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THE COLONIAL IN POSTCOLONIAL EUROPE:
THE SOCIAL MEMORY OF MALTESE-ORIGIN PIEDS-NOIRS

by

Andrea Lynn Smith

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by ANDREA LYNN SMITH entitled THE COLONIAL IN POST-COLONIAL EUROPE: THE SOCIAL MEMORY OF MALTESE-ORIGIN PIEDS-NOIRS and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Dissertation Director JANE HILL
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED: Andrea Lyn Smith
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the social memories of Maltese-origin pieds-noirs, or former colonists of Algeria. Over half of the French colonists of Algeria came to the colony from Spain, Italy, or Malta, among other European countries, during the nineteenth century. Naturalized as French citizens, they “returned” primarily to France at Algerian decolonization in 1962. As “liminal colonists,” interstitially situated between colonized and colonist, the Maltese were subject to considerable discrimination in the colony, a discrimination which has had lasting repercussions and which is revealed in the Maltese social memory today.

This project was based on nineteen months of ethnographic research conducted among elderly pieds-noirs of Maltese origin, now living in southern France, and archival research on colonial Algerian history. From these two distinct methods, I developed two versions of the Maltese experiences in colonial Algeria: that recorded in archival sources, and that reported in conversations about the past. These two versions of the past were then contrasted and compared. Through this method, I have uncovered what I call “domains” in Maltese social memory. These include the carefully silenced domain of the French-Algerian war; the ambivalent and compound domain concerning family histories and assimilation to French culture, often summarized through the employment of a version of the melting-pot metaphor; the nostalgic iteration of the colonial past; and the related and open-ended domain of memories of difficult or painful encounters with the Metropolitan French.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The Initial Research Problem: The "Forgotten" Pieds-noirs

This dissertation is based on nineteen months of ethnographic and archival research conducted from January 1995 to July 1996 among "pieds-noirs," or former colonists of Algeria, of Maltese and non-Maltese descent now living in southeastern France. The initial research idea developed out of my fascination with one particular aspect of French colonial Algeria: that over half of the French colonists were originally from Spain, Italy or Malta, and became French citizens only after two or three generations in the colony. I wondered how the preponderance of non-French colonists shaped Algeria’s colonial history. Did non-French colonists experience discrimination? Could stresses associated with their intermediate status have played a role in the development of extreme views in the colony, perhaps as they attempted to demonstrate their Frenchness? And how would having such a background influence the pieds-noirs today? Many of the million or more French men and women who were repatriated were moving “back” to a country that had

1 "Pied-noir" or "black foot" is a term now used by group members to identify themselves, and thus I use it in this dissertation as they do, to refer to former French colonists from Algeria, Tunisia, or Morocco. The origins of the term are unknown. The explanations commonly proposed are outlined in chapter 8. I follow French convention for pluralization: “pieds-noirs” and “pied-noir” are the plural and singular versions of its use as a noun or adjective. For example, a “pied-noir” function and several “pieds-noirs.”

2 Field research was supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the Social Science Research Council, and the American Institute for Maghrebi Studies. Write-up support was provided by a grant from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and a Dean’s Fellowship from the University of Arizona Graduate College.
never been that of their ancestors. This aspect of the repatriation experience is scarcely mentioned in the French literature on the subject. I wondered if this is because the ancestry of these former colonists is truly an insignificant question, or if instead this past has been silenced because the issue is still too sensitive to address publicly.

The official narrative about Algeria’s colonists is that they “melted” together in the creuset (melting pot) of Algeria very early, several generations before the pied-noir return to France. Because naturalization to French citizenship began in the 1890s, most of these former colonists were at least second if not third-generation French citizens. They shared the same French culture, albeit perhaps one with a special “Mediterranean” flair. They and their parents had attended French schools identical to those in France, and the men had completed mandatory military service like all other French men. Many had relatives who had lost their lives fighting for France in World War I, and many of those arriving to France in the 1960s had served in World War II. Clearly their official national identities were French, they felt French, acted French. End of question.

It was in reading through the history of the different components of Algeria’s colonist population that I began to doubt this official ideology. First, I noticed that a few books had been published recently, by pieds-noirs, about the history of the emigrations of non-French Europeans to Algeria. A pied-noir of Spanish descent, Jean-Jacques Jordi, examined Spanish migration to western Algeria in Les Espagnols en Oranie (1986); another book was published by Jordi and Gérard Crespo on the Spanish in central Algeria, L’immigration espagnole dans l’Algérois (1991), and another was published on the Maltese migration, L’émigration maltaise en Algérie (Donato 1985). Why such an
interest if these immigration histories were truly so irrelevant? To me, these texts suggested the consolidation of a pied-noir counter-memory that was beginning to address some of the gaps in French historiography on colonial Algeria.

The post-script of Donato's book provided the final impetus for embarking on this project. In this post-script, Pierre Dimech, president of an "Association France-Malte," wrote about the need for oral history research among elderly pieds-noirs to preserve their history before it was lost forever:

It cannot be not noted that the author, who obtained the concurrence of groups like the Cercle algérieniste and the Association France-Malte, has only collected a thin harvest of testimonies, nearly insignificant, considering the legitimate expectations. This Postscript to Marc Donato's work is thus a vibrant appeal to all of those for whom the name of Malta signifies more than something banal...Finally, it is an appeal to all of those who do not wish that the Great Adventure of the West in Algeria permanently disappear in the double shroud of forgetting and slander.³

³ Dimech's post-script is quite poetic in French: "Il ne peut pas ne pas être noté que l'auteur, qui a obtenu le concours de groupements comme le Cercle algérieniste et l'association France-Malte, n'a récolté qu'une maigre moisson de témoignages, quasi-insignifiant, compte tenu des espoirs qui étaient légitimement permis...Cette Post-face à l'ouvrage de Marc Donato est donc un appel vibrant à tous ceux pour qui le nom de Malte signifie autre chose que de banale considérations, qui, de temps à autre, traînent dans la Presse d'actualité. C'est enfin un appel à tous ceux qui ne veulent pas que la Grande Aventure de l'Occident en Algérie disparaisse définitivement sous le double linceul de l'oubli et de la calomnie" (Dimech in Donato 1985:191).
The existence of a Maltese-origin pied-noir association intrigued me. I wondered if there were other ethnically-based associations of pieds-noirs in France. In addition, the Maltese organization identified in the postscript suggested some level of interest among Maltese-origin pieds-noirs in their heritage. If this was in fact the case, it suggested that assimilation to French culture in Algeria had not been as complete as originally thought. On the other hand, if only Maltese-origin pieds-noirs organized along ethnic lines (as I soon discovered was the case), another puzzle presented itself. Given the close relationship between group identity and special group representations of the past, I wondered if there was not something unique about the Maltese history in Algeria, or the Maltese place in colonial society, that might have encouraged people of this origin in particular to group together later along ethnic lines. Considering Dimech's appeal for further consideration of the testimonies of the now quite elderly former colonists, I wanted to learn more about the characteristics of specifically Maltese representations of the colonial past. What follows is the result of my research on these problems.

The Colonists Return to Europe

The pieds-noirs arrived in France as one of a series of mass repatriations that followed decolonization of much of the French Empire in the mid-twentieth century.  

---

4 Return migrations followed the loss of Indochina in 1954, the Suez crisis in 1956-7, independence of the Protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, the loss of Algeria in 1962, and following independence movements in sub-Saharan Africa. L'Europe Retrouvée. Les migrations de la décolonization (1994), edited by Jean-Louis Miège and Colette Dubois, presents the first publication of a multi-stage international initiative to examine the consequences of these migrations for both receiving European nations and former colonies.
During the 1950s and 1960s, a total of 2.0 to 2.5 million French were repatriated from former colonies (Dubois 1994:18). A large proportion of these were pieds-noirs from North Africa: 1.4 million French were repatriated from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco between 1956 and 1967 (Ibid:92), and nearly one million of these came from Algeria.

These migrations to France represent only a fraction of the total return migrations to the European continent overall: an estimated five to eight million people were repatriated to Europe over a thirty year period following World War II as a result of decolonization (Dubois 1994:12). Despite the obvious significance of these migratory movements, surprisingly little anthropological or other social science research has been conducted among former colonists. The experiences of millions of migrants, and the long-term implications of the return of former colonists for European societies and cultures, are important problems that have yet to be seriously addressed.

This dissertation presents an initial effort in this direction. In this work, I illustrate the persistence of the colonial in a “postcolonial” Europe. Interviews with elderly pieds-noirs living in high-rise apartments in urban southern France concerned a very different world, a world spatially and temporally distant, that of colonial Algeria. Meeting sites were labeled with the former names of French Algerian cities, marking space in the modern French state as if situated in another place and time. This dissertation therefore is neither entirely about Europe, nor is it limited to North Africa. It is situated on both sides of the Mediterranean, and temporally on both sides of the colonial/postcolonial break. The underlying goal is not to further colonial nostalgia. Instead, I hope to call our attention to the fact that while much of the world has entered a
new postcolonial phase, the colonial has returned to Europe, and we have yet to understand just what the consequences are for European societies today or what they might be over the long term.

The Construction of Difference in Colonial Settings

In his 1951 article on "the colonial situation," Georges Balandier condemns most of the anthropological research on Africa written during the 1930s and 1940s, and finds the then acclaimed new "culture contact" research method equally disappointing.\(^5\) Despite the fact that Malinowski claimed in 1938 that the goal of this new method was to study societies as they actually exist and to move away from anthropological fictions, Balandier finds the approach apolitical and void of any theoretical contribution: "it lacks, among other things, any reference to the total society, namely the colony. It lacks the very meaning of social reality" (Balandier 1965[1951]:45).

Balandier identifies key features of colonial situations for anthropologists whom he finds so unwilling to see what was before their eyes. He points out the presence of more or less overt and ubiquitous violence. The "dominant minority" controls the majority through material superiority and a legal system operating to its advantage, and the whole social order rests on a "system of pseudojustifications and rationalizations" of more or less avowed racist character (1951:42). Any study of societies affected by colonialism, he writes, particularly studies undertaken by scholars guided by a

\(^5\) On the significance of Balandier's work to Africanist anthropology, see Moore 1993:20-23.
supposedly holistic discipline, must refer to this colonial situation as a *whole* and as a *system* (Ibid:54, emphasis added).

Anthropology has come a long way towards a more sophisticated and intentional exploration of the processes of colonialism. However, until recently, one side of the colonial equation has been largely neglected, that of the colonists. While studies of colonist societies have been published (Cohn 1962; Crapanzano 1985), these typically have been isolated works by authors whose main research interests lay elsewhere. Ann Stoler is one of the first to identify colonist cultures as her main research focus, and her provocative articles on the subject develop a theoretical framework for future anthropological research in this area (1989a; 1989b; 1991; 1992). In the first of these articles, “Rethinking Colonial Categories” (1989a), she writes that anthropologists studying colonialism often have taken its European agents as “an abstract force” and have been more sensitive to class, ethnic, or gender distinctions among the colonized than among the colonizers (Stoler 1989a:135-136). She urges anthropologists of colonialism to examine European communities as well. Colonial cultures were not simply transplanted from the Metropole, but were based on “new constructions of European-ness” (1989a:136-7). Work in the anthropology of colonialism now includes finer-grained studies of colonizer societies and the tensions between colonizer and colonized (see American Ethnologist special issue Volume 16, No. 4; and Comaroff and Comaroff 1988, 1991; Cooper and Stoler 1989; Prochaska 1990; Cooper and Stoler 1997, and Stoler 1989a, 1989b, 1992).
Stoler has highlighted in particular the permeability of the great colonized/colonizer divide. Once imagined as fixed, natural or unchanging, colonial categories and the boundaries between them are now viewed by anthropologists as vacillating social constructions:

the otherness of the colonized person was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained (Cooper and Stoler 1989:610; and 1997:7).

In these tightly stratified societies where an individual's social standing had real consequences in every facet of life, it was important that categories, and people within them, remained easily definable. For this reason, boundaries were sources of tension in colonial contexts, and governments spent considerable effort developing and re-tooling social categories. As historian Bernard Cohn has written, "a large colonial bureaucracy occupied itself...with classifying people and their attributes, with censuses, surveys, and ethnographies" (in Cooper and Stoler 1989:611).

One way to examine the historically constructed nature of colonist-colonized boundaries is to identify populations that fall between these categories, or what Stoler has referred to as ambiguous or interstitial populations, situated at "contradictory colonial locations" (1989a:154). Much of Stoler's research concerns such interstitial groups who defied easy categorization and threatened the stability of dominant rule. She has focused on distinctions cutting across the European communities, like class and gender (1989a, 1989b), or interstitial "racial" groups that confounded the colonizer/colonized dichotomy (1992). More specifically, she has examined the social and economic position of poor whites and European women in Sumatra, and "métis" or mixed-bloods, those of mixed
European and indigenous heritage, and has explored in a sophisticated manner the changing intersection of gender, class, and racial distinctions (1989b). While Stoler has explored this complex web of distinctions cutting across European communities in the colony, she neglects one form of distinction with particular relevance to some colonial settings dividing European populations at the outset: their national and ethnic origins.

Stoler tells us that colonizers were not homogeneous: "colonizers themselves...were neither by nature unified nor did they inevitably share common interests and fears" (1989a:137). Instead, they lived in communities created consciously to "overcome the economic and social disparities that would in other contexts separate and often set their members in conflict" (Ibid). Implicit in her argument is an understanding of the colonial situation as a precarious one with a dominant minority, and thus where unification of the ruling group was critical to the maintenance and perpetuation of colonial rule. Divisions within colonist society thus could prove fatal to the entire colonial enterprise. Surely, then, the national or cultural distinctions between European immigrants also could prove a divisive force. In fact, Balandier himself points this out in his early piece when he writes of national minorities or "foreign whites" who are suspect because of their nationality, and thus cut off from "real" colonial society (1951:40).

Stoler's neglect of nationality/ethnicity to date is unfortunate because the case of the Netherlands Sumatra plantation belt suggests that research focused along these lines

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6 In this dissertation, I consider the experiences of non-French Europeans who, during much of the period covered here, were both foreign nationals and members of various European ethnicities. My understanding of "ethnicity" corresponds with that found in
might yield interesting results. She writes that a distinctive feature of the plantation belt's foreigner community was its "multinational European membership" (1989a:139). In this article, she examines the development of a lower class European population and its threat to colonial rule and middle-class bourgeois morality; yet she does not specially examine the fate of non-Dutch Europeans, and we do not learn to what degree this category intersected with that of the lower class Europeans. We learn what criteria were developed by the Dutch Indies colonial government in 1884 for legal access to "European legal equivalence:" belief in Christianity, fluency in written and spoken Dutch, and training in European morals and ideas (1989a:153; 1992:538). We might then wonder if the Dutch language requirement was developed to exclude non-Dutch Europeans. If so, were the people who were excluded in this way granted some second or intermediate "European" identity? We also do not know how the requirement of Christian beliefs was implemented, or how this requirement might have excluded Dutch Jews, for instance, from full participation in the Dutch colonial project. Finally, one wonders what training in "European" morals might mean for a colony that had such a heterogeneous European population. These articles present the criteria for Europeanness (1989a; 1992), yet we do not learn which other nationalities comprised the Dutch Indies' colonizer population, if or how a national or ethnic hierarchy may have developed, or how any ranking of these nationalities may have been played out or intersected other distinctions such as class, gender or race.

much recent anthropological literature in which ethnicity is described as socially constructed status differences that are sometimes presented or understood as "natural." See Comaroff 1989; Alonso 1994.
There is thus still room in the anthropology of colonialism for the further deconstruction of the category “European.” Scholarly work is especially needed with regard to the problem the ethnic and/or national diversity of European colonial populations posed in some colonial settings, and the impact such diversity may have had on specific colonial trajectories. Stoler’s comment that Sumatra was distinctive for its multinational European population as well as its marked degree of social discrimination (1989a:139) suggests that these two phenomena may have been linked, an intriguing idea since a similar correlation has been found in the case presented here of French Algeria. Clearly questions of class and questions of race inform and are informed by understandings of European national and ethnic identities.

A consideration of the problem of colonies with colonists of different European ethnicities requires a more careful examination and deconstruction of another reified social category, that of “Europe.” “Europe,” of course, is not an unproblematic site either symbolically or literally. The site’s physical boundaries have evolved and shifted continuously over the centuries. In the process, peripheral locations have emerged and been erased, and the identity of Europe has shifted in relation to the changing frontiers with others without as well as with respect to others within (Boyarin 1992). The fascinating history of the shifting definitions of Europe and who is deemed “European” has direct implications in the colony. For Algeria, previously developed understandings of “Europeanness” determined which immigrants would be accepted there as “real” colonists, and which were considered more marginal. As Europeans encountered each other for the first time in the colony, ideas of “Europeanness” evolved. A consideration
of ethnicity in the colony allows us to examine to what degree inclusionary or exclusionary practices there were informed by contemporary understandings of the boundaries of Europe and the "European," and to what degree colonial ethnic diversity may in turn have informed similar practices in the Metropole.

The example of the Maltese is well suited to a study along these lines. Of all the European immigrant populations, the Maltese were the most interstitially situated, the most liminal. Malta was then a British colony; the Maltese, a colonized people. The Maltese immigrants who settled in Algeria were very poor, lived at first in indigenous neighborhoods, and spoke an Arabic idiom mutually intelligible with that spoken in North Africa, allowing them to form trading relationships with indigenous North Africans. Even Malta itself was a "liminal" place, located in the Mediterranean between the European and African continents (see Illustration 1, page 48). Geographers included the archipelago as part of Africa until 1801, when it was redefined as belonging to Europe (Donato 1985:18).

Van Gennep's "transitional" phase in his work on The Rites of Passage (1960[1909]) was elaborated upon by Victor Turner in his study of the ritual process (1969). In this latter work, Turner examined in detail characteristics especially of the "liminal" phase of ritual. While Turner's writings on liminality were developed out of a particular approach to ritual that was highly influenced by Durkheimian and functionalist traditions, he also discussed liminality in general terms. Liminality approached in this way is less a stage within a ritual process than a set of potential characteristics associated with enduring social groups or activities situated between social categories (Meyerhoff 1982:117; Ashley 1992:2). This use of the term liminality has proven fruitful in research in cultural studies. See for example, Babcock-Abrahams 1975, Diaconoff 1992; Gilead 1987; Reckert 1989. It is this latter sense of liminality and liminal groups that is employed in this dissertation. Such an approach to liminality is consonant with Douglas' elucidation of the pollution and danger associated with marginality and other transgressions of conventional cosmic or social systems (1966).
Stoler's research, as well as that by Douglas (1966) and Leach (1964) on groups transgressing conventional social categories, would have us predict that the liminal Maltese would have proven especially discomfitting to colonial leaders. One of the early hypotheses guiding this project therefore was that the Maltese would have been the focus of attention of French officials, resulting in discriminatory practices or ideologies. I found this to have been the case. Even the religiosity of early Maltese colonists, derived partly from their Catholic crusader heritage and involving a cult of saints (Boussevain 1965) identified them to nineteenth century northern European observers as less “European” and more “North African, and writings of early travelers, geographers and French officials reveal an unease and fascination with this people they found so difficult to define.

A second basic premise of this research was that for the Maltese, tensions regarding identity and status would have been especially charged. In the largely bipolar universe of colonial Algeria, comprised of those with power and those without, the Maltese position as liminal, subaltern colonist would have been a stressful one. I believed at the outset that memories of this unique social position must be linked somehow to the development today of Maltese-origin pieds-noirs associations.

Silences in the Official Memory of Colonial Algeria

When we turn to the historical literature on colonial Algeria, we find an almost complete silencing of the histories of the non-French colonists. This is surprising considering that over half of the colonists came from parts of Europe other than France.
Why is this history so marginalized in the classic sources?

The history of French Algeria has been the subject of a considerable number of reports, conferences, published articles, and books produced over the past one hundred years. A summary of this literature would require a whole volume; good annotated bibliographies can be found in Ruedy's *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (1992:258-284), and in Julien (see below) (1964:507-588). There are several secondary sources which are extremely thorough, detailed, and balanced: these include the widely accepted classics *Histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine*, vol I (1827-1871) by Charles-André Julien (1964), and volume II (1870-1954) by Charles-Robert Ageron (1979), as well as Ageron's masterful summary of the entire period, *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present* (1991), and his two volume *Les Algériens musulmans et la France, 1871-1919* (1968).

Most French historians of colonial Algeria, including Julien and Ageron, were primarily interested in the political struggles over Algeria. In their writings, they focussed in detail on the politicians and generals who were responsible for the development of colonial policy, described official government colonization programs, and considered the effects of French policy on the indigenous population. The colonists in general are discussed only in a perfunctory manner. In his two-volume work of 1968, Ageron discusses European settlers primarily in the context of the late 1890s anti-foreigner movement and anti-Jewish riots (1968:545-599). As David Prochaska has

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8 Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past* (1995) is an eloquent work examining how power operates in the making of history and the “silencing” of some pasts.
noted, the settlers have not been the focus of historical research or debate; “it is almost as if their presence in the Algerian tragedy was a fact too big to be seen” (1990:4).

Despite the fact that they comprised over half of the colonist population, the experiences of the foreign colonists have been almost completely overlooked. In the first book of the two-part Julien/Ageron series (1964, 1979), covering the most important periods of European migration to Algeria, Julien outlines only the most basic demographic facts, and provides, only on two pages, a brief stereotyped profile of the characteristics of the different immigrant groups (1964:250-251). We learn little about how these foreigners became French citizens, or how they were assimilated to French culture. In his 1991 publication, Ageron states only that the towns were the “real Algerian melting pot” (implying that some kind of assimilation occurred), and only refers to the assimilation process briefly and obliquely in the following passage:

The “foreign peril,” denounced by local politicians for electoral purposes, was in fact less historically important than the progressive fusion of the French with the naturalized “neo-French,” resulting in the Algerianization of both (1991:62).

The assimilation of the non-French, then, is presented almost as a non-issue, or at best as a rather straight-forward process not worthy of historical examination or focus.

**Toward an Alternative Perspective**

**A Pied-noir “Counter-History”**

Recent books have been published that begin to fill the gaps in our understanding of the migration and integration trajectories of the different European nationalities in Algeria. These include Gérard Crespo and Jean-Jacques Jordi’s *L’immigration espagnole*
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dans l’Algérois de 1830 à 1914 (1991); Crespo’s Les Italiens en Algérie, 1830 - 1960 (1994), and L’émigration maltaise en Algérie (1985) by Marc Donato. These books were written by pieds-noirs and most were published by pied-noir-run publishing houses. They suggest the consolidation of a pied-noir counter-memory motivated at least in part by a desire to address the silences in standard French histories regarding the experiences of the non-French.

While these works provide an essential introduction to the silenced pasts, they too gloss over the process of assimilation experienced by the non-French. Most present this process as having been completed by 1914. Crespo and Jordi explain that they studied the Spanish in the Algérois only through 1914 because after this time, there was “intégration sans faille” (flawless integration; Crespo and Jordi 1991:9). In his non-academic La vie quotidienne des Français en Algérie, 1830-1914 (1967), Baroli writes that by 1914, the synthesis was complete, and what he refers to as the successful “fusion of the races” was evidenced through the trials of World War I (1967:8). According to Baroli, the fusion of the French and non-French colonists occurred through naturalization laws, intermarriage, and the involvement of the newly naturalized French in the great assimilating institutions of the French state, particularly the schools and military service (1967:252-255). However, Baroli’s book is more a memoir than a careful historical study, and we are left wanting to learn in greater detail just how these processes worked, and how they were experienced by the immigrants themselves.

Prochaska’s Research: David Prochaska’s Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920 (1990), is the first serious historical study focussed specifically on
the formation of an Algerian settler colony, that of Bône, in eastern Algeria. His book examines the remaking of Bône from an Algerian port town into a colonial center from the 1830s through the early part of the twentieth century. In order to elucidate relations between different elements of the colonist population, he analyzed socioeconomic data from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While official documents of that time do not distinguish between individuals of different national origins, and thus prevent us from being able to contrast the Maltese economic level with that of the Italians, for example, Prochaska has found census and other documents that distinguish between French, naturalized French, non-French European, and Jewish colonists. From this material, he has been able to illustrate not only the development of distinct social classes between the French and non-French colonists, but also the persistence of social and economic segregation well into the twentieth century even following non-French naturalization. This research, the first of its kind, is critical for developing empirically grounded models of non-French colonist assimilation. Most important for our study here, Prochaska’s findings indicate that following their naturalization, the naturalized French of Bône, which included substantial numbers of Maltese, remained economically and residentially segregated from the Metropolitan French well into the twentieth century.

Colonialism Remembered: Because so many former colonists of Algeria are still living, these questions can be approached through ethnographic as well as archival research methods. There has been a growing interest in the use of oral sources in studies of the colonial past. Most work along these lines has involved the use of the testimonies of former
colonized people to complement archival sources. This research direction is based on an awareness of the biases inherent in the development of colonial archives, and thus in the conviction that only a limited perspective on the experiences of colonialism can be developed from officially produced documents (Guha 1988a, 1988b; Holbrook 1982; Pandey 1988).

More recently, there has been an increasing sense that the voices of the colonists as well as the colonized might also prove useful to studies of the colonial past. This problem was addressed in France in a recent colloquium, “Mémoires de la colonisation. Relations colonisateurs colonisés” (Goutalier 1994), and French students have begun to explore Algerian history in this way. Because recent research on colonialism using oral testimonies has followed more the goals and methods of oral history than an anthropological study of memory, I first outline trends in oral history research, and then develop the different problem of liminal colonial social memory, as conceptualized and studied here.

Oral History

With the expansion of historical research since the 1960s, many historians have begun to construct knowledges about people previously left out of mainstream histories using new or renovated methods, including oral history (Feierman 1993:168, see also
Joutard 1983). Using oral testimonies, historians now consider the pasts of people not always featured in conventional written sources, for instance, women (for a review, see Anderson 1987), working classes, marginal populations (Wyatt 1987), and previously neglected regions of the world. Some oral historians use oral testimony to complement written sources as well as to provide an “insider” or subjective account of larger historical processes (Atiya 1982).

Historians and sociologists have outlined concerns with oral history research methods. The problem of the selective and changing nature of memory is a key concern (Cutler 1984), and many question the reliability of data collected in this way. Sociologists in particular have argued that a reliance on individual life history accounts has limited use in the consideration of larger historical processes, and raise concerns with sampling and of over-generalizing to a larger social group from the testimonies of a few individuals. In part in response to these criticisms, the discipline of oral history has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years. In the United States, this has occurred in conjunction with developments in the wider discipline of history as scholars have given more serious attention to the problem of subjectivity in all historical research. 

Oral historians also have begun to explore the subjective nature of their research, starting

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10 The use of oral testimonies has proved particularly fruitful in studies of the African past. For reviews of key works, see Feierman 1993:182-185 and Moniot 1990; see also Delivré 1974; Finnegan 1980; Miller 1980; Vansina 1980, 1985.
in the late 1970s (Passerini 1979; for a review, see Yow 1997). Anthropology has proven an important influence, and anthropologists periodically publish in oral history journals outlining similarities between the fields (Crapanzano 1977; di Leonardo 1987) or the stressing the need for greater attention by oral historians to ethnographic research methods (Crapanzano 1980, Rosaldo 1980; Joutard 1983). However, subjectivity sometimes enters into oral history writings in ways that indicate that the ultimate goal remains to tap into "the truth." An underlying objectivism of this kind may be linked to a sense of mission many oral historians bring to the field. In their reaction against the written monopoly on the past or to vindicate people who are voiceless, the "oral historian can have the honorable temptation to erase him or herself completely" (Joutard 1983:194), and in their effort to avoid "betraying" their interlocutors, they may attempt at all costs not to introduce the kind of critical approach found in traditional historical research. In France, scholars like Dominique Aron-Schnapper have rejected the term "oral history," stating that their approach is more akin to that of an archivist than a historian—they collect oral histories but do not feel they should confront or analyze them (Joutard 1983:7). Some oral historians thus work in a manner analogous to "salvage" ethnographers in that their primary goal is to record and preserve the reminiscences of a certain people before they are lost forever. Oral history conducted with this sense of mission is similar to some current research in anthropology on memory. Because this literature on memory is so influenced by the earlier writings of Maurice Halbwachs on

\[11\] For a history of the subjectivity question in American historiography, see Novick 1988.
collective memory, I turn now to these foundational texts before exploring the differences between “collective,” “popular,” and “social” memory in current social science research.

Collective, Popular, and Social Memory

French sociologist and Durkheim disciple Maurice Halbwachs’ influential works on collective memory are often cited today as scholars return to the problem of social, collective, or popular memory. In *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1992 [1925]) (the social frameworks of memory), Halbwachs insisted on a social source of memory. He criticized psychologists who at the time argued that memories are stored in the unconscious (Ibid:38). If this were the case, “each individual mind would in this manner drag behind itself the whole array of its memories” (Ibid:39), a proposition he believed was soundly countered by dream research. He felt that in order to truly remember, we must be in contact with human society. Halbwachs proposed the existence of “frameworks” of memory; social frameworks within which individual memories and thoughts are possible or meaningful. While he admitted that individuals have unique memories due to different life circumstances, he did not propose a mechanism for individual remembering. Instead, he believed that even these individual memories are basically social, for they leave a lasting impression to the extent that they are linked or interrelated to the thoughts “that come to us from the social milieu” (Ibid:57), a milieu outside of which we can never escape or think.

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12 The literature on social memory is a dynamic one. Some recent and important works include Alonso 1988; Bourguet et. al. 1990; Boyarin 1991, 1992, 1994; Brow 1990;
Having demonstrated the social nature of individual memories, Halbwachs turned to the concept of collective memory, considering the memories of the family, religious organizations, and social classes. His discussions are based on ideal-types, not actual case studies, and perhaps partly for this reason, conflict does not feature in his model, and group homogeneity is indirectly stressed or assumed: "the similarity of memories is merely a sign of a community of interests and thoughts" (Ibid:52). These "communities of interest" are presented by Halbwachs as integrated wholes, integrated partly by shared memories. Each family, for example, has its "proper mentality," its memories which it alone commemorates (Ibid:59). He argued that collective memories function in the present as models or examples that teach the nature of the group's qualities, flaws, and values. Social groups are thus bound together and understand themselves through social memory.

In The Collective Memory, a work published posthumously in 1950, Halbwachs contrasts collective memory with history. Collective memory, he argues, is an unwritten stream of continuous thought delimited by a specific social group, while history is a unitary written collection of facts, often regarding the nation, constructed by objective, impartial historians (1980 [1950]:81). The development of a universal history is a violent process, involving the severing of memories from groups, a reduction of events to comparable terms, and the introduction of universal demarcations (dates, etc.) into the "stream of facts."

This Halbwachsian contrast between a spontaneously developed unwritten "collective memory" and an impersonal and consciously constructed "history" persists in some contemporary French writing on the subject (see Nora 1989; Le Goff 1992). In an article outlining the national project "Les Lieux de la Mémoire" (sites of memory), Pierre Nora poetically elaborates on Halbwach's memory/history opposition (1989). Memory, he writes, is integrated, unself-conscious, "spontaneously actualized" and "blind to all but the group it binds" (Ibid:9); "the remnants of experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral" (Ibid:7). The quintessential repository of collective memory, according to Nora is "peasant culture," which he fears is fast disappearing (Ibid). History, in contrast, belongs to all and to no one, claiming "universal authority;" its true mission, he argues, is to "suppress and destroy memory" (Ibid:9). In fact, Nora believes that the French documentation project is of utmost importance because we live in a time of "the conquest and eradication of memory by history" (Ibid:8).

An analytical distinction similar to that made by Nora and Halbwachs between universalizing "history" and enclaves of group "memories" is apparent in recent anthropological writings on social memory. While many recent scholars now employ renovated terminologies, writing instead about contrasting "official" and "popular" histories, or "dominant," "subaltern" or "subordinate" memories (c.f. Alonso 1988; Brow 1990; Popular Memory Group 1982; Swedenburg 1991), I believe we find ourselves in a rather continuous line of thinking.
The Popular Memory Group, a group of Marxist scholars at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, states that it wants to move beyond a limited sense of "history-writer" as "the historian" or specialist academic (1982:206), to an expanded idea of historical production that includes "all the ways in which a sense of the past is constructed in our society" (Ibid:207). They discuss two main ways in which a sense of the past is produced, that produced through "public representations" and that through "private memory." The public stage is occupied by various actors, sometimes in conflict, comprising "the historical apparatus," and who produce a "field of public representations of history." To reveal the power of these historical representations and their connection to dominant institutions, they refer to public representations of history as "dominant memory" (Ibid). The Popular Memory Group recognizes that "dominant memories" are not of course everywhere "dominant" (Ibid). In addition, they believe that there may be different kinds of dominant memory. Representations of the past developed by state agencies are the most obvious of these public representations; however, institutions that have a greater autonomy from state and capital, such as local historical societies, private museums, and even members of the educational field, may develop alternate representations.

While dominant memories achieve centrality, other memories are marginalized, excluded, or reworked. These memories derive, the group argues, from "quite other processes"—a knowledge of the past is "also produced in the course of every day life." The Popular Memory Group describes this other, popular, memory in greater detail:
There is a common sense of the past which, though it may lack consistency and explanatory force, none the less contains elements of good sense...Such knowledge may circulate, usually without amplification, in everyday talk and in personal comparisons and narratives...if this is history, it is history under extreme pressures and privations...It is not only unrecorded, but actually silenced. It is not offered the occasion to speak (1982:210).

In his article, "Notes on community, hegemony, and the uses of the past" (1990), Brow presents his own "neo-Halbwachsian" approach to social memory. He stresses the importance of memory in the process of "communalization." Community to him involves a sense of belonging together (1990:1). While all communities are socially constructed, he notes that some communal relations are more binding, and feel to members as if they existed for all time. This sort of social order is what Bordieu calls "doxa" (1977:164 in Brow 1990:2)—a social order taken for granted, involving the "absence of contending opinions" (Ibid). Brow seems to be falling into the romantic path already mapped out by Nora and Halbwachs, and he even eludes to a recent past characterized by harmonious stable communities: "rapid and profound changes in the objective conditions of contemporary life constantly threaten the boundaries of doxa" (1990:2). While Brow envisions hegemony as involving "all levels of consciousness," like the Popular Memory Group, he does not find all levels of consciousness equivalent, and he too employs Gramsci's concept of common sense to introduce non-dominant or non-hegemonic consciousness. He states that common sense is the "practical, everyday consciousness of ordinary people in a particular society" (Ibid:4). Part of this field of common sense is popular memory, the privatized senses of the past generated "within a lived culture" (Ibid). We find ourselves still within a relatively continuous line of thinking.
A Romantic Turn in Social Memory Research

The analytical distinctions drawn between popular and dominant memory, or Nora’s “memory” and “history,” can be viewed as a variation on the nature/culture trope; the “organic” or untarnished flow of memory is contrasted to a history viewed as cultural construction (Starn and Davis 1989:2). The conception of popular memory that emerges from this literature is surprisingly ahistorical, guilty of the “denial of coevalness” that Fabian outlines in his seminal work, Time and the Other (1983). In this book, Fabian argues that the anthropological claim to power is most clearly visible in its uses of Time when constituting its object (1983:1); he focuses in particular on the distancing of those observed from the time of the observer (Ibid:25). Such distancing, which culminates in a denial of coevalness, is exemplified by Nora’s account of his “lieux de mémoire” project. Nora contrasts the “acceleration of history” with the “repetition of the ancestral” (1989:7), and links the “collapse of memory” with the sweeping “into history” of “societies newly awakened from their ethnological slumbers” (Ibid). A radically different understanding of the Time of people with memories and that of people with histories is suggested by these remarks.

While less guilty of the denial of coevalness, Brow and the Popular Memory Group nevertheless overdraw the distinctions they make between popular and official representations of the past, perhaps in part because of an understandable romantic reverence of the memories of the “people.” While I can understand the value of calling attention to the use of different constructions of the past in hegemonic struggles over

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13 On Halbwachs’ failure to historicize memory, see Boyarin 1994:24.
power and identity, I find the assumption at the outset that these memories derive from fundamentally different social processes difficult to accept. When these writers turn to the memory of subordinate peoples, they present a formulation that is romanticized and sometimes condescending. I find particularly disconcerting the assertion of such radically different processes involved in the formation, maintenance or reproduction of these different kinds of memory. The positing of such radically different processes is based on a rather thin theoretical foundation, and does not sit well with the considerable evidence that decidedly “subordinate” groups manage to articulate their pasts in a sophisticated fashion that in no way resembles Gramsci’s “common sense forms” or “strangely composite constructions” (see Hendricks 1993; Briggs 1988, Price 1983, Tonkin 1992 for just a few examples). The limitations of such an assertion become obvious when we consider the complexities of power relations: the existence of power struggles that occur along gender or other lines even within a social group as small as a family, for instance. We can move beyond simple polarities by purposefully examining the social memories of a social group that cannot be situated neatly as “dominant” or “subordinate,” such as that of the “subordinate colonists” discussed in this dissertation.

In the work that follows, I avoid the term “popular” memory because of its association with the theoretical formulations outlined above. I also discard the phrase “collective memory” as too closely linked to the influential writings of Halbwachs and because it refers more specifically to the memory of a specific kind of social group, a collectivity. Instead, I find the phrase “social memory” the most useful terminology, and use it here to refer to representations of the past of a group of people.
An Analysis of Maltese-origin Pieds-Noirs Social Memory

In anthropological research, concerns about the subjective nature of anthropological research and ethnographies led in the 1980s to a serious exploration of the bases for ethnographic knowledge and experimental techniques in ethnographic writing (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986). In a move away from the traditional ethnography that summarized research in distant third-person narratives, some anthropologists began to explore the life histories of specific individuals in detail. An extreme version of this approach is the presentation of biography as ethnography (Crapazano 1980; Shostak 1981).

While early uses of biography have involved ethnographers' reconstructions of an individual's life story, researchers interested in a "discourse-centered" approach to culture and language (Sherzer 1987; Urban 1991) have begun to present analyses of the actual texts of individual life-stories (Hendricks 1993). This represents a departure from the reconstructed biographies of Native Americans (see Hendricks 1993:23-24) and the earlier autobiographies of Nissa and Tuhami. Much of this work highlights style, form, or performance. Tonkin, for example, examines the development of different discourse genres in narratives of Jlao historians of Liberia (Tonkin 1992); Hendricks examines the structure and narrative style of a 75 minute "life history" by Tukup, an elderly Shuar of southeastern Ecuador; and Briggs explores creativity and skill of elderly Hispanic individuals' discourses about the past in northern New Mexico (1988).

The detailed examination of the ways a particular group discusses the past can be an interesting and intriguing problem in itself, however in this project I wanted to use this
material as the point of departure for subsequent analysis. This project thus strays from more classic anthropological approaches to memory in which people's talk about the past becomes the primary data source. Conversely, this research also strays from classic oral history. I was not interested in using oral sources simply to fill a gap in the archival record, giving primacy to the archival record; I did not want to embark on a project that would culminate only in an oral history of life in Algeria from the Maltese perspective. Instead, both bodies of data, oral testimony and archival records, have been used together with a larger goal of uncovering and then analyzing Maltese pied-noir social memory.

Archival research was necessary to achieve this goal. In order to analyze a body of social memory, one needs a separate, alternate point of reference, an understanding of the same history from another perspective with which one can to contrast the group memory in question. This alternative perspective could be that found in mainstream historical writings, national "official" history texts, or what some working on social memory sometimes call the "dominant" memory. In my case, such an approach, however problematic, was not even possible. Standard histories of French North Africa do not highlight the experiences of the non-French settlers. I therefore conducted archival research to fill this gap.

My dissertation research methodology was therefore two-pronged. The first phase involved extensive archival research from which I developed an archive-based history of the Maltese experience in North Africa. The second phase involved ethnographic research among a group of Franco-Maltese pieds-noirs, focusing on their memories of the past. The archival record yielded one narrative, the oral testimony,
another. After developing these distinct narratives about the Maltese in Algeria, I then contrasted the two and analyzed the differences.

Two distinct research methods, therefore, with distinct immediate goals, were used throughout the 19-month period. I was based in Paris for the first six months (January to June, 1995), where I conducted archival research, and spent the next fourteen (June 1995 to July 1996) as ethnographer in Aix-en-Provence. These two research phases were not kept strictly distinct, however. In order to maximize the time spent with the research community, I saved some trips to the archives for times when principal informants were on vacation (in August 1995, for instance, I left Aix for Nantes and London). During the first six months while based in Paris, I traveled to Aix-en-Provence twice (totaling one month altogether) to attend annual association outings.

