. Colonial domination remained predicated on unequal power relations, but in the policies supported by Marty and Delafosse became less absolute and more dialogical.

The efforts of Marty and Delafosse to spread this civilizational, developmental, and empirical model forms the core of the next chapter, a trace of their movements, connections, and words in the metropolitan and colonial academic and political spheres. Marty and Delafosse translated the ideas of African history and development, particularly those of Ibn Khaldun, into an early twentieth century vision of a misunderstood civilization. In the process, they significantly altered French conversations about colonial rule by advocating a policy of association, an approach based on maintenance of native political and social structures. At the same time, their views influenced sociological discussions on the very nature of human civilization.
Chapter 4: Shaping Views: Delafosse, Marty, and the Description of African Civilization

“They then ripped the skin from his back, which they held in front of his eyes; then his buttocks, then his anus. Following that, they pulled out one of his eyes that was then presented to the other, unhappy eye. Finally, they removed his sexual organs, which they inserted into his mouth. M. Rubino, still breathing, was then cut into pieces.”¹ Paul Marty offered this description of the massacre of a French train conductor in 1910 as evidence of the savagery of some of the inhabitants of the forested region of northern Cote d’Ivoire. Similar depictions of violent events, while sometimes apocryphal, caused some in the French colonial system to doubt the prospects of the civilizing mission. Marty, Maurice Delafosse, and their colleagues, however, saw “savagery” as an alternate reality, evidence of a society still at an early stage of human development. Georges Hardy, close collaborator with Marty and Delafosse in Afrique occidentale française (AOF) and later in Morocco, summed up this sentiment: “History...shows also how people move from savagery to civilization or similarly return from civilization to savagery, and that is an excellent source of learning.”² Civilizational transition offered colonial scholars and administrators practical motive to study and understand native groups in cross-sectional relief. Penning the bulk of their analysis between 1912 and 1921, these French Africanist scholars observed a West African socio-cultural transition caused, at least in part, by the First World War, in the process delivering new views of African society from both the inside and the margins.

Delafosse, Marty, and others like them built on the model of development and decay promulgated by Ibn Khaldun in an effort to shape colonial policy. They employed the language of civilization to explain distinctions between European and non-European groups, modeling much of their analysis on existing African-Arabic-language scholarship reaching back to the medieval period. They accepted native intellectual elites, even those from previous time periods, as partners in understanding social structure and development. These elites, more than simply abstract thinkers, participated as intelligent interpreters of their own social forms. The resultant analysis measured societies according to their relative progression towards European modernity. The primordial Berbers, for example, attained a high level of development. For Ibn Khaldun they were “a true people like the others of the world such as the Arabs, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans”; comparing the Berbers to the European classical world made the past greatness of Africa apparent. Civilizational rise and fall occurred in cycles; decay smothered development with luxury and excess.  

Through their conversations with African intellectuals and ethnographic analysis, as described in the previous chapter, Marty and Delafosse arrived at a very specific depiction of African civilization. This chapter describes their model, descended in large measure from Ibn Khaldun. However, these French scholars ultimately moved beyond the cyclical paradigm advocated by the famed Maghrebi scholar. While they wrote of Africans grouped in “civilizations” that rose and fell over time, they sought to control that rise and fall through the insertion of the French colonial state. In this way they

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participated in the early moments of what James Scott has labeled the “socio-technical” and “middling modernist” effort to reform society via “technical procedures.” In order for that development to truly take effect, however, they had to find both a moment of past greatness from which African civilizations could recommence their movement towards distant “modernity” and discern the basic building block of the African social order. Comprehending that fundamental structure, they hoped, would enable them to relate to Africans in locally derived terms, thereby making the developmental process smoother.

This chapter follows their textual journeys to describe Africa as ripe for
civilizational advancement, led by a new West African Islam controlled by the French colonial state. Islam offered an educational opening through which French Africanists proposed the colonial administration alter the then-flat arc of African development. At the same time, Delafosse and Marty, however, struggled to define the basic building block of society, testing ideas developed from comparisons to the European past and evolutionary conceptions of linguistics before settling on “family” or kinship, a component that they never quite conceptualized in full. Nonetheless, the model created by Delafosse and Marty carried great weight in both policy circles, where it informed the policy of “association” with local governments; and the Parisian academic world, where it had a significant impact on the emerging field of sociology, particularly through the person Marcel Mauss. His use of the civilizational concepts and ethnological analyses proffered by French Africanist scholars is thus the subject of the following chapter.

Some of the concepts employed by Marty and Delafosse unquestionably derived from the

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theories and practices of their ethnological predecessors. However, many of their concepts lived on, moved on in the network by Mauss and ultimately finding anachronistic residence in the political framework of Jacques Soustelle in 1950s Algeria.

In their struggle to comprehend the basic building blocks of African society, French thinkers reached for linguistic or racial terms to describe the native emphasis on genealogy, a “tradition” they could never quite explain fully even with the aid of Islam. Sometimes working against academic and political convention, these scholars deployed empirically derived ethnological divisions as the basis for policy. In searching for the essence of each civilization they sought to cause each one to progress, to advance in civilizational level to recapture a period of lost greatness. From this position Africa and Africans would serve as productive members of France and the world. Islam played an important role in this process, alternately seen by French scholars as a civilizing force or a retarding structure. Islam presented a colonial quandary; it could complicate continued French rule in the eyes of many French thinkers, as religious leaders and jurists maintained an independent system of legal and political review outside the understanding (and thus control) of many European thinkers. Consequently, Marty and Delafosse spent significant time analyzing African religion, both Islamic and “animist,” so as to incorporate African religious beliefs in a more coherent form of colonial rule. Religion was far too important as an educational tool to suppress entirely; it was important for French colonial administrators to control Islam in particular without eliminating its salutary effects.
At the same time, the First World War offered an opportunity for closer collaboration with native elites. French Africanist scholars exploited the demographic changes in African society produced by the war to gain a new perspective on social structure. As thousands of West African men went off to fight for the French, the few who remained struggled to reestablish political and economic connections. African notables, most of them Islamic intellectuals, worked closely with French scholars in hopes of gaining political favor and powerful positions in the post-war political structure. In the process, they engaged in dialogue with French scholars on the complex and overlapping religious, political, and economic realities of daily life. War, and the resultant upheaval in African societies from conscription, gave French Africanist scholars more freedom to employ locally constituted ethnological networks.

Historians of French colonial Africa have differed in their evaluations of the effectiveness of Delafosse and Marty in shaping colonial policy through this ethnology. Most prominently, Alice Conklin has correctly identified Delafosse as an important advisor to AOF governors-general, although she made little of the contributions of Paul Marty. Conklin analyzed the ethnological theories of Delafosse for their relevance in metropolitan policy discussions, ultimately concluding that his work and the studies of others like him served as instruments in the larger colonial world, used or ignored by governors as they saw fit. This conclusion has led to criticism from Gary Wilder, among others, who accused Conklin of participating in a “republican metanarrative” that glorified the metropolitan ideological machine. He instead approached the French

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imperial state as a coherent whole composed of both colonies and metropole. For Wilder, the center and the periphery did not operate separately; the same conflict between colonial domination and social reform struck each in different ways. Wilder portrayed the colonies as a proving ground for the growth of what he termed “political rationality,” an effort to legitimately understand and apply new concepts of state formation outside of an idealized view of republicanism. This AOF reform movement, he concluded, also made important use of a new strain of “colonial humanism.” Indeed, Delafosse, Marty, and their peers worked to reform French colonialism from the inside, as Wilder has suggested. Efforts to paint colonial ethnologists purely as instruments of colonial domination are overstated. These French Africanists unquestionably participated in efforts to maintain French control over African territories, but previous scholarship has tended to overlook the sources of their information and their attempts to employ ideas borrowed from native Africans.

This strand of colonial humanism did not appear with the arrival of the First World War, as both Conklin and Wilder have suggested. Rather, these thinkers participated in a longer process of communication with African natives in describing and developing local civilizations. They were important gatekeepers, translating and interpreting native ideas on race and social construction for audiences in both the policy-making (in the colonies and the metropole) and academic milieux, offering important correctives in both directions. These scholars realized the difficulty of their civilizing mission in Africa, and suppressed their pessimism to deliver propositions for long-term

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study and association to ignite a Khaldunian cycle of development. French Africanists depicted civilizations as contingent and localized, anchored in the march of time but each unique in its own right. These views were important in their own right, and had an academic impact outside of that propagated by their political overlords. They advocated the political policy of association, an employment of local political, legal, and religious structures in the governance of colonial populations, over assimilation, the full implementation of French metropolitan governmental and cultural norms. Although the line between these forms blurred as colonial officials pursued their mandate to morally improve subject populations, Delafosse and Marty remained staunch proponents of an association founded on a close intellectual partnership with native elites to understand and reform African social structures.

Far from drowned out by the power of metropolitan sociology, these academics actively shaped discussions of native structure and the processes by which it was created. In the words of Raymond Betts, “practice seemed to be preceding theory.” Overt mentions of Delafosse and other colonial scholars were not common in the publications of prominent sociologist Emile Durkheim and his intellectual followers, and these colonial thinkers provided both data and inspiration for the work of Marcel Mauss in

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7 Conklin, A Mission to Civilize, 197, argues that this work had an academic impact only when mediated by the governors-general.


particular. Following the generation of ethnological knowledge back to its source in the colonies reveals the prominent place of these scholars in metropolitan theoretical formulation. Marty and Delafosse pushed metropolitan and colonial officials and scholars to understand Africa as controlled by kinship structures that must be clearly understood and employed by the colonial state in a form of political association. Unique for their Arabic language abilities, access to Arabic language texts and ideas, and extensive networks of native ethnographic contacts, Marty and Delafosse were well-placed to inform colonial policy-making and metropolitan social theory via objective study on the ground. The academic and political worlds often existed as separate spheres; the requirements of colonial rule brought them together, luring administrators to consider real social examination as a part of political administration.

It is important to recall, however, that the ethnological investigations of Marty and Delafosse occurred in the colonial environment. Their efforts to “develop” African societies, certainly tinged with elements of concern for local populations, ultimately derived from the requirements of colonial expansion and the need to ease the requirements of administration. Marty, though, tried to position himself as offering unique insights, a scholar independent of the colonial state. He thus described his work on Senegal: “This book, the state of affairs of Senegalese Islam in the year 1915, breaks with all dogmatism. It aims at being the impartial product of a step-by-step investigation

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10 See chapter 5 for more detail on Durkheim and the school of sociology he founded. By the dawn of the twentieth century, Durkheim and his followers were the most renowned social analysts in the French academic establishment.
conducted over more than three years.”¹¹ He depicted his work as apolitical, subject only to the laws of science. This claim was far from self-evident; he and his peers were very much part of the colonial enterprise, even if acting as broad-minded reformers. As discussed in the previous chapter, Marty’s work routinely favored those Islamic scholars and African political notables who sided with the French colonial state. He conducted his ethnological examinations with the cooperation of the colonial state, making use of the power of his position to gain access to ethnographic and archival sources. He also consulted the work of other acclaimed scholars such as his colleague, Delafosse.¹²

For his part, Delafosse started detailed examination of native populations upon his arrival in Côte d’Ivoire in 1894, getting his first extended opportunity to dissect societies during his mission to map the Côte d’Ivoire/Gold Coast borderlands in 1902. Interested in everything from physical description of the natives to their arts and even toilet use, Delafosse set out to analyze native populations so as to preserve, respect, and advance each one.¹³ He aimed to study groups in their totality, considering everything from geography and social structure to language and history. The scholar “employed the synchronic method in a rigid fashion” but supplemented that approach with heavy


¹³ While the results of his mapping mission have never been published as a separate ethnographic work, he no doubt used them in forming some of his conclusions in his work on Cote d’Ivoire and Haut-Sénégal-Niger. In his notes on the expedition he indicated an interest in “physical description, tattooing, voting, habitation, buildings, agricultural work, individual work, commercial work, hunting and fishing, navigation, music, dance, the arts, games, hygiene, toilet habits, medicine, society, family, marriage, property, contracts, inheritance/succession, criminal law, the political state, religion, morals, history, language.” Scrap entitled “Rapport ethnographique et politique” in 2AP8D5, “Mission de délimitation (suite),” Fonds Maurice Delafosse (2AP8), Fonds du Patrimoine, Bibliothèque du musée de l’homme, Muséum national d’histoire naturelle (MNHN), (hereafter MNHN).
historical detail in moving from locality to locality, society to society. In the typical ethnographic fashion, Delafosse represented native African groups in snapshots, capturing them in a moment in time. However, he added detail to this depiction by changing scales, reinserting both time and comparison between geographically or what he considered temporally separated groups.

Despite their protestations to the contrary, Delafosse and Marty’s approaches at diachronic analysis ultimately fed into the exigencies of colonial rule. In their efforts to isolate specific moments of the African past, they froze the present, in the process ignoring the important and localized changes that had occurred over the centuries. Because the African present did not resemble the “modernity” of Europe, they discarded it and reached back into time for a more “pure” example. Their analyses suffered as a result, essentializing uniquely West African processes in a comparative and Eurocentric frame. Proponents of contextual examination, Marty and Delafosse’s removal of African societies from time and place actually stripped away the locally lived reality in favor of a generalized illustration of structures and nearly hegemonic forces such as “kinship” and “Islam.”

Like many French scholars of Africa, Delafosse considered African social change pessimistically. He wrote, “The effective progress achieved by the masses is slow, so slow that it resembles closely the progress realized by Sisyphus, who endlessly rolled his

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rock but always let it fall back to the starting point."\textsuperscript{15} His analysis followed the work of Ibn Khaldun, as civilizations existed in a constant cycle of rise and fall; every movement to the top of the hill ultimately resulted in a slide back down. Delafosse and Marty proposed to aid Africans in their efforts to quickly climb up the hill to the position occupied by Europeans. Islam, they thought, could aid this process intellectually because it emphasized literacy and had a long history of contact with the West, a legacy that they hoped made African adherents of the religion more receptive to European pedagogical methods and scientific precepts.\textsuperscript{16} Ultimately, Marty and Delafosse saw the colonial enterprise as “humanitarian” above all else.\textsuperscript{17} These scholars believed that the Sahel, the southern border of the Sahara and the meeting place of “black” and “white,” gave them the best opportunity to examine African societies from a cross-sectional perspective, from the margins and the places of overlap and contestation. From this time and place, they thought, development would begin.

Creating a developmental model along the Sahel

The southern Sahara and its border region, known as the Sahel, offered an opportunity for close study of civilizational groups in contact. In examining the history of West Africa, Marty and Delafosse found “whites” and “blacks” mixing along the Sahel, the front lines of trans-Saharan migration and conflict for more than one thousand years.


\textsuperscript{17} Maurice Delafosse and Lucien Hubert, \textit{Tombouctou: son histoire, sa conquête}, (Paris, 1894), 28.
years. Close study of this trans-regional history and the “values of ancient peoples” enabled French Africanist scholars to “learn the spiritual and temporal habits” they thought defined local groups.\(^\text{18}\) In other words, French scholars took inspiration from Ibn Khaldun and sought the *ancien régime*, the pre-colonial and in some cases pre-historical state of affairs, in all the West African societies. Paul Marty found that the resultant “sketch of the political and Muslim history is indispensable for relating the past to the present and explaining one by the other.”\(^\text{19}\) The Sahel offered insight into the interworkings of local civilizations including origins, influences, movement and the possibility of progress. Moments of ancient prominence stood as a jumping-off point for new development towards European social and economic “modernity.”

The Sahel, however, had been undergoing climatic change for centuries. Historian James Webb has described the region’s shifting frontiers of ethnicity and climate. Sahelian residents endured both “rapid ecological change” and successive Arab invasions that forced groups into contact beginning in earnest in the fourteenth century. With this movement came new group identifications as pastoralists self-identified as “white” to set themselves apart from their “black” neighbors to the south. Pastoral nomads in many cases became “warrior” groups, in contrast to tributary sedentary groups employed as farmers or religious scholars. Social categories thus found their roots in


Similar processes played out, in Delafosse’s description, across sub-Saharan Africa as environment shaped social development. He observed the shifting of social roles as pastoralists gained power in an area altered by a lack of rainfall. Côte d’Ivoire, on the other hand, suffered in some areas from a surfeit of vegetation. While similar to the Sahel as a site of civilizational crossing, the forest belt hosted bands mired in relative isolation. Delafosse operated again from a basic precept of Ibn Khaldun, the idea that environment shaped social organization. The French scholar thought that for different reasons and in spite of their “common origins,” societies in West African locales had “evolved” into an “infinite variety” of new forms. Ranging from “savage” bands in the forests to the highly developed clerical and warrior lineages in the Sahel, groups in the analysis offered by Delafosse (and later Marty) differed as a traveler moved from sea to savannah and desert. These forms owed their differences to the effects of “geographic milieu on social and material activity” more than any other factor.\footnote{Maurice Delafosse, “Les populations noirs de l’Afrique,” \textit{La Géographie} 37 (1922), 452-463 (Cote d’Ivoire), 463-465 (Sahel).} Intent on understanding the distinctions between even the sub-groups that made up these geographically determined “races,” Delafosse looked to the past for an answer. He saw West Africa as subject to a swirling series of influences that moved on trade and
migration routes, especially those from Egypt that “seemed to have influenced the civilization of most of the Negroes of West Africa.” 22 The Saharan edge, then, served as an important site of civilizational contact, where North and East African “whites” encountered sub-Saharan “blacks.”

French scholars faced a complex tapestry of interconnected and overlapping societies along the desert edge. They engaged in dialogue with natives who coded socio-economic classes as “races.” Arab and Berber pastoral warrior and clerical groups thus became “white” as sedentary social strata, largely cast by natives as lower entities in the socio-economic and political hierarchy of the area, became “black.” 23 Delafosse and Marty found these groups living side-by-side, on occasion intermixing, a state of affairs that at times baffled the scholars. However, with this confusion came opportunity; the desert edge offered colonial scholars a glimpse into the long, complex history of civilizational contact.

Delafosse and Marty saw the Sahelian border areas as host to a mix of “two great peoples, where two civilizations and two races interpenetrated and partially based themselves on each other.” 24 The Sahel operated as a cultural crossing, producing not only new racial groups but also innovative intellectual products that reflected trans-African thought. Delafosse remarked that “most cities of the Sahel bring to mind

22 Maurice Delafosse, Sur des traces probables de civilisation égyptienne et d’hommes de race blanche à la Cote d’Ivoire, (Paris, 1901), 2. Delafosse defended the Egyptian thesis throughout his career, although he later admitted that supposed archaeological evidence of Egyptian residents (particularly in the form of jewelry) was in fact explained through local manufacture or movement across trans-Saharan trade routes.

23 See Hall, A History of Race, chapters 1 and 2 for description of internal (non-colonial) native African negotiations regarding racial and socio-economic identification.

Morocco or Algeria as much as the true black Africa; some are more Moroccan or Algerian than Negro." In understanding the roots of Sahelian civilizations Delafosse and Marty sought to comprehend the entirety of French sub-Saharan Africa as well. Their efforts to develop a deeper understanding of Sahelian racial and social structures, however, called the developmental, progressive model into question. Marty and Delafosse failed to consider the full ramifications of long contact and intermixing, as it would be difficult to restore an originary social state from a complex and hybrid present. Their discussions with native elites, enormously valuable in ethnographic terms, glossed over the socio-economic origins of many of these class/race distinctions, divisions exploited by their native informants for personal social and political gain. In searching for African greatness in the past, Marty and Delafosse missed the complexity of the present. African societies were in fact sophisticated adaptations to the requirements of environment, trade, diplomacy, kinship, and migration. French Africanists, however, searched in vain for basic social and political structures they could then shape to resemble European "modernity," when in fact African "modernity" was just as complicated and right in front of them.

Linguistic analysis formed the core of Delafosse’s efforts to understand the construction of African social groups. He found linguistic links between virtually all African groups dating back to a primordial fusion of “white” and “black” groups across Africa. “People of the Mediterranean race,” such as Libyans and Egyptians, mixed with the négrilles, which included the Hottentots and Pygmies, to form new groups along the

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borderlands and contribute to the emergence of the “nigroes.” Marty used similar methods to analyze the choice of non-Arab names among Tunisian desert dwellers that he saw as demonstrating “the historical infiltration, the fusion of bloodlines, the spread of Mediterranean civilizations.” Unraveling the puzzle of names, languages and origin myths yielded significant analytical insight into the importance of genealogy in Arab and Islamic social groups across North and West Africa for these scholars. As discussed previously, these genealogies were vital to religious, political, and social legitimacy of Islamic residents of the area. Access to these genealogies offered an opportunity to gaze into both African history and the society that had made it.

Links to ancient or medieval Arab conquerors appeared in the origin myths of many West African groups. The Mauritanian Kunta presented a powerful Sharifian lineage based on descent from the Prophet, while the Peul (Fulbé) claimed descent from Arab-Islamic conquerors. These myths, which also included weaker ties to pre-Islamic Himyarite tribes in Yemen among Berber groups, were valuable to natives not so much for their content as for their intent. For Islamic communities located on the outer edge of the crescent of conquest, the maintenance of ties remained all-important. As seen in chapter 3, genealogies and Islamic histories offered an important space for natives to claim importance for themselves and their social groups. Along these lines Paul Marty noted, “The success of a Moor, of necessity a Sharif, is always assured in the land of the


blacks.” Claims to Arab-Islamic descent, generally recorded as oral histories but on occasion (as in the case of the Kunta) in written documents, served as the currency of social interaction.  Links to intellectual and political luminaries did not exist in a vacuum; they were also grounds for contestation and dispute. Competing warrior, clerical, or socio-economic groups fought each other for control of these lineages and the resultant temporal and spiritual power. In their quest for authentic ethnological history Delafosse and Marty sought out native intellectuals capable of communication at their level and in a largely Western idiom of political preeminence. By privileging the accounts of, for example, Shaykh Saad Buh (1850-1917) or Shaykh Sidiyya (d. 1926) at the expense of others, such as the exiled leader of the Murid Sufi order in Senegal, Amadu Bamba (1853-1927), these French scholars unwittingly participated at times in a long-running drama of social change and conflict.

With the Arab-Islamic invasions of the seventh through fourteenth centuries came social upheaval. Although French Africanist scholars thought Islam acted as a progressive force for civilization at times, the arrival of Islamic Arab invaders had, in their view, retarded the development of Berber groups who could have had a salutary effect on black societies. Echoing Ibn Khaldun, Paul Marty lamented the Arab invasions as “altogether regrettable,” as they caused in the destruction of “Berber civilization, practical and progressive,” and replaced it with Arab practices “derived from inveterate nomadism, incompatible with all serious evolution.”


sophisticated, urban intellectual elites as representatives of the highest form of native civilization, Marty argued. Waves of Arab-Yemeni\(^{30}\) invasion across the Sahara into the Sahel had altered social structures and had given birth to new class divisions in the area. Marty ascribed the nobility of descent from fourteenth-century Hassan Arab invaders to groups along the Sahel, particularly the Berabich of Mali and Mauritania. These new warrior elites, in his analysis, forced Berber groups into service as Islamic intellectual vassals. The French arrival in Africa halted this process in the scholar’s opinion, creating “centrifugal forces” that he expected, in time, to tear apart the political “confederation” of Arab and Berber.\(^{31}\) Privileging intellectual, non-warrior elites meant an enhanced possibility for a return to high civilization, regardless of ethnic background.

Delafosse saw social and political constitution occurring via a slightly different mechanism. As early as 1902 he proposed linguistic and ethnic distinction as key to understanding social and political order among West African groups. During his survey of Ivorian border areas he discovered that groups tended to cluster as linguistic units. Language served as the basic building block of nationality, ethnicity, and political

\(^{30}\) Delafosse, following Ibn Khaldun, described multiple waves of invasion across the desert. The first, composed of Hilalien Arabs in the eleventh century, was relatively small. The larger and more permanent invasion of the fourteenth century actually consisted of the Beni Hassan of Yemeni extraction. See Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, I, 188-190. For Marty’s part, he also considered these separate waves in different works, in particular his 4-volume *Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan*. Recent scholars have subjected these invasions to rigorous examination, adding significant nuance to the superficial descriptions of Delafosse and Marty. See, for example, H.T. Norris, *Saharan Myth and Saga*, (Oxford, 1972); and *Conquest of the Western Sahara*; and Ould Cheikh, “Nomadisme, Islam et pouvoir politique.”

allegiance, he proposed.\textsuperscript{32} Ethnography could provide a more complete description of the distinctions between linguistic groups. For example, Delafosse described the linguistically defined “Northern Mandé” as a unitary Soudanese civilizational group. These “intelligent” people, he thought, were capable of close association with Western civilization, capable even of modeling themselves on the Western example. While “fanatical” Muslims, they were sufficiently flexible so as to make expedient political choices. Ultimately, these groups were “naturally attracted to progress [offered] exterior to their civilization.”\textsuperscript{33} It was through flexible groups such as the Mandé, people who demonstrated significant intellectual achievement that the French could hope to advance African civilization, Delafosse posited. Moreover, any belief in a total alteration of the complex African growth of nomadic and sedentary groups into a homogenized French product was, in Marty’s words, “a beautiful utopia” beyond the grasp of the colonial state.\textsuperscript{34} French tutoring, in this model following on the heels of a detailed examination of African social organization, would improve local structures but not replace them with new forms.

While forward motion of African civilization seemed inevitable to these scholars, it required an external catalyst. French Africanists agreed that in many ways the civilization of blacks had changed little over the years, remaining at the same level in some areas as the ancient Egyptians. Only contact with North Africans, and by extension

\textsuperscript{32} “Rapport au Gouverneur,” 22 January 1902, Niably; Piece 62, 2AP8D49, MNHN.

\textsuperscript{33} Delafosse, \textit{Haut-Sénégal-Niger}, I, 347. Delafosse offers similar, although less positive, reviews of other West African groups in the same volume.

\textsuperscript{34} Marty, \textit{Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan}, III, 464–465. See above, however, for the views of Marty and Delafosse for just such a recovery and alteration in spite of the overlapping mixtures of groups along the Sahel.
Islam, offered relief from this stagnation. Delafosse imagined that civilization in North and West Africa grew only through exposure to external forces. He compared Africans with children suffering from a “neglected” education but not lacking in intellectual capacity. In his mind, they needed teachers, not disdain. “For having entered the school of humanity late, they are no less dignified in taking up their place.” The French colonial project, in Delafosse’s mind, needed to investigate the intellectual condition of natives so as to better present them with a tailored educational program.

He saw the stages of African development much like Lyautey in Madagascar, finding separation by geographic locality. In the forests of Côte d’Ivoire he found the “initial entrance” to the “successive steps” of civilizational development, the lowest rung on the ladder. The “cheerful country” of the northern savannah hosted people still in “adolescence.” The Soudan offered the “adult stage” while the Sahelian crossroads resembled “old age and the past.” Like Ibn Khaldun, Delafosse saw groups in certain environmental conditions, particularly those in flat areas with access to water in river or oceanic form, as more capable of great civilizational heights than their peers in sparse or desert regions. Development remained possible, but only if Europeans accepted that all civilizations did not move along precisely the same continuum. Rather, they had to accept that each had “different sources” leading to a “dissimilar end.” In following this distinct path many Africans found themselves trapped in a period of “collectivism”

37 Ibid., 465.
38 Ibid.
equivalent to Europe “prior to the middle ages.” 39 He summed up his argument in an influential colonial newspaper, La Dépêche coloniale et maritime, advocating for a colonial program based on “helping them [West African groups] to regain lost time.” With Western assistance these groups would have the chance to “evolve towards a more finished state.” 40 In spite of, or perhaps because of, his associationist beliefs, Delafosse adopted the typical racial rhetoric of the French colonial project to depict backward African societies in need of paternalistic assistance from their French overlords.

French Africanists expected to gain influence over native social institutions first, and most easily, through education. Direct access to pedagogy, in Marty’s words, presented an opportunity not to create new Frenchmen but instead to strive for “the adaptation of future men to new conditions...and the continuous evolution of the world.” 41 In short, native Africans required exposure to European industrial and social modernity that could present them with the tools to adapt to rapid change. To that end Africa needed new leaders, “young men of good Muslim comportment and sufficiently knowing European civilization so as to enable them to contribute to the moral evolution of their country towards its new destiny.” 42 Without question, these populations were ready for advancement; they lacked only a catalyst to push them along towards the European example.


40 Maurice Delafosse, “Civilisation, assimilation, association, autant de termes qu’il importe de définir,” La Dépêche coloniale et maritime, 16 January 1923, 1.

41 Paul Marty, Le Maroc de demain, (Paris, 1925), 142-143.

42 Ibid., 86. 265
In that willingness Marty, as a colonial official, saw opportunity. France, in presentiing avenues to the modern world, he thought would attract the loyalty of the upper classes of each African society who “desired progress.” In hopes of just such a movement, the French had set up combined Franco-Islamic schools called médersas (madrasas) in North and West Africa, particularly near the Sahara, and staffed them with native intellectual elites and French teachers. From these institutions, French administrators hoped, would emerge the next generation of intellectuals able to push civilization to the next level, an idea adopted from Faidherbe’s example in Senegal. Saharan intellectuals, for Marty and his colleagues, would contribute to the education of sub-Saharan blacks as they offered a certain “moral ascendancy” and “superiority of method” over their peers to the south.

Marty, though, cautioned that Franco-Islamic schools were not a panacea for the educational deficits that he saw in West Africa. He pointed in particular to Timbuktu, seen by many as a great center of Islamic learning, but which in his mind shone only when considered alongside the “ignorance of the black areas.” Prior to any real efforts at development, he proposed, West Africans had to adhere in larger numbers to Islam. Black Africans, he thought, required further exposure to a distilled version of that religion, one imbued with the modern, rational views of secularized France to contain any possibility of anti-colonial dissent. Islam, for all of its potential to the French colonial

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mission as a force for literacy and social cohesion, still stood as a potential source for unrest. The ideas of nineteenth-century ethnography, which had depicted Sufi Islamic brotherhoods as inherently anti-French, still had some hold among Africanist scholars. Islam could be useful in Marty’s eyes, as long as it was contained and controlled.

While a long-standing French Algerian sentiment depicted Islam as a force working against the French presence, Marty perceived some individuals within the seemingly monolithic structure as interested in close cooperation. He praised the loyalist views of Shaykh Saad Buh (see chapter 3) and, in particular, Shaykh Sidiyya (also known as Sidiyya Baba). Of the latter he remarked, “He permitted two people, two civilizations and religions to know one another and to consider themselves. He took a giant step...towards the evolution our presence in Mauritania can offer to the Saharans.”

Marty believed that Islamic leaders willing to view France as a useful, if not benevolent, force in the area could augment French political control while also enhancing the ability of natives to take command of their own political and social destinies. Islam, when considered in terms of its most liberal and pro-French elements, offered the means to both understand and elevate African civilizations.

**Describing Islam as a force for progress**

Marty and Delafosse sought to aid West Africans in an advance on European modernity, one identified by a fully developed literary and scientific culture shaped by native intellectuals and an industrial economic base. Progression in the direction of more “modern and liberal” forms of life necessitated a stronger educational system, but one

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grounded in local reality. Islam offered a solution to this problem, beginning with its tradition of learning that began early in life with Qur’anic recitation. Islamic civilization, formerly host to some of the world’s greatest scientific achievements, needed to regain the “rational” emphases of its past in a new, West African edition; this renewed vigor Delafosse and Marty expected to apply to more efficient and modern processes of industrial and economic development. All of this progress required a strong French understanding of the unique position of the sub-Saharan blacks as relative newcomers to the Islamic faith, particularly when compared with many residents of North Africa. West Africans were therefore less experienced in Islamic forms of learning.\textsuperscript{46} Immediate institution of a purely Franco-Islamic system of education, as Marty indicated above, stood little chance of success in the final analysis, as it would not be sufficiently familiar to most West Africans. French administrators had to acknowledge they did not yet know enough about their subjects to develop a properly tailored form of education.

In understanding Africans, French scholars and administrators admitted their almost complete difference from their subjects—they had very little in common. Georges Hardy, director of education in AOF and Marty’s colleague in Morocco in later years, considered all men brothers and invoked the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi in describing his effort to understand his subjects. He saw Africans as “my brothers the birds, my sister the ewe, my brother the wolf. I know, in a certain fashion, that his representation of the world does not at all resemble mine and that his spirit functions in accordance with distinct laws. We cannot agree except under the condition that I

Marty and Delafosse also saw Africa as a land of many different civilizations, a place where even Islam varied from locality to locality. They saw West African religion as both distinct and tied to the rigorous and mystical Sufi Islam of North Africa. It was uniquely infused with a long tradition of animist religions that made the locals more susceptible to French colonial encroachment but less able to advance in a civilizational sense. The Muslim religion enabled French colonial officials to employ the “veneer of Islam” spread across most of the illiterate population as a lever to force intellectual progress. French Africanists proposed a cultivation of this intellectual class (the veneer), a mirror image of themselves, as the “priestly and scientific flower of the population.” From this flowering they expected to harvest leaders prepared to engage in a long-term collaboration with France as economic and intellectual partners.

Marty dug deep in an effort to find the roots of this scientific growth. He consulted Delafosse, whose “definitive” body of work he thought set the standard for


studies of Islam in West Africa, particularly Cote d’Ivoire. Marty portrayed Islam and animism as locked in combat; “traditional” African religion was on the defensive as aggressive Islam attacked. The French presence, however, had upset the balance of this fight. He argued that the French had never applied a coherent policy on religion in the area. For example, he remarked that the French “liberation of slaves led to a noticeable decline in Muslim standards.” In other words, Marty believed that French assaults on Islam had weakened the already shaky Islamic juridical and political regimes in the area. Reducing slavery, he thought, had an unintended effect: destroying some of the social structure that propped up religious adherence. Islam was thus losing the fight in West Africa due at least in part to French intervention. Marty advocated fostering Islamic savants able to appeal to both Islamic and non-Islamic intellectual elites. Religious leaders, particularly those teachers who fit in the category of “intelligent and educated marabout [Islamic notable who also held some informal political authority],” exerted significant authority over all people in Cote d’Ivoire, including the “fetishists of the region.” Marty recommended that French officials favor certain Islamic notables without destroying social constructions. Careful manipulation of allegiances, he thought, would control Islamic growth and shape it to fit the requirements of colonial social development.

49 Marty, Etudes sur l’Islam en Cote d’Ivoire, 82. It is not clear to which of Delafosse’s works Marty is referring in this remark.


Nevertheless, Marty still favored Islam over the alternative. He believed the religion’s emphasis on learning provided an opening for the emergence of more advanced civilization in West African communities. Local populations had to reach a critical mass of intellectuals if they hoped to aspire to one day gain a form of Western modernity, he thought. The correlation between numbers of intellectuals and socio-economic success, Marty theorized, perhaps explained the slow Islamic growth (when compared to the rest of the region) in Côte d’Ivoire. The French soldier-scholar depicted Ivorians as having little interest in the flow of people and ideas from North Africa and the Middle East, important sources for Islamic learning.52

Most Western scholars of the early twentieth century saw the arrival of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa as occurring via caravan routes from Libya, Algeria, and Morocco. These paths converged along the Sahel, offering varied approaches to Islamic learning and worship that contributed to the unique strains of the religion practiced in Niger, for example.53 In colonial Upper Dahomey (modern-day Benin), Marty described Islam not as indigenous but as introduced like a sickness spread from neighbors in Niger,54 much in contrast with the Peul (Fulbé) of the Middle Niger basin whose Islamic roots reached back, in his analysis, to the thirteenth century. The Peul maintained intellectual contact with thinkers in Arabia, at times perhaps hosting “white” proselytizing holy men.55


Despite these long-standing ties to the larger world of Islam, Peul intellectuals had left little scholarship of their own.

Marty concluded from this widespread lack of sub-Saharan Arabic scholarship (minus that discussed in the previous chapter) that black Islam in its most sophisticated form stood on a relatively static bedrock of local religion; innovation occurred not from within, but from without. Sahelian Islam, he thought, remained purely superficial; it survived and grew only via outside contact. While Marty thought French administrators needed to contain violent or anti-colonial forms of Islam, the African variant of that religion did not in truth threaten the colonial state. He felt West Africans had not really accepted Islam in full social, cultural, intellectual, and even economic terms. Marty described the persistence of Sufi brotherhoods in West Africa, particularly the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya, as dependent on North Africans: “They [black Africans] in general maintain epistolary relations with the Moorish shaykhs who taught and consecrated them and send them gifts from time to time.”\(^\text{56}\) The Moors of North and West Africa served as the conduit to religious knowledge. Marty felt that understanding their importance in the religious structure of West Africa enabled the French to better categorize and develop native groups only recently converted to Islam.

Delafosse perceived the relative positions of Islam and animism a bit differently than did his colleague. In general, movement eastward along the Senegal and Niger rivers yielded fewer and fewer Muslims; many of those who had converted, Delafosse speculated, had done so only superficially, absorbing “Islamic civilization” without the religion. This process aided his ultimate goal of intellectual and moral enhancement.

regardless of actual religious adherence, as the people could employ Islamic techniques of learning without the baggage of religious piety. In the new colony of Haut-Sénégal-Niger Delafosse reported roughly 1.1 million Muslims against 3.7 million animists. He identified only 600,000 of those Muslims as black Africans, with the rest identified as Arabs or Berbers.\textsuperscript{57} Delafosse pressed for more consideration of animism as an important religious and social source for native African communities. Many of these natives he thought operated under “a very deep attachment to their native soil.” In Delafosse’s opinion, a religion tied to the land seemed perfectly suited to this belief system: “Molded to his mentality and according to his desires,” native animism stood “adapted to the milieu in which he [the native] lives; it suits him and is enough for him.” This flexible form of religion permitted social and political development. Delafosse pointed out that even as Islamic states rose to great heights and crumbled, animist states (such as the Mossi empire) persevered.\textsuperscript{58}

Ibn Khaldun’s description of civilizational rise and fall due to invasion and urbanization resonated with Delafosse. The French Africanist scholar thought that a native religion and society formed on a natural attachment to the land, however, offered an alternative, a way out of this deterministic bind. Animism presented an escape from the horrors of modern civilization; while Islam was a helpful force in learning, it could not solve the problem of inevitable decay. Delafosse’s African animism did not operate as a primitive obsession with “totems,” “fetishes” or multiple gods. Rather, it held, like

\textsuperscript{57} Delafosse, \textit{Haut-Sénégal-Niger}, III, 187.

some Eastern religions, that each “natural phenomenon” and every living thing possessed a “spiritual power.” Native African religions offered these colonial scholars the stability that Islam, Christianity and other monotheistic systems could not provide.

Delafosse in particular valued animism as a religion tied to the local soil, grown by natives to describe their own conditions, not those imported from North Africa or Arabia. However, local beliefs could not offer advances in knowledge; in that respect, Islam served as a vital impetus for progress in West Africa, at least in the eyes of French scholars.

Ismael Hamet, close collaborator and colleague of Delafosse and Marty, agreed that Islam stood as an important conduit to civilizational advancement for West Africa. He wrote, “The true principles of Islam have a civilizing value that accommodates the most deprived areas, that brings back the most barbarous humans.” For students of French West Africa, these “true principles” boiled down to those that helped to maintain the peace and enhanced cooperation with the colonial power and search for knowledge. An interest in history, so important in identifying partners for the trading of ethnological information, also marked the native elites best positioned to lead their people into modernity. Traditional Islam, despite its long history of animosity with the Christian West, provided a way to improve native thought patterns and learning techniques. For Paul Marty, “Islam constitutes certain progress in the primitive mentality of blacks...some


of these blacks have actually already evolved.‖ Islam, when cosmopolitan and
dedicated to the pursuit and spread of education and learning across the population,
catalyzed native intellectual development. French Africanists agreed that Islam was, in
the final analysis, most useful to both colonial rule and the future civilizational
advancement of West Africa when diluted by local animism and French scientific-
educational inputs.

Despite their weak collective position relative to European intellectual traditions,
Marty expected French-controlled Islamic educational techniques to deliver “primitive”
blacks to a higher intellectual level. Although not the “gleaming” center of learning
depicted in legend, Marty thought Timbuktu served as a salutary example in this regard,
as the “intellectual and moral” level of the city’s residents far outstripped “that of other
Soudanese,” even if that progress was minor in comparison with that found in Europe or
even Algiers.62 Delafosse agreed with Delafosse’s finding that Islamic learning
represented the key to native attainment of hitherto unseen levels of education,
particularly when exposed to the more refined and cosmopolitan ways of urban centers.63
Increased levels of literacy and intellectual growth did not occur via a one-sided push
from Islam or even the colonial state for Delafosse. Rather, they were the result of a
tripartite exchange between the people, their religious and intellectual elite and colonial
officials.

62 Marty, Etudes sur l’Islam et les tribus du Soudan, II, 3. See also the discussion of madrasas in chapter 3
of this study.
63 Delafosse, Les Nègres, 10-11.
Islamic growth in the early twentieth century, in Delafosse’s eyes, stemmed from its allure as a source of cultural and intellectual renewal. Black Africans desired literacy and the apparent higher standard of living that came with Islamic identity. Not only did they become Muslim (at least on the surface), they sent their children to develop Arabic literacy with Islamic marabouts. French administrators, moreover, had to remain neutral in this growth of Arabic learning. Marty concluded that madrasas met with failure in black Africa where Islam had not sufficiently “evolved.” Only with the full spread of Islam into all corners of daily life would a society build an “entente cordiale between religion and science, between the faith of the sons of the Prophet and French civilization.” French Africanists thus theorized that the introduction of Islam into traditionally black areas would increase the emphasis on Arabic language learning, but it would not replace thousands of years of non-Islamic religion. All Muslims, and particularly black Muslims, were not created equal.

The establishment of a unitary Islamic policy would, in the eyes of these scholars, lead France to overlook the significant distinctions between Islamic groups. Black Muslims, in contrast to animists, possessed a “mind opened by a more developed education and extended contacts with peoples of other regions.” He concluded that those populations, however small, “have been the best collaborators with our native policy in


French Islamic policy, according to this theory, had to take into account the religious and social variations occurring across Africa. There could be no unitary Islamic policy; each variation of Islam, often based on a specific Sufi affiliation, deserved consideration for its unique merits.

Delafosse was torn by the contrast between the traditional animist way of life and the new techniques brought by Islam and the eventual arrival of the French. While animism offered the benefits of a long, locally derived developmental process, it suffered from limited intellectual traditions. Islam, on the other hand, provided educational structure and long-established pedagogical techniques. Only a combination of the two forms would deliver a new generation of West Africans properly adapted to the modern world. He recognized that “France has nothing more to fear from Muslims than non-Muslims in West Africa,” owing at least in part to what he and his peers characterized as the largely superficial Islamic conversion of many black Africans. French policy, he concluded, should therefore rest on a “strict neutrality” when considering African religion. Ideally, Africans would progress along their own developmental arc, one that included social and religious forms developed locally. This “objective” view led Delafosse to recommend that colonial policymakers permit native populations, for the long-term sustainability of advancements, the option to “perfect local religions” at the
expense of Islam. Civilizational advancement, he thought, must occur on its own terms, not those dictated by Arabian Islam or France.

In contrast, Marty saw Islam as one moment in the development of West African society. West Africa had entered this “Islamic stage of evolution” due to the guiding hand of “the preceding generation” of French colonial leaders in Senegal. “Islamic renewal” pushed West African societies to the next stage of development both intellectually and politically, although it remained important for French officials to shape this process along pro-colonial lines. Sufi brotherhoods, so important in North Africa and growing in strength along the Sahel, could serve as “more than a religious banner.” Instead, they could act as the basis of a “national principle.” Thinking pragmatically, Marty saw these new national entities as useful structures for colonial control. The emergence of political forms based on a “French” Islam enabled close control by colonial officials. West African blacks lacked the “aggressive spirit” found in long-time Islamic converts elsewhere in Africa; he echoed Delafosse in concluding that the “Islamic danger” did not exist among these groups. Marty took a more instrumental approach to the power of Islamic brotherhoods in West Africa. He disagreed with Delafosse’s condemnation of colonial support of opposing Islamic orders as “deplorable.” In contrast, Marty saw little harm in “religious rivalries” that augmented “racial

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69 Marty, Etudes sur l’Islam au Sénégal, I, 10. Here Marty refers not only to Faidherbe and Gallieni, but also to AOF Governors-General William Ponty (r. 1908-1915) and Francois-Joseph Clozel (r. 1915-1917).


animosities.”\textsuperscript{72} Clearly echoing the “divide and rule” ideas of Gallieni and Lyautey, Marty saw Islam as useful for colonial control. French policy beginning in this period moved along these lines as French administrators intent on “development” focused on support to clerical Islamic groups over those with less progressive, warrior-based leadership.\textsuperscript{73}

The study of African religion, be it animism or Islam, yielded important gains not only in colonial administration but in pure science for these ethnologists. Scholars thought that religion offered a window into the fundamental composition of social groups, a prospect advanced most prominently by Marcel Mauss and his colleagues at the \textit{école pratique des hautes études} in the first decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, Delafosse saw religion as a universal, timeless force always acting to “adapt and superimpose itself” on pre-existing rituals and beliefs. Similar processes of adaptation unfolded, he wrote, “in all ages and in all human societies.”\textsuperscript{74} Following the trail of Islamic conversion revealed to Delafosse that the religion appealed primarily to elites and the bourgeoisie. These people, he thought, converted from a desire to “differentiate themselves from peasants.” Through study of Islamic learning and theology these converts claimed, according to Delafosse, “at least the appearance of scientific superiority,” an important marker of intellectual, and thus political, preeminence.\textsuperscript{75} A complete examination of the roots of Islamic adherence thus provided French scholars

\textsuperscript{72} Marty, \textit{Etudes sur l'Islam au Sénégal}, I, 286. Marty does not attribute his quotation of Delafosse’s conclusion.

\textsuperscript{73} Hall, \textit{A History of Race}, 193-194.

\textsuperscript{74} Delafosse, \textit{Haut-Sénégal-Niger}, III, 178.

\textsuperscript{75} Delafosse, “L’animisme nègre,” 146.
with significant insight into what they perceived as class distinctions and their social consequences.

Marty saw socio-economic divisions rooted more in racial distinctions that reached back centuries, as opposed to the intellectual self-selection proposed by Delafosse. For example, he wrote that Mauritanian groups with “Semitic blood” managed, by the passing down of an “uninterrupted tradition of [Islamic] faith and Arab culture, to conserve an Islam very close to that of the Orient.” He proposed that racial and civilizational groups generated by distinct historical, social, and political contexts employed different forms of social life. In Marty’s mind, African religion and social construction were both reflexive and intertwined; it was difficult, if not impossible, to extract one from the other. Religion expressed social structure, but was not at the base of human organization. Instead, he described religion as an important but still derivative form of larger societal forms. Marty concluded that African civilization was not as simple as some previous writers had depicted; it took more than a brief examination of religion to get at the essence of West African societies.

Marty and Delafosse thus dismissed the socio-religious theories of several prominent British social anthropologists as overly simplistic explanations of a more complex African social reality. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social evolutionary theorists working from the ideas of Herbert Spencer had pointed to “aboriginal” populations in Africa and Australia as simple precursors of European modernity, locked in an older stage of a unilinear developmental path. This viewpoint,

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advanced most powerfully perhaps by British anthropologist Sir James Frazer, depicted all religion as descending from African “totemism” or “fetishism.” Simply put, “totemic” theory held that Africans worshipped items or animals both for religious meaning and as a means of proving kinship, thereby ensuring reproduction occurred only with those outside the kinship group (with those of another totemic “tribe”). Delafosse decried these efforts to describe local social structure as fundamentally religious and founded on “totemism” as badly misplaced. He cited Mauss in condemning the poor science involved in ethnological analyses that employed “a very large number of absurd and generalized uses of the word ‘totem.’” “This institution [totemic-clan names] appears to be,” wrote Delafosse, “of an historic and social nature and does not carry any other significance, definitively, than as the memory of ancient feudal nobility.” The scholar thus read an episode in European history, feudalism, back into the course of African religious development even as he tried to refute another form of European evolutionary ethnocentrism. In spite of his efforts at relativism, Delafosse’s descriptions of African society relied, at least on part, on historical terminology developed specifically for the European experience. All the same, religion, whether animist or Islamic, was simply an expression of something more fundamental for Delafosse and Marty. Far more than the

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78 See chapter 5 of this study for more on this concept, which was defeated by the late 1910s by Delafosse, Mauss, Arnold van Gennep and other social theorists.


worship of “totems,” the French scholars thought that African society found its roots in something more basic, more human.

Ibn Khaldun’s theories perhaps offered a solution to this dilemma. However, Delafosse and Marty, little more than lay readers of his work, did little to move beyond their appropriation of his environmental-cyclical model of civilizational rise and fall. For Ibn Khaldun, the state, based on the centralization of power and force, was the most fundamental manifestation of human organization. Though their basic aim was to describe and explain the power of African civilization, Delafosse and Marty rejected this premise, perhaps because it implied that African civilizations had advanced beyond European-style feudalism. If African social organization was based on the state, then African colonial subjects would not need European developmental assistance, as their political order would then closely resemble the Westphalian nation-state system prevalent in Europe. Such a conclusion would do little to assist Delafosse and Marty in elevating their own profiles in the colonial world, as it would invalidate the entire project and question the fundamental premises of their brand of social science. Consequently, they sought something more basic as the foundation of Africa. They searched for something decidedly “pre-modern.” While religion could serve as an entry point to African societies, Delafosse and Marty believed that development could begin only from the most basic level. The search for the true core of African social organization was chaotic, involving many twists, turns, and analytical dead ends.

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The intellectual journey to understand kinship as the basis of social organization

French Africanist scholars struggled to understand the complex history of West African groups. They engaged in a wide-ranging search for the most basic expression of African social organization, as they did not find something sufficiently simple, something authentically African in the theories of Ibn Khaldun. Consequently, they approached native societies from a number of different directions. They looked first to Europe for an example, hoping to find signposts of European development along the African path. However, Delafosse and Marty ultimately discovered that such efforts offered little analytical gain. Linguistic distinctions provided some opportunity as well, but even when combined with previous discoveries relating to migrations, the arrival of Islam, and Arab-Islamic genealogy and kinship the scholars once again found little analytical gold. However, genealogies offered them a new, and ultimately productive way to approach native African social life. Guided at least in part by native elites, French scholars came to describe African civilizations as built atop a structure of kinship and class, notions they often described as “family,” with individual and group roles defined by a complicated mixture of family history and socioeconomic place.

The first efforts by Marty and Delafosse in this sometimes chaotic process focused on the feudal tradition in West Africa. In their analysis, Africans, from “warriors” to “serfs and slaves” fled restrictive political and social rule in search of “another, more welcoming collectivity.” Islam, they thought, had become entrenched in some communities in the sixteenth century by grafting on to the pre-existing feudal
order. Thus, African Islam stood for them as a feudal entity that relied on elaborate networks of fealty and tribute. Their descriptions locked Africans in the European past, helpless victims of circumstance unable to progress politically and by extension socially and economically as well. In this view Islam, while progressive in its efforts to spread literacy, retarded development of Westernized, liberated social classes freed from the restraints of fealty and serfdom. French colonial officials hoped the unique nature of West African Islam, with the liberating assistance of the French colonial state, would eventually permit its escape from such bondage. European equivalency, however, did little to aid Delafosse and Marty in their quest for the cornerstone of African collectivity.

The French Africanist scholars encountered analytical roadblocks as they tried to equate African chronology to basic European history. In linking African developments to an idealized and simplified European past, Marty and Delafosse disregarded one of what had been their most important inputs: local circumstance. In searching for basic social structure they overlooked the importance of individuals as socio-political actors in Islam. Several recent historians have added much detail to this discussion, arguing that local Islamic leaders had the greatest hand in effecting significant social and political change in West Africa, working both before and during the colonial enterprise to fundamentally alter the more secular constructs that had preceded them. The language of both West

82 Marty, L’Islam en Guinée, 9, 511. See also ould Cheikh, “Nomadisme, Islam et pouvoir politique” for detailed discussion of these caste structures since the eleventh century.

83 Many outstanding histories on this period have emerged in the last twenty years. See, for example, Hanretta, Islam and Social Change in West Africa; Muhammad Sani Umar, Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule, (Leiden, 2006); and James Searing, “God Alone is King”: Islam and Emancipation in Senegal, the Wolof kingdoms of Kajour and Bawal, 1859–1914, (Portsmouth, NH, 2002) for discussions of the dialogue between Africans and colonials regarding social and religious forms, building on Robinson’s Paths of Accommodation. For a trailblazing,
African socio-political order and dissent, for more recent scholars, became that of Islam, a force the French scholars looked at with suspicion as a potential anti-colonial entity despite its many intellectual uses. Perhaps cognizant, at least implicitly, of the contradictions of their historical comparison, Marty and Delafosse looked in other directions for an answer to the riddle of African social organization.

Marty puzzled over the reforming impulse found in some West African Sufi orders. The Murid order of rural Senegal offered a particular challenge to his views, so tinged by the requirements of continued colonial rule. While Marty described the group as a aberrant threat to be contained, recent scholarship has found that it emerged from the interplay between its founder, Amadu Bamba, and the multi-faceted world of colonial conquest, economic privation and Sufi mysticism. Renouncing temporal power, Bamba led a group of devoted followers in creating a state within the French Senegalese colony devoted to brotherhood and learning. In the process the group gained significant control over West African trading networks and a measure of independence through a long process of give and take with colonial administrators and local populations. While Marty depicted this Sufi order as disruptive of social norms and what he viewed as the traditional native values of work, Overlooking the salutary effects of Senegalese control of their own political and intellectual lives in an associationist political model, Marty depicted this Sufi order as disruptive of social norms and what he viewed as the traditional native values of work,


allegiance and the family. However, the obvious differences between the Murid Sufi order on the one hand and more secular, animist chiefs on the other presented an opportunity for development. The rise of the Muridiyya, Marty thought, showed that the “Islamic religious wave” of jihadist states had slowed, leaving African societies fragmented in a number of different, localized variants. Through these cracks in what seemed to him a feudal edifice he hoped the French would inject a new civilization, one founded on Western, humanist values.