**Archival Research**

I conducted considerable archival research, which comprises the basis of chapters 2 to 4. Maltese immigration to Algeria occurred from the 1830s through the late 19th century. By the late 1880s there were over 16,000 Maltese, the vast majority of whom lived in the eastern department, Constantine. For this reason, I limited my historical study to that region starting in 1830 and continuing through the 1890s, after which time archival sources have yet to be made available to researchers. Prochaska's recent work on a major city of this region, Bône (1990) contains an excellent fine-grained statistical analysis of demographic, occupational and residential stratification of the European residents of from 1876 to 1911. Because archival sources for the important city of
Philippeville are particularly rich, I focused my original research on the early relationships of the Maltese with the French and other Europeans on experiences in that city and in the neighboring towns of Guelma and Souk Ahras. This material in turn links to the stories of my informants, many of whom grew up in Philippeville and these smaller towns. Other materials examined in French archives include police records and confidential files on suspected foreigners, which include a wealth of information regarding the treatment of the first generation of Maltese immigrants by local French officials. Military archives at Vincennes record the use of Maltese as interpreters for the army.

During the period considered here, Malta was a British colony. I also consulted archival documents of the British Colonial Office at the Public Record Office in London, and at the National Archives in Rabat, Malta to better understand the Maltese emigration to Algeria, and to provide another perspective on the French treatment of the Maltese. Maltese colonial government reports, newspaper articles about expatriate communities, and newspapers published in North Africa by and for Maltese there were consulted at archives in Malta. A complete list of the archives consulted for this dissertation is provided in Appendix A.

**Ethnographic Data and Methods**

This dissertation is based partly on ethnographic research conducted over a period of fourteen months with French colonists of North Africa. I began this study working with an association of Maltese-origin pieds-noirs based in southern France, the
Association France-Malte-Provence. As my relationships with association members developed, I met as well with friends of this core group who were not association members, friends who belonged to other associations but who were not of Maltese origin, and, finally, other French colonists of Maltese origin whom I met in a variety of ways. Detailed information about the individuals I interviewed and the ethnographic methods used are provided in Chapter 5.

Analysis: Social Memory Domains

In the first three chapters, I present the results of my archival research, developing an "archival" memory of the early Maltese past in colonial Algeria. I outline the Maltese migration to North Africa, and to Algeria in particular, in chapter 2. In chapter 3, background on the French colonization of Algeria is presented, and I turn to the migration of European settlers to the colony. I then present key findings from my archival research on the discrimination experienced by the first generations of Maltese migrants, and explore the roots of anti-Maltese prejudices as presented in documents from the 1840s. The use of naturalization law in the re-shaping of social identities, and in particular the assimilation of the non-French colonists into the colonist faction are addressed in chapter 4.

Having presented some of the important aspects of the colonial past as experienced by their ancestors, I turn to the ethnographic setting in chapter 5, outlining the arrival to France of the former colonists, and describing in detail the research community and research methods. I then turn to the results of my ethnographic research, presenting what I call the "domains" in the social memory of the Maltese-origin pieds-noirs I interviewed. Some of
these domains were returned to frequently and in a patterned way in conversations; others were carefully avoided. In chapter 6, I consider the French-Algerian war, a highly-charged domain whose presence was signaled more through indirect clues than direct discussion. The more remote family past, and tales of assimilation and upward mobility, together comprise a compound domain to which most interlocutors referred, and which was often summarized by a variation on the melting pot metaphor, as I discuss in chapter 7. Finally, I turn to the nostalgic variation on the colonial past, which was often connected to an open-ended domain comprised of memories of the difficult encounters the pieds-noirs have had with the Metropolitan French since their arrival to France in the 1960s. In chapter 9, I summarize the domains in Maltese-origin pieds-noirs social memory, and present concluding remarks on the problem of selectivity in social memory.
ILLUSTRATION 1, MAP OF MALTA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
CHAPTER 2: MALTA, THE MALTESE, AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY MIGRATION

Introduction

Maltese began migrating to Algeria during the earliest years of French conquest starting in 1830, and by the mid-nineteenth century, they comprised a substantial portion of the European population in eastern towns. This migration was part of a wider Maltese emigration movement which spanned the nineteenth century and which has been examined in detail by Charles Price in *Malta and the Maltese. A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration* (1954). While emigration was insignificant in previous centuries, it became increasingly important in the early years of the nineteenth century, and by 1842, approximately 15 percent of the population of Malta lived outside the archipelago along the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean (Price 1954:61).

This chapter considers the factors that encouraged so many Maltese to leave their islands at this time. I present an introduction to the islands, the people and the Maltese language, and describe the economic base of the islands during the tenure of the Order of St. John (1530-1798). After considering the socioeconomic status of the Maltese during the first half century of British rule starting in 1800, I trace the initial decades of the nineteenth century emigration, and consider why many Maltese chose North African destinations in particular.
Malta and the Maltese

Malta is a small, rocky archipelago of three islands, Malta, Gozo, and tiny Comino. The island of Malta has an area of approximately 95 square miles, and Gozo, to the northwest, is approximately half that size (see Illustration 1, pages 48). The islands are located in the central Mediterranean sixty miles to the south of Sicily and 180 miles north of the North African coast and have a harsh climate and no permanent source of water. However, despite the lack of important resources of any kind, the islands have played an important role in international affairs during the past few millennia due to their strategic location in the Mediterranean (see Illustration 2, page 50). The islands were populated at least by the beginnings of the Neolithic, which in Malta, as in the rest of the Mediterranean, dates to 5,000 BC (Courtin 1994). Megalithic temple ruins are found on both Malta and Gozo and date to 3-4,000 BC. The Phoenicians arrived in the 10th century BC, and were followed by Greeks in 736 BC, Carthaginians, and Romans. In the late 9th century AD, Malta was conquered by Berber-Arabs of the Aghlabid dynasty based in Tunisia, and Muslims remained in power until the Norman Conquest of 1090 AD. It is this Muslim conquest and Malta’s Islamic period that has most troubled later historians, who, in their efforts to demonstrate the innate “Europeanness” of the Maltese people, developed and reproduced many “false traditions,” in Maltese historiography, sometimes even based on forged documents (see Luttrell 1977). Early Maltese historians insisted on Christian continuity throughout the two hundred years of Muslim rule.
sometimes placing antagonistic Christian-Muslim relationships at the center of Maltese history. Because it so closely resembles Arabic, the Maltese language was particularly problematic to scholars trying to prove that Malta has a predominantly European heritage, and until the nineteenth century, grammarians speculated that the language had Phoenician or Punic origins.\textsuperscript{15} Based on this shaky assumption, historians like A. Caruana and Augusto Bartolo argued that since the language had been so minimally influenced by Arabic, it was highly probable that during the Islamic period, very few Arabic speakers settled on Malta and thus Arab Muslims had very little influence on the culture or language.\textsuperscript{16}

Recent scholarship presents quite a different scenario. Work by medievalist historian Luttrell and others has revealed that Christianity completely or almost completely disappeared on Muslim Malta (Luttrell 1975); this argument is now a virtual consensus among scholars (Luttrell 1991). Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that not only was Christianity lost, but that the Muslim invasion also coincided with a thorough and rapid language shift, as Wettinger has found in his study of medieval place names and other onomastic evidence (1972; 1986). Little is known about the period prior to Arab conquest except that Malta was under Byzantine rule and had been Christian for some time. It is unclear what language was spoken during this period, although many

\textsuperscript{14} This conquest occurred in conjunction with the Aghlabid conquest of Sicily. Ahmad bin 'Umar occupied Malta briefly in 869, and was followed by Muhammad ibn Hafagab, the Arab governor of Sicily. Muslims ruled the islands until 1090 AD (Salloum 1997:34).

\textsuperscript{15} This view is still popular in Malta today, and sometimes surfaces in tourist guides to the islands.
assume that it was a form of Latin or Greek. If this was indeed the case, virtually no evidence of the previous language can be detected in place names recorded in 14th, 15th and 16th-century documents; ninety-nine percent of these were of Semitic origin (Wettinger 1972; 1986). The fact that none of the pre-Arabic place names survived indicates that unless the Maltese already spoke a Semitic language during the Byzantine period, the hypothesis of minimal Arab presence on Malta can be discarded (Wettinger 1986:88).

Furthermore, Wettinger argues that because place names provide practically no evidence of the earlier language, it is highly probable that during the Muslim conquest, the local people were expelled and replaced with Arabic speakers (Ibid:91).

There is additional evidence supporting such a sequence of events. During the Islamic period, Islam was the religion of most if not all Maltese (Ibid:92). Even after Count Roger the Norman conquered the islands in 1090, the terms of the peace treaty he signed with the Muslims allowed local Muslim rulers to continue to administer local affairs, suggesting that the Christian population of the islands of this time was relatively insignificant.

An examination of the Maltese language itself provides further support for Wettinger's repopulation hypothesis. Linguists now believe that Maltese is the result of the convergence of two unrelated language families, Southern European Romance and North African Semitic (Maghrebine Arabic) (Brincat 1991:91). By modern accounts, the history of this language begins with the Arab invasion and the complete replacement of the previously spoken language, whatever it may have been, with North African Arabic.

\[16\] Maltese historians A. Caruana and Augusto Bartolo made these assertions in 1896 and
(Brincat 1991:93). After this sudden and complete Arabization, a slow and cumulative Latinization began in the Norman period and continues today (Ibid:94).

Exposure to Romance languages was minimal in the early Norman period as few foreigners speaking these languages were stationed there until the 12th century. After the reconquest of Malta by Roger’s son in 1127, a permanent Christian garrison was finally based on Malta and the administration henceforth was Christian, but sources indicate that the growth of the Christian population was extremely slow. Even a century after the expulsion of Muslims in the 13th century, there are reports of Muslim baptisms, suggesting that the Muslim departure was not sudden or complete. During the tenure of the Order of St. John, starting in 1530, the large presence of Arabic-speaking slaves on the islands may have had a conservative influence on the language, although the number of foreigners speaking Romance languages increased dramatically during this period as well. Foreign contributions to the evolving Maltese language were principally from Sicilian until the seventeenth century, followed by Tuscan Italian, and finally modern Italian and English since the nineteenth century. These languages have left a mark in all

1915, respectively (Wettinger 1986:88).

17 The first Maltese grammars were produced in the 18th century. Until the end of that century, however, literary works in Maltese were rare. Maltese writers began asserting their linguistic identity in the late 19th century, yet there were still difficulties with the alphabet. An association of Maltese writers proposed to shift to a new Latin alphabet for Maltese in 1921. Maltese was declared an official language of Malta in 1934 (see Vanhove 1994:168).

18 By the seventeenth century, nearly a third of all marriages in some parishes in Valletta were between Maltese women and foreign men, providing a social basis for the Latinization of the Maltese language, which continued through the nineteenth century (Brincat 1994:103).
aspects of the language, including morphological and phonetic features (Vanhove 1994:168).

The Order of Saint John: The Knights of Malta

The Sovereign Military Order of the Hospital of Saint John was established in Jerusalem in the 12th century following the first Crusade, ostensibly to serve European pilgrims arriving to the newly conquered Levant. Following the Crusaders’ defeat in 1291, the Order moved to Rhodes. They moved again, this time to Malta, in 1530 following their defeat by Ottoman leader Suleiman I. At the time of the Knights’ arrival to the islands, the 15 to 17,000 Maltese inhabitants supported themselves with a meager subsistence agriculture and by working as sailors for European enterprises trading in the Mediterranean (Blondy 1994:75). Suleiman followed the Knights to Malta, and attacked the islands in a long siege in 1565, now called the Battle of Lepanto. The Order and Maltese forces managed to repel the invaders. This battle was later viewed by the Maltese as a key symbolic event, representing not only the defeat of the Muslims by the Catholics, but also as a victory for Europe against the Ottoman Empire (see Frendo 1988:186-7), and the basis for claims about Malta’s pivotal role in efforts to maintain a Christian Europe.

Over the next three centuries, Malta was governed by the Knights, a heterogeneous collection of “soldier monks.” Strict regulations limited access to the Order to members of European nobility and thus prevented most Maltese from participating in local government. The Maltese did benefit from an increased prosperity
and standard of living under the Order's rule, however. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, piracy, a common practice along both shores of the Mediterranean, was a principal source of income for the Maltese islands. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Order of St. John not only captured non-European pirate ships and enslaved their crews, the only piratical activity permitted to them by their statutes, but also began to pillage non-piratical ships of non-Christian states as well. After 1605, piracy became a full-fledged commercial endeavor carried out under the Maltese flag. Associations of financiers bought the necessary boats, equipment and provisions, armed the men, and divided the earnings through a careful formula, with a pre-determined percentage of the proceeds benefiting the Order (Blondy 1994:77). Europeans from throughout the Mediterranean began to establish themselves in Malta to take part either directly or indirectly in this flourishing trade.

The Order tried to foster other, more legitimate means of encouraging economic growth, particularly towards the end of the 17th century when piracy grew less profitable. They built the largest hospital in Europe in Valletta, offering free care to all, and ship captains began to stop at Malta to drop off sick passengers. The hospital was expanded to include quarantine facilities. When these facilities were extended to ships, Malta

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19 The Order's great fortification projects were completed in part through slave labor. At any given time during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were over two thousand slaves in Malta, and during the last 75 years of the Order's rule, at least 9,600 slaves were captured and brought to the islands. Most of these slaves were North Africans; a minority were Turks, Jews or from sub-Saharan Africa (Pullicino 1972:374).

20 The disruption of trade caused by the Order's piratical activities created lasting tension with the Republic and Venice and led the latter to refer to the Order as "corsairs parading crosses" (Mallia-Milanes 1994).
became a crucial Mediterranean port of call during periods of epidemics (Blondy 1994:80). Low storage rates and greatly reduced custom duties for non-residents\textsuperscript{22} resulted in increasing trade. By the 18th century, Malta was a principal warehouse for merchandise shipped between the Levant, North Africa, Sicily, Leghorn, and France, and an increasingly important center of exchange and trade. This international trade benefited a growing middle class of businessmen, shopkeepers and traders.

There were two additional sources of external income for the islands during the eighteenth century. The Order owned sizeable estates in Europe and spent a large amount of its annual revenues on the islands in the form of public works, subsidized food, charities and pensions, and in the maintenance of the Order itself, expenditures which benefited the Maltese both directly and indirectly (Price 1954:2). This paternalistic system resulted in the Maltese subsisting partly off the economy of Europe, and relying on an economic base they had not contributed to.\textsuperscript{23} But in addition to the Order’s expenditures, the Maltese enjoyed a profitable commerce associated with cotton. This cottage industry employed a large portion of rural Malta, including the cotton farmers and those employed spinning or weaving it. Yarn and cloth was exported primarily to Spain. Less important products manufactured in Malta included cut stone and metal filigree (Price 1954:2).

\textsuperscript{21} The Order of St. John was originally established with the obligation to receive and heal the sick for free regardless of ethnic background or religion (Blondy 1994:79).
\textsuperscript{22} The custom duty was one percent for merchandise stored in Malta and sold elsewhere by non-Maltese (Blondy, op. cit.).
The relative prosperity of the 18th century, derived from the storage business, the Knights’ subsidies, and the cotton trade, was such that the populace was able to rely on imported items for two thirds of its food supply. The islands’ population grew as a result of both natural increase and immigration during the Order’s rule, increasing from approximately 20,000 in 1530 to 100,000 in 1798 (Brincat 1991:98). The Order itself included over six hundred Knights, three thousand sailors and nearly seven hundred slaves in 1632 (Ibid:96). As the Order developed the fortifications of the harbor at Valletta, the population of this area swelled with migrants from Sicily and other parts of Europe arriving to work in construction and on ships. In the harbor area of Valletta and the Three Cities, there were 8,855 inhabitants in 1590 and 37,888 by 1797 (Ibid:99). Especially in these harbor towns, foreign immigrants and Maltese were in daily contact, and there was considerable intermarriage between Maltese women and foreign men.

For the Maltese, this relatively comfortable situation changed abruptly at the end of the eighteenth century. First, the Order’s sizeable estates in France were confiscated during the French revolution. By 1792, the Order’s possessions in Germany, Naples, Portugal, Sicily, and Spain were either taken or heavily taxed. In 1797, the Order’s income had fallen to a third of its 1788 earnings, and in June 1798, Napoleon invaded the Maltese archipelago and expelled the Order from the islands altogether. With the Order gone, the Maltese economy foundered, and the populace struggled through the next four decades of political upheaval and economic uncertainty and decline.

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23 Price writes that while one could argue that Malta was a parasite on the general European economy, one could also view this money as rent paid by Europe for the use of
British Rule and the Nineteenth Century Migration

Following Napoleon’s short week in Malta in June 1798, the French evicted the Knights, imposed new taxes, tried to form a republican government, looted the Order’s palaces, and imposed the French language. On September 3, 1798, after Napoleon’s troops began selling off the treasures of the islands’ many churches, the Maltese revolted. After a two-year siege of the French troops, during which the Maltese were assisted by British forces, the French finally surrendered, and the British took their place. The British continued to occupy Malta during their long war with the French. At the Treaty of Paris in 1814 and again at the Congress of Vienna the following year, Malta was officially declared a crown colony of the British Empire.

In some ways, the British presence in Malta was similar to that of the Knights: the British used the islands as an important naval base and trading port for their wider Mediterranean interests, and spent increasing sums to renovate the harbors, develop public works, and maintain the British soldiers and sailors stationed there. During the first decades of British rule, however, these expenditures were never on the same order as those of the Knights, and certainly could not offset the needs of the islands’ growing population. While increasing numbers of Maltese found work in the harbors, by 1842 these workers numbered only three to four thousand, or one-sixth of the laboring population at best (Price 1954:10). Severe unemployment and underemployment, and difficulties in providing enough food for the ever-increasing population plagued the Malta’s strategic harbors in its several centuries-long conflict with the Ottoman Empire (1954:2).
islands during these first decades as a British colony, and the Maltese began to leave in large numbers.

After a brief period of economic growth during the Continental blockade and its use as a port for smuggling British goods into Europe (Price 1954:3), Malta experienced several decades of decline associated with endemic disease and serious economic hardship. The cotton industry suffered when Spain imposed a prohibition on the importation of foreign cotton in 1800 and was further shaken by competition on the world market with Egyptian cotton. Local industry and the growing storage trade could not replace cotton production as the main occupation of the Maltese (Price 1954:5). A series of epidemics (1813, 1829, 1837) decimated large portions of the population, and had a secondary depressive effect on the local economy due to the imposition of quarantine restrictions on ships coming into or out of Malta. This period of economic depression was capped by a major drought from 1840 to 1841 which encouraged the flight of many of the already impoverished farmers.

The first census conducted by the British in 1842 provides some indication of the standard of living of the average Maltese. Of the 112,500 Maltese and 2,000 British

24 Products that were stored in Malta included cereals, oil, tobacco, coffee, sugar and hides en route to Europe, and manufactured goods headed from Europe to Egypt, Turkey and North Africa (Price 1954:4).
25 During the cholera epidemic of 1813, approximately five percent of the population perished (Price 1954:3): smallpox killed 1,200 in 1829 (Colonial Office (CO) 158/68, Public Record Office (PRO), and cholera returned in 1837, killing approximately 4,000 Maltese.
26 The following information is from “An abstract statement of the population of the islands of Malta and Gozo, according to the census taken on the 21st March 1842,” The Malta Government Gazette, December 31, 1842, No. 1551, pp. 57-59, National Archives, Malta (NAM).
and other foreigners, living on the islands, 55 percent lived in rural areas and 45 percent lived in the largest city and port town, Valletta. A small Maltese upper class was comprised of a few noble landowners (813 total)\textsuperscript{27} as well as almost 2,000 professionals, including doctors, lawyers, midwives, architects, government employees, and foreign consuls. Many of those in professions found it increasingly difficult to maintain the standard of living they had been accustomed to during the Knights’ tenure (Price 1954:15). There were at least a few hundred “merchant-dealers” who had profited from the early cotton trade, and who were involved in an important cereal trade with Egypt and further east and local trade with Sicily (Ibid). Approximately 5,000 Maltese were involved in commerce on a smaller scale, working as shopkeepers, innkeepers, peddlers and so forth.\textsuperscript{28}

However, two thirds of those listed in the census as gainfully employed were rural laborers, urban laborers, artisans, small farmers and fishermen.\textsuperscript{29} Laborers comprised approximately half of the working population altogether, and were involved in a range of trades. Almost half were still involved in the cotton trade as spinners and weavers. Others worked as carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, seamstresses, butchers, cooks and bakers. Several hundred were maritime artisans, such as rope makers, ship builders and

\textsuperscript{27} Op. cit., page 58, NAM.
\textsuperscript{28} Op. cit, NAM.
\textsuperscript{29} Price argues that due to the small size of the archipelago and the fact that most survived by working several jobs simultaneously, there were few distinctions between the skills, income, or habits of the unskilled laborers and artisans, and between the agricultural laborer and small farmers, and he considers the standard of living of those listed in the census accordingly as essentially equivalent (1954:8-9).
sail makers. Counted separately were the over 4,000 men working as sailors, boatmen and fishermen.

Agriculture was a difficult undertaking in this harsh rocky land with little rainfall. Farmers managed to grow cotton nevertheless, as well as cumin; fruits such as figs, melons, and grapes, as well as onions; and, in rotations, wheat, barley and clover on their very small fields. Wheat was imported from Russia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and fruit and vegetables were brought in from Sicily. The Maltese kept goats from which they obtained milk and cheese; other animals for eating were imported from North Africa (Vadala 1911:21-22). Of the 12,500 people working in agriculture, a large majority (70 percent) were only laborers on others’ farms. An additional 3,300 agriculturists were tenant farmers holding plots of 30 acres or less on short leases of four to eight years against rents that often cut into their subsistence (Price 1954:13). For many, starvation was imminent. Those employed as laborers and artisans in the towns were not much better off. Families of tanners, spinners and weavers also had difficulty maintaining a minimal standard of living, and had to rely on assistance from local charities (Ibid:11).

By Price’s account (1954:8-11), the average working Maltese family in 1842 included a married couple with seven to ten children, approximately five of whom survived to age fifteen. Unmarried adults often lived with their relatives, and thus a typical household could include four adults and three children. A complete family lived

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30 This situation improved in 1843 when the Government, which owned one third of the islands, lowered its rents by 25 to 30 percent, and other landlords began to follow suit (Price 1954:13).
in one or two rooms, often sleeping on straw. The diet was frugal and people had few
belongings, dressing in coarse cotton and rarely wearing shoes. This standard of living
remained fairly constant from the turn of the century until the 1840s. During prosperous
years, people tended to simply consume more oil, alcohol, and tobacco, and made more
donations to local churches. However, many families made barely enough to survive.
Over five hundred of the employed are listed in the census as professional beggars, and
1,600 lived at government or private charitable institutions.\(^\text{31}\)

While it is impossible to determine from the census data just how many Maltese
lived above or below the average living standard, Price notes that a clue to the number of
underemployed lies in the figures of charitable relief. The British administration in the
1820s was spending approximately 15 percent of its revenues on charities (Price 1954:11-
12), and already by the 1820s, the standard of living of the lower classes was so alarming
that the British Governor of Malta ordered that a committee investigate petitions for
charitable relief.\(^\text{32}\) Over 4,000 petitions, representing whole families, were received by
the Governor’s office during the five-month period. Of these, the committee found only
one to be a possible fraud. They also found that at least half of the applicants were
willing and able to work but were unemployed and completely without means. The
committee reported that many of the individuals represented by the 2,600 petitions they
rejected were also impoverished and in need of immediate financial assistance. The
committee concluded: “if some means of occupation do not offer, to afford this redundant

\(^{31}\) 1842 census, op. cit., page 58.
\(^{32}\) “Report to the Governor of Malta by committee appointed 30 July 1824 to receive
Petitions for charitable relief...”, CO 158/41, PRO.
Population the means of gaining a livelihood, the misery and distress amongst them will accumulate in a painful degree."

Despite the establishment by British officials of some public works programs, Maltese unemployment and its population both continued to increase, and the committee's predictions were realized. The Governor of Malta referred to both of these problems in a letter to his supervisors at the Colonial Office in London in 1831. Natural population growth, a "serious evil," had averaged from 500 to 1,000 per year for the previous twelve years, he wrote, despite the recent epidemics.\textsuperscript{33} He added that industry was not very developed in Malta, and consisted primarily of spinning cotton and cigar manufacturing. The only hope, in his view, was to encourage emigration.\textsuperscript{34} Many Maltese had come to the same conclusion and began to leave the islands.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Destinations of the Nineteenth Century Migrants}

Approximately 5,000 Maltese had already left between 1814 and 1829 (Vadala 1911:48). By the 1840s, approximately 20,000 Maltese had settled overseas, spread out almost directly proportional to their distance from Malta, with most settling in Algeria and Tunisia, and lesser numbers in Egypt and in eastern cities of the Ottoman empire.

\textsuperscript{33} The birth rate averaged 35 per thousand from 1823 to 1842; the death rate during this time was 29/thousand; the natural increase of the population was thus 6 per thousand. The population increased from 100,000 at the time of British occupation to 117,500 in 1842. By this time, the population density was 960/mi\textsuperscript{2}.

\textsuperscript{34} Letter no. 14 of March 3, 1831 to Colonial Office, CO 158/68, PRO.

\textsuperscript{35} The migration was first observable in the increasing sex imbalance in the population, which Governor Ponsonby interpreted as derived from the departures of many men for Bône and Algiers. Letter of March 18, 1833, to Colonial Office, CO 158/75, PRO.
such as Constantinople, Smyrna, and the Ionian islands (see Illustration 1, page 48). By the mid-1840s, there were clearly identifiable Maltese communities all along the southeastern Mediterranean, including approximately 5,000 in eastern Algeria, 3,000 in the Regency of Tunis, with hundreds in each of the important towns along the coast, 1,000 in Tripoli, approximately 1,000 in Constantinople, and 2,000 settled in Alexandria and Cairo. Maltese continued to migrate to these destinations until emigration slowed in the 1880s. Throughout the nineteenth century, the shores of Africa and the Levant received more than 90 percent of the Maltese migrants (Price 1954:189).

**Conditions in North Africa**

Conditions overseas were not necessarily better than those in Malta, although it was sometimes easier to find work. Semi-skilled, European-trained artisans such as carpenters, masons, shoemakers, glasscutters, and smiths were in demand for North African rulers' modernization programs. Like other Europeans, Maltese found work in these trades in Alexandria and Cairo under Mehemet Ali, beginning as early as 1814 (Price 1954:51). Independent merchants were also increasingly drawn to North Africa. Small towns along the coast of Tunis like Sfax or Sousse were of less interest to big European firms, but independent traders could profitably bring in European products like tobacco, material or wine in their *speronera* (small sailboats of 50 to 150 tons) and bring

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36 Because an unknown percentage of the migrants left without papers of any kind it is difficult to determine exactly when people left Malta and where they settled. However, the intended destinations as noted on passport applications in 1841 were Algeria, 54%; Tunisia, 17 percent, Egypt 15 percent, the Ionian islands, 5 percent; and Constantinople, Greece and Tripoli, 2.5 percent each (Price 1954:59).
back raw materials like oil, hides, cattle, or cereals (Ibid). The establishment of this kind of trade in the smaller port towns led in turn to the establishment of shopkeepers, agents, boatmen, wine-shop owners, tobacconists and so forth. In Algeria, there was a new wealthy trading partner with immediate and urgent needs for certain products, and willing to pay almost any price for them: the French Army. In fact, Maltese merchants found a lucrative business in trading with both the British and French Armies. Already by 1836, Maltese vessels were making regular deliveries of coal and other items at the Algerian coastal city, Bône, and returning to Malta with cattle, of which the British military establishments were always in short supply.\(^{37}\) By the 1840s, considerable numbers of Maltese were settled in or around the cities of eastern Algeria. In Bône and Philippeville, for example, they comprised almost half of the European populations until the middle of the century.

In part because of the archipelago's proximity to North Africa, and probably also because of the desperation motivating some of the migrants, the Maltese migration there was characterized by a high degree of spontaneity and mobility. Emigrants often did not have passports or papers of any kind. The first to migrate were often young men who left their family members behind, at least temporarily. In their search for employment, these migrants traveled a great deal throughout North Africa, sometimes landing in one Tunisian port, only to head on to Algeria and later to Alexandria, returning to Tunis, and

\(^{37}\) Foreign Office (FO) 111/7, Reports of 1836, PRO. The number of Maltese vessels who were recorded as having made the journey in both directions containing only ballast suggests that the Maltese may have been delivering contraband as well.
stopping off in Malta once or twice in the process. People having difficulties in Malta could try their luck in North Africa, and return home if they did not succeed. While this dissertation considers primarily the Maltese in Algeria, it is important to keep in mind that Maltese emigration to Tunisia and Algeria were interrelated parts of a whole, and that there was much travel back and forth between the two regions, particularly during the early part of the century. From 1830 on, Algeria was increasingly under direct French control. Tunisia, however, was a distant province of the Ottoman Empire until 1881: Europeans there were under the jurisdiction only of a handful of consular agents and consequently under significantly less surveillance. Probably partly for this reason, Maltese often migrated first to Tunisia and then made their way to Algeria overland or by boarding one of the many small trading vessels following the coast, in the process frustrating French bureaucrats in Algeria who regularly complained about Maltese arriving there without the proper paper work. Entrepreneurs moved from one territory to the other with changing business opportunities, workers traveled back and forth with changing employment prospects, and, of course, criminals and contrabandiers were remarkably mobile, often hiding in new Maltese communities until their reputations, and/or local French officials, caught up with them.

38 FO 339/98, PRO.
39 See letter of June 15, 1844 from British Consulate General, Algiers, to Reade, Tunis, about a Maltese being sent to Tunis, FO 335/88/3; 9 July 1849 letter of St. John to Reade, about a boatmaster being sent to Tunis, FO 335/97/5; CO 158/172, PRO.
Distressed Maltese Overseas

The Maltese Trans-Mediterranean migrants were not always able to find work, and consular agents stationed overseas complained to the Governor of Malta about Maltese criminality and poverty as early as 1817. In Ottoman ruled countries like the Regency of Tunis, farming was not an easy undertaking because Muslim law prohibited non-Muslims from owning real property there until the 1860s. Immigrants in Algeria risked threats of serious epidemics (see Valensi 1969) as well as war-related violence and reprisals.

As British subjects, the Maltese were the ultimate responsibility of the British consular agents stationed overseas. Urgent needs like hospitalization or the return to Malta of destitute migrants were paid for by the consular agents and ultimately charged to the Governor of Malta’s budget. While the Maltese Governors actively promoted emigration, they were accused by consular agents of merely shifting the responsibility for the poorer of their charges to British administrators elsewhere. Already in 1821, consular agents in Tripoli and Alexandria complained to the Governor about the number of distressed Maltese annoying the local government and causing the consuls “trouble and expense.” In response, the British developed guidelines, remaining in effect until well after World War One, for the maintenance of distressed Maltese overseas. Those who, upon “strict enquiry,” were determined to be in actual distress, were to be given a daily allowance for their maintenance until they could be sent back to Malta, and the voyages

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40 Letter from British consular agent in Alexandria to FO, June 1837, FO 78/322, PRO. Letter to British consular agent at Tripoli, November 1817, CSG 08/1, NAM.
back to Malta were free of charge for those in real distress. Throughout the nineteenth century, significant numbers of Maltese were returned to Malta at British expense, and British officials sometimes complained of widespread abuse by the Maltese of the possibility of free transportation back home. The British Consul General to Algeria wrote in 1849 that he believed that “not a single Maltese family on the coast of Africa has not sent each year to Malta one of its members at government expense.”

Like those found in other Mediterranean destinations, the conditions and opportunities in Algeria were extremely variable, and already in the 1830s, distressed Maltese were being returned to Malta by the British Consul General in Algiers. These included women and their children, who were “destitute of all means of living,” an “indigent Maltese who having lost the use of his limbs cannot work and cannot from the nature of his disease, be admitted into the Civil Hospital here.” When the local economy in Algeria took a turn for the worse in the 1840s, the British Consul General had great difficulty meeting the increased demand for his services. He contacted the governor of Malta, asking him to prevent the poorer classes of Maltese from leaving for Algiers by withholding their passports. While the Maltese in Algiers who found themselves in difficulty could apply directly to the Consul General for the arrangement of their passage home, those in the hinterlands were not so fortunate due to a notable

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41 Précis of letters of September 27, 1821 and October 1, 1821 between British Consuls and Chief Secretary of Malta, GMR 1329, NAM; CO 158/213, PRO.
42 St. John to GG, March 31, 1849, F80/614, Archives d'Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence (AOM).
43 Letters of St. John to Governor of Malta, April 1839 to March 1840; FO 112/4, Algiers embassy correspondence, PRO.
44 March 16, 1847, Governor to St. John, CSG 05/3, NAM.
shortage of British consular representation in Algeria during the entire period of French control. Instead, French officials often performed a similar function, perhaps for different motives, and sometimes with great zeal. In 1848, for example, ships were sent regularly from Philippeville transporting 30 to 40 Maltese at a time, at a large cost to the Government of Malta.  

It may seem somewhat puzzling that the strongly religious Catholic Maltese migrated only rarely to the Christian European states to the north, preferring instead the difficult and sometimes dangerous Muslim territories. This choice seems all the more puzzling insofar as there was no precedent for European migration to North Africa. Prior to the nineteenth century, few Europeans other than consulate officers and their families lived permanently in North Africa voluntarily, for it was too risky. The Mediterranean piracy that resulted in Muslim slave labor in Malta also led to Christian slavery in North Africa until the first decades of the nineteenth century. It was only after the abolition of

45 Letter of October 7, 1848 to St. John, F80/614, AOM.
46 By the end of the nineteenth century, there were only about 700 Maltese in Gibraltar and 600 in Marseille; at that time, there were many thousand Sicilians in Malta then, but only some 500 Maltese were established in Italy (Vadala 1911:51-54).
47 By the end of the 18th century, there were 252 “free” Christians and 1,000 to 2,000 Christian slaves in the Regency of Tunis. These slaves worked for the Bey, the court, the government and the city of Tunis (Anselme des Arcs 1889:86-87; Valensi 1967:1278).
this practice in the Regencies of Tunis and Algiers by the 1820s\textsuperscript{48} that poorer Europeans began to settle more permanently in North Africa (see Vadala 1911:42-43).\textsuperscript{49}

The Maltese preference for North African destinations may have been influenced by the similarity of the Maltese language to the locally spoken Arabic idiom. The ease with which Maltese merchants established trading relationships with the local community was due in part to their ability to communicate upon arrival. But another factor may have been cost; this was an emigration of a population who may not have been able to afford longer journeys.\textsuperscript{50} The trip to Tunisia, less than two hundred miles to the south, could be made in small fishing boats for only a few shillings.

However, there is also some indication that Maltese chose destinations closer to home with an ultimate goal of returning to Malta after having amassed some savings. Such a strategy is suggested by the extremely high rate of return-migration. Price estimates that approximately 85 percent of those leaving between 1840 to 1890 returned

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{48} Dates given for the end of slavery in the Barbary states vary: British sources tend to point to the August 28, 1816 peace treaty between Lord Exmouth and the Dey of Algiers; French sources often cite the 1818 Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle or the subsequent arrival to Algiers of a combined European squadron in September 1819 requesting the end of all piratical acts. Some isolated incidents occurred after these treaties but by the mid-1820s, the enslavement of Christians was no longer openly practiced.

\textsuperscript{49} Of course it should be assumed that Maltese were engaged in trade along the North African coast even during the period of piracy and Christian slavery. Already by 1817 there were enough distressed Maltese settling in the Regency of Tripoli to merit the attention of British consulate officers there. This suggests that during these early years, either conditions in Malta were harsh enough to encourage Maltese to risk enslavement, or that some Maltese were not concerned about being captured. CSG, 08/1, letter of 15 Nov. 1817, NAM.

\textsuperscript{50} A desperate aspect to the Maltese migrations in the first part of the nineteenth century is suggested by the large number of entire families who left Malta for Mediterranean destinations with few possessions. By the 1830s and 1840s, British consular agents from}
to Malta (Ibid:189).\textsuperscript{51} That transportation costs were not the only limiting factor is further indicated by the regular failures of all free or subsidized emigration schemes developed by British officials and capitalists for more remote destinations like Jamaica, Cyprus, or Crete. Until the twentieth century, the Maltese had no interest in heading farther afield.

In the following chapter, I consider the settlement of Europeans—Spanish, Italian, Maltese, and French—in Algeria. After outlining the early history of French colonization starting with the initial conquest of Algiers in 1830, I describe the first decades of European settlement, focussing on the French treatment of the large non-French population in the colony. The Maltese settled predominantly in the eastern department of Constantine, and I consider these settlements in greater detail. A series of incidents that occurred in the city of Philippeville in the 1840s illustrate early Maltese relationships with other European settlers. Anti-Maltese stereotypes that developed during these early encounters persisted and shaped Maltese-French relationships in the colony through the early part of the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{51} Price points out that the Maltese rate of re-migration is significantly higher than the high rates of re-migration of other peoples, for instance the rate of approximately 50 percent of Italians in the 1890s (1954:189). Of course, the free "shuttle service" back home provided by the British must have been a factor inflating these figures.
CHAPTER 3: THE FRENCH CONQUEST OF ALGERIA AND EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT, 1830s – 1870s

The French Conquest of Algeria, 1830 – 1870

The French conquest of Algeria began in 1830 almost accidentally and certainly with little public discussion or consensus. From the sixteenth century to 1830, the “Regency of Algiers” had been a remote and semi-independent Regency of the Ottoman Empire. The territory was divided into three divisions or beyliks ruled by beys who reported to the dey in Algiers. Five percent of the ethnically and religiously diverse population of approximately three million lived in urban areas. The rest were sedentary cultivators and nomadic or semi-nomadic herders. The local economy was based on the extensive cultivation of grains and stock raising.

The initial French invasion of Algiers was ostensibly triggered by a conflict over a French government debt to an Algerian firm; negotiations over French repayment broke

52 The historiography of Algeria is vast. For an excellent and up-to-date annotated bibliography of the most important sources, see Ruedy 1992:258-284. The classic work on the first half century of French rule is Julien, Histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine (1964). Ageron’s Modern Algeria, A History from 1830 to the Present (1991) is a masterful summary of the entire period. His longer works (1968a, 1968b and 1979) highlight the later decades of French rule, starting in 1871.
53 These beyliks included the Beylik of the East (with Constantine as the capital), the Beylik of the West (with Oran as the capital), and the central Beylik of Titteri. The area surrounding Algiers was part of the Dar al-Sultan.
54 For a concise review of Algeria just prior to French conquest, see Julien 1964:1-20. Many works treat aspects of this period. Nouschi 1961:54-155 provides an excellent review of rural economic life in the Beylik of Constantine at the time of conquest. See also Valensi 1977 and Gallisot 1975.
down when the dey struck the French consul with a fly swatter. A more compelling proximate cause, no doubt, was French king Charles X’s wish to divert his subjects’ attention away from serious domestic problems. The Bourbon monarchy, restored following Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815, had become increasingly repressive and the nation increasingly polarized, especially after Charles X’s ascension to the throne in 1824.

The French troops landed at Sidi Ferruch, near Algiers, and conquered the city using contingency plans drawn up years earlier for Napoleon. Despite the considerable resistance by Algerian troops organized by local notables, the city fell to the French in three weeks on July 4, 1830. Many city dwellers fled, the dey left for Naples, and Turkish janissaries and bureaucrats were deported by mid-August (Ruedy 1992:50). In France, widespread celebration at the news of the victory occurred only in Marseille (Julien 1964:62). The rest of the country was ambivalent. Some feared the British reaction and the return of English-French hostilities, for the French conquest represented an obvious shift in the balance of power in the Mediterranean. There was also concern about the considerable expense of the conquest operation, future expenses that the army might incur, and the potential risks to national security in maintaining the French army overseas.

The victory in Algiers failed to change public opinion in France about the monarchy. The 1830 revolution occurred only a few weeks after the Algiers conquest, overturning the Bourbon monarchy. When the French military generals stationed in

55 The circumstances leading up to the “coup d’eventail,” or “the affaire d’Alger,” are
Algiers received word of the revolution, they initially considered leaving for France to return their former king to power, but abandoned the idea because a lack of support from the troops. They resigned themselves instead to waiting for the arrival of their new general, who was being sent by the new regime. The soldiers, camped in the suburbs of Algiers, were left to their own devices and engaged in a generalized destruction of local property (Julien 1964:65). Speculators began to migrate across the Mediterranean to purchase homes and properties abandoned during the invasion (Ruedy 1992:52). As increasing numbers of the soldiers became ill with malaria and dysentery, they moved into Algiers, evacuated hundreds of inhabitants without compensation, turned Mosques into barracks, and took over palaces. Many soldiers deserted, and many local people fled the city.

Thus began the French conquest of Algeria. The years to follow were characterized by similar violence and a general disorganization fueled by considerable ambivalence back in France. Throughout the nineteenth century, the French public and leadership alike were more engaged by internal politics than by North Africa, and no clear plans for the newly conquered territories emerged. Some politicians favored maintaining French control of the cities conquered thus far with a limited military presence. Others promoted full-scale colonization of the area and the settlement of substantial numbers of French migrants, a project that would require the securing of discussed in detail in Julien 1964:21-63.
additional territories to serve as buffer zones to protect the settlers, and a larger and continued military presence. Because until 1870, French generals stationed in Algeria had considerable control over both military and civilian affairs and were rotated frequently. French military and colonization policy in Algeria shifted over the next four decades with the changing personalities and motivations of the particular general in charge.

For the autochthonous population, the period from 1830 to 1834 was the "time of anarchy" (Ageron 1991:11). Initially there was no generalized uprising against the French, but instead differential responses across the territory by local leaders. The first two generals, who tried with mixed results to co-opt ruling elites, were followed by General Rovigo, a former minister of police, who ruled ruthlessly from 1831 to 1833. Despite widespread protests, he turned the most venerated mosque of Algiers into the first Catholic Church of the colony and controlled the city with great brutality. As punishment for a purported theft, he had the entire tiny tribe of the Oufia near Maison Carrée massacred; his soldiers brought back the villagers' heads on swords. For years after his departure, subsequent generals had to work hard to counteract the damage he had caused to French-Algerian relations.

France endured rapidly changing forms of government with a succession of revolutions: from one monarchy to another, to a republic, an empire, followed by another republic, all within the short forty-year period from the initial conquest of Algiers in 1830 to 1870. It is understandable that the French public would be preoccupied by internal politics, and less concerned about France's overseas policy.
ILLUSTRATION 3, STAGES OF FRENCH CONQUEST OF ALGERIA.

1830 TO 1930
As huge estates were purchased in the fertile Sahel by French capitalists, other Europeans began to settle in the central Mitidja plain, circulating under armed guard, and local Algerians began to trade with the French (Julien 1964:103). However, the direction of French policy remained unresolved. A commission was formed in 1833 by King Louis-Philippe to determine whether or not further conquests would be in the French interest. The commission reported on the many abuses committed by the French troops, and that capitalist speculators were interfering at all levels. But, despite these problems, and the constant attacks on soldiers and colonists by Arab and Kabyle tribes, the commission concluded that France should continue to occupy Algiers. The commission also recommended that the government try to attract more small farmers to the colony, and that the army better secure the territories occupied thus far. An ordinance of July 22, 1834 instituted the regime of the French North African possessions, constituting the first official recognition of French possession of the colony. The colony was to be led by a "governor-general" (Gouverneur Général), under the control of the Ministry of War, an arrangement that persisted until 1870. The Governor General had all-encompassing powers: he was responsible for the army, made defense-related decisions, directed the administration, and was responsible for the budget, the granting and securing public property, education, the press, and the police. His power to create laws by decree remained in place until 1946.

By the time of the 1834 ordinance, the French occupied primarily the cities and

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57 Reasons for maintaining a French presence in Algeria were complex. At the time, there was some concern about creating a political vacuum in the Mediterranean following the departure of the Turkish forces (Ruedy 1992:52).
suburbs of Algiers, Bône, Bougie, Oran and Mostaganem (Ruedy 1992:53). Over the
next four decades, French conquest proceeded with difficulty and in stages (see
Illustration 3, page 77). French troops met tough resistance throughout much of the
conquest period: between 1830 and 1871, only one year (1861) passed without major
armed conflict in some part of the country (Ruedy 1992:55).

Already by 1834, two Algerian leaders emerged out of the power vacuum created
during the confusion of French conquest. In the east, the Hajj Ahmad ibn Muhammad.
Bey of the eastern province of Constantine, defended his territory against French
incursions. In 1837, after repeated failed attempts to take Ahmad’s base in Constantine,
the most important interior market during the Turkish period, the French finally
succeeded after a brutal battle during which the city was pillaged (Julien 1964:142).
Ahmad resisted French attempts to co-opt him, and spent the next eleven years as a
fugitive (Ruedy 1992:61). Following Ahmad’s defeat, the coastal city of Bône was
placed under direct French rule, and the remainder of the beylik was parceled out to eight
Muslim notables responding to the French. Meanwhile, in western Algeria, the Amir of
Mascara, Abd al-Qadir ben Muhyi al-Din al-Hasani,58 had founded an Arab-Berber
theocracy in response to the French conquest, and managed to unite two thirds of Algeria
under his sultanate (Julien 1964:180). He minted his own money, set up weapons
factories, signed peace treaties with French officials, and continued to defend his territory
from intruding French forces. The French broke the terms of their 1837 treaty with Abd

58 Because this dissertation concerns colonial Algeria, I follow spelling used in Naylor
and Heggoy’s Historical Dictionary of Algeria (1994). For an improved and more
al-Qadir when they moved troops across his territory in 1839, and in response, al-Qadir issued a declaration of war. He sent his forces to destroy French farms in the Mitidja Valley and many newly settled colonists were killed. A long, brutal war followed. The policy of "restricted opposition" was replaced with a policy of "total conquest" when General Bugeaud became Governor General in November 1840 (see Ageron 1991:18-21). In his long war against al-Qadir, Bugeaud increased the size of the Algerian troops to 108,000 French soldiers plus native auxiliaries, and waged a war of total destruction. He organized "razzias," or raids, with a goal of ravaging all territory not under French control. People and livestock were massacred, and crops, fields and dwellings burned. The result was the final defeat of Abd al-Qadir in December 1847, the French occupation of all towns in the Tell, and devastation and acute economic crisis for the indigenous population. According to Ageron, the war resulted in the permanent alienation of the Algerians from the French (1991:19).

The final phase of French conquest involved the remote mountainous areas and the desert and oasis regions to the south. A series of popular rebellions in these areas in the 1840s and 1850s took the form of millenarian movements. One of the best known of these was the 1849 uprising organized by Bu Ziyan in the oasis of Za atsha, southwest of Biskri. After a long siege, the French finally won, massacred the entire town, and cut down approximately 10,000 date palms (Ruedy 1992:67). In the 1850s, the Berber tribes

accurate transliteration of Arabic, see Park's Historical Dictionary of Morocco (1996), of the same series.

59 This treaty, signed in May 1837 between then Lieutenant Bugeaud and Abd al-Qadir, granted al-Qadir the beylik of Titteri and sovereignty of two thirds of Algeria (see Ageron 1991:15).
in Kabylia were still unconquered, and would not be entirely forced to submit until after the great pan-Algerian revolt of 1871.

**European Migration to Algeria**

The first Europeans to arrive in Algeria are described by Ageron as “human vultures,” who took advantage of the wartime chaos to buy up houses and fields abandoned by the fleeing local population. Once they had made sufficient profits, most of these capitalist speculators returned home.60 Along with these profiteers, poor Europeans attracted by the promise of cheap lands and work also began to migrate spontaneously and would continue to do so throughout the nineteenth century. These Europeans came primarily from peripheral areas bordering the Mediterranean, and especially from islands. Corsica, Sardinia, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, Malta, and many smaller islands of Italy, Pantelleria and the Lipari Islands provided an important contribution to the European populations of Algeria (see Illustration 4, page 82). Spanish came first from the Balearic islands, particularly from Mahon. The *Mahonnais* settled early near Algiers where they worked as market gardeners. More Spanish arrived later on from Valencia and Alicante. Italians came from the Piedmont, and in particular Sicily, Sardinia, and the Naples region. Sardine and anchovy fishermen from Naples and the island of Ischia who fished annually along Algerian shores began to settle. Germans

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ILLUSTRATION 4, SITES OF NINETEENTH CENTURY EUROPEAN MIGRATION TO ALGERIA
migrating during the first decades were primarily from Bavaria and Baden (Ricoux 1880:10-16). French arrived principally from the old provinces of Provence and Languedoc which bordered the Mediterranean, the Dauphiné, and Corsica. By 1840, there were over 25,000 Europeans in Algeria, living mostly in or near the conquered cities. Sixty percent of the migrants settled in Algiers, and only 10 percent lived in rural areas (Julien 1964:158).

The European populations in Algeria have been studied by demographers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first migration waves were composed of considerably more men than women, suggesting that the first to arrive were temporary migrants prospecting for better jobs. The sex ratio for European adults in Algeria was 148 men per 100 women in 1847, but over the years it shifted with the increased migration of whole families, so that by 1880, the ratio was 114 men to 100 women (Ricoux 1880:20).

The official census figures for the European populations between 1833 and 1876 are presented in Table 1, below. The French represented only from 38 to 50 percent of the European population through 1876. Despite the widely publicized official French colonization projects, which granted concessions preferentially to French citizens, French immigration barely reached the combined levels of the non-French Europeans. Spanish, Italian, and Maltese dominated numerically for much of the century, and settled in areas

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61 Provence includes the departments of Alpes de Haute Provence, Var, Bouches du Rhône, and parts of the Vaucluse and Alpes Maritimes. The Languedoc region comprises the departments of Gard, Hérault and Lozère.
of Algeria closest to their countries of origin: the Spanish settled mostly in the western
departments of Oran and in Algiers, and the Maltese and Italians were predominant in
Constantine.

TABLE 1: THE EUROPEAN POPULATIONS OF ALGERIA, 1833 to 1876

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<th>Spanish</th>
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<th>Maltese</th>
<th>Germans</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

These census data are problematic, however, and should be considered approximate at best. Demographer Ricoux found outright errors in the official statistics of 1847 and 1851 (1880:17-18, note), and was particularly disturbed by the development of a new census format with each new census operation throughout the century, making the collected data difficult to compare. Age group classification, for example, was carried out only for certain years. In the 1866 and 1872 censuses, children were categorized as “celibate,” resulting in the erroneous reporting of an unusually high rate of celibacy for Algeria at that time (Ibid:22-23). And in 1876, while the population was enumerated by age, neither national origin nor religion was recorded, so demographers

62 The classics include Ricoux’s La démographie figurée de l’Algérie. Etude statistique des populations européennes qui habitent l’Algérie (1880) and Le peuple algérien. Essai de demographie algérienne by Demontes (1906).
63 Source: Ricoux 1880:13.
were unable to create separate population pyramids for the different sub-sets of the population (Ibid:25).

These data indicate that the Maltese comprised only a fraction of the total European population: 15.5 percent in 1833; 8.4 percent in 1845, and diminishing to 4 percent in 1876. Due to inconsistencies in the census data and reporting practices, it is difficult to determine what the margin of error in estimates of the size of the Maltese population might be. It is probable that there were more Maltese than officially noted, however. Throughout the nineteenth century, French officials complained to the Governor of Malta and British consulate officers about the Maltese who traveled to Algeria overland from Tunisia without documents of any kind, and those who arrived by sea without passports and/or ship papers. In most of these cases, we of course learn only of the individuals who have been caught. Because Maltese who arrived without papers were summarily deported by French officials at this time, we can assume that individuals in this situation would have attempted to elude the census takers, and thus that the numbers of Maltese are underestimated to some degree. However, while the Maltese represented a relatively insignificant portion of the overall European population of Algeria, they were the dominant European nationality in cities in the department of Constantine for the first half century of French colonization.

Migrants who arrived on their own initiative were soon joined by individuals who participated in French settlement programs. Although more Europeans migrated

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64 November 25, 1853, French Consul General (C.G.) at Tunis to British C.G., CO 158/172, PRO.
65 July 9, 1849 letter, British C.G., Algiers to C.G. in Tunis, FO 335/97/5, PRO.
spontaneously, these migration histories have received little serious attention from historians, who have tended to highlight what have been referred to as the "official" French colonization programs. These programs, especially significant in the nineteenth century, involved the settlement of French and other Europeans as well as the colonization of the land. Because an underlying goal of these programs was to develop Algerian agriculture, intensive agriculturists were sought, primarily from France, Germany and Switzerland. These concessionaires usually were granted free transportation to Algeria, free lands, and were encouraged to clear the land, plant crops, and build farms.

Official Settlement Programs

Official colonization, 1831-1841: During this first decade, the military government was preoccupied by the conquest and re-organization of the conquered territories, and was ill-prepared for the spontaneous arrival of so many Europeans. There were no funds set aside for colonization projects, and colonization policies and philosophies had yet to be articulated. Sometimes migrants remained for weeks camped out at the ports, not unlike refugees. Military officials attempted to slow down migration. Spanish emigrants from the Balearic Islands were either sent back or pressed

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66 The periodicity used in this section reflects that employed in the report, Enquête sur les résultats de la colonisation officielle de 1871 à 1895, published in 1906 by M. de Peyerimhoff, Director of Agriculture, Commerce and Colonization. Peyerimhoff was asked to examine the long-term results of French official colonization programs of the late nineteenth century. As part of his report, he prepared a very thorough summary of French official colonization programs starting in 1831.

67 Tanski report, op. cit., p. 135
into military service, and by 1832, the Ministry of War stipulated that all disembarking in Algeria have adequate resources. Migration temporarily slowed (Peyerimhoff 1906:15).

Official efforts to organize colonial settlements were at first haphazard. Specific projects were organized only in response to immediate need, and many of the early efforts were failures. The town of Boufarik, for example, was created in 1836, but by 1839, it resembled more a cemetery than a village, with two-thirds of its inhabitants in a hospital in Algiers (Julien 1964:152). Many other early settlements near Algiers were abandoned following attacks by Abd al Qadir’s troops in 1839.

Between 1841 and 1851, the army began to initiate colonization programs in earnest. The first colonization decree by General Bugeaud of April 18, 1841 allowed the state to grant a small building lot and 4 to 12 hectares for cultivation to French and other European immigrants who arrived with the minimum capital of 1,200 to 1,500 francs. Candidates were required to submit an application addressed to the Minister of War, who made the final selection. In addition, colonists were to receive building materials, oxen, temporary loans, and seed, as well as free passage to Algeria (Peyerimhoff 1906:21-2). Aiming to limit land distribution to settlers who would live on and work it themselves, General Bugeaud stipulated that the colonists first receive only a provisional title. These titles outlined a set of required conditions, including the number of hectares to cultivate and trees to plant; colonists received their permanent titles only after fulfilling these conditions. Seven such colonist “centers” were established in 1842, 14 more in 1842, and 17 in 1844, first in the fertile Mitidja plain near Algiers and the Sahel, and later near Oran and the valley of Philippeville. The announcements made in France regarding this
opportunity had the desired results, and in 1843 alone, 14,000 people, of which almost 13,000 were French (including 5,000 from Alsace), arrived in Algeria. The remainder of these first concessionaires were from Germany, Ireland and Switzerland. Italians, Maltese, and Spanish were not encouraged to apply (Peyerimhoff 1906:23). In sum, during this decade, 126 towns or villages were created or enlarged, and 15,000 concessions, totaling 115,000 ha., were allocated (Ibid:39).

Following the revolution in France of February 1848, the French government was confronted with the problem of widespread unemployment. In Paris alone there were over 100,000 unemployed workers following the closure of national ateliers (workshops). A proposal was made to send some of these individuals overseas. The state published announcements of a program of free concessions available in Algeria: over 100,000 applied, from which 20,000 were accepted (15,000 from Paris). These migrants, the “quarante-huitards” (“forty-eighters”) were settled in forty-two hastily created villages. This project was only a partial success. As with many of the other programs, the migrants were not familiar with farming, and they experienced very high rates of infant mortality and suffered through a cholera epidemic in 1849. Within a few years, 3,000 of the original colonists had died and 7,000 returned to France (Ageron 1991:30).

There was considerable return migration during the mid-nineteenth century (Julien 1964:250). Despite the availability of cheap or free land, life was not easy. The migrants needed to learn about the new agricultural conditions and climate, and were subject to disease. Epidemics struck regularly: cholera came in 1849, 1854, and again in 1867-8; in 1867, typhus and famine hit particularly the indigenous populations, but also
the Europeans, and smallpox swept through in 1871 (Ricoux 1880:21, 65). Settlers were discouraged by the long wait to obtain even their provisional titles. Those who had arrived with little money often had to borrow at usurious rates in order to survive. If they experienced too many bad harvests in a row, they lost their lands and were ruined.

1851-1861: Following Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte’s coup d’état in December 1851, Algeria again came under military rule after a few years of civil administration. Considerable land was obtained during this period by restricting tribes to smaller pieces of land (the policy of cantonnement), and 85 villages were created. A new concession system established April 26, 1851 reduced owners’ obligations and abolished the provisional title system. From this point on, individuals who received concessions could immediately sell or mortgage them and the reduced obligations were simply transferred along with the property title. In addition, individuals could now obtain up to 50 hectares at a time and did not have to meet financial requirements (Peyerimhoff 1906:31).

These new regulations encouraged the involvement of private capitalist enterprises and facilitated concentration of ownership. During the 1850s, a total of 250,000 hectares were conceded to 11,000 individuals (Ibid:39), for an averaged of 23 hectares per concession (compared to an average of 8 hectares per concession in the 1840s). Large capitalist enterprises played an increasing role in colonization. The Compagnie Genevoise, for instance, settled 500 families on 12,000 hectares, and for their efforts received rights to 8,000 additional hectares. The company eventually farmed the entire property with the labor of poorly paid Arab workers (Ruedy 1992:71).

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68 On the long economic crisis of 1866 to 1869 in the Constantinois, see Nouschi (1959)
During the decade from 1861 to 1871, official colonization slowed somewhat. Twenty-one centers were created which included very large concessions of 25,000 to 100,000 hectares granted to private organizations and banks (Peyerimhoff 1906:37).

The French government obtained nearly 500,000 hectares from indigenous tribes following the insurrection of 1871, and used these lands for additional settlement programs. Following the loss of Alsace and Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian war, the government began to settle people of these former French territories in Algeria. A special arrangement offered some individuals nine-year leases at a nominal rent of 1 franc per year. After the second year, colonists could sub-let their properties to other European families, who, in order to become permanent landowners, simply had to complete the nine years residence as stated in the original lease. While this arrangement was available to any French national of European origin, primarily those former nationals from the Alsace-Lorraine regions participated.69 (Peyerimhoff 1906:43). From 1872 to 1873, 84 centers or groups of farms were created, and 900 families settled.

Peyerimhoff's study was commissioned to examine the long-term outcome of the settlement programs from 1871 and 1895. He found that despite the attractive terms, the settlement of those from Alsace and Lorraine had limited success. Many of the migrants were unprepared for the difficult life and abandoned their concessions. Only 387 out of the original 1,183 families remained on their lands by 1899 (Ibid:52).

69 The special title II concessions also attracted French from Corsica, as well as individuals born in Algeria. In Constantine, out of 438 families installed from 1871 to 1874, only 78 families remained on their lands by 1906, and over a hundred families left Algeria or died. But only 50 percent of these individuals were from Alsace or Lorraine.
Official vs. Private Colonization

The official settlement programs described above offered concessions to primarily French, German, and Swiss settlers. But "private" or "spontaneous" settlement of Europeans, through the independent acquisition of property from Muslim or European landowners (Ruedy 1967:vii), also played a significant role. Private colonization has received considerably less scholarly attention in the classic historical sources (Julien 1964; Ageron 1991, 1979), and thus it is difficult to determine with any exactitude the relative proportions of the different mechanisms for European settlement. However, the two systems worked in tandem: through the concerted state efforts, considerable expanses of land were taken from the autochthonous population, placed in the public domain, and offered free or nearly free to European settlers. Once these settlers sold or abandoned their lands, they had entered into the system of private colonization.

This close relationship between official and private colonization is illustrated by the case of the town of Guelma, inland from Bône and Philippeville in the department of Constantine. A proposal to create a small European town in Guelma was developed in January 1845. At the time, there was already a French military camp there along with nearly three hundred Europeans who had arrived independently to settle near the army. They provided services to the nearby military base, working as masons, bakers, and farmers. The first European civilian was a celibate Maltese butcher who arrived in 1837. The rest were from southern France, Corsica, or were French citizens who were born in Algeria.

Ruedy’s *Land Policy in Colonial Algeria* (1967) examines the source of lands of the public domain, and the legal framework established in the nineteenth century which...
and who undoubtedly sold meat to the military camp. Italian and French bakers, day laborers, merchants and masons arrived soon after.

Local officials decided that the site was ideally suited for the establishment of a more substantial European village and proposed Guelma as a new center for European settlement. The government decided to create a center for 250 families, granting the first 100 families free concessions of a building lot and a field for cultivation. Local officials decided to offer the property titles to the individuals who were already established in Guelma as well. These 38 male heads of households were mostly French, with lesser numbers of Maltese, Italians, and Germans. Few agriculturists applied for the free concessions, which the Director of the Interior felt was due to the remoteness of the site and the associated higher prices for basic goods there. The Ministry determined that the best solution would be offer the concessions to people who had not yet arrived in Algeria, and thus who "undoubtedly do not yet have fixed ideas about the location, and perhaps would agree to settle in Guelma." The families who finally arrived over the next year and a half were all French or German, suggesting that the French selected only individuals of specific nationalities to receive the early concessions even though they

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71 "Rapport fait au Ministre le 20 janvier 1845," IL 52 Guelma, AOM.
72 During this time, Italian and German unification had yet to occur and these terms are thus anachronisms; the individuals are listed in the archives instead as "Prussian," "Hessian," "Piemontais" and "Bavarian." In order to facilitate comparison between eras, however, I have grouped together these individuals under the later national categories.
73 In French, he wrote, "...qui n'etant pas encore venues dans le pays, n'ont sans doute pas d'idées bien arrêtées sur le choix d'une localité et consentiront peut-être à se rendre à Guelma." Letter by Guyot, Director of the Interior and Public Works, 27 September 1845, IL 52, AOM.
were ostensibly available to any European. By 1847, a few of the new concessionaires had already left, including one who sold his concession to a Maltese man to raise livestock.⁷⁴

A similar process occurred in Philippeville, and again, Maltese obtained land primarily through private, unofficial means. In his study of the property titles of concessions near Philippeville, Solal examines in detail the case of St. Antoine. Located just inland of Philippeville, this town became an official colonization center in August 1844, according to the 1841 decree. By 1845, the village had 42 building lots. These were all granted by 1848, sixty percent of them to French, yet only 92 people lived there and the population increased very slowly. Half of the concessionaires never built their homes and eventually sold their lots to others who converted them into gardens. By 1868, the 34 town buildings were owned by 23 individuals. Small 5 to 6 hectare plots were absorbed into larger properties, and some colonists, particularly the Maltese, systematically purchased all the lots around their initial pieces of land (Solal n.d.: 192-241). At the time of Solal’s writing, most of the market gardeners in the Philippeville suburbs were Maltese (n.d.: 164).

Peyermihoff’s review of the concessions granted between 1871 and 1895 found a similarly high rate of turnover. Of the 10,000 concessions granted during this period, approximately 60 percent had changed hands by 1902. In many cases, lands were sold after farm failures, but in addition, there was considerable capitalist speculation, with individuals applying for the free concessions in hopes of making a quick profit by

⁷⁴ IL52 Guelma, AOM.
reselling them. Others stayed in town and rented out their field plots to Algerians (Peyerimhoff 1906:150). The scale of “private settlement” was thus considerable, and in addition, resulted in a notable concentration of property into fewer hands. Between 1871 and 1902, the numbers of concession owners fell by 34 percent in the department of Constantine, and 25 percent in the two other departments (Ibid:153-4). Peyerimhoff also noted that those buying up the lots were not always French. He found that in the Constantinois, a few Maltese were becoming very wealthy landowners by obtaining failed or abandoned farms initially granted to concessionaires from Alsace or Lorraine (1906:155).

The Effects of Settlement on Algerians

The lands granted to Europeans through both official and private channels were originally controlled by different Algerian tribes, local beys, and the dey. The land tenure systems in practice at the time of French conquest were complex and the result of the interaction of different cultural practices and locally developed tenure systems. In the Constantinois, there were many categories of property, including beylical lands, which were cultivated through several distinct systems including work duties (touizas) imposed on neighboring tribes, and the employment of khammas, who received a fifth of the annual yields (see Nouschi 1961:80-85). Different categories of arch lands (inheritable by males) were held by individual tribes, and in the Constantinois were

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75 In 1902, of the nearly 10,000 proprietors of the 1871-1895 concessions, 202 were non-French, and 616 were Algerians (Peyerimhoff 1906:155).
divided up regularly between individual families according to their needs and their labor potential at that point in time. *Melk* lands (inheritable by both males and females) were typically occupied by a single family.\(^{77}\)

When the French arrived, they identified and claimed the important beylik lands, 158,000 hectares of which were transferred to the public domain by 1851 (Ruedy 1992:70). Confiscation was the second most important source for lands of the public domain, and was used as a punishment following uprisings, or was practiced by simply claiming lands left behind by people fleeing the French invasion. *Cantonnement* was a system developed during the Second Empire that involved the confiscation of tribal lands and the concentration of tribes onto smaller and smaller pieces of land further away from European settlement. Finally, following the great insurrection of 1871, the French government confiscated an additional 500,000 hectares from the insurgent tribes as punishment. During the colonial period overall, from 1830 until 1954, more than 3 million hectares of agricultural land passed from the control of the autochthonous population to that of the European colonists.

The French land policies alone were enough to lead to the systematic dismantling of the economic base of the rural Algerians, as described with such clarity in Nouschi

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\(^{76}\) Preconquest land tenure systems are described in detail in Nouschi 1961 and Ruedy 1967.

\(^{77}\) *Melk* lands were often erroneously described by French officials as private property in the French sense. Nouschi underlines that this was not the case. While these lands theoretically could be sold, the lands were considered to belong to the family, i.e. all those who had invested their labor into the land. Individuals who had worked the land and who were not present when such a parcel was sold had a right to repurchase *melk* lands at any time (Nouschi 1961:91). Other restrictions on the alienation of *melk* lands also sometimes applied.
When the French arrived, the local property regime and land use practices were well adapted to the local ecology and social organization. There was a dynamic socioeconomic equilibrium with approximately 3 million people subsisting from the local resources. But by the 1850s, the Algerian peasants had already begun to produce grain to international merchants in port cities, and the local economy became increasingly linked to wider economic systems, and thus more vulnerable to the vagaries of international markets and fluctuating prices.

The sénatus-consulte law of 1863 greatly accelerated the socioeconomic disintegration of the tribes. This law is described by Nouschi as the single most important piece of legislation in the history of rural Algeria after the arrival of the French (1961:307). Napoléon III’s goal in establishing the law was to limit the influence of tribal chiefs and ostensibly to prevent the continued disruption to tribes caused by their cantonnement. To this end, the law promoted the extension of individual property rights by ordering the redistribution of individual family units onto their own strictly defined privately-owned properties. This transformation of jointly held lands into private property, according to Bourdieu, “facilitated the concentration of the best properties in the hands of the Europeans through the sale by auction to a single purchaser of lands held in common” (1958:121). The end result was the disintegration of the traditional social units and social structure, and the creation of a rural proletariat, “a mass of dispossessed,
uprooted individuals fit only to provide a reserve of cheap labor” (Ibid).\textsuperscript{78}

Diversity Among the Colonists

Research by Ann Stoler (1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1992) has demonstrated that diversity within the colonist segment, and especially the existence of groups blurring or confounding the colonist/colonized boundary, often proved threatening to the stability of colonial rule. In Algeria, diversity of this kind was remarkable, and largely understood as national or ethnic in origin. Sources from the first decades of French imperialism in Algeria identify Europeans by their national and regional origins. During this period before the unification of Italy, for example, people are identified in marriage records as “Piedmontais,” or as Sardinians; others are described as Mahonnais, Spanish, or Hessian. Corsicans were sometimes reported as such, and only later grouped with other members of the French nation-state as “French.” As the French bureaucracy in Algeria evolved and as nation-states solidified in Europe, officials increasingly referred to the European settlers there as members of the respective nations, as Spanish, Italian, and so forth, or, simply, as foreigners, “étrangers.”

Early reports and legislation from this period indicate that the Maltese were definitely noticed by French officials, and sometimes singled out by discriminatory legislation and practices. In the following section, I present findings from archival

\textsuperscript{78} Bourdieu points out that the French state helped European colonists by not only providing them with free lands, but also in providing additional aid in the form of loans, technical assistance, and irrigation projects (1958:122-123). Nouschi (1961) also considers the unequal tax and credit systems and their effects of the rural peasants in Constantine.
research illustrating the early French approach towards the sizeable non-French population in Algeria. I then turn to the experience of the Maltese in the department of Constantine, where occupational and social segregation between Europeans of different national backgrounds developed quite early, and where we find considerable evidence of the early development of negative stereotypes about the Maltese.

Deportation and the Power of Local Authorities

During the first decades of French Algeria, administrators and police often complained about immigrants and their conduct. In Algiers, there was apparently much drinking and fighting, and the two most prosperous businesses there at this time were cabarets and bordellos (Julien 1964:159). The colony was ruled by the military through 1870 and civil rights were few. It was not unusual for individuals in Algeria to find themselves summarily imprisoned or deported without a trial. Already in 1831, the British Consul General complained to General Berthezene that Maltese there were being habitually arrested and punished without being judged or having been granted the right to first see their consular agent. One of the Maltese in question was imprisoned for having established a café apparently without the permission of the proper authorities. Maltese who had not obtained the proper signatures in their passports were refused entry by the marine police.  

Finally, in August 1836, the Governor General was granted (by his own decree) the right to deport individuals he perceived to be dangerous to public security.

British Consul General St. John did little to stop this practice. In 1839, he

79 St. John letter to Director of Interior, December 29, 1839, FO 112/4, PRO.
reported to the Governor of Malta that the Director of the Interior requested that twenty to thirty “Maltese of bad character” in Bône who were “presumed thieves,” be sent to Malta. When St. John asked for some proof of their “living by theft,” the director responded that his government’s right to expel any Frenchman extended to foreigners. St. John felt he could not interfere, and wrote to the Governor of Malta, “I do not think such an act could be reasonably complained of.”

The dossiers of those deported as a result of the 1836 decree illustrate the range of behaviors state officials considered threatening to public safety. Violent behavior was sometimes punished by deportation: a French general was sent back to France for his “fits of violence,” a mason was deported after being accused of having molested two girls, and a Spanish man was deported from Algiers for threatening people in the street with a sword. Individuals were also deported for their alleged unethical business dealings. The army was often short of supplies, and periodically had difficulty procuring food from the local population. Intermediate traders, who purchased goods from the indigenous population and sold them to the army were often accused of monopolizing the scarce goods and charging exorbitant prices. A group of indigenous Jewish traders were expelled, ostensibly for this reason, from the province of Constantine. According to their dossier compiled by French officials, they had been purchasing wool, grain and livestock from local tribes prior to the harvests for sale at inflated prices. As a result, the army ran short of wool needed at the hospital and for bedding, while the speculators were apparently exporting considerable quantities of this product. The dossier also stated that

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80 March 24, 1839, St. John to Governor of Malta, FO 112/4, PRO.
the tribes, having sold all of their products to these traders, were unable to pay the taxes required by the local notables, resulting in the latter exacting these tributes forcibly, leading to tribal uprisings or emigrations. It seems clear that the ultimate source of disruption in the local economy was the arrival of the French (on this, see Nouschi 1961:160-187), however these alleged “speculateurs avides” were nevertheless deported in perpetuity from their homeland.81

Other foreigners during the early decades were deported for their collaboration with local Algerian leaders. As he prepared to defend his territories in western Algeria, Abd al Qadir purchased weapons from European traders and hired European engineers to provide technological expertise, and those accused by the French of helping him were deported.82

**The Return of Convicted Prisoners to Algeria**

French and non-French Europeans convicted in Algeria of serious crimes were sent to France to serve their sentences. Prison terms were long: Antoine Camilieri, Maltese miller, served 5 years in Toulon for theft in 1846. Once they had completed their sentences, many of these men returned to Algeria, to the dismay of local authorities who thought that they had dispensed with them forever. Individuals who had been deported were also managing to return secretly to Algeria.

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81 F80/612, “Expulsions,” AOM.
82 The U.S. consul, Garavani, was deported for purportedly having hired a mechanic to assist Qadir, and a member of the Foreign Legion and a group of alleged arms dealers were also expelled from the territories for having assisted Qadir F80/612, “Expulsions,” AOM.
The return of Maltese ex-convicts in particular was perceived by local authorities as a threat to public order, and an image of the Maltese as violent criminals or particularly detrimental to the future of the colony developed during these early years of French Algeria. In fact, several laws were established specifically to mitigate the danger they allegedly represented. A decree proposed by the Director of the Interior in February 1843 stated that any Maltese who had completed prison terms of a year or more were forbidden in perpetuity from returning to Algeria.83 This measure was viewed by the Ministry of War as “nicely resolving” a delicate matter. In a letter transmitting the decree, the Minister wrote that the law provided the administration “a natural means of purification against which nobody can complain, and, furthermore, promotes the development of the colony by further guaranteeing its security.”84 These statements suggest that the Maltese ex-convicts were viewed as a plague or disease. Furthermore, they indicate that the administration had been engaged previously in discussions on how to limit Maltese migration. While a prohibition on the immigration of the Maltese in general may have been politically impossible, the administration implies by the above statement that at least a prohibition on the immigration to Algeria of ex-convicts was a measure that could receive little legitimate complaint. In order to prevent the Maltese who had been convicted of crimes in Algeria and who had served prison sentences in

83 Decree of 20 February 1843, Letter from the Ministère de Guerre, Paris, to Gouverneur Général de l’Algerie, F80 1666, AOM.
84 Op. Cit. The passage states in French, “Cette mesure présente en effet l’avantage de remédier aux inconvénients signalées: elle donne en même temps à l’administration un moyen naturel d’purification contre lequel on ne peut élever aucune imputation fondée de vexation ou d’arbitraire, et tend, en outre, à favoriser le développement de la colonie par de nouvelles garanties de sécurité...”
France from returning to Algeria, further measures were established requiring prison officials in France to notify the General Governor in Algeria each time a Maltese was approaching the end of his or her prison term. Descriptions of the individuals were distributed to the local police throughout Algeria so that they could be more easily apprehended. The released prisoners were transported directly to Malta.

However, this law apparently did not serve as a deterrent, for Maltese ex-convicts were periodically discovered again in Algeria. Joseph Pace and Lorenzo Grech, for example, after having served sentences of three and five years in Nîmes and Toulon, respectively, were transported back to Malta where each managed to obtain passports for Algeria, signed by the French consul there! Once French officials discovered that these men had returned to Algeria, the passport signatures raised legal questions about their case. A solution was reached, however: because the colony was under military rule, the answer was simple: a special law was enacted for these two men by the Direction of the Interior expelling them from the colony for life. Other Maltese ex-convicts returned to Algeria regularly, exasperating the Interior department. Gregorio Xuereb, who completed a term in France, managed to return to Algiers, where he was arrested in August 1844, sent to Toulon and then to Malta. He nevertheless returned to Algeria again and was found in Philippeville. The Minister of Interior wrote to the Governor General about the matter:

> What certainly encouraged the criminal to make another attempt is very probably because he will have noticed that there was no penalty attached to his return to Algeria, and that we were content to arrest him and send him back to Malta without making him submit to another prison term.\(^{85}\)

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\(^{85}\) Letter of June 23, 1845 to the GG from Director of Interior, F80/613/AOM.
The minister proposed that a law enacted in June of 1841, imposing prison sentences on those returning to Algeria following their deportations be employed in these cases. Henceforth, not only would returning Maltese prisoners be expelled from Algeria for life, but those who were discovered in the colony would be required to serve additional jail time in France before their transportation back to Malta. This application of the 1841 deportation law was perceived in some areas of Algeria as unjust. In April of 1846, two Maltese ex-convicts found in Algeria argued before a tribunal in Philippeville that they had not been notified that in serving their prison sentences in France they were also being expelled from Algeria. These men were acquitted by the tribunal. Similar acquittals were granted by tribunals in Bône and Alger a few years later. To prevent this from occurring again, the government developed a new regulation stating this time that non-French of any origin who were sentenced to prison terms of a year were automatically expelled from Algeria. Individuals who could provide a guarantee for their future behavior were allowed to return, but only in special cases.86

Fears that the Maltese migrants in particular threatened public safety increased to such a degree that in 1845, the acting director of the Interior sent a frenzied letter to the Governor General stating that he had heard from the police commissioner that two British vessels full of escaped Maltese prisoners were on their way to Algiers. The letter is summarized along the side as follows: “we pray that you refuse admission to Algiers of

86 Letters of January 22, 1853 and February 8, 1853, between Préfet of Constantine and GG; and letters of September 3, 1846, June 26, 1846, to the GG from Ministry of War. Paris; F80/1666, AOM.
200 Maltese bandits." The Governor General was alarmed enough that he instructed the police to conduct a rigorous examination of the papers of all of the passengers of the vessels and to send back any whose presence might be "inconvenient."

It is clear from this material that some Maltese were singled out as particularly dangerous or undesirable migrants, however it is difficult to develop a sense of the reasons why this might have been the case. To better examine the relationships between the Maltese and the other European migrants, we must turn to a fine-grained study of the Maltese in one region of Algeria. Because the Maltese were concentrated in the department of Constantine, sources from that department best illustrate the initial French encounters with and reactions to this particular European population.

The Maltese and the Department of Constantine

The French took the port of Bône in 1832 and Bougie in 1833 (see Illustration 5, page 106). After several attempts to conquer the important inland trading center and beylik capital of Constantine, they finally succeeded in 1837. The seaport town, Stora, was conquered in October 1838. With the conquest of Djidjelli in 1839, the entire eastern coast was under French control. Bône and the surrounding towns were under civil administration, and inland, the rest of the region was under the control of four military cercles controlling Bône, La Calle, Guelma, and l'Edough.

The Maltese were the most numerous of the Europeans in these eastern towns during the next several decades. Bône attracted Maltese quite early on. Only a few years

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87 Letter July 26, 1845, F80/613, AOM.
after the port's conquest, Maltese ships were trading regularly between Bône, and Malta or other Algerian ports. By 1833, there were 403 Maltese in contrast to 225 French civilians (see Table 2, below), and the Maltese represented over 50 percent of the European population there until 1847, when they would be surpassed slightly by French settlers.

**TABLE 2: Bône: Maltese and French population sizes compared, 1833 to 1837**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Maltese</th>
<th>Total European</th>
<th>% Maltese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>1231</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>1477</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>2496</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maltese also settled in the smaller cities in the region. Philippeville, Guelma, and, somewhat later, the towns of Jemmapes and Souk Ahras, all had high concentrations of Maltese settlers (see Illustration 5, page 106).

**The Maltese in Philippeville in the 1840s**

We learn a great deal about the early European settlements and European perceptions of the Maltese in the 1842 report on Philippeville by the town’s second *commissaire civil*, M. Lapaine. This town eventually became one of the most important centers for Maltese immigration in the department of Constantine. The small fishing

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88 July 27, 1845, draft, F80/613, AOM.
89 FO 111/7, Letter of Llambiaz to St. John, 30 June 1836.
90 Source: Tableau de la situation des établissements français dans l’Algérie, 1838.
91 “Tableau de la situation de Philippeville pendant l’année 1841 et le 2ème trimestre de l’année 1842,” October 12, 1842, Commissaire Civil Lapaine, 1L8, AOM.
village of Stora, and the ruins of an early Roman port city, “Russicada,” were taken by the French in October 1838 after their conquest of Constantine. The point along the coast that became the site for this new town was chosen with the express purpose of facilitating commercial relations with Constantine. The town was named “Philippeville” after King Louis-Philippe. It was essentially a military camp until February 17, 1840, when a civil government was formed, led by *commissaires civils*, who were appointed by the governor general, and who simultaneously carried out the functions of mayor, chief of police, and judge. The first commissaire was Emmanuel Antoine Fenech, who was replaced by M. Lapaine on May 8th, 1841.

Following the establishment of French troops within the newly constructed city walls, immigrants began to arrive, and the increasing numbers of settlers required the periodic enlargement of the city limits. Over the next few years, according to Lapaine, the city developed in an “astonishing” manner: large warehouses and buildings were built, and four years after its initial establishment, the encampment began to take on the form of a real city.

There was no census of the civil population in 1839; however by 1840, there were 3,000 Europeans living there, and nearly 4,000 in 1842 when Lapaine wrote his report. Approximately half of the Europeans were French, from “Provence” or Corsica. The rest were from Malta, and Italy (Sardinia, Sicily, or Tuscany), Spain, Portugal, Germany, Russia and Greece. Also living within the city walls were autochthonous Arabs, Kabyles.

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M'zabis, Biskris, and Israelites. Approximately one hundred indigenous Jews, originally from Constantine, worked in commerce or as traders with Arabs in the interior.