Marty had written his comments during the First World War, when the political doctrine of association had clearly assumed the dominant position. By the 1920s, however, ideas of political and economic “development” had caused some theorists to call for a renewed assimilationist effort at direct governance. Delafosse, by then an important figure in political and academic discussions in both the metropole and the colonies, sought to counter that emerging school of thought through a public discussion of his findings. Each social group, in his view, had its own version of structure, as “civilization is multiple and no human civilization is of itself superior to others...civilization is the manner by which men live in society.” In one of his most revealing moments, Delafosse recommended that colonial thinkers consider every

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colonized population in its relative position. Civilization was not absolute; rather, social state operated as a function of lived existence, not abstract conceptualization.

He had written previously that efforts to define civilization or society outside of the “actual state of culture” implied a basic comparison of all collectivities to “the Civilization, ours.” Delafosse thus continued to find reconciliation of the profoundly Eurocentric views of the colonial civilizing mission and his basic notions of important, localized African culture and society quite difficult. He had long tried to remove himself from this bind by conducting detailed on-site observation and analysis that he hoped would deliver a holistic view of African civilization in its own right, not warped by any ideological prism. This approach rendered progress possible, but only along the unique arc carved out by the civilization itself.

Such a study was possible for Delafosse only in regions with a relatively unitary social structure. He thought he had found such an area in Haut-Sénégal-Niger during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Senegal and Niger river basins hosted populations organized around the same “guiding principles of customary law” as well as “organization of the family,” “conception of justice,” and “social state.” He could thus demonstrate and explain “the characteristic principles of the native civilization” of the area. The scholar examined the population of the area through a three-part lens: the first focused on “anthropology (the body)”; the second considered “ethnography (values)”; and the third looked at “linguistics (dialects).” He thus acknowledged that physical differences, “the body,” existed between groups, at least in the form of tattooing


90 Ibid., III, 2.
or other locally-initiated physical changes. In determining a group’s “values” he tried to
discern the structure and mechanics of social organization. Delafosse ultimately found
that “ethnic divisions” created a “social group, composed principally of a combination of
extended families having a unique origin.”

Social groups, in his view, distinguished
themselves not by belief systems or physical characteristics, but by linguistic variance.

Delafosse thus set out down another exploratory road. Comparisons with
European history had simply not yielded an appropriate description of the fundamentals
of African societies. The scholar thus set his sights on linguistics, his true expertise,
hoping that language offered an opportunity to understand a society from the inside. He
wrote, “One of the best means to arrive at an understanding of the institutions of a human
collectivity consists in collecting and analyzing the terms used by that collectivity to
express the concepts related to these [social] institutions.”

Local idioms, Delafosse
 theorized, offered insight into the very structure of the society they sought to explain.
This approach considered natives as, at least subconsciously, intelligent interpreters of
their own social reality. Linguistic analysis, he believed, must occur in the host
language; he held that interpretation that followed on translation risked losing the
nuances of a word’s meaning found only in a full social context.

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91 Ibid., III, 109, parentheses in original. See below for further definition of the term “extended family,”
rendered in Delafosse’s description as “familles globales.”


93 It is important to note that this stance was explicitly rejected later by European cultural and social
anthropologists. Claude Lévi-Strauss in particular argued that mythological structures were universal, but
it was the relationships between the terms used to describe these myths that were most important. Thus,
these relationships served as the subject of his analysis; he theorized that these relationships were
unchanged by the act of translation. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a
considered the linguistic “stage of evolution” a classification that “did not necessarily indicate a shared heritage between these groups [societies sharing a similar language].”\(^{94}\)

In other words, Delafosse did not define a civilization by language. In his experience, several groups in West Africa shared a language similar to Peul (Fulbé), but they came in radically different migratory waves and from different origins in Africa or the Middle East. Societies at the same stage of social evolution, regardless of origins, might at the moment of ethnological examination overlap, thus giving the appearance of ancient kinship. He concluded that civilizations moved through some sort of absolute succession; there was a commonality between the “stages” reached by each group.

While they might have moved from different starting points, each social entity in Delafosse’s model eventually passed through vantage points equivalent with the European past. Linguistics, despite his significant erudition in that field, did not offer Delafosse an escape from the relativist bind. Despite his claims to objectivity, Delafosse admitted the existence of some absolute scale of linguistic-social and thus civilizational progress. For instance, he described “Negro-African languages” in three basic categories or stages, finding an “evolution of linguistic phenomena and a parallel evolution in the state of civilization” as languages changed to meet the requirements of civilizations transforming into entities with a material emphasis similar to that of European societies, resident at the apex of human development.\(^{95}\) Delafosse could not avoid the trap of European relativism where the achievements of other civilizations existed only in


comparison to the development of Europe. Delafosse and Marty would have to find another analytical point of entry to the African social order.

Interested above all else in reconstructing African social and political forms in such a way as to reignite development towards a Western industrial modernity, Delafosse and Marty struggled to provide a unitary definition of the basic social block where work would begin. Colonial officials had long employed the term “race” as a sort of shorthand to indicate anything from color-based distinctions to those founded on socio-economic class. Delafosse himself could offer only vague notions of race as “major divisions of the human species...there are only two races: the white race and the black race. The term...seems inadequate to me.” Despite these early misgivings, Delafosse advocated for an understanding of race as foundational in 1924. “There is nothing but race,” he wrote, each type sharing a unique mentality shaped primarily by environmental factors.96

Hewing to his previous stance on the impact of environment, Delafosse pressed for the appreciation of each society as unique. However, he failed to define race, a slippery word that served only to link the worlds of physical anthropology and ethnology in a twisted mix of origins and social structure.

Marty suffered much the same fate. In trying to describe a Songhay village in the Soudan, he alternately considered race as a “conglomeration” of “people with the same name”; and a cluster of former slaves from various areas that came together. After “losing memory of their origins,” these peoples formed “a social class in truth, but one

96 Maurice Delafosse, “Juxtaposition, assimilation, association,” La Dépêche coloniale, 21 June 1924, 1.
with people not far from being considered a race.”

European visions of race as hardened biological “type” or even as a basic environmental “lineage” did little for Marty to explain the poorly defined boundaries between ethnicity and socioeconomic class in West Africa. French Africanists had to work in an environment where natives linked socioeconomic position to familial descent. “Race,” in local terms, denoted socioeconomic class and ties of kinship to prominent Islamic conquerors and/or intellectuals. European academic discussions of race as physical type simple did not adequately describe local conditions. Marty and Delafosse thus appropriated local genealogical descriptions in their studies of African social constructions.

Skin color or head shape, vital to the anthropometric techniques of physical anthropologists, seemed of little import to Africans themselves, who both Delafosse and Marty saw as intelligent interpreters of social construction. They adopted this native view in describing African social classes as well; for Marty and Delafosse, there was no better evidence than that provided by members of the society in question. Marty tried to understand the distinction between occupational class and race in the Soudan. He struggled to distinguish between the “local ethnic element” and “a caste of fishermen and watermen...who with time will end up as a veritable ethnic unity.”

He had tapped, at least superficially, into the complicated racial and socio-economic descriptions employed

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99 See Hall, *A History of Race*, chapter 5 for detailed discussion of this transfer particularly as seen in Tuareg socio-political structures.

by native African groups. However, his efforts to apply the more definitive European categories of ethnicity or race caused confusion. In his mind, caste structures were transitory, existing only so that native groups could harden along well-defined, European-style ethnic divisions.

Delafosse, on the other hand, was more willing to see caste as a basic social form. He saw tripartite West African social divisions, with a ruling class, a large group of professionals or artisans, and slaves composing the three basic elements. The ruling class generally came from “a nobility composed of all those who can establish their genealogy and show that they have the right, since some ancient period, to carry the name of an honored clan.” The professional, caste-bound group in the middle position of the hierarchy could claim descent from others of similar occupation; in this way they assured their social position through historical recollection. Below these professionals lay slaves and former slaves, “those who do not know their background.”¹⁰¹ In reconstructing native social forms, then, Delafosse pointed to the upper stratum of historically invested elites as those in the best position to ensure progress. Those who understood and showed interest in their origins were more likely to remain invested in development as the colonial project continued. It was these elites who could best act as social interpreters for French Africanists. Marty and Delafosse could see that this upper, intellectual class possessed significant interest in genealogy and kinship. It was that interest that showed them what they ultimately concluded was the true root of African social construction: the extended family.

After a long journey through numerous ethnological experiments, Marty and Delafosse settled on kinship ties, or what they called the “extended family,” as the most important and fundamental manifestation of African social order. Indeed, their research indicated that even the Islamic conversion of prominent animist African lineages “had no influence...on their social life”; instead, kinship and descent formed the bedrock of African societies. Marty and Delafosse saw Muslim Africans in particular as obsessed with maintaining and extolling their ties to Arab-Muslim conquerors, political leaders, and religious scholars. French Africanists tried hard to explain this emphasis in large part because they came into constant contact with African Muslims, who formed the bulk of the prominent political families in most of the colonies of AOF. Marty and Delafosse concluded that African Muslims fixated on genealogy and descent as means by which to access political power.

However, the French scholars took the analysis deeper, determining that the need for genealogical connection drew, at an unconscious level, from a “primordial” need to remain connected to the “extended family.” Delafosse remarked that this extended family provided the “social element on which native society is based” while also acting as the only solid political structure. Through his interactions with both animist and Sufi Islamic leaders (and the work of Marty on the latter), Delafosse concluded that African civilizations were formed around a patriarchal system of political rule. Leaders of Sufi brotherhoods, sometimes in possession of both spiritual and temporal power, in his mind capitalized on the prestige that came with claims to long Islamic descent. Political chiefs


who could tout not only a political position but also long links of kinship with prominent families, he thought, enjoyed far greater prestige and likely a larger swath of authority.  

More recent scholarship, conversely, has demonstrated the far more complicated reality of pre-colonial Africa. Scholars have found that kinship in Africa included more than just European notions of extended family or noble lineage. Some historians and anthropologists have concluded that slavery offered an important means by which to diversify, maintain, and even enhance the position of a kinship group. Others have described the institution as a mode of production that generated class structures. Both sides of the argument, however, agree that pre-colonial (and even early colonial) slavery formed an important component of nearly all West African societies. Kinship was far more than simply a notion of relatedness; in fact, it encompassed relationships between even the disparate political, religious, and economic groups involved in African slavery. Genealogical renderings of these groups, then, denoted more than descent. Proclamations of kinship tied elites to the management of economic and political structures that came with leadership of West African social groupings.  

At the same time, as noted above and in chapter 3 of this study, genealogical claims aided Islamic intellectuals. Through links to prominent warriors and/or thinkers of the past these savants claimed religious, 


105 Note that this discussion is limited only to the intra-African practice of slavery, and not the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which was a different institution altogether. The historical literature on slavery and its complicated place in African social development is immense. On slavery as positioned to enhance kinship group status, see, for example, Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, “Introduction,” in Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives, ed. Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, (Madison, 1977); on slavery as productive of class divisions, see, for example, Claude Meillassoux, The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold, trans. Alide Dasnois, (Chicago, 1991 [1986]). For a wider-ranging study that examines slavery from multiple analytical perspectives, see, for example, Paul Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa, (Cambridge, 2000); or Martin Klein, Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa, (Cambridge, 1998).
moral, and political authority. Hardly content, in most cases, to wall themselves off from
the colonial state, native intellectuals entered into dialogue with French administrators
and scholars regarding their genealogies, in the process hoping to shape their socio-
economic and political positions in the colonial state. Power structures, both before and
during the colonial period, involved significant negotiation and dialogue as individuals
carved out their places via claims to familial historical prominence.

Efforts to reform and remake African societies did not begin and end with the
French colonial state. Africans themselves negotiated with each other and French
administrators to enhance their political and social status. For example, some native
groups claimed Prophetic descent in an effort to claim greater prominence in the colonial
and even post-colonial Sahel. Efforts to reform and remake African societies did not begin and end with the
French colonial state. Africans themselves negotiated with each other and French
administrators to enhance their political and social status. For example, some native
groups claimed Prophetic descent in an effort to claim greater prominence in the colonial
and even post-colonial Sahel.106 In the typical Eurocentric view, Delafosse and Marty
saw these links as reminiscent of the European Middle Ages when commoners at times
took the name of and claimed kinship with local lords. Social, political, and religious
power, they thought, came from these relationships; any French efforts to investigate or
manipulate these connections had to take the family unit as the starting point.107 These
kinship groups, when considered in their full, native-described extent, formed the basis
for the civilizations the French Africanists sought to improve. The extended family
represented both the “base and the term of social and political evolution” of native
groups. Delafosse harangued his superiors that reform would occur only after

106 Timothy Cleaveland, Becoming Walata: A History of Saharan Social Formation and Transformation,
(Portsmouth, NH, 2002), 23.

significant analysis of clerical genealogies in virtually all of his works, but see in particular Études sur
l’Islam au Sénégal, 1, 15-68, where he dissects the interrelationship of many of the prominent Islamic
clerics.
understanding this inherently “patriarchal” form; developmental efforts would succeed only after the implementation of a deliberate program of reform centered on kinship. 108 The family, however, could not form the basis for a colonial state; for that, administrators had to consider groups of interconnected families as unitary civilizations. Delafosse proposed that French West African policy focus on collectivities, not individuals, as the basis for social and political organization. 109 A properly categorized and recognized collectivity must necessarily include kinship units as its basic social and political components. From this scientific description, Marty and Delafosse thought, the French colonial state could prepare and implement progressive policy. The political terms under which such progress could occur, however, were enormously important in the colonial world of rule via externally imposed structures.

Pressing for a policy of association

Neither Delafosse nor Marty enjoyed a position of sufficient authority in the colonial hierarchy to permit direct access to colonial policymaking. However, each could make use of highly placed officials with similar mindsets, providing information and analysis designed to spur scientific study and consequent policy changes. Marty and Delafosse worked closely with natives and other French colonial scholars and soldiers to


109 Delafosse, Les Nègres, 38-39. Delafosse in particular advocated for a policy similar to Lyautey’s sponsorship of the grands caïds. See also Georges Hardy, “Le congrès de la société indigène,” Outre-Mer 3, 4 (December 1931), 481 for a later discussion of this same theme. See chapter 2 of this study for more detail on Lyautey’s policies in Morocco.
develop a compendium of data while also engaging in conversations in prominent journals both in France and the colonies. The French scholars then published their findings in prominent newspapers and personal monographs, some of which gained dissemination throughout AOF thanks to their networks of French correspondents. Publication in newspapers enabled Marty and Delafosse to reach policymakers in the metropole. At the same time, these French Africanists made use of the sponsorship of powerful colonial ministers and lobbyists for the colonial cause, several of whom provided political or economic support to French Africanist publications.\textsuperscript{110}

Any effort to influence colonial policy required expression and incorporation of one important theme: the necessity of the French retention of power at virtually any cost. Marty’s plaudits for AOF governor-general William Ponty’s \textit{politique des races} focused on the policy’s modernity as a “derivative of the national principle that triumphs today among the armies of civilization,” a concept that “proclaimed the equal human value of all peoples and their right to exist.”\textsuperscript{111} Marty saw this approach as optimum for the maintenance of French control but with an informed approach for native life, thereby facilitating both respect of native social and political structures and a closer working relationship between those entities and the French colonial state. Delafosse added to this platform a deliberate “program of study” that included anthropological, genealogical,

\textsuperscript{110} Marc Michel, “Un programme réformiste,” 315. For example, the metropolitan publication \textit{La dépêche coloniale} boasted a circulation of eight thousand (in its own reckoning) by 1913—see Charles-Robert Ageron, \textit{France coloniale ou parti colonial?}, (Paris, 1978), 162-164. For more on dissemination of colonial scholarship see Raoul Girardet, \textit{L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962}, (Paris, 1972), particularly chapters 3 and 4; and Betts, \textit{Assimilation and Association}, chapters 6-8.

\textsuperscript{111} Paul Marty, \textit{Islam en Mauritanie et au Sénégal}, 6-7.

French policy, he advised, must focus not on efforts to alter native social life, but on basic education so as to improve their ability to interact with Westerners. He reminded policymakers of his previous conclusion, that Africans were not intellectual “inferiors,” but simply lacking in education. The French educational program, he thought, must combine elements of traditional Arabic-Islamic education with a Westernized approach. In this way, native groups would no longer feel lost in the civilizational wilderness. Delafosse continued, “We need to promote their evolution...but our interest, much like theirs, demands that they feel themselves the instigators of this evolution.” Intellectual agency, in Delafosse’s mind, must always rest (or at least appear to rest) with the natives themselves.

French colonial administrators and policymakers, from the French Africanist perspective, would inspire “progress” only through a program that took into account local requirements. This program required adaptation as the subject society slowly evolved, necessitating ethnographic vigilance in monitoring those changes. Delafosse proposed that natives willing to engage in the “collaboration of races” first conceived by Alexander the Great were best positioned to progress to a more modern position. In short, Delafosse and Marty struggled against the “assimilationist” view of colonial governance,


113 Marty, Études sur l’Islam en Cote d’Ivoire, 448-449; Delafosse, Les Noirs de l’Afrique, 156-159; and Maurice Delafosse, “Ce qu’on peut leur demander,” La Dépêche Coloniale et maritime, 1 October 1924, 1.

voiced most powerfully in the First World War era by Blaise Diagne, a native African who represented the Senegalese four communes in the French legislature.

The communes, composed of the oldest French holdings of Saint Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and Rufisque, enjoyed status as a French department. Commune residents thus also enjoyed French political franchise. These populations, as evidenced by Diagne’s presence in the French legislature, were citizens integrated into the French polity, unlike their Muslim peers in Algeria, who could gain full citizenship only through a renunciation of their rights to Islamic legal review. The success of these four polities, established as trading outposts by the French in the seventeenth century, served as important evidence for the validity of the assimilationist doctrine in the French colonial debate. Assimilationists such as Diagne, in advocating for a total assumption of French values and political norms by Africans, violated the principles espoused by Marty and Delafosse. In the eyes of French Africanists, Diagne and his peers “ignored” the long civilizational history of Africans who had followed a developmental “path in a different direction.” Efforts to move entirely to French-language instruction and governance, Marty and Delafosse scolded, employed assimilationist tenets that were either “false” or “premature,” sometimes falling victim to the temptation to “tyrannically install our values in place of native customs.”

Marty and Delafosse countered these political opponents

by cultivating support in Parisian policy circles, achieved through both lobbying of French colonial parties and the publication and dissemination of their writings.

Shaping colonial policy thus required influence both in the colonies and in Paris. Delafosse, in writing about a fictional character named “Broussard,” engaged in some autobiography in 1909. The protagonist, having spent 15 years in AOF in a life not unlike that of Delafosse, found “his name known in West Africa and at the same time not completely unknown in Paris,” a depiction that fit the young Africanist scholar as well. Delafosse too enjoyed a reputation for skill in African affairs by the dawn of the twentieth century. As early as 1901 the Minister of Colonies called on him to investigate the Côte d’Ivoire border areas, an area he had “brilliantly served since 1894.” His presence was particularly important, the governor continued, in light of his knowledge of “the ethnographic character, the values and the language” of the local populations. In 1902, the future AOF governor-general François Clozel, in publishing his then-definitive ethnographic work on Côte d’Ivoire, found Delafosse the greatest of Africanist scholars. The young social scientist showed Clozel “all that African ethnography and linguistics can hope to be.” Following in the footsteps of his mentor, Octave Houdas, Delafosse worked to disseminate his ethnological work across the AOF bureaucracy, as ministers

116 Delafosse, Les états d’âme, 70.

117 Albert Decrais (Min of Colonies), “Instructions ministerielles,” 31 October 1901, Piece 8 in 2AP8D3B, MNHN.

118 Clozel and Villamur, Les coutumes indigènes, 536. These comments follow the reproduction of a Delafosse letter from June 1902 regarding an ethnographic examination of Bondoukou, then Delafosse’s duty station. Delafosse later pointed back to the ethnographic questionnaire published in this work as the definitive guide to such study. See “Instructions générales du 1er Aout 1904 mises à jour au 30 Juin 1905 par M. Delafosse, administrateur de la cercle de Korhogo,” in 2AP8B2, MNHN.
and governors at times pressed their subordinates to consider scholarly works in local policy-making. ¹¹⁹

When compiling his extensive geographic and ethnographic study of the border region in 1903, Delafosse traveled to Paris to work in the geographic service at the ministry of the colonies, an ideal location to ensure his ideas received attention. While never published as an academic study, these reports found their way into the hands of ministry officials who valued them sufficiently to give Delafosse a number of extensions to enhance the quality of his work. ¹²⁰ From a position of relative notoriety both in France and the colonies Delafosse could better influence the thoughts of important policymakers. Never able to ascend to such administrative heights himself, in part due to failing health that led to a premature death in 1926, Delafosse settled for indirect influence of colonial policy through well-researched publications, believing himself among the intellectual elite he saw as so valuable to African societies.

While Delafosse enjoyed this early prominence, Marty toiled in relative obscurity. However, his 1912 assignment as Director of the Muslim Affairs bureau on the AOF staff in Dakar suddenly brought him to the fore. The AOF governor-general remarked in 1914 that “since his arrival in AOF [Marty] has not ceased to move and learn. He wrote very interesting travel reports from his particular point of view. His studies...on Muslim

¹¹⁹ See, for example, “Le M” (presumably Minister of Colonies) to Governor General, AOF, 8 March 1902, where the minister provides 15 copies of a recent Houdas publication regarding Arabic writings among the Trarza Moors and the possibility of a greater civilization than previously realized along the Sahel, FM/SG/AOF/II/1, ANOM. The Houdas publication attached was Note sur une inscription arabe trouvée chez les Maures Trarza, published by the National Press in 1901.

¹²⁰ Delafosse to Director of African Affairs, Ministry of Colonies, 18 June 1903; Louis-Gustave Binger to 2ème Bureau, Ministry of Colonies, 23 June 1903; Chief of Cabinet to Minister of Colonies, 3 September 1903, FM/SG/CIV/III/4, ANOM.
traditions were widely commented on.”121 A later AOF Governor-General may have purchased as many as 167 copies of Marty’s L’Islam au Sénégal to teach new administrators the wide variance of religious beliefs across the region in 1917.122 He gained academic credibility in metropolitan France as well, receiving academic prizes from the Collège de France, the Ministry of Public Instruction, and the Geographical Society of Paris.123 Working closely with Delafosse, who had moved to AOF in 1915 as a special advisor to the recently installed Governor-General Clozel, Marty influenced colonial policy from the ground up. They found some success during the two-year reign of Clozel, as their influence contributed a new political policy favoring association via chiefly lineages instead of the imposition of direct rule.124 Renowned for his “erudition in the study of Islamic questions,” Marty’s publications gained the attention of AOF governors-general for the “important documentation” he offered to the leadership who noted their “importance and value” for local governance.125 Indeed, Marty’s publications

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122 Harrison, France and Islam, 135. Harrison based this conclusion on a purchase record he found in the colonial archive; I could find no corroborating archival evidence, but the purchase fits with the pattern (although on a larger scale) seen above in disseminating Houdas’ work.

123 Evaluation of 1934, Marty dossier, SHD. The supervisor only vaguely referred to his work as “Islam en AOF.” It is unclear whether he received prizes for any specific book; only his work on Niger appeared in the 1930s, with all others completed between 1916 and 1922. He left AOF in 1925 for Morocco and later Tunisia, the foci of his later publications.

124 Conklin, Mission to Civilize, 176-179.

125 “Notes d’après-guerre,” Feuillet individuel de campagne 1937; Feuillet spécial, 23 August 1920; Feuillet spécial, 13 November 1918; Feuillet spécial, 10 May 1921, Marty dossier, SHD.
continued to provide the primary description of native groups in contact with French colonists well into the twentieth century, influencing native and French analysts alike.  

While advising colonial policy Delafosse and Marty promoted their progressive model to fellow administrators and, in Delafosse’s case, metropolitan students. He had lived in Paris from 1905-1910, teaching at the école coloniale and the école des langues orientales. Delafosse enjoyed significant notoriety in Parisian academic circles, attracting the attention and assistance of prominent academics, in particular Arnold van Gennep and Marcel Mauss (see chapter 5 of this study). The aforementioned Georges Hardy considered himself a disciple of Delafosse, agreeing in full with the need for “a simple entente, a simple alliance” with native groups. Hardy modeled his colonial policies and instruction on Delafosse’s desire for “true progress, progress in depth, solid and durable progress.” He took this approach with him to a later position as director of the école coloniale, the training ground for administrators and Delafosse’s former teaching post, where he could pass it on to next generation.

Assimilation, in the eyes of Delafosse’s disciples, rested on the false assumption that a European must treat an African as tabula rasa. The associationist camp instead argued that native peoples both possessed and understood a civilizational past and future. Colonial governance, they held, must respect those values while helping Africans to develop their political, social, and economic capabilities to a higher, more modern level.

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126 See, for example, Issa Kane, “Ould Deid, Emir du Trarza de 1930 à 1944,” Bulletin hebdomadaire d’informations locales, 15-21 January 1945, 5. ALG/GGA/28H/1, ANOM. The author cites Marty as the definitive reference on Islamic warrior and clerical lineages in Adrar beginning in 1910. For a more general discussion of the place of Paul Marty as the source of knowledge on African Islam, see Robinson, Paths of Accommodation, 205-224.

For Henri Labouret, graduate of the *école coloniale* and prominent administrator, academic, and theorist beginning in the 1930s, assimilation had failed at least since Colbert’s 1674 directives to colonists to “instruct them [the peoples of Canada] in the maxims of our religion and our values.”¹²⁸ In other words, the French need only look at their own past failures to assimilate native groups to understand the impossibility of doing so in the future. Perhaps because of the defeats suffered by Delafosse at the hands of Blaise Diagne regarding the Four Communes in Senegal, those areas warranted no mention in French ethnological discussion of association.

Delafosse passed on to his intellectual successors a dislike of assimilationist policy and the example of a “man between two worlds.” Straddling the line between the academic and colonial milieux, Delafosse and his disciples used publication as a mechanism for reform. Unable to gain positions as governors, colonial administrators in the mold of Delafosse and Marty founded journals dedicated to reformist principles, working in both France and Africa with French and native authors.¹²⁹ In 1929, Henri Labouret, a 1920 Delafosse student at the *école des langues orientales* in Paris, teamed up with Hardy to run the journal *Outre-Mer* with a decidedly associationist slant, banking on the prestige a connection to Delafosse brought across the French African (and, to a


¹²⁹ Anne Piriou, “Indigénisme et changement social: Le cas de la revue *Outre-Mer*,” in *L’Africanisme en questions*, ed. Anne Piriou and Emmanuelle Sibeud, (Paris, 1997), 47; Hardy, “Maurice Delafosse,” 22. Delafosse received a brief appointment as lieutenant governor of Oubangui-Chari in Afrique équatoriale française in 1918. However, health problems confined him to Paris and he reverted to an honorary governorship in 1919. See chapter 7 of this study for Pierre Bourdieu’s description of the line between academic and colonial worlds.
lesser extent, British) colonial system. Working from Delafosse’s earlier efforts to
publish native ideas in French translation, Hardy and Labouret pointed out the “absolute
necessity” of properly schooled administrators ready to deal with the “educated native”
who was “devoted” to the French cause. Natives, they wrote, operated not only as
ethnological sources but as scholars in their own right, building on the work of
trailblazing French scholars. To that end, the journal editors offered a prize for native
authors writing in French in 1930.

During the interwar years native scholars sponsored by Delafosse and his peers
gained a foothold in colonial ethnological circles. Many of them first appeared as simply
“courtiers” of French scholars such as Labouret or Delafosse. However, several of
them rose to prominence in later years, in particular Mamby Sidibé and Amadou
Hampâté Bâ. Sidibé gained a scholarly reputation in French ethnological circles from
publication in Outre-Mer and Hardy’s Bulletin de l’Enseignement de l’Afrique
occidentale française (Bulletin of West African Instruction), building and participating in

130 Ed Van Hoven, “Representing Social Hierarchy. Administrators-Ethnographers in the French Soudan: Delafosse, Monteil and Labouret,” Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines 30, Cahier 118 (1990), 182; Piriou, “Indigénisme et changement social,” 53. Labouret served as a French army captain in Cote d’Ivoire and held many of the same teaching positions as Delafosse following the latter’s death in 1926, including at the école coloniale and école des langues orientales, also picking up Delafosse’s position as the director of the International Institute of African Languages and Civilizations. Reformers also published in L’Afrique française, the mouthpiece of the powerful Comité de l’Afrique française and associated with Lyautey, among others. See Wilder, The French Imperial Nation-State, 59-60.

131 Labouret preface to Moussa Travélé, “Le Komo ou Koma,” Outre-Mer 1, 2 (June 1929), 127; “Le prix d’outre-mer,” Outre-Mer 2, 1 (March 1930), 93. See also Piriou, “Indigénisme et changement social.”

132 Piriou, “Indigénisme et changement social,” 63, 68. Piriou provides an exhaustive list of native Outre-Mer contributors: Mamby Sidibé (1929, 1931, 1932, 1935); Moussa Travélé (1929, 1931); A. Dim Delobson (1929, 1930); Dominique Traoré (1932); Guillaume Cyrille (1932, 1933); Amadou Mapaté Diagne (1933); M. Montrat (1935); Robert Ouattara (1936); Balde Saikou (1937). The journal folded in 1937.

133 See the conclusion for more detailed discussion of Hampâté Bâ, who grew to great academic prominence particularly in post-colonial West Africa.
networks of scholarly and political exchange that contributed to the political order after the Second World War and into the post-colonial period. Perhaps most importantly, Sidibé founded a Niamey (Niger) branch of the Institut français d’Afrique noire (IFAN) in 1946. IFAN, initially intended to offer a native perspective to French ethnological research and policy-making, ultimately created a core of intellectual elites who occupied high-level positions in government and academia in the new post-colonial states.\textsuperscript{134} Sidibé and a few others also published in the most prestigious AOF journal, the Bulletin du comité des études historiques et scientifiques de l’Afrique occidentale française. Generated by a committee that originally included both Marty and Delafosse, the journal proclaimed itself the purveyor of the most scientific ethnological analysis and collection in the region.\textsuperscript{135}

Long after the departure of Marty and Delafosse, native African authors continued their contributions, offering similar civilizational thoughts plucked from Ibn Khaldun. In 1938, an author under the pseudonym “Bou Haqq” considered the progress of civilization along the Sahel, the meeting point between “white” and “black.” The Tuareg, formerly masters of the area, had fallen back into “decadence,” living as though they were “feudal


\textsuperscript{135} Jézéquel lists Sidibé, Amadou Mapaté Diagne and Moussa Travélé as among the contributors to the journal. See “‘Collecting customary law,’” 142.
lords of another age.” The notion of separate and distinct civilizational groups at different points along their developmental paths thus appeared not only within the colonial hierarchy but among native intellectual elites as well. Working to promote a policy of “association” with native political and social groups as opposed to the homogenizing effect of “assimilation,” Marty and Delafosse attempted to reform the colonial apparatus from the inside. This model of civilization, inherited from Faidherbe and Lyautey, did not end at policy-making circles; indeed, it moved through academic channels to the French metropole, finding a foothold in the second generation of Durkheimian scholars interested in basic social structure as it existed “on the ground” in the colonies.

**Altering metropolitan academic perceptions**

Delafosse recognized the potential for colonial connections to Parisian academia even before his time as an influential administrator. His alter ego “Broussard” discovered that presentations on native life at the Sorbonne sparked interest, but they were “insufficient and too vague” for someone hoping to truly understand life outside Europe. Scholars and eager students alike, the colonial functionary advised, would find the best information by asking someone who had been there and seen native African societies in action. Some metropolitan social scientists, having grown tired of armchair theoretical

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136 Bou Haqq, “Noirs et blancs au confins du désert,” *Bulletin du comité d’études historiques et scientifiques de l’AOF* 21 (1938), 480-489 (quote on 488). The editors described the author only as “a personality who traveled for many years in the Sahel” who had decided to use the pseudonym Bou Haqq, as it translated to “friend of the truth.”

models, looked to Delafosse as the bridge between abstraction and empiricism: he stood as both “man of action” and “man of study.”

In addition to his colonial service and teaching requirements, Delafosse helped to form professional societies, including his co-founding of the new Parisian society of ethnography in 1920. Brought into close contact with Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Arnold Van Gennep, Marcel Mauss and other prominent sociologists in the metropole, Delafosse gained a reputation as the most important source for insight into questions on societal structures among “primitive” groups. Lévy-Bruhl, when working with Mauss to develop the Institut d’Ethnologie (IE) at the Sorbonne in the early 1920s, consulted Delafosse first not only for his ethnological experience but also for his ability to destroy bureaucratic obstacles. Mauss himself teamed with Delafosse in the Paris teaching community until the latter’s death, and counseled student Alfred Métraux that Delafosse’s language courses were “perfectly sufficient” as credit towards a degree at the IE, negating any need for further study. Delafosse’s views informed a more nuanced depiction of native groups. Rather than primitive sketches of European life in a previous era, they described alternate forms of social structure, worthy of study in their own right.

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138 René Maunier, “Maurice Delafosse (1870-1926),” Revue d’ethnographie et des traditions populaires 7, 27-28 (1926), 189. See also Amselle and Sibeud, “Introduction,” 10. In this description Delafosse fit the model set by Lyautey, who had advocated for men of both intelligence and action in the colonies.

139 Auguste Terrier to Delafosse, 25 March 1924. Terrier, writing in his role on the Comité de l’Afrique française, attached a copy of an Arabic manuscript and asked Delafosse to aid in interpreting and translating. In a note added 28 March 1926, Delafosse indicated he gave the piece to a student to translate. 2AP8C6h, MNHN.


and helpful in determining the weaknesses in absolute models propagated by Emile Durkheim, Arthur Radcliffe-Brown and other functionalist theorists of the early twentieth century.

Although not as well-connected as Delafosse in Parisian academic circles, Marty still felt himself part of the conversation regarding “primitive societies.” In his work on Côte d’Ivoire, Marty viewed some of the inhabitants of the forest belt as exemplifying “what the Durkheim school calls the ‘prelogical’ mentality.”¹⁴² His statement, while a misguided description of Lévy-Bruhl’s work as representative of Durkheim and his followers (see chapter 5 of this study), nonetheless demonstrated his engagement with metropolitan social theory. Colonial scholars such as Marty were both aware of and interacting with metropolitan scholarship on African societies. French Africanists saw abstract Parisian social theory as limited. Consequently, these colonial scholars engaged with that work while trying to correct some of what they perceived as misinterpretations and generalizations. Without the means to do much of the research themselves in the early twentieth century, metropolitan sociologists began a slow turn to African scholars to lead the way. In this relationship, French Africanists provided empirical and at times theoretical support to publication and education in France proper.

More than purely French phenomena, conversations on colonial ethnology took place in a multi-national environment. Delafosse in particular worked closely with Lord Frederick Lugard, the influential former governor of British Nigeria and perhaps the most famous proponent of “indirect rule.” He saw the British statesman as both kindred spirit

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¹⁴² Marty, *Etudes sur l’Islam en Côte d’Ivoire*, 40. See chapter 5 for more discussion on Lévy-Bruhl’s notion of a “primitive mind” and the attacks on that position by Mauss founded on, in part, ideas from Delafosse’s work.
and example, as he and his form of colonial governance revealed that “the best method, to ensure the material and moral well-being of the population and its social progress, is to permit its [an African civilization] development along its own racial path.”¹⁴³ The two men worked together in the years preceding Delafosse’s death to form the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures at the University of London.¹⁴⁴ Much like the journals founded by Delafosse and his successors in AOF, Lugard’s organization intended to foster “a closer association of scientific knowledge and research with practical affairs.” This “connecting link between science and life” must necessarily include “brochures or texts written or dictated by Africans.”¹⁴⁵ Delafosse and Lugard thus hardened the links between Africa and metropolitan academic and political centers. The views of Delafosse and Marty, including those of their close native collaborators, now appeared in international academic circles and propagated via newspapers, journals, and monographs. From this point of influence the ideas would again see the light of day, this time radiated back out from the metropolitan center in the form of the next generation of researchers schooled in techniques pioneered by Delafosse, Marty, and their peers among African populations.

¹⁴³ Maurice Delafosse, “La leçon des faits: C’est des institutions des indigènes qu’il faut nous inspirer pour déterminer l’orientation à donner à leur évolution,” La Dépeche Coloniale et Maritime, 28 February 1924, 1.

¹⁴⁴ Louise Delafosse, Le Berrichon, 389; Lord Frederick D. Lugard, “The International Institute of African Languages and Cultures,” Africa 1, 1 (January 1928), 7. Labouret describes Nigeria as the site where “the protectorate method was brilliantly applied,” producing “the most advanced” African society. Labouret, “Questions de politique indigène,” 82.

Conclusion

These two most prominent French scholars of West Africa lived relatively short lives, as Delafosse passed away in 1926 and Marty in 1938, both at the age of 55.146 Marty had devoted his entire life to colonial military service, dying a lieutenant colonial in a military hospital in Tunis, in the process showing how far a military ethnologist could go in that period in the conduct of ethnographic research in Africa. A simple examination of the lengths of the lives of Marty and Delafosse masks their enormous influence on French political and ethnological views of West African societies. Far from simple compilers or slaves to the colonial mindset, they participated in an effort to define and describe African social groups in language provided by Africans themselves. Race and civilization in this rendering became more complicated terms as Delafosse and Marty interpreted, sometimes erroneously, native African descriptions of their social reality. Employing a wide range of linguistic, geographic, and ethnographic techniques, Marty and Delafosse described African civilization in space and time. Africans had a history that they understood and communicated in this telling; from that description of the past French scholars and administrators tried to discern their place on the path to modern civilization. For these French Africanist scholars, understanding an area dominated by Islam and kinship required collaboration with the long tradition of African civilizational

146 On Delafosse’s last days, see Louise Delafosse, Le Berrichon, 398. On Marty, see Report of 15 March 1938 by Doctor-Lieutenant Colonel Gaulier, Marty dossier, SHD, which discusses his death in a military hospital in Tunis. Reassigned to Morocco in 1925, Marty found himself ejected from the country in 1930 after accusations of Christian proselytization by the Sultan’s staff. This proselytization may have come from his efforts to pass out Arabic translations of Ernest Renan’s Vie de Jésus (1863)—see Spencer Segalla, The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956, (Lincoln, NE, 2009), 230. Although Marty still published while in Tunisia, he apparently fell into some state of depression and received multiple rebukes from senior officers on his dress and behavior. See Evaluation of 31 October 1930, signed by General Noguès, and General Jacomet to Director of Central Administration of the French Tunisian Army, 19 December 1932, Marty dossier, SHD.
scholarship, beginning with the medieval Arab geographers and ending with modern savants. They struggled to understand, and in some cases misinterpreted, the role of kinship and genealogy in African social constructions and in Islam more generally.

These scholars extolled the virtues of native constructions while calling for a continued developmental role for France. Though Marty and Delafosse emphasized a relative approach, they often found themselves unable to escape the trap of Eurocentrism. In trying to describe the potential of African civilizations, they looked to the past as written in the accounts offered by Africans themselves. That process, however, actually served to infantilize Africans of the present as but shadows of their former selves. Thus, African societies appeared not as complex responses to varied environmental and economic influences, but as victims of a cyclical process outside of their control. In the process, Marty and Delafosse added further justification to the French civilizing mission while burnishing their own positions as important interpreters of the requirements of colonial rule.

Delafosse and Marty participated in a movement to humanize French colonial rule even as they struggled to contain or eliminate what they viewed as the nefarious or retarding aspects of Islam during and immediately following the First World War. They operated in a time of tumult, as global conflict opened up new avenues for change while closing others. In this space they proposed an increased civilizational communication, albeit one still bracketed by the unequal power relations brought on by colonial domination. The true contributions of Delafosse and Marty, though, were not in their ethnographies, studies that adhered in many ways to colonial presuppositions that placed
black Africans at the bottom of a civilizational hierarchy. Rather, their emphasis on knowledge gained at the source, in the colonies themselves, ultimately aided future generations of native Africans in their efforts to describe the worth of their civilization outside the dictates of the colonial state. In the words of Léopold Sédar Senghor, later president of independent Senegal, Delafosse “not only affirmed the civilization values of black Africa, but proved them.” Delafosse enabled an important “cultural dialogue” between France and Africa that proved enormously influential in academic and policy circles in the forty years following his death.147

This dialogue informed metropolitan social theorists as they tried to better understand human social composition. Moving beyond basic Durkheimian notions of ideal types and primitive representations of the European present, Marcel Mauss and his students focused on information gathered in the field from intelligent natives themselves, drawing on the vast repository of knowledge generated by Marty and Delafosse. The metropolitan engagement of Mauss and his peers with African-generated ethnology, and its subsequent radiation back to the colonies for political implementation through a new generation of students, pushed the French colonial network to new places.

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147 Léopold Sédar Senghor, afterword to Louise Delafosse, *Le Berrichon*, 401-402.
Chapter 5: Escaping Durkheim: Marcel Mauss, the Field, and Social Structure

Dedicated to “combining the elements of scientific inquiry,” Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and the founding members of the prestigious Année Sociologique (AS) journal vowed to study history in tandem with sociology if only to tap into the facts provided by study of the past. The AS group instrumentalized history as a device for the collection of supporting data. The discipline provided them with a window to an earlier time of simpler social structure. Building on the foundation laid by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Durkheim and his followers, including his nephew Marcel Mauss, formed the most powerful block of social scientists in France by the end of the nineteenth century. They rejected what they viewed as the overly simplistic notions of the physical anthropologists.¹ As the AS group stated in the journal’s first issue, “Facts have no significance…except when they are grouped in laws and types.”² Durkheim and his disciples thus set out to understand the composition and activity of social groups and mass phenomena; individual variation played little part. The related field of ethnology gave Durkheim some insight on “primitive” societies at an earlier evolutionary stage of the European present.

Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), correspondent and professional colleague of Maurice Delafosse in Paris, was initially firmly in Durkheim’s camp with respect to the power of

¹ By 1914 Paul Broca’s société d’anthropologie de Paris, the fading seat of physical anthropological thinking, was surpassed in membership by the Institut ethnographique international de Paris, founded by Maurice Delafosse and Arnold van Gennep and focused on colonial ethnographic information gathering. See Emmanuelle Sibeud, “The Elusive Bureau of Colonial Ethnography in France, 1907-1925,” in Ordering Africa: Anthropology, European Imperialism, and the Politics of Knowledge, ed. Helen Tilley and Robert J. Gordon, (New York, 2007), 59-60.

² L’Année Sociologique 1, 1 (1896), iv.
group analysis. However, he altered his view over time and emerged with a more relativist position\(^3\) that in many ways incorporated the views of Delafosse and Paul Marty and considered social groups on their own terms apart from Europe. Sociological examination for Mauss required full consideration of the relative positions of civilizations on a developmental continuum; each moved along a unique path at a different rate. In Mauss’ view, French social scientists saw everything with a flawed “sociological and prehistoric romanticism,”\(^4\) which considered the European model as the baseline and overlooked the more local and individual origins of societal difference, a trap into which he also fell at times. Working from the foundation laid by Durkheim and incorporating elements of Delafosse’s work, Mauss constructed a new metropolitan French ethnological sociology based on knowledge generated in the colonies. In the process he spawned a new generation of social scientists grounded in empirical investigation and dedicated to first-hand observation of the colonies themselves.\(^5\)

Tracing the twinned ideas of “civilization” and “development” as they existed in Mauss’ work stands as a significant departure from the previous chapters in this study. Hardly a colonial scholar, Mauss took colonial inputs and translated them into the metropolitan academic milieu, thereby making them available to new generations of


social scientists and, ultimately, French ethnological political administrators. He incorporated the concept of civilizational distinction advocated by Delafosse, in the process making use of African notions of race, genealogy, and religion. Although clearly not a colonial scholar, Mauss accepted the inputs of colleagues operating in Africa in formulating sophisticated theories of social structure and the sociological method. He and his colleagues at the Institut d’ethnologie (IE) in Paris employed the language of colonialism to gain state sponsorship of on-the-ground research. Hardly ardent colonial ideologues, Mauss and his colleagues nonetheless valued the colonies as sources of empirical information, finding Africa and other non-Western locales sites of important insight into the basic social forms that eluded social scientists.

Contemporaries such as Maurice Leenhardt and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl also wrote sophisticated descriptions of non-European social forms, but they did not tap into the vast resources of African history in place among African elites for centuries. Mauss, more prominent in international ethnology than either man, used connections in Africa and around the world to assert the importance of non-European social and political forms. British and American colleagues looked to Mauss as a central figure of the emerging anthropological discipline. He maintained ties to nearly all of them, from cultural relativist Franz Boas in the United States to pioneering fieldworker Bronislaw Malinowski in the United Kingdom.6

6 See Folder 1.78, Franz Boas; Folder Evans-Pritchard in MAS 18, Folder Labouret in MAS 19, and Folders Malinowski, Professor Gunn, and Radcliffe-Brown in MAS 20, Institut Mémoire de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC), Archives de Collège de France, Fonds Marcel Mauss, Caen, France, (hereafter MAS).
This chapter thus follows the idea of “civilization” and its powerful connotations as it mutated through transmission to and reinterpretation in the metropole. Far more than a middleman, Mauss reimagined the sociological and ethnological enterprise as part of a larger process of colonial information generation and theoretical explanation. True to the civilizational paradigm laid out by colonials such as Louis Faidherbe, Hubert Lyautey, and most importantly Delafosse, Mauss reoriented French social theory away from abstract musings towards a more localized and specific appreciation of the prospect of development and progress. He formulated a research agenda that guided his students from the 1920s to the 1940s, pressing a Delafossian view that portrayed civilizations on unique trajectories and developing at their own rate. This research plan sought out fundamental forms of human communication and social interaction that existed across all civilizational groups.

Beyond this academic impact, Mauss’ conceptions of ethnological investigation influenced his student Jacques Soustelle, who translated them into an ill-advised form of political rule in war-torn Algerian in 1955-1956. Soustelle’s ethnological state, the subject of the next chapter, brought French ethnology to its political height, in the process demonstrating the weaknesses of scientific, inward-looking government in an international arena. Pierre Bourdieu, a young soldier turned ethnologist in 1950s Algeria, took the Maussian concepts of civilization and local knowledge, and reapplied them to fieldwork in the colony. In the process, he took his sociological predecessor’s work a step further, offering an important counter to the structuralist conceptions of Claude Lévi-
Strauss, among others. His conception of civilization and development, particularly as seen through his intellectual combat with Lévi-Strauss, is the subject of the final chapter.

Drawing on a wide range of sources including everything from questionnaires to manuscripts, Mauss and his students hoped to discern basic commonalities, ultimately leading to conclusions such as his theory of the universality of the ritual of gift-giving. These universal social truths, each of which he named a “total social phenomenon,” combined the religious, legal, moral, familial, economic, and political forms of any society in one social expression. A full appreciation of these structures in their full historical context enabled Mauss and his students to conclude that even “primitive” non-Western societies, in contrast to the social evolutionary ideas of Durkheim and Spencer, displayed enormous variety and complexity. Mauss expressly tied his analysis of these universalities only to the non-Western “societies that surround us or immediately preceded our own.” These societies were not, in Mauss’ conception, necessarily tied to a simple backwards reading of European history. Analyzing change over time provided him with insight into fundamental social structures and the prospect of additional native

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7 See, for example, undated “Questionnaire ethnographique” in Folder 34.7, MAS, which is quite similar to the list Delafosse compiled in 1901-1902 (see chapter 4). The questionnaire in Mauss’ files requested information on “clothing, personal ornamentation, coloring and tattooing, drawing and sculptures, cooking, braiding, weaving, basketry, pottery, dyeing and painting, metallurgy, machines, construction, invention, spirit of preservation, housing, fire, foods, cannibalism, drug use, hunting and fishing, nomadic and pastoral life, agriculture, education, mental faculties, writing, astronomy, arithmetic, money and securities, weights and measures, commerce, property, succession, slavery, government, justice, crimes, social organization, kinship, marriage, family, widows, morals, sexual relations, death, funeral ceremonies, paths/oaths/ordeals, taboos, sacred animals, religion, mythology, magic and magicians, history, initiation ceremonies, circumcision, music, games, swimming, navigation, war, customs, stone tools, reproduction, abnormal characters, artificial deformities, medicine and surgery.”


advancement towards European-style modernity. Mauss’ approach, which placed the Western experience apart from that of any other social grouping, fit well with the prevailing sentiment in France that emerged in the first decades of the Third Republic. The scholar’s views both sustained and fed off descriptions of European exceptionalism, which in part justified colonial domination of African and Asian peoples, and the pedagogical/research world emerging to support this new political and ideological agenda.

Mauss entered French academia at a moment of great transition, particularly in the social sciences. As the Third Republic struggled to establish itself as a viable, long-term political structure for France, the population tried to come to terms with the humiliating defeat at the hands of Prussian invaders in the conflict of 1870-71. Public and academic discussion, stoked by reformer politicians such as Jules Ferry in the 1880s, focused on the need for social renewal by means of detailed sociological investigation and examination in the metropole (as opposed to Lyautey, who argued for a French reinvigoration via the colonies). The searing effects of the Dreyfus affair beginning in the 1890s made this need even more urgent, as French society split over the proper involvement of the closely-defined notions of religion and race in social and political organization.\(^\text{10}\)

Several new sociological camps emerged in an effort to take advantage of the new opening provided by republican ideology. Republican thinkers in this period sought to

\(^{10}\) George Weisz, “Education and the Civil Utility of Social Science,” Minerva 16, 3 (1978), 453. Jules Ferry, at various times minister of education, foreign affairs, and prime minister in the 1880s, enacted serious education reform that made schooling free, obligatory, and secular. He also, in his guise as foreign minister, advocated for colonial expansion to Indochina, an effort that, while ultimately successful, pushed him out of government for a time.
legitimate imperial expansion by encoding their conclusions with what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has described as the “symbolic efficacy” of the “absolute, universal, and eternal” truths promised by the French university and research establishment.\textsuperscript{11}

Durkheim emerged as the most powerful of these new sociologists, in the process developing his own school of like-minded thinkers, the aforementioned AS team. Establishing prominence for his new discipline required Durkheim to simultaneously widen his field of view to incorporate exciting new minds (in linguistics, philosophy, and economics) and to demarcate his science from others. His personal brilliance, recognized across the French academy, helped to push his work and that of his collaborators beyond that of historians, who when compared to him seemed to write only dense studies without obvious applicability to the modern world.\textsuperscript{12}

Durkheim, as noted above, considered history a useful source of evidence on the progress of social evolution over time. Ethnology, the comparative study of civilizations or races of men, existed for most Durkheimians as a source for data regarding the development of the ideal types they saw exhibited in modern European society.


\textsuperscript{12} Weisz, \textit{The Emergence of Modern Universities}, 291-292; Weisz, “Education and the Civil Utility of Social Science,” 453. Carole Reynaud Paligot argues that race theorist/anthropologist Charles Letourneau was a key transitional figure between the anatomist-anthropologists (such as Paul Broca) of the mid-nineteenth century and Durkheim, as Letourneau focused on the intellectual and psychological consequences of physical distinctions between the races. See Reynaud Paligot, \textit{La république raciale: Paradigme racial et idéologie républicaine (1860-1930)}, (Paris, 2006), 84-86. On the struggles of historians to redefine the discipline as based on social and economic analysis in this same period (as opposed to political or “great man” history), see Laurent Mucchielli, “Aux origines de la nouvelle histoire en France: L’évolution intellectuelle et la formation du champ des sciences sociales (1880-1930),” \textit{Revue de synthèse} 4, 1 (January-March 1995), 55-98. For an overview of the combat of Durkheim and his followers with other French social theorists, see Laurent Mucchielli, \textit{Mythes et histoire des sciences humaines}, (Paris, 2004).
Ethnography, the gathering of information on foreign “races,” delivered this raw data to sociologists who, without the need to journey to foreign lands themselves, could make use of the accounts of travelers or missionaries in formulating their conclusions safe in their Parisian offices.  

Sociology stood at the top of this academic-analytical pyramid, much as it had for Comte, viewed by the early twentieth century as the founder of the modern discipline of sociology and the most powerful proponent of positive observation. The other social sciences and humanities could inform this process, but not bring it to a final conclusion.

Mauss ultimately worked against this armchair paradigm, not through his actions (as he remained a purely metropolitan analyst himself), but instead through his civilizational model and advocacy for an understanding of social structure as dynamic rather than static. While he remained respectful of his uncle and academic superior Durkheim, Mauss felt the freedom to explore new territory. “We were not a simple school of blind disciples around a master, a philosopher,” he explained. Instead, he pointed to the “superior certitude” the “descriptive sciences,” such as ethnography, provided when compared with the “theoretical sciences,” such as metaphysical philosophy. He thought that no single method, speculative or not, could adequately explain social phenomena. Rather, such exploration required ethnographic, historical, 

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13 See Laurent Mucchielli, “Aux origines de la psychologie universitaire en France (1870-1900): Enjeux intellectuels, contexte politique, réseaux et stratégies d’alliance autour de la Revue Philosophique de Théodule Ribot,” Annals of Science 55 (1998), 263-289, for discussion of Durkheim’s links, via psychology, to notions of social evolution and Paul Broca’s physical anthropology. Mauss also reported that Durkheim had a “strong admiration” for Condorcet and Comte as the “founders” of sociology, as well as Spencer as an evolutionary theorist. See Marcel Mauss, “In Memoriam: L’œuvre inédite de Durkheim et de ses collaborateurs,” L’Année Sociologique Nouvelle série, 1 (1923), 15.

linguistic and archaeological investigations capped by a more informed sociological analysis of the whole.\(^\text{15}\)

Mauss saw sociologists at the top of the analytical food chain, feeding on the ideas delivered by ethnologists trained in the metropole. However, he redefined the nascent social science by considering individuals as important in the formation of social structures. People themselves represented the meeting place between the historical, the physical, and the ethnographic or social. Dialogue and discussion with natives, or any subjects of analysis, Mauss thought, would deliver great insight into the forces and forms shaping their interactions, as they were more than simple cogs in a social machine. For Mauss, the most important moment for social study occurred when people both understood and took control of their social destinies. He wrote, “It is by considering the whole entity that we could perceive...the fleeting moment...when people become sentimentally aware of themselves and of their situation vis-à-vis others. In this concrete observation of social life lies the means to uncover new facts.”\(^\text{16}\) Mauss thus found that social analysis fundamentally required an understanding of subjects, regardless of their status as European or non-Western, as intelligent interpreters and actors in their own social dramas, able to comprehend their own conditions.