The first to settle were primarily but not exclusively men. Lapaine reported 43 births for 1840 and 105 births in 1841, indicating the presence by that time of a substantial number of women. Fifteen of the 1841 births were illegitimate. The marriages of these years (7 in 1840, 34 in 1841) represented predominantly the formalization of "unions illicites," presumably following illegitimate births.

How was daily life in this new town? Lapaine, who writes that he would like to be able to report a moral development that paralleled that of the town's physical evolution, states that unfortunately he cannot: "there is still considerable corruption and chaos." While Lapaine does not tell us what happened in the town's short four-year history, he alludes to a past of high tensions, too many men, and violence.

The Philippeville Porter Conflict

During the early decades, the Maltese worked as laborers in construction or agriculture. In the process, they were often in direct competition with other laborers, including indigenous workers. This was certainly the case in the porter trade. Before French conquest, there had been considerable trade between North African provinces and Europe and the Levant. The transportation of goods on and off ships (porteafax) was an important task that in the pre-French period was carried out by ethnic organizations under

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93 "La corruption et le désordre sont encore profonds."
the control of *amins*, who negotiated contracts and took a percentage of the earnings. This arrangement continued during the first decade of French control.\(^9^4\)

In Philippeville, a porter team comprised of Biskris was established under the direction of M. Dobignard in 1839 or 1840. Dobignard’s company worked primarily for the troops and the military administration. He boasted that with the arrival of his company to Philippeville, the military’s transportation expenses were reduced 30 percent. Traffic at the port was so busy that by April 1840, he requested permission to bring an additional 20 Biskris from Algiers to Philippeville to double the size of his crew. But by August of the next year, there were problems in Dobignard’s operation. For an unreported reason, the porters refused to make a requested delivery, and Dobignard called on Commissaire Fenech to settle the dispute. Fenech reported later to the Director of Interior that Dobignard became so abusive to the porters that he almost caused a riot, and subsequently verbally abused even the commissaire himself, presumably for not forcing the porters to complete Dobignard’s orders. Dobignard was also Under Lieutenant of the local Philippeville militia, and later that evening, while taking part in a militia parade in a drunken state, he continued to verbally abuse the mayor. Because there had already been previous complaints about Dobignard by the chief of his militia battalion.\(^9^5\) Dobignard

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\(^9^4\) Laws established in 1837 and 1838 provided for the maintenance of indigenous organizations in Algiers, but stipulated that the *amins* be named by the Gouverneur Général. F80/613, AOM.

\(^9^5\) Letters of 14 August 1841, from Fenech to the Directeur de l’Intérieur; and 11 August 1841 from the Commander in Chief of the militia bataillon d’Ambly to Fenech; F80/1439, AOM.
was removed from his position for two months and sent to Bône for a trial, and his Biskri company dissolved.  

However, Commissaire Fenech's difficulties with his town's porters were not over. A Maltese porter company was formed, in direct competition with the remaining Biskris. After a few months, the Maltese company had caused so many problems that Fenech contacted his superiors to request that the principal Maltese troublemakers be expelled in perpetuity from Algeria. Fenech's description of the Maltese "offenses" is quite interesting. He wrote,

The only ones in charge of commercial transportation and that of the military, they use this advantageous situation to make others grant their constantly increasing demands. Even yesterday, merchandise was dropped in the mud in the middle of the street, under the pretext that it was not their responsibility, but that of the owners, to bring it into the stores.

Fenech acknowledged that abolishing the Maltese company altogether would not be desirable, for this would result in considerable disruption to local trade as when Dobnigard's company was dissolved. Instead, he requested that his superiors at least deport the main instigator, who he identified as Vincent Vella. Vella, he wrote, had been trying to organize his fellow workers into a "coalition" to demand higher fees. In response, the local commandant temporarily expelled Vella and four other Maltese

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96 Letter of December 18, 1841, from Colonel Commandant Superieur to Governor-General of Algeria. F80/612, AOM.
97 Correspondence of December 1841, F80/613, AOM.
98 "seuls dans CE moment chargés des transports du Commerce et de ceux de l'administration de la Guerre, ills se prevalent de Cette position avantageuse pour faire admettre des exigences sans cesse renouvelées. Hier encore des marchandises ont été déposée dans la boue au milieu des rues, sous prétexte que c'était aux proprietaires, et non à eux, à la faire entrer dans l'interieur des Magasins."
porters to the neighboring city of Bône. Following a hearing in Algiers, Vella was deported in perpetuity from the entire territory of Algeria on March 2, 1842.\textsuperscript{100} The Biskri company was re-organized, again under Dobignard’s leadership, and a company of 38 men was in place January 10th, 1842, at which time the Maltese company was formally dissolved, because of its “intolerable pretensions.” But further complaints by the Direction of the Interior led the Governor General Bugeaud to declare the porter occupation finally open to both Europeans and indigenous workers in a decree of May 19, 1843. At the same time, new universal guidelines turned this into a highly regimented occupation under the direct control of the local police.\textsuperscript{101}

The Philippeville porter dispute illustrates some wider trends in Algeria at this time. First, there was a proliferation of laws as the military tried to create order while Europeans arrived and obliged the army to deal with their more mundane needs. The Fenech-Dobignard dispute is an example of the frequent conflicts between military and civilian authorities. During this chaotic period, there was also much competition: between French and indigenous traders and businessmen, who were trying to control different branches of commerce, particularly the quite profitable trade with the military; between indigenous and European laborers; and, between European immigrants of different nationalities.

\textsuperscript{100} Letter of January 16, 1842 to Governor General. F80/613.
\textsuperscript{101} Arrêté of May 19, 1843. Draft. F80/648.
Ethnic Segregation in the Philippeville Labor Market

The *portefaix* affair provides an example of a European immigrant group competing in a formerly indigenous-dominated labor market. Here, the Maltese porters were able to compete with the locals not because they had greater access to capital or other resources, but because they were willing to work for a similar salary. But their entering the labor market was not always desirable to the procurers of their services, and it seems that the Maltese, who were often criticized for their “impossible” attitude and “outrageous” pretensions, may have worked in a less subservient manner than the Biskri or other porter corporations.

The porter dispute also illustrates the early concentration of migrants of the same nationality into specific economic niches. The disbanded company was not known as “Vella’s portefaix,” or the “European” company, but the *Maltese* company. Over the next several decades in Algeria, migrants of the same European nationalities tended to work together, perhaps in part due to family ties and their sharing a common language. This occupational segregation was commented on by eyewitnesses and has entered the folklore of colonial Algeria; authors often allude to the Italian fisherman, the Maltese goat-herder, and the Mahonnais gardener. In his discussion of the local economy of Philippeville just after Fenech’s departure, Lapaine too describes a cultural division of labor. The earliest Europeans in the town found means of employment largely in services catering to the military establishment. Traders brought foodstuffs from overseas, or served as intermediaries between the army and the local indigenous population. Liquor shops were set up, and prostitutes arrived from Spain and Portugal. By 1842,
Philippeville had nearly 4,000 civilian inhabitants, only ten bakeries and butcher shops, and 110 cafés and liquor stores. The army’s influence was diminishing, and ships were arriving to the port from France, England or other European countries to trade with the townspeople and the indigenous population. Imported goods, for example, cloth and hardware, were being transported on mules or large camel caravans to the internal trading cities of Constantine and Souk Ahras.

According to Lapaine, the French were clearly the local elite. Comprising less than half the European population, they worked in agriculture and commerce. Almost all trade with Marseille was under French control, and French migrants owned almost all of the houses in town. Italians, on the other hand, worked as masons, gardeners, and retailers (marchands de détails). The small number of Spanish and Portuguese worked as gardeners, terrace builders and cigar makers. Most of the prostitutes in the town were from these countries. In addition, there were a hundred and fifty Germans, Greeks and Russians who worked as gardeners or set up brasseries. The Maltese were grocers and food suppliers for the army, and worked as manual laborers in nearby fields and construction sites.

Occupational segregation and stratification persisted in the nearby town of Bône through the early twentieth century. In his study of the European communities of Bône over the period from 1876 to 1911, Prochaska found that the merging together of the Europeans of different ethnic origins occurred more slowly than the classic sources would lead us to believe. He examined the distribution of individuals of different origins across fifteen occupational categories. He found that Algerians were more likely to work
the land than Europeans. Jews were less likely to work the land, and were
underrepresented relative to their population size in some crafts, such as food preparation,
building and construction, and home furnishings. Most important for our study,
Prochaska also found significant distinctions still existing between native and naturalized
French and other Europeans, further evidence, he believes, of the continued existence of
European colonies within the larger French colony (1990:168). Native French had a
virtual monopoly on jobs in government, the military, and in the liberal professions, such
as medicine and law. They were more likely to work in commerce than naturalized or
non-French Europeans, and were less likely to work in menial jobs. Using a vertical
occupational schema, Prochaska also found that native French were more likely to have
high or low white collar positions than naturalized or non-naturalized Europeans.
Perhaps most surprising, he found that non-naturalized Europeans were closer to the
indigenous population in terms of the proportion of white and blue collar workers than
they were to the French (Ibid:172). This evidence of incipient class formation associated
with ethnic origin indicates a socioeconomic basis for status anxiety among the petits
blancs, the poorer non-French Europeans. Not only was their socioeconomic status
closer to that of the indigenous population than to the French, but in addition it did not
improve significantly following their naturalization (Ibid).

**Anti-Maltese Discrimination and Social Segregation**

While Lapaine devotes no more than a paragraph to each of the other European
nationalities in Philippeville, he dedicates four pages to the Maltese, suggesting a special
interest in them. He is especially troubled by the development of widespread anti-Maltese sentiments among the other townspeople. Lapaine spends considerable time dissecting the roots of this anti-Maltese prejudice. According to Lapaine, the other colonists did not like the Maltese in part because of their “fierce” character, “their lack of good faith in their relations with other Europeans [and] their greed, which brings them to be seized by an irresistible competition.”

He writes that they have a temperament dominated by their “African blood,” and are degraded by their poverty and deprived of education. However, he also describes them as motivated, industrious, and gifted with an entrepreneurial flair:

“The most difficult occupations, the most tiring work, the most minute sales which can yield a profit only through the practice of strict thrift and rigorous savings, become their sole domain; little by little, their modest investments become more extensive; their earnings prudently invested multiply...their sobriety and their patience thus result in their monopoly of almost all branches of local retail.”

Lapaine thus finds the prejudices of the townspeople rooted in professional jealousy: merchants especially are frustrated with the ability of the Maltese to undercut their prices. He condemns the townspeople for their hypocrisy, for although they “shower the Maltese with disdain,” they nevertheless frequent their shops, which offer

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102 Lapaine stated: “Les reproches formulés contre la population maltaise reposent sur la férocité de son caractère, son peu de bonne foi dans ses relations avec les autres Européens, sa cupidité qui la porte à s’emparer par une concurrence irrésistible de toutes les branches du commerce du détail.”
103 “Les industries les plus pénibles, les travaux les plus fatigants (sic), les trafics les plus infimes que l’habitude d’une frugalité rigide et d’une économie rigoureuse peut seule faire fructifier entre leurs mains, deviennent en quelque sorte leur apanage exclusif; peu à peu, leurs modestes spéculations prennent de l’étendue; leurs gains prudemment employée multiplient leurs ressources; leur activité que rien ne lasse, leur sobriété et leur
reduced prices for almost all necessities. He is alarmed by the widespread ostracism, and writes that he is concerned about the potential long-term consequences: already the Maltese have begun to respond by segregating themselves from the wider community.

How long did anti-Maltese prejudices persist in Philippeville? Marriage records for the European population of Philippeville from 1854 to 1878 provide evidence not only of preferential in-group marriage for the different European nationalities represented, but in addition indicate the social isolation of the Maltese in particular. Although the Maltese were the third most numerous European nationality in Philippeville at this time, they inter-married with other Europeans the least (Ricoux 1880:95). French from France sought each other out: out of 1,000 marriages, French men married 804 French women, 68 Spanish, 48 Italians, 38 Germans, and only 28 Maltese (Ibid:96), despite the fact that in 1878 Philippeville’s European population was half French, and included 3,000 Italians, over 2,000 Maltese, and only 1,000 Spanish and 157 Germans. French males were preferentially seeking out French, Spanish, and especially German spouses and were apparently looking beyond the very sizeable pool of Maltese women.

Maltese Liminality in Nineteenth Century Accounts

During the first decades of colonial Algeria, the rich diversity of peoples from across Europe coupled with the original ethnic complexity was a source of fascination for contemporary European travel writers. A member of the Foreign Legion wrote in 1840 about life in Mustapha (near Algiers):

patience font ainsi tomber entre leurs mains presque toutes les parties du commerce de
I was beyond measure surprised at the motley crowd with which I suddenly found myself surrounded, and fancied that I must be in a masquerade; Arabs and Frenchmen, Jews and Italians, Spaniards and Negroes were mixed in picturesque confusion. Next door to an elegant French milliner, an Arab barber was shaving the heads of his fellow-countrymen, and an Italian restaurant, who extolled his macaroni to every passer-by, was the neighbor of a Moorish slipper-maker.

Within this diverse array of identities, the Maltese were often singled out as particularly difficult to describe. As demonstrated above, they were clearly "noticed" by early French officials, who enacted laws to defend Algeria specifically from the purported "harmful" influence of the Maltese.

Local authorities and French writers were uneasy about classifying the Maltese as "European" or colonist. When he put forward population figures for Tunisia in 1858, Dunant wrote that the European population, if we include the Maltese, is a bit more than 12,000 people (1858:254).104 After considering in detail the positive and negative qualities of the Maltese, Lapaine states, "Let us now say it, the Maltese deserve to be admitted as a constituent of our colony." The acceptance of the Maltese as colonists was a problem requiring some thought.

To what degree was Maltese liminality linked to their being a colonized people? Very little, it appears. While the shift in status from colonized people to colonists that accompanied their migration to North Africa adds yet another dimension to the interstitial quality of their status in Algeria, this issue does not appear in contemporary accounts. Instead, what is highlighted and seems to most threaten the European writers' world

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104 "La population européenne, si l'on y comprend les Maltais, peut s'élèver à un peu plus de douze mille ames" (Dunant 1858:254).
views is the Maltese affinity to “Arabs,” the North African Muslims. In *L’Algérie en 1854*, for example, Bard writes,

Let’s do justice to this half-Italian, half-Arab people from Malta, a real transitional and moral link between the East and the West…he is a brother to the Europeans, and a friend and almost comrade of the Arabs…they are a type of hard-working Moor (1854:99).

Charmes, who stopped in Malta on his way to Tunisia, noted several times in his 1888 publication that he found it difficult to say whether Malta should belong to Europe or Africa. In the end, he equivocated, stating that the island “is part of both continents. Its sterile earth, burnt by the sun…seems more African than European…As for the Maltese language, we know that this kind of jargon is just a corrupt Arabic.”¹⁰⁵ Ironically, even the strong catholicity of the Maltese led some writers to view them as more North African than European:

Regarding their faith, they are as intolerant as Arabs. Furthermore this is not the only similarity that they have with the latter. They are called “Christian Arabs,” and this is not inexact. Their bone structure, features, language, temperament, customs, all reveal their Arab blood¹⁰⁶ (Faucon 1893:301).

In this colonial setting, the underlying logic informing the distinction between colonist and colonized was one contrasting civilization and barbarism, not unlike that described by Alonso for the Chihuahan frontier (1995:64). In Algeria, however, this dualism was superimposed onto and informed by an earlier, religion-based dualism,

¹⁰⁵ “Elle participe à la fois des deux continents…Son sol sterile, brûlé par le soleil…semble plus africain qu’européen”…Quant au maltais, on sait que cette sorte de patois est une corruption de l’arabe” (Charmes 1888:29, 31).
between Christianity and Islam. The centuries-long antagonism between the proponents of these faiths has served as the basis for distinguishing Europe from Africa and the Orient, and in the definition of the frontiers of the European continent itself, as well as for distinctions between colonists and colonized.\textsuperscript{107}

Malta and the Maltese are interstitially located in this dualistic conception of the world. As Arabic speakers sharing many cultural features with North Africans, to northern Europeans, they were seen as more African than European. However, as Catholics, and inhabitants of the mainstay of Christianity in the Mediterranean, they were included, albeit sometimes with great hesitation, with the rest of Europe.

The management of a colony characterized by multiple national and ethnic identities among the colonists was difficult, but even more difficult was the fact that these non-French colonists together outnumbered the French colonists throughout the nineteenth century. In the following chapter, we will consider the problem posed by this growing population of non-French Europeans. This large "colony within a colony" concerned officials in France and Algeria. When military rule was replaced with a republican administration in 1871, the administrative assimilation of Algeria to French law and standards accelerated. In the process, French officials in Algeria embarked on a

\textsuperscript{106}...ils sont sur le chapitre de la foi d'une intolérance égale à celle des Arabes. Ce n'est pas d'aillleurs le seul trait de ressemblance qu'ils aient avec ces derniers. On les a appelés des Arabes chrétiens et la définition ne manque pas d'exactitude. L'ossature, les traits, la langue, le tempérament, les moeurs, tout révèle en eux le sang arabe (Faucon 1893:301).

\textsuperscript{107} On the evolving and intersecting principles informing category formation in French Algeria, see Lorcin 1995.
project to definitively reduce the significance of the non-French settlers, a project that was finally achieved through the establishment of naturalization laws, as will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: LEGAL ASSIMILATION AND NATURALIZATION LAW IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ALGERIA

Introduction: Algeria, 1870-1871

The end of the Second Empire following Louis-Napoléon III’s defeat in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian war and the establishment of the Third Republic in France mark a major break in the history of colonial Algeria. The French Government of National Defense in Tours, which represented the new Republic while Paris was still under siege, began to issue decrees bringing about an end to the military’s power in Algeria. The long years of military rule had come to an end, and henceforth the balance of power shifted increasingly to the colonists.

For the Algerians, the fall of the Emperor caused significant concern. Already in March 1870, the announcement of a civil regime for Algeria was met with great concern: a civil regime implied settler’s rule, further confiscation of Algerian lands, and government by European-elected officials (Ageron 1991:50). By this time, Algerians of all classes had been suffering greatly from the loss of their lands to the French and other settlers. In addition, between 1866 and 1869, drought, locusts, and failed harvests led to widespread famine, and a deadly cholera epidemic circulated the territory. In the Constantinois, approximately one fifth of the population perished, and even the wealthier Arab and Berber families found themselves with a considerably lowered economic status.
at the end of the crisis. Many French troops who had been based in Algeria had been sent to Europe to fight in the war, and the French defeat in September 1870 provided a possible opening for the Algerians. A massive Algerian revolt began in January 1871. The revolt spread and was eventually led by Muhammad al-Hajj al-Muqrani, an important Constatinois tribal leader, joined by the Kabyle's Rahmaniyya brotherhood. After the call for holy war, nearly a million people joined the insurrection.

It took the French seven months to end the conflict, and in its wake, the French repression of the revolutionaries was terrible. They deported many of the leaders as far as New Caledonia, imposed war reparation penalties of an impossible 35 million francs, and confiscated lands. Seven tribes had their territories of over 300,000 ha. annexed to the state domain of which only 73,000 ha. were later returned (Ageron 1991:52), and 306 other tribes had 240,000 ha. confiscated (a practice referred to as sequestration), and were charged nearly 9 million francs to gain back access to the remainder. Because most tribes could not afford to pay these fees, they were required to sell much of their land back to the French state at a fixed price in order to raise enough money to purchase the rest. In this way, the state obtained an additional 10 million francs and 200,000 ha. (Ageron 1991:52). The total cost of the war to the Algerian revolutionaries approached 65 million francs. Most tribes were ruined, and it took others twenty years to repay the debt (Ibid:53).

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108 See Nouschi 1959 for a detailed discussion of this economic and demographic crisis as it was experienced in the department of Constantine.
109 The revolt is described in detail in Ageron 1968:1-66.
110 On the deportees in New Caledonia, see Kabyles du Pacifique (1994) by Mehdi Lallaoui.
The lands taken from the revolutionaries were used by the state for additional settlement programs. Between 1871 and 1895, over 640,00 hectares were conceded to settlers by the French state, and over a third of these lands were obtained during the post-Insurrection sequestrations.

The Administrative Assimilation of Algeria

Algeria was transformed at the beginning of the Third Republic in 1870 from a territory under military rule to departments of Republican France. A civil regime was developed, and the French of Algeria gained the right to representation in the French Parliament in October 1870. Indigenous tribal units in the colonized territories who had been under military authority were now under civil authority. For Algerian Muslims, this transformation from military to civil authority resulted in a tremendous decline in their political, social and economic status (Ageron 1979:19-20, 31).

The administrative assimilation of Algeria had commenced, and over the next few decades, Algeria’s institutions became increasingly similar to those in France. Algeria, however, was not a democracy. Despite the official fiction that Algeria was simply three departments among the many comprising the French Republic, it was a colony with a huge subject population. Algeria’s democratic institutions were developed for the exclusive benefit of the colonists; the 200,000 French colonists, French citizens, directed their own fates as well as those of the 3 million Muslim non-citizen subjects (Ageron 1979:19). Even Algerian communes, based in theory on their French counterparts, were fundamentally different. In the commune of Lourmel, for example, 52 voters were in
charge of "public" moneys raised primarily by taxing the neighboring 2,890 Muslims juridically attached to the commune (Ibid:23).

During the Third Republic, legislation was also developed that reached into the heart of Algeria's social landscape, and through the application of new naturalization laws, whole categories of people ceased to exist, at least in the juridical imagination. This process had started during the first decades of French conquest, as the military rulers attempted to adjust Algeria's legal and justice systems to better match those in place at the time in France.

Law and the Shaping of Social Identities

At the time of French conquest, Algeria was a place of remarkable ethnic and religious diversity. During the Ottoman period, the vast territory had been ruled indirectly by a decentralized bureaucratic military apparatus allowing tribal units a great deal of autonomy. Only approximately 15,000 Turkish troops controlled the population of some three million; their rule was possible only with the complicity of local notables (Julien 1964:7, 15). Urban centers were the primary loci of power where the Turkish officers and bureaucrats lived, as did members of privileged tax-exempt tribes (Bennoune 1988:17-19). Marginal and dissident tribes lived in the peripheral expanses. The number of independent tribal units and chiefdoms as recorded in early French colonial reports gives a sense of the high degree of local autonomy under the Turks: there were almost 500 tribal units, 200 of which were considered autonomous, living in the vast peripheral
regions of the high plateaus and Sahara, and controlling nearly 70 percent of the territory (Bennoune 1988:18).

Ethnicity and religion were interrelated and important dimensions of social life. The society as a whole was comprised of multiple ethnic groups understood by North Africans as organized into a hierarchy (Valensi 1977:7). At the apex of this hierarchy were the small number of Turkish functionaries, followed by Couloughlis, offspring of Turkish men and North African women. In addition, there were Andalusians or "Moors;" predominantly Muslims exiled from Spain (Valensi 1977:8); Arabs, descendants of the conquerors of the 7th to 11th centuries; Berbers, the indigenous population living primarily in Kabylia, the Aurès mountains and the Sahara, comprising approximately fifty percent of the population; and M’zabites, Ibadi Berbers who lived in oases of the Sahara. At the bottom were Jews, descendants of multiple migrations to the region starting perhaps as early as the 9th century B.C. and continuing through Roman occupation into the 19th century (Chouraqui 1968:8), and sub-Saharan Africans who often worked as slaves.

Multiple legal systems were in practice. North African Muslims followed the strict Malekite rite of Koranic law, and the Turks the Hanefite rite (Julien 1964:5). In Berber regions like Kabylia and the M’zab, local systems of private or customary law were founded on precedents set by marabouts or assemblies of notables (Ibid:6). The Jewish community had its own formal written religious law. There was a fairly marked

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111 Pouillon (1993) deconstructs the erroneous but commonly used term "Moor."
112 The M’zabites were Ibadi, a branch of the Kharijites, a separatist sect of Islam.
degree of ethnic segregation in North African cities of all sizes, which typically had distinct Jewish, Moorish or Berber quarters.

That distinctions were maintained along religious lines for millennia, as in the case of the Jews living in this Muslim-ruled territory, provides an indication of the important role played by religion in the life of North Africans. Islam distinguishes between "Believers" and "Infidels;" theoretically the latter should be removed from Islamic society through slavery, extermination, or conversion. Situated between these extremes are the "People of the Book," Jews and Christians, who received scripture recognized by Islam as divine (Chouraqui 1968:44). Christians and Jews were thus allowed to remain in Islamic states as long as they followed a series of regulations associated with their official inferior status as dhimmi, or "protected" peoples. Additional repressive regulations were articulated for Jews in North Africa, particularly following the establishment of the Almohad empire in the 12th century. Because they were unable to own land, North African Jews lived primarily in cities (Valensi 1977:9). These North African Jewish communities were periodically revitalized by the arrival of

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113 See Valensi 1986 for a review of various classification schemes proposed by anthropologists and historians for this ethnically diverse region.
114 In general, dhimmis were prohibited from touching the Koran, mocking Islam, marrying Muslim women, proselytizing, or aiding the enemies of Islam. They could hold administrative positions, but were restricted from positions that had judicial powers, involved the commandment of troops, or the direct administration of the treasury (Chouraqui 1968:45-47).
115 This perpetual inferior caste-like status was difficult, and it is understandable that some Jews were eager to see European as opposed to Turkish imperialism in North Africa (Stillman 1976:109). But there were also positive aspects to the dhimmi arrangement. Jews were guaranteed rights to own property, enjoyed religious autonomy, managed their internal community affairs without outside intervention, and were allowed
Jewish immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula and Leghorn, Italy, from the 14th through 18th centuries.

Ethnic distinctions in North Africa were not rooted solely in religion. Residential segregation was sometimes associated with a parallel division of labor, with each trade the domain of specific ethnic groups and specific streets in the city dedicated to that trade. Ottoman policies helped promote the maintenance of ethnic distinctions. Turkish leaders concerned themselves very little with the functioning of society and typically delegated responsibility to regional leaders who in turn delegated to heads of smaller social groupings. Migrants to cities were often concentrated into specific occupational niches and organized into corporations with a leader (amin) who served as liaison between the group's members and higher authorities (Julien 1964:13). For example, M'zabites who migrated to cities from their Saharan oasis region of the M'zab were organized into privileged corporations with a written guarantee of protection, which had a near monopoly on running public baths, operating mills, and bakeries (Julien 1964:13; Valensi 1977:38). The "Biskri," people from the oasis town of Biskra, were granted a similar corporate status and often worked as porters or water carriers.

considerable economic freedom, in contrast to Jews living in Europe at the same time (Ibid:89).

116 The association of occupational niches with specific ethnic groups suggests that this Turkish policy of organizing new city dwellers and certain trades and craftsmen into corporations encouraged an urban ethnogenesis similar to that described in O'Brien for colonial Sudan (1991).

117 The Kabyles were not organized into a corporation, however (Julien 1964:14) which suggests that the Turks understood the risk in providing the populous Berber tribes with a unifying institutional structure.
Research by Stoler and others demonstrates the importance to colonial rule of the establishment of clear-cut social categories, which was certainly not the case for Algeria during the first half of the nineteenth century. The arrival of Europeans from across the continent only further complicated the social landscape. During its earliest years in Algeria, the French state countered this diversity initially with legislation that reduced Algeria's legal pluralism, and then turned to law that directly confronted the social identities themselves. The state’s underlying motivation for doing so did not derive only from a desire to shape Algeria into the "ideal" two-part colonial structure, however, for a precedent had been set in France. In order to better understand the French approach to difference in Algeria, therefore, we must first consider the parallel process that was carried out previously during French state formation.

The Citizen and State following the French Revolution

The French Revolution appears to represent a triumph of the individual, but it also represents a triumph of the state. Under the Ancien Regime, large portions of the population had no civil or political rights whatsoever, and social inequalities were built into the social and legal framework of the country. Many institutions stood between the individual and the state, notably the feudal orders, guilds, and the Church. Even municipalities had semi-autonomous jurisdiction over individuals (Rheinstein 1956:140). Many matters concerning individuals' private lives were thus regulated by these separate institutions. Marriage, for example, was viewed as the exclusive concern of the Church, and was regulated by canon law, which outlawed divorce. Members of other religions
followed their respective religious laws for questions concerning marriage, divorce or inheritance. Families also mediated between individuals and the state. The family under the Ancien Regime was organized into what could be described as a miniature feudal vassal-lord relationship. In exchange for the protection and recognition of the state, the male head of the household was accountable for its members (Donzelot 1979:49), and thus had state-sanctioned power over his offspring, wife, and servants. Household heads could even instigate the imprisonment of other family members.118

During the Revolution, with the abolition of the institutions of the monarchy, the privileged orders and separate religious corporate groups, a mass of citizens was created who were equal under the law. With intermediate institutions cleared away, a direct, unmediated relationship between the individual and the state was created. However, also swept away were the legal apparatuses associated with these institutions. A new system of law was therefore needed, and after several years of efforts, the Code Napoléon was established in 1804.

The Napoleonic code completed ongoing efforts of the past several centuries to develop a unified law applicable to the entire nation. Early French law was based loosely on Germanic law in the north and Roman law in the south, and was elaborated during the feudal period as distinct laws were developed for separate locales or municipalities.119 as

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118 Because many individuals imprisoned in this way were confined in the Bastille, Donzelot states that the storming of the Bastille could be viewed as a "symbolic destruction par excellence of family arbitrariness" (1979:51).
119 Thus the comment attributed to Voltaire that travelers through France changed laws more often than horses (Tunc 1956:20).
well as for clearly defined classes of people (Cairns and McKeon 1995:6-7). By the Absolutist period, attempts were made to develop a unified legal system.

With the establishment of the *Code Napoléon* following the Revolution, many aspects of an individual’s private life formerly under the jurisdiction of separate religious institutions or customary law were now the concern of the state, and all French citizens were thereafter obliged to follow state law on these matters. The state now had the responsibility to monitor many aspects of personal and family life. Although Donzelot does not consider this form of state infiltration into private life in his study *The Policing of the Family* (1979), a consideration of this legislation suggests yet another line of evidence in support of his argument that with the proliferation of philanthropic and state institutions developed especially for the poor, family patriarchalism of the Ancien Regime was destroyed, but “only at the cost of a patriarchy of the state” (1979:103). In one move, the Code Napoleon secularized marriage, and adjudication in marriage cases became, at least in theory, the exclusive domain of the state. Divorce also now fell under the purview of the state. Divorce was legalized by the Code, yet outlawed again in 1818 under the Bourbon regime until the end of the century (Rheinstein 1956:159), which would have important repercussions soon after in Algeria. A series of complex inheritance laws were developed and universally applied to all French. In the end, therefore, along with the granting of equal rights to all living within the territorial limits

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120 The Napoleonic Code stipulated that a portion of all estates be divided equally among the blood relatives of the deceased according to a complex formula that excluded the spouse, even in cases in which a will had been provided (Rheinstein 1956:156). An important motivation for these inheritance laws may have been to break the hold of the land-based nobility by forcing the dispersal of their property across the generations.
of the French state, a centralized bureaucracy was created in which the state governed many aspects of individuals' private life, and from this point on, any distinct community based on ethnicity, religion, or other features was viewed by the state with suspicion.

Emancipation and Assimilation of French Jews

The ambivalent nature of this period of French state formation is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the French Jews. French Jews had few rights before the Revolution, but in 1789, they became the first in the West to receive full emancipation and to be accepted as citizens guaranteed equal civic and political rights and obligations. This emancipation carried with it the associated abolition of the community’s former autonomous corporate status and thus its religious/legal autonomy. Henceforth, French Jews were required to follow the Code Napoleon for matters like divorce, inheritance, marriage and so forth.

A “consistory” system was developed to facilitate the assimilation of formerly autonomous religious communities into the French state. Napoléon I convened an assembly of Jewish notables in 1806 in an effort to create a centralized organization for French Jews. Decrees in 1808 established a consistory structure for French Jews like that which had been established for the Protestants. For the first time, Judaism became an officially recognized religion in France. Its organization was centralized, Jewish practices in France were homogenized, and Judaism was placed under direct government

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121 This process, applied to Protestants and Jews, paralleled the ongoing attempt by the state to limit the Catholic Church, an important competitor for state power.
122 Imperial decrees of March 17, 1808 and December 13, 1808.
control. A central consistory in Paris led regional offices which in turn were in charge of local consistories. The central consistory wielded enormous power as it was the only body responsible or capable of appointing rabbis, of administering the rabbinical school, making new policy, and distributing funds\(^\text{123}\) (Hyman 1979:27). Consistory representatives soon played an important role in the assimilation of Algerian Jews.

The Reduction of Algeria's Legal Pluralism

Not unlike France of the Ancien Regime, Ottoman Algeria was governed by multiple legal systems. The diverse ethnic and religious groups regulated most of their own affairs with distinct forms of written or customary law. In other colonies, colonial officials who were faced with elaborate and especially written forms of "customary" law often allowed indigenous courts to continue handling at least certain classes of cases, leading to interesting examples of legal pluralism.\(^\text{124}\) This was not the case, however, with French Algeria. The legal pluralism initially encountered by the French was quickly reduced during the first years of conquest. Following the collapse of the Turks in 1830, all vestiges of Ottoman rule were abolished (Cristelow 1985:12). Although the French continued to recognize the existence of Berber customary law, especially in areas of high Berber presence, Berber courts were often replaced by French tribunals (Hooker

\(^{123}\) Each head of a Jewish family was required to pay consistory dues, and all who wished to remain Jews had to register with the consistories. According to the 1808 decree, the consistories also were to "ensure that no assembly for prayers should be formed without express authorization," to encourage Jews to follow "useful" professions, and to inform authorities of the number of Jewish conscripts in the region (In Encyclopaedia Judaica 1971(5):908-912.)
The jurisdiction of Jewish religious courts also was curtailed almost immediately.

Muslim Arabs comprised the largest indigenous group, numbering approximately 3 million in 1830. Muslim legal systems posed special problems for colonial powers because they were written traditions managed by indigenous legal professionals (Cristelow 1985:5). Furthermore, Islamic law is an integral part of the Islamic religion, and colonial powers risked serious problems in tampering with the practices of the legal professional class. However, in Algeria, the French nevertheless managed to transform local Muslim legal practice into a highly centralized system subordinate to French courts (Ibid:9), as discussed below.125

In this context of legal homogenization and the associated loss of local ethnic and religious groups' legal autonomy, a series of new laws were developed that represent the continued attempt by the French state to bring distinct communities in Algeria under a single system of regulation. Naturalization laws established throughout the nineteenth century offered and then finally imposed French citizenship on certain social groups, and provide examples of further state efforts to engineer social identities and to simplify the range of civic identities. The systematic denial of French citizenship to Algerian

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124 The analysis of the relationship of co-existing forms of law is the focus of much research in the anthropology of law. For a review of the literature on legal pluralism, see Hooker (1975), and Merry (1988).

125 Cristelow (1985) outlines how the Muslim courts were altered. He points out that while some interest groups in Algeria feared the Muslim courts and law school, and wanted to dismantle them, they were saved and became the last separate domain in defense of an Algerian identity against the threat of assimilation (1985:15).
Muslims, however, underscores the state's recognition that Algeria was not simply a part of France, but, from the state's perspective, was and should remain a French colony.

Muslim Naturalization Codes

Napoleon III's *Sénatus-consulte* law of July 14, 1865\(^\text{126}\) accorded indigenous Jews and Muslims in Algeria the status of French subjects, and established a mechanism for the naturalization of indigenous Algerians and foreign Europeans upon approval of individual requests. The law also declares that new citizens are subject to French law. While this statement sounds innocuous, it implies that Muslims applying for French citizenship will be required to abandon their *status personnel*, their rights and obligations under Koranic Law, and instead must follow the strictures of the Napoleonic Codes for such matters as marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

The official motivation for this *Sénatus-consulte*, as outlined in the "*exposé des motifs*," was to facilitate assimilation of the indigenous population, in accordance with the general good will expressed by the Emperor towards the Algerian Muslims in his Imperial letter of February 6, 1863.\(^\text{127}\) However, following the first declaration, "*l'indigène musulman est Français*" (the indigenous Muslim is French), the law states


\[^{127}\text{This letter, which outraged the European communities in Algeria, includes his famous proclamation, "Je suis aussi bien l'empereur des Arabes que l'empereur des Français." During his subsequent voyage to Algeria, Louis-Napoleon is reported to have told the inhabitants, "Je viens au milieu de vous pour...vous assurer que la protection de la métropole ne vous manquera pas!" (Op. cit, p. 114).}\]
that, as such, "he can be admitted to serve in the army and the navy," indicating that another motivation for establishing this code may have been to enlarge Napoleon's armies.

French colonial armies commonly enlisted local, colonized subjects into their ranks overseas. In fact, it is difficult to overstate the importance of Africa and African troops to the French Army. As the French colonial empire expanded, there was not enough manpower to conquer new territories while holding onto the old ones using only troops from the Metropole. Military leaders calculated just how far they could push troop levels at home, and stopped short of recruitment levels that would evoke a public calling into question of the particular colonial expeditions then underway. To proceed with their colonial adventures, they relied in part on local troops, and one could argue that without this additional manpower, the whole colonial enterprise would have eventually foundered. As the French empire stretched further around the globe, indigenous troops were used in most major French operations of the 19th century, and were brought to Europe to defend France from the Franco-Prussian war through both world wars.

Virtually from the time of the initial French conquest of Algiers, Algeria provided a training ground and manpower resource for the French Army. In 1835, the Zouaves, a regiment formed of members of the Zouaoua tribe, became the first of several indigenous

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128 Clayton's France, Soldiers and Africa strongly makes this point (1988). In addition to its use as an enormous manpower pool, Africa served as a training ground for many French divisions and as the home base of the Foreign Legion during most of its existence.
units which would comprise the French *Armée d’Afrique* (Clayton 1988:53). These Algerian indigenous troops served in the conquest of Algeria and in most colonial and other French campaigns of the 19th century, particularly in the Second Empire engagements of Crimea (1854-56), Italy (1859), and Mexico (1861-67) (Clayton 1988:62). Their service was highly praised by Napoleon III, who viewed them as one of Algeria’s most useful “products.”

The report of Senator Mr. Delangle published with the 1865 Sénatus-Consulte further reveals Napoleon’s intentions. He presents a series of rhetorical questions: Is it in the interest of France and the colony to grant French nationality to the indigenous Jews and Muslims? Is this law prudent as well as liberal? In arguing that the time has come for such a measure, and that France in particular would benefit, he reports that many indigenous youth have already sought out the honor of fighting under the French flag, and notes that some 7,000 were members of the French *Armée d’Afrique* in 1854 alone.

For Algerian Muslims, the mandated loss of their *statut personnel* associated with French citizenship would mean forsaking their rights and obligations under Koranic law and thus practices integral to their religious practice and their identity. Naturalization was thus viewed by the indigenous population as a form of social suicide, and the numbers who applied were minuscule. Between 1865 and 1899, only 1,309 demands for

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129 The three main divisions of the French army at this time were the Metropolitan army, the *Armée d’Afrique* (in fact the army of north-west Africa), and the *Troupes Coloniales* (or *La Coloniale*), called *Troupes de Marine* until 1900, comprised of volunteers and recruits from French colonies other than those of North Africa (Clayton 1988:6-7).

130 Napoleon III wrote: “*Ce que l’Afrique peut produire de plus utile à la France, ce sont des soldats*” (Ageron 1968b:1057).

131 Sénatus-consulte, op. cit., p. 115.
naturalization were filled and some 13 percent rejected (out of a population of 4 million Muslims by 1901) (Ageron 1968b:1118).

Over the next eighty years, French policy towards the assimilation of indigenous Muslims in Algeria was fraught with contradictions. Metropolitan politicians increasingly called for reforms that would improve the condition of the “indigènes,” particularly after the 1870s incorporation of the civil territories of Algeria into France as three departments of the French state. Life for Muslims under Algeria’s new civilian government in general worsened. Those living in the communes de plein exercice, the areas of high European concentration, would never have a voice in the organization of local affairs due to limitations imposed on their voting power, and those in the communes mixtes were even worse off, as they were subject to the whims of politicians elected by a tiny European minority.

These political inequities were highlighted in France. Many politicians found it difficult to support the continued existence of three departments of France comprising predominately a non-citizen subject people. Reform movements gained particular moral strength from a law establishing conscription of Algerian Muslims in 1908, and many asked how non-citizens could be asked to serve the nation without some promise of citizenship? Public opinion in France further shifted in favor of Muslim reforms following the service of approximately 174,000 indigenous Algerian troops in World War

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132 Periodically, proposals were presented to grant French citizenship to Muslims that did not require the denial of the statut personnel. These included a proposal by Michelin and Gaulier in 1887, Bazille in 1895, and Michelin and Cluseret in 1897 (See Ageron 1968:1116-7).
I (Michel 1984:119). But each reform movement failed due to the categorical opposition from the Algerian colonists and their representatives in France. A much debated and heralded law of 1919 that contained a naturalization provision represented an attempt to respond to the demands of Muslim veterans of World War I as well as the reformists in France, but in the end fell short of almost everyone’s expectations (Ageron 1968b:). For the Muslims, it was inadequate because it again linked naturalization to the repudiation of Islamic law.