Building a library of information capable of contributing to such a broad-ranging civilizational description required contacts in multiple societies around the world. Such contacts proved readily available for Mauss. He tapped into the broad networks of


ethnological knowledge generated by colonial officials, particularly those developed and cultivated by Delafosse and Marty in North and West Africa in tandem with native intellectual elites.

By pressing for the use of on-site observation as part of university education, Mauss took advantage of a French academic establishment slowly reforming to permit views from outside the mainstream, as universities began to control the staging of courses and the choices of degree concentrations apart from governmental dictates.\textsuperscript{17} The French colonial empire gave him numerous opportunities to examine non-European societies. Indeed, French soldiers and administrators had conducted such studies since the very beginning of conquest as the notion of governance by association gathered political momentum. This theory of rule, which called for colonial governments to respect and maintain native political and social forms with an eye towards ultimate independence, had emerged as the leading technique by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Heavily influenced by the civilizational ideas advanced by French Africanist scholars, Mauss formulated sophisticated theories describing social relativity and calling for on-site ethnological investigation. His concepts then radiated back to the colonies via fieldworkers and later political leaders.\textsuperscript{18}

Mauss pressed his ideas across the metropolitan academic environment and into the colonies through his instruction at the Parisian IE. He taught that only through deliberate cultivation of native written, oral, and ethnographic sources could ethnologists

\textsuperscript{17} Weisz, \textit{The Emergence of Modern Universities}, 161, 167.

\textsuperscript{18} Lévi-Strauss discusses this phenomenon in “French Sociology,” in \textit{Twentieth Century Sociology}, ed. Georges Gurvitch and Wilbert E. Moore, (New York, 1945), 512. He considers the far-ranging impact of Mauss’ essays on the gift and seasonal Eskimo variations.
and sociologists discern the true makeup or constitution of social structures in their myriad of forms. He took a particular interest in Africa, home to a large and active ethnological community and the preponderance of French colonial subjects, many categorized as “primitive” by European social scientists. Native oral histories served notice, Mauss postulated, that African civilization had a significant history distinct from the European experience. In African societies he found “sagacity, a spirit, an art of telling, a poetry even, that we must not let disappear and that we must collect.” Mauss thus enlisted a number of students to collect this information for the good of French science, colonial governance and the future of African societies.

Working from the IE beginning in 1925, Mauss fathered a new generation of ethnologists and sociologists dedicated to fieldwork and extensive local examination, employing concepts and methods first developed by Marty and Delafosse. His teaching, characterized by Claude Lévi-Strauss as “highly esoteric,” nonetheless exerted an enormous influence. Future Algerian governor-general Jacques Soustelle found him “almost magically informed of everything, possessed of great flashes of insight.” Other students praised the “man without preconceptions” who had “no dogmatism in him” and always placed “freedom and respect for others” ahead of other requirements. In this Maussian paradigm, scientists had the ability to understand social reality only after they

19 Ibid., 551.
20 Lévi-Strauss, Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss, 1. This essay initially served as the introduction to the collection of Mauss’ work, Sociologie et anthropologie.

developed an appreciation of the effect of context or environment on both the civilization in question and the examiner himself or herself, a concept that would reemerge most prominently in the studies of Pierre Bourdieu in the 1960s. The resultant reflexivity unleashed a new period in twentieth-century Western ethnology and anthropology, in which scientists considered the impact of their own interventions, even if purely intellectual, both on the subject society and as a limiting factor for their objectivity.

Like Delafosse and Marty, Mauss described Africa in terms of civilizations both in need and capable of significant progress. Understanding the levels of societal constitution, particularly through religion, gave insights into structure and the possibility of progress in this model, although Mauss recognized that universal truths were few and far between. The sociologist “ignored conventional contexts and never ceased to insist on the necessity in field ethnography of an insatiable curiosity across all domains,” which he argued could result in an “encyclopedic” knowledge of a society and its culture, recalled a student. 22 From his earliest days Mauss broke with convention as he tried to explain complex social phenomena in novel ways.

Exploring the sociological method through links to Africa

In the ever-shifting world of late nineteenth and early twentieth century French social science outlined above, Mauss struggled to find his own academic path and navigate the minefields of personal identity, academic position, and colonial ethnological collection. He ultimately concluded, and pressed his uncle to do the same, that sociological analysis was possible only with detailed knowledge of native practices. He

found research on the ground and in the colonies enormously important to the
advancement of his science. To that end, he employed and conversed with Frenchmen
resident in the colonies, who he perceived as the best possible sources of that data. He
did not conduct on-the-ground ethnographic studies himself, opting instead to use the
results of research performed by others in his sociological analysis in France.

Mauss’ unique position in French social science derived from a number of
sources, prominent among them his Jewish background growing up on the border of
Germany and France. The Rhine borderlands of France and the German states suffered
in a centuries-old tug-of-war between two cultures. Neither French nor German in full,
their inhabitants lived astride two worlds. This perspective shaped the worldview of
Marcel Mauss and his uncle, Emile Durkheim. Born in a mid-sized town in Lorraine, the
two men grew up with ancestors from both sides of the national border. Mauss’ father
fought on the French side in the Franco-Prussian War, retaining French citizenship even
in the short-lived German occupation that followed. The young Mauss inherited this
borderland identity from his family and remained on the outskirts of French nationality.
The family’s presence on the edges of French society resulted from its unsuccessful
embroidery business and, more importantly, its place in a long line of rabbinical Jewish
learning. A strong Jewish religious heritage set them apart from the French mainstream,
particularly in the 1890s when religious background became critical to larger national
questions of nationality and French identity in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair. In later
life, Mauss remarked that this strict Jewish upbringing caused both he and his uncle (born
in 1858) to rebel against that lifestyle, instead dedicating themselves to science and
rationality. Being what historian Venita Datta has called “state intellectuals,” Durkheim and Mauss entered a mainstream society that saw itself as increasingly secular. Rejecting Judaism and establishing a position in secular French culture enabled Mauss to move in French society without suspicion. Once within the academic community he followed his uncle in working against convention, enrolling not at the prestigious _école normale supérieure_ in Paris but instead at the University of Bordeaux.

Durkheim had landed in Bordeaux in part due to his unconventional views on social science. Neither historian nor philosopher, Durkheim proposed to further Comte’s studies in a new direction, by the analysis of fundamental expressions of human social life. Bordeaux hosted the only chair in France for the study of sociology; Durkheim languished there in a sort of exile imposed by a French university system slow to react to changing intellectual currents. From this position on the margins of French academia, Durkheim eventually carved out a significant niche for himself and his disciples, earning credibility and a place in Paris by 1902 as a professor of pedagogy at the Sorbonne. This new position, which came when Mauss was still a junior scholar, opened up a world of funding, political sponsorship and research access to his colleagues at AS, the journal he founded in 1896.

Durkheim’s focus on the insertion of sociology into the standard university curriculum, even if it came only via a basic teaching curriculum and not a

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25 On this period in French academia and Durkheim’s search for a Parisian post, see Weisz, _The Emergence of Modern Universities in France_, 294; Christophe Charle, _La république des universitaires, 1870-1940_, (Paris, 1994), 190-191; and Terry Nichols Clark, _Prophets and Patrons: The French University and the Emergence of the Social Sciences_, (Cambridge, MA, 1973), 180-195.
disciplinary chair at a university, left him at first close-minded to the exciting prospects of ethnology and ethnography. Durkheim’s reluctance left room for Mauss to advocate fieldwork, a cause to which he would devote himself beginning in 1913.

First, Mauss had to develop his own intellectual identity independent of his prominent uncle. He graduated with a degree (license) in philosophy in 1892, also taking law courses and spending a compulsory year in the military. He completed his agrégation (certificate to teach at secondary or university level) in 1895 and began to pursue a doctorate in philosophy (that he would never complete) with the benefit of state scholarships. Now an agrégé ranked on a level commensurate with the philosophy graduates of the école normale, Mauss saw himself as equivalent to a Parisian-educated academic even as he remained an outsider. With his credentials now established, Mauss joined Durkheim on the AS team. Pierre Bourdieu, a late-twentieth-century intellectual inheritor of Mauss who similarly found himself outside the Parisian academic mainstream, described the young sociologist’s unique position in working for his uncle. Mauss, “whose position as glorious assistant saved him from the ridicule usually evoked by theoretical professions of faith of the crudest kind,” remained immune to many of the polemical attacks launched on his superior. He was thus free to experiment with new theories and views, particularly in consultation with his good friend, historian and AS

26 Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 21, 28 fn 103. See also, “CV Mauss,” Folder 38.10, MAS. Mauss refers to his scholarships for the agrégation and doctoral studies as “for services at the same level as the ECOLE NORMALE” (caps in original).

colleague Henri Hubert. Durkheim, still very much an armchair analyst akin to a philosopher, took some time to understand the value of the field examinations proposed by Mauss and Hubert. However, the master did eventually accede that the importance of “primitive” ethnographic data in assessing positions on the evolutionary path legitimized some of the projects undertaken by the younger members of his team, including Mauss. Although Durkheim could not escape his basic reliance on the social evolutionary theories of Herbert Spencer, his younger colleagues, inspired by what they saw as the path-breaking work of Africanists such as Delafosse, employed detailed field data to construct a new vision of societies as distinct in their own right, not part of a teleology of Western development.

Mauss developed a core group of colleagues during his time at the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE) in Paris, where he enrolled in 1895. While there he spent time with fellow students and future prominent sociologists Hubert and Arnold Van Gennep. Ultimately most interested in the social aspects of the newly formed section on “religious science,” Mauss accepted a position teaching “religions of uncivilized peoples” in 1901. The EPHE, at this time an upstart and unconventional institution in the conservative world of Parisian academia, added unconventional courses of study such as religious science while the Sorbonne or other universities refused to change. Consequently, Mauss, a man from the edges of mainstream French society and operating against

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30 “CV Mauss,” MAS 38.10; Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 37, 44, 85-86, 89.
academic convention, employed the EPHE as a center of correspondence. From Paris he exchanged letters and served in academic societies with contacts in the colonies, particularly Africa, and in France to inform his ethnological studies. These sources, both peers such as Delafosse and lower-level functionaries who served as information gatherers, shaped his understanding of foreign societies as unique in their own right. Each society developed implicit rules that governed interaction, but those forms appeared to the observer only after in-depth examination. Ironically, Mauss employed the techniques of armchair ethnology and sociology he so derided in the work of others. His acknowledgment of the weaknesses of his own techniques, however, served as the basis for a new generation of ethnologists focused on fieldwork and cognizant of their own role in shaping ethnographic reality.

Even as religion formed the center of this ethnological/sociological work, Mauss moved to extremes to resituate himself as a French secular academic far removed from the Jewish lifestyle. Living as a Bohemian on the Parisian left bank, Mauss reportedly enjoyed the company of multiple girlfriends on a shoestring budget, often spending his nights carousing at cafés on the “Boul-Mich.” He discovered avant-garde art, particularly the work of Pablo Picasso and its evocations of far-away ideas and people. In a later homage to Picasso, Mauss declared himself to have been “one of the young people seduced by your painting and your drawing.” Based on his “modest knowledge of


32 Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 51-52. “Boul-Mich” is a moniker given the Boulevard Saint-Michel, a prominent left bank avenue which runs into the heavily bohemian and student-populated fifth and sixth arrondissements.
primitive art,” Mauss believed that Picasso’s work “brings us closer to the purest sources of impression and expression.”

For the young scholar, art provided insight into exotic societies. He was willing to consider unconventional sources of social knowledge in mapping reality and its underlying structures. In this way Mauss worked against convention in both his personal and professional lives, setting the stage for his reformulation of sociology as an ethnographically rooted science based not on abstract metropolitan musings but on fieldwork.

During this period no political movement could give as cosmopolitan a view of extra-French developments as socialism. Academics joined left-wing groups in part to retain some sort of voice in political affairs, as they found themselves increasingly pushed to the side by traditional political parties focused on the divisions of the Dreyfus Affair. Mauss collaborated with the famed philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and other AS colleagues on socialist causes. Many of these academics published in the communist-leaning daily l’Humanité. A fellow philosophy agregé, Lévy-Bruhl taught history and modern philosophy at the Sorbonne. Most importantly, he provided Mauss a window

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33 Marcel Mauss, “M. Marcel Mauss...” Documents 2, 3 (1930), 177.


35 Besnard, “La formation de l’équipe,” 19; Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 123. Mauss’ contacts included a young Jean Jaurès, the famed socialist leader who would remain among Mauss’ closest political friends until his death. Lévy-Bruhl’s wife may have financed part of the newspaper’s operation through donation of her marriage dowry. Lévy-Bruhl, never a formal member of the AS team, nevertheless maintained close ties to Durkheim and Mauss; they periodically shared meals. See Lévy-Bruhl to Mauss, 5 Dec 1904(?); Lévy-Bruhl to Mauss, “dimanche” (perhaps 1910), MAS 8.10.

36 Born in Paris on 10 April 1857 (d. 13 March 1939), Lévy-Bruhl had a brilliant academic career, including graduation from the école normale supérieure in 1876 and an 1884 doctoral thesis on a Latin topic. See Jean Cazeneuve, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, trans. Peter Rivière, (New York, 1972 [1963]), ix-xvi; and Gringeri, “Twilight of the Sun Kings,” 58-66. Missionary-ethnographer Maurice Leenhardt was another
on the colonies through his writings on the “primitive mind” and his connections with prominent French African intellectuals and administrators who he had met during previous travels in West Africa. Lévy-Bruhl’s notion that “with very few exceptions, primitive peoples have no history” provided an easy antithesis to Mauss’ own views.37

Lévy-Bruhl’s conclusions echoed those of many metropolitan theorists of the era, who found that native groups had little to contribute to civilization, representing either an earlier stage of human evolution or simply standing as a breed apart. Mauss and other unconventional scholars challenged this reading of non-European thought processes as tainted with belief in the cultural superiority of European language and religion. Despite this basic disagreement, Lévy-Bruhl did provide Mauss access to a large network of colonial soldiers and administrators engaging in research “in place.” He had a close relationship with a lieutenant governor of Niger and later Governor-General of Afrique occidentale française (AOF – French West Africa), who encouraged research by metropolitan scholars to eliminate a perceived “lacuna” in metropolitan understanding of “our [French West African] races, so curious, so diverse.” 38 Mauss saw the value of such associations and worked hard to cultivate contacts in Africa, a process continuing from such unconventional scholar who pushed Lévy-Bruhl in a productive give-and-take on the complexity of the “primitive” mind. See James Clifford, Person and Myth: Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian World, (Durham, NC, 1992 [1982]), 200-206; and “Dossier Nécrologique,” Folder 22.16, Institut Mémoire de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC), Archives de Collège de France, Fonds Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Caen, France, (hereafter LVB), for description of the connection between the two men.

37 Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Primitive Mentality, trans. Lilian A. Clare, (New York, 1923 [1922]), 384; originally published as La mentalité primitive.

38 Jules Brévié to Lévy-Bruhl, 15 October 1923; Brévié to Lévy-Bruhl, 4 December 1931, LVB 3. On his death the Monde Colonial extolled Lévy-Bruhl’s role as patron of colonial scientific investigation. See “Deuil dans notre comité de patronage,” Monde Colonial, April 1939, LVB 22.16.
his student days in the late nineteenth century until his retirement during the Second World War.

In 1894, Mauss considered a position at the Faculté des Lettres in Algiers. His mother recommended he “seize the opportunity,” as “it would be a tremendous stroke of luck for an active, inquisitive man to get his start in a place like Algiers.”

Mauss never took the job, opting instead for a metropolitan academic career, but his interest in the French colonies remained. As was the case for the scholars who preceded him in this ethnological network, Mauss saw Algeria as an important field for research and teaching. Social scientists interested in discerning the reality of non-European existence had an opportunity to journey, relatively cheaply, to France’s oldest African colony. Once there, they could develop useful academic contacts in an environment of ethnographic experimentation and discovery. Although he never traveled there himself, Mauss’ thought frequently went back to Algeria as an important site for social investigation. Over the course of his career he sent numerous students to the area for fieldwork even as he corresponded with French North African politicians and scientists.

Mauss also later considered a position at the Trocadero ethnography museum in Paris only to find it had gone to René Verneau (also a professor of Maurice Delafosse) instead. His interest in ethnography and the display of ethnographic artifacts via museums, though, also serves a window into his developing methodology. He perceived the colonies as sites where non-European societies acted and changed over time. In

39 Rosine Mauss to Marcel Mauss, 23 January 1896, cited in Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 32.

40 M. Bayet to Marcel Mauss, 17 October 1910, cited in Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 166 fn 80. See chapter 3 for more on Delafosse’s links to Verneau.
Mauss’ mind, the physical, oral, and written artifacts found among “primitive” peoples were vital tools for use in discerning the underlying social structure. Mauss, from his position as trained analyst of the forms of human interaction, saw himself as uniquely qualified to construct theoretical models that considered both the circumstances of creation and use of these artifacts. While he employed others to gather this basic data for him, he preferred to have academic training and work in situ. In searching for assistance, he turned his gaze to his colleagues.

Arnold van Gennep, Mauss’ prickly classmate at EPHE and ethnographic veteran of Algeria, inspired Mauss to make field observations central to his sociological conclusions. Beginning in 1901, van Gennep applied his wide-ranging intellect\textsuperscript{41} to ethnographic study, developing questionnaires for use by colonial functionaries and advocating for the institutionalization of the science in France and the colonies.\textsuperscript{42} Information collection, so critical to van Gennep for “knowing the needs and tendencies of the governed and administered,” must take place in the field. Seeing themselves as kindred spirits, Mauss and van Gennep worked together in the first decade of the twentieth century to insert ethnography into university curricula, hoping to correct the

\textsuperscript{41} Born 23 April 1873 in the German state of Wurtemberg, van Gennep moved with his mother to Lyon at age 6. Brilliant with languages, he graduated from the \textit{école des langues orientales} and EPHE and lived/taught in Poland and Switzerland before assuming a life as a poor scholar in France beginning in the First World War. He was excluded from the AS and from other French universities in part due to his withering attacks on the publications of others and his dislike for metropolitan theory. He reportedly had skill in French, Dutch, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, various Slavic languages, several “Eastern languages” and could read numerous Scandinavian languages. See Ketty Van Gennep, \textit{Bibliographie des œuvres d’Arnold van Gennep}, (Paris, 1964); Rosemary Zumwalt, \textit{The Enigma of Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957): Master of French Folklore and Hermit of Bourg-la-Reine}, (Helsinki, 1988); and Nicole Belmont, \textit{Arnold Van Gennep: The Creator of French Ethnography}, trans. Derek Coltman, (Chicago, 1979).

\textsuperscript{42} See van Gennep to Mauss, 28 February 1902, MAS 13.20; Zumwalt, \textit{The Enigma of Arnold van Gennep}, 50-51.
“lamentable situation” in which the discipline found itself in France. Their collaboration culminated in Mauss’ aforementioned 1913 article on the state of French ethnography.\footnote{Arnold van Gennep, “Etudes Ethnographiques,” in Religions, Moeurs et légendes: Essais d’ethnographie et de linguistique, (Paris, 1908-1909), I, 187; van Gennep to Mauss, 5 February 1907 and 18 May 1907, MAS 13.20.} In that article, Mauss complained of the poor state of French ethnography, finding strong examples only in the work of Faidherbe and several other colonial officers and administrators since 1830.\footnote{Marcel Mauss, “L’ethnographie en France et à l’étranger,” Revue de Paris 20, 5 (September-October 1913), 538.} This article called for a new method of social understanding, a crusade that resulted in the creation of the Institut d’Ethnologie (IE) at the Sorbonne in 1925. Mauss’ recommendation for the improvement of French social investigation rested on a simple requirement: respect for native knowledge. Van Gennep’s experiences and input certainly informed Mauss’ perspective, as the former had spent time in Tlemcen (Algeria) cafés observing what he saw as the rapid disintegration of native Algerian society due to French influence.\footnote{Arnold van Gennep, En Algérie, (Paris, 1914), 8, 20-21, 129.} If Mauss and other like-minded individuals wanted to discern the parallel social structures of colonial peoples, in van Gennep’s opinion, time was of the essence as the colonial encounter homogenized cultural and social groups.

Mauss recognized that sociology could offer conclusions on social function, but it could not assume facts. Understanding colonial societies required significant input from those most familiar with the affected peoples; scholars, soldiers, and administrators resident in those areas could provide that information, as could educated natives themselves. To that end, he induced Durkheim to work closely with Delafosse as early as 1911. Together the men formed the Institut français d’anthropologie. Through this
association and its successors, metropolitan and colonial ethnographers and linguists collaborated closely in trying to develop a shared vision of the origins of social structures and their functions.\textsuperscript{46} Ethnological conclusions were possible for Mauss only with the assistance of a “corps of ethnographers, whether professional or amateur, who can observe on site, with their eyes, who can furnish documents and assemble the material for collections.” These fieldworkers were on the frontlines to conduct an “intensive ethnography.” This examination consisted of “deep study of a tribe, a study as complete and quick as possible without omitting anything” and could conclude within “three or four years.”\textsuperscript{47} Mauss and his colleagues proposed that an institutionalized ethnological/ethnographic bureau could conduct such research, aided by an educational system that produced scientists devoted to understanding societal difference.

Delafosse stood as the ultimate example of the possibilities of such a system. However, his development as a social scientist took too long in Mauss’ view; he had spent twenty years in Africa by the breakout of the First World War. France did not have the luxury of waiting that long to send out future fieldworkers as the studied societies would have moved too close to the Western example and entered a subjugated and hybrid state. Mauss’ image of sociology required a detailed, on-the-ground examination and accumulation of data followed by rigorous analysis by trained social scientists. Mauss and Durkheim wrote of this process: “It is to ethnography and history that one must turn to trace the lines of civilization, to reattach diverse civilizations to their fundamental

\textsuperscript{46} Sibeud, “The Elusive Bureau,” 60.

\textsuperscript{47} Mauss, “L’ethnographie en France,” 821; Manuel d’ethnographie, 13.
origins.” In this model, understanding civilizational groups required first the efforts of ethnography and history. From there sociology could consider both the “most elementary” and the “most advanced” aspects of each society in formulating a unified theory. Sociology and ethnography needed each other in Mauss’ view; only from the combination of the sciences could analysts propose anything approaching the truth of social organization.

Mauss’ views on the subject became even more important in the wake of the First World War. With Durkheim’s death in 1917, the AS group quickly fell apart, missing the leader’s charisma. However, no analytical alternatives developed in post-war France. Many of Durkheim’s closest disciples, who remained wedded to Comtean positivist progress, found themselves anachronisms in an era torn by cataclysmic conflict and infused with pessimism. Only two sites/techniques remained open to sociologists in post-war France: the international ethnological research emphasis of Mauss and academic sociology focused on metropolitan France. The latter found its center in Paris at the école normale and became the new standard approach to French social science. Many scholars with views outside this mainstream, unable to find jobs at universities or research institutes, fled abroad to the Soviet Union, the United States, or Germany. Mauss filled the vacuum ably, establishing himself as the leading sociological voice in France while continuing to press the benefits of ethnology via his international connections.49

48 Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, “Note sur la notion de civilisation,” Année Sociologique 12 (1913), reproduced in Oeuvres, II, 455.

49 Clark, Prophets and Patrons, 200-201, 218-219. Célestin Bouglé (1870-1940) led the teaching side of sociology, particularly in the late 1920s and 1930s. W. Paul Vogt has described Bouglé as caught between two wings of ethnology in the period, leading to metropolitan focus: the linguistic emphasis of Mauss and his followers; and the statistical approach of Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and others. See W. Paul
Academic prominence gave Mauss access to the upper echelons of French academic and government sponsorship. He made the most of his new position, gaining patronage and funding that he exploited to create the IE in 1925. He justified this new effort, as noted above, by appropriating colonial language. French officials overseas had long seen ethnographic expeditions as valuable to policy formation and governance. Consequently, metropolitan linguists such as Octave Houdas had worked with colonial leaders to sponsor explorers and colonial administrators in gathering documents and ethnographic data. However, it took the support of French metropolitan academic institutions in the form of the IE to solidify the links between Africanist scholars and the metropole. Marcel Griaule’s Dakar-Djibouti expedition of 1931-1933 serves as a good example of this process as controlled by Mauss.

A student of the Lorrain sociologist, Griaule possessed experience in African languages and archaeology and had led a previous expedition to Abyssinia (Ethiopia). His trans-African expedition demonstrated the potential of ethnographic fieldwork. Funded by 23 different French government organizations and the American Rockefeller Foundation, Griaule and his group collected, by their reckoning, 3,500 ethnographic


objects, 6,000 photographs, and 200 specimens, and took notes in over 30 languages. Griaule followed Mauss’ teachings closely as he directed his team to use “extensive” examinations to collect a wide-range of objects. Teams then selected important items for “intensive” examination, considering them not as detached artifacts (for simple display in a museum), but in a detailed ethnographic context. From this level of description Griaule formulate numerous conclusions as to the nature of social construction in the area while also providing data to inform metropolitan theory, a progression close to Mauss’ ideal model for social analysis. Discussions with natives permitted Griaule to describe the cosmology of groups such as the West African Dogon, providing an important addition to the studies of Delafosse and Marty on native religion.

This brilliant interwar cohort of Mauss’ students at the IE also included Germaine Tillion, part of a new wave of prominent French female scholars who initiated her studies in “people known as ‘non-civilized’” in 1930. Mauss saw her as a “serious and conscientious” student who would ultimately produce “the best application of exhaustive research methods on an organized society.” Women such as Tillion had the potential,

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51 Georges-Henri Rivière, “Témoignage,” in Ethnologiques, XI; Paul Rivet and Georges-Henri Rivière, “La mission ethnographique et linguistique Dakar-Djibouti,” Minotaure 1, 2 (April 1933), 3. Rivière, as the co-director of the Trocadero ethnographic museum, acted as a primary link between the research team and the French museum and academic communities.


in the eyes of male metropolitan scientists, to access a heretofore largely untapped ethnographic resource: native women. Unlike Faidherbe or Delafosse, who had both married native women in Africa, Tillion could interact with African women without the hindrance of long-running gender inequities. From this perspective, Mauss and his peers thought, female scientists would deliver unmatched insights particularly into home life. Mauss had acted as her thesis supervisor from 1934-1940, strongly suggesting to her that she conduct fieldwork in Algeria. 54

During her time observing the remote Berber groups living in the Aurès Mountains, Tillion wrote regularly to Mauss for counsel and to provide progress reports. In 1937 Tillion confirmed, “We [Tillion and colleague Thérèse Rivière] are adhering to the directives that we received from you; we have studied the rest of the Aurès and have found that the choice of the Oueld Abderrahmane to study was the best.” 55 During their time with this Chaouïa Berber group, the students gathered numerous ethnological sources, including descriptions of what the French portrayed as “prehistory”; an ethnographic study of 300 notables with further analysis of their family names and affiliations; objects for display in the museum; and a collection of songs and origin myths. 56 Working from the example set by Delafosse and Marty, Tillion, Mauss, and others then used this ethnographic data in an effort to better understand the complex

54 Lacouture, *Le Temoignage est un combat*, 36.

55 Report of 6 March 1937, MAS 12.63. The “Ouled Abderrahmane” is a specific lineage of Kabyles in the Aurès, chosen by the young fieldworkers for their apparent openness for study. Interestingly, Tillion complained of working “without direction” in a letter to Mauss of 4 January 1937, MAS 12.63. Mauss’ reply is lost to history, but likely contained some specific instructions to Tillion and her research partner, Thérèse Rivière, the sister of prominent museum curator Georges-Henri Rivière.

56 Germaine Tillion, “Report of 6 March 1937,” MAS 12.63. See chapter 6 of this study for more discussion of Tillion and her later work in Algeria under Jacques Soustelle.
relationship between Islam, genealogy, and kinship in Africa. Although certainly never complete or fully understood, they began to attach ethnographic collections to socio-historical context. The novelty of the approach and the artificial nature of relationships with colonial subjects made the “knowledge” they produced of African societies ultimately incomplete. In the minds of this first generation of fieldworkers, however, they had achieved a greater degree of ethnological accuracy than any group before them. With such an emphasis on information and ideas produced in the field, far from the metropole, Mauss broke with academic tradition. He constructed new institutions and affiliations that reflected his international connections, incorporating ethnological techniques from the United Kingdom, United States, and French Africanists through his flourishing epistolary associations. In the process, he redefined French sociology as explicitly empirical and dependent on the information and analysis generated by colonial ethnologists.

**Breaking barriers and building a new sociology**

Teaching at EPHE had allowed Mauss, since the early twentieth century, the intellectual freedom to approach research and the study of man in his own way. “I never did militant sociology,” he recalled, instead instructing his students to work across a broad range of disciplines in a comparative and relative method.\(^{57}\) He worked both with and against fellow metropolitan academics in founding the IE. Even as some of his peers (such as Lévy-Bruhl) supported his efforts, others (in the university establishment in Paris) resisted his new approach. Mauss and his like-minded colleagues at times

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\(^{57}\) Mauss, “L’oeuvre de Mauss,” 211.
employed colonial language to justify their research and acquire metropolitan and colonial fiscal and political support. Their agenda remained clear: the unearthing of native (largely African) social forms, in the process showing the complexity of African societies considered “primitive” when compared to Europeans since the age of exploration. Sociology thus took on a new Maussian shape where colonial fieldwork informed social scientific analysis.

Constructing this new vision of sociology, however, required Mauss to carve out a strong foothold in the political and academic worlds in Paris. From a position of academic prominence and with the support of the colonial political establishment he hoped to change the way in which sociology viewed and collected ethnographic data. He lost a tight election to the Collège de France in 1908. That defeat disgusted his AS brethren and was perhaps a reflection of his contrarian views on social scientific process.58 Halted in his efforts to access the very highest echelon of French science, Mauss instead set to work with van Gennep and Lévy-Bruhl on a government-sponsored ethnological bureau, a new angle by which to accumulate the government support so vital to his long-term research agenda.

Unfortunately for him and his peers, Mauss soon found his life on hold with the breakout of the First World War in 1914. Recalled to standby from auxiliary service at the relatively old age of 42, Mauss volunteered on 3 September 1914 for service at the front. Recognizing his special skills, the service assigned him as a French-English interpreter to the 27th British division. Hardly spared the horrors of combat, he fought at

58 Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 149-155. Mauss lost out in what the AS team called the “Loisy affair,” as the defrocked priest and modernist historian of Christianity Alfred Loisy gained the chair instead of the young comparative sociologist.
the First Battle of Ypres in December 1914 before moving to service with an Australian
division from 1916-1918, again engaging in combat at the Somme and the third Battle of
Ypres.⁵⁹

Highly decorated for his role in the war,⁶⁰ Mauss returned home a changed man,
as did most other veterans of the conflict. Many of his colleagues died on the front lines,
and Durkheim passed away in November 1917. Mauss then took up Durkheim’s mantle
as the leader of French sociology: “I defended sociology everywhere and compromised
from time to time on its behalf.”⁶¹ Faced with rebuilding his life amidst the ruin of war
and the loss of the large part of a generation, Mauss consulted the new interpretations of
African civilization authored by Delafosse in the war years. He threw himself into the
reconstruction of French sociology, educating a new class of ethnologists who adopted
French Africanist research methods. The moment had come for Mauss to not only work
to improve the state of French sociology but also to energize the French academic
institutions so resistant to change.

He joined forces with Lévy-Bruhl, Delafosse, and anthropologist Paul Rivet to
institutionalize the ethnological approach. In 1920, this union formed the société
française d’ethnographie from the remnants of various ethnographic and folklore
associations. Dedicated to assembling colonial ethnology as fuel for the emerging
generation of French social scientists, the men initiated a new era in education. “A new

⁵⁹ “CV Mauss,” MAS 38.10.

⁶⁰ Mauss’ decorations included the croix de guerre with 2 bronze stars; croix de la victoire; croix militaire
anglaise; medaille interallié, croix du combattant, croix du combattant engagé, and the medaille de la
victoire. See “CV Mauss,” MAS 38.10 and “Décoration de la croix militaire anglaise,” MAS 38.9.

horizon appeared before our eyes,” recalled Jacques Soustelle, among the first students of the new IE. “We young researchers discovered a whole new world and our teachers gave us the keys.” Mauss and his professorial colleagues in the metropole and in Africa thus reinvented French social science, supported both politically and financially by the French colonial empire and formal Parisian academia. Through the ultimate creation of the IE, Mauss and his colleagues invested the next generation of students with a view that took them away from the stuffy halls of Parisian academia to the empirical source in the colonies.

Cognizant of the immense importance of colonial information, in part due to its accessibility, for understanding human social constructions, Mauss, Delafosse, Lévy-Bruhl and Rivet tied their mission to those areas. Colonial governance for these scholars could improve only with a better understanding of the peoples under its care. They exhorted colonial officials to then tailor political administration to local needs with the assistance of scientific analysis. In language familiar to colonial leaders, the founders of French metropolitan ethnology described many of the colonies as at a lower developmental state than France; consequently, those colonies required French assistance. “When a colony includes populations of an inferior civilization, or very different from ours,” wrote Lévy-Bruhl, “good ethnologists can be equally as necessary as good engineers, good foresters or good doctors.”


thus set their sights on the French government and academic establishment, hoping to establish a political foothold, and the corresponding research funding, by appealing to this perceived need for trained colonial officials and savants.

Mauss, leveraging his international reputation and position as Durkheim’s intellectual heir, successfully lobbied the Director of Higher Education and the Rector of the University of Paris to assist him in convincing the Minister of Public Instruction to create such an institute. Thus, these scholars, many of them Jews, made use of extant systems to advance their own agendas, just as they had appropriated the mantle of secular intellectual to escape what they saw as the trap of Jewish heritage. They employed the colonial system of exploitation and domination to advance their professional careers and to acquire a rich stockpile of social information. Their primary interest lay in the use of the new ethnological interpretations emanating from Africa in formulating theoretical models of basic social interaction. They both contributed to and undermined the colonial system by advancing a humanist conception of people as important actors.

This is not to say, however, that these social scientists were completely disinterested in the fate of Africans. Influenced by Delafosse, these metropolitan theoreticians also appropriated the language of civilizational progress. Couched in the language of colonial governance and reform and modeled on the work of Delafosse and his peers, Mauss called for the new ethnological institute to “organize, encourage and accelerate ethnographic study in France and in particular in the French colonies.” He argued that the resultant studies of “inferior races, peoples, civilizations” were critical enablers of a colonial administration able to provide “our tutelage” in helping colonial
subjects to “prosper.” Mauss concluded that ethnological examination would refine colonial methods and aid decision-makers in their efforts to “definitively and practically assess colonial policy.” Finally, he convinced academic and colonial officials that ethnology was most important as the “sole means of providing for the education, the march towards civilization of these peoples.” Mauss’ proposed fieldwork thus gained political credibility and legitimacy through direct association with the civilizing mission. Colonial ethnology in Mauss’ conception would reveal native societies and thus inform policy adapted to those societies.

As proof of their positive colonial intentions Mauss and his affiliates needed only to point to their long history of collaboration with Africanist scholars. Beyond Delafosse, Mauss and the AS team had worked with Edmond Doutté, a sociologist and Islamologist of North Africa, beginning as early as 1913. Mauss enjoyed Doutté’s “sociological and ethnographic sense” and his desire “to be useful to civilization, to the progress of his region, to his friends the Berbers and Arabs.” He even concluded that Doutté’s views on religion in Morocco “formed the base on which the actions of the republic rested during the protectorate [in Morocco beginning in 1912].” Mauss thus credited the scholar for the success of the colonial mission in North Africa: “it is Doutté who founded the tradition to which Marshal Lyautey adhered.”

Lyautey’s administration in Algeria and Morocco appeared in French ethnological literature as taking a progressive view of Islam.

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64 “Pour la création de l’Institut d’Ethnologie,” addressed to “Monsieur le ministre,” n.d., MAS 40.21. The document concluded with recognition of the importance of funding from “the state, colonial governments, and the specific donations that it will perhaps be possible to solicit.” For an earlier expression of a similar institutional idea, see Mauss, “L’ethnographie en France,” 820.

a religion helpful in the ultimate goal of enhancing native intellectual capabilities through its position as a conduit to a dynamic civilizational past. French colonial governments, in this model, had to cultivate native intellectual elites as the leaders of local political structures supported by a largely separate French colonial state. In time, colonial theorists anticipated the French administration would disappear as Africans entered industrial modernity.

By committing themselves to ethnographic study tied to the colonial mission, Mauss and his peers adopted much of this civilizing and developmental view. Much of their approach came from French Africanist scholars, the only link to African societies available to metropolitan sociologists. Lacking specific knowledge of key African historical texts that stood beyond their linguistic capabilities, Mauss believed the AS team had a significant blind spot in its view of African civilizations and their historical progression. He and his IE peers turned to French scholars resident in Africa to correct this deficiency with not only raw data but also analysis. The ethnological method employed by French Africanists thus shaped the charter and teachings of the IE in Paris, particularly in light of Delafosse’s position as a member of the founding board of directors.

The Africanist scholar had been important to Mauss’ ethnological thinking since the years preceding the First World War. While he recognized the brilliance of Delafosse’s wide-ranging ethnographic depiction of African societies as distinct, important, and complex in *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* in particular, he lamented that French Africanists had not yet provided an equally exhaustive study of other groups on the

continent. The very brilliance of the few extant studies pointed Mauss to the need for a more systematic approach guided by the methods pioneered by Delafosse and Marty. Delafosse’s direction to locate the oldest members of tribes appealed to Mauss; these individuals served as repositories of ancient languages and oral traditions. A reconstruction of language hierarchies by piecing together these vestiges would yield, in Mauss’ mind, a more complete depiction of local social structures that Delafosse and Marty had so powerfully described as emanating from kinship groups. Mauss and his colleagues, with the assistance of the ethnological analysis provided by Africanists such as Delafosse, could then apply this data to more general conclusions on the universal forms of human interaction. Mauss and his metropolitan colleagues suspected numerous colonial administrators were capable of insights equally important to the development of ethnology and sociology. They called on Delafosse not only to develop such sources himself—he was largely absent from the colonies after 1919—but to push other administrators to conduct similar investigations throughout Africa.

Delafosse thus activated networks of interested colonial reformers and savants to conduct such research. For example, in 1921, Henri Labouret, a young French army captain then in Upper Volta, filled out an ethnographic questionnaire on the local

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68 Marcel Mauss, “Fragment d’un plan de sociologie générale descriptive,” Annales Sociologiques 1 (1934), reproduced in Oeuvres, III, 353-354. This notion of the village elder as source has, of course, been discounted by later anthropological scholarship which points out that these representatives often approached their descriptions as exulting the status quo, not reflecting social reality. See Bourdieu’s views in chapter 7 of this study.

69 Lucien Lévy-Bruhl to Mauss, 27 June 1925, MAS 8.10. See chapters 3 and 4 for more on Delafosse’s career arc, which included significant teaching time in metropolitan schools such as the Ecole des langues orientales and the Ecole coloniale.
population generated by Mauss, Delafosse and Lévy-Bruhl (the form of the original questionnaire is unclear). In his reply, he requested Mauss respond to ethnographic and sociological questions he would submit “from time to time in the course of my research.” Mauss, now an important figure in international ethnology/anthropology, served as a personal waypoint for the transfer of ethnological analysis. Both ends of the African-Parisian ethnological exchange benefitted from the reciprocity implied by this communication. Mauss collected ethnographic data, and astute ethnological analysis when available from colonial scholar-administrators such as Delafosse. In return, his French African correspondents enhanced their metropolitan academic connections. The resultant networks of ethnological knowledge served as a sort of ethnological/sociological clearinghouse, an accumulation of knowledge beyond that generated by any scholar him or herself and useful in understanding the populations they ruled.

Delafosse enhanced these two-way connections by tapping both metropolitan and colonial academics to serve on the boards of scholarly ethnographic and ethnological societies and to publish in journals. These associations ultimately linked the “laboratories” of African field ethnology with language and colonial schools in the metropole, thus providing a point of entry for colonial savants or administrators to an increasingly receptive sociological community searching for an identity in the wake of

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70 Labouret to Mauss, 12 June 1921, MAS 7.2. Labouret shortly became a prominent figure in the international ethnological community, corresponding with British Lord Frederick Lugard, former governor of Nigeria and proponent of indirect rule (see chapter 4). In the late colonial era (1950s), Labouret authored a study calling for the near-term removal of exploitative French colonial structures in Africa: *Colonisation, colonialisme, décolonisation*, (Paris, 1952).
Durkheim’s death. Together the groups, which Lévy-Bruhl characterized as “concerned with the same questions,” advanced “ethnological science and put the results of that science at the service of our native policy when it is requested.” Working closely with professors from the Sorbonne, the Collège de France, the Muséum national d’histoire naturelle, the EPHE, the école coloniale, and the école des langues orientales, Mauss and his colleagues positioned the IE to train students from all of those schools to conduct ethnological fieldwork in support of both academic and colonial requirements.

Georges Hardy, former collaborator of Delafosse and Marty in AOF and Morocco and expert in colonial education, took over leadership of the école coloniale in 1925. Dedicated to deep sociological and psychological study of native populations, Hardy pushed numerous colonial administrative students to IE courses in ethnology, geography, collection, observation, sociology, and folklore taught by luminaries such as Mauss, van Gennep and Delafosse (until his death in 1926) with the sponsorship of virtually all the French colonial governors. These students thus gained exposure to the progressive civilizational model advocated by Delafosse and Mauss.

Through liaison with these governors, the IE sent investigations across the globe, adding to the storehouse of social knowledge and providing colonial governments with

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71 Delafosse to Mauss, 13 May and 28 May 1920, MAS 6.45. See above for more on the rise of Mauss as a central figure after the First World War.


studies of “native races” and “social facts” intended to further their understanding of the foundations of Berber political structures in Algeria, for instance. Despite the power of information generated in the colonies, explained Mauss’ mentor and fellow IE board member Louis Finot, colonial governments needed to be “stimulated by pleas coming from Paris and bearing the official stamp.” Only through a combination of local knowledge and metropolitan political pressure could academics develop a broad base for ethnological research, from there moving into publication, Finot advised. In other words, the organization would have neither political nor academic impact without an administrative and organizational foundation beneath the colonial surface. Reform of both science and the form of colonial governance required a sort of deal with the devil, working with the colonial state so as to change it.

The university-colonial affiliation yielded tangible benefits in the short-term for ethnology as a discipline while in the long-term providing, it was hoped, an empirical foundation for an understanding of universal social forms. Like Delafosse, Mauss and his colleagues saw that the French state in Africa did not function at its highest efficiency because it did not fully understand the subject populations. While Mauss, Lévy-Bruhl and their colleagues supported Delafosse’s vision of a progressive colonial project, this reform would have to wait for them to move into a better position. Their first loyalty was

75 Mauss to Resident General, Morocco, 30 Dec 1925, entitled “Note sur l’institut d’ethnologie de l’université de Paris,” MAS 40.22; Printed extract of *Revue d’ethnographie et des traditions populaires* (3-4 trimesters, 1925), 23-24 in LVB 10.3.

to the survival of ethnology as a discipline in France, a future that guaranteed their livelihoods and places in the academic edifice.

Mauss and his colleagues recognized that funding stood as the most important variable in the long-term survival of institutional ethnology. They exploited connections in the French metropolitan and colonial governments to establish a funding base for ethnographic study. Soustelle recalled that they “managed to extract from the clutches of government officials and the pockets of private patrons the funds needed to send young researchers, fresh out of the Sorbonne, to their first assignment in the field.” 77 Much of this money came from French governmental agencies such as the anthropological establishments of the Muséum and most importantly the Conseil National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), an organization that included Mauss, Rivet and Soustelle on its advisory board at different times. 78

Mauss, Delafosse, and the other founding IE members placed heavy emphasis on support from extra-governmental agencies. Reaching out to their colonial correspondents, the board members cajoled additional funding from the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures founded by Delafosse and Lord Frederick Lugard and managed by Henri Labouret in the 1930s. 79 The IE most prolifically exploited connections to the American Rockefeller Foundation for grants beginning in


78 See, for example, “Rapport présenté par le docteur Rivet, professeur au Muséum, Directeur du musée d’ethnographie du Trocadéro,” 22 January 1931, MAS 11.20, which discusses funding intended to procure additional ethnographic displays.

79 Labouret to Mauss, 31 July 1931, MAS 6.49. See chapter 4 for more on the connections between Lugard, British colonial governor in Egypt and Nigeria famed for his emphasis on “indirect rule,” and Delafosse.
1926. Employing his status as esteemed colleague to Arthur Radcliffe-Brown, Boas, and other celebrated social/cultural anthropologists of the era, Mauss toured research institutes in the United States and United Kingdom and garnered financial sponsorship for research in Africa, including more than 400,000 francs for Griaule’s Dakar-Djibouti mission of 1931-33 and 150-200,000 francs for a later Griaule mission to West Africa. This money helped the IE and French government establish “a Centre of Ethnological Studies” in French African territories. The IE also sent research teams to Indochina, the Pacific island colonies, and the Americas. Largely flowing to IE students embarking on research in the 1920s and 1930s, this funding enabled the creation of new networks of rotating fieldworkers transmitting the latest in ethnographic research and analysis back to the center for publication and sociological analysis by more experienced scholars.

Mauss’ students benefitted directly from the funding bonanza stimulated by the IE directors. As the institution grew in prominence, the directors expanded their field emphases to some areas not under French colonial rule, though the bulk of research remained focused on Africa. The grants sent scholars to Mexico, Brazil, West Africa and Algeria among other locations; the studies they authored formed the core of the next generation of ethnology, a science now viewed by many administrators as foundational to the French colonial mission. Mindful of the deficiencies of his own generation of

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80 Mauss to Chairman, Rockefeller Foundation, 29 September 1930, Folder Chairman, MAS 18; Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 247, 293.

81 The Mauss correspondence is full of references to funding. See, for example, letters from Germaine Tillion to “Monsieur le Directeur,” 14 May 1939, MAS 12.63; Thérèse Rivière to Mauss, 18 August 1938; and Georges-Henri Rivière to Mauss, 2 September 1930, MAS 11.22 which include discussion of trips to conferences as well as fieldwork. For discussion of the performance of these early students, see “Rapport sur le travail fourni au M.E.T.,” MAS 11.22. Most importantly to this study, Mauss’ efforts supported the
sociologists, Mauss deliberately set out to train the next group to gather empirical information in the colonies. He hoped they could generate analysis similar to that written by Delafosse, who he saw as delivering the most detailed and useful depictions of distinct civilizations in Africa. Mauss had defined civilizations, races, and progress in accordance with what he saw in the work of Delafosse. Students who employed this level of detail could not go wrong in his view.

Mauss’ influence on ethnological method extended beyond that practiced by his students. Claude Lévi-Strauss, the most celebrated French anthropologist of the twentieth century, never took a class with Mauss. However, even he felt the direct impact of the man he saw as the “master” of ethnography and ethnology. The two men initiated correspondence in 1931 when Lévi-Strauss sought to interview Mauss regarding his military background; their association continued through the 1930s. Mauss, with the assistance of Soustelle and Rivet, helped Lévi-Strauss garner 40,000 francs to continue his Brazilian research in 1936. The young scholar later claimed that his ethnological conclusions, based on research conducted “on the ground,” agreed with those proposed by Mauss. Above all else, Mauss wanted his students to practice an analysis of non-European populations with the benefit of ethnological data generated on the ground.

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expeditions of Jacques and Georgette Soustelle to Mexico; Germaine Tillion and Thérèse Rivière to Algeria; Marcel Griaule to West Africa; and even Claude Lévi-Strauss to Brazil.

82 See below for more discussion of Mauss’ use of Delafosse’s civilizational ideas in his conception of basic social structure.


84 The letters offer no detail on the specific conclusions, apparently discussed in a previous letter from Mauss but no longer in evidence in the archives. Lévi-Strauss to Mauss, 4 October 1931; Lévi-Strauss to Mauss, 14 March 1936; Lévi-Strauss to Mauss, 5 December [1938?]; MAS 8.3. On the results of this research, Lévi-Strauss’ only detailed ethnographic mission, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, La vie familiale et sociale des Indiens Nambikwara, (Paris, 1948) and chapter 7 of this work.
Although not a trained ethnographer himself, he saw himself as qualified to conduct such analysis through his enormous breadth of knowledge. His position at the head of French ethnology and on the leading-edge of European social science gave him the stature to create guides for fieldwork employed by his students.

Indeed, Mauss and the IE sent the new generation of fieldworkers to conduct their examinations with an array of ethnographic guides. With these guides he hoped to standardize the collection of ethnographic information, making it more useful for subsequent ethnological and then sociological analysis. Based in part on the earlier anthropometric directives by Louis Faidherbe and Paul Topinard in Algeria, the new materials also included a detailed ethnographic questionnaire developed by Mauss, a guide on the conservation of art, and an additional linguistic form.\(^{85}\) Mauss’ lessons to prospective fieldworkers included three primary focus areas. First, he expected them to understand “social morphology,” or basic social representations, including demography, human geography, and the use of technology. He also stressed “general phenomena” such as language, reaction to natural occurrences, international interaction, and “collective ethnology,” or the society’s own depictions of itself relative to other civilizational groups. Finally, he pushed his students to understand the “physiology” of a society, including their day-to-day techniques and technology of life, esthetics, economy, law, religion, and science.

Fieldwork, Mauss thought, must also include the collection of socially significant objects. He instructed ethnographers to catalogue all interactions with native groups in a

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“travel journal” that could help to “characterize” different “civilization types” through a close examination of, among other things, their manufacture and use of tools. Mauss’ research agenda thus emphasized description viewed through a comparative lens. He expected this ethnographic compilation to reveal commonalities between societal components in different regions around the world. He anticipated that such overlaps would lead to an understanding of social structure divined from the common approaches to varied social functions as employed by geographically separated groups. What he left out, though, was a consideration of the European relativist prism through which his students compared economic tools and techniques.

Travel, observation, and collection, in Mauss’ eyes, permitted students to slowly build a graphical depiction of the civilizational groups they encountered; they then portrayed these groups in demographic relief via maps. Mauss saw Jacques Soustelle’s “La culture matérielle des Indiens Lacandons” as the perfect example of this technique as it cartographically depicted neighboring groups at different levels of economic and social development. For Mauss and his students, racial or civilizational distinction stemmed from the approach of native groups to Western standards of industrial and intellectual achievement. Mauss thus found himself in a bind similar to that encountered by Marty and Delafosse. The drive to describe “pure” native social forms while also aiding in the development of the subject society blinded French ethnologists to the referential position of Europe in their thought. While each society lived on its own terms, it was impossible

86 Mauss, Manuel d’ethnographie, 14.

87 Ibid., 16-17. Jacques Soustelle, “La culture matérielle des Indiens Lacandons,” Journal de la Société des Américanistes, (1937), 1-95. See also chapter 6 of this study.
for colonial analysts to depict the potential for future advancement along a notional continuum without landmarks or signposts. While he began to force ethnologists to consider the impact of their own backgrounds on their analysis, Mauss was unable to stretch this view beyond the bounds of Comte’s positivism; all forward civilizational movement appeared only with an implicit reference to Europe as the standard. That analytical barrier remained largely in place until punctured by Bourdieu decades later. In part, Mauss and his students overlooked this problem in their zeal to expand the range of sociological contacts and data available for analysis.

The sociologist expected his institutionalized ethnological organization to tap into the enormous resources presented by the colonies, both the target of research and the source of most of the manpower. He felt the IE must serve as the “center for receipt and dissemination” of ethnology generated outside France, thus guaranteeing the institute and its members the patronage of colonial leaders and a firm place in French academia above the line of any potential budget cuts. Mauss viewed colonial administrators, particularly those trained by knowledgeable ethnographers and sociologists, as the best possible investigators at that moment of disciplinary refinement. He saw himself and other metropolitan academics as lacking sufficient local knowledge and experience to generate valuable source material. In no position to criticize the ethnographic work of French Africanists due to his lack of time outside of Europe, Mauss identified himself as lacking in “the competence of missionaries or colonials” in dealing with native matters. Mauss thus acknowledged the importance of the networks managed by scholars such as Delafosse and Marty to the conduct of social science research. He never did any true

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ethnological fieldwork, but did, on one occasion, travel to the “field” outside France. He saw his own brief 1930 foray into Morocco as “a bit of ethnography, but as an amateur, entirely at my cost and for my own education.” He left it to the next generation of scholars, trained in Paris but with significant field experience, to bridge this divide, linking up with powerful networks of ethnological knowledge already resident in the colonies and yielding a more informed sociological product.

In a conceit typical of the French civilizing mission, Mauss saw colonial functionaries as close collaborators with natives in everyday life. In Mauss’ eyes, colonial administrators, soldiers and doctors were “more intimate” with natives than academics or government officials in Paris. Colonials thus gained perspective denied to metropolitan thinkers overcome by “prejudices, so dangerous in studies of language and religion.” He emphasized that educated natives themselves also stood as important contributors to ethnographic collection. Owing in part to his long relationship with Delafosse and Doutté, Mauss understood the value of ethnological knowledge generated in the colonies, employing it in his own understanding of race and civilization. As he told British functional anthropologist Arthur Radcliffe-Brown in 1924, “The good old comparative method, improved, has me as its defender. But it must be agreed that this typology of civilizations instead of societies is beginning to take shape. I hesitate to

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89 Mauss to Bronislaw Malinowski, 28 January 1930, Folder Malinowski, MAS 20. For more on the brief Moroccan fieldwork, see Mauss to Lecoeur, 17 February 1930 and 9 July 1931, Folder Lecoeur, MAS 19. Mauss finally gained election to the Collège de France in 1930 as well. See Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 269-273.

subordinate us to historians, but we must take it into account.” A basic sociological comparison of civilizational groups did not suffice for Mauss in this new order. He believed that he and his peers required a fully informed depiction of native societies, including their developmental arc (informed by history), to understand the past, present, and future of social groups.

Social structure as historically and individually constructed fact

Relative comparison remained the hallmark of Mauss’ methodology throughout his sociological and ethnological career. While he agreed with Durkheim that the study of “primitive societies” was essential, he found non-Western groups important to sociology not because they were evolutionary predecessors to Western society, but because they were complex and distinct forms opened by colonial rule to a detached, cross-sectional scan for structure. Following Marty and Delafosse, Mauss held that historical data provided a vital input to sociological examination, as it revealed both the past and the future of a civilizational group. The truth of social organization, in this view, appeared only after extensive observation followed by comparative ethnological/sociological analysis. Mauss harbored positivist thoughts of the value of scientific examination descended from those of Delafosse. He built on the French Africanist model of progress by considering the social forms that caused and structured behavior. It was this view of unique civilizational development that undergirded Mauss’ research agenda and served as the crux of his legacy to his students.

91 Mauss to Radcliffe-Brown, 6 December 1924, Folder Radcliffe-Browne [sic], MAS 20.
Mauss saw that observation was vital in understanding societies; he believed that fieldwork provided the only reliable data for informed conclusions on the origins of social behavior. However, that positivism did not run concurrently with social evolutionary theories. Mauss rejected the position of many of his illustrious predecessors who studied “primitive” societies for the light they could shed on the European present and past. As Lévi-Strauss recalled, “He once told this writer it is easier to study the digestive process in the oyster than in man; but this does not mean that the higher vertebrates were formerly shell-fishes.” While facile and racist in its comparison of non-Western societies to oysters, Mauss’ comment nonetheless suggests one aspect of his thought process. He felt that evolutionary social scientists committed one grave error: they discerned a direct developmental link between societies that were in reality quite different. At the same time, he eschewed disciplinary dogmatism in favor of an interdisciplinary view of subject societies that included history and geography molded together under the umbrella of sociology. Such a “comparative method” avoided some of the pitfalls of Durkheimian and Comtean sociology, as it was “less pretentious but simpler and more nuanced.” Informed by Delafosse’s African analysis, Mauss saw civilizations moving on their own path, not along a unilinear course charted by the European past. Progress was relative, not absolute, at least in theory. Mauss felt this relativism enabled him to see societies through a wider lens; pure, focused, synchronic investigation risked losing perspective.


93 Mauss to Alfred Métraux, 7 April 1927, Folder Métraux, MAS 20.
An obsession with pure observation tended too far towards positivism, and its now-rejected call for universal progress through the worship of objective science, in Mauss’ view. He remarked that adherents of Comtean positivism ended up “observing nothing but coincidence.” Instead, he argued that ethnographers must perceive each society in its present state of civilizational development. This analytical and methodological approach would, in his view, permit scientists to combine a “positive policy” with a “complete and concrete sociology.” Scientific examination gave Mauss some hope for alleviating colonial problems: “If it [science] does not yield practical solutions, it will at least provide a sense of the rational action [to pursue].” Mauss’ view of colonial ethnology presupposed a deep understanding of native societies built not from abstract theorization but from experience on the ground among and in conversation with the natives themselves. Only after detailed ethnological analysis, he claimed, could sociologists develop theories to describe the foundational realities of interpersonal interaction.

African society, long viewed by many Europeans as among the most primitive in the world, seemed enormously complex to Mauss. Influenced by the finely detailed studies of Delafosse and his peers, Mauss saw the French Soudan (Mali) as “composed of amalgamated peoples since the twelfth century.” Attempting to break down societies by linguistic or topographical barriers presented significant problems for Mauss, as some societies had links via language or land that stretched back to the “origins” of the groups

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themselves.\textsuperscript{95} To answer these problems he advised social scientists to turn to the natives themselves as intelligent interpreters of social reality. Like Delafosse and Marty, Mauss proposed to unearth the foundation of “social cohesion” among these peoples by a deep analysis of their oral traditions and histories that contained “the precepts and ideas” and ultimately the “perception that the tribe held of itself.”\textsuperscript{96} Acknowledging native intelligence stood as the first step in this method. Next, social scientists had to rely on the historical and sociological accounts of intellectuals like themselves, preferably those in writing, to discern the origins of structures and tendencies. It was here that Mauss and his colleagues placed great value in the derivative analyses of African civilizations written by Delafosse, Marty, and others. Africanist studies, when considered as a coherent group, had the potential to deliver an encyclopedic knowledge of a society; from that level of information skilled analysts such as Mauss hoped to discern fundamental structures that shaped social life.

Ethnological investigations also offered some hope for the social, political, and economic development of Africa, Mauss and his colleagues reasoned. Like Delafosse and Marty, they postulated that appeals to native intellectuals to participate in a joint project of civilizational improvement were key to the success of the colonial project. Intellectual and moral structures seemed to Mauss to shape all of society; understanding the moral bases for collective action permitted views into the structure as a whole. He expected that although morals and belief systems varied by people and location, they generally found expression in a similar manner. Mauss thus applauded the utility of

\textsuperscript{95} Mauss, \textit{Manuel d’ethnographie}, 23-24.

\textsuperscript{96} Mauss, “L’ethnographie en France,” 539-540.
proverb collections assembled by scholars such as Delafosse; these sources contained the most insight into native intellectual capabilities and structures. Mauss’ ethnologists had a much larger obligation than observation. Indeed, he expected social analysts to “reattach the institutional and structural to the mentalité and the reverse.” Natives themselves assisted Mauss in assembling his conclusions on social life through their verbal descriptions of conventions and norms. A collected recording of these individual commentaries, he thought, amounted to a description of mentalité. People, he thought, acted according to implicit guidelines governing their interactions. Mentalité stood in for social structure to an outside observer. It was of course difficult to penetrate this relationship; all native discussions did not reflect structure, and he also saw that these conversations acted every day to alter or at least obscure the very forms for which he searched so longingly.

Mauss proposed to escape this bind by a retreat along the temporal developmental scale; like his Africanist brethren he saw the possibility for civilizational advancement lay not in assimilation but in recognition of parallel development and the return to an originary state from which an accelerated path of progress could begin anew. From this “protohistory” he proposed that sociologists develop an understanding of “total social phenomena” that linked religious, juridical, moral, political, familial, and economic

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97 Mauss, Manuel d’ethnographie, 201. Mauss approvingly references Delafosse’s collection L’âme nègre, (Paris, 1922) as a perfect example.

98 Mauss, “L’oeuvre de Mauss,” 215. See also Mauss, “L’âme, le nom et la personne,” 134 for Mauss’ views on Leenhardt’s analysis of the interrelationship between personality and society and a refutation of Lévy-Bruhl’s early notions on “mystical” and “prelogical” native thought processes. Lévy-Bruhl reconsidered these views late in life, heavily influenced by Mauss and Leenhardt among others. See Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Les Carnets de Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, (Paris, 1949), 55, 62, 81; and Clifford, Person and Myth, 172-216.
structures into one belief. Lévi-Strauss described the resultant “total social fact” as “three-dimensional” and capable of making “the properly sociological dimension coincide with its multiple synchronic aspects; with the historical or diachronic dimension; and finally, with the physio-psychological dimension. Only in individuals could these three dimensions fuse.” In other words, Lévi-Strauss interpreted Mauss’ key tool, the total social fact, as composed of several elements. Sociology, at the top of the pyramid, considered all dimensions of any social structure as it existed at multiple, frozen snapshots in various realms of life. However, analysis also had to consider changes in the edifice produced over time. Mauss hoped that a sociologist could follow these changes back in time, thereby giving insight into basic forms before later individuals changed the outward conventions. Comprehending social reality thus required Mauss to appreciate an understanding of contingency, of the role of individuals as actors in social life. Variability, however, did not rule out the possibility of structure. Human beings still interacted within a larger social construct; Mauss theorized that some forms of that interaction were common across all societies.

Mauss saw some ideas, most famously his notion of gift exchange, as fundamental in all human societies and anchored in human performance of social belief. In a sweeping intellectual examination that encompassed groups from Australia to Africa and North America, Mauss concluded that all human groups, regardless of level of development, based much of their interaction on the exchange of gifts, whether for reproduction, sustenance, or civility. He concluded that the existence of such


100 Lévi-Strauss, Introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss, 26.
“universals,” or beliefs/practices held in common by all members of the species, revealed that all human socio-cultural groupings were constantly developing, led by individuals who progressively became cognizant of “themselves and their situation vis-à-vis others.”¹⁰¹ Individuals, then, held the key to understanding the fundamental principles that guided societies.

In his mind, these principles derived from the interactions of “men and groups of men.” The sociologist pointed to one central fact of sociological study: “It is the feelings of men in spirit, in flesh and blood that are acting and have always acted everywhere.” Societies in earlier stages of development modeled the complicated process that created modern Europe in a long-running “social evolution.”¹⁰² This evolution, though, was not unilinear as described by Spencer or Durkheim; non-European civilizations did not exist purely as echoes of a distant Western past for Mauss. Basing his conclusions at least in part on French Africanist scholarship, Mauss portrayed civilizations as moving along repeatable and similar paths of development and decay. These cycles overlapped and influenced each other, and all groups passed through certain marked stages at different times (e.g. nomadism, sedentarism, feudalism). This system of mutual influence and interference, however, did not mean to Mauss that civilizational groups were necessarily inferior or subordinate. Rather, his ethnology informed by history acted as a window for him to see “the first form of collective representation that has since become the

¹⁰² Ibid., 264, 278.
foundation of individual understanding.”

In short, Mauss argued that individual variations emerged as new manifestations of a primordial social moment. Mauss discerned complicated cycles of development in each society’s historical arc. From these cycles he sought to discern commonalities and overlaps between the specific arcs. Time was relative and important to Mauss in discerning the distance and mutation of current social practice from its original and fundamental forms.

Recognizing this complex reality, Mauss believed that social scientists had to avoid easy conclusions based on faulty, simplified assumptions. For example, he participated in ongoing discussions in the ethnological-anthropological worlds on the evolution of belief systems. Religion, as a seemingly universal social structure, was an easy target for oversimplification in his view. Following the lead of van Gennep and Delafosse, Mauss rejected simple explanations of the religious practices of native African and Australian groups that Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown and other prominent social theorists of the time saw as the most primitive on earth. Foremost among these oversimplifications, in Mauss’ mind, stood the idea of totemism, a theory whose advocates proposed that modern religious and marriage practices descended from ancient associations with representative animals. Most famously promulgated by English anthropologist Sir James Frazer, the “totem” or central religious object, also known as a “fetish,” supposedly served as the original basis of religion. The object, often tied directly to an animal regarded by the native group as sacred, also served to structure reproduction by stressing exogamy or marriage outside the kinship group, thus expanding

103 Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, “Esquisse d’une théorie générale de la magie,” [1902-1903], in Sociologie et anthropologie, 137.
and enhancing the bloodline through the mechanism of religious belief. For example, a group that named itself the “crocodile” tribe held that animal in high esteem and its members were forbidden from harming any crocodile they came across. At the same time, the society enforced a ban on marriage of crocodile men to crocodile women; they would instead have to find mates in another tribe, perhaps one associated with another stereotypical African animal such as the monkey or the zebra.

Totemic theory resulted not from a strong combination of empirical investigation and theoretical development, in Mauss’ view, but from a series of mistaken assumptions and flawed conclusions. He characterized the concept as descended from an “immense misunderstanding between two civilizations, the African and the European; it has as its foundation only a blind obedience to colonial usage.” Each Maussian civilization existed on its own terms and according to the needs of its individual component parts. In Mauss’ opinion, social structures, however similar in appearance from the outside, were in fact products of different historical processes and intended to fulfill a different purpose. Structure, classification, and progress rested largely with each civilizational group. “Over the course of human progress in the genealogy of societies, the form of each [civilization] has varied,” Mauss wrote; when taken together this variety appeared as a “kaleidoscope” of ever-evolving structures. “This mixture,” he continued, “particular

104 See, for example, Sir James Frazer, The Golden Bough: A study in magic and religion, (Oxford, 1994 [1890]); Totemism and Exogamy: A treatise on certain early forms of superstition and society, (London, 1910). For van Gennep’s refutation of this thesis (which in reality came after scholars such as Delafosse had dispelled the notion of totemism as the original religion/social tool), see L'état actuel du problème totémique, (Paris, 1920); and “Tabou, totémisme et méthode comparative,” in Religions, moeurs et légendes, II, 22-88. Delafosse treats the idea extensively in Haut-Sénégal-Niger, (Paris, 1912); see also chapter 4 of this study.

105 Marcel Mauss, “La problème des classifications en Afrique occidentale,” Année Sociologique X (1907), reproduced in Oeuvres, II, 244-245.
to a given society at a given moment, gives it...a unique appearance.”

Mauss argued that belief in the spiritual power of all things, and some material objects above others, did not link social construction across all societies. It was not a reflection of a linear evolution.

In these refutations of European depictions of totemism, Mauss relied heavily on Delafosse’s descriptions of African religious life. Animism, the term preferred by Delafosse to describe pre-Islamic West African religions, respected the power of all living things. European analysts spent too much time, in Mauss’ view, trying to link African religious expression to the European present. He suggested instead that different societies at different times conceived of the relationship between the natural, the supernatural, and the human in radically divergent ways. Attempts to extend the religious beliefs of one group to the past of another rested on faulty assumptions. For Mauss, the West did not stand at the top of a unilinear process of evolution. As it had for Delafosse and Marty, African political, economic, and social progress remained possible, but only when considered in full relative terms.

Although they both admired Comte’s emphasis on empirical investigation, Mauss followed Durkheim in rejecting Comte’s expectation of universal progress that in his mind presupposed that all human societies developed along the same course. Mauss wrote, “If there is not a human civilization, there were and always will be diverse

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106 Mauss, “Divisions et proportions,” 125. See also his earlier discussions in Marcel Mauss, “Typologie des races et des peuples,” Année Sociologique IV (1901), reproduced in Oeuvres, III, 363; and Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, “De quelques formes primitives de classification: contribution à l’étude des représentations collectives,” Année Sociologique VI (1903), 17.
civilizations that dominate and contain the collective life of each people.” Working from the evidence gathered by scholars on the ground in Africa, Mauss perceived civilization occurring in myriad forms and existing at multiple developmental phases; each deserved separate and independent investigation in an effort to find commonalities that could assist both in understanding the “total social fact” and in finding a specific, tailored form of intellectual and moral progress. Total social facts, when viewed as living ideas shaped by the generating civilization, revealed change over time and the fundamental mechanism by which social groups structured their interactions.

Describing the possibilities of African civilization and progress

Africa provided the most intriguing area for sociological investigation, particularly for those like Mauss who entered the inquiry with an eye towards development. In soliciting governmental funding tied in large part to the contributions of science to colonial governance, Mauss employed some of the rhetoric of the civilizing mission. He described Africans as in a critical phase and in need of contact with Europe, currently occupying the top place on the civilizational developmental continuum. African societies, in danger of disintegration due to the excesses of some colonial regimes, were in a transitional phase, making them ripe for ethnological analysis. Mauss argued that understanding the changes wracking those societies required analysts to grasp the temporal component of development; acceleration of native movement along the progressive continuum would enable African groups to catch up to European industrial modernity particularly in its social, moral, and economic manifestations.

107 Durkheim and Mauss, “Note sur la notion de civilisation,” 454. Italics in original.
The ideal of total civilizational knowledge offered Mauss and his peers the possibility of African progress. Mauss emphasized that all societies did not exist in the same physical or intellectual “area” (*aire*) nor could they be expected to develop along the same lines. In understanding groups, Mauss admonished scholars to classify societies by their “area” of geographic reach. Moreover, he proposed an additional comparative process whereby sociologists considered the sum total “∑” of the commonalities of the societies captured in that geographic span. The degree of overlap, considered in its historical context, revealed areas for further examination, possible sites of universal social construction or even the elusive “total social fact.” In short, Mauss thought that graphical devices were key tools for the depiction of “ethnographic provinces” divined with the aid of archaeology and other interdisciplinary tools. Placing civilizational groups together in a visual display of their socio-cultural overlaps showed them in a comparative light.

With their areas of contact and distinction now clear, Mauss argued that ethnologists would be able to see those civilizations that were moving forward, towards a more modern social form, and those who remained mired in more “traditional” ways. In essence, Mauss expected this approach to yield a better notion of the “progress” or “regression” endured by each group. Mauss concluded that sociologists employing this method would be able to discern the “chronological and geographical linkage of societies,” a process that did not follow a “unilinear development.” Instead, societies and

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civilizations were multiple. Mauss wrote, “Numerous are the evolutions never achieved, numerous are the disappeared phenomena, numerous are the fusions that have occurred.” He believed ethnology did not make all societies equal; it simply compared their particular social structures and mentalities.\textsuperscript{110} He further argued that civilizations did not follow one particular evolutionary path; there was no single movement towards modernity. Rather, it took close study to understand the varied forces and influences that did or could shape the future of a social group.

Mauss and several of his AS peers had long valued what they saw as the pioneering work of French Africanists for its sociological relevance. Discussions of Africa in the AS had increased in the early twentieth century as Delafosse and his peers increased their metropolitan contacts. The resultant ethnological networks paid particular attention to the internal development of African civilizations while also admitting that external influences, most importantly Islam, had played and would continue to play a significant role in African affairs.\textsuperscript{111} North and West Africa thus stood for Mauss as an enticing area for study, as it had played host to clashes between internal and external social forces for thousands of years, from the Romans to the arrival of Islam in the first Arab invasions and finally the onset of colonial rule. With the foundation of the IE in 1925, Mauss, now the last surviving AS member with an interest in Africa, attracted students to his lectures describing ethnological conduct across the Mediterranean. As


these students began to move ethnological careers, Mauss felt himself an academic relic. Before he could send these students out to observe the interaction of external and internal forces in Africa, he felt the need to experience it firsthand, if only as a tourist.

Now 58 years old, Mauss took his only ethnological field trip to Morocco in 1930. Mauss perceived external forces as enormously important. In his time in the protectorate Mauss visited Rabat, Marrakech, and Fez, in the process interacting with notable French and native Moroccan scholars from the *Institut des hautes études marocains*, founded by Lyautey less than ten years before. Even while in the Moroccan “field” Mauss did little real ethnographic collection, relying instead on the objects and information provided to him at scholarly institutes and museums. His three-week stay gave him little opportunity to form specific conclusions, although he was able to form a strong opinion on the arc of Moroccan development.

In a speech to the *Institut français d’anthropologie* following his return, Mauss employed his Moroccan experience to comment on the importance of colonial social science. The wide range of influences that inevitably affected each societal group made the need for ethnology ever more urgent in his mind; specificity was the only resource left as traditional African cultures and societies disappeared with increased European contact. In this fear Mauss encountered a common ethnological bind: colonialism enabled native civilizations to progress through contact, but it tended to erode traditional social structures and forms, making scientific analysis more difficult. However, Mauss approached this transition as an opportunity, a place to examine the boundaries of social collectivities in flux. Saharan societies hosted just this type of permeability; Mauss felt
that scholars could actually observe the process of socio-cultural mixing along the Sahel in Morocco, Senegal, and Mauritania. The sociologist and now “amateur” ethnographer thought a close working relationship between French ethnologists and native informer-savants would provide important insight into societal change.¹¹² Studies by French West African scholars such as Marty and Delafosse offered an important departure point. Mauss recommended that French scientists look for social metamorphoses similar to those depicted by Marty and Delafosse, but in the Moroccan milieu.

Saharan Africa thus became, for Mauss, a realm of “international transmission and circulation” where scientists discerned continuity and change as well as a unique “historical morphology.”¹¹³ Mauss echoed the cautions of Delafosse in particular when he warned that a failure to fully consider the complex underground connections of African societies not only risked the future of those groups, so “permeable,” but also the future of European civilization. He feared the rapid disintegration of native African societies driven by mass media and new forms of communication. Influenced by the pessimism brought on by the carnage of the First World War, Mauss saw the 1920s and 1930s as a period of crisis for the entire globe, not just Africa. Mauss believed that, despite the catastrophe of the war and the obvious problems on the continent, Europeans

¹¹² Mauss address to Institut français d’anthropologie: “Assemblée générale du 21 Mai 1930,” L’Anthropologie 40 (1930), 455-456. Mauss, for example, gives specific mention of Si Bou Median, an invaluable former aide to Douté in Morocco and a source among the Sufi Bori group in Marrakech. On his plans for the trip, see Mauss to Lecoeur, 17 February 1930, in folder Lecoeur, MAS 19; and Mauss to Malinowski, 20 March 1930, folder Malinowski, MAS 20. In the first letter, he proposed traveling for 15 of the 21 days on his own, without scholarly assistance; in the second he still expected to do some amateur ethnography. His report to the Institut, however, makes no mention of such freelance movement. In another letter, Mauss made it clear the improvement of the Moroccan museum establishment was an important motivation for his visit. Mauss to Malinowski, 28 January 1930, Folder Malinowski, MAS 20.

continued to perceive themselves as superior to all others. As Lyautey, Delafosse, and Marty had theorized, societies that refused to accept the renewal that came with external influences risked entering a period of decay, surpassed by other civilizations that had at one time been inferior.114 As Delafosse and Marty had proposed, modern social groups advanced only by mixing with outside collectivities. Such a conclusion, though, required the imposition of an absolute scale in which civilizations at any moment stood in comparison to each other and to some ideal, resulting in a relative ranking of “inferiors” and “superiors.”

Mauss’ analysis assumed a civilizational hierarchy; development was impossible if all societies existed at the same “stage” in the process. In this view, Europe, thanks in large part to its unique developmental path from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, existed apart from all other civilizational groups. Mauss saw Europe as highly urban and industrial but also achieving great intellectual heights in terms of science and literature. Other civilizations aspired to that level, both reference and goal as Europeans struggled to conceptualize the civilizing mission. Europe, he thought, displayed few, if any, vestiges of ancient “primitivity” still apparent elsewhere.115 Thus, Europe stood at the top of Mauss’ developmental pyramid, having rid itself of the remains of previous phases.

Mauss, like the other French ethnologists in this study, was unable to escape a sense of


European cultural and social superiority that assumed all historical development must resemble, or at least culminate in, that of Europe.

Mauss, despite his protestations to the contrary, bought into the basic ideas of the French civilizing mission. Europeans, in Mauss’ view the possessors of enormous intellectual and ethnological acumen, remained the only people capable of evaluating and assisting natives in their efforts to advance into modernity. This developmental program, he argued, relied on analysts to temporally locate civilizations along the continuum of progress. While Mauss pointed out that each civilization developed according to unique contextualized circumstances, his description of the group in absolute terms had to fall back on experiences common to the European observer. The European model stood as the only known comparative measure of progress for Mauss and his peers.

Mauss personified this perspective in the European academic community, bringing his message not only to the US and the UK but also to gatherings as far afield as Norway, where he acted as the “representative of French science” at an academic conference on the idea of civilization.116 Both national and international spokesman for a hierarchical, temporal view of African civilizational progress, Mauss directed the radiation of this model back to Africa through his students, beginning in the 1920s and continuing past his death in 1950.

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116 See MAS 17.4 for Mauss’ correspondence relating to this conference. He presented, “De l’emploi de la notion de civilisation et en particulier de civilisation primitive en sociologie et en histoire”; Mauss to Alf Sommerfeltt, 5 April 1925.
Conclusion: Knowledge radiation in France and beyond

The European onset of the Second World War coincided with the death of Mauss’ close colleague and collaborator Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in 1939. Forced to retire from the Collège de France and resign from EPHE in 1940 by the Vichy government because of his Jewish background, Mauss disappeared from the public eye to avoid deportation or further persecution.\(^{117}\) In poor health and evicted from their apartment, Mauss and his wife left their comfortable quarters in the summer of 1942 for a cramped, dirty space in another district of Paris, an escape that Germaine Tillion labeled later as occurring “by miracle.”\(^{118}\) Following the death of his wife, Mauss fell into even worse health. After his departure from EPHE, he largely ceased publishing and receded into obscurity. He passed away on 11 February 1950, largely forgotten as his funeral drew few mourners.\(^{119}\)

However, the African civilizational paradigm he espoused, inherited from Delafosse and those before him, lived on in enhanced form among his students. In particular, Marcel Griaule in many ways took over his mentor’s role. He taught at EPHE and the successor to the école coloniale, the école de la France d’outre-mer, even chairing Delafosse’s International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.\(^{120}\) Griaule, with Labouret and other peers, stood in the vanguard of a new generation of scholars and colonial officials questioning the very basis of the colonial order. Colonial policy, they thought, should focus not on exploitation, but on respect and association. In


\(^{118}\) Ibid., 345; Tillion to Mauss, September 1945, MAS 12.63.


\(^{120}\) Lebeuf, “Marcel Griaule,” XXIV.
their view, Europeans must create “an inventory of spiritual riches in a community of thought and action with the blacks themselves.” Assimilation stood as the “unacknowledged child of racism” that denied the importance and vitality of African civilizations.\(^{121}\)

Africa stood as not only subject but also producer of ethnological knowledge for this generation. In the same vein as Faidherbe, Delafosse, and Marty, Mauss included Africans (through the mediation of French Africanist scholars) in the process of understanding Africa itself. No ethnographer, he thought, could penetrate the mysteries of a society without dialogue with the members of the community. African employees in French schools and museums in Dakar had contributed to the collection and understanding of ethnological data by Mauss and his peers, even as others came to France to attend courses at the IE and elsewhere.\(^{122}\) Most importantly, French universities in the 1930s hosted African intellectuals who shaped the next fifty years of African political and social thought.\(^{123}\) Léopold Sédar Senghor, later a founder of the post-colonial Senegalese state, led the *négritude* movement (with Aimé Césaire, among others) while a student at IE and the Sorbonne in 1933-1934. Inspired by the teachings of Mauss and Griaule, Senghor saw immense value in literature, art, and oral traditions as refutation of

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\(^{122}\) See, for example, Adandé Alexaure, Secretary of the Dakar Museum to Paul Rivet, 4 December 1937, MAS 11.20. The presence of this letter in Mauss’ files is a mystery; perhaps Rivet passed it to him as the IE’s expert on African ethnographic collection (through his students) and as a man desirous of detailed contact with African intellectuals as sources of ethnological knowledge. Alexaure proposed correspondence courses or travel funding for native African intellectuals to attend the IE.

simplistic views of “Hamitic” and “Semitic” binaries in African history. Any close examination of “Negro-African civilization,” in Senghor’s view, led ineluctably to an understanding of “the power and the complexity of black thought,” the foundational premise of ethnological humanism.124 Thus, ideas regarding African civilization as interpreted by French Africanists radiated back to Africa via their close interactions with metropolitan scholars. Far from two distinct localities, France and West Africa grew together via the intellectual linkage running through Algeria.

Following Mauss, the next generation of ethnologists grasped the thread of his civilizational ideas and took them in several directions. Claude Lévi-Strauss, by the 1950s France’s most influential ethnological scholar, refined Mauss’ “total social fact” by an examination of American (non-European) mythology. He found inspiration in the work of Durkheim and Mauss on antonyms such as the “sacred or profane, pure or impure, friend or enemy, favorable or unfavorable,” oppositions that in Lévi-Strauss’ rendering formed the basis for all human interaction.125 In a quest similar to that pursued by Mauss, Lévi-Strauss sought immutable structures; in his mind, he found them in these binaries. Breaking with his intellectual mentor, he saw “the progress of scientific knowledge could only have been and can only ever be constituted out of processes of connecting and recutting of patterns...inside a totality that is closed and complementary to itself.”126 Unlike Mauss, who saw civilizations as in constant flux due to the interactions of the internal and the external, Lévi-Strauss conceived of systems of belief as shut off to

124 Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Préface,” in Ethnologiques, V-VII.

125 Durkheim and Mauss, “De quelques formes primitives de classification,” 86.

126 Lévi-Strauss, Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss, 61.
external input; they worked from pre-existing materials periodically reshaped and recast by *bricoleurs* but using only a finite store of materials. Universal beliefs were not only possible, they were common for Lévi-Strauss.

Mauss’ search for empirical evidence to support social conclusions influenced other thinkers as well. Pierre Bourdieu found great worth in these ideas, particularly as he found himself as between French worlds, much like Mauss’ experience as a French Jew in the late nineteenth century. Resident in Algeria during enormous upheaval, Bourdieu saw social structure not as universal but as localized, contingent and defined only by repeated observation and investigation rather than theoretical divination.

Descended from a similar intellectual tradition, Bourdieu ultimately voiced a powerful counter to Lévi-Strauss’ structural viewpoint through his concept of habitus, an idea that took Mauss’ perception of individuals as important social actors and expanded it to include a compilation of cultural and symbolic capital and the accrual of historical and social background. Most importantly, he turned ethnology in on itself, pressing for a reflexive approach that considered the ethnologist as social actor. Bourdieu thus stands as the most important intellectual inheritor of Mauss’ ideas among African ethnologists, as he incorporated both an emphasis on locally generated information and a notion of the distinctiveness of civilizations. His intellectual journey and combat with Lévi-Strauss is the subject of chapter 7.

127 Anthropologist Abdellah Hammoudi, like Bourdieu, has found that ethnography can serve as a precursor to the higher level of analysis found in sociology. For Hammoudi, it is important to focus first on “situational encounters,” then move to “a second stage, into a metalanguage, with the aim of constructing a synoptic view of things. Otherwise, we may be stuck with languages of the traditions themselves.” See Abdellah Hammoudi, “Textualism and Anthropology: On the Ethnographic Encounter, or an Experience in the Hajj,” in *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*, ed. John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi, (Berkeley, 2009), 32.
The development of Bourdieu’s approach owed much to the war raging between France and Algerian separatists in the mid-1950s, a conflict that increased in intensity during the governor-generalship of Jacques Soustelle, Mauss’ former student. Interested in a policy of association or “integration,” Soustelle’s political leadership focused on ethnological examination of the populace so as to better understand their discontent. Although ultimately unsuccessful, Soustelle’s policies grew not only from his education with Mauss but also from a long legacy of Africanist scholarship that considered African sources as valuable and saw African civilizations as unique, important and worthy of development.
Chapter 6: Jacques Soustelle and Ethnological Government in Algeria

A civilization is above all equilibrium of soil, fauna, flora and men. These empirical equilibriums can sometimes be destroyed by a mysterious incident: a mushroom coexisted peacefully with Canadian birches for centuries until the event that escapes us—perhaps the worn-out land no longer offering sufficient nourishment to the birch—and the mushroom ousts the birch.¹

French ethnologist Germaine Tillion (1907-2008) thus described the sometimes symbiotic, sometimes parasitic relationship between the French colonial state and the Algerian natives it ruled. Grafted onto an idealized, composite Algerian society since the mid-nineteenth century, Tillion suggested that the French system at first lived side-by-side with Algerians to the benefit of each group. However, the industrial growth of France and the rest of the “civilized” world left native Algerians, a group she depicted as the unmoving and inflexible birch, behind in virtually all phases of modern life, from the economic to the social. Tillion, an ethnological colleague of Jacques Soustelle (1912-1990) since the 1930s and one of a number of important French female social scientists of the period, provided important socio-economic analysis to him during his tenure as governor-general in 1955. The generation of scientists such as Tillion and Soustelle trained by Marcel Mauss and his peers at the Institut d’Ethnologie (IE) in Paris moved adroitly between fieldwork, be it in Latin America or Africa, and the metropole where they could find funding and political-academic sponsorship. This group acted as “intermediary” figures in the development of colonial policy and in the growth of French ethnology as a discipline.²


Soustelle took over as Governor-General of Algeria mere months after the eruption of violent unrest in the Aurès mountains on 1 November 1954, an effort led by the nascent Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). His tenure as governor-general brought the ethnological, civilizational networks first expanded by Louis Faidherbe in the 1840s full circle, back to their origins in France’s oldest African colony. Ethnological networks provided him with administrative and political access into what he thought were the root causes of native Algerian discontent, unrest that he and his team believed originated in the conditions of the rural, uneducated poor. He and his team of fellow social scientists intended to collect and interpret ethnographic information on the population in hopes of improving and solidifying French colonial rule. Detailed ethnological studies of the plight of the Algerian peasantry offered long-term prospects for success. However, under the harsh spotlight cast by war-time conditions, science failed to comprehend the very real disenchantment felt by the politically astute members of the revolutionary movements both in Algeria and abroad. Soustelle’s policies thus did not account for the sophistication of the separatist camp that had concluded before his arrival that further peaceful negotiation with France was futile.  

The Algerian War escalated by the end of 1955, hastening Soustelle’s departure and further turning much of the population against the prospect of a continuation of French rule.

As a Mauss student, Soustelle took in his mentor’s civilizational conclusions. Specifically, Soustelle believed in the possibility of progress among peoples viewed as “primitive.” Like his professor, Soustelle rejected the Durkheimian concept of unilinear

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3 See Matthew Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origin of the Post-Cold War Era, (Oxford, 2002), chapters 2 and 3 for discussion of the sophistication of the Algerian approach that sought international recognition and resources from the early 1950s.
evolution in favor of separate developmental arcs for each distinct society. In following Mauss’ research plan, Soustelle first endeavored to understand Mexico. Later in life, he applied the lessons learned from Mauss and his initial ethnological fieldwork to the political governance of Algeria. In the process, he put the ethnological concepts of progress and development to the test in the most difficult of circumstances. Although his administration ultimately failed to resolve the tensions produced by over a century of colonial domination, it did provide an initial platform for the sociological studies of Pierre Bourdieu. The young sociologist then formulated ground-breaking theories that both rejected notions of Algerian inferiority and built on the turmoil of war to better understand the complicated processes that informed each person’s interaction with his or her social group.

Connecting native Algerians and scientifically inclined colonial Frenchmen, Soustelle’s new government built political institutions based on ethnological examination and analysis. As a highly educated person, Soustelle saw himself as the ideal representative of an ethnological worldview that held intellectuals as critical in measuring civilization. However, Soustelle had little familiarity with Algeria itself; thus, he leaned on those who came forward to offer their services as interpreters of Algerian life. Committed to stamping out the revolt by addressing its social causes, Soustelle and his staff refused to treat with active rebels. The ethnological conclusions of his government thus stemmed from two primary types of informants. The peasantry offered little, as they lived in daily fear of FLN reprisals and had limited information on rebel activities and desires. His other primary informants, Western-educated, evolué politicians, had nothing
to lose by supporting the French government, as they stood to have little status in a future state governed by the remnants of the FLN, an organization that had already begun to target people labeled as French collaborators.\(^4\)

Unaware of or unwilling to consider the limitations of his ethnological approach, Soustelle tried to resolve the conflict through “informed” political change. He established governmental ethnological structures, worked to enhance the linguistic overlap of the resident cultures, proposed increases to native political participation, and passed land reforms designed to accelerate industrialization. His reforms were, in truth, intended to address long-standing concerns voiced by Algerian dissidents. However, he and his staff did not appreciate the changed political climate in Algeria that made such reform impossible, at least for the disaffected young rebels. The legacy of Paul Marty and Delafosse in West Africa in effecting political change based on ethnological investigation convinced Soustelle that his approach would, over time, bear fruit. By the mid-twentieth century in Algeria, however, the time for reform had ended as native revolutionaries, metropolitan politicians, and reluctant French colonists countered his every move. Seized by a sort of malaise by the latter half of 1955, Soustelle followed policies similar to his predecessors in Algeria, furthering a terrible spiral of terrorism and brutal repression. His tenure in Algeria brought the progressive paradigm outlined in this

\(^4\) On this point see Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 78, where he recounts that the FLN killed 6.5 times more Algerians than did the French from 1954-1957, particularly by mid-1955 when the FLN target set expanded to include civilians.
study to its final political form; the failure of his government revealed the impossibility, even to contemporaries, of true Franco-Algerian reconciliation.\(^5\)

Soustelle’s rule in Algeria, however brief, ultimately appears as conflicted as his policies. He was first an anachronism, applying ethnological techniques refined by Maurice Delafosse and Paul Marty in West Africa thirty-five years before. As one of his problematic Arab-Algerian interlocutors, Ferhat Abbas, recalled, Soustelle was perhaps the right man for the job; he simply arrived a half-century too late.\(^6\)  His tenure as governor-general revealed in stark relief the problems in the scientific approach to government. He did not consider the swirl of international forces that drew Algeria together with Egypt, Indochina, and Indonesia in a potent mixture of nationalism and decolonization. His FLN opponents, however, did not overlook the importance of the international arena, basing their strategy from the beginning of the conflict on a sophisticated mixture of Arab-Islamic nationality, the independent rights of citizens as recognized by the international community, and calls for social equality that resonated in the post-war world.\(^7\)

At the same time, European metropolitan governments after the Second World War became increasingly reluctant to engage in costly campaigns to put down rebellions, 


particularly with American Marshall Plan dollars riding on their willingness to grant citizenship and wage equality to their colonial subjects. Soustelle overlooked this fluidity, assuming that African societies had not changed in the intervening decades, a myopia that certainly contributed to the ultimate failure of his policies.⁸ In short, Soustelle’s effort to understand and rule Algeria through ethnology cast him as a summative figure, bringing back the ideas of French ethnologists from Faidherbe to Mauss. Unfortunately for Soustelle, those ideas were out of date in a drastically different African and international context by 1955.

The idea of “ethnological governance”⁹ did not originate with Soustelle; indeed, he often drew upon the examples of Faidherbe in 1850s Senegal and Thomas-Robert Bugeaud’s Algerian bureaux arabes of the 1840s. Faidherbe and Bugeaud had relied on military officers to remain in close contact with native populations in the countryside, away from urban centers and the colonial bureaucracy. These officers, often skilled in local languages, served as interpreters of French rule for native Algerians while also transmitting native needs and concerns back to higher authorities. In the process, they

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⁸See, for example, Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, 1996), 392, 395, 423; Gert Oostindie and Inge Klinkers, *Decolonising the Caribbean: Dutch Policies in a Comparative Perspective*, (Amsterdam, 2003), 67, for discussion of international trends. See below for more on the origins and implications of these movements. On the problems of such linear, if not synchronic, assumptions in African political and social development, see the strong critique of Mahmood Mamdani’s work in Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, (Berkeley, 2005), 17-18.

⁹Melanie White, “The liberal character of ethnological governance,” *Economy and Society* 34, 3 (2005), 474-494, also employs this term in a related way, but in a different context (that of nineteenth and early twentieth-century US and UK politics). She defines the approach as, “the set of practices that is organized by a developmental notion of human conduct (i.e. character) that operates as a standard of liberal government and serves as an index for the responsible exercise of freedom,” 476.
became an invaluable source of ethnographic data on African populations. In following these techniques, Soustelle expected to rule Algeria through ethnology in two ways. First, ethnologists themselves (himself included) would play an important role in the formulation and execution of developmental policy. Second, the local knowledge generated by ethnology would inform policy decisions across the board, regardless of the scientific background of the official responsible for implementation.

Soustelle modeled much of his method on Hubert Lyautey’s *politique de la tasse du thé*, an idealized urbane and dialogical approach to native contact conducted over a shared tea service. In Soustelle’s mind, only through this sort of close political association and examination could the French hope to accomplish the “moral conquest” of the area by fostering “the evolution of ideas, of values, and of legislation.” Soustelle thus instructed his subordinates to govern in a manner both “human” and “humane.”

As a student of Marcel Mauss, Soustelle felt that proper ethnology considered natives intelligent interpreters of their own world. Consultation of these natives, in this case the economically disadvantaged peasantry, promised the governor-general and his staff a policy informed from the inside and more respectful of local requirements. “Most of Algeria is a mixture and no definite territory belongs to any group,” Soustelle recalled in 1960. “It is mixed up like a salad dressing and you cannot separate the various elements

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10 For more on the *bureaux arabes*, see chapters 1 and 2 of this study as well as K.A. Bowler, “‘It is not in a day that a man abandons his morals and habits’: The Arab Bureau, Land Policy, and the Doineau Trial in Algeria, 1830-1870,” (PhD Dissertation, Duke University, 2011); or Osama Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria*, (Stanford, 2010).

except at great expense of human life.”12 He recognized, at least in retrospect, the complex fabric that made up what he and his staff saw as Algerian “society.” Soustelle thus proposed the study of the “elements” of Algeria in hopes of avoiding the forcible and violent separation of them occurring in the revolution.

Soustelle, however, still conceived of the “elements” of Algerian society as part of a larger “civilization,” an entity that in his vision of Algeria had stagnated in developmental terms until the arrival of France. Soustelle theorized that every human society, if taken to its greatest height, could attain the status of “civilization,” a mark of distinction that placed it ahead of its competitors. His model, descended from Maussian concepts, proposed that these moving social structures existed not only in a particular place but also in a particular time; multiple generations of related societies and civilizations could exist simultaneously in a process of “schizogenesis.”13 While all of these groups had some relationship to each other, temporal distinction and movement made a relative comparison impossible. Soustelle thus added more of a value judgment to the civilizational spectrum advocated by the African ethnological thinkers profiled earlier in this study. Only societies that had reached certain, presumably absolute, standards held Soustelle’s title of “civilization.”

On the surface, Soustelle and his subordinates regarded Algeria as part of a moving civilization. Analysis of his policies in the colony, however, reveals a more static frame-of-reference. His approach, informed by decades of French ethnological


work in Africa, is perhaps best described as social engineering, in this case an effort to fundamentally transform the way-of-life in Algerian populations. In this regard, Soustelle’s efforts at social transformation are best understood through a comparison with what James Scott has termed a “high modernist ideology.” Scott has described four elements that characterized “modernist” social engineering: an “administrative ordering of nature and society”; the adherence to a “high-modernist ideology” that included enormous state “self-confidence” in the power of technical prowess; the presence of an authoritarian state with unilateral ability to conduct social experiments; and a “prostrate civil society” unable to halt those reforms.\(^\text{14}\)

Scott’s model is useful in thinking about Soustelle’s time in Algeria, and in considering the French colonial project as a whole by the 1950s. Secular Algerian nationalists had created a state-in-exile in Egypt and Tunisia, an endeavor that incorporated Islamic intellectuals as well. Certainly not powerful, Algerian civil society was also not entirely “prostrate,” in spite of the privations spurred by the guerrilla campaign launched by radical separatists. Indeed, Algerian Islamic religious leaders had participated in what James McDougall has termed a “reinvention” of the Algerian national past as antique, i.e. pre-colonial, and Islamic since the nineteenth century, a process appropriated by secular nationalist cadres in the 1940s.\(^\text{15}\) While Soustelle believed in the power of science to reform Algeria, he did not intentionally discard the

\(^{14}\) James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven, 1998), 4-5, 94. Scott describes the typical conceit of modernizing reformers: “It followed that scientifically designed schemes for production and social life would be superior to received tradition,” a concept that does not adequately describe the view of development employed by the ethnological networks under examination here.

\(^{15}\) James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, (Cambridge, 2006), chapters 1 and 2.
past altogether, a key component of Scott’s criteria. He considered history as an important factor in civilizational development, rather than viewing all non-Europeans as in possession of an irrelevant pre-modern “tradition.” Without question, Soustelle was a “modernist” reformer, but one who descended from a very specific French colonial lineage that viewed local histories as vital in comprehending the possibility for economic and social change. Ethnology, in this model, relied on an appreciation of historical context.

The intellectual hubris that came with colonial ethnology led Soustelle to believe in the power of science to heal all social and political ills. As a product of scientific investigation, ethnological information seemed to Soustelle largely untainted by the power inequities of the colonial system. Consequently, he never considered the possibility that direct contact with what he and his staff believed were the leading political intellectuals in Algeria was, in fact, missing the point. Algerian political language, conceived apart from, and often outside, the colonial state was in fact quite sophisticated in incorporating multiple viewpoints so as to develop a shared desire to resist the French. In his zeal to “develop” Algeria so as to mend the great breach between French settler and native Algerian populations, Soustelle did not realize that the ethnology he and his team practiced relied on the reproduction and reinscription of long-standing colonial imbalances as an explanatory language; Algeria was far more than a collection of socio-economic classes. Algerian separatists did not recognize and refused

to converse in this language, much as Soustelle refused to correspond with them, making any effort at “objective” science virtually impossible.

Soustelle and his staff instead focused on what they saw as the defining gap in Algeria: the division between rural and urban, poor and wealthy. Best carried out by military officers or colonial administrators, Soustelle expected close examinations of peasant groups to yield a flexible policy sensitive to the exigencies of each locale. Soustelle and his staff looked to rural populations, particularly in Kabylia, to provide ethnographic detail to his new version of the bureaux arabes, the sections administratives spécialisées (SAS). Recalling the classroom examples of Mauss, Soustelle instructed his subordinates to remain in close contact with officials and scholars working to the south in Afrique occidentale française (AOF) in hopes of establishing a similar model in Algeria. In his mind, French West African scholars, in the tradition of Delafosse and Marty, had conversed with important African intellectual networks and grown to understand the socio-economic structures at play in the area. He wanted to transplant French Africanist notions of civilizational movement and methodology to Algeria.

By following the genealogies and intellectual trajectories of important African thinkers, Soustelle reasoned, French Algerian ethnologists and administrators would better tap into and understand the intertwined intellectual and kinship systems of disparate groups, thereby developing a better adapted policy for each through locally-enhanced networks of knowledge production. As the oldest French possession in North Africa, and arguably the source of many West African concepts, Soustelle believed that Algeria had at one time played a key role in the development of these trans-Saharan
networks. Soustelle reasoned that French ethnography by the mid-twentieth century had lost sight of this unique position. French civilization must understand, in Soustelle’s mind, and develop both North and West African societies through the Mediterranean littoral, the “Algerian door leading to the heart of the continent,” a North African centrality first proposed by Faidherbe in the 1850s. Soustelle’s conclusion built on the long-held French belief that Algeria was the most important of its colonies, the key to Africa and international prominence.

Like West Africa, Soustelle proposed that Algeria had fallen behind the modern world. He proposed to give the colony the external catalyst needed to reinvigorate positive social and intellectual development. Islam offered some help in this regard, as Soustelle and his staff saw it as a generally progressive institution “trying to evolve, to adapt itself to the modern world.” He thus made use of descriptions employed by Delafosse and Marty in radically different circumstances. In Soustelle’s mind, France stood as both example and goal for Algerians searching to control their movement into and conflict with European modernity. In holding to these views, though, Soustelle missed the changing context of post-war Africa.

Metropolitan officials in both France and Great Britain, mindful of the remarkable recovery of the Dutch economy in the wake of the decolonization of Indonesia, sought to make colonial policy more efficient. A new model of colonialism, known as

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18 Course on Islam delivered by Captain Jacques Carret, Service des Liaisons Nord-Africains (SLNA), part of “Stage d’orientation” for officiers des affaires algériennes (OAA), 6 December 1955, ALG/SAS/DOC/3, ANOM. The course notes serve as a model of the previous orientation courses given to new SAS and OAA officers in late 1954 and early 1955 (during Soustelle’s tenure) for which little documentation remains beyond basic outlines.
“trusteeship,” emerged to return some “efficiency” to European colonial relationships. Cognizant of their inability to fulfill the social and economic needs of their colonial subjects, European governments proposed a federal model with an eye towards near-term independence, in the process remaking the colonies with a new political and economic structure focused on “efficiency, science, progress, and welfare.” Metropolitan and colonial officials alike held that their native subjects were not yet able to govern themselves; the problem lay in the inability of the home governments to meet their increasingly well-articulated social and economic demands. A more scientific approach, theorists held, made it possible to cover all angles. It would lead to greater efficiency, less expense, and a federalized, “rehumanized” government adapted to local conditions. Economic and political change was now an important policy goal for metropolitan politicians looking to rid themselves of the expense of the colonies without international loss of face. Colonial “development” offered a way out by giving colonial populations “modern” tools with brief instructions on how to use them.

Soustelle’s notion of civilizational advancement, however, had a different political goal than that advocated by federalist pundits. For Soustelle, as for those theorists, previous French efforts to elevate the Berbers at the expense of the Arabs had failed; total assimilation to the French way of life stood neither “possible” nor “desirable” for any colonial society. Again employing language derived in part from Delafosse and Marty, he stopped short of recommending independence for African groups. Instead, he

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strongly advocated the French follow a policy of association, but one with deep ties to metropolitan France. Algerian social and political structures could change, but in Soustelle’s mind this transition would occur only after a long period of “integration” with France. He defined this concept in a June 1955 broadcast on Radio Algiers as “neither subversion nor stagnation but evolution within the framework of the French republic and its justice, its humanity.” He indicated his policies would respect the “ethnic, linguistic [and] religious” elements of native life in transforming Algeria into a “true French province in the administrative, economic, social, and political domains.” Walking a fine line between the historically ambiguous policies of assimilation and association, Soustelle advocated a future Algeria that was politically integrated into France while retaining its “traditional” character. He rejected calls for an independent Algeria, as in his mind the civilization was not yet progressing sufficiently to warrant separation from France. For Soustelle, the great gap between France and Algeria required a long-term political and social recombination of the two. Either not cognizant of or in denial over the socio-economic reality of the post-war world, Soustelle proposed a reinvigoration of the basic French civilizing mission.

Emerging from ethnological, political and military networks in the 1930s and 1940s, Soustelle engaged Algeria with a scientist’s eye, cultivating the growth of knowledge from French and Algerian sources alike. His background as an interwar ethnologist cast him, in his description, as “the humble interpreter of not a civilization,

but a swarm of civilizations.” Just as he had emerged from a variety of influences, so too did each civilization appear from tangled origins. He thought the interpretation and understanding of these civilizations, so often in conflict, required an ethnological, comparative, and locally-informed eye.

**Understanding the world through networks**

Echoing Maurice Delafosse, Soustelle described his deep interest in studying the world outside France: “as far back as I can trace my memories, I always had a passionate desire to learn about distant countries and, especially, distant peoples.” His career as an ethnologist sated this thirst while also providing “an appealing element of sport and adventure.” Soustelle emerged as one of France’s leading colonial thinkers due to his long interaction with networks of knowledge production. An early exposure to the power of French educational connections ultimately led him to ethnology and a career in academia. The requirements of war pushed him to instrumentalize these types of connections overseas, employing ethnological informants to better understand and manipulate the colonial world. Finding success in these networks, Soustelle realized that the colonial project itself, which he saw as similar to his war-time pursuit of intelligence in the name of Free France, depended on information gleaned from what he and his staff portrayed as intellectual elites. He came to Africa because of war; he remained interested in Africa and Algeria for their ethnological and developmental possibilities.

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22 Soustelle, “Discours prononcé le 24 Mai.”

Born in Montpellier, France on 3 February 1912, Soustelle later recalled his childhood in simple terms: “I liked books and cats.” The young student enjoyed enormous academic success in school in Lyon and Paris, in the process meeting his future wife, Georgette, a fellow scholar who also trained as an ethnologist and traveled with Jacques to Mexico and Algeria in later years.\(^{24}\) He parlayed his academic abilities into a first-place prize on the entrance exam for the elite Parisian école normale supérieure (ENS) in 1929, the leading French institution for the training of academics and teachers, gaining a scholarship and stipend. Soustelle, unlike Mauss but similar to Lyautey, spent his free time at school not in feckless play but in broadening his experience. Paul Rivet, the director of the ethnographic museum at the Trocadero, took Soustelle on as an assistant during his Paris school years and placed him on the team building displays of African villages and Asian temples for Lyautey’s Colonial Exposition of 1931.\(^{25}\) Soustelle thus saw first-hand the view of the colonies held by distinguished colonial officers such as Lyautey, in the process coming under the influence of Rivet and the growing ethnological world of Paris in the interwar years.

His journey into the ethnological fold did not occur by happenstance. Soustelle’s place as an ENS student put him in contact with an extensive network of French intellectuals, particularly sociologists, who had links to the French colonies. As the most prestigious training ground for secular intellectuals and teachers alike, the ENS provided


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entrée to elite academic circles. Soustelle’s most important influence in this period, not surprisingly, was Mauss, then a professor at the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE) and the Collège de France. Introduced to the great thinker by an ENS professor, Soustelle found himself awed by his new mentor’s powerful intellect: “No one who had the privilege of knowing Marcel Mauss will hesitate to agree that he was one of the greatest minds of our times.” Following Mauss’ courses in ethnography and ethnology at the IE, Soustelle saw his true calling, investigation of native groups in their own environments.

As it turned out, Soustelle had developed a relationship with the most groundbreaking teacher of field ethnography in France. In Mauss he found an outstanding teacher, one who “profoundly influenced an entire generation of researchers. By a curious paradox, it was this man who never did field work (he was the last and greatest of the armchair anthropologists) who inspired us to go out and follow trails in every corner of the world and who armed us with rules and advice.” Mauss stood alone, particularly in his own eyes, as a sociologist interested in ethnological comparison built from the colonies, employing trained French scientists and natives alike. He encouraged his students to encounter native societies on their own soil, observing their social forms while in conversation with native intellectuals. Soustelle combined this teaching with the ideas of other intellectuals such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), then making waves


28 Murphrey indicates Soustelle met Lévy-Bruhl at the Trocadero in “Jacques Soustelle,” 14-15. Their association continued until Lévy-Bruhl’s death in 1939; Soustelle helped the great scholar to consolidate his late publication of *Morceaux Choisis*, (Paris, 1936), where Lévy-Bruhl wrote of his error, at least in
with his theory of “primitive mentality” as distinct from modern European thought, in developing his own unique approach. Soustelle sought to examine each society in its own right, on its own terms, informed by local conditions. No two were alike. The young ethnologist took this approach forward in his studies, applying to work in the field as part of the first generation of IE graduates.