Political assimilation of the Muslims, particularly the extension of voting rights, was a direct threat to the settlers, and Muslim assimilation was thus a highly charged issue throughout Algerian history, with Metropolitan and colonial legislators usually holding diametrically opposed positions. Colonists in general wanted to prevent the enfranchisement of Muslims regardless of their personal status; they were all too aware that their own enjoyment of political and economic domination in Algeria would quickly come to an end if even a tenth of the Muslim population was granted full and equal voting rights. Thus, the offering of French citizenship to Muslims only when coupled with a denial of their personal status may have been presented as a compromise solution.

133 See Smith n.d. on the association of citizenship with military service in France and Algeria.
but it was a "compromise" designed to fail. It would not be until 1946 that Algerian Muslims were able to receive French citizenship and still retain their *statut personnel*.  

**Algeria's Jewish Community and Naturalization Codes**

The history of the relationship of Algeria's Jews to the French state paralleled that of their co-religionists in France. During the first decades of French rule, the autonomy of the small indigenous Jewish community (approximately 37,000 at conquest) was systematically diminished. The jurisdiction of rabbinical courts was reduced to matters related to religion and marriage three years after the French arrived. By 1842, French courts were given complete jurisdiction over Algerian Jews, including for questions of marriage, divorce, or personal status (Friedman 1988:6). This represented a dramatic change, for it essentially eliminated the community's corporate status. Henceforth Jews were required to interact with the French civil law system, and to do so as individuals.

Members of the Jewish community in France played an important role in the ongoing assimilation process. According to several scholars, French Jews who encountered their Algerian counterparts were shocked at their standard of living. Organizations were formed to help pull Algerian Jews out of their situation of "ignorance

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134 This occurred with the law of May 7, 1946, which granted French citizenship to all colonial subjects of the entire French colonial empire in conjunction with the formation of the *Union Française*, a federation of former colonies established as a means to grant partial autonomy while keeping the empire together (Ageron 1994:71-74). This liberal gesture on the part of the French state followed the World War Two service in defense of France of hundreds of thousands of colonized incorporated into the French Army, and resulted in a shift in the French relationship to the colonies from which there would be no return. By this time, liberation movements had grown, and decolonization in Algeria was imminent.
and poverty" (Laloum and Allouche 1987:19) and to reform their schools and religious practices (Hirschberg 1981:51). Rabbis were sent as instructors from France, and some French groups tried to encourage indigenous Jews to adopt European clothes, the French language, and to enroll in the local militia (Ibid). In 1839, a commission was formed to help "regularize" the educational system and religious practices of the Algerian Jews so they would more closely correspond with those of the Jewish community in France; Parisian lawyer Adolphe Cremieux, the author of the Cremieux decree, became involved in this project in the 1840s. The commission recommended the complete incorporation of Algerian Jews into the French consistory system (Friedman 1988:8). This recommendation was resisted by some Algerian Jews (see Friedman 1988:9), for participation would mean an end to remaining elements of local autonomy and loss of the right to divorce or polygyny, practices which would be abolished under the consistory system.

The commission's recommendations were carried out nevertheless. An ordinance of November 9, 1845 created a French-style consistory structure for Algeria (Ibid:6). Among other duties, consistory officials were to maintain order in synagogues, prevent private prayer assemblies, ensure that parents sent their children to school, and supervise the spending of community funds. Rabbis were now to teach "patriotism," and to lead prayer recitations to the French royal family (Ibid:7). When the new head Rabbi of the Algerian consistory began to take steps to attach it officially to the French consistory structure, a petition was sent by Algerian Jews, but to no avail (Ibid:8). In 1862, local Algerian consistories were formally incorporated into the French system. Participation in
this system was still not obligatory, however, and many indigenous Jews continued to attend locally-run religious institutions.

In 1865, Jews like Muslims were granted the opportunity to become naturalized French citizens with Napoleon III's 1865 Sénatus-consulte legislation. Like the indigenous Muslims, Jews could apply for French citizenship if they agreed to abandoned their statut personnel. For Algerian Jews, naturalization also entailed mandatory participation in the consistory system. Apparently the benefits of French citizenship were not enough to encourage Algerian Jews to apply, and during the four years the decree was in effect, only 144 Jews were naturalized in this way (Julien 1964:467).

The establishment on October 24, 1870 of the Crémieux decree permanently eliminated this "problem." Under this decree, all of Algeria's Jews became naturalized French citizens en masse, and were thus required to become involved in the local consistory system. This decree was established during the Franco-Prussian war by the provisional Republican Government of National Defense, after the capture of Louis-Napoléon by the Prussians. Adolphe Crémieux, already involved in efforts to raise the status of Algeria's Jews, was appointed Minister of Justice, and Algerian affairs fell under his mandated responsibilities. Because the government had little time to concern itself with colonial affairs, Crémieux was given full reign to develop legislation needed to resolve pending matters (Rey-Goldzeiguer 1990:538). The decree was one of several he published the same day regarding Algerian affairs, and simply states,
Indigenous Jews of departments of Algeria are declared French citizens; consequently their real and personal status will be...regulated by French law.\textsuperscript{136}

Friedman challenges traditional scholarship (Chouraqui 1973; Cohen 1900; Eisenbeth 1937) that claims that Algerian Jews reacted enthusiastically to French citizenship. She notes that Crémieux had been to Algeria seventeen times, and knew that the Jewish community there was conservative and that legislation offering a choice to become French would not work (1988:10). The decree thus appears to have been a final attempt by frustrated supporters of the consistory system to "encourage" assimilation by formally requiring Algerian Jews to conform to French Jewish practices (see Schwartzfuchs 1980).

Following its establishment, members of the local Jewish community resisted by refusing to take part in the mandated civil marriages (Friedman 1988:10). These practices were widespread enough to prompt a letter of rebuke from the Central Consistory to that in Algeria:

\begin{quote}
We are informed that grave infractions of French laws are often committed in the three provinces of Algeria. We learn with the deepest regrets that, despite the assimilation which has been the object of our dearest wishes...many of our Algerian co-religionists do not fear to contract their religious ceremony without preceding this ceremony with the celebration of the civil marriage. We count on your patriotic sentiments...to aid us to promptly accomplish the regeneration of our co-religionists of Algeria...You will please help them understand that...their complete assimilation to the Israelites of the Metropole imposes on them the obligation to submit without reservations to all the prescriptions of French legislation (in Friedman 1988:11-12).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{135} Sénatus-consulte sur l'état des personnes et la naturalisation en Algérie. 14-21 July 1865, op. cit.
The Crémieux decree is sometimes cited as the key to explain the widespread and violent anti-Jewish agitation among Algerian colonists in the 1890s. David Prochaska links the decree to anti-Semitism in two arguments. At one point, he argues that the decree, in granting Jews the right to vote, unleashed an electoral crisis in Algeria, for the Jewish vote subsequently became a swing vote in certain regions (1990:202). He also states that the decree would set off a time-bomb; “the veneer of French citizenship could not hide the fact that the Jews resembled the Muslims more than the Christians” (1990:138).

Friedman takes this second argument further, stating that the decree, in shifting one subset of the indigenous population into the “colonizer” category, heightened colonist anxieties about their status and stability (Friedman 1988:23-25). In reviewing the writings of some of the anti-Semites, she finds a shift after 1870 to portrayals of Jews as dirty, rotten or in various ways, “polluting.” Following the work of Mary Douglas (1966), she suggests that because Jews were viewed as transgressing accepted social classification schemes, they were viewed as polluting and therefore the focus of discrimination. While Friedman’s argument is sound and similar to arguments used elsewhere in this dissertation concerning the Maltese, I believe she needs to take it even further and look beyond the awkward status of the Jews. The answer, I believe, lies more in the awkward status of the key participants in the anti-Jewish movement, the non-French Europeans. Their status as second class, or “subordinate” colonists and the social discrimination they experienced in the colony by the Metropolitan French was anxiety provoking at best in this setting of extreme caste-like distinctions. In their desire for
acceptance as full-fledged members of the elite colonist class, some non-French colonists shifted attention away from themselves and onto the naturalized Jews. They attempted to raise their status and appear “more French than the French” through their denigration and terrorization of the Jewish community.

**Mass Naturalization of the Non-French Europeans**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, there was considerable concern in colony and Metropole alike regarding not only the striking imbalance between settlers and colonized, but also the imbalance within the settler population. In spite of the development of a long series of French settlement programs, the non-French settler population was continuing to increase at a faster rate than the French due to higher birth and immigration rates. In some regions the imbalance was striking. In the department of Oran, for example, there were 67,000 French civilians in contrast to 92,290 Spanish- and 100,000 Europeans overall—in 1887 (Leroy-Beaulieu 1887:52). A similar predominance of non-French migrants was found in the department of Algiers in 1886 (106,000 French colonists versus 174,000 non-French Europeans; Crespo and Jordi 1991:24). With so many foreigners, would Algeria remain French, or would other nations steal this prize colony away? How could it be assured that Algeria remain culturally French with so many foreigners present? In Algeria, where the settlers were outnumbered by the Muslims nearly ten to one and the French hold on the colony was never sure, it was important to consolidate the settlers. Since there was so little success
in programs encouraging French immigration, naturalization emerged as the logical solution.

A mechanism allowing foreigners to request French citizenship through naturalization on an individual basis had been in place in France and Algeria since the late 1840s which included a ten-year residence requirement.\textsuperscript{137} Napoleon III’s \textit{Sénatus-Consulte} of 1865 reduced the residence requirement to three years, and eliminated the need to receive prior formal authorization to establish residence in France, as required by the previous legislation.\textsuperscript{138} Published with the law is a report that clearly states that the underlying goal in reducing the residence requirement and eliminating the preliminary authorization requirement was to facilitate naturalization of the burgeoning number of non-French Europeans in the colony:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Aujourd'hui, l'émigration étrangère forme à peu près la moitié de la colonie africaine...Ne sent-on pas quel intérêt capital il y a d’empêcher que l’Algérie ne perde, à ce mélange d’étrangers, le caractère de la nationalité française, en transformant, et le plus vite qu’on pourra, en Français les étrangers qui viendront se fixer en Afrique?}\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

In the end, the bill did not have the desired effect. From 1865 to 1874, only 293 Spanish, 313 Italians, and 601 Germans obtained French citizenship in this way (Jordi 1986:129), out of total populations of approximately 92,500 Spanish and 25,800 Italians, and 5,700 Germans by that time.

\textsuperscript{137} Foreigner naturalization in Algeria was articulated in the laws of 22 March 1849, 5 December 1849, and 7 February 1851.

\textsuperscript{138} 14 July 1865 \textit{Sénatus-Consulte} sur l’état des personnes...op. cit.

\textsuperscript{139} “Today, foreign emigration comprises approximately one half of the African colony...don’t we sense how important it is to prevent Algeria from losing its French character to this mixture of foreigners, by transforming as fast as possible these foreigners into Frenchmen?” Op. cit., page 117.
It is unclear why Europeans were not requesting French citizenship. There were benefits associated with French citizenship and few negative consequences: only French citizens were guaranteed civil and political rights in Algeria, and only they could be appointed to the many lucrative government positions available at the time. In France, it was felt that foreigners were avoiding naturalization purposefully to avoid the mandatory military service there. But French recruitment laws were not applied to Algeria until 1875, and at that point, French citizens of Algeria served only one year while Metropolitans served five. In addition, the requirement to serve in local militia units was applied equally to French and non-French alike throughout most of this period. ¹⁴⁰ In addition, legislation had been established that should have encouraged naturalization: a law of October 16, 1871 made French nationality a prerequisite for receiving government concessions (Jordi 1986:103).

Increasing numbers of Europeans began to consider naturalization following the establishment of restrictive legislation against foreign fishermen. Foreigners had been granted complete freedom in all trades in Algeria through measures established in 1836 and 1843. Fishing during the early decades was dominated by foreign fishermen and vessels, in particular attracting Spanish, Italian and Maltese fishermen. ¹⁴¹ In July 1886, this situation changed for Italians, the majority of the fishermen in Algeria, when the French/Italian trade alliance was rejected. From this point on, there could be no more

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¹⁴⁰ Following agreements with Britain in 1863 and Italy in 1868, their nationals were exempted from the Algerian militia obligation (Jordi 1986:131).
¹⁴¹ “Report for the Year 1889 on the Commerce and Agriculture of Algeria.” Foreign Office 1890 Annual Series, No. 669, Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance. April 1890. 40 MiOM, AOM.
than 25 percent foreigners on any fishing vessels fishing in French Algerian waters.

Even more significant was the law of 1 March 1888, which prohibited fishing within 3 miles along the coast to all but French citizens (Lacoste 1931:34). Foreign fishermen henceforth were required to either return home, or to attempt to become French through the 1865 Sénatus-Consulte. Consequently, foreign fishermen quickly began to seek out French citizenship, as illustrated in Table 3, below:

Table 3 Naturalizations of Foreign Fishermen, 1885-1888

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Naturalizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, despite the increased naturalization of some fishermen, by 1889, while almost all of the Germans and Swiss in Algeria were naturalized, only 13 percent of the Italians and 2 percent of the Spanish had opted for French citizenship (Jordi 1986:103).

Interest in the relative sizes and growth rates of the European populations in Algeria grew into a near obsession, and several demographic studies of the European populations of Algeria were published in the late nineteenth century. Many present comparative birth, death and fertility rates for the different European nationalities in Algeria. It was regularly noted that Maltese, Italian and Spanish marriages were more

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142 Source: “Report for the Year 1889...,” op. cit. 40 MiOm, AOM.
143 For example, Ricoux, 1880, La Démographie figurée de l’Algérie. Etude statistique des populations européennes qui habitent l’Algérie; Demontès, Le peuple Algérien. Essais de démographie algérienne (1906) and Leroy-Beaulieu’s L’Algérie et la Tunisie (1887). This sensitivity is reflected in later works as well. A French school textbook reports the relative proportions of the colonist populations as if describing a sports match: “The following years, the French triumphed. In 1861, they were 112,000 against 80,000 foreigners...then they lost this lead a little (Bernard and Redon 1936:78).
fertile (see Leroy-Beaulieu 1887:40-53), and as a result, these populations were increasing more rapidly than the French. Writers like Leroy-Beaulieu began to argue for the resolution of the “foreigner question” through naturalization (1887:vi).

It was becoming clear that widespread naturalization of Europeans would not be achieved unless the element of choice was removed (Jordi 1986:132), a strategy articulated openly by Leroy-Beaulieu (1887:54). The state turned to the solution of mass naturalization. The citizenship law of June 26, 1889\(^{144}\) automatically naturalized all foreign children born in Algeria or France to French fathers if they did not choose otherwise by the age of majority, as well as all third generation foreigners. Brubaker examines in detail the extension, through this law, of the application of *jus soli*\(^{145}\) in France in chapter 5 of his *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992).

*Jus soli* had been a mechanism for receiving French citizenship early on through the Napoleonic Codes, in which “potential” citizens, those born in France of foreign fathers, could “reclaim” their French citizenship upon demand (Brubaker 1992:89-91). Brubaker argues that the formation of French citizens through the extension of *jus soli* in 1889 should not be considered a simple state response to demographic concerns (Ibid:85, 103-4); instead, he believes that this incorporation of foreigners into the French state responded to a political necessity. At the time, many French were complaining that while they were required to complete military service obligations that spanned many years, the


\(^{145}\) *Jus soli* is the principle according to which those born on national territory have the right to citizenship, as distinct from *jus sanguinum*, in which the right to citizenship is acquired through a principle of descent.
foreigners in France were avoiding this obligation, and thus able to advance in their careers while the French served. Furthermore, there was a growing sense that the large number of multi-generation foreigners were developing into "nations within nations" (Brubaker 1992:106).

However, demographic and military concerns are identified clearly in reports published with the law. In his statement to the Senate on June 3, 1889, Senator Delsol outlines not only the problem of the foreigners' evasion of military service obligations, but points out as his third main point the large numbers of foreigners in France in general:

"En troisième lieu, on invoque un fait social qui prend une importance de jour en jour plus grande. Le nombre des étrangers qui viennent se fixer parmi nous est considérable. D'après le dénombrement de la population fait en 1886, il y a en France 1,115,214 étrangers dont beaucoup peuvent être appelés à servir dans des armées ennemies."

While demographic concerns seem to motivate at least partly the 1889 law's application to France, they were critical factors in its application to Algeria. Delsol's report cites population figures from the Algerian censuses of 1865 and 1886, and states that the foreign population has been increasing there at a faster rate than the French due to higher birth and migration rates. He predicts that soon it will surpass that of the French, and adds:

146 This point is clearly articulated in the text published with the 1889 law, and in fact, a harsher version of the law was proposed which would have made it impossible under any circumstances for third generation France-born men to decline French nationality. Loi op. cit, p. 64.
147 "In the third place, we introduce a social fact that takes on a greater importance every day. The number of foreigners who establish themselves among us is considerable. According to the census of 1886, there are in France 1,115,214 foreigners, of whom many could be called up to serve in enemy armies." Op cit, page 65.
Dans de telles circonstances, le jus soli ne s'impose "il pas et ne devient 'il même pas l'unique moyen d'assurer pour l'avenir la prédominance de l'élément français sur l'élément étranger?\textsuperscript{148}

The procedure established for the third generation born in France wishing to refuse naturalization was extremely elaborate and reveals the intention of those writing the law to prevent most from choosing this option.\textsuperscript{149} Six documents were required, including the individual's birth certificate; the parents' marriage certificate, translated and legalized by French consuls in their country of origin; birth certificates of both parents, translated, and certified; a certificate from foreign military authorities outlining the individual's military status; and a nationality certificate obtained from their country sent by the foreign consul and signed by two witnesses of their nationality stating that in no way would the individual ever wish to become French (Jordi 1986:132-3). During this era, most of these documents would have been extremely difficult or costly to obtain. Consequently, the 1889 naturalization law had the effect of almost immediately elevating the size of the "French" portion of the colonist population (see Table 4, below).\textsuperscript{150} Over the years, as more and more Algeria-born foreign children reached majority, the French portion of the population increased steadily.

\textsuperscript{148} "In such circumstances, isn't jus soli imperative, and doesn't it even become the only way to assure the predominance of the French over the non-French in the future?" Op. cit., page 65.

\textsuperscript{149} It should be noted that the imposition of French citizenship in this way ran contrary to Napoleonic law. Under the original code, naturalization of individuals born of foreign parents in France was optional and achieved only through individual initiation. See Brubaker 1992:88-89.

\textsuperscript{150} A few managed to follow these procedures. For a time it was a practice among some Spanish families in Oran to have one of their sons declare himself Spanish as a safeguard in case of worsening political or economic conditions in Algeria (Jordi 1986:136).
Table 4: Proportion of French and Non-French Europeans, 1886 to 1901\textsuperscript{151}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total French\textsuperscript{152}</th>
<th>Naturalized French</th>
<th>Non-French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>219,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>211,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>318,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>212,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>364,000</td>
<td>72,000</td>
<td>189,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cultural and Political Assimilation of the Naturalized French

Third Republic politicians were confident in the assimilating power of their nation (see Brubaker 1992:108-9), and believed that through their service in the military and participation in the education system, the children born and raised on French soil would soon become assimilated to French culture and ideals. During this time, analogous if not identical “assimilating” institutions were also in operation in Algeria, and a similar optimistic stance was assumed by some politicians regarding the Europeans naturalized there as well. Not everyone in Algeria had such faith in this assimilation experiment, however. The loyalty of such large numbers of naturalized French, or néos, as they were called until the 1930s (Jordi 1986:133), eventually representing approximately half of the French population of Algeria, was questioned in both France and Algeria. At the end of the 19th century, fear of a péripé étranger (foreign peril) was widespread (Ageron 1968:547; 1979:120-121). The editor of the journal *Le Temps*, for example, wrote in 1896, “l’élément d’origine française est débordé: que les choses continuent et il sera noyé avant peu...si l’on n’y prend garde, l’Algérie passera bientot entre les mains des

\textsuperscript{151} Source: Ageron 1991:62.
The néos faced discrimination from the native French, the "Français de France." Pejorative terms were used in Algeria to denote individuals from mixed marriages, even those between "native" and naturalized French (Sivan 1980:166). And of course legal assimilation does not automatically lead to socioeconomic assimilation. Economic divisions between the former Italians, Spanish and Maltese and the French from France persisted in Bone well into the twentieth century (Prochaska 1990), and a lower class settler class, comprised largely of originally non-French, remained apparent to visitors in the 1950s (Crespo 1994:170).

Most historians argue that World War I marked the turning point after which ethnic distinctions were completely blurred and a unified colonist population was formed (Baroli 1967; Crespo and Jordi 1991; Crespo 1994:133). The sources of assimilation are unanimously agreed upon: through their involvement with the French schools, military service, electoral and legal systems, the foreign-origin colonists were, in theory, transformed into French men and women. The war itself was viewed as the litmus test of the "Frenchness" of the newly naturalized. It has been noted often that during the war, the newly naturalized French of Algeria accepted their enlistment and there were few problems with recruitment, proving wrong the xenophobes in Algeria and France. In addition, non-French Europeans volunteered in large numbers to fight for this nation.

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152 Of the total French population, approximately 43,000 in 1886 included naturalized French Jews (Leroy-Beaulieu 1887:50-51).

153 "The French-origin portion (of the population) is swamped...if things continue, it will be drowned...if we aren't careful, Algeria will soon be in the hands of the foreigners" (in Crespo 1994:130).
which was not yet theirs and which most had never seen. It is estimated that overall approximately 73,000 French/Europeans of Algeria were mobilized (Meynier 1981:601), of which 22,000 perished (Heggoy and Haar 1984:40). The patriotism of the colonists remaining behind was quite pronounced during the war. After the battle of Verdun, for example, parades and demonstrations were carried out for weeks even in the remotest villages of Algeria, and funeral processions and mass commemorations of the dead were elaborate (Meynier 1981:603).

Certainly practical aspects of the war—the mixing together of recruits from different regions and ethnic groups of Algeria with those from the Metropole as well as their exposure to France—helped reduce the gulf between the various European ethnic groups in Algeria. However, the war was also, and, I argue here, primarily, a psychological turning point for both the “Français de France” and the “néos.” The French had the evidence they needed of the real loyalty of the recently naturalized. In turn, the néos now had the best proof possible, in the mind-set of the time, of their true belonging to the nation: their military service. They (or their relatives if they themselves would not survive the war), could claim to be not only legally French, but spiritually French. The extreme patriotism of the colonists remaining behind in Algeria during the war can be viewed as a parallel demonstration by those not serving of their true “Frenchness.”

What is of special interest here is the fact that for many in France and Algeria, the legal definition as French of the néos was not enough. In the popular understanding of

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154 Meynier estimates that 60 percent of the foreigners of draft age Algeria who could
the time, fulfillment of military service obligations held greater significance, a
perspective clearly illustrated by the following passage from a French school textbook on
the history of Algeria:

There is reason to add that a large number of foreigners, born in Algeria or
permanently tied to the country, have become French thanks to the naturalization
laws. They are sincerely attached to their new Patrie. All behaved valiantly
during the great war of 1914-1918. Already French by law, they have become
more so through the common experience (communauté) of perils and spilled
blood (Bernard & Redon 1936:192-3, emphasis added).

"Nous, les Algériens:" The Evolution of a Settler Culture

After 1896, the number of colonists born in Algeria was greater than the number
of immigrants. The “fusion” of the elements of the settler population, first a political
goal, became increasingly a reality through the decades of co-habitation in the colony and
the slowing of migration from France and other European countries. As Ageron states,
the “étrangers” and the “néo-Français” melted together with the people who called

There was an increasing awareness among the colonists of their forming a unique
new culture in Algeria. By the 1870s, writers began to explore the possibility that a “new
white race” was being forged in the “crucible” of Africa (Lorcin 1995:196), and this idea
became widespread by the 1880s. In part as a reaction against the Orientalism of much
French literature concerning North African topics, French writers in Algeria began to
write novels that illustrated Algeria as they experienced it. Louis Bertrand’s works,
Pepète le Bien Aimé (1909) and Le Sang des Races (1899) are some of the best known.

have avoided the war decided to serve and in the process become French (1981:601).
In these, he promoted the idea of a Latin Africa, popularizing the idea that North Africa was simply a continuation of the Roman conquest and therefore that Latin civilization was the first, true civilization of North Africa (Lorcin 1995:201). In his novels, he reproduced the stereotyped European-origin characters of urban Algeria at the turn of the century, writing for instance about Maltese, Napolitan and Mahonnais masons and cart-drivers (charretiers) sitting around drinking after work. He also reproduced to a certain extent the spoken language of the period, called “pataouête.” Already by the 1880s, the formation of a new language from the mixture of the languages and dialects spoken by the European and indigenous people of Algeria was noted by authors (e.g. Ricoux 1880:276), and this colonist “pataouête” was further popularized by Musette’s Cagayous, another character from the suburbs of the large Algerian cities.

**Transition to the Contemporary Period**

Migration from Europe to Algeria slowed considerably during the twentieth century, and every year, an increasing percentage of the colonists was born in the colony. By World War I, many of these were the third or fourth generation in their families born in Algeria. The late nineteenth century naturalization laws continued to naturalize the third generation Europeans, and the colonists of Algeria became increasingly French, at least in a legal sense: in 1886, the colonist population of Algeria was almost equally

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155 See pages 198 to 212 of Patricia Lorcin’s *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (1995) for a discussion of Bertrand, the algérianiste school, and their vision of the Algerian melting pot that left little room for the autochthonous populations. Bertrand was infamous for his anti-Semitic views.

divided between French and non-French Europeans, but by 1961, the non-French proportion was reduced to only 6 percent.\textsuperscript{157} In 1961, 83 percent of the French in Algeria, the \textit{Algériens}, as they called themselves, had been born there.

Most of the people I interviewed for this project were born sometime between 1910 and 1935. They grew up in the 1920s and 1930s, a period in Algeria when the colonists were increasingly aware of their unique identity, as “Algériens,” an identity distinct from that of the Metropole.

World War II was experienced by the colonists first as a “\textit{drôle de guerre},” as many were enlisted, sent to the front, and then quickly returned following armistice in 1940.\textsuperscript{158} Vichy politics gained popularity in the colony, and strict discrimination laws were easily passed, restricting Jews from participation in schools and from occupying government positions.\textsuperscript{159} By the time of the arrival of the American troops November 8, 1942, the war had reached North Africa in a new way, and many began to actively support the side of the Allies. Most of the men I interviewed had served in the war, many volunteering because they were too young to be enlisted. The women talked about their quick marriages and spending the following three long years waiting for their husbands’ return from Europe.


\textsuperscript{158} The “\textit{drôle de guerre}” (strange kind of war) lasted from September 1939 to April 1940. On World War II in Algeria, see Nouël 1987.

\textsuperscript{159} For an in-depth examination of North Africa under the Vichy Regime, see Michel Abitbol’s \textit{The Jews of North Africa during the Second World War} (1989).
Following the war, there were only a few years of calm before the commencement of the *Guerre d’Algérie* (1954-1962), the eight year-long decolonization struggle at the end of which the French of Algeria would leave precipitously for France. It is only after this mass flight and their exile to France in 1962 that a self-conscious "pied-noir" identity developed, as discussed in detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5: EXODUS, EXILE, AND THE CREATION OF THE “PIEDS-NOIRS:
INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC
METHODS

Introduction: Exodus, Exile, and the Creation of the Pieds-noirs

The crystallization of a “pied-noir” culture occurred in France, following the
“exodus” (l’exode) of the French of Algeria at the end of the long French-Algerian war
(1954-1962) and their exile in France. In this chapter, I outline the migration of the
French from Algeria, placing this migration in the larger context of the multiple
migrations associated with the decolonization of much of the French empire in the 1950s
and 1960s. I turn to the immediate and longer-term effects of the arrival of these
migrants to France, and finally consider the pieds-noirs in the Aix-Marseille area of
southeastern France, where I based the ethnographic research portion of this study.
Finally, I outline in detail the ethnographic methods used, and summarize my principal
findings in delineating the key features of the social memory of the Franco-Maltese I
interviewed.

Migrations of Decolonization

The migration of the French in Algeria to France followed a series of post-
decolonization migratory movements. These first migrations commenced with the loss of
Indochina in 1954, and continued with the return of thousands of French from Egypt
following the Suez crisis, the migration of hundreds from sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and return migrations from the neighboring protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia. Approximate numbers of French who returned from these colonial settings are outlined below in Table 5.

TABLE 5: Repatriated French, 1952 to July 1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Number of individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>132,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinée</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>275,500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decolonization from 1952 to 1961 involved colonies with considerably fewer settlers than Algeria. There are good reasons for conceptualizing settler colonies differently from other colonial settings (Prochaska 1990:10-11). Traditional colonies included two main groups, the indigenous population, and a small number of colonists who were primarily temporary migrants from the colonizing country, including administrators, missionaries, and merchants; in settler colonies, in contrast, the settlers comprised an important third block (Ibid:9). Prochaska argues that it is the resulting three-sided conflict that develops during settler colony decolonization that is responsible

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for the extreme violence characterizing such periods, as evidenced by the cases of Kenya, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and Algeria (Prochaska 1990:10-11). Certainly the decolonization movements of the non-settler colonies identified in Table 5, above, were considerably less violent than the long war that represented the end of French Algeria, and the repatriation of former colonists from these territories proceeded slowly and with minimal disruption. Former colonists from the neighboring North African Protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco, for example, returned to France over a period of years, as illustrated in TABLE 6, below. In contrast, return migration from Algeria, where over a million settlers were living, occurred precipitously over a period of months, and at least 80 percent of the settlers there had left for France within a two-year period (Jordi 1993:32).

TABLE 6: Repatriation from North Africa, 1956 to 1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>170,00</td>
<td>12,200</td>
<td>9,600</td>
<td>12,920</td>
<td>16,427</td>
<td>7,089</td>
<td>4,232</td>
<td>232,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>142,00</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>4,729</td>
<td>1,813</td>
<td>1,416</td>
<td>171,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>150,00</td>
<td>651,000</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>35,500</td>
<td>22,988</td>
<td>7,416</td>
<td>4,832</td>
<td>947,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>462,00</td>
<td>676,200</td>
<td>90,400</td>
<td>52,320</td>
<td>44,144</td>
<td>16,318</td>
<td>10,480</td>
<td>1,351,862</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

162 From 1955 to 1959, only approximately 110,000 non-Muslim French had left Morocco out of a total population before independence of 320,000. Three years after Tunisian independence in 1956, approximately 45 percent of the non-Muslim French population remained (Fremeaux 1996:13-14).
163 French historian Jean-Jacques Jordi has published two thorough studies of the migration of the pieds-noirs from Algeria, focusing especially on the short- and long-term effects on the main port of entry, Marseille; De l'exode à l'exil. Rapatriés et Pieds-Noirs en France (1993) and 1962. L'arrivée des Pieds-Noirs (1995). Also useful are articles in Marseille et le choc des décolonisations (1996) the proceedings of a colloquium held in Marseille in 1995 and edited by J.J. Jordi and Emile Temime.
The French Meet the Former Colonists: The Politics of Terminology

I have been referring to those returning from the colonies as both "colonists" and "settlers." Although "settler" is in many ways a more appropriate term for the Europeans living in Algeria, and "colonist" applies better to the Europeans of non-settler colonies, in discussing the French of Algeria, I use both interchangeably. This is because I find "settler" too innocent a term; I prefer "colonist" for its more explicit connection with colonialism. In French, however, there is no good equivalent. The term "colon" is applied only to agriculturalists, those involved in "colonizing" the land. The arrival in France of hundreds of thousands of former settlers in the 1950s and 1960s therefore posed a problem of terminology as French officials and the public attempted to find a suitable means of identifying the migrants. Interestingly, the series of terms used sometimes in colonial settings and presented in Memmi's *Portrait du Colonisateur* (1957)—colonisateur, colonial, and colonialiste—did not enter into common parlance in France to indicate the French returning from the overseas empire. This suggests a distancing through language and a subtle denial of French participation in imperialism. Instead, the first colonists arriving from Indochina were referred to as simply "Français d'outre mer" ("overseas French"). This neutral term makes no explicit connection between the people it refers to and the colonial context. Ironically, for this reason,
French officials soon discovered that it was too vague to serve their purposes, for in a strictly legal sense, it applied to both the French from France as well as the naturalized French who were originally members of the indigenous population, i.e. both French colonists and colonized from overseas. The term thus posed problems for French officials who wanted to be able to distinguish between these two groups. In response, we find a temporary proliferation of compound terms. In official missives regarding the colonists of Algeria, for example, de Gaulle refers to them alternately as “la communauté de souche française d’Algérie” (the community of French origin or descent of Algeria), “les Algériens de souche française” (Algerians of French origin) and “les Algériens de souche européenne” (Algerians of European descent), among other formulations (Bénichou 1992:203).

As government bureaucracies continued to coordinate the settlement and integration of the increasing numbers of “Français d’outre-mer,” a new term was applied to the migrants, a word with a precise legal definition in France and which also quickly entered common parlance, that of “rapatriés” (or repatriates). A “rapatrié” in French is a “person returned to his homeland or country.”

France, like most other nations, had a repatriation policy in operation prior to this period, coordinated by the Ministry of

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165 Memmi wrote about the “colonisateur,” the colonizer, an usurper who accepts the role of being a non-legitimate privileged person (1991[1957]:52). Some colonizers accept this privileged position whole-heartedly, and thus travel the entire journey to becoming a “colonialiste,” an individual who not only colonizes but who seeks to legitimize the entire colonial enterprise and who actively promotes colonial politics and policies (1991:45). Finally, the “colonial” is a European living in the colony without privileges and at the same standard of living as the colonized, and who, in Memmi’s view, cannot exist (1991:10).
Foreign Affairs. This Ministry was responsible for the repatriation and reception of French who for political reasons were required to leave a foreign state (Dubois 1994:98). As immigrations of former French colonists increased following the loss of Indochina, a *Centre d'orientation pour les Français rapatriés* was created in December 1956, also under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although this center was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior in 1958, reflecting a growing sense that the problems associated with these migrants were more internal than external matters (Fremeaux 1996:20), the linguistic continuity remained, and French bureaucracies and jurisdiction today continue to identify this population as “rapatriés” and the migrations as “rapatriements,” or repatriations.

The selection by government officials of the term “rapatrié” is quite revealing. The identification of this mass migration phenomenon in official French discourse as simply a process of “repatriation,” a relatively coded and neutral term (Henry 1996:152), denies the drama of this historical break which represented the beginning of the end of the era of French imperialism. The use of a term already in existence also creates a false sense of continuity with previous forms of repatriations, thus silencing any recognition of the novelty of the current situation. It is interesting, furthermore, that the government chose a term such as “rapatrié,” and not another term, for instance, “exilé,” or “réfugié.” Ostensibly “refugié” was inappropriate because according to international legal definitions developed following World War II, refugees are foreigners placed in a special relationship with the receiving country in response to their persecution or need to leave a

166 *“Personne qui est ramenée dans sa patrie”* (Dictionnaire du français au collège,
conflict situation (Henry 1996:150-151). The colonists, as French citizens, could not be considered refugees. However, terms like “refugee,” “deportee” or “exile” may have been avoided as well because they suggest a situation out of control. Such a possibility is underscored by the fact that if government officials had truly been constrained by strict definitions, they would have been unable to use “rapatrié” as well. This term, which refers to French citizens being brought back to France from a foreign state, usually by the government, is applied only with great difficulty to a colonial context. In the case of Algeria, barely applies at all. Algeria was juridically a part of France. The colonists did not believe they were returning from a foreign state, rather that they were migrating internally from one part of France to another. Furthermore, the migrations were spontaneous, and certainly not coordinated by the French government. Finally, most of these so-called repatriates were born in Algeria and considered Algeria, not France, their “patrie” or homeland. In fact, many feel they are closer to “expatriates,” and see themselves as a people forced to leave their homeland and to live out the rest of their lives in exile in a foreign land.

It is partly in response to their official appellation as “rapatriés” that the settlers of Algeria in particular felt the need to find other ways of identifying themselves. Because their previous self-identification as “Algériens” was no longer useful following the formation of a new Republic of Algeria comprised of people also referred to by this term, they began to adopt an initially derogatory appellation used for them by the Metropolitan Larousse 1994:852).
French, and began to call themselves "pieds-noirs." Over the years, the term pied-noir had been extended to rapatriés from neighboring Tunisia and Morocco, and that is the usage employed here.

The Pied-noir Exodus from Algeria

Migration from Algeria began in earnest at the end of the war after French officials signed an agreement with the leaders of the Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne in Evian on March 18th, 1962. The Evian accords were reached after the mounting three-sided violence began to spread into France. The conditions agreed upon corresponded only partially to the subsequent events, as the signing parties were guilty of "a measure of self-delusion if not substantial hypocrisy" (Clayton 1994:173). The French government had accepted an independent Algeria, but planned to further link the new nation to France economically; Algerian leaders agreed to some economic stipulations yet planned to ignore them following independence.

Through the accords, the colonists were promised special protection in Algiers and Oran, full civil rights, proportional political representation, dual nationality for three years with an option for Algerian nationality or the status of resident alien, the maintenance of property rights, and were guaranteed that there would be no expropriation of property without compensation (Clayton 1994:174; see also Stora 1995:77). Most of

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167 The various theories put forward regarding the origins of the term "pied-noir" are discussed in chapter 8.
168 This three-sided violence occurred between the French government, the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN)'s Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN), and the underground colonist Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS), which emerged in early 1961. The main events of the war are outlined in chapter 6.
these were later revealed to be empty promises. Following the agreements, the OAS began another wave of violence in Algiers and Oran, encouraging retaliations by the FLN. The French Army, bound by the accords to maintain a policy of non-intervention, remained spectators during the final months of escalating violence and atrocities (Clayton 1994:174). Colonists began leaving in increasing numbers.

Despite the accelerating violence following the accords, as well as the ongoing departures of hundreds of thousands of French from Morocco and Tunisia, French government officials did not predict the mass colonist flight from Algeria. While legislation was already in place in December 1961 that made the re-integration of former colonists an overriding national priority, General de Gaulle estimated that of the 1,075,000 non-French Muslims in Algeria, only 100,000 to 200,000 would migrate to France at the conclusion of the war (Fremeaux 1996:21). In fact, during the last months of the war, an effort was made to prevent a mass departure on the part of the settlers. As the violence of the war increased in the spring of 1962, French officials requested that Trans-Mediterranean ferry companies reduce their weekly France-Algerian crossings to sixteen, and then to seven in March, and three by April of 1962 (Jordi 1995:19). Perhaps reflecting this reduction in ferry service, between January and April 1962, only approximately 68,000 colonists migrated from Algeria. On May 16th, however, in response to the ever increasing demand for their services, the companies decided to intensify their services without receiving government approval, and emigration increased

169 The law of 26 December 1961 “Relative à l’accueil et à la réinstallation des Français d’outre-mer.”
dramatically: over 500,000 people crossed the Mediterranean from May through August 1962 (Jordi 1993:66).  

This flight from Algeria was characterized by chaos on both sides of the Mediterranean. In Algeria, many colonists, already exhausted by the eight long years of war, felt abandoned by French officials when they signed the Evian accords. The increased violence of the final years of the war had created a situation of increasing anarchy, and many colonists began leaving out of fear of reprisals. The departures were rushed. Even those who knew at the time that they would probably never return could only bring two trunks on the ferries (Clayton 1994:174), and most abandoned their homes, boats, cars, and most of their belongings. One woman described to me the chaos of this period: strangers handed out the keys to their cars and their apartments as they made their way to the ferry station. Cars were strewn along the roads leading to the ports, many of which were burning shells. There was no room for these cars on the ferries, she explained, and bitter emigrants who were determined to prevent their later use by Algerians sometimes simply set them on fire before boarding the ferry. Abandoned pets roamed the streets, and freed birds stayed clinging to their cages in panic where they finally died of starvation or were caught by roving cats.

Conditions in France upon debarkation were somewhat better, although local French authorities were utterly unprepared for the hundreds of thousands of migrants.

Jordi estimates that by the end of 1962, 650,000 French had migrated from Algeria to France. He notes that these figures are conservative estimates, however, and do not include those who migrated via Italy or Spain, those who traveled through unofficial channels, using private boats, for instance, as well as migrants who did not sign up upon arrival at the "centres d'accueil des rapatriés." These figures also do not include Muslim
from Algeria. Official government spokespeople even attempted to convince the French public (and perhaps themselves) that this movement was not out of the ordinary, and sometimes referred to the migrants as "vacanciers," people who had decided to take their summer vacations a bit early that year (Jordi 1995:69). The city of Marseille in particular experienced tremendous disruption (see Jordi 1996). Over sixty percent of the migrants from Algeria passed through Marseille, and by the summer of 1962, nearly 200,000 refugees remained in the city of 770,000 people (Jordi 1995:70). Marseille's public and private social service organizations were completely overwhelmed, as Jordi so clearly describes (1993; 1996; see also Jordi and Temime 1996).

This experience marked both colonists and Metropolitans alike. Migrants who had to live for weeks with their entire families crowded into makeshift housing in barns and garages felt that they had been completely abandoned by France, and still retain extremely negative memories of their reception there (Jordi 1993:89-92). Metropolitan French who had lost sons and friends fighting in Algeria already blamed the colonists for their losses, and were now further disturbed by their sudden swamping of local services, and the priority these newcomers received in employment, housing, and loans.

*Rapatrié and Pieds-noirs Integration into French Society*

The French government provided all former colonists arriving in the 1950s and 1960s, financial support for their immediate needs, including subsistence benefits, temporary lodgings, and social security benefits for one year (Dubois 1994:100). French, 26,000 of whom migrated between May and August 1962 (Jordi 1995:68).
However, the permanent settlement of nearly 1.5 million individuals from the colonies overall, or approximately 3.6 percent of the total Metropolitan population (Ibid: 107), would be achieved only with considerable difficulty, particularly since France was already experiencing a housing shortage at the time. In 1959, a Commissariat à l'aide et a l'orientation des Français rapatriés was created to help find employment for French who had been working in the private sector in Indochina, Morocco, Tunisia and Guinea. As both the numbers of migrants and problems associated with their integration proliferated, a Secretary of State for Rapatriés was created in August 1961 (Fremeaux 1996:20). On December 26, 1961, the law on the "accueil et la réinstallation des Français d'outre-mer" was established, which allowed the government to regulate "rapatrié" affairs through the establishment of ordinances and which provided additional funding for their settlement and integration (Ibid).

Following the more moderate migratory movements of the 1950s, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of pieds-noirs from Algeria in just a few months over-whelmed the agencies that had been designed to accommodate only a few tens of thousands of repatriations per year. Emergency measures were enacted by the end of the summer of 1962 allowing the state to requisition any unoccupied property. The government also began construction on high-rise apartment complexes with apartments set aside for rapatriés to address the acute housing shortage. In the meantime, families from Algeria in particular, the last to arrive, were housed in collective dormitories at military bases, in hospitals, and old factories, and others lived for months crowded in tiny hotel rooms (Dubois 1994:101).
Employment was also a concern. After re-integrating the French arriving from the other colonies, the government now faced the need to find positions for the more than 300,000 actively employed arriving from Algeria. The professional re-integration of these migrants was further complicated by the fact that most pieds-noirs from Algeria settled in cities along the Mediterranean, including Toulouse, Bordeaux, Sète, and Marseille, regions that were economically depressed at the time (Baillet 1975:304); demands for employment in the southern departments exceeded opportunities by the thousands. The converse was true for many northern departments (Ibid), and the French government began a concerted effort to encourage the pieds-noirs to move out of the Midi. An important campaign was started in 1963 that involved the development of 70,000 industrial positions for pieds-noirs and the provision of additional funds for moving expenses and on-site training. In the end, however, only 400 contracts were signed (Ibid:305). The geographic redistribution hoped for was not only unsuccessful, but pieds-noirs who had originally settled in northern departments were beginning to move southwards as well.

This internal pied-noir migration was not motivated by economic considerations. In his 1975 study, Baillet found that the pieds-noirs from Algeria living in the Midi were under-employed; pied-noir households in Marseille and Avignon earned 37 to 54 percent less than Metropolitans in the same cities, and they were living primarily in small high-rise apartments. In contrast, the pieds-noirs who had settled in northern departments or Paris easily found the positions they were seeking, and had achieved what Baillet refers to as "complete" economic integration. Despite these differences in economic status and
social integration, pieds-noirs settled in the North were moving south. Baillet interprets this migration as a result of their difficulties in forging new social relationships with the Metropolitan population, and their desire to be closer to former friends and relatives. From 1963 to 1968, the population of pieds-noirs in the 8 departments of the Midi increased by 50 percent. By the 1970s, more than half of all pieds-noirs in the country were living in these departments (Ibid), and the city of Marseille was receiving 3,000 pieds-noirs per year from the central, eastern and northern regions (Ibid:309). According to statistics from 1990, pieds-noirs are still highly concentrated along the Mediterranean, as well as in Paris, Lyons, Bordeaux, and Corsica (Dubois 1994:108).

Long-term Consequences of Decolonization Migrations

It is now thirty-five years since the final wave of decolonization migrations, and yet it is remarkable how little research has been conducted on their long-term effects in France. The total numbers of both rapatriés in general, and the Algerian subset, are unknown and subject to estimates based on various methods of extrapolation. Only the census of 1968 included a category for “rapatriés,” and the figures presented in this census are generally considered gross underestimates. Since 1968, French censuses no longer provide a separate “rapatrié” category, and this post-1968 policy is interpreted by Jordi to indicate that they are now integrated into metropolitan society (1993:108). The answer, I believe, is subtler. In France, official state statistics rarely if ever indicate

171 Scholars today estimate that there are 650,000 rapatrié families in France altogether, or approximately two million people, two thirds from North Africa (Henry 1996:155), including both Muslims and non-Muslims.
ethnic, national, or religious origins, and consequently, a comparison of how ethnic groups compare nationally in terms of employment levels, schooling, or salaries is achieved only with great difficulty. This official policy is based on the long-term French government stance towards difference stemming from the Revolutionary period (discussed in chapter 4), coupled with a renewed conviction following World War II that the state should ensure the safety of its citizens by refraining from compiling data that could be later used to sort them according to religion, ethnicity or other criteria.

However, this policy also could be interpreted as an attempt by the government to mask difference and to present French society as far more unified than it actually is, an important feature of state formation (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). Many pieds-noirs feel strongly that this is the attitude of the government, at least in their case. Some are frustrated by their inability to secure concrete proof from the government of their numerical significance, or of the relative dimensions of pied-noir economic or social successes and failures in comparison to wider French society. In response to their invisibility in the official state imagination, pieds-noirs organizations go to great lengths to estimate the size of the pieds-noirs populations in various cities and nation-wide.

Because pieds-noirs have officially “dissolved” into wider French society statistically, their integration is difficult to elucidate, and the problems they have experienced following their migration to France are rarely addressed in the academic literature. Psychiatrists have published some papers on the high rate of pied-noir suicides, and writers refer to pervasive psychological problems associated with the
trauma of the war and the permanent loss of their homeland (Jordi 1993:186-7), however systematic studies on these problems have yet to be completed.

Some studies have attempted to examine the long-term economic impact of pied-noir integration in limited geographical regions or specific cities, however many of these are brief or are students' masters' papers. Even the relationship between pied-noir integration and the *Trente Glorieuses*, the three decades of rapid economic growth in France following World War II, is unclear. Some argue that following the first difficult years in France, pied-noir economic integration was so successful because they benefited from the rapid economic growth that characterized the period from 1958 to 1973. However, an alternative view suggests that we look closer at the rapatrié impact on the *Trente Glorieuses*. Some authors suggest that the arrival of one and a half million people in immediate need of housing, clothing, shoes, cars, and all basic appliances, fostered immediate economic growth (Baillet 1975:311). Although no recent study in geography or economic history has tried to evaluate to what extent this large scale migration phenomenon influenced national economic activity, Lees believes that the economic growth at least along the Mediterranean was undoubtedly linked to the economic expansion caused by the migrants (1996). She writes that in the Midi, following the immigration of rapatriés, construction experienced unprecedented activity.

Not only was housing required to accommodate the migrants, but buildings were also needed for schools, hospitals, social service centers, and new administrative offices (Lees 1996:107). Commerce, transportation, and public and private social services were also stimulated by the sudden increase in the population. The net revenues at large department stores increased 10 percent from 1960 to 1961, 22 percent in 1962, and 13 percent 1963 (Ibid:106). Demand fueled inflation, and apartment prices increased 90 percent in some regions between 1958 and 1964 (Ibid:107). Although most rapatriés arrived with little capital, their sudden wealth in the form of subsistence allowances, indemnities, and special low interest loans allowed them to consume in a way France had not seen before (Lees 1996:106). Unfortunately, in the absence of systematic studies, such hypotheses, however acceptable intuitively, remain at the level of conjecture.

Pieds-noirs Associations

The difficulties experienced by the pieds-noirs in their efforts to integrate into French society and in their relationships with Metropolitan French as well as their common experience of exile, have encouraged them to turn to each other for moral, economic, and social support. The pieds-noirs began to form mutual aid and cultural associations that helped them adapt to France and re-connect with friends and neighbors following their exodus from Algeria. Over the years, these associations have helped re-weave a new social fabric between pieds-noirs scattered across the new and alien

173 Many pieds-noirs in the Midi obtained work in construction or opened shops and other small business. In the department of the Bouches-du-Rhône, of the 32,000 rapatriés filing requests for employment between June 1962 and October 1964, only 1.5 percent
landscape. Through this rich vie associative (literally, association life), the pieds-noirs have not only renewed lost social connections, but have built entirely new sets of relationships. They are thus bound together in new ways in part out of their collective difficulty in forming relationships with the Metropolitan French, and on the basis of their common exile from their homeland.

Estimates of the number of pieds-noirs associations vary widely. Jordi suggests that there are approximately 400 (1993:199), while in his book Les Associations Pieds Noirs (1994), Maurice Calmein estimates a much higher figure of 800 (1994:15). The first associations were mutual aid organizations that defended pied-noir interests. Many of these associations lobbied the French government to accelerate the planned or promised reparations (indemnisations) for property and savings lost in Algeria, and promoted the amnesty of individuals condemned for having supported the cause of l’Algérie Française (Calmein 1994:20). The first associations of this kind were originally formed in Algeria. The ANFANOMA\textsuperscript{174}, for instance, was created in 1958 with the goal of promoting a French Algeria. After it shifted to a more moderate political stance in 1959, some former ANFANOMA members formed RANFRAN,\textsuperscript{175} which declared its unambiguous support for a French Algeria. Upon arrival in France, most

\textsuperscript{174} Association Nationale des Français d’Afrique du nord, d’Outre-Mer et leurs Amis.

\textsuperscript{175} Rassemblement National des Français d’Afrique du nord et d’Outre-Mer.
pieds-noirs joined one or the other. ANFANOMA is today the principle association in defense of pied-noir interests (Calmein 1994:24). 176

Following the 1970 reparations law, viewed by many pieds-noirs as inadequate and unfair, pieds-noirs associations headed by Général Jouhaud raised a public appeal for the national recognition of the need for amnesty and settlement of the reparation question, and petitions were signed by hundreds of high-level personalities in French society, many of whom were originally from Algeria (Ibid:30). This action resulted in the French government’s reopening of the individual amnesty and reparations files. Many other smaller associations defending pied-noir interests have formed over the past thirty years. Of these, the USDIFRA in the Var became one of the most well-known nationally following its organization of several dramatic commando operations and acts of collective civil disobedience in defense of pieds-noirs. 177

Because the pied-noir flight from Algeria was so abrupt and chaotic, people were disconnected from their former friends and even relatives. The first associations also organized huge reunions that served as occasions where such individuals could find each other. For years, the thousands of individuals attending the annual pilgrimage of Notre Dame de Santa Cruz in Nimes, for example, held up signs with names indicating the

176 Pied-noir associations have a reputation of being extremely susceptible to internal conflict and fission. The standard line told by pieds-noirs is that for every two pieds-noirs, there will be three associations. See Calmein 1994:24-44, “La Guerre des Chefs,” for a brief overview of the history of the largest of the pied-noir defense associations, including ANFANOMA, the Front National des Rapatriés, (FNR), RANFRAN, and others.
towns they were from, or of the individuals they were trying to find. It has taken considerable time and effort for family members and friends to find each other, and while in France, I witnessed several tearful reunions between friends who had not seen each other for 35 or 40 years.

A second wave of pied-noir associations began to develop in the 1970s. These are sometimes referred to as *amicales,* and are closer to social clubs than tools for political mobilization. The majority of these are organized around a specific locale in Algeria, often a city or town, but sometimes also a larger region, and they serve to unite people from these locales. Because it would be difficult to bring members to meetings from throughout France, these associations are typically based in a certain region of France as well, and thus unite people living in one part of France who were originally from the same place in Algeria. Examples include the *Amitiés Oraniennes de la Côte d'Azur,* *Amicale des Batnéens de la Région Parisienne,* or *L'Amicale des Oraniens du Gard.* Others are organized around schools of Algeria: *Amicale des Anciens Elèves du Lycée Duveyrier de Bilda,* *Association des Anciens de la Faculté de Droit d'Alger,* and so forth. Another type of *amicale* is religion-based, and these are often organized around patron saints: *les Anciens du Patronage Saint-Georges,* or *L'Association des Amis de Notre-Dame d'Afrique.* These associations are responsible for the organization of mass "pilgrimages," like the ones organized annually to Nîmes and Carnoux-en-Provence uniting tens of thousands of pieds-noirs each year (Calmein 1994:87).

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177 The Union Syndicale de Défense des Intérêts des Français Repliés d'Algérie took over the property of a pied-noir farmer in Fréjus in 1974 whose land was being repossessed.
Other associations have been formed with the express purpose of promoting pied-noir culture and memory. One of the most important of these is the *Cercle Algérieniste*, created in Toulouse in 1973 to further the goals of the *Algérieniste* movement in Algeria formed in the 1930s to safeguard and promote the new culture being forged in the colony. The modern *Cercle Algérieniste*'s goals extend beyond a solely literary focus to the perpetuation of pied-noir culture in the widest sense. This organization began to produce a quarterly review in 1975, *L’Algérianiste*, and started its own publishing house, *Editions de l’Atlanthrope*.

**Pieds-noirs in the Aix-Marseille region**

The ethnographic portion of this dissertation is based on data gathered during ethnographic fieldwork in the towns of the Aix-en-Provence-Marseille region of the department of the Bouches du Rhone in southeastern France (see Illustration 6, page 179). This department has a very high pied-noir concentration. Although the census of 1968 reported a total of 93,068 pieds-noirs in the department, representing 6.3 percent of the total population, Jordi’s examination of departmental repatriation files indicates a much larger number: 155,000 *rapatriés* in general were registered there by July 1964, of which 120,000 were from Algeria (1993:103). In 1975, pieds-noirs from Algeria represented approximately 12 percent of the departmental population (Baillet 1975:108).

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They also organized a variety of other forms of civil disobediance, including a widespread tax strike in the departments of Hérault and the Var (Calmein 1994:32-33).
ILLUSTRATION 6, MAP OF FIELD SITE
Without better statistics, it is difficult to determine how many pieds-noirs were living in Aix-en-Provence when I conducted my fieldwork there in 1995-6. The figure widely cited by representatives of the local pieds-noirs organizations is 25 percent of the town’s population; I believe it is safe to claim that Aix is 12 to 25 percent pied-noir, and that the Bouches-du-Rhône has one of the highest concentrations of pieds-noirs in France.

The pieds-noirs I met during my fieldwork did not comprise a community in the classic sense. The group I interviewed was in some ways a collection of individuals and married couples living in many different towns and neighborhoods scattered across the urbanized Aix-Marseille area. They came from quite varied economic and social circumstances in Algeria. Some had been life-long city-dwellers, while others had grown up in rural farming villages and had rarely visited the nearby cities. A small number were from elite families in Algiers, while others were poor farmers or door-to-door salesmen in eastern Constantine. After their exile to France, they followed different trajectories. Some spent years as public servants in Northern cities and migrated south only upon retirement, while others stayed on in Marseille and tried their luck as entrepreneurs. These individuals can be considered to be part of a “community” today, however, because most belong to a tightly linked network of local pieds-noirs associations. After initially meeting with members of one of these associations uniting pieds-noirs of the region who are of Maltese origin, I soon discovered the close connections between members of this association and other associations in Aix, and also learned that Aix is one of the most active centers for pied-noir activity in France.
The Vie Associative Aixoise

Aix-en-Provence is a regional center for local pied-noir associations. While associations have been active in the area since the pied-noir migration there in the 1960s, the Aixois association movement gained momentum in 1989 following the interesting inclusion of a pied-noir, Alexandre Proust, on the electoral slate of the socialist candidate for Mayor, Jean-Francois Picheral. In his letter to Picheral of January 1989, later circulated informally within the local pied-noir community, Proust expresses his gratitude at being asked to join Picheral in the municipal elections in his capacity as president of CIDUNATI, an association of private businessmen of the department, but outlines his interest in serving instead as representative of his fellow "rapatriés" (sic. pieds-noirs). Proust outlines to Picheral a wish-list of the Aixois pied-noir community, estimated in his letter as representing one quarter of the population of the city. These include the creation of a new position within the municipal government of Adjoint aux Rapatriés, the organization of the local pied-noir associations into a collectivity or federation, the need for municipal funding for these associations, and finally, a "maison des Rapatriés," a building that could house their activities. Proust also states that he is only interested in serving with Picheral for one term.

The socialists won the election, and Picheral became mayor of Aix; many believe the socialist return to power was directly related to the "unholy alliance" Picheral had made with the typically right-leaning pieds-noirs. Picheral seems to have been trying to solicit the pied-noir vote when he invited Proust to join his electoral slate, and from

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Proust's letter to Pichéral, we are presented with the implicit promise Pichéral made to the pieds-noirs in exchange for their vote. This relationship has served both groups well. After winning the election, Pichéral kept his “promise” to the pied-noir community: Proust was appointed to the newly created position of adjoint délégué aux rapatriés for six years, and resigned at the end of his term as he had intended. A federation of local pieds-noirs associations was formed, and funding was obtained from the local Aixois government for its maintenance. Finally, and most importantly for the pied-noir community, the desired “maison des rapatriés” became a reality, and construction on the new community center, called the Maison Alphonse Juin, commenced in June of 1992.

The Federation and the Maison Alphone Juin

At the time of my fieldwork, 36 associations were members of the collectif, or federation of local pied-noir associations. These included regional branches of many national pied-noir organizations, including ANFANOMA, the Cercle Algérieniste, the UNP, the ADPCAFOM, and others. A private library of North African materials, the Centre de Documentation Historique sur l’Algérie (CDHA) is also based in Aix, housed within the new municipal library complex; the association managing this collection is also a member of collective. Also included is the very popular Geneologie Algérie, Maroc, Tunisie, a national association formed in 1982 that serves as a central genealogical information base and resource center. Its newsletter provides a forum in which members can correspond with each other in their attempts to reconstruct their family genealogies. In addition, the collectif includes three associations of harkis, the
Muslim Algerians who fought alongside the French. The most active associations are those organized around regions of Algeria, however.

The Maison is the site of local association meetings, and also hosts parties, public lectures, and exhibits throughout the calendar year. While I was there, there were several painting exhibits, an exposition of Japanese calligraphy, and an exhibit of uniforms of the French Armée d’Afrique. Lectures were given by pied-noir authors who had published recent autobiographies about their life in Algeria or political treatises on French-Algerian relations. Amateur historians presented talks on North African topics with historical themes. These lectures were attended by fifty to one hundred participants, and attracted widely from the local pied-noir community.

Federation-wide parties and other social events were held throughout the year at the Maison, including soirées dansantes, evenings involving a catered meal and dancing; costume parties; cocktail parties; and annual late January to early February “galette des rois.” The more active associations managed to attract between two hundred and four hundred participants for their social events, and held these events at large rented halls in the Aixois area.

The Franco-Maltese association was the only one in the federation organized along ethnic lines. Many members of the Maltese association belonged to others in the federation; the considerable overlap in membership occurred particularly with the association uniting former residents of Bône, a city of substantial Maltese presence. The Maltese association annual calendar was very similar to that of the other associations in Aix. The first event of the year was an annual meeting held in early February to elect
association leaders. Outings were held on Ascension Day in May,\textsuperscript{179} and in the late summer or early fall, the association organized annual week-long trips to Malta.

**Ethnographic Methods**

**Contacting the Research Community**

Individuals for this study were contacted through what has been called the networking or “snowball” method (Bernard 1988:98), essentially the only method possible for contacting such a “hidden” and officially invisible population in an urban setting. This strategy involved my contacting first a few key informants, and meeting their friends, and continuing the process. I purposefully pursued this strategy relatively passively, stressing more the “snowball” than the “networking” aspect of the method: because I was working with a population that feels very misunderstood and generally disliked, and, furthermore, because I knew I wanted to talk with them about potentially difficult and painful subjects, I felt I had to let the informants select themselves to a large extent. I was especially careful to not scare people off by being overly eager or pushy, for I felt that such a demeanor would be treated with suspicion. I therefore rarely asked for phone numbers, but instead gave out my number when appropriate and let the potential informants contact me.

This strategy was successful partly because the research population was eager to talk about the same topics I was interested in. Many of this aging community were

\textsuperscript{179} One year the outing involved a day-long boat trip along the Rhône, and the next year it included a visit to a museum in Avignon, a trip to the Camargue, with a dinner in Ste. Marie de la Mer, and a visit to a local botanical garden there.
thinking back over their lives, and still miss Algeria terribly. Many enjoyed returning to
their childhood memories or expressed a need to work through the unfinished conflicts
they had ignored for so long as they proceeded with their new lives in France. Some feel
a certain alienation from their children, who did not experience or cannot remember that
lost world. Many find few other people in France interested in colonial Algeria or willing
to talk with them about that time. By the end of my project, I sometimes felt more a
social worker than anthropologist, for I was in demand. Informants contacted me
regularly to find out when I would have time to meet with them again. Perhaps thinking
that I might find their discussions about the past repetitive, individuals began combing
their apartments for books, articles, and any other kinds of memorabilia about colonial
Algeria that might provide a pretext for inviting me to return. I gathered an impressive
amount of material this way: copies of old maps, old newspaper clippings from the time
of the Evian accords, copies of newsletters of defunct pied-noir associations, articles in
the French press about the pieds-noirs, and copies of archival documents that a member
of the community had collected during a foray to the archives, and which had been re-
copied and passed along. The kindness and generosity of the pieds-noirs I met astounded
me regularly.

Finding People: Overview: I met the principle informants for this study through
a variety of connections. Starting with the principle informants who were running the
Maltese association, I was first introduced to fellow association members, and then to
their family and friends. Meetings of the Maltese association were held in the Maison
Alphonse Juin, and over time I became closer with leaders or members of other
associations who invited me to interview them. In addition, professors I had met in France put me in touch with Maltese-origin pieds-noirs they knew. Finally, I met some of the more important informants by chance.

**Beginnings:** The project really started while I was still in the United States. After finding the book, *L'émigration des Maltais en Algérie au XIXème Siècle* (Donato, 1985) at the library of the University of Arizona, I sent a letter to the author through the publisher. Although I did not know this at the time, the publishing house had been defunct for many years. Thankfully, the letter was forwarded onto the author, who wrote back to me immediately, enthusiastically encouraging me to proceed with my plans.

When I arrived in France several months later in January 1995, we again exchanged letters, and the author put me in touch with two men he knew who headed a Franco-Maltese pied-noir association in Aix-en-Provence. I wrote to the association leaders from Paris, and traveled to meet with them a month later. During this first formal interview, held at their office at the Maison, I introduced myself and outlined my project ideas. I was most concerned about whether or not there would be enough interest in the project among the potential research community to proceed. Although they felt that I would find the elderly informants' memories of Malta too faded to merit any kind of scholarly study, they felt that there would be great interest in talking about North Africa. We met again the next day, at which point they invited me to attend the association's next outing, to be held in May.

I returned to Aix from Paris for the association's annual Ascension Day outing attended by over 50 association members. From that point on I was included in all
association activities as adopted member. After moving to Aix in July, I met with the association leaders regularly at either the association office in the Maison, or, increasingly, at their homes. In September, I accompanied 20 association members on a week-long trip to Malta. Due to the intense nature of the trip, I became very close with most of the trip participants.

Other Associations: In order to situate the Maltese association within the wider context of the regional pieds-noirs associations, I spent a fair amount of time at collectif-wide activities and public events held at the Maison, including lectures, art exhibits, and parties. In addition, I attended events organized by the other associations, including quite a few large barbecues, dinners, and soirées dansantes held at larger rented spaces. I found that these large gatherings were not the best times to engage in formal interviews, and used these occasions instead as times to meet people who might later become more active participants in my research.

Malta and Tunisia: In order to find people who might have returned to Malta, I placed an advertisement in the Malta Sunday Times before arriving there in March (1996) to conduct archival research. I later learned during interviews at the Maltese Emigration Office that strict Maltese return migration regulations in the 1960s prevented almost all of the individuals of Maltese descent living in Algeria or Tunisia from returning to Malta. The advertisement caught the attention of only one woman in Malta. She was in her 90s, and had lived in Tunisia as a young girl, but had returned to Malta in 1935! The advertisement was also noticed by an Algerian pied-noir of Maltese origin living in France who subscribed to the Times. This individual had organized an earlier
Franco-Maltese association in the Marseille area, and I later met with him on several occasions. I met Maltese still living in Tunisia through a Catholic priest when I was there in March-April of 1996.

Random encounters: Finally, serendipitously, while conducting research at the National Library in Malta, I met four members of a pied-noir association based in southwestern France. The association members invited me to their annual meeting in Perpignan, and there I met an entire new network of pieds-noirs, all originally from an eastern Algerian town, a substantial number of whom were of Maltese origin. Through this organization, I also met the directors of another important Franco-Maltese association based in Toulouse.

Quantifying Relationships

Over the course of eighteen months in France, I was introduced to and spoke with individuals numbering in the hundreds. In order to analyze data from the more important informants, however, I have found it useful to consider only those with whom I reached a certain level of intimacy. In order to determine who to include in this subset, I ranked my relationships by level of intimacy on a scale from 1 to 8. Level 1 includes the large number of individuals I met only in a public group setting, regardless of the number of times this occurred. “Level 2 individuals” were those who I met at association meetings or public offices, but with whom I managed to speak alone at length. Level 3 includes those with whom I carried out an in-depth interview, but in a public setting. I classified my relationships with those I met at my apartment as level 4. In France, invitations into
another person's home indicate a certain level of intimacy, and thus when I was invited to
someone's home, but not for a meal, I classified the relationship as level 5. When I was
invited to individuals' homes for meals, these were usually elaborate mid-day meals that
lasted until the early evening; I was sometimes invited to stay for supper as well.
Relationships in which I was invited for such a meal at least once were counted as level
6. I wanted to distinguish an invitation for a formal meal from individuals who, due to
their age or living situations, were unable to invite me for a meal, but with whom I
exchanged numerous and regular telephone calls and meetings. I categorized these
individuals as level 7. Finally, the relationships I classified as level 8 involved regular
phone calls, meetings, multiple invitations for meals, teas, and numerous outings. In the
following analysis of Maltese social memory, I consider data from only the informants of
level 3 intimacy and above.

Characteristics of the Informants, Level 3 and Above

The following study of social memory is based on my interviews, meetings, and
conversations with 57 individuals of level 3 intimacy or higher. Of these, most (43) were
from Algeria, of whom 28 were of Maltese origin. I also worked closely with 15 pieds-
noirs from Tunisia, 12 of whom were of Maltese origin, as well as two pieds-noirs from
Morocco (see Table 7, below). Aside from two unusual cases, all of these informants
were elderly, between 60 and 87. The average age was 72 years old. Most lived in
southern France. Many lived in Aix-en-Provence, Marseille, or towns between the two
cities, although I also traveled to Paris, Toulouse, and Perpignan to meet a few individuals.

**TABLE 7: Pieds-noirs Individuals of level 3 intimacy or higher**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Maltese</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tunisian versus Algerian Pieds-noirs**

I initially considered informants from Tunisia as well as Algeria because individuals of both colonies formed the Franco-Maltese association in Aix. Even the association leaders were a mixed group: the president was from Tunisia, and the secretary was from Algeria. As I proceeded with my interviews, it became clear that the experiences of the Maltese-origin pieds-noirs who had grown up in Algeria were so different from those of Tunisia that I would have to focus my ultimate analysis on one group or the other. Differences between people of the two origins were exacerbated during our trip to Malta, and individuals began to sit at meals with others of the same background. Eventually the dining room seating became segregated, with one table for the Algerian pieds-noirs and the other for those from Tunisia. Tensions between the association leaders worsened during the fieldwork, and towards the end of my research, the secretary from Algeria left the association with several other Algerian pieds-noirs.
Although I sometimes found myself caught between the two factions, I managed to maintain ties with individuals from each. Because this conflict was a source of considerable interest and concern, many of my informants discussed it at length during our interviews. After I realized that ultimately the dissertation would concern only the pieds-noirs who had lived in Algeria, but continued to meet and interview the "Tunisiens" as well with the idea that I might want to analyze the differences between the two bodies of social memory at some later date.

When I asked the informants how life differed in the two locations, the reaction was unanimous: "Oh--it was completely different in every way!" Because Algeria since 1870 was considered a part of France, the French living there saw it as France rather than a colony, an ideology that persists among many pieds-noirs from there today. Tunisia, on the other hand, was a protectorate and ruled indirectly. Consequently, French officials did not apply French law there to the extent to which they had in Algeria, and they tolerated the persistence of discrete and self-perpetuating communities of foreign-origin Europeans. In Tunis, for example, there were Sicilian quarters, Maltese neighborhoods, and Greek communities within which original languages were spoken until decolonization. As a result, most of my interlocutors who had grown up in Tunisia spoke some Maltese and a few spoke it fluently. Religious institutions were granted considerable freedom in Tunisia, and mass was preached there regularly in the different immigrant languages. Naturalization was optional through the mid-20th century, and many Maltese there opted to maintain their "statut britannique," their status as British subjects, even though doing so meant they could not entertain careers in the French
Finally, there was a generalized acceptance of ethnic difference in Tunisia that differed dramatically from Algeria. The people I met from Tunisia stated quite easily that they were Franco-Maltese.

The Algeria-based pieds-noirs, on the other hand, had a much more contradictory and ambivalent relationship to their Maltese heritage. They had denied this heritage for so long in Algeria’s climate of assimilationism, and frequently asserted their “pure” Frenchness. At the same time, they regularly contradicted themselves by discussing openly the prejudice they had felt by the “French.” The social memory of this group was more complex, and accordingly, I have focussed this dissertation on specifically the memories of those who had lived in Algeria. In a subsequent work, I hope to analyze the contrasting memories of their Tunisian counterparts with an ultimate goal of analyzing the differences between the two perspectives on the past.

**The Second Generation**

In the figures presented above, I do not include the children of my informants. This does not reflect a lesser level of intimacy. In fact, I became very close with the daughters of two of my informants, and met with each on several occasions in social settings apart from their respective parents. However, I have decided not to include these members of the second generation as informants here because they represent an entirely different viewpoint on the colonial past; I felt I could not include these individuals in my study without distorting my original project focus. It is clear that a study involving second-generation pieds-noirs would be a fascinating one: the dozen people I knew well
from this generation were all in their late thirties to mid-forties, and thus had spent their formative years in Algeria. Most were still single, had married other pieds-noirs, or seemed to have difficulties with wider French society. A few of the people I met of this age group had moved overseas, choosing to work and live in Africa, South America, or the Pacific, in contrast to general patterns in wider French society. However, a serious consideration of the memories of this subset of pieds-noirs merits a separate study onto itself, and for this reason I do not include data from the second generation here.

The Algerian Subset

Most of the forty-three interlocutors from Algeria were born and raised in the department of Constantine, and two thirds were of Maltese origin. Of the Maltese-origin subset, two-thirds were from the Department of Constantine and the others were from the Department of Algiers. Sixty percent of the Constantinois had lived in the urban areas of Bone or Philippeville. The remainder grew up in the smaller towns and rural villages of Guelma, Souk-Ahras, Jemmapes, Duzerville, and Lannoy.

These individuals were born between 1909 and 1935 (see Table 8, p. 194). While this age spread is considerable, almost all were members of the second generation born in Algeria: their grandparents had been born in Malta, and had come to Algeria (or first to Tunisia) between 1850 and 1880. Only a few individuals strayed from this generational patterning: one woman was the fourth generation born in Algeria, three men were the third, and one man had parents who had migrated directly from Malta and thus was the first generation in his family born in Algeria. There were slightly more male informants.
TABLE 8: AGES OF INTERLOCUTORS IN 1996 AND AT THE END OF THE FRENCH-ALGERIAN WAR IN 1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in 1996</th>
<th>Age in 1962</th>
<th>Birth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1924*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1923</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
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<td>1922</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1921</td>
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1920</td>
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<td>77</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1919</td>
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<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1918</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1917</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1916</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1915</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1914</td>
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<td>83</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Designates average age of individuals interviewed.
All but three of the informants of Maltese-origin were the offspring of World War I veterans. They were French citizens at birth. They all attended French school in Algeria, and most of the men served in World War II. Throughout my fieldwork, their French nationality was never a question in their minds; their ethnic or cultural identities, on the other hand, were quite another matter.

Interview Methods and Taping

Throughout my study, I followed very unstructured interviewing method as recommended by Joutard (1983). Because I was interested in the informants’ memories not necessarily as “facts,” but as a way to understand how the past has been remembered and reproduced, I tried to refrain from directing the conversation, and asked the vaguest of questions about life in Algeria. I made a concerted effort not to introduce my own periodicity or terminology into the discussion. The interlocutors usually talked freely and with little interruption.

Taping is an essential part of such a research method. While extensive notes taken after each meeting have served in later analysis, the tapes are also crucial. It is in carefully listening to tapes and re-reading transcripts that connections between topics, the skipping over of sensitive issues, the effect on the conversation of someone entering the room, the censoring role of spouses or other participants, and my interference in the conversation, are revealed. I have recorded in this fashion approximately sixty hours of interviews, including fifteen one and a half hour tapes with non-Maltese pieds-noirs from Algeria and Tunisia; two with pieds-noirs from Algeria of mixed origin; twelve with
Maltese-origin pieds-noirs from Algeria; and nine with Maltese-origin pieds-noirs from Tunisia.

Data Analysis

Due to the importance of the tapes to this research method, the first stage of analysis involved the transcription of all of the tapes. To accelerate the process, I hired a native French-speaking transcriber with write-up funds to assist me. After completing the transcriptions, I listened once again to each tape, making corrections to the printed transcriptions as I went along.

While re-listening to the tapes, I took notes and prepared a data base entry for each, outlining the basic conditions leading to the development of the "document," including the location of the conversation, topics discussed prior to turning the tape recorder on, the number of people present, the reasons for interruptions, and my initial reactions. I then prepared a detailed listing of all of the topics addressed in the conversation, in order, for each. I followed a similar procedure to summarize my field notes. These notes span 600 pages, single spaced. I first created a long running list of topics, and then summarized that list, preparing in this way two précis of differing levels of detail that I could consult easily.

Because I am most interested in the linkages between topics and the train of thought of the individual speaker, I determined that coding the data into a computer data base would be a waste of time. The case of the French-Algerian war illustrates this point well. It was important to be able to quickly find in my field notes or tapes each time the
French-Algerian war was mentioned, an operation that could have been facilitated through computer data coding. However, I also needed to know when the war was not mentioned, i.e. when it was skipped over purposefully or accidentally in conversation, a finding that would prove difficult if not impossible to code. Similarly, the regular connections made between topics, which of course are potentially infinite in number, could be coded only with great difficulty. I found that the best way to uncover both positive and negative patterns as well as the patterned linkages between topics was to read and re-read the précis of field notes and transcripts, as well as the tape transcripts themselves. It was only in becoming intimately familiar with my data in this way that the most interesting findings emerged.

The sorting through such an extensive amount of information without recourse to a computer required patience and considerable cross-checking of information. I made lists of the main topics that were emerging as key features of the Maltese social memory, and highlighted them on a copy of the entire set of field notes and tape transcript précis. When I believed I had found an important pattern within or between topics, I sifted through all other instances when the same or a similar topic had been raised to check my findings. At times, my double-checking in this way led me to discard or adjust my original hypothesis. On other occasions, my original hypotheses were confirmed.

“Domains” in Maltese-origin Pieds-noirs Social Memory

I have identified several main themes, or what I refer to here as domains, in the discussions about the past of the Maltese origin pieds-noirs from Algeria, presented visually in Illustration 7 (page 198). I refer to these collections of topics as “domains”
A compound domain:

* Family migration histories, genealogies
* Family narratives of upward mobility, economic success

A heavily defended and silenced domain:

The French-Algerian War

An open-ended memory domain:

Reception by the French or "Taccueil," since 1962

Migration to Algeria + 1 generation

TIME

1954

1962

Discrimination

Melting Pot Narrative

Summarized through Maltese assimilation
because they operated almost spatially, as places to inhabit for a while during a conversation. Some people preferred to spend more time in one domain than another. Other domains were closely related, and conversations slipped easily from one to the other. Still others were collectively understood to be strictly off limits for public discussion.

In the following chapters, I describe these domains in greater detail. In chapter 6, I discuss the various manifestations of the usually silenced and highly fortified domain of the French-Algerian war. In chapter 7, I turn to the complex of linked domains involving the family past in Algeria: family migration histories, genealogical memory and stories of upward mobility, assimilation, and discrimination, which together comprise a changing landscape often glossed by use of a version of the melting pot metaphor. Closely related to this compound domain is the protected and sometimes all consuming nostalgic iteration of the Algerian past. Finally, sometimes serving as a contrast to the nostalgic past, are the difficult memories of the first years in France, a layered domain of disappointments and rejection that spans from 1960 to the present and which is continuously expanding with the addition of new memories.
CHAPTER 6: THE FRENCH-ALGERIAN WAR IN FRANCO-MALTESE SOCIAL MEMORY

Introduction: The War and Ethnographic Objectivity

When first formulating this project, I felt that it would be feasible only as long as I avoided the French-Algerian war (1954-1962). First, consideration of the war would take me away from my main research focus. I was interested in Maltese memories of intra-European relationships, a topic which would be best approached through memories of the period before the war, and thus before the increasing polarization of Algerian society and the consolidation of the European position.

But in addition, I feared unleashing what I imagined would be hours of narratives about the war. I did not want to hear these stories--partly because I felt they would be endless or would reach no resolution, but also because I imagined they would represent an attempt to vindicate the “wrong” side. In other words, the war raised the problem of relativism in anthropology. This war was infamous for the French army’s use of torture as one of its principal weapons. I knew this, and did not want to engage my informants on

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180 Throughout this chapter, I refer to the war in its most neutral appellation in France, as the Guerre d’Algérie (the Algerian War). This is the term most often used by French historians and social scientists, e.g. Benjamin Stora (1992, 1995). In English this war is sometimes referred to as the “Algerian War of Independence,” e.g. Naylor and Heggoy’s Historical Dictionary of Algeria (1994:20). In Algeria especially it is often referred to as the “revolution” (Stora 1992:121).

181 On the revelation that torture had become standard French practice, see Stora 1992:28-34 and 55-58. Vidal-Naquet’s La Torture dans la République (1983) demonstrates how government officials not only knew about this practice, but managed to order it without actually putting their orders in writing.
this subject; I did not want to put myself in the position of trying to understand the war from their perspective. There were limits to ethnographic objectivity, and, therefore, to research among this population. In fact, because I realized that the war posed problems for my development of empathy for the research community, I left for the field not wanting to know exactly what it was the people I was to meet had done during those years. I read little about the war in preparation for the project because I felt that too much knowledge would interfere with my ability to form relationships and thus put the entire study in jeopardy.

When I first met with the two leaders of the Franco-Maltese association in Aix to present to them my research plan, I stressed that I was interested in people’s memories of the decades before the war, what they had heard from their parents and grandparents about life in Algeria in the first decades of the 20th century, and what they had experienced from the 1930s on. Their response to the project was overwhelmingly positive, and in our initial discussions we ignored the war years completely.

But in southeastern France, with high percentages of pieds-noirs and immigrant Algerians, the war was a constant presence. I learned this during my second week in Aix when I was sitting one afternoon at an outdoor ice-cream shop along the Cours Mirabeau, a handsome avenue lined with sycamores and sidewalk cafes. An elderly woman at the next table was talking with her two grandchildren while they ate their ice creams. A song by “The Cranberries” was playing on the outdoor stereo. I had seen the music video accompanying the song, which consists of a collage of images in black and white from
various armed conflicts, including footage from Northern Ireland and war-time devastation and UN peace-keeping troops in the former Yugoslavia.