Already celebrated for his numerous academic achievements, Soustelle conducted fieldwork in Mexico in the early 1930s and completed his doctoral thesis on the Otomi-Pame Indians of Mexico in 1937. His initial arrival in Mexico made him realize his own perspective as a European who “measures civilization by the height of the houses and the lower level of temperatures” and searches for the “dances of men brandishing lances and bones.” He could see in himself a tendency towards the misguided Durkheimian assumption of non-European “primitivity” as a necessary evolutionary stage on the path towards modernity. He thus reinserted context into the social equation in a method that omitted “neither somatic anthropology, nor ethnography, nor history” in assembling a composite picture. Soustelle followed Mauss in advocating for a combined approach to societal analysis. No social science could fully describe reality to him; science instead promised an approximation of “truth” through the composite use of multiple techniques.

Fieldwork in Mexico proved enormously important to young Soustelle; while there he formed his own impressions of the action of civilization away from French part, in coming to the notion of the “primitive mind.” Soustelle authored an obituary of Lévy-Bruhl as well: “Lucien Lévy-Bruhl,” *Europe* 49, 196 (April 1939): 533-535.


classrooms. The young ethnologist, by his own account, learned one lesson quickly upon his arrival. He recalled, “I have learned to remain cautious of the great explorers, reporters, and professional travelers who fill up their journals with accounts of their exploits and discoveries that one may feed to the poor people called civilized.”\(^\text{31}\) These accounts, he believed, offered little in the way of real intellectual nourishment. Indeed, ethnology was far more difficult than such accounts let on. For Soustelle, the writings of travelers and other amateurs lacked analysis, perspective, and a full accounting of historical and regional context.

Mexico offered numerous examples of variation induced by contextual differences. Even after a relatively short exposure to this variety, Soustelle grew disgusted with ethnographies unable to adequately describe societies of a “pure race.” At this early stage in his work, Soustelle posited that individual groups, particularly those who had retained vestiges of pre-colonial, pre-Western society, were “not homogenous.”\(^\text{32}\) It was the responsibility of European ethnology, he believed, to discern older structures so as to better understand the present. French ethnologists, he hoped, would then use this comprehension to shape the native path to a more modern form. Scientists, he cautioned, must appreciate each society or civilization for its own worth, its own potential, as on its own path towards modernity. Mexican civilizations, far from primitive precursors to European societies, were in fact important and old in their own right, as demonstrated by their long links with other groups spread across the globe. For


\(^{32}\) Ibid., 34; Soustelle, *La famille Otomi-Pame*, 91-93. As proof of that heterogeneity, Soustelle provided tabular accounts of civilizational distinctions, the sort of work applauded by Mauss in chapter 5 of this work.
example, Lacandon native musical instruments showed significant similarity to those employed by some North African groups, in Soustelle’s mind reflecting a long history of cultural contact introduced by the trade in “black slaves.” After recognizing these connections, Soustelle’s idealized social scientist would then “introduce a bit of order into the chaos of languages and tribes” in Central America by categorizing the distinctions and overlaps of each group with the others.33

Soustelle’s basic critique of French ethnography, then, came in two basic forms. First, ethnography required a solid methodology based on first-hand experience. Educated Europeans craved knowledge about those who existed outside their direct experience; it was the responsibility of the social scientist, he admonished, to offer accurate depictions and insightful analysis to an academic reading audience. Second, he found that French ethnography tended to essentialize non-European populations. “Mexicans,” he found, were a varied society consisting of many different groups with connections around the globe. Observers who described all non-whites as simple reflections of Europe at an earlier period failed to appreciate each group for its own contributions and development over many centuries.

In reflecting on the social scientific method, Soustelle also mulled the nature of colonialism and the ethnographic encounter. Development and progress remained possibilities in his view, but only if Europeans acknowledged the vitality of the social and cultural constructions that preceded their arrival in foreign places. Despite his emphasis on locally derived information, Soustelle employed the language of progress so important

33 Soustelle, La famille Otomi-Pame, 549; Jacques Soustelle, “La culture matérielle des Indiens Lacandons,” Journal de la Société des Américanistes (1937), 85–86, V.
to the civilizing mission. In the process, he overlooked the basic contradiction of the colonial ethic. Although he believed that each civilization moved along its own path, this conception of change explicitly required and justified Western intervention in those societies, thereby nudging them in the direction of European modernity.

Upon his return from Mexico in 1937, Soustelle took up a place as assistant director of the Trocadero while teaching at the école coloniale, earning a chair in American antiquities at the Collège de France in 1938. At the age of 26 Soustelle thus found himself in the highest echelons of the French academy and in position to interact with people from all corners of the French colonial system. He later described his conversations with “young Africans such as Léopold Senghor,” and their importance in teaching him of the inefficiencies of the colonial system and the need to join with native intellectuals in finding a “practical solution” to the problems of governance. Exposed to some of the best African minds in the French colonial empire, Soustelle concluded that native Africans provided invaluable insight into the colonial condition and an important avenue by which to study social structure. Discussions with men such as Senghor opened his eyes to the great potential in Africa, a land of great possibilities not fully realized even under colonial tutelage. At the same time, native thinkers acted for him as middlemen, brokers to the insight and materials so vital to the conclusions formed by

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34 Murphrey, “Jacques Soustelle,” 24-25; Mauss to Lecoeur, 8 February 1937, MAS 19, Folder Lecoeur, Institut Mémoire de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC), Archives de Collège de France, Fonds Marcel Mauss, Caen, France.

35 Jacques Soustelle, Vingt-huit ans de Gaullisme, (Paris, 1968), 286. The reference is to Léopold Sédar Senghor, poet, academic and politician who would serve in the first generation of post-colonial Senegalese leaders. See, for instance, Gary Wilder, The French Imperial Nation-State: Négritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars, (Chicago, 2005), part 3, for discussion of the formation of this elite generation of “négritude” poets that also included Guadeloupe native Aimé Césaire.
Africanist scholars such as Delafosse and Marty. For the young Soustelle, colonialism was a means by which to more effectively study non-European populations, in the process yielding a dialogic roadmap for assisting native African groups to take charge of their own development at some point in the future.

Museums, particularly the Trocadero and its successor, the Musée de l’Homme (MH), provided important sponsorship to French ethnologists in interwar France. In 1942 Soustelle recalled the MH as a “veritable palace of the social sciences” devoted to “studying the life of exotic peoples [and] pulling up from the soil the accounts of lost civilizations.” French science, particularly the ethnology practiced by those affiliated with IE and MH, was on the leading edge of the French colonial effort. This undertaking, dedicated to the development of “universal ideas,” acted in Soustelle’s mind as “a challenge to racism, to the degrading doctrines of slavery and exploitation, to the new barbarism that already threatened the world.”36 He felt that museums and their employees must conserve, protect and exalt the “intellectual riches” of native societies while pushing for a “new humanism.” This effort, he thought, enabled colonial subjects to “know themselves and gain an understanding of their civilization.”37 Soustelle thus proposed French science as the vanguard of a new approach to colonial development, one that allowed colonial subjects to see the glory of their locally created civilizations by looking in the reflection provided by museum preservation, thereby restoring to them their humanity.


At the same time, Soustelle believed that deciphering the fundamentals of belief systems and social organization offered him unique insight into the history of a civilization as a whole, as it had for Delafosse and Marty. In a model similar to Ibn Khaldun’s paradigm, Soustelle proposed that many civilizations at one time or another progressed to the apex of human development only to fall back to a more natural state through a continuous cycle of decay and development. Soustelle theorized that the originary condition existed only at the level of “culture”; when sufficiently cohesive these groups could advance to the level of civilization, perhaps with the assistance and influence of neighboring groups. Soustelle’s basic theories on civilizational rise and fall thus included two implicit positions. First, he and most of his peers framed their analysis, in spite of their relativist rhetoric, according to a basic rubric that placed “modern” Western forms at a higher and more advanced position, apart from the cyclical movement endured by others. Conversely, his theories also implied civilizational intelligence. Each people possessed a genius specific to time and place. Only by understanding those specifics could the French help the less-developed advance to the apex of their particular path, progress previously interrupted by the march of European modernity and the African failure to adapt to the explosion of technology and colonial conquest.


39 See the introduction to this study and the description by Arjan Appadurai of the “rupture” between past and present in the Western definition of modernity; Appadurai, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, (Minneapolis, 1996), 1-3.

40 Soustelle, La famille Otomi-Pame, 211. It is important to note that Ernest Renan and other nineteenth-century Orientalists proposed similar notions of civilizational intelligence, at the same time exalting Europe as at the pinnacle of this hierarchy.
His Mexican experience showed Soustelle that knowledge constituted the “riches of civilization” and that intellectuals acted as the “carriers” of that tradition. He admonished ethnologists and colonial administrators to treat locally generated ideas as “precious stones” appropriate for display “so that they can be seen by all.” Europeans and native groups alike could then view and consider these jewels in fashioning a new and better society. In his view this knowledge permitted Europeans to better understand their global neighbors; from that understanding would grow a mutual appreciation. Comprehension of non-European groups came from intimate contact with groups in their native areas. Soustelle later remarked that a civilization that “has never pleaded its own case” could only “be unjustly belittled” by those with no intimate knowledge. The ethnologist ultimately felt that all people were in some way civilized and engaged in combat with other groups and with nature. Natives could contribute both to the pure scientific understanding of their structures and to their own political and moral development through a dissection of social structure mediated by French ethnologists prepared to analyze and interpret events and rituals. From this analysis he expected to deliver a tailored approach to political, social, moral, and economic development in full consideration of the unique history and intellectual capabilities of each civilization.

The academic idealism Soustelle displayed in the interwar years abated somewhat with the explosion of the Second World War in 1939. Called on first to serve as a lieutenant in the 24th Infantry Regiment and the information bureau in Paris, Soustelle

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42 Soustelle, *Four Suns*, 97.

quickly transferred to Mexico City in December of 1939.\textsuperscript{44} Far from his previous academic positions, Soustelle worked as an intelligence officer, exploiting networks of information gathering first developed years before during ethnographic fieldwork and expanded in wartime.\textsuperscript{45} Following the fall of France in 1940, Soustelle joined de Gaulle’s Free French effort as one of the first to support the young general in his move against the Vichy government. Soustelle gained diplomatic recognition for Free France in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia before accepting a position in London as the Minister of Information for the state-in-exile in 1942 at the age of 30.\textsuperscript{46}

He thus came to see the world through glasses tinted with the color of liberation rhetoric. Free France employed a language of freedom, desiring above all else to release France and its colonies from the binds of Nazi captivity. Indeed, the notion of a release from tyranny infused much of his ethnological work from that point forward. He described his post-war goal as the restoration of humanity to colonial subjects. Like those under the thumb of Nazi fascism, Soustelle felt that Europeans must liberate Africans and Asians from their desperate economic and political situations. Ethnology had offered and would provide a new way ahead, one that returned African civilization to the Africans themselves. He thus critiqued previous French methods of both colonial rule and social science. In his mind, the French had long ago lost sight of the humanity of

\textsuperscript{44} Denis Rolland, “Jacques Soustelle, de l’ethnologie à la politique,” \textit{Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine} 43, 1 (January-March 1996), 139-140. Soustelle had retained some ties to the military following his compulsory service in 1937.


\textsuperscript{46} Soustelle, \textit{Vingt-huit ans de Gaullisme}, 22-23.
their subjects; each person and each society was unique. He was unable, however, to conceive of European assistance outside of the basic framework of colonial rule. He saw ethnology as a key instrument in preserving and protecting these societies, restoring to them some measure of their pre-colonial existence. While humanist in conception, Soustelle’s efforts to “preserve” native societies served to freeze those groups in time, in the process denying the very vitality he exalted. Even in retrospect, Soustelle proudly trumpeted his “fundamentally rational” perspective on Algeria that drew on “the historical, ethnic, religious, and economic reality” of the colony, assuming in the process the existence of some unitary “Muslim personality” that the French must respect and maintain. In his mind, he was adhering to the wishes of Algerians themselves, who wanted him to treat Algerian “culture” as a “precious stone.”

Drawing on his museum experience, Soustelle believed that displays of African history would aid in development, as Africans could recapture that lost greatness by gazing in wonder at their previous achievements.

Ethnology offered Soustelle not only a worldview, but also a framework through which to expand his intellectual and political contacts. Throughout the Second World War, Soustelle leaned on the connections and techniques that grew from his time at the IE and MH in Paris. The ethnological community, specifically centered on the MH, had served as an active site of resistance to the Nazi occupation; several members were

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47 Jacques Soustelle, L’espérance trahie (1958-1961), (Paris, 1962), 255; Jacques Soustelle, “Nous sommes en présence en Algérie d’une entreprise aggressive de panarabisme à direction égyptienne,” Le Monde, 3 March 1956, 1; Soustelle, Aimée et souffrante Algérie, 6-7. Soustelle reported in his memoir that Algerian Constantine Deputy Abdelmadjid Ourabah called for him to duplicate his “precious stone” approach to culture in Algeria as the deputy had read in Mexique, terre indienne. For an earlier example of Soustelle’s “freezing” of cultural artifacts, in this case hammocks, for civilizational reflection, see Soustelle, “La culture matérielle des Indiens Lacandons,” 70.
incarcerated or killed by the Gestapo. Germaine Tillion, for instance, was forced into a labor camp at Ravensbruck following accusations of her participation in the French underground movements. “I was part of this small, fervent team, [and] I am still part of it despite distance and war,” Soustelle remarked in 1942, “and there is nothing in my life of which I am more proud except for having responded yes to the call of General de Gaulle.”

Moving on from his Mexican experience to positions of greater responsibilities in the Free French cause, he found ethnological networks, now reconfigured as part of the resistance, useful in executing his responsibilities. In London he controlled the Free French radio programs emanating from Brazzaville (Afrique équatoriale française (AEF)) and Beirut while working closely with British allies. Soustelle moved with de Gaulle to Algiers in 1943 and began work first at the ministry of information and later as head of the new Direction générale des services spéciaux, an umbrella espionage organization consolidating French intelligence efforts in Africa and Europe. Although not a field intelligence specialist himself, Soustelle employed and worked with chains of French, American, British, and native African operatives from Morocco and Algeria to the Congo.

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48 Marin and Soustelle, “Les français parlent aux français,” 137. The MH witnessed the execution (of Boris Vildé and Anatole Levitsky) and deportation of numerous affiliated faculty and students in this period, including the exile of Director Paul Rivet to South America.


Much like Tillion and other ethnologists, Soustelle linked Africa and the metropole through networks of information exchange and production. Not merely a source of intelligence on Mediterranean activities, Soustelle thought the continent offered renewal for a France torn apart by the German occupation. In terms similar to those employed by Lyautey at the dawn of the twentieth century, Soustelle expressed his belief that Africa “could become for France, if its leaders desire, what the Far West represented for the United States: the land where a new civilization could grow by the will of the pioneers.”

France, in Soustelle’s opinion, needed to look outward, beyond war-torn Europe, for renewal, for an opportunity to expand greater France across the Mediterranean.

Work in Africa inspired Soustelle to reach two important conclusions derived at least in part from the findings of previous French ethnologists. In the first place, networks composed of non-European local inhabitants were enormously important to understanding the social and cultural terrain both in wartime and customary colonial rule. Local informants had acquitted themselves well in both circumstances, demonstrating their centrality in any effort to decipher local structures. Additionally, Africa played host to an enormous range of complex societies with a strong intellectual capacity in their own right. In Soustelle’s mind, Africa represented more than a weak partner in a one-sided assimilationist campaign. Africans could and should contribute to their own future in tandem with a benevolent, understanding France. He never questioned the place of


51 Soustelle, *Envers et contre tout*, II, 277. See chapter 2 of this work for more on Lyautey’s views on social regeneration.
France as a civilizing force. While he lamented the erosion of native social structures, he ultimately concluded that French developmental assistance was vital to the future of Africa.

Following the war, Soustelle participated as an elected deputy in the constitutional debates to determine the future of the provisional government and its successor, the Fourth Republic. As former intelligence chief, Minister of Information, and Minister of Colonies (from October 1945 – January 1946), Soustelle’s word on colonial matters carried credibility. In a debate of 23 March 1946, Soustelle agreed with native African delegates who saw colonial issues as “a problem of civilization, a problem of institutions, [and] a political problem.” French policy had for too long revolved around a sense of racial superiority descended from theorists such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Arthur Gobineau, he thought. The ethnological deputy argued that French administrators and politicians needed to understand the rich history of Africa to prepare for a long, shared future. He pronounced that the political way ahead lay neither in “assimilating Africans to metropolitans, nor in metropolitans to Africans, but in blending two cultures and two peoples.” In the future, Soustelle proposed, Africa would “transcend the antinomy of colonizing people and colonized people” with an eye to a later “flowering of a new people and a new civilization” growing from the roots of its predecessors.52 Now more than ever, Soustelle blurred the line between assimilation and association. Because

he valued native intellectual contributions, Soustelle saw them as important to the future of France, although not necessarily as equal partners. Soustelle, at least implicitly, conceived of France as the dominant player in any colonial partnership.

Soustelle proposed to recast the French future through fusion with the vibrant societies of Africa. Through a close cooperation with African ethnological networks Soustelle hoped to develop a new form of colonialism, one that began with political association but inexorably led to the export of a new, multi-cultural French federal state to Africa and around the world. He did not account for the remarkable diversity of non-Western intellectuals in Africa, nor did he consider the marginalized position of French-speaking African thinkers in the post-war context and the increasing sophistication of anti-colonial arguments. He lived and worked in a charged post-war French political world where he was cast first as part of a discredited right-wing party in the late 1940s and early 1950s and then as a member of a failing left-wing coalition. Despite promises to the contrary, de Gaulle’s transitional government and the succeeding Fourth Republic succeeded only in kicking the colonial can down to the road, failing to take action to provide for the political rights of colonial citizens and setting the stage for decolonization and ultimate independence in Africa.

**Building a colonial government through ethnological examination**

After almost a decade in post-war governments Soustelle appeared to be just another politician. However, the explosion of war in Algeria in 1954 brought his name back to the lips of metropolitan politicians willing to overlook his right-leanining Gaullist
The French Premier, Pierre Mendès-France, and Minister of the Interior François Mitterrand hoped that he brought instant credibility due to his wartime association with Africa, his attendance at the 1944 Brazzaville conference, his brief tenure as Minister of the Colonies, and his participation in the post-war constituent assembly. When appointed governor-general, Soustelle proposed to quell the violent unrest in Algeria by understanding the sources of that discontent. In order to discern the causes of unrest, he enlisted the assistance of a number of prominent French ethnologists of Africa to unravel the complex interrelationship between religion, law, and social interaction in France’s oldest colony.

Soustelle and his key staff employed teams of social scientists to conduct this investigation, focused on the rural countryside but in conversation with Algerian political elites. In these discussions Soustelle and his team engaged Algerians with a political stake in maintaining France’s position in the colony. Ethnological investigation and governance, then, was haunted by the belief that *évolué* intellectuals would provide insight into the revolt, when in fact they were at times disconnected from the men and concepts that drove unrest. Ignorant of this gaping methodological hole, Soustelle and his scientific subordinates ultimately concluded that, in Khaldunian fashion, Algeria was torn by the urban-rural divide that exacerbated the tensions brought on by a colonial state that failed to attend to the political and religious needs of its native population. Soustelle’s approach, which attempted to respect African intellectual structures as valuable in their own right, rested on basic policy propositions long held by Soustelle and advanced specifically for Africa by de Gaulle himself.
French colonial policy in the immediate post-war era grew from de Gaulle’s comments at the 1944 Brazzaville conference. Although uttered largely to gain the political support of native AOF and AEF delegates, de Gaulle’s promises of “moral and material” profit for Africans working closely with France framed the efforts of future colonial administrators. Soustelle in particular took on de Gaulle’s pledge to work with the colonies “for their own development and the progress of their population, to integrate them into the French community with their personalities, their interests, their aspirations, [and] their future.” De Gaulle’s new vision of a French union gave Soustelle a political end-state that jibed with the civilizational relativism advocated by Mauss. Influenced strongly by these two approaches, Soustelle ultimately concluded that each non-Western civilization had a unique developmental arc to follow, but that such a path existed in only one direction: political federation with France. When approached by Mendès-France and Mitterrand (a socialist government) to take over the post of governor-general in Algeria in early 1955, Soustelle accepted with the understanding that he was acting in accordance with the wishes of de Gaulle, then in self-imposed exile.

Political and social conditions in Asia and Africa in 1955 were a far cry from those in 1945; the colonial world analyzed by Delafosse and Marty in the 1910s and 1920s was a distant memory. Soustelle was curiously unaware, from a review of his policies, writings, and speeches of his governor-generalship, of many of the

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53 “Discours prononcé à Brazzaville le 30 Janvier 1944 lors de l’ouverture de la conférence africaine,” in Soustelle, Vingt-huit ans de Gaullisme, 430-431. I have used this copy of de Gaulle’s speech specifically because it was reproduced by Soustelle in his book; whether accurate representations of de Gaulle’s actual words or not, it is this wording that Soustelle attributed to his superior.

54 Decree of 1 February 1955, FM/81F/641, ANOM.
internationally circulating ideas of nationalism and anti-colonialism. European colonies had become increasingly interconnected by transnational efforts at collaboration as they tried to “modernize,” in the process providing a means by which ideas could move rapidly around the world, even to previously disenfranchised peoples. The first to collapse was the Dutch Empire, which had lost Indonesia during the Japanese occupation, as it too struggled to deal with the rigors of rebuilding European society after the German occupation. The end of the war led almost immediately to a declaration of independence by Indonesians, a moment that, in the words of historian Louis de Jong, left the Dutch “powerless, weakened... [and] painfully surprised.” The Dutch quickly moved towards a federal colonial model with their remaining Caribbean colonies, a construction that disintegrated by the 1960s as nationalists distrusted Dutch intentions.55

Similar events played out elsewhere in Asia as Indochina and India struggled for independence, efforts that resounded loudly in colonial Africa. Labor movements in particular took control of public discourse in West Africa, where strikers used colonial terms of liberty and equality to demand pay and enfranchisement equal to their metropolitan peers. They rejected European relativism, in the process casting doubt on ethnological efforts to peg pay to an imagined African “way of life.” Metropolitan politicians in France and Great Britain in particular realized the enormous social and economic costs of continuing the developmental mission as before, setting their empires


Algerians also tapped into these post-war international currents. Messali Hadj, the leader of the separatist, though peaceful, \textit{Etoile Nord-Africain} since the 1920s, was rapidly supplanted by more radical separatists who concluded that only violence would deliver full political rights and, ultimately, citizenship. Drawing on the centrist nationalist messages espoused by Hadj and Ferhat Abbas, the long-standing historical-nationalist rhetoric of powerful religious leaders and scholars, the ‘ulama, and a superior organization, the new FLN proposed to “channel the immense waves that stir up patriotic enthusiasm of the nation.”\footnote{James McDougall, \textit{History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria}, (New York, 2006), 138, 140; Charles-Robert Âgeron, \textit{De l’Algérie française à l’Algérie algérienne}, (Saint-Denis, 2005), 449, 453; Henry F. Jackson, \textit{The FLN in Algeria: Party Development in a Revolutionary Society}, (Westport, CT, 1977), 22-30; and Front de Liberation Nationale, “Plateforme, III, 3,” in \textit{La révolution algérienne par les textes}, ed. André Mandouze, (Paris, 1961), 31.} Soustelle had somehow missed the large-scale change in African context. Europeans were weakened by war as Africans, including Algerians, emerged from the conflict with a stronger will to gain political independence. Africans themselves were no longer willing to accept a relationship based on power inequities. African politicians asserted their rights to control their own destinies and, ultimately, their own form of government even if achieved through violent means. The French government in Paris, focused on reducing expenditure and rebuilding the metropole in both economic and social terms, offered little support to Soustelle’s ethnological efforts in Algeria.
The appointment of Soustelle caused uproar in both metropolitan and Algerian
*pied noir* (French settler) political circles. It seemed a strange marriage of center-right
ideologue with left-wing government for most observers. At the same time, French
Algerian settlers feared the possibility of an actual implementation of de Gaulle’s
promised Brazzaville policies that would change the legislative structure in Algeria and
give greater voice to the almost 8 million native Algerians, diminishing the position of
the nearly 1 million Frenchmen in the province. French settler fears had been stoked by
the 1 November 1954 onset of the FLN war, building on the traumatic French defeat at
the hands of Vietnamese separatists at Dien Bien Phu.

Into this complex political mess flew Soustelle on 15 February 1955, leaving a
French snowstorm for what he described as an equally chilly reception in Algiers.\(^58\) His
appointment proved too much for the Mendès-France government. It fell in the middle of
February due in large part to the growing discontent of many metropolitan politicians
with the left-leaning administration of the colonies. Edgar Faure formed a new regime
and, in August, reaffirmed Soustelle’s place in Algeria for six additional months even as
he remained suspicious of socialist-inspired efforts at colonial reform.\(^59\)

Tied to socialism through his association with Paul Rivet and the MH team,
Soustelle appeared a mass of contradictions to his opponents and supporters alike. For
his part, Soustelle intended to use his governor-generalship as a platform from which to
inform the average Frenchman of conditions in the colony. As he later recalled, part of

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\(^{58}\) Soustelle, *Aimée et souffrante Algérie*, 1.

\(^{59}\) Decree of 21 July 1955, FM/81F/641, ANOM. Soustelle’s reappointment took effect for 6 months on 1
August 1955.
his platform on taking office was “penetrating the stupefaction of the metropolitan who
has never been to North Africa,” a powerful statement that echoed the ideas of many
right-wing French settlers who saw themselves as underrepresented and unappreciated in
the metropole. While a confusing muddle to his contemporaries, Soustelle’s mixed bag
of policies in Algeria in reality reflected his ethnological background and an effort to
construct an idealized “native” he could then display to the world as the epitome of
developmental colonialism.

Soustelle outlined his priorities for reform in January as to “Bring back peace and
order where they have been compromised, pursue and accelerate economic and social
programs in order to create the resources necessary for a growing population, [and] give a
new impetus to the progress of Algeria in all domains.”

Focused on security and basic social and economic reform, this plan fell in line the standard centrist position. However, Soustelle soon moved to the left with social reforms infused with lessons he had learned
during his time in Mexico. In discussing the establishment (advocated by Tillion) of
centres sociaux, locations designed to enhance native access to education, Soustelle
indicated his goal of “attacking...misery and ignorance simultaneously on all fronts.”

These centers, targeting the illiterate and destitute, aimed to reform Algerian society from
the bottom-up even as reforms took hold from the top-down. In conversation with
Algerian evolué politicians and intellectuals, Soustelle and his staff believed that basic
literacy and French education would assist the lower classes in their movement into the

60 “L’Algérie...ce serait Sedan,” delivered at French National Assembly, 9 March 1956, FM/81F/24,
ANOM.

61 “M. Soustelle: j’entends donner une impulsion nouvelle au progres de l’Algérie dans tous les domaines,”
Le Monde, 30-31 January 1955, 3.
modern world. The governor-general thus departed from the Maussian example by proposing a continued political cooperation between Algerian and France, close ties in his mind best delivered through a shared education that included instruction in both Arabic and French. Social centers, for all their idealist promise as places of assistance, still drew on the power inequalities in Algeria, placing rural Algerians at the command of a French educational system without real input into the curriculum.

Lyautey offered an historical model for social reform through close cooperation with native groups. Soustelle adhered to the marshal’s basic dictate that “the secret is the extended hand, not a condescending hand but the loyal man-to-man handshake made in an effort to understand each other.” Soustelle echoed that “trusting cooperation” served as the “essential base of all positive action.”62 The governor-general did not mimic Lyautey’s rule by selected Moroccan tribal chiefs, instead maintaining the pre-existing direct governance in conjunction with elected Algerian assemblies. He did not recognize that the time for “trusting cooperation” had passed for the core of the separatist movement.

Some contemporary French observers also criticized Soustelle’s ethnological approach. One French delegate in the Algerian assembly railed against the “lack of contact” between Soustelle and the Algerian legislature. This delegate believed the governor-general, who “arrived with many diplomas and titles,” did not understand the local political situation, instead believing himself the “holder of much knowledge [and] carrier of the democratic flame” who refused to consult the French elected officials

62 Pour l’Algérie, 81, ALG/SAS/DOC/1, ANOM.
already in place.\textsuperscript{63} The new emphasis on ethnological investigation and policy threatened the power structures in place in Algeria even as they appealed to French officials in the countryside anxious to better understand and help their native charges with an eye towards preserving their own lives in the face of the FLN onslaught.\textsuperscript{64}

Although certainly concerned with the plight of his French subordinates in the countryside, Soustelle’s focus remained on understanding the causes of rebellion in Algeria. French Algerian social policy, in Soustelle’s mind, had long relegated native Algerians to a backward status, judging them purely on technological achievement without considering the enormous intellectual potential already resident. He saw much of the ethnography of Algeria as employing easy binaries such as Berber/Arab or Colonial/Algerian; the reality was far more complex and deserving of study.\textsuperscript{65} Soustelle believed that Algeria, and thus France, could not hope to progress without such systematic consideration of the complexities of social structure and organization. Ethnology provided the tools to dissect Algerian “society,” but required direct contact with the population and a deliberate plan of examination.

The new governor-general thus based his government on ethnological principles. He criticized previous governments, notionally intent on republican principles of

\textsuperscript{63} Gabriel Lambert to Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury (Minister of the Interior), 27 September 1955, FM/81F/641, ANOM.

\textsuperscript{64} See, for example, Paul Biliquey, Director of Boys’ School of Adrar, to Soustelle, 25 October 1955, ALG/GGA/11CAB/5, ANOM.

\textsuperscript{65} Soustelle in \textit{The Four Suns}, 73-74, accuses Western governments of assessing civilizations on the basis of one aspect, for instance technology, at the expense of enormous achievements in other areas. See also Soustelle’s speech to the UN, 6 February 1957, FM/81F/24, ANOM. On French Algerian ethnography under the Third Republic see George R. Trumbull IV, \textit{An Empire of Facts: Colonial Power, Cultural Knowledge, and Islam in Algeria, 1870-1914}, (New York, 2009); or Patricia M.E. Lorcin, \textit{Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria}, (New York, 1995).
equality, as having overlooked the enormous administrative, social, and political inequities of the system. “A scientific knowledge of their [native] social structures” would help to alleviate this problem, he thought. Indeed, his government would use “ethnology, anthropology, [and] sociology” not only to inform, but also to “guide public policy towards social and ethnic groups in overseas territories.”\textsuperscript{66} He expected his subordinates to follow these maxims. Soustelle thus assumed the part of social engineer as he ordered society administratively. He adhered to an “uncritical, unskeptical, and thus unscientifically optimistic” view of the possibility of progress given French scientific and industrial power.\textsuperscript{67} Soustelle expected his colonial state to remake Algerian society on a local level, beginning in the countryside and in conversation with natives themselves. It was the choice of correspondents, however, that caused his administration to miss much of the real discontent in the colony. Localized discussion, in this case, did not reveal to him the terms and intellectual currents on which nationalists had constructed their program.

Hoping to better gauge the opinion of the average Algerian, Soustelle directed his administrators to gather information not from dry staff meetings but from “conversation” with natives that he saw as “more edifying than a 100-page administrative report.”\textsuperscript{68} Soustelle believed that the “progress of Algeria” necessitated a dedicated corps of French administrators willing to conduct routine, unannounced trips into the country to engage in

\textsuperscript{66} Soustelle, \textit{Aimée et souffrante Algérie}, 26-27; Soustelle, \textit{Vingt-huit ans de Gaullisme}, 291.

\textsuperscript{67} Scott, \textit{Seeing Like a State}, 4-5. See also Michael Adas, \textit{Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance}, (Ithaca, NY, 1989), for discussion of the place of technological superiority as ideology for colonial domination and expansion.

“human relations with the populace.” To that end Soustelle and his closest staff confidants, ethnologists Germaine Tillion, Vincent Monteil and Jacques Juillet, embarked on numerous “study trips” to outlying Algerian regions to converse with local leaders and intellectuals. The trips also at times included Georgette Soustelle, who could gain the perspective of women and mothers when visiting hospitals, orphanages and schools.

Soustelle’s regime employed women to a greater degree than other colonial administrations. Soustelle believed that women, long categorized as oppressed by most French analysts of Islam, would provide unique insight into the form and function of Algerian social structures. They offered Soustelle’s government a perspective outside what many French analysts had perceived as a basically patriarchal system. Perhaps influenced most by Tillion in this regard, Soustelle’s administration came to see women as also capable of deep intellectual insight into their society, thereby offering a novel perspective to colonial rule. A gendered approach moved beyond the basic instrumentalization of sexual relations for control of chiefly lineages or access to native information, techniques employed at least in part by Delafosse and Faidherbe. When recognized as important contributors women could shed light on one of the great mysteries for French Africanist scholars since at least Marty and Delafosse: the interconnection of genealogy, kinship, and history in the area that scholars saw as the foundation of Arab-Islamic civilization. Tillion and Georgette Soustelle were important players in both ethnological information gathering, as they had both proved during

69 Circulars 4.684CC and 4.685CC, 15 June 1955, Pour l’Algérie, 19-23, ALG/SAS/DOC/1, ANOM.

70 Report of Colonel Constans (Director of the Military Cabinet) on Governor-General trip to Kabylia, 7 March 1955; Report of Vincent Monteil (Chief of the Military Cabinet) on Governor-General trip to Boufarik, 14 March 1955, ALG/GGA/11CAB/29, ANOM.
previous fieldwork, and in the formulation of native policy. They provided new access to previously unseen corners of Algerian social life as discussants with women, previously inaccessible to male ethnologists due to local social norms.

Soustelle relied on similar contributions from his key staff; he expected each to deliver a different perspective on local events. Of the 274 people employed by Soustelle on 1 June 1955 at his Algiers headquarters, 26 served as “key staff” in his civil and military cabinets, with most others dedicated to administrative tasks.71 Soustelle and his key staff saw an open dialogue with Algerian political leaders as vital not only in understanding the causes of revolt but in controlling the spread of discontent. Soustelle and his prime subordinates thus spent time opening and maintaining dialogues with available Algerian intellectual and political elites. These conversations ultimately yielded little useful information, as the ethnographic informants chosen by the governor-general’s staff generally, like Abbas, hewed to a centrist line that was still willing to negotiate with France. Francophonic, and to a lesser extent francophilic, partners gave Soustelle some insight into the larger Islamic world. However, the continued emphasis of the administration on socio-economic disparities as the root of conflict missed the larger point. FLN leaders were in fact sophisticated and drawing on centuries of reformist religious and social discussion while constructing a new, idealized Algeria unified in opposition to the French presence.

Soustelle’s staff looked, most importantly, to Ferhat Abbas as a middleman who could deliver his conceptions of both the “average” Algerian and the revolutionary sentiment. Abbas was a French-educated, French-speaking native moderate who

71 “Effectif de la Direction des Cabinets Civil et Militaire,” 1 June 1955, ALG/GGA/11CAB/1, ANOM.
advocated for cooperation with France in a process culminating in independence; he was hardly a radical member of the FLN, and thus perhaps not the best possible choice as liaison with revolutionary movements. Soustelle dispatched top-level staff to meet with Abbas on occasion, as the French administration saw the urbane politician as the best interlocutor with the disparate protest movements. The well-spoken intellectual characterized Soustelle’s appointment of well-known scholars of Arab and Berber communities as critical to stemming discontent in the first months of his administration.72 Abbas described the cabinet as having “among its personnel two men that Muslims know: Jacques Juillet and Commandant Vincent Monteil along with a woman of well-known courage and humanism, Germaine Tillion.” Abbas saw all three of these staff members as liberal and possessing significant local ethnographic and linguistic expertise, a combination that offered him hope for the future. Monteil, who later authored an updated French translation of Ibn Khaldun and likely introduced some of the North African’s civilizational ideas into the administration, tried to conduct oral interviews with FLN leaders, but found resistance from Soustelle, who refused to “negotiate” in any sense with armed rebels, forming a schism with his ethnological cabinet from its earliest

72 This is not to suggest that Abbas was the only anti-colonial figure in Algeria at the time, or even necessarily the most important. Rather, Soustelle and his staff approached Abbas as the best intermediary with the various unrest movements, which did not have a true center after the detention of Messali Hadj in the 1940s. The best analysis of these competing groups and their interrelationship is Mohammed Harbi, Le F.L.N.: Mirage et Réalité, (Paris, 1980).
days.\textsuperscript{73} Juillet’s activity centered on altering the distribution of wealth and attacking social inequality at its economic roots.\textsuperscript{74}

Most importantly, Tillion focused on socio-economic class investigation and the inequalities of industrialization among the poor peasantry. A heroine of the MH circle of resistance during the Second World War, Tillion survived the camp at Ravensbruck and emerged as an important French scholar of North Africa.\textsuperscript{75} She offered strong connections to metropolitan scholarly organizations, in particular the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (co-founded by Delafosse), which funded her North African research from 1934-1937; and the Centre nationale de recherche scientifique (CNRS) that funded her return trip in 1939-1940.\textsuperscript{76} Her involvement in the administration thus brought credibility, in Soustelle’s eyes, with both metropolitan


\textsuperscript{74} Abbas, Autopsie d’une guerre, 67-68, 73. Soustelle did not initially select Tillion as his research attaché, at first preferring Jean Servier, a more celebrated (and also conservative) scholar and war hero who ultimately did not get the job for reasons that remain obscure. See Arrete, 15 February 1955 and Soustelle to Lamassoure, n.d. (February 1955), ALG/GGA/11CAB/1, ANOM. Monteil’s translation appeared as Discours sur l’histoire universelle (Al-Muqaddima), ed. and trans. Vincent Monteil, (Beirut, 1967-1968). It became the definitive French translation (surpassing that of de Slane), although in much of the Western world it was perhaps bested by Franz Rosenthal’s English translation. See Moncef M’halla, Lire la Muqaddima d’Ibn Khaldun: Deux concepts-clés de la théorie khaldunienne, asabiya et taghallub (force et domination), (Tunis, 2007), 4; and Mohammed R. Salama, Islam, Orientalism and Intellectual History: Modernity and the Politics of Exclusion since Ibn Khaldun, (New York, 2011), 85-90.


\textsuperscript{76} Forget and Wood, “Notice biographique,” 12-13; Tillion CV, ALG/GGA/11CAB/62, ANOM. See also Germaine Tillion, Il était une fois l’ethnographie, (Paris, 2000), 13, where she described the CNRS decision that the Aurès would be an outstanding field site and that a woman could work there profitably. This book is Tillion’s late effort to recapture, in monograph form, her ethnographic fieldwork in Algeria from 1934-1956.
thinkers and Berbers who were aware of her work with Chaouia tribes in the Aurès. She, in tandem with Monteil, opened the door to Arabic and Berber oral and written sources on local conditions for Soustelle. Her reliance first on governmental research funding and then on the colonial state, though, forced her to avoid any critical or introspective views on the nature of French governance in Algeria, particularly under Soustelle and his successor, Robert Lacoste.\textsuperscript{77} She thus focused on an “objective” gathering of the facts of social life in Algeria.

Familiar with the works of classical Arab scholars on North Africa from her linguistic and ethnological training in France, Tillion consulted Ibn Khaldun, Leo Africanus and numerous other North African sources for both background and analytical devices for use in deciphering the local civilizations. Her graduate theses, although lost in the war, broke new ground by offering, in the words of her advisor, prominent Orientalist Louis Massignon, “for the first time to integrate different individuals, to sum up the social history” of a particular group.\textsuperscript{78} Tillion brought this path-breaking approach in early 1955, gaining a bully pulpit from which she could exert enormous influence over policy through the collection and presentation of ethnological data.

Tillion arrived in Algeria first under a 3-month CNRS mandate to study the socio-economic causes of the uprising. Following a meeting with Soustelle in February 1955 Tillion entered the cabinet as chargée de mission, spending significant time on tours of


\textsuperscript{78} Tillion, \textit{Il était une fois l’ethnographie}, 15; Evaluation by Louis Massignon, ALG/GGA/11CAB/62, ANOM. Tillion referenced Ibn Khaldun and Leo Africanus specifically on numerous occasions in her writing, but also studied the works of Ibn Battuta and al Bekri.
the countryside in a methodical effort to understand the social realities far from Algiers. In her examinations Tillion leaned heavily on ideas descended from “the great North African Ibn Khaldun,” particularly his emphasis on the relationship between ideology and “the manner by which each [group] provides subsistence.” She described socio-economic inequalities that owed much to the distribution of civilization in a process of rise and fall tied to the urban-rural dichotomy. The “civilized” cities of Algeria, she theorized, pressed women into servitude and disrupted long-standing kinship ties with far-flung groups across the nomadic and semi-nomadic groups of the interior. Destroying the relationships of women with each other, in Tillion’s view, fractured the basic social structure of Algerian groups and made the approach of modernity and industrialization even more destructive to country peasants. Tillion proposed that detailed examination of and conversation with the Algerian peasantry must stand as the first step in reform, as the rural population was the segment of Algerian society most targeted by the nascent FLN rebellion.

Tillion’s ethnographies of Algerian populations provided Soustelle with what he believed was insight into the actual conditions of Algerian rural groups outside the day-to-day purview of French administrators. However, her approach was tainted by the nature of her research question, as it presupposed some basic social issues as the basis for

79 Forget and Wood, “Notice biographique,” 21-22; Rice, “Déchiffrer le silence,” 167; Arrete, 2 March 1955; G. Dupovy (Director, CNRS) to Soustelle, 14 September 1955; Lamassone to Soustelle, 11 June 1955, ALG/GGA/11CAB/62, ANOM. Tillion’s then-academic supervisor and CNRS liaison Louis Massignon, in conjunction with François Mitterrand, first asked her to travel to Algeria in early 1955. Per agreement between Soustelle and Dupovy, CNRS paid Tillion until 1 April 1956 at which time the French Algerian government took over administrative responsibility for her research.

80 Tillion, Il était une fois l’ethnographie, 110.

81 Ibid., 261; Rice, “Déchiffrer le silence,” 163-164.
revolt. Tillion located a social target for French reformers; the educational and economic conditions of the Algerian peasantry. When combined with the work of Monteil and Soustelle’s own ethnological experience and understanding, Tillion’s conclusions provided the foundation for reform of the Algerian rural populace in an effort to replace the FLN as the benevolent and knowledgeable power.\(^2\) Key to defeating the insurgency, Tillion posited, was developing a counter to what she mistakenly interpreted as their secular and anti-religious stance. Islam offered just such an institution.

Tillion observed that Islam, far from a source of “fanaticism and ferocity,” instead acted as a “conducting medium” offering access to the accomplishments of both Western and Eastern civilizations. “These ideas may have been transmitted by a sort of social osmosis,” wrote Tillion in 1957, “from areas where the two communities [European and Muslim] were in contact.”\(^3\) She agreed with the conclusions of Marty, Delafosse and others who had pointed to Islam as an important source of intellectual development in the colonies. The depiction of Islam as a progressive force enabled Soustelle to avoid, as much as possible, the dichotomizing language of “modern” France and “Islamic” Algeria in his administration. He instead described a policy of association, toleration, and ultimate integration of the Islamic way of life into the larger French polity, although he gave no sign that Algerians themselves would have the ability to shape the manner in which they would politically enter France.

Integration of Algerian Muslims into the French political structure, in Soustelle’s opinion, required a detailed understanding of the unique social and legal norms

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\(^2\) Soustelle, *Aimée et souffrante Algérie*, 83-84.

introduced by Islam. Initially formed in 1935, the Service des liaisons nord-africains (SLNA) provided Soustelle and several of his predecessors with analyses that focused on religion as the defining aspect of Algerian life. Ultimately reoriented as the “Muslim policy section” of the civil cabinet, Soustelle expected SLNA staffers to avoid views of Islam as exotic or fanatical in favor of a balanced approach that emphasized Islamic toleration and learning.84

For example, a former French attaché in Istanbul sent a lengthy analysis of Islamic fatalism and failure to adapt to Western culture to Soustelle in August of 1955. The author, a retired general, depicted Islam as “opposed to the spirit of progress.” Colonel Paul Schoen, liberal proponent of Muslim rights, veteran of the native affairs bureau in Morocco, and the director of Soustelle’s SLNA, countered by portraying cultural and intellectual achievements as very important in Islam, home to an advanced desire for “human progress.”85 Schoen nonetheless did agree that Islam needed to change, to enter the modern world of Western civilization. Schoen concurred that the push to “secularize and modernize Algerian Islam” represented a “vital interest” for the French government in Algeria. His opinion, however, approached the problem from an Orientalist angle, as it overlooked the problem many Muslims would have with Western efforts to “reform” or “modernize” a religion based on the authority of dynastic rule and

84 Circular 2.281NA, 29 August 1950, Pour l’Algérie, ALG/SAS/DOC/1.
the power of appointed officials and judges. French reformers had no intellectual,
political, or moral legitimacy to change Islamic structures.\textsuperscript{86}

In the spirit of modernization, Schoen further advised Soustelle that failure to
reduce polygamy and press the rights of women in marriage and childbirth could prove
fatal not only to the colonial effort but to an Algerian society itself overcome by an
exploding population and unable to produce enough food.\textsuperscript{87} Even in an administration
that for the first time considered the views of female staff members, Soustelle’s key male
subordinates caricatured women as silent partners in reproduction and social continuity.
Very much products of their times, Schoen and Soustelle did not view women as
important social players, although the governor-general clearly valued their ethnographic
inputs, as evidenced by the reliance on Tillion as lead ethnologist and Georgette Soustelle
as additional female liaison to the population. Soustelle conceded that reform could
occur only with the close cooperation of Algerians themselves, collaboration that began
at the highest levels of government, included women, and extended to all colonial
administrators, who were expected to learn Arab and/or Berber and received bonuses for

\textsuperscript{86} See, for instance, Abdellah Hammoudi, \textit{Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan
Authoritarianism}, (Chicago, 1997), for discussion of the power of the political-religious relationship, and
its inversion, in governance of Muslim states.

\textsuperscript{87} Schoen to Soustelle, 14 October 1955, ALG/GGA/11CAB/79, ANOM. The focus on female colonial
subjects was not entirely new, as the interwar period, particularly in West Africa, saw a heavy focus on
eugenics and the reproduction of both a colonial workforce and a French population to serve as
administrators. See Alice Conklin, “‘Faire Naitre’ vs ‘Faire du Noir’: Race Regeneration in France and
strong results on language testing.\footnote{See Soustelle to Deputies and Senators, 17 March 1955, where he requests that all Algerian legislators, particularly those of native Arab or Berber origin, work closely with the governor-general’s office prior to submitting ideas to the French national assembly in Paris. See also the responses of Ahmed Ait Ali (23 March 1955), Amar Naroum (24 March) and Mahdi (n.d.), ALG/GGA/11CAB/2. On languages see Soustelle, \textit{Aimée et souffrante Algérie}, 80, where he discusses these inducements for administrators.} As full of presuppositions as the approach to women might have been, it represented a step forward in the French Algerian administration.

Similar to the experiences of Faidherbe and Lyautey, the governor-general found that ethnology in time of war aided in understanding the opponent. By eliminating the sources of discontent he thought the French would destroy socio-economic and religious divisions that fueled the insurgency. He proposed to conduct these investigations in a “mission of peace” to better understand France’s “Muslim sons” in a quest to “hasten the necessary evolution of this country in the direction of progress and of justice by honest and effective reforms.”\footnote{Soustelle radio address, 28 October 1955, FM/81F/641, ANOM. See also Circular 2.385CC, 5 April 1955, \textit{Pour l’Algérie}, ALG/SAS/DOC/1.} Clearly paternalistic, Soustelle believed it was the responsibility of soldiers, administrators and missionaries to both collect information on colonial populations and implement the requisite reforms. In Soustelle’s mind, colonial functionaries in daily contact with the populations were in better position than governors, politicians, or local Algerian elites to truly change local circumstances. “These pioneers,” Soustelle remembered in 1973, “showed themselves many times closer to Africans, more sensitive to their suffering, more determined to help them,” a sentiment influenced at least in part by Mauss’ emphasis on the importance of ethnological collection in tandem with people living among the subject population.\footnote{Jacques Soustelle, \textit{Lettre ouverte aux victimes de la décolonisation}, (Paris, 1973), 47.} The low-level functionaries of colonial government could do the most to understand the world of the
average Algerian in this view; they helped the French government react to and stamp out “agitation.”

Soustelle, in part referring to his predecessors and political opponents, described revolution as the product of a loss of contact between population and government. He sought to restore that cooperation through intellectual exchange. The ethnological method of Delafosse and Marty, however, did not aid him in identifying intermediary authorities through whom to reestablish communication. Soustelle and his staff sought out both key Algerian political intellectuals and representative members of the rural poor as new contacts in this effort. In the process, he overlooked the importance of young, particularly university-trained elites who found little opportunity for employment in what they saw as a world dominated by France. Young intellectuals such as the teacher and author Mouloud Feraoun had grown by this time to appreciate the FLN, a movement that stood for some in Kabylia as “the guardian of all of our illusions, our extravagant hopes.”

Ostensibly committed to ethnology conducted with the aid of Algerian intellectuals, Soustelle’s administration engaged only with those already available in the political administration, bypassing the possibility of dialogue with people he discarded as terrorists and their sympathizers.

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91 Lamassoure to prefects of Algiers, Oran, Constantine, southern territories, 1 April 1955, ALG/GGA/11CAB/2, ANOM.

Relying on the information he had at hand, Soustelle arrived at what he considered an ethnological appreciation of the revolt. In this explanation, the urban-rural divide, often linked respectively with “sedentary” and “nomadic” peoples, tore native society apart. Soustelle’s cabinet proposed that an Algeria with limited productive farmland could not support its large population, a paucity perhaps necessitating a move to the south, “towards the immense expanses of black Africa,” thereby allowing for the social regeneration of both societies.\footnote{For Soustelle’s take on nomadism, see \textit{The Four Suns}, 93-94. On his staff’s view of the need for renewal due to overpopulation, see note of 8 November 1955 (no signature), ALG/GGA/11CAB/2, ANOM.} Reform of African civilizations thus required understanding across geographic, linguistic, racial, and ethnic boundaries. According to Soustelle, Algeria served as the entrance point for this reform. Before his new ideas on colonial rule could spread across Africa, however, the French needed a full and continuous study of areas distant from the urban seats of French power and civilization. In Soustelle’s mind, Algeria (and thus other parts of Africa as well) suffered from “endemic under-administration,” a government that had lost touch with its population.\footnote{Soustelle to Minister of Interior (Bourges-Maunoury), 1720, 12 March 1955, FM/81F/24, ANOM. See also Soustelle, \textit{Aimée et souffrante Algérie}, 26.} An ethnologically informed understanding of the populace from administrators living among them offered the best opportunity for reform and progress.

Soustelle’s depiction of the Algerian revolt, for all of its ethnological depth, still considered the conflict as endemic to the society in question. He did not account for the larger forces of pan-Islamic or pan-Arabic thought, or even the longer-term consequences of succeeding rule by Vichy French, British, American, and finally Free French forces in North Africa. Nationalisms in the area grew not just from economic disparity or
fundamental social conflict; they were the product of the intersection of numerous international forces as well. The failure to account for the full range of influences on Algeria contributed, in the end, to the failure of Soustelle’s ethnological government. At the same time, he and staff never accurately located the source of discontent in the colony as voiced in large part by French-speaking, educated separatists. Soustelle, by focusing his examination on the plight of the peasantry, concluded that Algerians must want French assistance to move into European-style modernity. Therefore, Soustelle and the French instituted larger and more onerous governmental structures that forced Algerians to confront, on a daily basis, the physical manifestation of their political subjugation. They thus proved, at least in part, the point of the nationalist movement: France simply did not understand the enormous complexity of Algerian religion, government, and desire for socio-economic and political equality.

Algerian separatists noted, in particular, that no form of continued political association with France would deliver the equality they sought, as colonialism inherently produced and relied on inequality. Soustelle and his staff missed the important issues raised by an American historian of France more than twenty years before: “What does happen when that superiority is not sufficiently recognized, and what would happen should it disappear through the success of European tutelage?” The historian answered his own query in tones that would later reverberate around the French colonial empire:

95 On this international aspect, see McDougall, History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria; and Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution. For the British impact on the nationalist movement, see Douglas W. Leonard, “‘They do not know how to deal with native unrest’: British intervention and unintended consequences in French North Africa, 1940-1946,” Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History (2012, forthcoming). On international funding support to the FLN in the first years of the war, particularly from the Arab world, see Emmanuelle Colin-Jenvoine and Stéphane Derozier, Le financement du FLN pendant la guerre d’Algérie, 1954-1962, (Saint-Denis, 2008), 54-57, 76.
“The association policy, called by whatever name, rests upon mutual interests, which may be temporary, and upon a fraternité that could hardly outlive them if French domination were still asserted.”96 It was power, not brotherhood that held French Algeria together and tore it apart.