"Who is this singer?" the grandmother asked the children, "is it an Israeli, that woman, 'Noah'? "Na," one boy said, "It's a Scottish woman." the younger boy chimed in. "Hmm?" the grandmother asked, not really listening. "Yeah," exclaimed the younger boy, "It's against the Guerre d'Algérie!" "You think so?" the grandmother said, paying more attention now. "Yes, yes, I saw it on TV, it has the "casques bleues" (literally, blue helmets, the French expression for the UN peace-keeping forces). "Ah! But there weren't any "casques bleues" in Algeria!" the woman said, somewhat relieved. The children started laughing. "Oh, no, I think it's about Bosnia" the older one said. "Well, yes, that could be, there are casques bleues in Bosnia," the elderly woman replied. "Yes," said the older boy, "it's against the war in Bosnia."

A few weeks later, an exhibit of local artists filled the Cours Mirabeau. While I wandered up the street, looking at the strange sculptures and garish oil paintings, I ran across a man selling paintings as well as a book he had recently published about the harkis, the Algerians who had volunteered to fight during the war on the side of the

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182 The group is from Ireland.
French. I spoke at length with the author, a retired French soldier who was ashamed of the treatment the harkis had received in France after their years of faithful service. He told me that this was one of the most shameful aspects of the war, and finally had to write his own book about their plight.

Later that year, in the dead of winter, there was an extended demonstration by children of harkis. Some twenty or so, mainly young men in their twenties, camped out in the main town square in front of the Town Hall. People crossing through town had to circumvent their row of sleeping bags. They were protesting their high rate of unemployment, lack of funding, and their general abandonment by France. They put up signs outlining their complaints and announcing their hunger strike. They stayed there on the pavement, in their sleeping bags, for weeks, not eating, and I feared that they might die of exposure.

While it wasn't always as obvious or overt, the war also was a constant presence in the imaginations of my elderly interlocuters. In fact, I believe unspoken tensions regarding the war led many to re-interpret for themselves the focus of my research at the start of my fieldwork. I was first introduced to a large group of Franco-Maltese association members on their annual Ascension Day outing in May. They had organized a boat trip down the Rhone, from Arles to the end of the river delta. Dinner was served on

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183 The word “harki” is derived from the Arabic “’haraka,” to move, and refers to the mobile units first created in 1956 to aid the French in “territorial security.” Immediately following the war, thousands of harki were massacred in Algeria. Between 1962 and 1969, approximately 80,000 harkis and 60,000 family members migrated to France (Font 1996:96-7). Many were given jobs in the forest service and lived in make-shift camps in remote rural areas. Others were placed in guarded high rise apartments in urban areas.
the boat, and association members sat grouped together with friends at a series of eight large tables looking out on the river. The association presidents and officers sat at a head table on a small platform at the front. After a few general announcements to the group about the association's membership, financial status and future projects, the president and other officers gathered together and shepherded me around the room to introduce me to the members seated at each table. The president, a very articulate and animated elderly man of Maltese origin who was originally from Tunisia, introduced me without much hedging or delicacy, stating simply, "I would like you to meet Andrea Smith, a young American student who will be in Aix for a year. She is interested in studying the memories of the French of North Africa, the pieds-noirs..." Each time he began to address the subject of my research, the expressions on the people's faces shifted from smiling openness to frozen wariness, as if they were thinking, "Who is this foreigner, and what does she really want from us?" The president, from Tunisia, had neglected to consider to what degree the past is laden with painful recent memories for those from Algeria. He too must have sensed the tension, for as he continued around the room, he began to stress that I was especially interested in the pasts of the Maltese in Algeria, the immigrants of Maltese origin, and Trans-Mediterranean migrations in general. With this revised presentation, each time he highlighted the Maltese focus of my research, the relief on the listeners' faces was visible; some even sighed. "Ah, all right. Well then, I have a Maltese great-grandmother!" one elderly woman stated as if to cut through the tension. One group even applauded at this point of his presentation, not so much at the joy of having a foreigner arrive in their midst to interrogate them, but more, it seemed, at the relief in learning that I
wasn’t primarily interested in the painful, and in the end, depressing, saga of French Algeria, but in the narrower, and, in their minds, much “safer” topic of the Maltese migration there.

In order to accommodate their conflicting desires to both continue working with me and yet to avoid the war, my research community needed to reformulate my project. Instead of seeing it as a study of the collective memories of life in Algeria of a subset of pieds-noirs, a topic that could be construed as one including the eight long war years, they imagined a “safer” study, one concerning a more distant past, that of their Maltese ancestors. Thus, through this collective collusion between the research community, its spokesman of ambiguous insider/outsider status, and myself, we negotiated a new way of defining my project. Throughout the fieldwork, even though people described at length to me their memories of life in Algeria, as I had hoped, they continued to introduce me to other pieds-noirs as someone interested in the history of the Maltese emigration to Algeria, and I was imagined as more historian than anthropologist.

A few months into my fieldwork, after it seemed that empathy with the research community would not pose a major problem, I began to study this period in earnest. Knowledge of the war, while difficult, proved essential to my study. This knowledge enabled me to better understand the kinds of traumas the interlocutors may have lived through, and proved especially important for data analysis. Only with knowledge of the main events and key dates of this long conflict could I determine just when shifts in conversation corresponded with allusions to or accidental discussions of the war years.
The War as a Domain in Maltese Pied-Noir Social Memory

The war was a highly guarded domain in the Franco-Maltese social memory. It was a topic everyone carefully avoided, and I sometimes did not notice how a speaker was maneuvering the conversation to circumvent this period until after re-reading my notes and listening to the taped interviews. As the qualities of this specific silencing became more apparent, I began to see that the memories of this period of time were inscribed with such powerful emotions that the whole period was walled-off. This domain therefore operated like a kind of memory “black hole,” a domain of tremendous power, an endless pit to be carefully skirted around, a time-less, space-less horror which threatened to negate all in its path.

For most, this domain was so successfully screened from their consciousness that they managed to circumvent the war years completely in conversation, just skipping over this period of time as if it did not exist, even when they were presenting detailed life histories. However, sometimes a narrative would begin to move towards this forbidden, dreaded terrain. In these instances, others would quickly enter the conversation as if carrying out a rescue mission, abruptly changing the conversation, and wrenching the speaker away from this tremendous rut of emotional chaos, trauma and despair before it was too late. Yet on a few occasions, when others were either not present or unable to intervene due to the formality of the conversational setting, I witnessed individuals “fall” into this endless dark space, spinning out one horrible story after another in an obsessive and uncontrolled manner.
For the remainder of this chapter, I describe in detail how this memory domain both shapes and is revealed by everyday conversation. I present the common strategies used to elude the war in conversation, including the use of euphemism, omission, and the collapsing of time in life histories. I then consider the role of rescuers who steer the conversation away when it approaches these forbidden years. Finally, I describe in greater detail the times when individuals "fell into" this memory domain, and their confusion after pulling themselves back to the present time and space. But first, I turn to a brief review of some of the important features of this long conflict.

The Guerre d'Algérie, 1954–1962\(^{184}\)

Most sources mark the beginning of the war with the proclamation, from Cairo, of the principle objectives of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), along with attacks on French civilians by the associated Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN), on November 1, 1954.\(^{185}\) Algerian independence was declared July 5, 1962. The period of seven and a half

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\(^{184}\) The many events comprising this period are interpreted differently even by those ostensibly on the same side or taking part in the events. Any synopsis of this war would be viewed at least by some of those I interviewed as a skewed polemic, and I thus summarize this period with great hesitation. For an overview, see Benjamin Stora's *La Guerre d'Algérie* (1954-1962). In English, chapters 8 and 9 of Charles-Robert Ageron's *Modern Algeria* (1991) are brief but good. Stora's masterful *La gangrène et l'oubli* (1992) examines both the war years and how they have figured (or not) in post-war Algerian and French public consciousness. The classic work in English remains Alistair Horne's *A Savage War of Peace* (1977).

\(^{185}\) Even the date of the commencement of the war is a matter of debate. Many of those I interviewed had lived through the coordinated massacres in the Constantinois on the day of armistice at the end of World War II (November 8\(^{th}\), 1945) and believed that this massacre, and the brutal reprisals by the French army which followed, should be viewed as the starting point of the confrontation.
years spanning these two dates was comprised of some long stretches of time characterized by a semblance of "normal" daily life. These periods of calm and optimism were punctuated by coordinated attacks by Algerian organizations on European civilians in cities and rural regions, counter-terrorist bombings in Muslim quarters, all-out assaults by the French army, and an array of internecine feuds.

This conflict had many features of a civil war. Groups who together, however awkwardly, had comprised a common society, began to pull apart and battle each other while on the surface seeming to behave still as parts of a whole: they lived in the same small villages, traversed the same city streets, worked at or patronized the same banks. Algerians continued to work on farms or in factories of the very people they were hoping to overthrow. Colonists continued to employ office managers and family servants who, in some cases, warned them about imminent attacks, but who in other cases participated in such attacks. Further complicating this period for those living through it was the fact that the sides of the dispute were not as clearly drawn as it might seem. The "Français d'Algérie," those of French nationality, included French with French or other European origins, as well as naturalized Muslim Algerians. Draft laws required young men to serve, regardless of origin, and thus naturalized Muslim Algerians, some of whom undoubtedly supported the independence movement, served during the war on the side of the French. In addition, considerable numbers of Algerians volunteered and also served alongside the French (the harkis, mentioned above). On the "European" side, some communist and Christian organizations actively supported the Algerian independence movement.
The French army began large operations in the Aurés mountains less than three months after the November 1st attacks and troops stationed in Algeria steadily increased as national service conscripts were sent to Algeria. While the Army attempted to destroy armed bands in rural mountainous regions, French political leaders considered a range of ineffective political reforms (Ageron 1991:109). The suicidal operation of the FLN in the department of Constantine in August 1955, in which 71 European civilians were massacred and hundreds wounded, led to horrific French reprisals\(^\text{186}\) and an increased polarization of the society between "Muslim" and "European."

As the French army increased its presence in Algeria, the ALN began to organize an urban guerrilla offensive in Algiers. Individual attacks in Algiers in June of 1956 were followed by coordinated bombings by the end of September. In January, the infamous General Massau and 8,000 paratroopers were brought in to stop the attacks. They succeeded, but only after ten months and having resorted to the systematic use of torture, thus bringing to the war a new level of brutality and heightened international attention.

The war destabilized the polities involved. Conflict over French policy in Algeria and the growing war expenses exasperated an already fragile political climate in the Metropole, and government after government collapsed, culminating with the fall of the Fourth Republic. The government of Mollet fell May 21, 1957 and another formed in June collapsed in September of the same year. Another, established November 6 by Gaillard, fell April 15\(^\text{th}\) 1958. In Algeria, massive demonstrations following the April

\(^{186}\) Estimates of the numbers of Algerians killed range from 1,273 to 12,000 (Stora 1992:17).
collapse culminated in the seizure of power by a "Committee of Public Safety," formed by military officers and settlers on May 13th and the occupation of the central offices of the gouvernement-general in Algiers (the administrative headquarters in Algeria). As politicians in the Metropole attempted to form a viable government, military officers in Algeria were organizing a military coup, and called on General de Gaulle to lead the country out of the impasse.

France came very close to civil war: military officers were planning parachute drops in Paris, and managed to take Corsica May 24th without any resistance. On May 27th, with complete disregard for the constitution, de Gaulle announced his plans to form a government. The Prime Minister resigned, and President Coty, considering the alternatives to be either a military coup or a government formed by de Gaulle, invited de Gaulle to become the last Prime Minister of the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle was granted emergency powers for 6 months starting June 1st, 1958. He traveled to Algeria immediately to calm the settlers, reassuring them that he had "heard" them, implying that he understood their determination to maintain the status quo in Algeria. But within a year, he began to pursue a different policy, referring in his speeches to Algerian self-determination. The settlers viewed Gaulle's policy shift as a betrayal, and responded with an uprising in January 1960. In early 1961, generals of the French army created the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS), and nearly succeeded in their planned "putsch." They took Algiers and Oran in April 1961, but after failing to secure the rest of the country, evolved into an underground organization. As such, OAS members carried out assassinations of French and Muslim leaders and terrorist bombings in France and Algeria.
By 1961 and 1962, mass demonstrations in both the Metropole and Algeria were handled with increasing violence and repression. The FLN demonstration in Algiers on July 5th, 1961, and a demonstration of Algerians in Paris on October 17th, 1961, resulted in dozens of deaths each. An anti-OAS demonstration in Paris on February 8th, 1962 ended with eight dead. Bombings in both colony and Metropole increased in 1962: in France, there were 107 bombings between January 15th and February 11th. In Algeria, there were 801 bombings in January alone, killing 555 and wounding nearly a thousand, and during the first two weeks in February there were 507 (Stora 1995:74).

A cease-fire agreement was reached in Evian, France on March 18th, 1962. In response, the OAS began an all-out offensive, taking control of an entire quarter of Algiers, Bab-el-Oued, and organized a massive demonstration. French soldiers fired on the settler demonstrators on March 26th, killing nearly 50. At this point, the OAS commenced a scorched earth policy. In May 1962, OAS supporters killed dozens of Algerians per day in Oran. They also attacked property, and blew up the main library of Algiers, as well as the municipal library, the Town Hall and four public schools in Oran (Stora 1995:79). By this time, settlers were leaving the country daily by the thousands. Following official French recognition of Algerian independence on July 3rd, 1962, there was a final massacre of mostly Europeans in Oran where the OAS had killed so many Algerians.

Over the course of the conflict, approximately 2.3 million French soldiers served, of which approximately 25,000 were killed. Two thousand eight hundred European civilians were killed by terrorist attacks, and nearly eight thousand wounded (Ageron
1991:160), and in 1963, 1,773 were still reported missing, many of whom were presumed dead. The estimates of the numbers of Algerian fatalities vary widely; 200,000 to 500,000 seem the closest estimates. In addition, millions of Algerians had been displaced during the war. Finally, of special significance for this study, the war culminated in the departure of the vast majority of the million French colonists of Algeria by the summer of 1962, including most of those I interviewed. For the pieds-noirs, the end of the war marked their great rupture with their home country, and their flight to and permanent exile in France.

Evasion through Euphemism: *Les événements*

It might be expected that the experiences of the war years would be an important topic of conversation. For these elderly individuals, the war spanned eight years at the beginning of their adult lives (see Table 8, page 194). Those who were 65 in 1996, for example, were 23 at the start of the war and 31 by its end. Most had already married and were starting families, and the men were launching their careers. And yet, I know few personal details from this period, and do not know how the war influenced their life choices, or what kinds of accommodations they had to make in their daily routines.

When the elderly interlocutors wanted to refer to these eight years of conflict, they used the strikingly simple expression, "*les événements,*" the events. The use of this

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187 Ageron 1994:160-161 outlines estimates of war-time losses. He notes that the Algerian government's claim that 1.0 to 1.5 million Algerians perished during the war cannot be true if one examines census data. He calculates instead losses of 203,000
euphemism, instead of its more official appellation, the "Guerre d'Algérie," (or the more politically charged "Algerian war of independence"), is itself indicative of a specific attitude towards this period. This time, wrought with such conflicting perspectives and emotional weight, was better left undefined. Any other name for it could raise difficult emotions or lead to interminable debate. Even the standard usage "Guerre d'Algérie" was difficult for most I interviewed. Some argued that this was nothing like a "real" war, fought in the usual way; if it had been such a war, surely the French would have won, given their overwhelming military superiority, they felt. This period also could not be called the "Algerian war of independence," as is common outside of France and Algeria, for this formulation carries an implicit understanding of the war as a stage in the inevitable process of decolonization. They avoided taking such a position, which would call into question their presence in Algeria over the generations, and which would suggest that their lives were merely anachronistic remnants of a fundamentally untenable enterprise. If colonialism were so untenable and morally reprehensible, they argued, why were some obvious colonies like the United States able to persist, and even garner international respectability? Instead of participating in these or other debates, and to elude the pain of this period of time, the war years were voided of meaning and referred to simply as a neutral stretch of time, those "things" that happened, the "events."

(Ibid: 161). Stora is more cautious. He states that certainly 500,000 people of all backgrounds, but primarily Algerian, perished in the war (1995:91).
Evasion through Omission: Collapsing the War Years

Interlocuters used several strategies to avoid discussing the war directly. Some simply skipped over the war years. They outlined details of their life in Algeria, skipping over the years of the war, and proceeded to describe their settlement in France.

A second and more common strategy of silencing is one I call “collapsing.” Autobiographical accounts were detailed before and after this great gulf, while the war years were collapsed into a single phrase, for example, “après les événements,” or “after the events.” Following long discussions of their education and early careers in the late thirties or forties and early fifties in Algeria, individuals effectively skipped the eight years of the war in an instant by starting a new section in their narrative: “After the événements, we arrived first to Marseille where I found work as...” Thus, the years of the war were reduced to a reference point, to a point in time of no duration, which served to sort individuals’ lives into two streams, the time that occurred before the war, and the years which followed.

One interlocutor did not use this simple phrase, but achieved the same effect with the two sentences in his narrative devoted to the war. I had met M. Messerchmitt through a small pied-noir association. He decided to outline his life history for me on the telephone when it became clear that I would not be able to travel to Lyons to interview him in person. During our two-hour conversation, he discussed his family’s immigration history and his own life story. He told me in detail about his grandparents and their reasons for migrating to Algeria from France and Malta, and talked about what life was like for them in the early years of the colony. He began discussing his own professional
trajectory. At first he worked in the military as a pilot. Then, he stated, "During the
Guerre d'Algérie, I didn't work as a pilot, but worked for the army as radar specialist.
France left Algeria in 1962; the army left so I did too." He continued to describe his
military career in France, and, after he retired from the military, his years working for
France Telecom. He then shifted to his memories of World War II. He felt that I should
really try to interview him in person one day because, as he said, he can remember well
"how people lived during the war." He talked about the arrival of the allied forces in
November 1942, the long lines of trucks passing his street, and his first encounter with
Americans, who threw out their rations to children following the convoys. As I filled page
after page of notes, he provided additional fine detail, describing the type of coffee the
Americans brought, differences between the American and British soldiers, and described
one Christmas when the family had hosted American soldiers.

There are several interesting aspects to this narrative. First, the phrase "la guerre,"
("the war") signified only World War II. Once he had introduced World War II into his
monologue by referring to the allied debarkation, he consistently referred to this time as
"pendant la guerre" (during the war). Apparently he felt there was little chance that I
could become confused and mistake this war for the more recent Guerre d'Algérie. "The
war" was of course World War II. Secondly, while he provided a wealth of detail about
life during World War II, the Guerre d'Algérie is notable for its lack of detail and of
personal memories of any kind. Finally, this latter conflict, which continued over a much
longer period of his life (eight years as opposed to three for World War II), entered into
his narrative only as a bridge to the next phase of his life, and he himself featured only as a
passive subject of history. He stated that he was working for the military, and when France left Algeria, he left too, implying that since he was in the military and the military was leaving, he had no choice but to follow.

The Influence of War Evasion on Family Histories

If speakers were not careful, conversations traversing the “safe” territory of family stories, of life during the early periods of the colony or the upward mobility of the generations, could move towards the war years. When telling a story of a specific relative other stories about the same individual could follow. The stubbornness of “Uncle Giuseppe,” illustrated in a story that took place in 1943, might remind family members of another similar incident that occurred in 1960. It may have been for this reason that so many people I interviewed initially outlined their family migration history in an almost scientific, rote manner: “My maternal grandmother was from Malta, she came over once she was widowed. She married my grandfather, Paul, of Maltese origin but born in Tunis. On my father’s side, his mother was Sardinian and his father Maltese. Thus I am 3/4 Maltese.” Use of such a formal, structured style of account may have granted some individuals an additional sense of control over this potentially difficult material, helping them to manage memories that were potentially linked by subject and which threatened to disregard the ban on the eight forbidden years.

The desire to avoid painful war memories may also explain why I learned so much more about my interlocutors’ grandparents than any other family members. Often, in fact, family trees ended at that generation, and in most cases, I heard little about their parents’
or siblings’ lives. Parents, and especially siblings, were more likely to have been war casualties, and male siblings at least would have served in local militias or army units. An effort to circumvent the war years completely may have been the underlying reason why people rarely talked about these individuals. War avoidance may thus explain why I observed a distorted distribution in the frequency of discussions about different family members. For example, I rarely learned how many siblings an interlocutor had, but was told in detail the birth dates and names of those of their grandparents and even great-grandparents.

**Self- and Group-Surveillance and Rescuing Others**

Chains of stories about a particular relative sometimes veered towards the forbidden years when speakers were not careful, however. From these occasions I learned that, along with their efforts to censor themselves, people also kept close watch on each other. On these occasions, I witnessed striking “rescues” by others present who steered the speaker back to safer ground.

One of these “rescues” occurred when I was visiting a couple I knew well in their small apartment in a multiple high rise complex in Marseille. After lunch, the Bernards were talking about their relatives. They told me how difficult life was for the first generations in Algeria. Whole families were killed by epidemics. But for the immigrants arriving from Malta, the huge expanses of land available made Algeria seem a real “Garden of Eden.” Mrs. Bernard’s grandparents arrived from Malta penniless, and both husband and wife immediately set to work clearing land and digging their own wells.
After having three children, they died at an early age, and the eldest son, Mrs. Bernard's father, "Xavier," quit school to raise his sisters. He traded livestock and worked so hard that he eventually became extremely wealthy. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bernard told me story after story about this unique individual: his fantastic ability to remember and later recognize every animal he ever sold, his incredible mind for figures and so on. In the following passage, Mr. Bernard realizes that I had not yet grasped just how wealthy Xavier had become, and to illustrate his wealth, he begins to tell me a story of something that happened to Xavier during the war:

ALS: Oh, so he was someone of a very...a rather elevated standard of living.

Mr. B: Very high standard, yes! They weren't able...before they had cars like now, he had a carriage with two white horses...In the morning, the horseman was waiting for him, outside the door. After that, there were cars....

Mrs. B: (interrupting) Would you like some more coffee, Andrea?

ALS: (quickly, to her) Oh, no thanks.

Mr. B: Yes. So, I remember one time, it was in 1957, he was...

Mrs. B: (interrupting in a very loud voice) You see Andrea, my grandparents, my grandparents on my father's side, it was really the typical Maltese custom...one leaves for adventure, to make money, but, watch out! To die, when they are old, they return to Malta.

I never learned what story the husband was attempting to tell me; all I know is that it happened three years into the war, in 1957. But it is clear from the recording of this conversation that I was interested. When the wife interrupted the first time to ask if I wanted some coffee, I answered her quickly and quietly, almost in a whisper, so as not to interrupt her husband's train of thought. When she interrupted the second time, her voice
was loud and forceful, and she dominated the conversation for several minutes, not stopping until the conversation was safely onto a new topic. In this instance, Mrs. Bernard introduced a topic that was truly “safe” in that it was far from Algeria, and yet ostensibly of great interest to me: the characteristics of the Maltese people in Malta. Thirty years ago, her sister had met a Maltese man in Algeria, married him, and had moved to Malta. For the remainder of our conversation, the couple outdid each other with hilarious stories meant to illustrate the “odd” behavior of the Maltese, despite my attempts to steer us back to Algeria.

On another occasion, a conversation that had unwittingly raised wartime memories was steered away from this period in a more overt manner. Here, the individual in the “rescuer” role first stated quite plainly that she didn’t want to hear any more about the war, and, as in the case above, introduced another subject of conversation. This happened when I was at a large public lamb roast (mechoui) organized by an Aixois pied-noir association attended by over 350 people originally from the Algerian city of Bône (now Annaba). I had driven Louise to the dinner, a woman in her late sixties, who was known to many there, but who had disappeared from public view for many years after a distressing divorce. We were seated with a group of women in their sixties and seventies. Louise had become involved in Chinese medicine to deal with several serious health problems of her own, and now sold Tupperware products to maintain her modest lifestyle. During a lag in the conversation over the course of the all day event, I mentioned Louise’s rather unusual “hobby” to the other women. They were intrigued and began asking questions. Louise obviously enjoyed this discussion, and outlined the kinds of Chinese
medicine she practiced, how she got started, and her recent trip to China. She then asked
the other women, “Would you like to hear about the time I almost had a heart attack in
China?!” “Yes, yes, tell us!” they responded, and they settled in to listen to her story.

Louise explained that when she and her husband left Algeria, she was sick,
mentally sick. She had lost ten people in her family during the “évenements,” including
her favorite youngest brother. She couldn’t believe it, couldn’t accept it, and wanted to
blame something or someone. Somebody had to be responsible. She mulled it over and
decided that General de Gaulle was at fault. It was because of him that that they were
forced to leave, and in the way they did. She became obsessed. To set the world right,
she thought, she would have to kill him, and she began to consider ways she could do this.
Because her husband was an important figure in the French military, she imagined that at a
military awards dinner she would approach de Gaulle with her husband to shake his hand,
and would instead attack him right there and then. This obsession developed to such a
point that her husband became quite worried and tried to convince her to stop and to put
the past behind her. But the obsession continued, until she had a dream one night. She
dreamt she was approaching de Gaulle to kill him when she suddenly saw two large tears
rolling down his face. She knew instantly that he was sorry, that he hadn’t meant for
things to turn out the way they did. But, she told us, she wasn’t sleeping; she was in fact
hallucinating! She felt that he had come into her very room to tell her this! she exclaimed.
There he was, de Gaulle, right in front of her! At that point, seeing the tears in his eyes.
something shifted for her, she said; the spell was broken and she no longer felt obsessed.
So, her life went on. Several years later, she was on a trip to China with her Chinese medicine study group. One day they went on an excursion to visit the Great Wall. She remembered it was extremely hot that day, she hadn’t had enough to drink, and was exhausted and dehydrated. She looked up, and right there, right in front of her on the Great Wall, was General de Gaulle! She was in complete shock, and felt she would have a heart attack right there and then. What was he doing there!?!?

The group listening to this story was transfixed—they knew very well that de Gaulle had been long dead (deceased in 1970) by that time. “What was it?!” they asked, “a vision?!”

She told us that she finally came to her senses. It turned out that there had been a cultural exchange program underway between China and a French wax museum, and the French had sent a life-sized statue of de Gaulle to China. There it stood, on the Great Wall!! That was what she had seen!

The women found this story very entertaining, and it was followed by much laughing and joking. But Louise’s story also had conjured up the Guerre d’Algérie in everyone’s minds. One woman began talking about de Gaulle, and admitted to the others that she too hated the man and all he had done to them. The discussion proceeded in this direction for a few minutes. Another woman offered a somewhat wider perspective. “Yes, we were at a bad point in history. Maybe we were going to have to leave anyhow, maybe it was the end of a kind of era, but we shouldn’t have left in that way. Not in that way. That is what is so shameful. Maybe we should have left in 1958, even. When I think of all the young men killed between ‘58 and ‘62, and for nothing!”
The other women were nodding. There was a slight pause; they had reached an open point in the conversation. Would they continue talking about the war, the impact of history on their lives, the inevitability of decolonization, or what actions could have made a difference?

A dynamic woman in her early sixties spoke up, taking control, and completely breaking the mood. "Let's not talk about all that!" she said, and then turning to Louise, she added, "tell us more about China!" Louise obliged, and the conversation turned far from Algeria. Over the next hour or so, Louise talked about the strange foods she ate in China and explained in greater detail the philosophical basis for her medical practice. After she outlined the kinds of ailments she had before her encounter with Chinese medicine, several of the women began talking about diverse medical complaints, and the French-Algerian war was all but forgotten.

During the vast majority of my interviews and during the conversations that I observed, the pieds-noirs either avoided the war outright, or used the war only as a way of marking time. When people wandered into this silenced territory, others served as "rescuer." Rescuers not only ended the conversation at hand, but also introduced a new topic, and, often accompanied with a noticeably energetic or forceful demeanor, continued to steer the conversation along the new direction until it was well on its new course. However, on two occasions I witnessed dramatic examples of what could happen when individuals were not "rescued" and instead fell into the dreaded abyss. These occurred in more formal settings, when codes of politeness prevented spouses and friends from
intervening. Helpless, we all had to wait and watch while the two men in question completely lost their bearings.

**Falling Into the Abyss**

The first time I saw somebody lose control was at the annual meeting of an association managing a private library on Algerian history. The public meeting was held in an auditorium of the Aix municipal library. The board of directors was seated on a stage in front of over two hundred association members. The president stood up, a tall, older, thinner, and impeccably dressed version of Paul Newman, with graying hair, blue eyes, and the tanned and wrinkled face of someone who spends his free time on a yacht. When I had been introduced to him before the start of the meeting, he had been extremely welcoming to me, and exuded confidence and warmth; a very skillful politician, I thought at the time. He began to make the mandatory initial presentations, first introducing the other board members, and outlining the status of their collection, which had reached nine thousand books. He then turned to the organization’s finances. They needed additional funding for the upcoming year, he explained, to pay for the computerization of the library’s collection and to give the librarian a small raise. He outlined which kinds of funds might be obtained over the next year from nearby municipalities. If he were unable to raise the money needed from public sources, however, he told us he would do whatever was necessary to keep the library operational. He would turn to private funds, if necessary, and would not hesitate to use his own money. “We have to think about our children,” he added, “The next generation is important, and they need this collection.” He
went on to tell us that his children were so important to him that he had taken five years off from his career to raise them. He began to raise his voice. “Our children are important, and I know from experience that they need this library, they need a place where they can learn the truth about their parents’ past.” He continued, becoming more and more agitated: “What I mean is, WE know what happened, WE were there, WE were at the barricades, on the 26th of March, we were there in ’62, and before, even, we held out to the very end. We KNOW what it means to hold out, to keep on going. WE know, WE were there when…” and he was off, tracing with great emotion the pivotal episodes of the war.

The president pulled himself out of this obsessional mental pathway only with great difficulty. He managed to shake himself out of this train of thought with some considerable internal effort, accompanied on the physical plane with a visible shudder as he wrenched himself back to the present time and space. He paused for a moment, looking out at the somewhat shocked and uncomfortable audience with an almost blank, stunned, stare. Finally, the politician that he was took over, and he moved back to his presentation, wrapping up his financial discussion, and moving on to questions from the audience.

I do not know the president well, but his leadership position in this very elite and well-funded organization suggests that he is widely respected by its members. Judging from the audience’s reaction, it seemed that such a lapse had rarely if ever occurred before. How did this happen?

One of the goals of this association is to provide a repository of resources to develop and sustain an alternate reading of colonial Algerian history, including the war.
Consequently, it could seem reasonable to the president to try to mobilize association members with an argument that touched on the war years and which reminded the audience of the uniqueness of their perspective due to their direct experiences. An argument of this sort could have a great impact, and encourage members to take a more active role in the association. And yet, in the president's case, the war memories were too emotionally charged for him to manage this rhetorical strategy effectively. Once he had tapped into the emotions that linked for him these events of the war, one memory slid automatically to the next, and he was no longer in control of his storytelling.

I witnessed a similar outburst at a large multi-family dinner party. This occurred over the winter holidays. Two families I knew well, the Vellas and the Bernards, had their children visiting. Yveline Vella, a dynamic mother of two in her mid-forties, had taken time off from her job in Paris, and Xavier Bernard had come back for a few weeks from Brazzaville where he worked for a French company. I had been looking forward to the dinner, for it presented a rare opportunity for me to observe interactions among multiple second-generation pieds-noirs and their parents.

During dinner, we were first locked into a long and rather dull discussion about African religion and African marabouts, with all contributing to the best of their knowledge. Then Xavier's parents entertained us with engaging stories of their latest trip to Africa to visit their son. But the conversation then returned to religion, and in this case Islam, and whether or not there was any possibility for solidarity between Christians and Muslims. Mr. Bernard felt that the argument presented by others of the perpetual incompatibility between Christians and Muslims was simplistic and wrong, and embarked
on a story to illustrate his point. He told us about a time in Algeria when he came across two "Arabs" fighting on the beach. One man's abdomen was sliced right through and his intestines were spilled out all around him. The point of his story was to tell us that while the other "Arab" (i.e. Muslim) wanted to finish off the wounded man, he (i.e. a Christian) insisted on calling for help and ultimately saved the Arab's life. In other words, he meant to provide an example of a case of Christians and Muslims getting along. However, in telling the story, Mr. Bernard lost track of his main point, and continued to elaborate on just how voluminous human intestines are, and how, when no longer contained by our skin, they really spill out—"You can't imagine how they could possibly fit back in," he explained. "It's amazing, you can still be alive, festooned by your own guts splayed all around you—in the case of the poor Arab, just spread out, all covered in sand." Perhaps noticing my expression of amazement, he continued in this vein, moving on to stories of the French conscripts he saw during the war who manifested a whole array of injuries: legs blown off, huge holes in their body somewhere, and how remarkable it was that doctors still managed put them back together. As these graphic stories followed one after the other, I noticed that Mrs. Bernard and her son had their heads bowed, indicating their embarrassment at their relative's loss of control in this public and somewhat formal setting. They obviously felt constrained from carrying out the usual "rescue" response by the formality of the setting, and everyone was clearly relieved when it was announced that it was now time for dessert.
Conclusion

The French-Algerian war was eluded by the elderly interlocutors through processes operating at both the individual and the group level. Some of the individuals I interviewed ignored the war years completely through simple omission, suggesting that these years were systematically repressed, blocked from their everyday consciousness. Others achieved a similar result by collapsing time in their life histories, and reducing the war to a mere turning point in the narrative. People in both categories had mastered well a self-censorship of this period of time, at least during the hours I spent talking with them or participating in their gatherings among friends.

Individuals did occasionally bring up the war years in a group setting, either consciously or inadvertently, but in these instances were finally censored by others. Here, silencing was a social activity, and indicated an underlying ongoing surveillance, an unspoken agreement that these years should not be discussed. Finally, individuals who began discussing this period often did so in an uncontrolled manner, and in their traversing this domain, they lost track of where they were and what they had been talking about previously. The war memories dominated over all other.

The cases of individuals getting lost in their war memories, coupled with the generalized patterned avoidance of the war years, reveal the war as a domain of great presence and power. This period was screened from public consciousness most of the time through work on both the individual and group level, through a combination of unspoken agreement, constant surveillance, and ultimately, the expenditure of considerable emotional energy.
CHAPTER 7: A COMPOUND DOMAIN: MEMORIES OF FAMILY, ASSIMILATION, AND DISCRIMINATION

Introduction

In earlier chapters, I have presented archival evidence of significant anti-Maltese prejudice during the first decades of colonialism. This prejudice was shared by Europeans of other origins by the mid-19th century, and was widely reproduced in writings of the late 19th century. French concerns about the growing numbers of non-French Europeans finally led to the mass naturalization laws of 1891, discussed in chapter 4. Following these mass naturalizations, the French of Algeria and France continued to complain bitterly of a “foreign peril” and the possibility that the colony’s values and culture would be more Spanish or Italian than French. Most texts claim that by 1914, however, the European “nations” within Algeria had merged into one as the newly naturalized citizens attended French schools, fulfilled military service obligations and inter-married. A new culture and people was formed, that of the “Algérien,” as they called themselves in early 20th century Algeria, or, the “pied-noir” in today’s terminology. But how does our understanding of the assimilation process shift when we turn to a new source, that of the social memory of those who lived through these transitions?

In this chapter, I compare the narrative that emerges from the archival record with discussions about the past of Maltese-origin pieds-noirs to determine which aspects of the past have been perpetuated in the social memory. I first explore the complex domain involving family stories, genealogical data, and narratives of assimilation and upward
mobility. A collapsing or glossing of this complex landscape occurred through the use of a specific version of the melting pot metaphor, which reproduced an official French ideology about assimilation in Algeria. Also present as well, however, is a thinly disguised deeper memory of discrimination. Memories of discrimination surfaced sometimes only obliquely, in clues emerging from stories that sometimes even explicitly denied any experience of discrimination. But in other cases, the discrimination was openly discussed, as the elderly pieds-noirs grappled with their compound identities.

Performance Aspects of Remembering

When I accompanied the elderly pieds noirs on outings, joined them at large association dinners or multi-family dinners, the early life of their ancestors was not often a subject of conversation. Instead, people spoke about a range of other topics in the present: their respective children and grandchildren, micro-level politics within pied noir associations, internal French or world politics, crime and other problems associated with urban life in 1990s France, and sometimes what they considered the odd interpersonal relations of the metropolitan French. However, because all knew that my primary interests lay in the daily life of Maltese immigrants in Algeria, they addressed this topic when I met with them alone or in small groups. In these smaller, more intimate settings, people talked about the past whether I introduced the subject or not, and whether or not I was taping the meeting. Most frequently, such interviews occurred after dinner between a married couple in their seventies and myself. Approximately half of the interviews I conducted like this were taped, and during the remainder I took detailed notes.
Both taped and untaped conversations about the past ceased when members of the next generations, the children or grandchildren of the informants, entered the room. Because these abrupt endings occurred even when the interviews were being taped, my tapes often include several minutes of introductions and casual conversation between the elderly informants, their adult children, and myself. In these instances I stopped the tape recorder out of courtesy when it was clear that the past was no longer the subject of conversation. The elderly informants and I returned to the question of the colonial past only once their younger relatives left again.

While generation mattered a great deal, colony of origin did not. Interviews proceeded in a similar way when I was talking with pieds-noirs of Maltese origin who had grown up in Tunisia and those of Algeria. Furthermore, similar conversations ensued in small mixed settings, when I met with a few pieds-noirs from the two colonies. In these instances, the pieds-noirs spent much of their time contrasting social and economic conditions for the Maltese living in each place.

The subject of daily life in colonial Algeria was usually introduced into the conversation by the informants themselves. This was not surprising: they knew this was the reason for my visit, had invited me for this reason, and thus it was understood through our arranging of a meeting time that they were interested in talking about the past. Often, the hosts asked me to turn on the tape recorder and began talking to me immediately about their ancestors without any prompting from me. From this point on, most interviews, taped or not, followed a rough two-part format, despite the fact that I made an effort not to steer the conversation. The first part consisted of an introductory discussion
of their ancestors’ migrations to Algeria, and was a more structured, and as I describe below, more formal presentation. Following this genealogical introduction, discussions about the past were highly variable in structure and content. Despite this variability, however, over the course of most interviews, a fairly consistent “standard immigrant family history” emerged. I now describe in greater detail these elements of the family history interviews.

**Formal Portion: Genealogical Introduction**

Most interviews began with an outline of the interlocutors’ family migration histories. They told me which ancestors first came to Algeria, from where, and when. Often they did not know which towns these ancestors came from, but knew the country. This highly structured narrative was in many cases illustrated by genealogical information they had collected about these migrants, including handwritten or typed genealogies they or other relatives had prepared, and photocopied birth and death certificates that were stored with their family papers. It seemed that many had carried out some preparations in advance of my visit, putting together or at least locating genealogical information.

The formality of the genealogical portion of the interview may stem in part from the nature of the material outlined. People often read to me from xeroxed archival documents, and if I was not taking notes, asked me to do so. They spelled out names and birth dates of the most distant relatives, working down the generations, usually through the male, patronymic line. My field notes and tapes contain many careful details about my informants’ great-grandparents and grandparents, the first generations to arrive in Algeria.
Several individuals had prepared quite elaborate genealogies and even written reports on their family histories, and explained to me that this new interest in their family histories resulted from their age and recent trends in France. Now that they were retired they had more time for such activities. In addition, several mentioned having watched the broadcasting on French TV of the American program, “Roots.” “Since that show, it’s a trend, all over France,” people would tell me. “After “Roots,” everyone is learning more about their past.” When I asked, some claimed emphatically that this was not just a pied-noir phenomenon; everyone in France was involved. This may have been true, but other individuals who had spent considerable time tracking down their ancestors told me that they wanted to put together this information for their grandchildren because they had never known North Africa or Algeria. While these grandchildren were usually not very interested in this past at present, their grandparents felt they might develop such an interest later on. Further, because they considered that their pasts in Algeria had not entered into the French national heritage, they felt an obligation to fill in the blanks themselves.

Interestingly, this more formal introductory portion occurred in all types of interviews, taped or otherwise. Over the course of the fieldwork, I became very close with several families, getting to know not only the primary elderly couple, but also relatives of their generation as well as their children and grandchildren, and often spent entire days at their homes. I interviewed other couples only after having met them briefly once or twice at larger pied-noir functions or through my closer elderly friends. In both kinds of interviews, when we met to talk about the past, the interlocuters invariably
commenced our talk with an unprompted formal introductory presentation of their family migration history.

This introductory portion was formal not only because of the structured format of their genealogical discourse, the ordered, generation by generation, nature of the presentations themselves, but also because of their presentation style. Some appeared for our interviews wearing more formal clothes than I had seen them wear previously. One elderly gentleman in particular liked to hold the tape player microphone in his hands, speaking to me like a newscaster or reporter at a sporting event. He said this was to ensure that I captured the best quality sound possible, but this practice, coupled with his unusual donning of a tie for this occasion, suggested that he took this interview seriously. His dress alone indexed a break with our usual casual way of interacting. The formality of this portion of our discussions suggested that the interlocutors felt that we were now engaged in a different kind of interaction.