**Reform through ethnological instruments**

By the middle of 1955 the Algerian revolt still seemed limited to small bands operating in remote areas. Soustelle continued his program of reform not out of desperation, but from a deep-seated belief that his ethnological efforts would correct at least a half-century of administrative and scientific neglect. Soustelle limited his view of change to that created by a comprehensive program of close contact with rural Algerians. Understanding the ideas of the peasantry and/or the nomadic groups of the desert edge would yield insight, he thought, into the prospect of renewal for Algerian civilization. This progress, which Soustelle felt should fall under the control of a benevolent French government, would also aid both Algeria and France as they gained a prominent place in the post-war order. To achieve this program of reform Soustelle created educational and administrative organizations in the countryside. When combined with increased cooperation with, and political/economic opportunities for, native Algerian intellectual elites, he expected these programs to deliver a new Algeria that could serve as an economically and socially viable component of France and the world. The actual result

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of his extension of government, however, was a further explosion of revolt and the expansion of the rebellion into the cities.

Colonel Schoen advised Soustelle that comprehensive reform would occur only following recognition of the fundamental misalignment of French and Algerian outlooks. In Schoen’s view, the “schooling” of young Algerians, particularly girls, was of paramount importance. Any legislative action had to occur in a “climate of confidence” between the two sides, framed by “true Muslim policy,” a coherence dreamed of by Marty and Delafosse in West Africa and never fully realized in practice anywhere in the French colonial system.97 The “Plan Soustelle” that emerged from the ethnological examinations of the first four months of Soustelle’s governor-generalship therefore focused on three primary areas: land reform to accelerate industrialization, the instruction of Arabic in schools (alongside French), and citizenship for Muslim Algerians.98 Soustelle did little to realize the first goal, as land reform required the reversal of over a century of policies designed to deliver the best parcels of land to French settlers while collectivizing “nomadic” Arab Algerians in particular. His actual efforts thus focused on the second two pieces of his platform. Believing he had the support of political leaders in the metropole, Soustelle enacted a two-tiered approach to the “integration” of Algeria.


98 Memorandum, Direction d’affaires d’Algérie (Ministry of the Interior), 8 December 1955, FM/81F/24, ANOM. This memorandum, apparently created for internal metropolitan consumption, offers the simplest and most straight-forward description of Soustelle’s broad plans for reform.
into France with what he thought was a full view of ethnological, geographic and historical context.\textsuperscript{99} Science thus informed Soustelle’s rule in Algeria while also, at least in his mind, legitimizing his approach to his metropolitan superiors and to Algerian legislators.

In Soustelle’s new Algeria, language was as a unifying factor for all Algerians regardless of national or ethnic origins. While French instruction would continue in all schools, Soustelle proposed to also offer Arabic in two separate tracks. The “literary” or classical Arabic track focused on “Muslims,” while its counterpart focused on the specific Algerian Arabic dialect and targeted all others, also referred to as “Europeans.” Soustelle’s plan did offer Europeans the opportunity to study classical Arabic if so inclined. The educational administration would then funnel the very best classical students, primarily native Muslims, to the French-controlled madrasas, reinvigorated as centers of higher Islamic learning under colonial tutelage.\textsuperscript{100} As Marty had envisioned, Islam would serve in Soustelle’s government as the educational gateway to African populations. French administrators could make use of its place at the center of local Islamic intellectual life by controlling the curriculum and infusing it with more “modern” ideas. Like his ethnological predecessors, Soustelle cultivated intellectual classes, in this case through their knowledge of classical Arabic, over their rural peers. Never fully realized, the language in Soustelle’s reforms indicated the possibility of mixed Franco-


\textsuperscript{100} “Projet de décision relatif à l’enseignement de la langue arabe en Algérie,” n.d (1955), FM/81F/24, ANOM. See chapters 3 and 4 for more discussion of the evolution of the madrasas in French Africa.
Algerian schools, a state of affairs previously practiced in French primary and secondary schools only with mixed-heritage students and never carried out at “native” schools.

Even an administration that spent significant resources investigating and analyzing the plight of the rural poor searched for the future of native Algerian political governance among the lettered elites to whom it had access. In the process, many of the most important Algerian intellectuals slipped through the cracks, choosing a policy of avoidance or exile rather than engagement with what they saw as a teetering colonial state.\textsuperscript{101} French officials were left with those Algerian politicians willing to converse with them, men like Abbas largely dissociated from the revolt and the body politic.

At the same time language stood as a bridge between the native divisions Soustelle saw as problematic in forging a unitary Algerian identity. The Berbers, many of whom had at least basic Arabic-speaking skills, stood apart from the colonial enterprise that had focused on controlling the Arab population since the early part of the twentieth century. The governor-general envisioned a “bilingual community” [French and Arabic speakers] of Europeans, Berbers and Arabs where the groups could engage in an exchange of the intellectual “treasures” of each “civilization.”\textsuperscript{102} Soustelle expected enhanced linguistic overlap to eliminate at least one source of friction, mutual intelligibility, and deliver a civilizational equilibrium founded on a common ability to communicate. Language acted as a unifying force, bringing together the disparate groups

\textsuperscript{101} Earlier in the twentieth century, reform-minded ‘ulama had tried to work within the colonial structure, only to find little room for negotiation. By the 1950s, they were subsumed by the larger nationalist movement, adding their particular expertise to the new descriptions of Algerian “national” heritage and destiny. See in particular the discussion of Tawfiq al-Madani, who emerged as FLN spokesman-in-exile, in McDougall, \textit{History and the Culture of Nationalism}, chapter 3 and conclusion.

\textsuperscript{102} Soustelle, \textit{Aimée et souffrante Algérie}, 88.
in Algeria in one or two common tongues. The policy, though, forced language education through French-controlled institutions, denying FLN separatists and other reformers one of their primary goals: control over cultural and linguistic expressions of Algerian identity.\(^\text{103}\)

Soustelle further believed that Arabic instruction gave native Algerians an enhanced sense of self-worth. When they saw Arabic employed as what amounted to a second official language, Soustelle thought, natives would finally understand that the colonial state valued their unique social order. Soustelle had no designs on a forced feeding of French language. Instead, he expected French administrators to use the newfound cross-cultural confidence and trust not only to rule more benevolently in “integrating” Muslim Algerians, but also to better understand their social structures and particularly the place of Islam. Language overlap thus offered Soustelle’s government the promise of both enhanced ethnological investigation and social reform.

Most importantly and also most controversially, Soustelle took this emphasis to the reform of political representation. Since the Crémieux decree of 1870, which gave full citizenship rights to Algerian Jews, French administrators had considered options for the slow provision of citizenship to Muslims. However, policy-makers struggled to reconcile the separate world of Islamic jurisprudence, which in their mind threatened the edifice of colonial rule, with European legal norms. Efforts to extend citizenship to Algerians who were willing to renounce the Islamic courts, or at least submit to French law, occurred in 1936, 1944, and 1947 with limited impact. Indeed, French colonists

resisted each attempt by bringing the Algerian Assembly to stalemate. Soustelle entered office with sweeping declarations of his intent to extend the vote to all Algerians regardless of background, an effort that was doomed from the start due to the intransigence of French settlers, the lack of concern among metropolitan politicians with no interest in a plural federal system, and the violent protest by Algerian rebels looking to destroy what remained of French political control.

Bundled with measures designed to increase the educational level of Algerian Muslims (similar to American citizenship and civics classes), Soustelle’s reform package rested on the increased employment of educated elites in the colonial structure. Unlike previous bills rejected for their ambiguity, Soustelle pushed for “social and intellectual levels” as requirements for government service, standards that would presumably be met (although he never provided a full description) at first by those with French language skills and education. Through this new corps of civic-minded Muslims he intended to spread participation to all Algerians over time as the educational system corrected centuries-old deficiencies. Soustelle expected the French to “accelerate the progress” of Algerian society so as to bring citizens of all civilizations to the same level. Such


106 “Avant-projet de loi édictant des mesures destinées à favoriser l’accès à la fonction publique des citoyens français musulmans et leur emploi dans les services semi-publics d’Algérie,”
enhancement required close tutelage, according to Soustelle’s basic ethnological-civilizational model, of Algerian elites working to industrialize and modernize the country. These reforms necessitated an additional apparatus of practical political, administrative, and economic education designed to slowly give way to native Algerian administration as the population integrated fully into the French national state.

Soustelle turned to the colonial past and the examples of Bugeaud and Lyautey in designing a new integrative administrative device. Colonel Schoen took on the leadership of this effort. He and Soustelle collaborated on the creation of the SAS (sections administratives spécialisées), an institution constructed on the example of the bureaux arabes, following the guidance of nineteenth century colonial theorist and politician Albert de Broglie. In 1860, the prominent French statesman had advised French Algerian native affairs personnel “to penetrate...[native] ideas on morality, justice, [and] social progress,” a process important enough to form the “lynchpin of French conquest.” Even after the bureaux slowly dissolved with the advent of civilian administration in Algeria in 1870, the idea persisted among colonists interested in social reform. Schoen quoted the most prominent of these thinkers, Marshal Lyautey, in calling for administrators with “no preconceived notions” about native populations. The colonial state needed military officers, said Schoen and Lyautey, who were “apt at understanding,

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ALG/GGA/11CAB/78, ANOM. The proposal noted that legal equality had existed in name since 20 September 1947 but had never been properly applied due to low levels of economic and social development and problematic wording. See also “Note pour Monsieur Lamassoure,” 22 June 1955 (signature illegible, perhaps V. Monteil), which points to the proposed 1936 Blum-Violette reforms and other bills as too vague to enforce.
feeling, judging, and divining needs” of their small communities.\(^{107}\) Dissent, violence and under-development resulted not from fundamental defects of Islam or Arabic-Berber civilization, Schoen thought, but from a French “break in contact” with the population over the preceding 100 years.

In an effort to correct this gap Soustelle and Schoen turned to the idea of ethnological native affairs officers adopted by Lyautey during his tenure in the Moroccan protectorate. As early as March 1955 Soustelle convinced the French colonial and interior ministries to grant temporary transfer of several of these specially trained officers, who he called “elite elements” of the colonial service, to duty in the Aurès, the seat of revolt. Managed initially by the French army, Soustelle saw the “happy results” of their work, particularly their ability to react to local circumstances.\(^{108}\) The program rapidly expanded by December of 1955 to 196 SAS offices. Soustelle’s “forward antenna of local authority” also included “medico-social” experts to help increase public confidence in the French ability to offer protection from rebel bands, as they were fluent in Arabic and also able to provide medical assistance when needed following FLN assaults.\(^{109}\)

*Officiers des affaires algériennes* (OAA), topical experts with Arabic language skills, commanded SAS offices. Each SAS included an OAA acting as the

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\(^{107}\) Colonel Schoen, “Quelques conseils,” 19 November 1955, in *Pour l’Algérie*, 45-46, ALG/SAS/DOC/1, ANOM. This article also cites Lyautey.


\(^{109}\) Note from Chief of Service of Administrative and Economic Action to Secretary-General of civil cabinet, 21 November 1955, ALG/SAS/DOC/5. This note was intended to provide historical and policy background in preparation for a Soustelle speech to the Algerian assembly in November 1955. See also Jacques Soustelle, *Lettre d’un intellectuel à quelques autres à propos de l’Algérie*, (Algiers, 1955), 11-12.
“representative of central authority” and the “technical advisor of pacification.” He had a staff including a non-commissioned officer or contractor and 4 technical specialists, including secretaries and interpreters. At times the staff increased with French and Algerian women assisting in home medical care and between 30 and 50 native security personnel also known as makhzen.\(^\text{110}\) Women provided an important link to the hidden world of Algeria. Soustelle hoped that the use of SAS women, both French and Algerian, would help the government converse with Algerian groups in their own language, to convince them of the positive aspects of the French colonial state through direct intervention in one of what he saw as the key concerns of the daily life of an Algerian mother and wife: the health of her family. This newly converted corps of loyal French subjects, he thought, would exert influence on their family groups to support the French and reject the pan-Arab, pan-Islamic dogma of the FLN.

To ignite this process of conversion Soustelle expected his SAS offices to exercise “incessant activity” in “taking the population back in hand,” particularly in rural areas “endowed with insufficient instruments of civilization.” Comprising military, financial and administrative aspects, the SAS model sought to reestablish what the governor-general called “national cohesion” to stamp out revolt from the ground up while also providing detailed ethnological examination.\(^\text{111}\) In the words of Colonel Schoen, “true pacification is becoming that of hearts and minds.” Winning over the local

\(^{110}\) Pamphlet entitled “Français et Françaises de bonne volonté! L’Algérie a besoin de vous,” (Paris, 1957), ALG/SAS/DOC/1, ANOM.

populace required a “permanent investigation” by an OAA officer operating as “topographer, geographer, ethnographer, agricultural engineer...and psychologist.” The officers, educated on topics ranging from Arabic and Berber to Islamic jurisprudence, would produce a “monograph” on each sector intended to document their efforts and provide a strong baseline for future students of the area. Above all, Schoen and Soustelle cautioned their field officers to avoid the power struggles and resistance to central government authority that doomed the bureaux arabes; they could not afford an emotional, involved “arabophilia,” but had to remain both aloof and objective. While Soustelle recognized that the on-the-ground approach could cause a native backlash, generating complaints of paternalism, he stayed true to his model of civilizational development, calling for a measured approach that was “progressive” and “in good faith.”

In his mind, the Algerian revolt stood no chance as long as the French gave proper attention to native concerns exposed by scientific examination and administration.

Soustelle’s reforms that stimulated “contact” and development were perhaps the most durable of his short tenure as Governor-General. “Implanted in the furthest reaches of the bled [Algerian near-desert], in the mountains or on the steppes,” Soustelle told the Algerian assembly, SAS offices “devoted themselves body and soul to a noble task,” an

112 Italics in original. On this educational program see “Programme du stage d’orientation des officiers des affaires algériennes et des administrateurs des services civils contractuels, stage du 5 au 24 décembre 1955,” ALG/SAS/DOC/3, ANOM. Most of the specific presentations for that course no longer exist in the French archives, but similar courses from 1956 remain in printed form, including most notably Captain Jacques Carret’s “Introduction à l’étude du maraboutisme et des confréries religieuses en Algérie,” 23 January 1956; and M. Letourneau’s “Le passé de l’Afrique du Nord dans ses rapports avec le présent,” 16 April 1956, which includes significant discussion of the temporal component of Berber and Arab-Bedouin civilizations as roughly equivalent to middle-ages Europe. For an analogous Russian effort to subsume Islam, see Robert D. Crews, For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia, (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

effort that expanded into the cities after Soustelle’s departure in early 1956. These offices, however, did not directly address the basic educational gap that Soustelle and his staff saw keeping the vast majority of native Algerians ignorant of and apart from the political franchise. In recognition of this educational gap, Tillion suggested that Soustelle create *centres sociaux* to provide supplementary education for native Algerians not able to access established schools. At the same time she proposed these centers as tools to reduce rural poverty through specialized education in advanced agrarian techniques. Educational access, Tillion believed, gave rural natives at least an opportunity to escape cycles of poverty, malnourishment, and ignorance by giving them the intellectual tools to pursue better economic opportunities in the cities or even in France itself.

Tillion recommended all the social centers operate under the direction of an experienced administrator, a man or woman with at least three years of colonial experience. Not only central locations for ethnological and sociological study, Tillion also expected the centers to act as meeting places for native French and Arabic speakers alike. Consequently, the social centers offered a remedial French language sequence to accompany Soustelle’s proposed Arabic language program for European colonists. Known as “français parlé,” the curriculum presented elementary-level education to adolescents between 14 and 19 years of age five times a week over five months. Strictly

114 Soustelle to Algerian assembly, 3rd session, 29 November 1955, FM/81F/641, ANOM; Desbordes, “Jacques Soustelle,” 383. Robert Lacoste, Soustelle’s successor, created the *sections administratives urbaines* (SAU) in 1956 to find the sources of revolt in the cities, particularly Algiers.


limited to young males with prospective employment,\textsuperscript{117} pre-professional language instruction worked hand-in-hand with the efforts of Soustelle and Tillion to create a class of French-literate elites able to take over the political and economic stewardship of Algeria. The centers produced bulletins with discussion on social topics from both French and Arab-speaking authors printed in both languages.\textsuperscript{118} Soustelle and Tillion saw this as a place for intellectual exchange between civilizations, where even those with limited formal education could engage in textual conversation regarding the proper direction for Algerian governance.

Soustelle charged the centers to support “all initiatives with the potential to improve the economic, social, and cultural progress of the population.”\textsuperscript{119} The governor-general and his ethnological aide envisioned them as sites of educational remediation and economic advancement. Tillion saw industrial and economic underdevelopment as the root cause of conflict and unrest in Algeria, creating a base inequality stemming from over a century of colonial excess and repression.\textsuperscript{120} Soustelle described the centers in similar terms to the Algerian assembly in November 1955: “These centers constitute polyvalent organisms designed to ensure the accelerated development of under-developed collectivities towards material and moral well-being. Veritable cultural missions, they associate, at the personal level, the means and methods of education, health, professional

\textsuperscript{117} Pamphlet “Français Parlé,” Service des centres sociaux d’Alger, ALG/SAS/DOC/4, ANOM.

\textsuperscript{118} Forget, “Le service des centres sociaux,” 41-42 fn 23.

\textsuperscript{119} Arrête, 27 October 1955, \textit{Journal Officiel de l’Algérie}, 4 November 1955, FM/81F/24, ANOM; “L’action des SAS dans les domaines social, économique et culturel,” ALG/SAS/DOC/3, ANOM. Although the brains behind the concept, Tillion did not direct the centres sociaux; that responsibility fell to Charles Agyesse.

\textsuperscript{120} See Tillion, \textit{Algeria: The Realities, passim}, for more discussion of this underdevelopment.
training and agricultural modernization.” Moral development in this case implied a leveling of the educational opportunities across gender and age lines. Soustelle and Tillion had thus undertaken a comprehensive effort at social reform and re-engineering that they hoped to ultimately achieve through the assistance of native elites. These reforms, however, relied on projected capabilities. Promises of future access to careers still based on French language capability did not appeal to FLN supporters who desired immediate access to the socio-economic opportunities enjoyed by the citizens of France and the rest of the international community.

Viewed by French Africanist scholars and soldiers as a hindrance to change since at least the time of Lyautey, the perceived subordination of Islamic women took center stage in the creation of Tillion’s new curriculum that aimed at a “basic education” for all Algerians regardless of gender or status. As noted above, Soustelle envisioned these classes first as the means by which to develop a populace with the basic skills necessary to create an industrial economy. As rural Arabs and Berbers succeeded in educating themselves over time, Soustelle reasoned, the French Algerian administration would update the curriculum to include more sophisticated Western secondary-style educational concepts. By spreading education to all people the ethnologists hoped both to raise the standard of living and increase political participation. Only through the adoption of these Western standards, they thought, could Algerians hope to advance along their

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121 Soustelle speech to Algerian assembly, 29 November 1955, FM/81F/641, ANOM.

122 Harbi comments that “elite nationalists” took inspiration in this sense not only from Islamic culture and Arabic language, but also from “rational scientific philosophy expressed in French,” L’Algérie et son destin, quoted in Remaoun, “La politique coloniale française,” 275.

civilizational continuum. These precepts, conceived in the hope of advancing Algerian civilization, ultimately fell victim to the same problems as the analyses of Marty, Delafosse, and Mauss. Soustelle and his staff developed their reforms in light of ethnological conclusions developed in the early twentieth century. In doing so, they missed the enormous changes in the Algerian context, and in Africa at large. By the 1940s and 1950s, African political actors had appropriated colonial language to press for their rights and ultimate independence. Soustelle’s reforms thus aimed to solve problems that had mutated into new forms. Reforms had little chance of success when opposed to compelling calls for the recovery of “national dignity” and a new “psycho-political union of all Algerians” from the FLN. Even moderate Algerian politicians by this time were forced to base their positions on a rejection of the French colonial presence if they hoped to maintain power.124

Founded on the ethnological principles of native dialogue advocated by Faidherbe, Lyautey, Delafosse, Marty, and others, Soustelle’s plan of grassroots social investigation and activism promised reform from the ground-up. Regrettably for Soustelle and French administration in Algeria, these efforts failed as the colony spiraled into an ever-deepening cycle of violence and repression. His ethnological efforts, mired in a fundamental misreading of the sources of revolt and the ideological background of the FLN rebels, failed to assuage native social and political unrest or to address the larger nationalist, pan-Arab, and pan-Islamic sentiment moving through the region. The efforts

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124 Front de libération nationale, “Plateforme, I, A, a” in La révolution algérienne par les textes, 1961; Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution, 95. See Ageron, De l’Algérie française, 449, for the example of moderate Algerian politician Dr. Bensalem, who was forced in early 1955 to accede the necessity of an exclusively “Algerian citizenship.” See Cooper, Colonialism in Question, 204-205, 230 for this point in a larger colonial milieu.
of Tillion and Soustelle excluded important Arabic-speaking Islamic intellectuals with little knowledge of French language or requirements of citizenship and no real incentive to engage the social centers or the SAS. Soustelle’s reforms ultimately had little impact, as continued violence by both French and FLN forces short-circuited changes. Young, disaffected Algerian intellectuals, attuned to international events, rejected any French government that restricted their voice in both the emerging Algerian nation and beyond. Soustelle’s inability to comprehend this sentiment as at the root of unrest doomed his efforts to institute a cooperative Franco-Algerian government.

The failure of reform and the crash of ethnology

Soustelle saw progressive social policy as vital to Algeria’s future, “the difference between life and death.” He felt that only the work of dedicated scientists and policymakers such as Tillion could save Algeria from economic stagnation and ultimately social disintegration. ¹²⁵ Beyond the resistance of FLN separatists, he found his efforts blocked at every turn by the ultra right-wing French colonists or the intransigence of Parisian politicians he had counted as supporters. ¹²⁶ Revolutionary cadres posed the greatest danger to ethnologists in the field and also presented an enormous obstacle to Soustelle’s programs. Although unknown to Soustelle at the time, the FLN, as the sole remaining revolutionary inheritor of earlier Algerian nationalist groups, represented the


closest to a consolidated voice announcing the real causes of unrest among the native Algerian population.

Far from a passive opponent, the FLN and its military wing, the armée de libération nationale (ALN), focused on the SAS offices as their principal foes. For all of its limitations, Soustelle’s ethnological approach threatened the FLN goal of intellectually and emotionally capturing the population so as to “transform the popular torrent into creative energy.” Recognizing elements of Maoist warfare that also constituted a core part of their own doctrine, FLN cadres sought to stop the “politico-administrative gymnastics” of SAS staffs. Although the OAA officers were still “novices,” FLN leadership feared their ability to “acquire the people politically” if not stopped by deliberate methods of psychological warfare such as intimidation, carefully targeted violence and propaganda. French government offices in close contact with local populations threatened the FLN power base in the countryside. Revolutionary leaders thus looked to stop French methods of information collection that they perceived as another instrument of the oppressive colonial regime and a counter to the growing influence of revolutionary cadres. The revolutionaries saw a “permanent danger” in


128 FLN/ALN Wilaya d’Oran (5), Service de renseignements et de liaisons, “Le SAS: Leur politique, rôle et méthodes,” 1, (Algiers?, 1958), 6-7, 15-18, ALG/SAS/DOC/5, ANOM. This document was written in French and perhaps intended for the French-educated elites of the cities. Many FLN/ALN manifestos of the period appeared first in French and only later in Arabic, owing in part to the elite origins of several of the founding members of the nationalist movements in the area. On Maoist warfare see Mao Tse-tung, Selected Military Writings, (Peking, 1963) or On Protracted War, (Honolulu, 2001 [1938]). Insurgency has become a massive field of academic study in the forty years since the conclusion of the Vietnam War. The best current survey of the history of non-state warfare is Ian Beckett, Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750, (New York, 2001).
ethnological and administrative networks of native Algerian soldiers and their families.

To the FLN, the actions of the SAS constituted open warfare.

While committed to violent attacks on French sympathizers and government officials, the FLN recognized the value of the SAS “hearts and minds” approach. The group sought to counter the reliance, in their eyes present as a deliberate policy since Lyautey, on doctors as “agents of pacification” by “conquering ignorance and misery.” They instructed ALN fighters to destroy public confidence in French medicine by sabotaging their efforts as FLN-affiliated elites simultaneously offered effective medical and financial assistance to rural populations. Revolutionary leaders further directed their cadres to destroy French informational networks by attacking French-allied native Algerian military forces and offering an alternative educational system run by and for nationalist cadres working purely in Arabic. French efforts at scientific examination and administration thus found significant roadblocks as the FLN at times menaced programs such as the ethnological work of Pierre Bourdieu and his team in eastern Algeria.

The ethnological makeup of his cabinet placed Soustelle in a unique position to negotiate and converse with these rebel leaders in hopes of stemming the tide of rebellion. Tillion, Monteil, and Juillet had built large networks of connections during their years of ethnographic fieldwork. They turned this expertise and supposed credibility with the native population they believed came from such close study into a

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130 See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, “Algerian Landing,” trans. Loic Wacquant, Ethnography 5, 4 (2005), 415-443; “Entre amis,” Awal 21 (2000), 5-10; and chapter 7 of this study for further detail.
means to both understand the causes of revolt and mediate or reduce further acts of violence. Soustelle’s view of the FLN as terrorists, however, limited their reach. Only after his reign, in 1957, was Tillion able to gain an audience with Saadi Yacef, FLN chief for Algiers, to try and limit the violence then occurring in Algiers.\textsuperscript{131}

For his part, Soustelle met with the moderate Ferhat Abbas several times beginning on 2 April 1955 to work on a solution to the violence. Abbas found Soustelle “a great man...[who] did not lack good intentions.” However, the turmoil of revolutionary Algeria needed more than that; even in Abbas’ mind, the time for reform had passed. The Algerian politician felt that Soustelle “arrived a half-century too late” to a world where the “immobility” of French politics doomed any negotiated peace. Arab-Muslim leaders, recalled Abbas, agreed with Monteil and Juillet who “registered with anguish this immobility that justified, if such a thing was still necessary, the revolt of the oppressed.”\textsuperscript{132} Monteil couched his resignation of June 1955 as based on policy incoherence: “I persist in not believing in the possibility of attempting both repression and ‘reforms.’ One must choose.”\textsuperscript{133} French Algerian governments had used torture and other extreme measures since 1954, a fact that certainly influenced both Monteil’s

\textsuperscript{131} Forget and Wood, “Notice biographique,” 24-25. For a compelling account of this encounter, which Yacef claimed he instigated to argue against the use of torture, see Germaine Tillion, Les ennemis complémentaires, (Paris, 1960), 40-51; and Saadi Yacef, Souvenirs de la bataille d’Alger, (Paris, 1962).

\textsuperscript{132} Abbas, Autopsie d’une guerre, 74-75.

\textsuperscript{133} Reproduced in Desbordes, “Jacques Soustelle,” 490. Monteil also reportedly said in 1955 that oppressive French tactics were founded on race and brought a “war unaccountable and merciless,” with the tacit acceptance of torture hastening his resignation; Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution, 87.
decision and the continued intransigence of some separatist leaders.\footnote{Murphrey, “Jacques Soustelle,” 115. François Mitterrand ordered Roger Wuillaume to examine the use of torture in Algeria prior to Soustelle’s appointment in early 1955. In a report delivered to Soustelle in March of that year, Wuillaume recommended “raising the veil of hypocrisy” that hid torture in police operations by approving the use of such measures in exigent circumstances by specially trained paratroop regiments. “Le rapport de M. Roger Wuillaume, Inspecteur General de l’Administration, 2 Mars 1955,” in \textit{La Raison d’état: Textes publiés par le comité Maurice Audin}, ed. Pierre Vidal-Nacquet, (Paris, 1962), 55, 57, 68. The secondary literature on French torture in Algeria is growing as of this writing. For a general overview of the international implications see Connelly, \textit{A Diplomatic Revolution}. A detailed recent study of the French practice of torture in Algeria is Raphaëlle Branche, \textit{La torture et l’armée pendant la guerre d’Algérie}, (Paris, 2001).} Soustelle’s failure to rein in these brutal measures contributed to the disenchantment of his staff and emboldened his enemies who could turn such measures against the French in psychological warfare.

The resignation of Monteil and Juillet in the summer of 1955 offered FLN leaders, in Abbas’ words, “new proof of the impotence of France.”\footnote{Abbas, \textit{Autopsie d’une guerre}, 109, 111-112.} With the loss of this “left wing” of Soustelle’s cabinet, even Algerian moderates had to conclude that any possibility of true reform was gone; the right-wing elements of French colonial politics had ultimately won the day. Buoyed by increased support from disenchanted Algerian politicians, the FLN on 20 August 1955 launched a renewed wave of violence in the countryside. A failure in terms of dead and captured, the FLN could nonetheless claim victory in the “war of subversion,” as they had created a deep trench between Europeans and native Algerians that would soon fill with “a river of blood,” as Soustelle eloquently put it.\footnote{Soustelle, \textit{Aimée et souffrante Algérie}, 125.} In the face of such violence the governor-general remained an idealist. He stayed true to his dual course of examination and social reform, pushing for a political solution through the full incorporation of a unitary Algeria into the French state. By this
time, however, discontent with the conduct of the war among French metropolitan elites had made such a goal politically untenable for Fourth Republic governments already on shaky ground. Soustelle did little to aid the French government, as his regime contributed to a long legacy of intrusive, directive French colonial policy in Algeria that did not account for the changing views of well-educated elites unwilling to accept a future of limited political rights. He never criticized the basic structure of colonialism, even going so far as to respond directly to French metropolitan intellectuals who did challenge the power inequities and exploitation implied by French rule in Algeria.

Continued violence in Algeria sparked protests in metropolitan France, particularly among intellectuals such as Raymond Aron, Jean-Paul Sartre, and other left-wing radicals. Their manifesto of 26 November 1955, which denounced the French colonial project in Algeria as misguided and oppressive, sparked a war of words between Soustelle and the Parisian intellectual class from which he had emerged. He responded by attacking their knowledge of the situation; in his mind and according to his Maussian training, only an official with sufficient ethnological expertise could accurately comment on the political state of affairs. “I feel myself closer to an Arab or Berber Algerian than certain sniggering metropolitans,” remarked Soustelle; the French absolutely had to remain in an Algeria mired “in a state of evolution that cannot be checked and cannot be reversed.”137 Soustelle conversely proposed that Algerians needed a progressive “integration” into the French state, a “clear and generous doctrine, based on scientific knowledge” of the populace that considered the “geographical, sociological and ethnic

realities.”

Algeria’s development had halted in the sixteenth century, he thought, interrupted by the chaos of Ottoman domination and the rise of pirate federations. Soustelle felt that the colonial state, far from an oppressor, could lift the Algerians from this low level and bring them into France, thereby accelerating their development and reintroducing them into the modern world.

As an ethnologist, Soustelle expected support from non-European Algerians in pushing for political integration. In his mind, the detailed scientific examinations of his staff set the stage for a properly tailored progression into the French state. He continued talks with Algerian leaders in the administration and expanded socio-economic investigations in the countryside. These discussions came to naught, however, as the young nationalist leaders rejected Soustelle’s proposed reliance on religious leaders in moving the state forward. While respectful of their elders, native nationalists called for greater roles for the young, well-educated secular elite and an incorporation of religious messages into a coherent, Algerian national identity. By the end of September 1955, even the Muslim councils, composed largely of moderates, had rejected Soustelle’s appeals for integration in favor of an as-yet ill-defined national model, one that fully dismissed any further role for France in Algeria’s future.

In a twist replicated across the colonial world over the next twenty years, the people groomed by Soustelle to ease

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139 Soustelle, *Lettre ouverte aux victimes*, 46; Address to United Nations, 6 February 1957, FM/81F/24, ANOM.

the transition into a new form of Franco-Algerian statehood discarded the model, instead opting for a future of national self-determination without French interference. With the failure of integration among both metropolitan intellectuals and native groups, Soustelle’s tenure in Algeria came to a close in early 1956.

Conclusion

As the Fourth Republic teetered on the brink of collapse due in large part to the unpopularity of the Algerian war in France, Soustelle’s position became untenable. He was recalled in January 1956, ironically now fêted by the settler community initially hostile to his appointment. Viewed as the sole voice for a continued algérie française by the French Algerian right-wing, his departure drew massive crowds (composed primarily of French settlers with very few native Algerians) to the docks to wish him well and call for his return as the only man still willing to keep Algeria French. He gave a final statement to the crowd, further stoking their hope for a reversal of fortune: “If you want me to continue to defend French Algeria then let me leave.”\(^{141}\) Now simply a member of the national assembly from Lyon, Soustelle kept his promise, returning to Algeria with de Gaulle in triumph in 1958 as the latter announced his return to politics and a continued algérie française in the new Fifth Republic.\(^{142}\) However, Soustelle’s renewed popularity


\(^{142}\) Soustelle, \textit{Vingt-huit ans de Gaullisme}, 145-147; Soustelle, \textit{Aimée et souffrante Algérie}, 192.
in Gaullist circles dissipated with the revolt of military officers in Algeria and his reported complicity in the attempted putsch of 1961, a charge he denied until his death.\footnote{Soustelle, La page n’est pas tournée, 76-77; Murphrey, “Jacques Soustelle,” 253.}

Soustelle’s 1967 memoir, The Four Suns, written while in exile from Gaullist France, focused on his 1930s fieldwork, a period that remained central to his ethnological and political ideas. In these recollections Soustelle burnished his self-image as an altruistic crusader for social justice, adopting the language of the protest movement that would explode in the 1968 student revolt. Soustelle described his sadness not as due to the disappearance of study subjects, but as the result of the destructive effects of modernity, thereby anachronistically depicting himself as a 1930s intellectual with a concern born of the 1960s. Soustelle recalled his commitment to a program of localized expertise; in his opinion, vast synthetic treatments of global civilizations lacked the depth afforded by experience and a contextualized consideration of the origins of native social structures.\footnote{Soustelle, The Four Suns, 14-16, 46.} In this view Soustelle went beyond the conclusions of Mauss, who felt that sociology could discern universal facts from these specific investigations. For Soustelle, ethnology was a political end in itself, not a means to sociological truth.

Describing himself as “exiled and alone, spectator to a bloody drama that is destroying my country,” Soustelle continued to press for Algerian integration until that country’s independence in 1962.\footnote{Jacques Soustelle, L’espérance trahie (1958-1961), (Paris, 1962), 11.} Finally pardoned for his alleged role in the 1961 military revolt after de Gaulle’s retirement in 1968, Soustelle went back to academic ethnology at EPHE and the MH, accompanying students on field work in Mexico and
creating an anthropological center in Lyon. Elected to the Académie française on 2 June 1983, Soustelle died of cancer on 7 August 1990 at home in France.\textsuperscript{146} His efforts to rein in Algerian political violence via a careful study of social life had failed.

Soustelle’s administration ultimately represented the political culmination of over a century of ethnological efforts to build a strong link between native and French understandings of the very nature of difference in the colonies. The failure of his efforts revealed the weakness of science as policy; despite efforts to train his administrators to study the populace and consider their views, the project remained at its base paternalistic, developmental, and ignorant of the background and content of the separatist national movement. In retrospect, Soustelle gave some credit to the international forces that fueled the Algerian revolt, although he depicted them largely as an elaborate conspiracy led by the pan-Arab forces of Egyptian Gamel Abdel Nasser.\textsuperscript{147} His brand of ethnology, especially when based on concepts and techniques devised for West Africa in the first decades of the twentieth century, did not account for the relatively small but quite active group of disenchanted young Algerian intellectuals. These individuals had identities that simply did not fit with the French ethnological approach. They coded themselves not purely as Muslims, Kabyles, or Arabs, but as a combination of all of those things in an environment of national self-determination. Soustelle’s version of colonial ethnology, anchored in the West African findings of Marty and Delafosse, required Algerians to aspire to a European version of modernity that was no longer possible in light of the


changes of the post-war world. No amount of sympathetic science could overcome a basic disrespect for the right to self-government.

From the cataclysm of the Algerian war emerged a new generation of social scientists repulsed by the excesses of colonial domination. Valuing a dialogue with native groups, these new thinkers dismissed political concerns and focused on the theoretical possibilities of science outside the metropole. Pierre Bourdieu, a young conscript working briefly in Soustelle’s military cabinet and continuing on under Robert Lacoste, conducted ethnological and sociological studies of Algerian civilization in hopes of uncovering basic truths of social construction. Battling the powerful structural convention of Claude Lévi-Strauss then in vogue in French metropolitan theoretical circles, Bourdieu found in Soustelle’s Algeria the optimum place for cross-cultural study oriented around the notion of individual contingency and variance. Ultimately, he worked under the model first given to Soustelle by Marcel Mauss: ―He drew away, and drew us away as well, from the temptation to schematize that is built into the science of man.‖

Bourdieu’s way ahead lay in an understanding of the importance of local influences on a person’s social perception. Structure, he proposed, varied with the individual.

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Chapter 7: ‘La sociologie est un sport de combat’: Pierre Bourdieu and the Inheritance of French African Ethnology

As a war-time ethnologist in Algeria, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) worked with “extreme sadness and anxiety,” risking personal safety in an effort to study Algerian society in hope of aiding its escape from the trap of Western colonial domination.¹ He practiced an engaged ethnological sociology concerned with the plight of its subjects and approaching scientific study as a “martial art...to be used in self defense.”² The preeminent French social critic and intellectual after the death of Michel Foucault in the 1980s, Bourdieu exposed and combated social inequality in an increasingly multicultural environment profoundly shaped by the interrelated cataclysms of revolution, decolonization, and mass immigration. Working initially from a powerful empirical base developed in close cooperation with non-French residents of Algeria, Bourdieu offered an alternative to what he saw as the unimaginative structural approach that dominated French social science beginning in the 1950s. The young scholar reintroduced to social understanding and interaction the importance of context, local conditions, and individual variation by seeking no less than “a sort of Copernican revolution” through an active investigation of a society from its “interior.” Bourdieu’s approach encouraged social scientists to understand human collectivities “according to their own logic, norms and


² From radio interview in La sociologie est un sport de combat, VHS, directed by Pierre Carles, (New York, 2001). With respect to his time in Algeria, Bourdieu always called his practice “ethnology” rather than “anthropology,” a term which he reserved for Claude Lévi-Strauss. However, he also applied elements of Maussian sociology, which leads me to the term “ethnological sociology.”
values," an idea derived in this French colonial tradition from Louis Faidherbe’s initial intervention in Senegal and passed down through the ethnology of Maurice Delafosse and the sociology of Marcel Mauss, who Bourdieu frequently cited as among his most important influences.4

Working first in an Algeria ruled by Jacques Soustelle and employing investigative techniques advocated by Mauss, Bourdieu inherited a long French colonial tradition of African ethnological examination that saw conceptions of time as important markers of “civilization.” Bourdieu, an ethnological autodidact, employed Africanist techniques as interpreted by Mauss, applying them first in an Algeria ruled by Jacques Soustelle, a Mauss student. He thus engaged with the progressive Africanist developmental paradigm, whereby a civilization’s position along a chronological, developmental axis influenced the way its participating members perceived truth, history, and the future. Understanding and describing a society’s history enabled French colonial ethnologists to discern the greatest heights of a particular social group, thereby permitting a resumption of development from a past moment fraught with potential. Bourdieu also valued the study of history, but as a means to encourage Kabyles to encounter European modernity head-on, not as tacit acknowledgement of the power of France to aid in Algerian advancement along a Eurocentric sequence of development.


4 Perhaps the most important single scholarly contribution by Mauss to Bourdieu’s ethnological theories came in his “Les techniques du corps,” [1936] in Marcel Mauss, Sociologie et anthropologie, 4th ed., (Paris, 1968 [1950]), 365-386, where Mauss used the term “habitus” to describe unconsciously inherited and understood patterns of physical movement. See below for more direct discussion by Bourdieu of Mauss’ influence on his ideas and career.
Bourdieu adapted the French civilizational model by viewing time as relative, not an absolute in an externally imposed system comparing Africans or Asians to a presumed European standard. From that point he reimagined the entire process of social formation. This chapter considers Bourdieu’s publications that grew from his Algerian experience of 1955-1961, including some of his writing into the 1970s, as the intellectual culmination of the ethnological networks discussed in the preceding chapters of this study. Basing his conclusions on data collected during that relatively short period of time, Bourdieu returned the individual to discussions of social form and function while pressing for important dialogues between subjects and their foreign observers. From this position he reconceptualized the collection and analysis of ethnological data and looked, with a weary and pessimistic eye, to the futures of Algeria and France. His Algerian experiences shaped his view of the world. The apparent hopelessness of a people crushed under the power of “modernity” and the onslaught of a market economy led him to theorize a basic disconnect between subjective and objective social structures.\(^5\) Bourdieu thus upended the developmental concepts advanced by the French colonial ethnologists before him. More than an advocate for change according to a Western rubric, Bourdieu pushed Algerian Kabyles in particular to reappropriate their own identities, in the process escaping the time capsule in which colonialism had locked them.

In Bourdieu’s experience, Algerian peasants took a different view of the horizon of experience and possibility than Europeans. “Different criteria of truthfulness are applied in the case of an event occurring within familiar space and in the case of a happening in the land of legends beginning at the very border of the directly experienced world,” he wrote in 1963. People, he thought, existed in multiple frames of reference simultaneously. The way in which they reconciled the differences between their everyday experiences and abstract beliefs revealed much about the forces that shaped social interaction. Kabyle “criteria of truthfulness” varied by individual circumstance. This realization permitted Bourdieu to challenge the structural conclusions of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) by advocating a relativist approach to social experience anchored in personal history and the concept of the habitus, the accumulated influences on a person that formed the limits of his or her social experience and position. A detailed examination of Bourdieu’s early writings, anchored in early Algerian empirical data gathered at first during military service, reveals his descent from the Delafosse-Mauss line of ethnological thought. He took an overtly anti-colonial stance while extolling the importance of interested intellectuals in the interpretation of their own societal norms. However, it was not his colonially tainted ethnographic explorations that set him apart from his peers. Rather, he formulated sophisticated models for understanding social interactions from empirical information gathered in Algeria. These new models enabled him to engage in a textual battle with structuralism, a struggle in which he held to the basic concept of the intellectual ethnological tradition he inherited, that the field was vital.

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to social analysis. In his mind, scientific examination had to occur in conversation with people embedded in the subject society.

Never comfortable in rural peasant or metropolitan academic circles, Bourdieu, like so many others engaged in African ethnology, stood astride multiple worlds. Caught between the urban and the rural, the intellectual and the self-taught, and the modern and the traditional, Bourdieu devoted his life to challenging scholarly conventions. He sought out colonial research subjects who lived on the edges of society, people to whom he could relate in a new spirit of sociology, one informed by and engaged with the lives of both subject and analyst. Societal change came not from the top-down or the bottom-up but from the margins in his mind, making those people resident on the outskirts of “proper” society prime subjects for ethnological investigation.

As other French ethnologists had suggested, Bourdieu found that migration and the movement of peoples over time altered modes of social interaction. Newcomers, heavily influenced by “the urban milieu and above all by their knowledge of the modern world and ‘civilization’” irrevocably modified the urban-rural interaction and Algerian society as a whole. However, these new arrivals, for all their power as agents of change, did not immediately fit in with the existing socio-economic order, particularly that imposed by colonial rule. Many of them, Bourdieu posited, positioned themselves as intellectuals on the edges of “traditional” rural life, in the process becoming “organic”

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thinkers who renounced colonial allegiance through open conflict. In this rupture Bourdieu saw opportunity for sociological study; much like Jacques Soustelle, the governor-general at the time of Bourdieu’s arrival in Algeria in 1955, the young soldier and scholar sought to find the origins of unrest through an empirical unraveling of social structure.

While he regarded sociology as “the social science par excellence,” Bourdieu nevertheless advocated a blend of abstract theorization with the more concrete information offered by ethnology, history, and economics in order to gain a more complete appreciation of life in the society under examination. For example, Bourdieu’s employment of the root metaphor in describing native Kabyle society drew from conservative Algerian nationalist discourse and emphasized the “human condition” over “human nature.” In other words, non-French Algerians, by their daily examples and their descriptions of social position, provided an important portrait of their reality. Each man or woman played a role in determining the course of his or her life, within the bounds created by past experiences and influences, he thought. Bourdieu incorporated long-running Algerian conversations on the complicated relationship between past and present, group and individual.

9 Pierre Bourdieu, “Révolution dans la révolution,” Esprit Nouvelle série, 29, 1 (January 1961), 32. Use of the term “organic” shows, even at this early date, the impact of Marxist/communist theory on Bourdieu. For more detailed analysis of Gramscian “organic” African intellectuals see, for example, Steven Feierman, Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania, (Madison, 1990); and Derek Peterson, Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya, (Portsmouth, NH, 2004).


In his reckoning, Kabyles stood mired in a past state, employing the tree root as a symbol signifying the importance of “tradition” and the maintenance of the social status quo at the expense of the dynamism introduced by external contact. The Berber Kabyles, he thought, served as an example of a group that lived close to a “natural” state, largely shielded from the influence of Western modernity. He was torn by this realization. In his mind, the Kabyles had to enter modernity at some point to maintain their population in an industrial world. At the same time, he lamented the destructive effect that modernity would have on a society that had developed along its own lines. In order to understand this complex transition he focused his study on the individuals who made up the larger group. While individuals could not change the influences, or habitus, that both flexibly and unconsciously shaped their behavior in response to constantly changing circumstances, Bourdieu proposed that they were quite capable of observing, cataloguing, and reforming the actions of society at large. The young scholar thus built on the theories of his ethnological predecessors; the rural, while unsophisticated, acted as a source of renewal for those in urban settings who had fallen into decay and disrepute. In Bourdieu’s opinion, people determined the form of their societies and their respective trajectories.

Bourdieu himself could not escape the French philosophical tradition he entered; in the end, he could only formulate new contributions to that tradition. While studying philosophy in school he encountered an intellectual tradition in transition. Following the First World War, French philosophers discovered the work, in particular, of prominent German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). As Michel Foucault has
described, French thinkers who adapted Husserl’s ideas broke into two distinct interpretations. The first, known as the “philosophy of the subject,” found its strongest proponent in Jean-Paul Sartre. The explosion of existentialism after the Second World War as the most important Western European philosophy grew in part from its message of freedom, a discussion that appealed to European populations recently released from Nazi occupation.12

However, the French adoption of German phenomenology did not stop there. Foucault noted that another branch, often forgotten, also grew from the German tradition. Advanced most importantly by Georges Canguilhem, the “formalist” or “philosophy of knowledge” interpretation advocated a more theoretical and rational approach to the study of man, one based at least in part in the idea of the “universal deployment of reason” attributed to the Comtean positivist tradition, a powerful influence in its own right on French ethnology. In essence, Canguilhem explored the epistemology of Western understandings of truth-making. Truth, for Canguilhem and also later for Bourdieu, did not result purely from experience. In fact, the belief in a true/false dichotomy stemmed from what Canguilhem called “error.” In Canguilhem’s mind, existentialists committed a grave mistake in believing they could actually develop absolute “truth,” a concept that was in his mind unattainable if considered from a

12 Michel Foucault, “La vie: L’expérience et la science,” Revue de métaphysique et de morale 90, 1 (January-March 1985), 4. Foucault points in particular to Husserl’s Cartesianische Meditationem und pariser Vorträge, which appeared in France as Méditations cartésiennes in 1929, as the key text that led French philosophers to adopt a more phenomenological tone. On the importance of the post-war moment to existentialism, see David Drake, Sartre, (London, 2005), 64. See also Alan D. Schrift, Twentieth Century French Philosophy: Key Themes and Thinkers, (Oxford, 2006), 20.
rationalist point of view.\textsuperscript{13} Bourdieu, in an article with Jean-Claude Passeron, discussed the effect of this belief in truth on science: “Because empirical sociology in France was founded on the illusion of a first beginning and, by the same token, on ignorance of the epistemological problems posed by any scientific practice, as well as on a deliberate or unwitting disregard of the theoretical past of European science, it could not but succumb to positivist temptations.”\textsuperscript{14} Canguilhem’s influence found its way to the very heart of Bourdieu’s approach to science. For both Bourdieu and his mentor, French social science had long failed to consider the ways in which it generated knowledge. Absolute truth was an expectation only for those who failed to see the error inherent in all human observation and analysis.

As a Sorbonne professor, Canguilhem found himself in much better position than the public intellectual Sartre, for example, to develop like-minded intellectuals to take up his theoretical charge. Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists eventually followed Canguilhem’s example, striking at an existential strawman that they saw as too focused on human experience and the variance introduced by individuals. Instead, they perceived the world through structure, concepts that shaped social interaction but that existed above and below the perceived and experienced surface of the world. Human actors, in the daily performance of their social existence, could not discern these structures, according to Lévi-Strauss and his colleagues. From this abstract perspective, Lévi-Strauss and his peers developed sophisticated models of the function of societal elements that remained

\textsuperscript{13} Foucault, “La vie,” 6, 14.

fixed across time and space, often expressed in human experience as myths or legends. Fieldwork thus remained important in gathering these discernible expressions, but only insofar as the information gained aided the analyst in the divination of a theoretical model.\textsuperscript{15}

Bourdieu’s emphasis on individual background differed significantly from the structural approach that surpassed existentialism as the dominant French philosophy by the early 1960s. While Lévi-Strauss had followed Mauss in basing his analysis on localized information, he on the contrary found little value in the history of “primitive societies” that offered “no lessons” to social anthropology.\textsuperscript{16} Lévi-Straussian structuralism looked “beyond the empirical facts to the relations between them,” which in Lévi-Strauss’ words confirmed that “these relations are simpler and more intelligible than the things they interconnect,” an approach that remained “resolutely teleological.”\textsuperscript{17}

Sociological and anthropological truth, Lévi-Strauss theorized, was “not to be found among the elements of history.” Instead, his brand of “anthropology” discerned structure through data that achieved “some degree of credibility because of their over-all

\textsuperscript{15} Schrift, \textit{Twentieth Century French Philosophy}, 36-47. The most prominent structuralist colleagues of Lévi-Strauss in France were Louis Althusser (1918-1990), Roland Barthes (1915-1980), and Jacques Lacan (1901-1981). On Lévi-Strauss’ connections to Marcel Mauss, see chapter 5 of this work, or letters in MAS 8.3, Institut Mémoire de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC), Archives de Collège de France, Fonds Marcel Mauss, Caen, France.


coherence." Holding to a temporal model, Bourdieu took an opposing stance, remarking that “truth is a creation of history.” Like Canguilhem, Bourdieu had difficulty conceiving of an absolute fact, as the “truth” of existence was contingent and varied by individual experience.

At the same time, though, individual social position was initially determined by the transmission of “cultural capital” through both the family and educational systems. Individuals could overcome lower accumulations of capital by deliberate and exceptional actions, although most would ultimately find their places carved out, inaudibly and illegibly to all involved, by the dominant social classes. Bourdieu and Passeron wrote, “In matters of culture, absolute dispossession excludes awareness of being dispossessed.” Social hierarchy, whether colonial or French, emerged from long historical processes. By understanding the history of peoples, Bourdieu proposed that the path to the social present was not inevitable; it was produced by local contingency and dialogue revealed by a Maussian comparison and conversation between civilizations.

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19 Pierre Bourdieu and Antoine Spire, “*Si le monde social m’est supportable, c’est parce que je peux m’indigner.*”; (Paris, 2002 [2001]), 48.


21 Although outside the scope of this work, it is interesting to note the impact this idea has had on social science in general, particularly in economics, where the proponents of “path dependence” hold that accumulated history influences macro-economic behavior. For the founding concepts of this theory, see Paul A. David, “Clio and the Economics of QWERTY,” *American Economic Review* 75, 2 (May 1985), 332-337; and W. Brian Arthur, “Competing Technologies, Increasing Returns, and Lock-in by Historical Events,” *The Economic Journal* 99, 394 (March 1989), 116-131.
However, understanding the role of history in the ethnological process, no matter how contingent or internal, offered only a part of the puzzle to the young social scientist.

Arranging the pieces of a society into a comprehensible whole caused Bourdieu to reimagine the entire ethnological enterprise. In his mind, examining a society required assessment of the subject group by both its members and an outside ethnologist. At the same time, the ethnologist had to reflect on his or her own background. “The comprehensive ethnological examination that I have done on Algeria I can also cast on myself,” he mused, extending the analysis “to the people of my country, to my parents, to my father’s accent and that of my mother.”

Bourdieu recognized that his own experiences and influences as a child in rural Béarn, France, colored his interpretations of Algerian peasant life. He thus introduced a new “multi-sited” ethnography that investigated both rural Algerians and the peasantry of his native region. More than just a comparative collection of notes, Bourdieu’s early studies regarded areas as connected not to each other, but to the investigator him or herself. In studying these areas, Bourdieu sought people like himself as interlocutors, much as Delafosse and Marty had done fifty years before. In societies ripped apart by seemingly endemic warfare, Bourdieu thought, alienated intellectuals like him would provide startling insights on the group dynamic. In these thinkers he hoped to find people who could offer social commentary at a level and

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with a perspective commensurate to his own. He based his belief in the importance of these marginalized intellectuals in his own background. Indeed, Bourdieu saw himself emerging from just this type of conversation, the clash of rural and urban, peasant and sophisticate, autodidact and academic.

**Trapped between intellectual worlds: Bourdieu and Algerian fieldwork**

Difference drove Bourdieu to understand the world around him. He saw himself as an awkward peg that did not fit in any particular opening. However, he believed that he possessed a strong mind and devoted himself early to a career of intellectual exploration and academic exposition. Experiences as the son of a white-collar worker in a blue-collar, largely agrarian part of southern France forced him to recognize his dissimilarity, as did his position as the country boy in schools full of urban elites both in the small cities of southern France and later in Paris. In trying to define himself and his worldview, Bourdieu worked against most of the dominant intellectual paradigms of his time. He first rebelled against the Sartrean model of an “engaged” intellectual, striving instead for factual depth and extolling the power of empirical analysis and explanation as the true *raison d’être* for a modern French social scientist. He saw himself as an exemplar for a new generation of scientists who took full stock of their role in the life of subjects, but who also remained detached from the political sphere, a detachment he would find himself unable to maintain as he gained greater fame in France late in his life. Upon his arrival in Algeria, he found a world dominated by conservative politics and poor science. He described Algerian Islamic society as a unique and valuable social
construction. All of Bourdieu’s early work, though, attacked problems from the edges, a position with which he identified from his earliest experiences.

Born 1 August 1930, the young Bourdieu grew up as the son of a mailman. However, his family had entered the professional (non-agrarian) world only recently, as his father came from sharecroppers and his mother from a relatively wealthy peasant family. The family thus did not enjoy even the little prominence that came with multigenerational occupation of official posts. Making his life even more difficult, Bourdieu’s home Béarn region hosted primarily petty agriculture, making him something of a socio-economic outcast, a white-collar child in a blue-collar world. An outsider as a bourgeois among peasants, Bourdieu soon found himself even further outside the norm as a scholarship student at the provincial lycée in Pau, where his classmates did not recognize the name of his village and considered him rural and uneducated, a phenomenon that recurred even more forcefully when he later attended school in Paris.

Always too sophisticated, too rural, too intellectual, too uneducated or too poor, Bourdieu saw society from its edges, gaining in the process a cross-sectional view inspired first by bitterness at his position but later serving as the foundation of his sociological methodology. Detached from the bulk of the society he sought to observe, he found himself able to perceive layers of French class structure denied to someone firmly entrenched in the middle of such striation.

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25 Pierre Bourdieu, “J’avais 15 ans...Pierre par Bourdieu,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 31 January 2002, 30; *La sociologie est un sport de combat*. Bourdieu spent a year of preparatory school following his time in Pau at the prestigious lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris before moving on to higher education at ENS.
An outstanding student, Bourdieu’s early years of provincial schooling put him on a path different from his classmates. Bourdieu’s academic achievements gained him the support of his provincial headmaster, Bernard Lamicq. A classmate of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and historian-sociologist Raymond Aron (1905-1983) at the elite école normale supérieure (ENS) in Paris, a training ground for the nation’s top intellectuals and teachers, Lamicq steered Bourdieu in the same direction. Connections to this prestigious world could have singled out Bourdieu for a cozy academic life in Paris. However, he never pictured himself a Parisian academic; he rebelled against such academic expectations at the earliest stages of his development. Clearly among the best students in the school in Pau, Bourdieu nonetheless struggled with the boarding school “universe devoted to routine and repetition,” a situation made worse when the young scholar moved to perhaps the top preparatory school in Paris, one devoted to ritual and the site of an opposition of poor, scholarship students and their wealthier Parisian bourgeois classmates. When he continued his studies, as the headmaster had intended, a year later at the ENS (simultaneously attending the Paris faculté des lettres), Bourdieu found himself at the highest levels of French academia but still very much on the outside of the university establishment. Later in his career, he continued to reflect on his alienation from seemingly every social group in France. He compared his position to the plight of the Algerian intellectual, who remained “a man, standing between two


civilizations, who has been deeply stricken by all the tragedies of his people, and who quite often is himself inclined to a lukewarm or indifferent attitude in regard to religion.”

He had problems coming to terms with the socio-economic and class determinism that seemed to define the French academy, basic issues that would color his work for the entirety of his academic career.

At the ENS from 1951-1954 and as a lycée teacher from 1954-1955, Bourdieu became familiar with the great works of sociology, particularly those of Emile Durkheim and Mauss. “There was a kind of horror of Durkheim,” he recalled. “No one wanted to hear him spoken about.” However, Bourdieu’s teaching experience opened his eyes to the value of these early practitioners of sociology: “I had to read them [Durkheim’s writings] in order to teach them, and it is then that I became interested in them since they helped me a lot in my empirical work...Mauss even more...I read pre-structuralist texts with a structuralist mode of thinking.”

Like Mauss before him, Bourdieu sought the structures that lay under social formations. Again like his academic predecessor, he found that this search revealed only greater contextual complexity.

Viewing Mauss’ writing as part of his “personal treasure,” Bourdieu joined him in rejecting what the young thinker called “Lévy-Bruhl’s mistake,” or the creation of an “insurmountable distance between the anthropologist and those he takes as object.” He


modeled his scholarship on the writings of Mauss, who had described sociology as the study of “men of flesh and blood, living and having lived...sociology like human psychology is part of this portion of biology that is anthropology, which is to say the accumulation of sciences considering man as a living being, conscious and sociable.”

Ethnology, in this view, considered social interaction a uniquely human construction, one actively shaped and interpreted by the participants themselves. Sociologists and anthropologists could penetrate and explain this structure, in Bourdieu’s mind, only when they considered their own views and backgrounds as part of this mixture. Mauss’s theories offered Bourdieu a way in-to social structure, the ultimate aim of all sociologists. Bourdieu valued Mauss’ work for its focus on specific civilizations and their constituent individuals, a profoundly humanist endeavor made easier by access to colonial subjects. Working against the currents of rigid structuralism and the continued strength of the aging, academically sedentary Durkheimians, Bourdieu sought out sociological study in the colonies. He hoped to profit there from a vast supply of empirical data without the stifling formalism of life in Parisian academia. In turning to sociology/ethnology and away from philosophy, Bourdieu rebelled against the French academic expectation that the finest theoretical minds would focus solely on abstract thought. While philosophers looked down on sociologists as “averagely empirical, lacking any theoretical or empirical inspiration,” in Bourdieu’s words, Durkheimian sociologists looked down on ethnologists who did not adopt their particular view of

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evolutionary social structures and elementary, universal forms. Bourdieu believed, did little to honor Maussian relativism. Choosing Mauss over Durkheim, Bourdieu envisioned sociology as interdisciplinary, a science that incorporated the best of historical, ethnological, and economic data. An outsider by birth and nature, Bourdieu detested the idea of the intellectual elite developing theories far removed from the empirical source. For him, knowledge grew locally, not in some idyllic ivory tower.

Local understanding, according to Bourdieu’s model, depended on a full appreciation of context, a process that required self-analysis by the scientist him or herself. Bourdieu’s concern with science as self-critique grew in large part from his perception of existentialism. Sartre served as the face of this group, the personal culmination of the “mythology of the free intellectual.” By the end of the Second World War, Sartre had parlayed his success as a philosopher and playwright to international fame, in the process establishing strong connections to international communism and in particular revolutionary movements. In Sartre’s mind, the “authentic individual” carried an ethic of “permanent revolution”; he or she must wade into the middle of social movements in order to effect change.

Although not necessarily part of the existentialist ethic, Sartre and several of his prominent colleagues, such as Simone de Beauvoir, earned

\[31\] Honneth, et al, “The Struggle for Symbolic Order,” 37. Bourdieu in particular disliked Georges Davy, the last remaining active member of the original Année sociologique and a member of the board for the agrégation in philosophy.

international reputations as hedonists without a moral center. Bourdieu, feeding off this caricature, positioned himself as the very opposite of a Sartrean free spirit experiencing the world. Instead, he believed that philosophers must devote themselves to study, using their writings to inform and influence, not get involved in the movements that they described. Involvement with political movements, he feared, tainted the results of scientific or philosophical investigation.

Bourdieu considered knowledge generated by Sartre’s concrete descriptions of the lived and experienced world as lacking in introspection. For Bourdieu, existential expositions became a pointless endeavor steeped in the exaltation of the researcher as a sort of philosopher-king not weighed down by evidentiary concerns. In the young social scientist’s eyes, the existentialists lost sight of the most important scientific goal, an understanding of the rules, boundaries, and structures of social interaction. The Sartrean model of the total or ideal intellectual drove Bourdieu from the academic world by his own account: “I can say that I constructed myself, as I left the scholastic universe, and in order to leave it, against everything that the Sartrean enterprise represented for me.”

Existentialism exerted an initial influence on Bourdieu through the emphasis on lived experience; however, the theory’s failure to self-examine, to consider the sources of knowledge itself made the philosophy less useful, in his opinion, in the long run.  

33 Bourdieu, Sketch for a Self-Analysis, 10-11.

34 Honneth, et al, “The Struggle for Symbolic Order,” 35. Bourdieu also read some Marxism, particularly the early work of Marx himself (such as the Theses on Feuerbach), but fought against Stalinism while at ENS; as a result, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (later an acclaimed Annalist historian) denounced Bourdieu, Derrida and several like-minded classmates as “social traitors.” Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, however, depicted Bourdieu as a Marxist who denied the model in an effort to make himself appear unique, a common approach for the period in their view. Ferry and Renaut, French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism, trans. Mary H.S. Cattani, (Amherst, 1990 [1985]), 183-184 and chapter 5.
Dedicated to teaching and against the conceit of academic political activism, Bourdieu turned towards Canguilhem’s epistemological approach as delivered in lectures at the école pratique des hautes études (EPHE) and the Collège de France.\textsuperscript{35} The young philosopher turned to these non-traditional academic milieux, which had hosted Mauss for virtually his entire career, as the inspiration for a new philosophy of science, one that would foreground the researcher.

Still groping for a theoretical approach to inform his own brand of sociology, Bourdieu turned to structuralism. He was drawn to the movement’s efforts to “distinguish themselves from existentialism and all that it entailed in their eyes: that inspired ‘humanism’ that was prevalent, the preference for ‘lived experience.’”\textsuperscript{36} This humanism, however, included too much intellectual hedonism and self-interest for Bourdieu. He thus found a powerful alternative in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Also descended from phenomenology, Lévi-Straussian structuralism drew on Durkheim and Mauss, although Lévi-Strauss had never studied directly with either man. The structuralist paid homage to the Année sociologique (AS), a “workshop where modern anthropology fashioned part of its tools and that we have abandoned, not so much out of disloyalty as out of the sad conviction that the task would prove too much for us.”\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Bourdieu, \textit{Sketch for a Self-Analysis}, 23, 27-28. Canguilhem mentored Bourdieu as he emerged from ENS, although they had a brief falling-out when Bourdieu accepted a teaching position at Moulins instead of Canguilhem’s preferred post at Toulouse. They ultimately reconciled and Bourdieu considered working under Canguilhem for his doctorate in the late 1950s, a pursuit he ultimately abandoned.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 36.

What the AS movement had lacked, in Lévi-Strauss’ view, was a coherent framework that could inform the explanation of collective social phenomena. He placed himself at the head of a new movement he viewed as more capable of explicating social reality by employing ideas of structural relationships over basic notions of universal or ideal types. Social analysis, in this model, required a careful examination of each element’s relation to the whole and to each other to discern the overall outline. In short, social reality was far too complex to boil down to a single, all-encompassing evolutionary portrait.

Lévi-Strauss and his followers took their views too far in Bourdieu’s estimation. The structuralist school, he thought, had erred in rejecting context for the easy teleology discussed above. In assembling such a “basic catalogue” of “simple elements and the laws governing their combination,” Bourdieu believed the structuralists committed the cardinal sin of missing change and the contingencies introduced by time and history. Structuralist theory, he wrote, “leads to the placing of history between parentheses.”

Instead, he turned back to Canguilhem and examined the sources of knowledge. By looking at social organization at its source, he hoped to better understand the variance he saw in all human interactions. Algeria offered Bourdieu an opportunity to see variety and the importance of history first-hand. The ethnological investigations he conducted in Algeria revealed the impossibility of a structural description of an Algerian society enduring massive change as the colonial period drew to a bloody end.

Bourdieu gathered a large majority of the empirical materials for his writings on basic social forms and the clashes of civilizations during his time in Algeria from 1955-1961. The data he collected during this period formed the center of his views on

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38 Bourdieu and Passeron, “Sociology and Philosophy in France,” 201.
education, cultural formation, time, development, and habitus. He first came to Algeria in 1955 to serve his compulsory service in the French military. Fervently against the repressive measures employed by French forces in the area, Bourdieu refused entry into the officer corps, opting instead to remain an enlisted man. His superiors first assigned him to guard airbases with what he described as “all of the illiterates of Mayenne and Normandy and a few recalcitrants,” many of whom, he found, were communist autoworkers from the Renault plant outside Paris. On the sea voyage to Algeria with men he perceived as uneducated, Bourdieu urged them to “revolt” against the ridiculous strategy of “pacification” promulgated by Jacques Soustelle and his military commanders. Bourdieu described their responses, motivated by “fear and docility,” as ranging from “You’ll get us all killed” to “We’ll take you down.” Once again caught between worlds, Bourdieu fit in neither with his passive, sometimes illiterate fellow conscripts, nor with his superior officers who he found arrogant and surprisingly ignorant of world affairs. For intellectual stimulation the young academic turned in other directions; he found able partners in Algerian Kabyle society, men willing to conduct the detailed sociological and ethnological analysis he so valued.

Thanks to the intervention of a colonel from his native region, Bourdieu moved to the staff of the governor-general in Algiers in early 1956, an assignment that provided more opportunity for philosophical reflection and interaction with non-French Algerians.


themselves on a less confrontational (i.e. not as “pacification”) basis. Little evidence remains to pinpoint his precise activities in this period, as most cabinet works did not contain authorial attribution. He may have participated in the editing of propaganda documents and in the creation of a compendium of French knowledge on Algeria.\footnote{Yacine, “Pierre Bourdieu in Algeria at War,” 492; Sacriste, {	extit{Des ethnologues dans la guerre}}, 286 fn 4.} In any case, he remained on the military staff as a clerk until 1957, when his military contract expired.

The young soldier spent his military years in Algiers profitably, though, working with the Social Secretariat, a reform organization originally founded by the Catholic Church to press ecumenical ideas in France’s North African department.\footnote{The group was led, during Bourdieu’s time, by Father Henri Sanson. For more on the group’s relationship with Bourdieu, see H. Sanson, “C’était un esprit curieux,” \textit{Awal} 27/28 (2003), 279-286.} Funding from this group enabled the young soldier-scholar to move into the rural interior and conduct a preliminary investigation of peasant life. They sponsored his first article-length publications and gave him time to write his initial ethnological monograph on Algeria. Although a mere private, Bourdieu enjoyed a large reputation thanks to his ENS connections and his previous academic performance. He also garnered the sponsorship of, among others, famed Annalist historian Fernand Braudel (1902-1985), then teaching at EPHE, and the sociologist Raymond Aron (last seen as a classmate of Bourdieu’s provincial headmaster), who guided his career until a falling-out in the early 1960s.

Braudel pushed Bourdieu to consider the full range of temporal influences on civilizational clashes and ethnological distinction and criticized his early work as taking
“too little account of history.” Bourdieu took this critique to heart as he moved away from abstract, synchronic structuralism over the course of his Algerian research and writing.

Following his discharge from military service, Bourdieu took up a position as an assistant professor of philosophy and sociology at the University of Algiers from 1958-1961. In that time Bourdieu enjoyed the assistance of not only metropolitan academics but also colonial scholars. A few local French archivists and historians “helped me considerably,” and “guided my first steps,” he recalled as he came to terms with the “transformations undergone by [the] peasant economy and society,” as described by Germaine Tillion and the other ethnologists employed during Soustelle’s governor-generalship. The focus by these ethnologists on modes of agrarian production and the possibilities of modernization and conversion to industrial production led Bourdieu to consult the works of Jacques Berque (1910-1995), the acclaimed scholar of North Africa who had grown up in Algeria and written on socio-economic life in the region. Finding in Berque an “extraordinary guide for the young ethnologist-sociologist that I was,” he relied on Structures Sociales du Haut Atlas (1955) for inspiration and as “a model of

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Berque’s work taught him that North African groups worked according to their own logic; Bourdieu learned that each society had its own views that were important and valuable in their own right. Moroccans, whether Berber or Arab, offered significant insight into local processes of social interaction. Bourdieu then applied these ideas to his area of study, finding that Algerians had developed very specific and sophisticated socio-political structures that revolved around extended kinship groups and, particularly in Kabylia, village councils. Colonialism, however, had warped, exaggerated, and destroyed many of these forms. Viewing the problems in Algeria as resulting from a fundamental miscommunication of civilizations owing to unequal processes of modernization, Bourdieu incurred the wrath of most social scientists at the university and their French settler supporters. These groups saw the colonial world through a reactionary and synchronic lens designed to ensure their continued primacy in the colony.

By the time Bourdieu arrived in Algeria these university and settler communities had formed a relatively coherent bloc of ultra right-wing ideologues focused on the maintenance of *algérie française* at all costs. The few scientists conducting solid field research had little influence in a university that Bourdieu described as retaining an

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“intellectual quasi-autonomy” from metropolitan universities and “central science.” At the University of Algiers social science in general, and ethnology in particular, required no fieldwork and generally adhered to pre-set conclusions exulting the power and importance of the French presence in enabling the advancement of Algeria into the modern world, a view not all that different from the conclusions reached by colonial ethnologists of West Africa in the twentieth century. However, these views diverged on one important point: pre-French Algerian Islamic society appeared in French Algerian scholarship as of little worth and undeserving of academic study, a conclusion in stark contrast to the notions of Maurice Delafosse and Paul Marty. Dominated by the Marçais family, French Algerian ethnologists and sociologists by this time viewed “knowledge of the Arabic language” as “sufficient for knowing society,” a position that countered the views of French African ethnologists elsewhere and even those of the former governor-general Soustelle and may in part explain his short tenure in the position.47 In other words, these colonial scholars felt that local or native Algerian knowledge was of little value; language alone provided a conduit to understanding events in Algeria via the Orientalist interpretation of texts.

Despite these flaws, Bourdieu saw some utility in the achievements of the Eurocentric “scientists” of Algiers, who had achieved “detestable things, but also things that were not so bad.” In his mind, older Arabic texts were not without value; indeed,


47 Ibid., 6; André Nouschi, “Autour de Sociologie de l’Algérie,” Awal 27/28 (2003), 32. Interestingly, Soustelle’s first choice to serve as his ethnological attaché in Algeria was Jean Servier, a conservative academic at the University of Algiers ultimately replaced by Germaine Tillion, who focused on economic reform. Yacine, “Pierre Bourdieu in Algeria at War,” 496; Sacrèse, Des ethnologues dans la guerre, 220-221. See chapter 6 of this study for more on Soustelle’s tenure and his clashes with the French Algerian establishment.
they could provide valuable insight into conditions prior to European colonial arrival in North Africa. However, he realized that French Orientalists did not consider these texts in a contemporary context, instead employing them as evidence of overly simplistic Arab-Berber divisions and the decrepitude of pre-French Algeria. Ultimately, Bourdieu concluded that sociological studies of the rural population needed “a modern theory” to explain the vast inequalities of the system and the proper way forward.  

Bourdieu and his colleagues thus turned against pied noir (French Algerian settler) Orientalist techniques and towards ethnography. By conducting oral interviews with interned FLN rebels and impoverished peasants and consulting the “ethnographic novels” of Algerian intellectuals, Bourdieu hoped to get closer to a “true” understanding of Algerian social structures. From this comprehension he looked forward to a more complete model of the civilization’s internal functions and a developmental plan that Algerians could then employ to better deal with the encroachment of European modernity. He reported that his approach to information-gathering was so successful that, by the time of his departure in 1961, he had “found it all” in Algeria, enough to inform both ethnological analysis and sociological theory. He had found success, he thought, in large part due to close collaboration with native Algerians. Their views and insights formed an indispensable part of his repertoire. He saw them as important contributors to an empirically informed, theoretically described social reality; Bourdieu


49 Bourdieu, “Entre amis,” 7; “Pierre Bourdieu et l’anthropologie,” Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales 150 (2003), 6; Yacine, “Pierre Bourdieu in Algeria at War,” 492. Yacine reports that Bourdieu accelerated his departure in 1961 for fear of an impending assassination attempt by right-wing ultra settlers, a legitimate fear given that one of the students working with Bourdieu and Sayed, Moula Henine, was killed by OAS extremists; Sacriste, Des ethnologues dans la guerre, 309 fn 2.
concluded that seeking out people willing to think about the way in which they interacted with others, whether educated or not, stood as the most profitable path to a deep understanding of society. In this way he walked on new ground, surpassing the ideas of Marty or Delafosse in moving beyond basic class distinctions, searching for a description of civilization wherever and in whomever it might occur, not only among the intellectual elite.

A new approach to developing Algeria

Bourdieu’s Algerian research agenda and analytical goals resembled those of Delafosse half a century before. The young sociologist-ethnologist searched for the strength and importance of “originary” Algerian society amid the excesses of colonialism. However, he recognized the fallacy of colonial development; he did not expect to reignite Algerian progress by a return to the past. Instead, he tried to understand the relationship of Algerians with their past so as to aid them in reappropriating lost identities, in the process putting them in a better position to confront industrial Europe.

At the same time, he strove to open the eyes of Algerian intellectuals who, in his mind, followed Sartre and the radical anti-colonial thinker Frantz Fanon in overlooking the plight of the common Algerian peasant in favor of a focus on the denigration and exploitation of Algerian elite classes by the colonial system. Berber intellectuals such as Abdelmalek Sayed (1933-1998) and Mouloud Mammeri (1917-1989) served as important interlocutors for Bourdieu. At the same time, he realized the French populace knew little
regarding the state of affairs in the colonies; he thus set out to “tell the French, and especially people on the Left, what was really going on in a country about which they often knew next to nothing.” Bourdieu believed the establishment of a more equal Franco-Algerian scientific exchange would aid intellectuals such as Sayed and Mammeri in reclaiming their heritage and reengaging with the society from which they, like him in France, felt alienated. French and Algerian intellectuals must work together symbiotically, he thought; both sides would gain knowledge on the past and the future of Algeria through the exchange of views and a shared understanding of the calamity of colonialism.

Bourdieu ran into difficulty in understanding the flow of time for the average Algerian. He believed that a deep comprehension of the varying views of chronology at play in Algeria would reveal the best avenue for Algerian development. Time did not exist on a linear plane for Algerian Kabyle Berbers, according to Bourdieu’s research. Rather, history informed the past, the present, and the future, existing in all three temporal locations simultaneously. Bourdieu’s explorations and discussions of these concepts, however, found little traction in an Algeria torn by the violent struggle between the nationalist forces of the FLN and a French colonial state that employed torture as a means of gaining intelligence, particularly in the so-called “Battle of Algiers” in 1957.  

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51 French investigations of torture in Algeria (see chapter 6 of this study) dated to the beginning of the war, but were publicized most prominently in the experiences of captivity journalist Henri Alleg described in La question, (Paris, 1958). Torture accelerated during the urban battle for Algiers, as chronicled in the film The Battle of Algiers, DVD, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, (New York, 2004 [1966]); and the first-hand
Perhaps saddened by atrocities on all sides, he grew increasingly pessimistic of the abilities of rural Algerians to overcome the powerful European modernity that restricted their movements and opportunities. Consequently, he refocused his attention on the French metropole in the 1960s, armed with the insight of ethnological investigations among native Algerians, to examine the issue of Algerian development from a different angle, in the process challenging the structural mindset then prevalent in France.

*Sociologie de l’Algérie,* first published in 1958, emerged as Bourdieu’s first effort to show both the contemporary conditions of life for what he saw as separate Algerian ethnic groups such as the “Arabic-speaking peoples” and Kabyle Berbers. At the same time he practiced a form of “salvage anthropology” designed to recover and restore the lost, pre-colonial foundations of Algerian society. An ethnological study that considered the state of Algerian society before the colonial incursion, he thought, exposed the excesses of colonial rule while calling for its immediate removal. He hoped ethnologists, economists, and other interested parties would then be able to reconstruct the pre-colonial society in hopes of reigniting development and progress by a uniquely Algerian process. Bourdieu felt his scholarship would help social science, in a purely

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52 Abdellah Hammoudi describes this state as “conceptual impotence,” whereby colonial subjects are unable to develop schemes to deal with the authoritarian hegemon; see his *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism,* (Chicago, 1997), viii-ix. Bourdieu, as will be discussed below, did see some avenues of escape from this repression through the manipulation, insofar as was possible, by “agents” of their social existence.

academic sense, to gain a greater appreciation for the structural “truth” of Algerian
groups by willfully and consciously considering and removing the taint of colonial
domination. Scientists, in other words, had to factor in the change wrought by years of
French control when conducting sociological studies of native populations.  This
consideration, overtly political and anti-colonial on its face, in Bourdieu’s mind led more
importantly to increased scientific objectivity free from the exigencies of colonial rule.
Bourdieu’s early ethnographic efforts, still attached at times to both structuralism and the
standard tropes of French Algerian ethnography, nonetheless permitted him to reexamine
the way in which scientists conducted social investigation.

Raymond Aron, in his preface to Bourdieu’s work, praised the young scholar for
opening the door for Algerians to enter a new world. He wrote, “Precisely because the
struggle [with France] has given them an awareness of their own worth, the Muslims of
Algeria henceforth are open to modern civilization.” Bourdieu, though, added a more
somber note to the state of affairs in Algeria, lamenting the fate of a “society [Algeria]
that is compelled to define itself by reference to another,” in this case France. He
continued, “Its drama is the acute conflict within an alienated conscience, locked in
contradictions and craving for a way to re-establish its own identity, even by means of
excess and violence.” Bourdieu considered himself an important player in this identity
reestablishment, as he hoped to demonstrate to both French and Algerian readers that

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only a shadow remained of pre-colonial Algerian society, in the process causing Algerians to adapt themselves to the modern world apart from the influence of France.

Bourdieu’s description of “Arab-speaking” and Kabyle groups, however, fell at times into older French Algerian ethnographic stereotypes. He concluded that North African social structures, whether Berber or Arab, were largely invariable, based on the family unit, and dominated by a powerful male figure. In his mind, Arabs and Berbers had mixed for generations, making it difficult to distinguish between the groups any longer. “Everywhere,” he thought, “the Berber rock may be seen just beneath the surface of Muslim legislation.” Thus, Bourdieu, despite his best efforts, fell into the trap of French colonial Algerian ethnography. In favoring Berber society as the basis for organization in Algeria, he elevated Kabyles to the place of distinguished predecessor, a key element of colonial social science that had denigrated the Arabs as backward. In this “Kabyle myth,” Berbers stood as autochthones with a liberal democratic tradition, while the Arabs arrived as bloodthirsty bandits unable and unwilling to adapt to “modern” republican institutions. While Bourdieu tried to distinguish Berber and Arab “traditions,” he had difficulty in discerning the pre-colonial processes by which those modes of social interaction had appeared. A monolithic colonial state thus became the motor of change in Bourdieu’s early, synchronic anthropology, as he overlooked the

57 On this point, see also Abdellah Hammoudi, “Phenomenology and Ethnography: On Kabyle habitus in the work of Pierre Bourdieu,” in Bourdieu in Algeria, 200-201.


59 Ibid., 92.

60 For more on this myth, see Patricia M.E. Lorcin, Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria, (New York, 1995); and chapter 1 of this study, where Louis Faidherbe researched the migratory patterns of Berbers who he thought came from Northern Europe.
internal fractures and disputes occurring within the French colonial state and Algerian Islamic societies.\textsuperscript{61}

The French colonial state, he theorized, had upset the process of Arab-Berber mixing occurring since the success of Islam conquerors in the seventh and eighth centuries. The arrival of Europeans had thrown this slow transition into chaos, Bourdieu thought, rigidifying the somewhat porous boundaries between Berber and Arab. He concluded that all Algerian groups found difficulty in maintaining even an “insecure and constantly threatened equilibrium” in the face of the Western advance.\textsuperscript{62} He lamented the loss of many Algerian social structures destroyed by the French. Algeria, he thought, teetered on the edge of total collapse. The prospect of destruction, however, also served as an opportunity. Calling ethnology a “colonial science” tainted by association with the structures of domination was a “great stupidity,” Bourdieu noted. While colonialism had done much to ruin pre-colonial Algeria, the science it introduced provided Algerians a way out of the colonial bind.

Along those lines, he described ethnology as the key to civilizational recovery in Algeria. The science stood as “a very important instrument of self-understanding, a sort of social psychoanalysis permitting one to pull together the cultural unconscious that all people born in a certain society have in their heads.”\textsuperscript{63} While much “cultural capital” came from the “implicit pedagogy” imparted by dominant social classes, people had an

\textsuperscript{61}See Hammoudi, “Phenomenology and Ethnography,” 200-201, 229; and Goodman, “The Proverbial Bourdieu,” 100.

\textsuperscript{62}Bourdieu, The Algerians, 13, 16, 56-57, 73.


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opportunity to take back some control of their fate via recognition of this fact. Although still enormously powerful, cultural norms faced a potent challenger in agents able to implement “explicit pedagogy” designed to produce a “habitus by the inculcation, methodically organized as such, of articulated and even formalized principles.”

Ethnology in Bourdieu’s view, despite its introduction via colonialism, was most important as a stimulus to individual and group self-reflection.

He expected this mass introspection, led by both Algerian and outside scientists, to reveal the socio-cultural fundamentals of the collectivity in question. Bourdieu believed ethnological analysis must occur in conversation with the subjects of analysis themselves, not solely via abstract and distant consideration of symbols. He thought that engagement in such a “dialogue” enabled a “real comprehension” the investigator would not find elsewhere. As anthropologist Lahouari Addi has noted, Bourdieu approached social analysis from “the point of view of the agent and not that of the researcher.”

Kabyle researchers and informants played a vital role in gathering ethnographic information in Bourdieu’s wartime Algerian methodology, as they were “situated in the social hierarchy” and thus recognizable to displaced villagers, impoverished peasantry

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64 Bourdieu and Passeron, Reproduction, 47.

65 Bourdieu, et al, Travail et Travailleurs, 260-261; Addi, Sociologie et anthropologie chez Pierre Bourdieu, 21-22. Bourdieu credits Maurice Halbwachs’ Les Causes du Suicide, (Paris, 1930) as the inspiration for his research method from the interior. Halbwachs, a member of the Année sociologique team and disciple of Emile Durkheim, was also a close collaborator with Marcel Mauss but focused on the metropole.
and FLN cadres alike. Emplacement in the social structure, even if on the edges, provided scientists with internal data not otherwise available.  

Bourdieu sought access to the disparate political and social entities in Algeria through communication with people in a position similar to the one in which he found himself. In his mind, native Algerians interested in scientific investigation were not common. He expected to encounter them only on the margins of society, ostracized in some cases as French sympathizers in the ongoing war. He thus sought people caught between war and peace, colonialism and national independence, “between two social conditions and two civilizations.”  

Natives who stood astride the French and Algerian worlds, who spanned the gap between underdeveloped rural and decaying urban lifestyles and mentalities, provided unique insight into their own particular social order. Only investigators sympathetic to the rigors of this sort of life, like Bourdieu, could in his mind hope to be effective in an atmosphere of transition where the privations of war struck everyone on a daily basis.  

The young scientist thus recommended ethnological research teams comprised of both Frenchmen and natives. He expected these partnerships to operate with greater scientific credibility and ethnographic authority. While the French scientists delivered specialized, Western scientific input, only native Algerians had the ability to demonstrate relatedness, obvious links to Algerian society and the ability to speak the “language of 

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66 Paul Rabinow has also commented on the importance of informants on the margins as points of entry for ethnographic research. See his Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco, (Berkeley, 1977).

loss” so widespread in the war-torn colony. Ethnographic communication during conflict, Bourdieu theorized, required conversing in local metaphors and employing Algerian descriptions of reality. Language in both oral and written form offered a way in-to the society. “Oral improvisation” by the Franco-Algerian teams, Bourdieu thought, granted entry to the interworkings of the social group and gave “a pure meaning to the words of the tribe,” particularly when considered in tandem with the written power of poetry penned by intellectual elites. In a world with limited accessible written history, oral performance and literature provided the young scholar with what he thought was a penetrating view into civilizational norms.

Poetry and prose tantalized Bourdieu. Using literary texts to decipher a civilization, however, required him to do far more than a superficial reading. To be of any real worth, Bourdieu realized, his analysis required the assistance of skilled informants, preferably those with some sort of anthropological training. Mouloud Mammeri, prominent intellectual and long-time colleague of Bourdieu, stood as perhaps the greatest example of this type of individual. Mammeri was a native of Kabylia. He was also a literary scholar of Berber as well as an acclaimed cultural critic, analyst, and author who was willing to work with French scholars in developing an intellectual way forward after colonialism. Much like Soustelle, Bourdieu acquired the aid of those interlocutors who could and/or would help him. Mammeri, a French-speaking, highly-

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educated Berber stood as a man with no affiliation with the FLN and, quite frankly, little
to lose from a partnership with French scholars.70

Bourdieu and Mammeri found themselves in agreement on a number of issues,
particularly regarding the fundamental misunderstandings between Algerian socio-
economic groups, divisions that they came to see as foundational to the violence that
wracked the colony. When taken together their writings offered a level of analysis
approached by neither on its own.71 Bourdieu hoped that such partnerships would serve
as an example for ethnological examination. As a European scientist gained
developmental insight, Bourdieu fully expected his Algerian colleague to “reappropriate
his own identity” from the morass of colonial domination. Initiating the process of
“reappropriation,” however, required an understanding of the process by which Algerians
had lost their identities.

Over a century of colonial education, Bourdieu found, had forced many native
Algerians to renounce portions of their maternal Arabic or Berber language, culture, and
memory. Bourdieu hoped that a native ethnologist would rediscover these lost ideas
through a detailed examination of social development over time. Although Bourdieu

70 Mammeri attended the same Parisian lycée (Louis-le-grand) as Bourdieu, but had to stop his application
to ENS to enter military service in 1939. He ultimately attended university in Algiers, later teaching and
founding associations for the study of the Berber language and the journal Awal. Tassadit Yacine has
written that Mammeri and some of his French-speaking colleagues such as Mouloud Feraoun (1913-1962)
were viewed as “traitors” to the nationalist cause by some members of the FLN, an interesting contrast
considering Feraoun was assassinated by OAS Frenchmen (see chapter 6 of this study); Yacine, “Rapports
de genres et littératures postcoloniales chez Mouloud Feraoun et Mouloud Mammeri,” Awal: Cahiers
der études berbères 38 (2008), 16. Mammeri authored, most notably, La colline oubliée, (Paris, 1952); and
Le sommeil du juste, (Paris, 1955) in the 1950s, making him a well-respected Algerian intellectual before
Bourdieu’s arrival on the Algerian scene. See also Aomar Ait Aider, Mammeri a dit, (Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria,
2009).

71 See, for example, Mouloud Mammeri, L’Opium et le bâton, (Paris, 1965), for discussion of the different
forms and views of violence in war-time Algeria.
struggled to understand the fluidity of Algerian conceptions of time, he recognized that pliability provided at least some opportunity to reverse what he saw as the damage caused by colonialism. The process by which preceding French ethnologists had gathered information had been “odious,” he thought. However, the “socioanalysis” conducted by joint research teams stood as a chance for the “dominated” to “liberate themselves.”

Anthropology thus offered “salvage” of another kind: a retaking of the spirit of the society by its intellectuals for re-presentation to the populace at large, a conclusion that lay under Bourdieu’s work from that point forward. From this display Bourdieu believed former colonial subjects would take hold of time and history, and therefore the progress of their society. Bourdieu firmly believed native Algerians would refashion their present and future only if they realized and accepted the possibilities of progress and development along a unique arc, constrained by a reliance on the past that at times held them in check. They had to throw off the yoke of colonialism by accepting their current state and then moving forward to confront the West. Bourdieu believed that refuge in the past stunted, and would eventually deny, the Algerian ability to compete on the world stage.

Through it all Bourdieu recommended the ethnologist retain his distance. Development, while aided by external catalysts, ultimately had to come from within, from the native intellectual class engaged in societal examination. For Bourdieu,

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documenting this process of intellectual handover occurred not only in the form of ethnographic field notes but also via photography. Taking pictures enabled him to “intensify his gaze” on the subject society while providing a lasting record of an event or person. He could feel sympathy for his subjects, but he remained mindful of the example of Germaine Tillion, who had retained some objective distance in her ethnographic surveys of death, if only for her own sanity, in the Ravensbruck work camp during the Second World War.  

This distance, for Bourdieu delivered both by his status as outside scientist and by the camera’s lens, permitted an ethnologist to deal with the disappointment that came with observation of the vagaries of life in an underdeveloped society. Poverty, illiteracy, and social destabilization brought on by over one hundred years of colonialism jarred even the most jaded observer. It was important to retain some separation from that cold reality even while describing it in the vivid terms Bourdieu thought necessary.

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76 Bourdieu’s early analysis certainly assumed that pre-colonial Algeria suffered much less from the social ills he saw in the contemporary colony. He thus set out to discern the vestiges of the pre-colonial, and thus untainted, forms. Of course, this approach overlooked the excesses of the forms of rule that preceded the French presence under the Ottomans and the pirate states of Algiers. Much of the scholarship on Ottoman Algeria was produced in the colonial period and is thus somewhat questionable for its focus on exaltation on French rule as an improvement. For post-colonial studies of life in Algeria before the French invasion, see Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, (Berkeley, 1994), chapters 1 and 2; Lucette Valensi, *Le Maghreb avant la prise d’Alger (1790-1830)*, (Paris, 1969); and Mustapha Ben Hamouche, *Dar es-Sultân: l’algérois à l’époque ottomane: gestion urbaine et aménagement du territoire*, (Algiers, 2009).
Bourdieu believed that employment of Kabyle informants at an objective distance gave him unique insight into their society. As his scholarship evolved, he moved beyond the Manichean representations of Arab and Berber demonstrated in his early work. Instead, he increasingly focused on commonalities between groups. In his analysis, regardless of the level of interaction with French colonial domination or trade routes, all Algerian groups valued the collective over the individual. No person existed outside the group; full expression occurred only in a voice infused with the larger group consciousness. In a conclusion reminiscent of Delafosse and Marty, he wrote, “The family is the alpha and omega of the whole system, the primary group and structural model for any possible grouping, it is the indissociable atom of society.” Families and genealogies offered stability and structure to the social world described by Bourdieu. Families linked individuals across time in his mind, thereby offering a connection between past and present in Algerian societies. Families and their genealogical descriptions served as “the social structure projected into the past and thereby rationalized and legitimized.”77 Firmly anchored in the past and viewing tradition as formative of the future, Kabyle society thus offered Bourdieu little hope of progress if left in its current form.

Such a society, “resistant to progress and turned to the past,” would enter modernity only after a “veritable social revolution.”78 Shocked by the violence and inconsistency of the French approach to Algerian governance, Bourdieu theorized that natives burrowed into the past to recover lost equilibrium. However, this retrospective


approach only pushed them further from progress by “disrupting the rhythm of daily activities,” thereby altering “all experience of temporality.”79 War-time events appeared cataclysmic and called many “old Algerians” back to the fourteenth century, “the end of the world where all that was the rule became the exception.”80 In Bourdieu’s analysis, native groups feared more upheaval in a social system defined by strong connections to the past and reinforced by Islamic modes of familial reckoning, genealogy and political authority. Far from an indictment of Islam as religion, Bourdieu saw this trend reflected in “most civilizations that have not yet had an industrial revolution”; in short, among those groups subject to Western colonialism.81 Links between the present and the past thus represented an important marker of civilizational progress for Bourdieu. Algerians, mired in the past, had to find their way to modernity by rupturing their intimate ties with history and gazing instead into the future, as “projection of the possible is the basis of every belief in progress.”82 Native Algerians stood ready to take control of their future; in Bourdieu’s eyes, they had only to accept the past as prologue on their unique developmental path. Inherently destructive, the French colonial model nonetheless offered Bourdieu’s idealized Algerian society a progressive example to alter and appropriate for its own requirements.


Removal of colonial pressure did not mean Bourdieu intended to return Algeria to the pre-colonial moment. The Algerian demographic and environmental contexts, at the very least, he realized had changed significantly in more than a century. He advised native Algerians to acknowledge the unfortunate excesses of the colonial period, a legacy of exploitation that included misappropriation of land, demographic shifts, declining education, and the erasure of social structures, without giving in to them. In his analysis, social forms disintegrated with “the destruction of structural bases”; natives felt the effects “at all levels of social reality.” French colonialism had so infiltrated Algeria that the social forms present before its arrival had virtually ceased to exist; at best they had mutated beyond recognition.

Given this new reality, Bourdieu felt that the Algerian future depended on the society’s recognition of the catastrophe of social destruction as well as its acceptance of the impossibility of a return to the status quo antebellum. Efforts by ethnologists to salvage what was left of Algerian society, he hoped, would aid in the creation of a new civilization, one built on the ruins of traditional structure combined with the “cultural disaggregation” wrought by the “clash” with the Occidental. This “original and coherent” civilization would then incorporate the best offered by the “Maghrebi world” and would be “animated by an original logic.” A new interpretation of the social and economic future required a novel viewpoint, one offered, in Bourdieu’s opinion, by the


salutary collaboration of native and French scientists in describing Algerian society. 
Offering an opportunity to start anew, Bourdieu agreed with the former governor-general Soustelle in his call for a “degree of integration” into the extant world order by an Algeria cognizant of its “very low level” on the scale of development. Unfortunately for the young scholar, he also emulated Soustelle in finding a limited audience for his ideas. In his own words, Bourdieu’s first book “made no impact at all. It was the poor attempt of an outsider.”

For Bourdieu, science offered a means by which to escape the crushing weight of Western colonialism and industrial modernity. Like Soustelle, though, he failed to appreciate the full extent of ethnology’s relationship with the unequal power relations of colonial domination. Most Algerians, regardless of the cooperation of Mammeri or Sayed, had no desire to work arm-in-arm with Western specialists in removing the French yoke. Bourdieu’s call for scientific cooperation in Algeria went largely unheeded, particularly in the 1960s as the new Algerian governments increasingly focused on the elimination of those tainted by any scent of “collaboration” with French officials. Bourdieu in the 1950s thus failed to appreciate his position as a colonial instrument in the eyes of his research subjects.

85 Bourdieu, “De la guerre révolutionnaire à la révolution,” 11.
86 Bourdieu, “Logique interne de la civilisation traditionelle,” 43.
88 On the emphasis on Arab identity and the move against perceived French collaborators in post-colonial Algeria, see James McDougall, History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria, (Cambridge, 2006). See also J.N.C. Hill, Identity in Algerian Politics: The Legacy of Colonial Rule, (Boulder, 2009); and Jean Galland, L’indépendance, un combat qui continue, (Paris, 2007).
As the Franco-Algerian War entered a new phase with the onset of heavy urban warfare in Algiers in 1957, French settler efforts to maintain power grew more pronounced and sometimes violent. Still in the field as more French troops poured into the country in a broad policy of “pacification” and “quartering,” Bourdieu’s work also brought him negative notoriety in French Algerian academic circles. The young scientist saw the “venomous and rancorous” attacks on his writings regarding the clash of civilizations and destruction of social structures as indicative of the importance of his conclusions. Angered by his dismissal of traditional disciplinary divisions and the civilized/primitive, observer/observed dichotomies in Algerian colonial life, Algerian right-wing political and academic figures increasingly targeted Bourdieu as an enemy of the regime. Faced with the failure of his efforts to inject what he viewed as sufficient ethnological perspective into the Algerian war, and perhaps somewhat aware of his problematic position as an outsider in the midst of war, Bourdieu refocused his attention on the implications of his Algerian experiences and conclusions for sociology in general. In so doing he found himself opposing what was then the greatest name in French social science: Claude Lévi-Strauss. Advocating for a localized understanding of social structure, Bourdieu engaged in an inter-textual battle with the great French anthropologist that would provide the framework for French social science for a generation.

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89 The conduct of the war in Algeria has spawned an enormous literature. The most celebrated account is that of Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962*, (New York, 2006 [1977]), although numerous recent works have emerged to challenge some of Horne’s basic propositions, most notably Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, (Oxford, 2012), which positions early 1956 as the turning point of the war and the onset of greater violence. The most renowned first-hand description of French tactical and operational techniques in Algeria remains David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, (Santa Monica, CA, 2006 [1963]).

**Structure and the conduct of anthropology: Challenging Lévi-Strauss**

Bourdieu and Lévi-Strauss, working from a common Maussian background, struggled to understand societies in flux as they encountered Western modernity. They disagreed primarily over the role of the participant-observer; the importance and place of temporality; and most importantly the influence of primordial structure versus shared experience and unconscious acculturation in shaping social behavior. However, Bourdieu did not discount Lévi-Strauss’s prominence in the study of man. The young scholar admired, but never employed, Lévi-Strauss’ renaming of ethnology as “anthropology.” Bourdieu thought the semantic change reinforced philosophical ties to Immanuel Kant. At the same time, the term evoked another vein of French science—the anthropology practiced by Paul Broca and his colleagues in the mid-nineteenth century.

Through those connections Bourdieu explored the combination of abstract theory and the “thoroughness and rigor” that marked physical sciences such as biology and physical anthropology, minus of course the racist and ethnocentric approaches of its nineteenth-century practitioners. At the same time Lévi-Strauss’ intervention gave the discipline new strength in Bourdieu’s mind, as it rejected Lévy-Bruhl’s theory of a specific “mythological mode of thought” among primitive peoples. Several of Bourdieu’s early articles approached Algeria from a structuralist perspective, but he realized by the mid-

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92 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 5. For more on Lévy-Bruhl’s concept, see chapter 5 of this work.
1960s that he needed to move beyond Lévi-Strauss’ techniques and formulate his own approach. 93 Both men sought the basic societal forms that had served as the goal of sociology since Durkheim, but Bourdieu saw this structure as contingent rather than absolute and best discerned by dialogue rather than linguistic analysis. At the same time, Bourdieu’s social studies included the rigorous and critical self-examination common in philosophy. 94

When a student asked him about the role of personal experience in research, Bourdieu replied that “it does play a role.” He proposed that reflexive research must not focus purely on “raw personal experience.” However, he thought scientific self-examination carried insight into contextual factors, including the passage of time, affecting social phenomena not visible from a distance. Bourdieu concluded, “I know what I thought 30 years ago and I know what I think now,” a vital step in a process that required sociologists to “invent their own sociology, analyze themselves.” Composed in direct response to the distant approach of Lévi-Straussian structuralism, Bourdieu’s concept of participant “objectivation” made the ethnologist very much part of the analytical equation. In this version of sociology, proximity revealed flaws in methodology and conclusions while simultaneously opening up new avenues of thought.

For example, Bourdieu applied this self-examination to his ethnographic research in Kabylia by comparing it with work done in his native region of Béarn. In a deliberate


effort to “invert” or “reverse” Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes Tropiques*, Bourdieu sought to “make the banal exotic.” In the process Béarn offered a “control” for his sociological experiment while assisting in the transition from “indigenous” to “scholarly” lived experience. Contrary to Lévi-Strauss’ distant and powerless sadness at the disappearance of foreign societies, Bourdieu concluded that dissolution occurred as part of a larger process played out over time, involving both observed and observer. All conceptions of social construction, whether generated by native or foreign observer, were valuable in understanding the mechanics of human interaction. Analysis, then, was not limited to superstructure or mythic fundamentals. It was possible, in Bourdieu’s view, for scientists to see the world from both native and foreign vantage points, deepening and sharpening their analysis by considering a wider range of comparative inputs.

In a phenomenological move, Bourdieu advocated a dissection of “the familiar relationship to the social world....to objectivate my relationship of familiarity with that object, and the difference that separates it from the scientific relationship that one arrives at, as I did in Kabylia.” Studying Béarn gave him insight into his own peasant and petty bourgeois background, a latent part of his perspective that he, at the very least unconsciously, transferred to his studies of rural peasantry in Kabylia. In his mind, the deliberate and conscious acceptance of his background enabled him to relate better with Kabyle peasants given their similar background, an approach that he predicted would ultimately produce a better study. His position as a man between worlds placed him, in his words, “against the distance of cavalier positivism” while also keeping him away

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95 *La Sociologie est un sport de combat.*

from “the sympathetic immersion of subjective intuitionism.” In short, he cautioned ethnologists to avoid the destructive tendency to identify with the native group under examination, although scientists had to gain some intimate involvement with a society in order to understand it. Bourdieu’s work thus retained, at least in his mind, the empirical focus of a positivist approach but with deeper reflection into all possible interpretations of a social event from a native viewpoint.

Reflexivity, however, did not equal the glorification of the observer for Bourdieu. Hoping to avoid the “diary disease” that afflicted supposedly impartial and objective observers of foreign societies, like the author of *Tristes Tropiques*, Bourdieu called the entire process of ethnographic collection into question. He pressed for observers to “explore…the social conditions of possibility—and therefore the effects and limits—of that experience and, more precisely, of the act of objectivation itself.” When Lévi-Strauss extolled the virtues of an approach in which “the ethnologist, unlike the philosopher, does not feel obliged to take the conditions in which his own thought operates, or the science peculiar to his society and his period, as a fundamental subject of reflection,” Bourdieu responded with a call for a full consideration of the examiner’s place within a particular “anthropological field.” Self-analysis, he proposed, must consider the influence of a national or regional tradition or practice, the structure of the academic community itself, and the academic background of the ethnologist him or


herself. By acknowledging the origins and biases inherent in his or her work, Bourdieu thought the ethnologist would better isolate and understand the lived social experience of the subject of study. The conclusions that resulted from this deep examination, he hoped, aided the subject society in better adapting to the modern world.

Lévi-Strauss resisted such examination in part due to his personal temperament. Shy and self-effacing, the scientist did his best to avoid the limelight that came with intellectual celebrity in France. At the same time, Lévi-Strauss and structuralism existed as a response to the public musings and persona of Sartre, the anti-hero for the academic generation that followed him. Lévi-Strauss’ “hyper-empiricism” attracted many young sociologists and ethnologists, including Bourdieu. However, the father of French structural anthropology took his methodology a step further, pressing for the observer to “not only place himself above the values accepted by his own society or group, but...[also to] adopt certain definite methods of thought.” These thought patterns, useful for “all possible observers,” he thought would enable a scientist to completely break from any traditions or cultures of which he might be a part. In fact, the scientist could almost ignore the precepts of the subject culture, as his methods were airtight and not subject to local interpretation or adaptation. Moreover, Lévi-Strauss advocated for an anthropologist who “creates new mental categories and helps to introduce notions of space and time, opposition and contradiction, which are as foreign to traditional thought

100 Christopher Johnson, “Anthropology and the sciences humaines: The voice of Lévi-Strauss,” History of the Human Sciences 10, 3 (1997), 124. Lévi-Strauss initially studied law in Paris before passing the agrégation in philosophy in 1931 and moving on to ethnographic research in Brazil in the early 1930s, a period in which he remained in contact with Marcel Mauss, who provided him with guidance and some editing of his early conclusions. For more on Lévi-Strauss’ background, see Christopher Johnson, Claude Lévi-Strauss: The Formative Years, (Cambridge, 2003); and Denis Bertholet, Claude Lévi-Strauss, (Paris, 2003). The most complete biographical treatment since Lévi-Strauss’ recent death is Patrick Wilcken, Claude Lévi-Strauss: The Poet in the Laboratory, (New York, 2010).
as the concepts met with today in certain branches of the natural sciences.”

Lévi-Straussian social and cultural analysts could thus completely distance themselves from research subjects while creating a new arm of the natural sciences speaking only in the language of scientific inquiry, not the subjective, humanistic approach previously in fashion in French ethnology.

Bourdieu rejected this separation as impossible; no observer engaged in “interpreting practices” could avoid the call of his own background. In Bourdieu’s opinion, a scientist was instead “inclined to introduce into the object the principles of his relation to the object, as is attested by the special importance he assigns to communicative functions (whether in language, myth, or marriage).”

In Bourdieu’s mind, Lévi-Strauss’ descriptions of basic oppositions as the foundation of social interaction among American groups had a major flaw. Lévi-Strauss, he thought, had reached conclusions that unconsciously reflected his own presuppositions, experiences, and upbringing. True “distance” from the object of study, Bourdieu thought, came not from placing the observer above the fray, so to speak, but by subjecting that observer to the analysis previously reserved only for those considered “other.”

Reflexivity gave Bourdieu an opportunity to take his analysis in a novel direction. In a 1962 article on bachelors in rural France, he mused that “the primary task of sociology is perhaps to reconstitute the totality from which one can discover the unity of the subjective awareness that the individual has of the social system and of the objective

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structure of that system.” The people under examination were themselves important sources as interpreters of their own cosmology, particularly insofar as their positions relative to the “dominant” social class revealed the influence of both their accumulated social capital and the unconscious activity of habitus. Individual awareness and perception could reflect the actuality of social structure, particularly when these perceptions accumulated into a larger, networked understanding of the rules that governed human interactions. This dual awareness, of both the subject’s view of the social system and of the structure apparent to an outsider, delivered to Bourdieu the possibility of analytical finality and an approximation of objective truth for the outside scientist. Views of a society from both inside and outside brought humanity back to analysis, as in Bourdieu’s mind the ethnologist had to “reconcile the truth of the objective ‘given’ that his analysis enables him to understand and the subjective certainty of those who live in it.”

Frustrated by what he perceived as Lévi-Strauss’ run-away dissociation from the groups subject to his analysis, Bourdieu sought to reincorporate some consideration of the humanity of native groups, be they in France or in Algeria. Continuing in the tradition of Soustelle and Mauss, Bourdieu conducted his examinations in tandem with Algerians, thereby providing them with an insider/outsider view of their society and, Bourdieu hoped, enabling them to carry out the necessary reform to enter the modern age as capable participants cognizant of the forces unleashed by colonialism, industrialization, and globalization. The humanity of scientific subjects remained important for Bourdieu, particularly their inability to understand the full

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objective truth of their own social constructions without the aid of an outside observer. Individual human beings, while intelligent interpreters of their reality, could not provide a full portrait of any all-encompassing structure: “They do not have in their heads the scientific truth of their practice that I am trying to extract from observation of their practice.” Ultimately, Bourdieu’s ideal ethnologist could not expect any research subjects, even those with a positive approach towards scientific examination, to provide untainted, accurate information. Simple interviews and observation would not suffice.

In Bourdieu’s estimation, groups would try to push investigators towards elders focused on the reputation of the group at large. Such an approach would skew the data in his opinion; investigators needed to dig deeper and seek out lower-level members of the society, perhaps even those on the margins. Kabyle intellectuals, his partners in much of his scientific inquiry, were themselves alienated from their own, largely rural, society. However, they provided him with what he assessed as important and accurate perspectives that evaluated and dissected society in Kabylia from interesting angles. The memories and conclusions of elders were not sufficient in sketching social reality. More important was the notion of context. For Bourdieu, scientists would arrive at an accurate depiction of a society only when they considered the full range of economic and political factors that formed part of the background of each individual. Habitus shaped each person’s practices, although individuals remained capable of shaping events through the flexible interaction of their accumulated influences with a constantly changing


105 Bourdieu and Mammeri, “Du bon usage de l’ethnologie,” 12. For earlier reliance on these elders, see chapters 4 and 5 for discussions between Delafosse and Mauss.
environment. In short, each actor ultimately engaged with his environment in a way both “sensible” and “reasonable” given his background. A full contextual understanding of individual participation in the larger society permitted the ethnologist to view, through the eyes of the native, the “objective, collective future” envisioned by members of the society, an idealized path subject to change over time.\textsuperscript{106}

Structural analysis, in Bourdieu’s view, did not consider the evolution of the socio-economic worldview of research subjects over time. Rather, structuralists froze that view synchronically, analyzing social behavior through a sequence of isolated snapshots, not chronologically linked events. Bourdieu believed that Lévi-Strauss and his school “unwittingly” perpetuated the nefarious influence of “traditionalism” by creating “a system of oppositions and homologies” to represent that which was “by nature a succession.”\textsuperscript{107} For Bourdieu, “traditionalism” stood in the way of progress. A scientist who perpetuated a mode of thought that looked backward was irresponsible and locked the subjects of his study in a past moment, thereby removing any chance for the civilization to move forward. This form of analysis, he thought, reproduced the effects of colonialism in the guise of legitimate science.

Through an understanding of time, Bourdieu’s ideal anthropologist discerned native manipulations of structure. For example, Bourdieu found that Kabyles altered the timeframes associated with Mauss’ universal process of gift exchange. While he acknowledged Mauss had been correct in his description of gift-giving as a nearly universal act, Bourdieu refused to accept that the societal requirement for reciprocity


\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 29.
controlled all the actions of individuals. In other words, it was the “strategy” of agents, not the action of a general “rule,” that governed social interaction, a process best evaluated side-by-side with “time” and “its rhythm, its orientation, its irreversibility.”

Bourdieu thus advocated for social study focused first on the individual and his or her ability to progress in social and economic terms. The background that informed the manner in which each person dealt with changing circumstances came from local context. Bourdieu proposed that an ethnologist must, in a method previously demonstrated by Marty and Delafosse, consult the research subjects themselves to gain a complete appreciation for contextual changes over time. An historical and diachronic approach to social study enabled comprehension of the actions of the individual and the collective as interrelated and mutually constituting, neither sufficient in its own right in forming final ethnological conclusions.

In his early writings, even Lévi-Strauss acceded to the importance of some context in conducting ethnological analysis. He cautioned that “by taking as our inspiration a model outside time and place we are certainly running a risk: we may be underestimating the reality of progress.” Societies could and did change, at least in the anthropologist’s early thought. At the very least, civilizations existed across a broad spectrum of possible stages, although their movements were not evolutionary but “progressive, acquisitive.” While societies might appear “stationary” from one

108 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 5-7, 9. See chapter 5 of this study for more discussion on Mauss’ concept of gift exchange as a “total social phenomenon.”

perspective, from another they might demonstrate “important changes.”¹⁰ Lévi-Strauss ultimately concluded, however, that these progressions and distinctions exerted minimal influence on social structure. They did little, in his opinion, to affect the underlying, primordial oppositions that shaped human existence. For Lévi-Strauss, scientists who concluded “primitive” societies were moving along evolutionary or developmental arcs had no supporting scientific fact. Instead, European thinkers had created these ideas to justify their expeditions, an idea with some merit as it descended from Lévi-Strauss’ recognition of the devastation wrought by colonial contact.

Railing against Europeans who looked at societal age as an indicator of relative importance, Lévi-Strauss declared he was “happy to adapt myself to a system with no temporal dimensions in order to interpret a different form of civilization.”¹¹ He believed that the synchronic approach offered the objectivity desired by all anthropologists. This method avoided the search for progress and development that hampered much of French colonial ethnology by completely disentangling the European, firmly anchored in the linear movement of time and civilization, from the untranslatable musings of an alien society. Lévi-Strauss found what he thought was a theoretical alternative to colonial techniques in structural anthropology. He described his approach as an analytical endeavor by which a scientist “examines those differences and changes in mankind that have a meaning for all men, and excludes those particular to a single civilization, which


dissolves into nothingness under the gaze of the outside observer.” Only through
generalization and universal application would anthropology have a significant impact
outside the matrix of colonial domination, he thought. Meaning existed for Lévi-Strauss
only at the level of abstraction, well above and beyond any particular society.

Both Bourdieu and Lévi-Strauss sought to understand difference through an
examination of a social “totality,” derived from a “form that is common to the various
manifestations of social life.” Understanding these structures and their “non-
accidental” operation linked both thinkers back to their intellectual predecessors,
particularly Mauss. However, Lévi-Strauss rejected his colleague and mentor’s
relativism and emphasis on civilizational comparison. In Bourdieu’s words, structural
analysis “purported to rid ethnology” of “the subject and her lived experience.” In the
upstart’s eyes Lévi-Strauss’ “profoundly dehistoricized vision of social reality” made the
acclaimed scholar “unsympathetic” to Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus, or “history
turned into nature.” Bourdieu was motivated, at least in part, by a need to prove
himself worthy of Lévi-Strauss’ professional acknowledgement, recognition that he felt
had been lacking. Influenced heavily by structuralism early in his career, Bourdieu now
sought both to correct and replace Lévi-Strauss’ theories.

Many European ethnologists in the early twentieth century felt fortunate to
examine societies at a time of great upheaval, as the tumult caused by war opened

112 Ibid., 58.
113 Lévi-Strauss, “The Place of Anthropology in the Social Sciences,” 365. See also Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, 10; and Lévi-Strauss, The Naked Man, 626.
114 Adnani and Yacine, “L’autre Bourdieu,” 236.
avenues to the underlying structure. While the destruction of “traditional” societies filled Bourdieu and Lévi-Strauss with regret and sadness, it also offered opportunity. Both men believed the “transformations” wrought by the onset of modernity and the clash of civilizations revealed the internal controls regulating each system.  As noted above, Bourdieu saw the changes wrought by the collision between “traditional” and “modern” as formative of new civilizations. Lévi-Strauss, on the contrary, viewed the ruptures arising from the fall of colonial empires as windows through which to “abstract the structure that underlies the many manifestations and remains permanent through a succession of events.” Societies thus had little room for progress in Lévi-Strauss’ model. While each was capable of great heights in its own right, a comparative approach added little to the scientific study of primordial social structures. In his mind, underlying forms controlled future social manifestations in a powerful teleology. Societal distinctions, he thought, existed only on the surface with each undergirded by fundamental structures that did not vary. Operating from another angle, Bourdieu sought to enable civilizational progress by understanding each collectivity’s fundamentals. He expected his approach to deliver a more complete view of groups and the individuals that composed them as shaped by localized experience and host to enormous variance.

Bourdieu reintroduced local context as a basic form and boundary for social interactions without admitting the presence of absolute, universal forms. He credited Mauss for this concept. More than just the accumulated experiences of individuals,

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Mauss had described powerful contextual influences as habitus, a collective structure that changed in form “between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges” and combined social, psychological and biological elements. Bourdieu gave the idea, also previously mentioned by Lyautey, more concrete form and substance. He defined the concept as a “durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations” that comprised the “immanent law, lex insita, laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing.” In other words, Bourdieu’s version of habitus influenced all actions of an individual. Habitus acted differently for each individual, shaping his or her social activity as a sort of behavioral law; it emerged from the unique combination of lived experiences and family examples in each person’s background. In a move reminiscent of his call for reflexive analysis, Bourdieu saw this habitus as both creating social boundaries and reflecting those borders in a mutually sustaining process.

Habitus thus represented both structure and anti-structure, the culmination of Lévi-Strauss’ quest for unifying forms and the precise antithesis of the universal binaries for which the senior scholar searched. In Bourdieu’s words, “Through the habitus, the structure that has produced it governs practice, not by the processes of a mechanistic determinism, but through the mediation of the orientations and limits it assigns to the

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119 Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, 78, 81-82. Bourdieu’s first description of habitus, although lacking that label, appeared in his earliest ethnography: “One must nevertheless admit that everything seems to indicate that every civilization, at each period of its development, ‘was making a choice,’ by reference to the system of its fundamental choices (a culture being a system of choices which no one makes),” italics in original. Bourdieu, The Algerians, 111.
habitus’ operations of invention.” Individuals did not constantly remake the social environment; rather, they existed in a dialogic relationship with that environment. They could not describe the impact their collected influences and cultural capital had on their lives. They could only demonstrate that impact by the ways in which they engaged in social interaction given changing circumstances. Habitus existed not only to shape the views of individuals but also those tied to a specific “group or class,” thereby making the influences and history shaping each individual a “structural variant” of the similar forces which formed his or her nuclear social unit. Social classes, particularly those at the top of hierarchies, engaged in “cultural reproduction” through the articulation, often implicit, of social and cultural norms through education. In this way they recreated a “cultural arbitrary” by means of a process that was “the equivalent, in the cultural order, of the transmission of genetic capital in the biological order.”

Society and culture, in Bourdieu’s eyes, passed down through generations in the form of accumulated capital tied to the habitus in an almost chromosomal inheritance.

Bourdieu provided an early example in his work on Islam in Algeria. He represented the great religion as reproduced in many individual “religious profiles.” Each man or woman’s personal expression of and interaction with Islam revealed “the hierarchical integration in each individual of the different levels, the importance of which

120 Ibid., 95, 86-87.

would vary with his way of life, his education, and his aspirations.‖

It was this emphasis on communication between elements, conducted largely unconsciously from the point of view of the individual, and the possibility of structural dialogue and mutation that set Bourdieu apart from his older and more experienced rival.

For his part, Lévi-Strauss also reduced social forms down to “an ideal repertoire that it should be possible to define.” This model agreed with Bourdieu’s conclusion that each individual habitus remained bounded within a larger, less flexible set of behavioral possibilities constructed by the society as a whole. However, Lévi-Strauss took the analysis a step further, once again searching for “a sort of table, like that of the chemical elements, in which all actual or hypothetical customs would be grouped in families so that one could see at a glance which customs a particular society had in fact adopted.”

Far from constituted by a specific society composed of particular individuals, Lévi-Strauss’ version of reducible types spread across all civilizations and all societies, confined to a basic boilerplate restricted by human nature. He pushed analysis beyond the structural functionalism of British anthropologist Arthur Radcliffe-Brown, finding that the “relations between the terms,” not the definitions attached to those terms, were most important in understanding the rules governing behavior. “In order to understand the avunculate [relationship between nephew and mother’s brother],” wrote Lévi-Strauss, “we must treat it as one relationship within a system, while the system itself must be

122 Bourdieu, The Algerians, 117.

123 Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques, 178.
considered as a whole in order to grasp its structure.” The total, he concluded, was more than the sum of its parts; a scientist had to understand both the relationship between the components and their appearance as a coherent structure.

Bourdieu saw this argument as incomplete, as it lacked “the study of the relations between the agents and these relations,” or the agency of the individuals as they injected variance or interpretation into any system. He determined that failure to consider the actions of smaller units in the formation of social norms reified the observer’s analysis and led to “the [analytical] realism of the structures.” Incomplete analysis, in other words, made subject actions appear part of a larger theoretical construct. Bourdieu concluded that no structure was so solid. Conversely, social convention existed in the mind of each individual, the product of formative experiences and norms imbued by the society of which he or she was a member; no two people had precisely the same habitus.

In contrast, Lévi-Strauss described “human knowledge” as a “closed system.” He portrayed the myth-making and telling process as a “simultaneous production of myths themselves, by the mind that generates them and, by the myths, of an image of the world that is already inherent in the structure of the mind.” Built from cultural remnants expressed as “signs” or “symbols,” myths emerged at the hands of a “bricoleur” who

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worked “in an already established semantic environment.” Lévi-Strauss thus saw social and cultural knowledge operating in a Newtonian space where it could be neither created nor destroyed, but recycled and refashioned in the hands of a skilled cultural craftsman. Human social organizations made little progress, he thought, instead sliding between oppositional positions. Revealed by ethnographic observation, these binaries, such as raw/cooked and fresh/decayed, operated as “two poles around which accumulate complex combinations of emotions, sentiments and memories.” This same “dualism” shaped human life in a dialectical existence down to the most basic Shakespearean expression: to be or not to be, to exist or not to exist.127

Basic social forms governed the unconscious in Lévi-Strauss’ model. Discerning those basic divisions revealed to the structuralist that “these forms are fundamentally the same for all minds—ancient and modern, primitive and civilized.” Anthropologists could thus apply those ideas to other societies.128 Basic psychological formations controlled human interaction and remained present beneath any “illusions of liberty” held by individuals, he posited.129 Lévi-Strauss searched for these basic structures across the Americas from his earliest expedition in the 1930s, focusing on the Nambikwara Indians of Brazil. He saw no need to go beyond a synchronic method, as the group had no history. “I had been looking for a society reduced to its simplest expression,” he


explained, “that of the Nambikwara was so truly simple that all I could find in it was individual human beings.” From these most basic components of the group Lévi-Strauss ascertained the basic psychological tools and divisions that guided behavior. From this analysis Lévi-Strauss formulated more general theories, the oppositions noted above, to describe man at his most basic and untainted by European-invented notions of development or evolution.

Bourdieu rejected this stance by returning “real-life actors” to the equation. He believed that individuals were more than “regulated automatons” who existed as “epiphenomena of structures.” Instead, he postulated that men universally “manipulated social reality” by the creation of “an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations” built from “a small batch of schemes” common to all groups. Conducted from the ground in close cooperation with research subjects and with a self-critical eye, Bourdieu’s method of ethnological examination opposed the “bird’s eye” approach of Lévi-Strauss’ all-seeing ethnologist. Bourdieu thought the artificiality of Lévi-Strauss’ “laboratory” left out a key question to informants: why? It was important, he concluded in words similar to those of Delafosse a half-century before, to let subjects describe in their own words the reasons that lay under the behavioral decisions they made. The answers that informants provided could not, of course, describe the

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untranslatable actions of their habitus, but they were important to understanding the behavior of individual actors in response to changing circumstances.

When Bourdieu’s ethnologist had completed the collection of data, he or she had also to subject him or herself to a rigorous self-analysis, thereby avoiding both the “exoticism” of distance and the possibility of statistical “fetishism” brought on by the belief that conclusions informed by a sort of ethnological algebra formed all-powerful “truth.” Only then, equipped with the productive combination of abstract theory and detailed dialogical data, would the ethnologist arrive at the height of social science, the intersection of sociology and ethnology.¹³³

Focused on information generated in the colonies in close conversation with the subjects of analysis themselves, Bourdieu attacked the precepts of structuralism. Far from rejecting the idea of social structure, a move that would eliminate the object of his discipline, Bourdieu instead reintroduced time, context, and the individual to studies of social interaction. His sadness over the excesses of colonialism and anxiety for the future of Algeria gave him a new perspective on ethnological study, one that included research subjects as important contributors to understandings of social constructions. At the same time, Bourdieu reintroduced the anthropologist him or herself as an object of inquiry. Operating from a space located between the academic, military, French, and Algerian worlds, Bourdieu climbed to the top of the French intellectual community through a direct engagement with social issues in the former Algerian colony, a perspective he

developed in large part due to his interaction with the networks of African ethnology founded and expanded by those who had preceded him.

Conclusion

Following a brief bout with cancer, Bourdieu died on 23 January 2002, leaving behind 40 books, more than 500 articles and the most important school of sociological thought in contemporary France. Bourdieu’s work earned translation in five languages by the time of his death. Consequently, his influence spread across the globe, offering assistance in particular to American anthropological scholars looking for alternatives to structuralism. Indeed, British and American social/cultural anthropology went through a reflexive turn in part due to Bourdieu’s influence, reconsidering the definitions of observer, objectivity, subjectivity and even the field itself. He was most important not for his Algerian ethnographies, writings that still employed some of the colonial racial vulgate. Rather, he reformulated the practice of social analysis through a consideration of his Algerian field data, in the process disputing the findings of French structural anthropology.

Remembering his distaste for the role played by Sartre in the 1950s and 1960s, Bourdieu resisted inclusion both in the formalized French academic structure and the


sphere of famed public intellectuals. Although his descriptions of the actions of oppressive modern states found a large audience in French student movements beginning in 1968, he refused to take part in political demonstrations until finally offering his support to a rail worker strike in 1995. Ever the contrarian, he resisted candidacy to the *Collège de France* on several occasions before accepting election in 1982. Moreover, the critical and commercial successes of his work, particularly his later investigations of French academia and gender relations, earned him the Gold Medal for outstanding contributions to social science research from the *Conseil national de recherche scientifique* in 1993, ironically the first person so honored since Lévi-Strauss in 1968. Bourdieu eventually took on the mantle of leading social intellectual and activist through efforts to translate academic work into the vernacular, making it accessible to people both inside and outside the academy. As an “organic intellectual of humanity,” Bourdieu saw his role later in life as “denaturalizing and defatalizing human existence,” reintroducing context and circumstance as important players in any social development.

Firmly anchored in his experiences in Algeria, Bourdieu’s concepts of civilization, cultural capital, and habitus captured the sentiment of Faidherbe, Lyautey, and the others who had preceded him in understanding African difference. Like the French generals, Bourdieu pointed to the strength of past manifestations of specific

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civilizations as evidence of their enormous potential. Bourdieu agreed with Mauss that comprehending any social groups, including those in Africa, required on-site observation and interaction with natives of those groups. Drawing “native” intellectuals into Delafossian interdisciplinary investigations of social forms enabled Africans to take back some control of their development through a close partnership with French scientists. Humans, in this rendering, were important not only as scientific objects, but as intelligent, thinking members of societies, much as described by Mauss. As it had for the ethnologists who preceded him, history proved critical to Bourdieu in conceiving of the possibilities for African modernization, particularly the ability to react to and stem the influence of colonial and “modern” Europe. Like Ibn Khaldun, as interpreted by Delafosse and Marty, Bourdieu depicted the urban-rural dichotomy as fundamental to the way civilizations interacted with each other. Bourdieu was thus an important inheritor and interpreter of this long Franco-African ethnological tradition.

At the same time, Bourdieu went beyond many of the conclusions of those who preceded him. Most importantly, due in large part to the period and environment in which he worked, the ethnologist-sociologist worked from an anti-colonial viewpoint. He did not see ethnology as fundamentally developmental, as the French colonial state in Algeria had destroyed much of what it had encountered and observed. While he acknowledged that Algerian Kabyles had fallen well behind the West, Bourdieu refused to tie their historical arc to that of Europe. Instead, he approached time from a decidedly Algerian standpoint, relative and contingent on local interpretation. Unlike Ibn Khaldun and his French ethnological readers, Bourdieu did not see history as best described by
cycles of decay and rejuvenation. Rather, history was a constant process of acculturation, of the influence of accumulated events and teachings on the social predispositions of individual actors. Dominated for over a century by the French colonial state, Algerians had to recognize that their low positions had been inscribed and reinscribed over generations by a social order that sought its own reproduction above all else. Bourdieu thus brought pessimism to the study of Algeria that his predecessors did not carry. He escaped the sadness brought on by the seeming inevitability of oppression by advocating for the importance of individuals in both science and society. Recognition of the efforts of a dominant social group to control lower classes, he theorized, was the first step in a move to overturn those norms and reestablish some measure of equality. In a move unthinkable in a colonial framework, even the ethnological approach of Jacques Soustelle, Bourdieu followed Marcel Mauss in developing a counter to what he called the “coarse analyses of the most vulgar, common, and collective dimensions of human existence” that characterized modern French sociology.140

Plying a trade that approached people not as “puppets” of a monolithic structure but instead as agents who could, at least in part, understand the “meaning of their actions,”141 Bourdieu changed French sociology from the bottom up, from the outside in, from the margins of the French empire to the metropole itself. His work escaped the trap of colonialism not through ethnographic innovation, but instead through the eventual application of these Algerian-grounded concepts to larger problems relating to the

140 Bourdieu, Sketch for a Self-Analysis, 17.
141 Bourdieu, “Bachelorhood and the Peasant Condition,” 95.
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conduct of science itself, calling into question the role of the scientist-observer him or herself.
Conclusion: Ethnological Past as Prologue

From the 1840s to the 1960s, select colonial and metropolitan soldiers, scholars, and administrators grew to understand Africa in large part through ethnological conversations, both textual and oral, with native Africans. The men and women featured in this study conducted their investigations with the support of the colonial state and with an eye towards the improvement of colonial rule. In their minds, colonial government would benefit from a deeper and more complete comprehension of African social, intellectual, and political life. African “progress,” in economic, moral, intellectual, and political terms, stood as their ultimate goal. Although these French Africanist thinkers proposed that each African “civilization” progressed along its own unique developmental continuum, they struggled to define an end-state or process that deviated significantly from a European-style march to “modernity.” Instead, French colonial scholars, until Pierre Bourdieu, tried to reform the fundamental approach of colonial governance, to “perfect” that system from the inside. The proposed ethnological method of rule would respect and interpret its subjects as rational, human actors. Consequently, the perspective of native Africans themselves, particularly the insights provided by what French scholars perceived as intellectual elites, grew increasingly important. The manner in which French colonial scholars described African societies, then, derived in large measure from the words of native Africans. Employing connections both in the colonial system and with metropolitan scholars, French Africanists contributed to growing discussions on the fundamental building blocks of human collectivities. In the process, these scholars profoundly changed the French sociological method.
French ethnology thus emerged from the colonial world to shape the very nature of metropolitan social science. Hand-in-hand with these metropolitan changes came alterations to the colonial view of the social and political potential of Africans. Rather than working to transpose French political, juridical, social, and cultural norms on to what they considered long-standing African customs and traditions, these soldiers and administrators instead argued for associating such groups with the French, thereby respecting their societal trajectories while offering the beneficent impulse of European civilization. African groups were not earlier stages in European evolution, they thought; rather, each civilization moved through time and space according to locally specific logic. Each civilization, this general theory held, moved along its own progressive continuum but according to a general script of development and decay first advocated by the medieval Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun (d. 1408) and interpreted most prominently by early twentieth-century French scholars working in Africa.

Africa, full of energy and capable of significant forward civilizational movement, provided hope to French scholars and soldiers searching for a French renewal. As Ibn Khaldun had theorized, rural, underdeveloped Africans, particularly those of black West Africa, represented a necessary injection and revitalization for the stagnant and corrupt urban areas of North Africa and Europe.¹ At the same time, though, Africa itself seemed mired in a civilizational slump that dated to the explosion of industrialization in Europe, when the “dark continent” had fallen hopelessly behind. Islam had provided a spark to Africa in the medieval period, but the flame ignited by Islamic techniques of

¹ For an interesting late-colonial view of this process, see Henri Labouret, *Colonisation, Colonialisme, Décolonisation*, (Paris, 1952), 77, 136-137, 183.
learning and science had gone out, necessitating increased contact and reform in accordance with Western intellectual, social, economic, and political methods in hopes of a synergistic and mutually beneficial improvement for all concerned. Reform, French colonial scholars cautioned, was not possible in a policy vacuum. It took a concerted dialogue between French colonial intellectuals such as Maurice Delafosse, Paul Marty, or Pierre Bourdieu and native African intellectual elites such as Sahelian Islamic scholar Saad Buh or Kabyle poet Mouloud Mammeri. Together, these Franco-African ethnologists would both describe social reality and develop a comprehensive plan to hasten the arrival of a more advanced social and political condition.

French ethnologists concluded that the first step in “improving” African societies was the isolation of the past moment at which African civilizations had reached their peak. Colonial reformers hoped that recovering past greatness would reveal the developmental possibilities for each civilization, thereby charting and accelerating that process. Time loomed large in this analytical construct, and French colonial thinkers struggled to understand non-linear conceptions of its progression. It was important to French Africanists to avoid the pull of “tradition,” the ultimate hindrance to progress. Recovery of history and lost developmental time required the skilled interrogation of native texts, writers, and oral historians.

In conducting these investigations French scholars encountered a more fluid conception of time, where history and lived experience overlapped. As one native African intellectual, the late-colonial and post-colonial writer and historian Amadou Hampâté Bâ (1901-1991), explained, “The past is relived like present experience, outside
of time in some way...We move there at our pleasure as fish do in the sea or water molecules combine to form life.”¹ This uniquely “African” sense of time, so different from European conceptions of the path to “modernity,” confused French scholars unable to compare colonial events to anything but the European experience. As they struggled to understand and make use of this fluidity between the past and present, French scholars located similar ideas in texts, some written as early as the fourteenth century, which employed a complex combination of family, religion, genealogy, and mobility in composite portraits of African life. Reconciling these concepts, which Africanists viewed as vital to the developmental possibilities for Africa, became the most important goal of French Africanist scholarship. As the colonial period drew to an end and European states withdrew from the expense of overseas possessions in the post-war world, French scholars accelerated their efforts. They developed academic and political institutions in partnership with African scholars and devoted to the reclamation and analysis of this past, in the process providing new outlets for native African intellectual energy in literature and science. The intellectual networks they worked so hard to expand and exploit spanned more than a century of colonial rule and continued even in the absence of colonial power structures.

**Growth of networks of knowledge**

French Africanists, especially by the second decade of the twentieth century, tapped into a long African historical tradition. Since the tenth century Arabic-language chroniclers had recorded interactions across the Sahara, building on long-standing

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techniques of genealogy and oral history. The 1830 arrival of French forces in Algeria brought a concerted European effort to understand this history. However, most colonial ethnographers of the early and mid-nineteenth century phases of conquest and consolidation considered Africa in synchronic terms, hopelessly locked in a backward state and perhaps even populated by a different species of humans.\(^3\) Louis Faidherbe (1818-1889) certainly adhered to several of these notions. However, he also struggled to reconceptualize the French exploration of “difference” by constructing extensive networks of native African and French colonial savants in North and West Africa. A war hero and accepted scientist in the French metropole, Faidherbe offered important credibility to these nascent networks of knowledge production. A chaotic, multi-directional system of systems, Faidherbe’s ethnological rhizome required long-term cultivation to produce native intellectuals capable of fully comprehending their developmental trajectory, a process conducted beneath the surface of colonialism and ready to emerge when needed.

French ethnological networks might have failed over time with the accession of administrators more interested in the construction of local fiefdoms and the imposition of European cultural, social, and political norms. However, the surge of French African conquest beginning with Faidherbe in the 1850s and continuing with Joseph Gallieni and Hubert Lyautey into the early twentieth century provided an opportunity for the extension of ethnographic contacts across the African continent. Very much a part of the French colonial informational infrastructure, these networks encountered native Africans fully

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\(^3\) French Algerian ethnography by the 1850s and 1860s, which exulted an idealized “Berber” at the expense of the demonized “Arab,” drew in no small part from the polygenist ideas of physical anthropology, particularly those of Paul Broca.
conversant in their own social forms and willing to work with the French in ethnological terms in the sometimes selfish pursuit of an improvement in their social, political, or economic positions. In this period of French colonial rule, particularly prior to and during the First World War, associations between ethnologists and subjects produced vast stores of ethnographic knowledge useful both for French administration and for the local enhancement of social and political capital for African interlocutors. Conquering administrators such as Lyautey, who also saw colonial functionaries as important sources of moral renewal for metropolitan France, valued scientific input to the technologies of rule. Consequently, he and his peers in Algeria, Morocco, and West Africa supported social investigation with both funding and political patronage. Ethnological studies grew increasingly complex, revealing the enormous diversity of African civilizational forms. Therefore, Lyautey and other French colonial leaders turned to a new generation of colonial academics skilled in local languages, men like Delafosse and Marty, to develop coherent portraits of native African life. Local histories proved critical to this process as “authentic” sources reflecting African potential. The remarkable sophistication and variety of African social and political structures convinced French scholars of the need for respect and maintenance of these unique approaches to human organization. Delafosse and Marty reasoned that native Africans would not assimilate into French culture, as they were from civilizations with completely different views on the world and moving with a separate developmental plan. Civilizational difference, French Africanists believed, came from more than the physical characteristics proposed by race theorists and physical anthropologists.
French scholars came to this realization with the assistance of native African savants and their texts stretching back to the fourteenth century. The works of Ibn Khaldun, important to the French understanding of North Africa since the first translations in the 1840s, provided a locally informed example from which to begin new investigations. A fellow intellectual and political theorist, Ibn Khaldun appealed to French linguists and ethnologists as emerging from a similar tradition. Like Faidherbe and Lyautey before them, Delafosse and Marty saw French efforts in Algeria as misguided and based on fundamental failures to understand Saharan and Sahelian societies. Ibn Khaldun’s model of development and decay through the interaction of urban and rural fit well with their views. It both captured the apparent cyclical rise and fall of West African empires and emerged from the most detailed empirical investigation of Africa conducted to date. French Africanists thus sought out West African writings that belonged to the same school of universal history, hoping to discern the precise point at which to reignite the progress of African civilizations. As they further expanded their networks of native correspondents Delafosse and Marty pushed French ethnology further, gaining additional inputs to inform their analyses.

In attempting to maintain African political and social structures, though, French scholars in truth acted in opposition to their stated humanistic intentions. Delafosse, Marty, and their peers sought to isolate the moments of greatness in the African past. Their analysis seized on those instants as both indicators of potential and points from which to reinitiate African development. Although they intended their discussions, at least in part, to indicate the complexity and importance of African civilizations, French
Africanists implicitly rejected the present as irrelevant and backward. French ethnological studies thus froze Africans in the past and disregarded the dynamic nature of African life. At the same time, French Africanists, whether scholars, soldiers, or administrators, privileged the views of elites who, in many cases, had something to gain from collaboration with the militarily and economically powerful colonial state. In the French African ethnological conceit, Africa and Africans had no chance to “develop” without the generous assistance of the French state. Such an ethnocentric approach, though, was common for the time; the imbalances of power in a colonial situation did not occur to men who were, in truth, working against the grain of overt exploitation and the idea of making the world “French.” Their ideas, grounded in empirical investigation, slowly turned the tide not only of colonial policymaking, but also of theoretical formulation in the metropole.

French metropolitan scholars, long contemptuous of theoretical efforts by those not possessing a degree from the école normale supérieure, began to recognize African ethnological inputs as important and useful. Parisian academics thus started to reconsider the place of amateur fieldworkers, including soldiers and colonial administrators, in the scientific effort to understand human collectivities and modes of thought. Marcel Mauss in particular valued the judgments and data provided by colonials. He engaged with French and British scientists in forming a new approach to sociological analysis firmly grounded in a dialogue with native groups themselves. Mauss and his peers destroyed old myths regarding African totemism or other so-called “primitive” religions through a more nuanced and diachronic view of social change. By viewing societies in flux and in
full view of the historical record Mauss and his colleagues sought to discern underlying societal principles and even the “total social fact.” Colonial ethnology grew in importance in part due to Mauss’ academic and political connections. The next generation of colonial thinkers, trained by Mauss and his peers in Paris, took on problems of colonial difference not via theory but by fieldwork, observation, and dialogue.

Jacques Soustelle, perhaps Mauss’ most politically accomplished student, made ethnological networks central to French activity overseas first during the Second World War. An academic ethnologist turned intelligence operative, Soustelle valued native inputs more than some of his war-time Free French and Vichy peers. When appointed the governor-general of war-torn Algeria in 1955, he brought this expertise to bear in an attempt to repair what he saw as breach of contact between the French administration and native Algerians, be they Kabyle, Arab, or another group. To mend this rupture he and his ethnological staff searched for the sources of discontent. He created ethnological institutions such as the sections administrative spécialisées (SAS) to restore confidence and reinstitute conversation with the native intellectuals so prized by him and his intellectual predecessors.

His efforts to attack the basic social and political inequalities of the Algerian system through dialogue met with failure, however, as the time for negotiation had long passed. Soustelle’s form of ethnological governance, founded on principles espoused by Delafosse and Marty forty years before in a wildly different context, was anachronistic. Despite the protestations of his staff, Soustelle refused to engage in conversation or negotiation with the disenchanted rebels of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN),
thereby removing any real opportunity to discern their motivations for revolt. Soustelle’s government thus continued a long-standing trend whereby French authorities refused to grant real political rights to the growing class of French-speaking intellectual elites. Nourished by nationalist ideas that emerged from more than a century of Algerian Islamic discussion, the young leaders of the FLN tapped into world-wide currents that demanded the removal of colonial authority at all costs. An adherent of the humanist type of ethnology advocated by Mauss and his predecessors, Soustelle nevertheless accepted beneficent colonial rule as both necessary and desired by all parties for development. Soustelle failed to recognize the inherent difficulties of ethnology in war, as complete local knowledge (and thus access to the innermost details of a society) remained a distant dream unattainable in reality.\(^4\) Soustelle’s push for Algerian “integration” into the French polity thus came too late to arrest an independence movement that was long in the making.

The ethnological governor-general’s administration, though, opened the door for a new type of French sociological study of the population, one with, in some ways for the first time, an avowedly anti-colonial stance. Pierre Bourdieu led this effort in working, in particular, with Kabyle writers and scientists to reformulate French depictions of Algerian social structure. Unlike the structuralist paradigm of Lévi-Strauss that was quickly gaining ground in the late 1950s, Bourdieu’s model proposed the importance of local and lived experience to each individual’s participation in society. In other words, each person’s social position descended not from absolutes, but from concepts welded

\(^4\) See Matei Candea, *Corsican Fragments: Difference, Knowledge, and Fieldwork*, (Bloomington, 2010), 79, for discussion of the difficulty of penetrating the complex world of “interconnaissance” in a society of which the observer is not a born member.
into the unconscious through an early acculturation, then interpreted and applied subconsciously by intelligent social actors. He questioned the very nature of ethnology and sociology by ridiculing the idea of objective distance. Bourdieu approached social science as reflexive, requiring a full consideration of the context of each individual’s view on the world, including that of the scientific observer. Only after considering all sources of ideas and behavior, he proposed, could a scientist hope to arrive at something approaching scientific truth.

Bourdieu and Soustelle thus provided the final forms of the networks at the center of this study. They took advantage of large storehouses of ethnological knowledge that stretched across the Sahara from Algeria to West Africa, feeding on the social and historical ideas of Ibn Khaldun and his latter-day Sahelian and French interpreters to both incorporate and dissect native views on civilization, progress, and society. The colonial system, so often portrayed as a monolithic, oppressive force, in some areas worked both under and on top of pre-existing native African intellectual structures. Soustelle, operating at the very top of the colonial edifice in Algeria, formed much of his policy, however ill-informed and presumptuous, on precepts gained from ethnological examination. He employed methods introduced to him by Marcel Mauss, who formulated them with the assistance of colonial academics such as Maurice Delafosse.

Tracing networks of colonial interconnection offers significant insight into the actual mechanisms of anthropological power relations in the colonies. French colonial ethnologists operated in a complex environment, and it is through a detailed examination of their own backgrounds and conversations that a historian can arrive at a better
understanding of the effect of context on colonial rule and science. More than colonial intellectual tyrants, some French colonial ethnologists, particularly amateur soldiers and administrators, worked in close dialogue with native African savants to arrive at explanations of social change quite different than those advanced by metropolitan theorists. This study has thus built on the work of Bruce Hall, Gary Wilder, and Emmanuelle Sibeud in proposing a French colonial scientific world built on words and concepts generated in Africa by Africans. More than the product of one-sided discursive domination, as other scholars have described the French ethnological method, the networks traced in this work spanned the entire colonial system, from Madagascar to West Africa, Algeria, and even back to mainland France. This study also corrects an explicit assumption of virtually all French intellectual and colonial history that places Paris as the generating center of all important concepts, whether political or theoretical. In fact, the analysis here shows that French social theory of the interwar years, so interested in understanding the origins of “primitivity” and “difference,” did not drive French ethnological investigation. Rather, the concepts enunciated by French thinkers in Africa moved back to Paris through networks of correspondence and scholarship, finding political and intellectual culmination back in Algeria, the place where it all began.

In the end, ethnologists, regardless of language or even intent, participated in colonial science with an ultimate goal (until Bourdieu) of furthering French reach and power in Africa. They submitted analyses designed to facilitate a French Empire more in tune with the needs of its inhabitants, both metropolitan and colonial, and poised to reemerge as a great power as the twentieth century progressed. Ultimately, these
“amateur” conclusions, given great credence at the time by peers, seem to have done little to truly solidify French rule. However, they did have an important and lasting effect in Africa, among Africans. The French colonial form of ethnology as seen in this study required the input of informed intellectual elites from among the African populations. Several of these native African scholars, at first acting simply as assistants, ultimately became successful scholars in their own right, publishing in academic journals beginning in the early twentieth century, as seen in the discussion of Delafosse and Marty. Colonial ethnologists hoped to provide a more human form of rule in the colonies through scientific examination. In the end, they gave native Africans the tools to dismantle that very structure.

The French colonial scholars profiled in this study rarely expressed any overtly anti-colonial sentiment. Many felt sad as they witnessed the colonial process, particularly once they viewed the world through the prism of cyclical decay. However, as men between the French metropolitan and African worlds they also perceived the remarkable potential for new beginnings, for the creation of new and more interesting civilizations from the ashes of their predecessors. It was this sort of renewal that many French Africanist thinkers sought both in colonial societies and in France itself. Progress, even if cyclical, offered hope for the future. This forward movement required not assimilation to French norms but an increased reliance on native intellectuals as the leaders of a new era. French scholars thus worked to reclaim native cultural and social forms for African and colonial use in a process of political association. Developed in dialogue with African elites, these ideas eventually came to form the basis for anti-colonial movements and the
post-colonial order. The networks of knowledge cultivated for so long by these officials remained beyond the end of the colonial era, maintained and expanded by African intellectuals themselves. This handover is perhaps best illustrated by a short discussion centered on the relationship between a late French colonial scholar of the Sahel, Marcel Cardaire, and an important Peul (Fulbé) scholar of West Africa, Amadou Hampâté Bâ.

**The legacy of French colonial African ethnology**

As seen throughout this study, French colonial scholars and administrators had long cultivated native sources through both official and quasi-official channels. This current ran particularly strong in *Afrique occidentale française* (AOF), the West African political federation where the influence of Delafosse and Marty never fully waned. In 1936, long after their departure from the scene, the governor-general created the *Institut français d’afrique noire* (IFAN) to study specifically the local black civilizations and their cultural manifestations. The early director of the institute focused on developing a native intelligentsia that would ultimately become capable of carrying on ethnological and archaeological studies of the region without French assistance.

Initially, the institute subsisted on studies authored by French investigators. Over time, though, the director focused on creating “little by little a network of collaborators and observers who were absolutely indispensable to the development of research.”

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5 Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, (Stanford, 1997), 313 fn 72. Conklin also notes that the governor-general, Jules Brévié, was a close friend of metropolitan theorist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (see chapter 5 for more on Lévy-Bruhl’s colonial connections). See also Théodore Monod, “Historique de l’Institut Français d’Afrique Noire,” *Notes Africaines* 90 (April 1961), 34-36, where he describes the organization emerging from a 1931 request by AOF director of education Albert Charton.
French participants tapped into the currents of ethnological knowledge that had existed since the time of Faidherbe, taking advantage in particular of the relationships forged by Delafosse and Marty in the 1910s and 1920s. The organization, mirroring French hopes for African civilization, would develop only over a long period of cultivation: “IFAN is still being born, still germinating. As long as the soil is sufficiently and regularly provided with nutrition; as long as the young plants attentively cared for...it will grow, it will certainly flower.”6 In the eyes of French Africanists, the intellectual component of African civilization had lain dormant beneath the colonial surface for generations; with a deliberate and long-term feeding they hoped to bring it back above the surface, in the process elevating the entire civilization. Institutions such as IFAN served as one tool in forming these intellectuals. Even these organizations, however, required the input of native Africans already familiar with Western conceptions of objective science.

In order to find these intellectuals, the colonial administrative and scientific structure turned to administrators such as Marcel Cardaire. A military officer resident in the Soudan since the late 1940s, Cardaire directed the colony’s Muslim Affairs Bureau in the early 1950s before moving, in 1956, to a new position on the Saharan frontier.7


Cardaire saw “Islam noir” as quite distinct from the religion of what the French and many sub-Saharan African communities described as “white Africa” to the north. Indeed, French scholars proposed that “black” religion and culture had emerged from a combination of animist “old beliefs of the soil” and the medieval warrior ferocity of the Almoravid reformers of the northwest.⁸ This depiction, previously advanced by Marty and Delafosse in a warped reading of Arabic-Islamic histories and genealogies, portrayed West African civilizations as distinct from the Arab and Berber groups resident to the north. In order to understand this specifically “black” form of Islam and its effects on the local populace, scholars saw the need to turn to the natives themselves. Cardaire and his colleagues expected Africans to add the appropriate context to any discussion in a work of salvage anthropology made more urgent by the growing forces of globalization.⁹

Understanding and governing this fast-disappearing world depended on the ability of French officials to quickly penetrate to the very core of subject societies. In Cardaire’s mind, the “cement of the familial, tribal, and ethnic edifice” was “exclusively religious.” These “essentially social” religions did not exist apart from other forms of cultural or political life; they were instead “inseparable from the soil that holds them.”¹⁰ West African Islam, though, represented quite a challenge for a social scientist. It existed in multiple forms and locations, an edifice that displayed both the “cracks” between Sufi

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maraboutic lineages as well as their links across the Sahara. Cardaire concluded that a scholar must “follow the currents that irrigate all of these components” that stretched from Senegal to the furthest reaches of Algeria to fully comprehend local social interaction. 11 Working from information first provided by Paul Marty in the 1910s, Cardaire and his colleagues tracked the intellectual and political discussions that coursed along this “conducting medium” or religious “infrastructure.” 12 Islam, they thought, served as a device to convey civilizational communication and understanding in the local idiom.

Consequently, French officials sought to tap into these networks, a technique pioneered by Faidherbe and brought to its greatest height by Delafosse and Marty. In their minds, it only made sense to employ locals who had emerged from the Islamic educational system. Cardaire and his colleagues hoped these savants would better explain the history of the area as conveyed in genealogies that often remained incomprehensible to Western observers. 13 At the same time, collaboration with Islamic-trained elites offered access to urban schools, locations that Cardaire perceived as unique sites of intersection of West and East, European and Afro-Islamic thought. A strong collaboration with the prominent Islamic thinkers at these sites, men trained in combined Arabic-French schools in many cases, he thought would produce a better understanding of the utility of genealogy in a world with a different view of social truth.

Cardaire thus advocated for the creation of a Franco-African intellectual elite in a “new edifice” that would remain “loyal to the deep and ancient traditions” of scholarship in the area, but translated into modern language. He followed the examples of Marty and Delafosse in remarking that “this country has never lacked for thinkers so much as it has long lacked writing to record their statements.”

Philosophers and historians were all around him; Cardaire thought he had only to lean on them to gain a better knowledge of local conditions and prospects for development. African political intellectuals, many of whom worked with the late-colonial French as a hedge against the possibility of power for their foes in a post-colonial Africa, collected ethnographic information from networks of fellow savants and chiefs. Cardaire’s sponsorship of these groups activated and empowered a generation of intellectuals, such as Amadou Hampâté Bâ, schooled in Qur’anic memorization and able to recall great swaths of local history.

Through French sponsorship, Bâ and others like him began the process of reclaiming their own version of African history. Supported by colonial officials who at times harbored an honest interest in reform, this movement sought to remove the taint of colonialism by discovering the past. Bâ, like several of his intellectual peers, threw himself into the work. Unlike many of his colleagues, however, he harbored few political ambitions and never claimed to speak for his people as a whole. Born in a town in the

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eastern reaches of French Soudan, Bà claimed descent from the illustrious line of famed 1850s jihadist el-Hajj Umar Tal (d. 1868). Recognized early in life by native African leaders and colonial officials for his natural leadership and prodigious memory, Bà found himself thrust into the French African school system at a relatively young age. He ultimately declined attendance at the école normale in Dakar, the most prestigious French university-level education available to natives, opting instead for a career in colonial administration. Much like Lyautey or Bourdieu before him, the young functionary found himself a man between worlds. He retained a strong Islamic faith both shaped by and resistant to the colonial project. Both the French colonial and African Islamic worlds acted as sources of information and support for him, although he belonged fully to neither. His associations beginning in the 1930s with a Soudanese Muslim cultural association, which was thought by colonial officials to harbor separatist ideas, brought him some official suspicion. Nevertheless, his affiliation with IFAN beginning in the 1940s put him in conversation with prominent European students of Africa and Islam; the institute even sent him for a year to work with the United Nations in Paris. In all of these worlds Bà retained one particular identity: African.

It was this identity that served him as he cultivated a growing community of native scholars removing themselves from the French colonial world. “Never do I confuse my job and my faith,” he responded when confronted with his anti-French associations in 1944, “I need to reestablish the truth while never crossing the lines set


forth by law.”¹⁹ The “truth” of African civilization, culture, and society interested him far more than any particular political stance. By restaking claims to their own knowledge, Bâ expected African intellectuals to salvage what remained of the era prior to colonialism. That goal, however, did not forsake the contributions of “highly capable ethnologists” or the value of the French language as a common tool of communication among all people invested in African development.²⁰ In short, he proposed a reversal of colonial ethnological methodology. Native Africans had to lead examinations of African history and society; in the process they could also consult European studies and scholars for supporting evidence. This dialogue must take into account religious, and thus philosophical and epistemological, deviations between the European and African views of societal formation. In so doing Bâ and his peers hoped to create a new generation of elites poised to take control of the emerging Franco-Soudanese state or its post-colonial equivalent.²¹ Bâ’s inverted but still unified approach to the study of Africa would privilege African sources at the expense of all others. In the process, the scholar sought to reveal Africa’s importance to both Africans themselves and the world at large.

Bâ worked from the foundation provided by Delafosse in suggesting that Africa had a glorious past recoverable through sources other than writing. He quoted his religious teacher, Tierno Bokar, for support: “Knowing is a light which is in man. It is the record of all that our ancestors could know.” Oral sources were in reality quite

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¹⁹ Quoted in Ibid., 402.

²⁰ Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Aspects de la civilisation africaine, (Paris, 1972), 32; Bâ, Amkoullel, 383.

accurate and important, he argued, as “speech engages the man, speech IS the man.”

Oral communication defined African civilization; to repudiate that link, to denigrate oral sources, was to deny the very existence of an African past in the scholar’s eyes. What Europeans, even Delafosse, had failed to understand in Bâ’s opinion was the centrality of oral communication to everyday life. Africans simply did not write things down. While this made record-keeping for Europeans difficult, it did not hinder African intellectual production, seen most famously in the performances of local griots. More than that, however, average Africans of all walks of life were living repositories of history, genealogy, and heritage. In Bâ’s mind, “the inheritors of traditional knowledge of the period (whether pertaining to history, natural and human sciences, religion, initiation, customs, etc.), whether fishermen, hunters, blacksmiths, weavers, nobles or others, are precise informants in a wide variety of domains.”

Each of these individuals represented the collected knowledge of his or her network of informants, family members, and acquaintances. True knowledge of African social structure required the maintenance and understanding of this vast skein of connections. Natives had manipulated both kinship and colonial power networks to gain knowledge on widespread events and ideas from the very beginning of the European presence. This information, while valuable in its own right, could serve a much greater purpose for intellectuals such as Bâ: it could educate the natives themselves on the glory of the past and the potential of the future.

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22 Bâ, Amkoullel, 197; Bâ, Aspects de la civilisation africaine, 25. Capitalization in original.


Colonial officials had seen such possibility as well, but only through the lens of Western positive development and progress. Bá, on the other hand, saw the transmission of African civilizational description as “always didactic,” particularly for less-informed Africans. Native African scholars, he cautioned, had a responsibility to contribute to this societal education conveyed particularly through Islamic practices of learning. As Cardaire had described the constituent networks of Islamic education and kinship, so too did Bá in calling for a worldwide system of African science to capture the “global knowledge” that remained in the oldest members of society, the “last depositories.” Bá believed that these civilizational treasures “can be compared to vast libraries with multiple, invisible links between them.” West Africa depended on the maintenance and the growth of these links, he thought, to maintain its unique cultural identity and heritage. The colonial system had offered avenues for this maintenance. However, as the colonial period rapidly drew to a close it was the responsibility of Africans themselves to reappropriate these traditions. In that conception, advanced powerfully by Bá and his colleagues, the future of Africa depended on the recognition of its past and the exaltation of the human vessels that carried history.

As thinkers such as Bá met with French-educated élites from the négritude and related movements, Africa emerged again as an important intellectual site in the post-colonial world. Leaders from Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001) in Senegal to Modibo Keita (1915-1977) in Mali employed both colonial and uniquely African descriptions of

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87, XVIII. For more on Bá’s use of Wangrin, see Ralph A. Austen, “From a Colonial to a Postcolonial Voice: Amkoullel, l’enfant peul,” Research in African Literatures 31, 3 (Autumn 2000), 1-17. For more on Bá’s thoughts on networks, see Bá, Oui mon Commandant!, 51; and Bá and Daget, L’empire Peul, 14-15.

25 Bá and Daget, L’empire peul, 13; Bá, Aspects de la civilisation africaine, 26.
local social and political constructions, at times for nefarious or exploitative purposes similar to those of colonial officials. At the same time, Western historians, particularly from the United States and United Kingdom, participated in this act of recovery. Historians sought to describe moments seemingly lost to African history while participating in the exaltation, in some cases, of the purity of the post-colonial African state. These discussions could also lead to all-out denigration of the colonial state as the product and producer of one-sided exploitation.

European and American historians beginning in the late 1940s took part in this search for “authentic” African histories, hoping in the process to take up (unknowingly, perhaps) the call of Delafosse and Marty to reignite African development. Western historians of Africa generally believed that societies with a discernible past were important and necessary, not slaves to a colonial order. It was thus critically important to document the history of African civilization as proof of sophistication. These early studies, which continued into the period of decolonization of the 1950s and 1960s, focused on the complexity and prominence of pre-colonial societies and the recovery of what seemed lost accounts of that period. As prominent scholar of Africa Martin Klein recalled, “In retrospect the appeal of Africa for myself and many of my generation of Africanists was very much the excitement of watching the destruction of an oppressive

26 Full consideration of this post-colonial act of reclamation is beyond the scope of this work, and the literature is enormous. Monod foresaw some of this trend, at least in his recollection, as “several years before” 1960 he pushed IFAN to eliminate French researchers while incorporating more native Africans; “Historique de l’Institut Français d’Afrique Noire,” 47-48. On this process in the period and area in question, see for example Bruce S. Hall, “Bellah histories of decolonization, Iklan paths to freedom: The meanings of race and slavery in the late-colonial Niger Bend (Mali), 1944-1960,” International Journal of African Historical Studies 44, 1 (2011), 61-87; and A History of Race, 274; and for the growth of negritude, Gary Wilder, The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars, (Chicago, 2005), in particular part 3.
colonial order and being involved in the creation of a new one.” Many Western historians, by the late 1960s avowedly anti-colonial, sought to describe African agency and resistance in the face of European domination, providing “useful” history to post-colonial states. 27 These works opened the door to important conversations in the decades to follow regarding European global expansion and its effects on subject populations. Early Western history of Africa, however, missed the nuances of the relationship between colonial and native intellectuals, a process (although not an even one) that involved significant dialogue and contributed to what would become a vibrant African intellectual climate bent on reclaiming its own intellectual heritage. Natives sought, as had the French Africanists in their own way, the “truth” of African society, but one not mediated by the colonial condition. Intellectuals such as Bâ took control of these networks, pushing them in new directions independent of Western influence and input.

Although products of a system of exploitation and control, French ethnologists favored returning political and social control to Africans themselves. French scholars thus viewed their subjects around, over, and under a number of blind spots, most important being their inattention to the uneven distribution of power in the colonial system. Ultimately, it was this inequality that exploded in open revolt in Algeria and accelerated the process of decolonization in West Africa. Despite the excesses and failures of the period of French rule, some Africans emerged with a strong appreciation

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for the value and history of their civilizations, in the process expanding on and correcting the conclusions reached by French Africanists. In this way, they contributed to the “development” of their societies by employing and exceeding the techniques of colonial ethnology, a process of societal description built on their own language in the first place.
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Biography

Douglas W. Leonard was born in Urbana, Illinois to Gerald and Linda Leonard on September 24, 1976. He attended Elk Grove High School in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. He completed a bachelor of science degree in history at the United States Air Force Academy in 1999 (also studying at the French école de l'air in 1998). Upon graduation, he was recognized as a distinguished graduate. He then received a master of arts degree in history from Florida State University in 2000. Since that time, Leonard has served as an active duty officer in the United States Air Force, including a tenure as instructor and assistant professor of history at the United States Air Force Academy from 2006-2009. In that capacity he taught courses in modern military history, modern European history, the French Revolution and Napoleon, statesmanship, and introductory French language, also earning recognition as the Outstanding Academy Educator in history for 2007-08. The United States Air Force then generously sponsored his pursuit of a doctorate in history at Duke University from 2009-2012. During his time at Duke he published “Race and Conflict Across the Sea: The Life of Anténor Firmin” in Black Intellectuals: The Atlantic World and Beyond, ed. Kendahl Radcliffe, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner; and “‘They do not know how to deal with native unrest’: British intervention and unintended consequences in French North Africa, 1940-1946,” Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History (2012). Leonard received funding for research at various stages from the Air Force Institute for National Security Studies and the Duke University Department of History. Following graduation in 2012 he will leave Durham, NC for further assignment as an active duty officer in the United States Air Force.