The fact that I had come all the way to France to talk with people of this particular background about their past was received with great pride by many members of this small association. My project validated, in their view, the importance of their own history. The simple existence of my project, therefore, may have shaped the interlocutors' relationship to their own pasts in subtle ways. The formal nature of the introductory segment of the interviews therefore may stem in part from my presence, the interlocutors' sense that we were involved in a special kind of conversation, as well as their own changing assessment of the significance of their memories to wider scholarship. My interest in their pasts
validated these memories; they, in turn, validated my own research by undergoing considerable preparations prior to my visits.

Informal Family Stories

Following the genealogical introduction, however, the conversations were highly variable. I sometimes was asked to proceed with my “questions.” In these cases, I responded by endeavoring to become, to the degree necessary, a suitably serious “interviewer.” But I tried as best as possible not to introduce too much of my own language or periodicity into the discussion, and asked vague questions I hoped would prompt discussion on multiple topics, for example, “Were there any Maltese communities where you lived,” or “Were you aware that you had Maltese ancestry?” Questions such as these often led to a whole series of reflections: people often explained to me immediately that they were in fact French, not Maltese, and then proceeded to discuss the different ethnic groups (ethnies) in Algeria, referring to a network of memories connecting different points of time.

However, in most instances, I did not prompt people, and because of my minimal involvement, the conversations that followed were very much like monologues. These near monologues covered a wide range of topics and were presented in a range of styles. A few men discussed their family in an almost “sociological” style, outlining in a list form the occupations of the siblings of each generation. Others described aspects of their grandparents’ daily lives. Sometimes stories they had heard from one parent about their childhood figured prominently. The accounts were not structured chronologically.
Following the orderly genealogical introduction, I sometimes heard tales of the speaker’s mother, then a great-uncle, lifestyles of the earliest migrants, followed by more stories about the mother, and so forth. However, in the end, a “standard immigrant family narrative” emerged during most interviews, an optimistic “official” or overt narrative of the assimilation process as viewed through the family history perspective.

The Standard Immigrant Family Narrative

While not always presented chronologically, standard elements of this narrative were developed in most interviews. Family genealogies established exactly when the first ancestors from Malta, France, Italy or Spain, migrated to Algeria. Stories of the hardships of their grandparents and great-grandparents followed. Individuals instructed me at length on the difficulties of life for these early “pioneers;” describing the hazards of disease, deaths during childbirth, and, above all, the endless hard work required to survive in this difficult environment. The incessant efforts of their grandparents, often the first to arrive in Algeria, was a common theme. “My father’s father never took a day off in his life. He was a petit agriculteur. He worked every day from 3 am until sundown until the day of his death.”

This narrative was complemented by stories of the successive upward mobility of each generation. Rapid assimilation was a feature particularly of the Maltese, I was told during my first conversation with one of the directors of the Franco-Maltese association in Aix. The Maltese integrated into French society extremely rapidly in Algeria, he said, intermarrying immediately with French men and women. “In fact, the Maltese had an
incredible talent for assimilation. The first to arrive were day labors who worked extremely hard. They pushed their children to work hard at school so they could move into high-level administrative and other positions. In fact, the Maltese assimilated quicker than all the other Europeans in Algeria,” he explained. Others noted the Maltese reputation for assimilation and adaptation.

To illustrate the rapid integration and assimilation of the Maltese, many of my informants enumerated the succession of careers occupied by the men of each generation of their families, usually starting with their Maltese grandparents. For example, one man stated,

It’s important to know that the Maltese have a real capacity for assimilation, in just two generations. Yes, they have an ability to...to progress. OK, now I get to brag a little. ...My grandfather, huh?, he had a grocery store, he made anchovies. OK! And, the...well, I won’t talk bout the girls, because the girls during that time didn’t go on to higher studies...My father was a broker. His brother was broker. Another brother had a wholesale grocery business, and an another was in banking. Already, that’s one generation. The second generation, that’s mine. OK, lawyer, doctor of law. And, I have a cousin who is a polytechnicien....another is a pharmacist, another was a military general, another is an engineer...In, in, in. in two generations!

The speaker grew up in Algiers, and the occupations he outlined here were those more specific to urban areas. Families who had settled in rural regions delineated a different trajectory: goat herder, milkman, head of a dairy enterprise; or itinerant farm worker, truck farmer, vineyard owner. The underlying message, however, was the same. By the time of their own arrival into the world, many informants told me, their “bed was already made.” While most were not well off by any means, many of their parents had achieved
some sort of financial stability, and most of my informants had grown up in a far more economically secure family environment than had their parents or grandparents.

For some of my informants, however, their own careers represented a shift sideways at best. For example, one man’s grandfather who earned quite a lot of money resupplying ships coming into the port at Algiers. His father won medals for his war service in World War I, and was the commander of the port of Algiers during World War II. My informant spent his life in a secure yet minor position at the state-owned electric company. Another informant worked as a traveling coffee salesman in the remote Saharan regions; his father, a well-known figure in his town, had owned the largest bakery in the region. These men made claims on the Maltese ability to reach great successes in a very short period of time, but unlike the others, they did not use their own families as illustrations. Instead, they either talked of this ascension in general terms, or referred to well-known Maltese families who had achieved enormous wealth and status.

All but one of the Maltese from Algeria who I interviewed had parents (or in a few cases, grandparents) who had served in World War I. Usually this war was mentioned in passing; only two of my informants remembered events from this period. Mr. Attard, for example, was born in 1911, and had vivid memories of watching soldiers march off a ship at the end of the war; he remembered waiting there to see what his father looked like for the first time. The war service of their ancestors was significant for my study in another way, however. French citizenship was granted at birth to the second generation born in Algeria (through the naturalization laws of 1889, discussed in chapter 4). The majority of the Franco-Maltese I interviewed were at least the second generation born in Algeria.
(those whose grandparents had migrated), if not the third or fourth, and thus would be
French citizens at birth, through this legislation. However, men who completed military
service were also naturalized as French citizens, and their offspring also would become
citizens automatically at birth. Thus, because most of my informants had fathers who had
served in World War I, they were not naturalized through the second-generation law, but
were citizens at birth as offspring of naturalized French citizens. Perhaps for this reason,
the informants did not raise the question of their French nationality; it was simply taken for
granted. Their nationality did not represent any kind of change or family achievement
because political assimilation had already been achieved at least during their fathers’
generations.

Assimilation to French culture, however, was discussed at times, and usually
through the use of the melting pot metaphor. Often after telling me about the different
European immigrant populations and their concentration into particular occupational
niches in Algeria, or as a strategy to sum up their monologue, individuals would turn to
me and say, “Well, you know, it was a melting pot, just like the history of your country!”
The first few times I heard this, I thought the elderly speakers were resorting to this
famous metaphor for U.S. immigration history primarily in response to my presence: in
trying to illustrate their ancestors’ pasts in a way I would understand, they were taking
advantage of a widely shared perception of the history of my part of the world. But this
image came up so often that it soon became clear that this was how they also saw the
history of their ancestors in Algeria. They explained that over the decades, the boundaries
between the various European populations slowly began to dissolve, the cultures began to
merge together, and a new culture arose, that of the "Algérien," or, as they call themselves today, of the pied-noir.

The Melting Pot Metaphor for Assimilation in the U.S. and Algeria

The melting pot has proven to be a remarkably persistent metaphor for the process of assimilation in United States history. In contrast to the ideology of Anglo-conformity, a pervasive early ideology of assimilation that presumed that the adoption of English institutions and language should be the ideal goal (Gordon 1964:88), the melting pot model of assimilation was more inclusive. Because immigrants were arriving to a new environment from many countries, some saw American society not so much as a version of England, but as a completely new society involving the mixture of cultures, lifestyles, and institutions of all of Europe, and described these as mixing or melting together (Gordon 1964:115). Gordon notes that there have been adherents of this position in the United States since the 18th century. While the language used to describe this process varied in the earliest writings, by at least 1845, this new society was described by Emerson as a new alloy formed in a "smelting" pot:

As in the old burning of the Temple at Corinth, by the melting and intermixture of silver and gold and other metals a new compound more precious than any, called Corinthian brass, was formed; so in this continent...will construct a new race... (in Gordon 1964:117).

The melting pot metaphor for assimilation was reproduced in intellectual circles until the early 20th century, when it entered mainstream culture with the popular 1908 play by Israel Zangwill, The Melting Pot (Ibid:120). Despite considerable research by sociologists
and other scholars that has repeatedly demonstrated not only the persistence of
"unmelted" blocks of ethnic or racial groups in American society (see Gordon 1964), but
also the uneven contribution of each to this society dominated by English Protestant
values, the melting pot metaphor persists. Even scholars refuting this as an accurate
description of assimilation for particular immigration histories reference the metaphor
itself in their book titles.¹⁸⁸

In my research among pieds-noirs of Algeria, I have found considerable evidence
that this metaphor has been adopted in a very similar fashion to describe colonist
assimilation. For the pieds-noirs I met, the metaphor served as a short hand for a non-
controversial official narrative of the formation of a colonist culture in the colony. It was
a story that, in the telling, doubly bound together the pieds-noirs from all parts of Algeria,
and of all origins. They shared not only a common past, but also a particular orientation
to that past, at least when they were asserting the widespread melting pot model of
assimilation. Accordingly, this metaphor not only entered private conversations between
friends, but was developed by speakers at community-wide pieds-noirs lecture series and
at meetings involving pieds-noirs from different regions of Algeria.

¹⁸⁸ Recent titles include: Cracks in the Melting Pot: Racism and Discrimination in
American History (1973); The Un-melting Pot: An English town and its Immigrants
(Brown 1970); Between melting pot and mozaic (Torres, 1995); and Hispanic USA:
Breaking the Melting Pot (Weyr, 1988).
The Use of the Melting Pot Metaphor by Pieds-noirs

People I interviewed sometimes used the melting pot metaphor directly by talking about assimilation in the Algerian melting pot (le creuset), or indirectly by using verbs like fondre, to melt, saying for example, “we all melted together.” I sometimes heard these expressions at large gatherings of relative strangers. For instance, at an annual meeting of a pieds-noirs association of former residents of the Algerian city of Bône, I was seated at a table with a range of people of Maltese origin who had traveled far for the meeting, and thus were meeting me and each other for the first time. M. Frendo, a man in his early 70s, was telling me about his efforts to trace his family back to Malta; his grandparents had come to Algeria from Malta in the 1880s. Two others seated at our table began to join in the conversation. A comparatively younger woman, perhaps in her late 40s, with brown hair cut in a chic short bob, granny glasses and skin-tight leather pants, had journeyed to Aix on motorcycle with her husband, originally a “Breton,” he told us, who had blue eyes. very light blond hair, and wore a black and red New Wave-style outfit. The woman was of Maltese origin and had grown up in Bône like the others. I asked M. Frendo about the Maltese in Algeria. Were there any ethnic neighborhoods, or Maltese “communities” there? “Well,” he said, “Bône was a wonderful small city. There were only some 150,000 people living there, who came from all over. Such a range of religions and races. But, we were all mixed, he said, we were French first, and Maltese second. We went to French schools, of course, and that is how we were mixed (mélangés), how we melted together.” The biker couple began to take part in the discussion, and the young woman concurred. “Yes, we were all mixed, that was the beauty of Algeria.”
Individuals also used the melting pot metaphor during private interviews about their memories of Algeria. Whenever I met M. Grech, an active member of several pieds-noirs organizations since the mid-1960s, he spoke without any prompting from me whatsoever, and during the following taped interview, he began to outline for me some of the differences between the Maltese in Tunisia and those in Algeria:

In Tunisia, it's a little different. Because in Tunisia, in two words, there wasn't this mixture (ce mélange) that there was in Algeria...it wasn't, it wasn't the same thing. In Algeria, the Maltese entered a wider collectivity (ensemble) that I would call "néo-français." You see? You see? ....The pieds-noirs were a neo-Latin community, with a French base (or stock; à base de Français), French from all parts of the country. And then Italian, Spanish, Maltese, and Alsacian contributions, a bit of Swiss, a bit of Germans, and it all together formed a beautiful mixture (mélange)...

Here, Grech has begun to describe this mixture using an underlying metaphor of a soup or stew, with various elements all being added together to a French base or soup stock. But he turns to a more metallurgical image, adding,

...because we could... we mixed together those which could be mixed together...uh, and, yeah, like in chemistry, there are...elements that are more compatible than others.

Metaphor in Language and Thought

The essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:5). Lakoff and Johnson argue that because metaphorical concepts are systematic, the language we use to talk about these concepts is similarly systematic (Ibid:7); thus, working in reverse, we can use expressions in language to uncover and analyze the metaphorical concepts structuring these statements. This approach has led researchers in cognitive linguistics and linguistic anthropology to a rich
exploration of metaphor (Fernandez 1991; Holland and Quinn 1987; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

In their work on metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson discuss the mapping from a “source” domain to a “target” domain. Target domains are usually abstract, conceptual domains, while source domains are familiar, often part of the physical world, and “easy to think with” (Quinn 1991:57). For example, in the expression “he cracked under pressure,” the mind, an abstract concept, is talked about as if it behaved like a brittle object. The melting pot metaphor is a classic metaphor in this sense because the target domain is complicated and abstract (the assimilation process), and the source domain is that of concrete physical phenomena. People who cannot imagine the melting down of metals in a crucible can usually relate to the melting together of materials like butter or cheese to form a new substance when cooking.

Lakoff and Johnson also have noted that in the mapping of metaphor from the source domain to the target domain, aspects of the target domain are “highlighted” while others are “hidden.” When the image of metals melting down to form a new material is employed to illustrate the assimilation process, the highlighted aspects of the target domain include the creation of a new substance or mixture from the molten components. In other words, the metallic qualities of humans, their “shiny surface” or dense mass, for example, are not features of the target domain highlighted when this metaphor is used. Furthermore, it is not only the formation of a new substance from its components that is highlighted. The proportional contribution of these components to the final product is also highlighted when this metaphor is used for the assimilation process. As in its
American incarnation, the metaphor presents a rosy narrative that grants a utopian slant to the assimilation process in Algeria, one that asserts that everyone has contributed equally to the formation of the new culture.

The ability of metaphor to guide thought is illustrated here when Grech tries to explain why some groups were not included in the assimilation process.\(^{189}\) In the two illustrations of this metaphor in speech, both men acknowledged that not everyone was allowed into the “pot.” After explaining that everyone mixed together in Bône, Frendo told me that of course only people of the same religion “melted” together. There was no question in this colonial setting of a complete fusion occurring between the colonists and the colonized; indeed, as has been argued in chapter 4, such a fusion was avoided at all costs, for it would result in the death of the colony as such. Jews also were prevented from participating too closely in this “beautiful mixture” throughout the history of the colony, despite their early naturalization to French citizenship, and the social segregation between Jewish and Christian pieds-noirs in the colony was reproduced in the pieds-noirs milieu I worked with in France. When Grech tried to explain why some people were excluded in the quote above, he resorted back to his knowledge of the source domain:

\(^{189}\) The role of metaphor in structuring thought is a matter of considerable reflection and debate. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors structure thought to such an extent that they are “productive,” i.e. can create new ways of thinking. Anthropologists have criticized their work for ignoring the influence of culture; cultural knowledge or underlying cultural “models” may determine which metaphors can be selected in the first place. For more on the linguistic anthropologist perspective, see Fernandez 1991 and Quinn 1991. While this debate will not be resolved here, it is interesting to note that in the example of the melting pot metaphor, we have a case of a trans-cultural metaphor. For more on the changing uses of the metaphor for immigration history in France and the United States, see Green (1991).
like in chemistry, some groups just do not easily blend together. He made this statement as if reporting a natural law, and felt no need to explain or question this problem further. The logic guiding his understanding of the source domain was sufficient, in his view, to explain the strict social segregation of the colony.

I want to leave aside the anti-semitism and discrimination that structured colonial Algerian society, a topic which was sometimes addressed by the pieds-noirs when discussing the limits of assimilation in Algeria. Instead, I want to consider further what the metaphor tells us about the process experienced by those “melting” together. For here, too, a layer of experience is being glossed. Metaphors are “good to think” because they also hide aspects of the usually rather abstract target domain. Here, the greatly complicated process of assimilation in colonial Algeria, a process that spanned over a century, and which had very variable results, is reduced to a simple process of the physical world. The image of the blending together of metals, the formation of an alloy, serves as the model for a complex series of abstract social processes. Individuals talking about assimilation in this way elude many difficult aspects of this process, not the least of which is any discussion of cultural hegemony and power. Furthermore, the subjects of this complex process are reduced to passive ingredients in a chemistry experiment, and are blended as if by an invisible hand. This metaphor clearly hides more than it reveals. We are left wondering just how assimilation was experienced by those involved, and to what extent they were active participants.
Clues to an Alternate Memory

The standard immigrant narrative, which was completed and sometimes summarized by the melting pot metaphor, was relatively optimistic, uncontroversial, and, I found as I listened to one long family saga after another, somewhat dull. Because these representations corresponded closely with the official account of the process of assimilation found in classic French historiography and school texts, one conclusion could have been to accept this version as the only or primary “truth.” However, in the telling of these stories, the informants presented, within the stories themselves, clues that indicated that there was in fact another layer to this experience, another memory or contrasting interpretation. This alternative narrative was evidenced by language use and details embellishing the stories that contradicted and undermined the official narrative the individuals ostensibly were trying to tell. These unconsciously transmitted “clues” within the standard official narratives alert us to the existence of a widespread and parallel memory of the less pleasant aspects of the assimilation process.

Ethnic Marking of Stories

In the very stories meant to illustrate how thoroughly everyone had melted together to form a new colonial culture, references were dropped throughout indicating that the world was perceived in an ethnically marked way. The “pure” (pur) or “real” (vrai) French were regularly identified in stories. For example, when talking about the poverty in her mother’s family, Michelle explained that her mother and grandmother worked as house-cleaners for a lawyer’s family, “des gens riches et tout,” (rich people and
all) she told me, "des Français de France," as she explained. An elderly man of Maltese background explained that at school, the goal was to try to reach the same level as the "Français de souche" (people of French stock), les vrais Français." While they were French citizens and, as they argued, had fully "melted," these individuals of Maltese origin continued to distinguish individuals of French origin from other colonists when talking about the past.

This distinction was also common in contemporary interactions between pieds-noirs of different origin. In the same settings where I heard people present melting pot-like summaries of the history of European immigration to Algeria, I noticed that individuals, particularly those of French origin, were identified by ethnic origins. For example, one of the leaders of the Franco-Maltese association introduced me to an elderly M. Flournoy, stating that he was a "vrai Français," (real Frenchman) "Français de souche" (of French stock), stressing these words to me in case I would not catch their significance.

This marking of the social universe by national origins was even a feature of stories meant to illustrate how little these distinctions mattered. I had a long and interesting conversation with Mr. Mifsud, a 75 year old man of mixed French-Maltese heritage. I had mistakenly started our conversation by asking how it felt to be Maltese when growing up in Algiers, and thus elicited a long monologue in which he first made it quite clear to me that he was and had always been French. He continued, telling me that, furthermore, nobody cared about ethnic origins in Algeria:
You see? Between Italians, French, Maltese, Greeks, euh, I never heard...there was a real cohesion. And during the war, in '42—40, well 42, we were all enlisted, we all served in the war...Italians, French, I mean French, of course, but of French, Italian and Spanish origins...without even know—without even thinking that we were of foreign origins.

This passage is interesting because Mr. Mifsud twice catches himself and backtracks to revise his story. First, he begins to use the national origins of the individuals, i.e. “Italians,” “French,” as I had, as a short-hand for individuals of these backgrounds. But, since he is arguing that these origins did not matter, and perhaps too because he was talking about military service (only French citizens could serve in the French army), he revises his statement to refer to these people as people of various national origins. Secondly, he stops himself after beginning to tell me that they did not even know they were of foreign origins, and instead states that they did not think about these origins. To further illustrate this point a bit further along in the conversation, he states, “There were Spanish who did not even speak Spanish anymore!” During another conversation he made a similar “we were all the same” argument, stating at the end of a long monologue, as if the piece of final proof, “At my work, I had Maltese workers and I didn’t even know they were Maltese!”

Clearly there is a problem with Mifsud’s argument. If ethnic distinctions had been thoroughly erased, Mifsud presumably would not have known the origins of the people in these stories. For example, if the individuals he says did not speak Spanish anymore were so thoroughly blended in, how did he know they were of Spanish origin? A similar problem occurs when he is looking back at his Maltese workers. Did he only later realize that they were Maltese? If so, how was this possible if everyone was so thoroughly
“melted”? Did he instead know at some level, but was unable to really acknowledge their Maltese-ness until later on in life? This regular ethnic marking of individuals in narratives about the past indicates that at some level there was a recognition of ethnic difference in Algeria. The continued identification of particularly pieds-noirs of “pure” French origin in contemporary settings further indicates that even today not all pieds-noirs are considered equivalent, and apparently they had not arrived in France completely “merged” together into one indistinguishable new identity.

For the remainder of this chapter, I present additional aspects of the assimilation process as presented to me through family narratives that indicate a different, more complex memory of the Maltese assimilation to French culture in Algeria. These data suggest that the assimilation process was not automatic or imperceptible. Instead, it was a process the interlocutors observed, and one in which they and their ancestors played very active roles. Some made remarkable efforts to integrate economically first and foremost. Others aimed for social or linguistic capital. Most were proud of the efforts made by their ancestors towards greater social, economic, and cultural integration, but at the same time, their narratives express considerable ambivalence towards this process, what it required of them or their ancestors, and their reasons for striving towards these achievements in the first place.

**Assimilation through Economic Success**

The Maltese had a reputation during the earliest decades in Algeria of being both extremely ignorant and illiterate as well as incredibly ruthless in their business dealings, as
noted in chapter 3. Contemporaries who complained of the Maltese ability to undercut competition and their development of important monopolies in some trades often complained about their ignorance as well, and did not seem to recognize the contradiction inherent in their remarks. Certainly, some Maltese were illiterate, but those succeeding in business were also obviously able to add and subtract, and clearly excelled at other skills necessary to become successful trader in this setting.

Arriving in Algeria extremely poor, having lived previously as an impoverished colonized people, some Maltese came to quick conclusions about what it would take to advance in this new world. While some may have decided to improve their social or linguistic capital, many of the earliest to arrive first attacked their economic status. One man who was raised by elderly grandparents explained to me his early decision to work hard:

When I was 13 or so (1921) I was walking in Constantine on the Blvd. de Bésillon—it’s near my house, next to the Town Hall—and I was looking at night, there, the balconies were open, at a dining room with chandeliers. For me, it was like that. I said to myself, “I am going to work hard so one day I can have a chandelier at my house.” It isn’t much, but it is progress. I wanted...wanted to be somebody.

Many informants told me about their grandparents’ lives characterized by hard work. The Maltese were tireless, “in-cre-va-bles,” (impossible to defeat), as one man emphasized. “They worked harder than anyone,” his wife added; “if you needed some physical work done, you hired a Maltese.” Many individuals told me they did not know their grandparents well at all because they were always working. The earliest ancestors were all “morts à la tâche,” they said (died on the job).
These hard workers succeeded as well through incredible thrift. I heard many times the story of the Maltese man who went to his wedding in Algeria wearing the shoes from his communion; he had been too cheap to buy another pair. Another classic tale I heard was that of the poor Maltese couple who arrived with nothing, worked incessantly, and died at an early age. Upon their deaths, in putting their parents’ meager belongings in order, their children found in their amazement a stash of gold coins they had saved, buried in the wall of the home. Another man told me that even after achieving considerable wealth, his father continued to work in the fields, right in front of the hired workers. This way, his father had argued, he could get more work out of the workers, for they would have to try to keep up with their indefatigable boss.

In many of the stories I heard of ancestors who became extremely wealthy, their efforts were described as extreme, and one gets a sense of a desperation underlying all this hard work. One man told me outright that many Maltese, including his relatives, were motivated to earn beyond simply a moderate income by the anti-Maltese discrimination they faced daily:

Husband: So, at the beginning, this kind of distrust, little by little, turned into contempt (mépris) for the Maltese. So, these Maltese had to go to school, learn, evolve, or otherwise have money, and become very rich. And in these cases, the French, due to the fact that they were rich...

Wife: ...accepted...

Husband: ...that these were good people. That they were decent people. And the Français de France, those working in the administration, married these Maltese girls because they had dowries and lots of money.

Wife: Your grandfather’s sisters, that’s exactly what happened...
Husband: It’s what happened to all of grandfather’s sisters... So, naturally, the sisters of my grandfather, who were among the elite, got rid of their language, and spoke only French. Saying, we are French...

Wife: ...and anyhow, they became French citizens

Husband: ...and they got rid of their origins

ALS: I see. They never...taught their children

Wife: No, no, no

Husband: They were sophisticated, part of the bourgeoisie. You see?

But it was not enough to become tremendously wealthy. The awkward place of the Maltese who had achieved wealth at the cost of investing in any social or linguistic capital was beautifully illustrated by a story I heard one day at a pied-noir cocktail party. Robert, who had grown up with the “petit peuple” in rural Constantine, told me about a Maltese man he knew in his village. This man had worked a tiny plot of land year after year, first clearing the brush, fertilizing it, and eventually managed to begin growing vegetables for the market. He and his wife worked day in, day out. They finally bought adjoining fields, and soon had a handsome estate. In his old age, he spent his days working on his estate, wearing a big straw hat. One day some French people came over to his land, asking to speak to the owner. “Where is the patron?!?,” they shouted out to the man. The old man shouted back in broken French, “Le patron au village! Le patron au village!” As Robert explained to us, the man did not want the visitors to know that he, in fact, was the landowner of the fine estate, and was ashamed to speak with them because his French was so poor. He thus regularly pretended that he was a simple worker to cover up his own shame and ignorance.
I heard a similar story from Mr. Raynaud, a pied-noir of French origins, who had worked in Algeria for the Department of Agriculture. One of his research projects entailed interviewing vineyard owners in the area surrounding Souk Ahras to determine which species were being developed successfully and where. He told me he remembered once arriving at a very large farm, with beautiful rows of vines, and asked to be directed to the owner. M. Raynaud was astonished to find that the man who owned and operated this successful estate, of Maltese origin, could barely speak any French at all. When Raynaud asked him which roots he had on his vines, he replied "cinq sous, cinq sous" (five pennies) instead of "cinsault." For another part of the plant, instead of the proper term "mourvedre," he had memorized and responded "mars verts" (green March). When Raynaud asked him what kind of fertilizer he was using on the fields, he had to ask one of his Arab workers to translate the question for him. This wealthy landowner could barely speak French, let alone read or write it, and thus had managed to run an entire vineyard by using Arabic and memorizing simple childish phrases for terms essential for his work. I heard additional stories from French pieds-noirs I met illustrating the crassness and lack of sophistication of the nouveau riche Maltese.

These tales of wealth at all costs suggest a very particular kind of upward mobility, and lead us to consider the intersection of class, ethnicity and race in this setting. Many Maltese obviously felt that any attempts to assimilate through the standard channels, first politically through naturalization and then socially through the education system and military service, would yield uncertain results. They perhaps were quite conscious of the racism inherent in the early French anti-Maltese attitudes, and perhaps felt too "marked"
to aim for political or social assimilation. Instead, they calculated that they could more easily attain respectability through economic success. Once they had climbed their way to a new economic class, the later generations would perhaps find more rewards in investing in cultural, linguistic and social capital. In other words, their trajectory suggests the perception, at least by the first migrants, of a rigid barrier to their ascension through all but economic channels.

**Cutting Ties to Malta**

Another important clue about the assimilation process as experienced by the informants I spoke with is suggested by their lack of knowledge about Malta. This lack of knowledge of Malta was in fact so widespread that when first meeting me, the leaders of the Association France-Malte felt it would prove the only obstacle to my study: "You will find two memories here, intertwined: a distant one about the country of origin, Malta in this case, of which little will remain except maybe cooking, and then the much more recent memories about Algeria." I was warned that most of the individuals I would meet would have "NO memory of Malta, none whatsoever. Nothing will remain."

The generalized absence of any discussion of Malta in the collective memory was, I soon found, pervasive. Some people I interviewed had visited Malta since their retirement, and thus Malta occasionally entered our conversations, but only as connected to these very recent experiences. When discussing their ancestors’ migration to Algeria, they rarely commented on reasons for this departure except in the vaguest terms, indicating that stories had not been passed down the generations about this migration.
Because the subject of Malta did not surface automatically in our interviews, towards the end of my research, I began to try to prompt discussion on this topic. I asked individuals what they had been told by their grandparents or parents about Malta, and if they knew where in Malta their ancestors were from. The results were unanimous, and, I found, rather astounding: they did not know which island their ancestors were from, let alone which town, or why they had decided to leave, and had been told little or no details about life there. During the following excerpt of a taped interview with a husband and wife in their mid-70s, I asked about their knowledge of Malta when they were growing up:

ALS: So, your parents... didn’t speak too much about their pasts in Malta...
Husband: Never
Wife: No
ALS: So...
Husband: We didn’t talk about it
ALS: Yes
Husband: We talked about us, us in Algeria
Wife: No
Husband: We spoke about our lives in Algeria. We didn’t speak about our...
ALS: So, you didn’t have... any images of Malta, nor ideas of... churches, other family members, nothing like that?
Husband: No
Wife: No
Husband: No, and along with other Maltese, we socialized with Spanish, Italians... and they didn’t... they didn’t speak about their origins either...
Wife: We were French, and that’s that, you know?
(change of subject; Tape 19, p. 13)
The silence regarding Malta was total and widespread. Some had thought about this a great deal and had developed theories about why this might be so. The common thought was that their ancestors were working so hard they had no time to maintain contact with their relatives back in Malta. One woman knew about illiteracy among the Maltese, for, as she pointed out to me, her grandparents’ marriage certificate was signed with an “X.” She believed that it would have been difficult for those who could not write to keep in touch with their relatives during this era. Others seemed embarrassed about this “problem,” for here I was, having come all the way from the United States to interview them about their ancestors, about their past, and they knew so little about Malta, their purported homeland.

Viewed from this perspective, the genealogical introductory portions at the start of the interviews take on new meaning. Perhaps, in fact, these presentations were motivated in part by a desire to demonstrate their link with Malta, and thus the relevance of their particular family story to my study. Because they did not have much to tell me regarding Malta as transmitted through family stories, perhaps they felt they should at least demonstrate the links they did have to Malta to legitimize their contribution to my project.

The following excerpt from an interview with M. Grech illustrates both this desire to link his family to Malta in this way, as well as the complete silence in his family regarding Malta. At the beginning of our interview, he first outlined his Maltese heritage, and then tried to demonstrate what this heritage meant in terms of his knowledge of Maltese culture. In fact, he learned very little about Malta from his Maltese ancestors:
Thus, I’m one of the rare cases, and there are others in my family, where I am 
Grech, paternal, and Pisani, maternal, of Maltese origin. Thus, I am really at heart, 
at the heart of Malta. OK. And yet! I’ll tell you one thing, as far as I can 
remember, we never spoke of Malta….I am entirely Maltese...But, if I dare say it, 
I am entirely pied-noir.

He was very proud of being entirely Maltese in origin, and next outlined his family 
migration pattern in detail. He and his parents were born in Algiers, and of his four 
grandparents, only one was born in Malta; all the others were born in Algeria. He then 
spoke about his paternal grandfather, who had migrated directly from Malta:

OK, so he, he was the immigrant. But we, we never talked about Malta. Even 
though we spoke about the past. But my father… well, my mother didn’t tell me 
much of anything….Well, yes, she talked about….we talked about people, but not 
of the country. OK! So…which people? Well, my parents spoke to me about 
their own childhoods…but, well, this childhood was already in Algiers! So, at the 
level of Malta, what does this mean. We didn’t speak about Malta proper. But my 
father spoke about his parents, his father and mother. He must have told me that 
they came from Malta, because I couldn’t have made that up. And, he spoke 
about his father’s temperament, which is very much like the typical Maltese 
temperament…a very hard man, very hardworking, very severe (Tape 25, p. 5-6).

In this excerpt, M. Grech first tries to tell me that he heard his mother talk about people 
back in Malta, but then cannot come up with any examples, and realizes, mid-narrative, 
that his parents mainly talked about people of Algeria, not those in Malta. He then tries to 
explain his lack of knowledge about Malta despite his unusual pure Maltese heritage. 
From this narrative, it is clear that Malta was discussed seldom, and he does not even 
remember learning that he was Maltese.

Malta was erased from the social memory. People knew no stories, were told no 
details about life in the “home” country. As one informant liked to repeat, “ils ont coupé 
les ponts avec Malte,” an expression that literally means to “cut all bridges,” and which is
partway between “cutting ties,” and “burning bridges.” This man explained to me that because they felt such discrimination in Algeria, his great-grandparents wanted to forget their Maltese past to better and more quickly integrate.

In this process of breaking all connections to Malta, the language too was quickly lost. In contrast to the Maltese in neighboring Tunisia, who lived in Maltese-dominated ethnic enclaves and who continued to speak the Maltese language through the 1960s, in Algeria, the language was quickly lost by the time of the generation of my informants’ parents, usually the first generation born overseas. The informants and their parents actively participated in encouraging this language shift. Many told me how they, or their parents, consciously refused to speak with others in Maltese. One man, one of the second generation in his family born in Algeria, told me emphatically that in his family there was never any question of speaking Maltese. Even his parents refused to speak it. He then explained:

And why? Because the Maltese, among others, wanted so much to integrate that they wanted to speak good French. And anyhow, my wife will tell you; at her house, when they wanted to speak Corsican or Italian, they said, “No, we speak French! Here it is France!” So that they wouldn’t be viewed as foreigners, they wanted to speak good French...they spoke French out of preference, they tried to integrate (Tape 16A).

So few Maltese of Algeria learned the language that the elderly individuals who could were viewed with suspicion, and I was told by others that they were not “real” pieds-noirs.
“France Eclipsed All Else”

Why would these migrants have erased Malta so completely from their collective memory? One explanation was provided by Mr. Grech, who argued that they forgot about Malta simply because they were too busy looking to the future, to France. His narrative vividly describes to what extent young colonists in Algeria internalized a sense of French national belonging taught early on in school:

OK, so, me, what did I learn...for me, Malta was really very, very far. Remember, it’s far from Algiers! Hey, when you see Algiers, across from Marseille, Malta is 1,000 kilometers to the east. But what I mean is it was far geographically, but also far in time...and also, far psychologically. Because here, and I think I’m telling you something that isn’t true only for the Maltese. When we were in Algiers we looked north, we looked to France. You see? And, I’m not saying that we weren’t interested in our country, but we weren’t taught very much about our...our country. We were taught a bit here and there, but on a very superficial level. We weren’t taught about our origins, but, on the other hand, we knew,...this, this is the strength of the French education system. Here, I’ll give an example which is...everything I’m telling you is true, huh? OK. I was a very sensitive little boy, who cried easily, and, in 1940, when I was five, I would cry while singing “Je vais revoir ma Normandie; c’est le pays qui m’a donné le jour.” I was crying because it’s a song...well, it was during the war, we had lost, all that, and there was a very sad atmosphere, and so forth, but, this is to show you that I sang that mechanically, like a child, but it moved me, I had tears when singing “I am going to see MY Normandie...” But, I had NEVER seen Normandie—well, I had never even crossed the Mediterranean! This example is...it’s a little like when, they say, the little black kids used to sing “Our ancestors the Gauls.” In my case, I could have been saying “My ancestors the Normands,” even though I had never been to France. But, we were brought up to worship France (dans le culte de la France). France, for us, was...was a divinity. You see? And, therefore, France eclipsed all else.
(Tape 25, p 10-12)

The Question of Intermarriage

Inter-marriage is often considered a litmus test of social integration, and intermarriage features prominently along with the schools and the military in lists of the
great assimilating forces of colonial Algeria. Many historians have claimed that at least after World War I, members of the different European ethnicities stopped their former practice of marrying primarily members of their own group. After this point, they argue, inter-marriage was common. The elderly informants also claimed repeatedly that everyone intermarried, and used as examples the marriages in their families, usually of their own generation, in which siblings married other colonists of a different non-French origin. But while intermarriage between naturalized French of different origins, Maltese-Italian, Spanish-Italian marriages, and so forth, was commonly cited in stories, there were only two cases in my sample in which the elderly couple itself represented a union between French-origin and Maltese-origin families. In these two families, each couple first asserted that intermarriage was common and of no consequence. But during these two taped interviews, over the course of the conversation, the spouses of Maltese origin (in one case, the husband; in the other, the wife) eventually contradicted this assertion, using as examples their respective marriages. In one of these cases, the husband, Robert, was part Maltese, part French, and his wife Michelle was Maltese. In the following passage, Robert Vella first claims that where he grew up there were many Maltese-French marriages:

Robert: Families of more modest means, well, they married each other. But in our region, there were many marriages between French and Maltese, hein? Between French men and Maltese women, and Maltese women and French men (sic)

ALS: And this wasn't badly viewed?

Robert: No, no, no, no. Where we lived, no.

ALS: Oh. So not in Jemmapes.
Robert: The Maltese... (pause)

ALS: And in Bône, was there...

Robert: ... in Bône, yes

ALS: ... more segregation?

Robert: Yes, yes, yes. In Bône, well... But, well, really, you can’t say that, classify that as... Well, the French especially considered the others like second-class citizens (des Français de deuxième zone), lesser quality. But even between Italians and Maltese, this great-aunt, what was her name? Anne-Marie. Her mother didn’t want her to marry that guy because he was Maltese. Remember?

Michelle: But even Robert, when he told his mother, I know a girl, she said, “What is she?” She asked you what national... what background, you know. When he told her “Maltese,” she wasn’t happy. And why? Because I wasn’t... well, we were French, sure, but originally...

Robert: Not of French origin (français d’origine), you know.

Michelle: Française d’origine. I was of Maltese origin, and my mother-in-law was not happy about that.

ALS: But why would she be unhappy? Was it just the kind of image she had in her mind?

Michelle: I don’t know. I don’t know why.

In this conversation, Robert first asserts that in his small village, mixed Maltese-French marriages were common. His parents in fact were an example of an early mixed marriage: his father, a first generation Maltese born in Algeria, married the Algeria-born daughter of a French family when he returned to Algeria after having served four years in World War I. Apparently his having fought in the war, and particularly his having received a war medal (croix de guerre) for having been gassed at the end of the war, convinced the
woman’s father to permit his daughter to marry this Maltese man. Even though Mrs. Vella was happy with her husband, she was not pleased when her son decided to follow her example and marry a Maltese woman. Robert had somehow “forgotten” this part of his own history when he was making positive generalizations about the status of the Maltese in his village. Sure, there was discrimination, he tells me, but elsewhere, among those “other” people in the big city. His wife listens to these assertions until finally he begins to consider other friends who were prevented from marrying Maltese. She finally interrupts and reminds him of the ill-feelings his own mother had harbored against his marriage because his fiancée was of Maltese origins.

In the second case of a French-Maltese marriage, the wife had Alsacian origins and the husband was entirely Maltese. The couple first presented to me the optimistic official “melting pot” narrative, but as they discussed further the salience of ethnic origins in Algeria, the husband begins to talk about the discrimination and hatred he felt from the French:

Husband: It was a mixture of races...a mixing/brewing (brassage)
Wife: Yes, it happened very fast
Husband: ...the mixing together of all the French of foreign origins
Wife: ...and, they went to the same school
Husband: ...married each other, mixed together, and spoke French. Because, like I was telling you before, my grandfather, who was born in 1870, never spoke French.
ALS: But did you realize, back then, that you were of Maltese origin?
Husband: Yes... (hedging)
In this conversation, we first see the assimilation process, including intermarriage, outlined in positive terms. But when I ask the individual of Maltese origin, the husband in this case, if these origins no longer mattered by the time he was growing up, he begins to change his story. His statement has lost a bit in translation, for what he first says when he begins to think about the contempt he felt from the French past was that it always affected or even marked him (ça m'a toujours marqué), implying that these memories had been deeply engraved, had left their mark. Thus, while he might still believe in a vision of Algeria as a melting pot (and his own marriage and offspring represent in a way a further embodiment of that vision), he could not ignore these early memories of the discrimination he had experienced from his mother-in-law.

Interr marriage between Catholic colonists was widely considered by my informants as the final "proof" that the different European populations in Algeria blended together, and was held as a widespread ideal. However, as these two cases indicate, people who
were actually involved in mixed marriages, particularly those between naturalized Maltese and "pure" French, groups at the two extremes of the colonist ethnic hierarchy, had a different experience. They had confronted, through their own marriages, the lingering animosity felt by many in Algeria against the Maltese. After talking about intermarriage in positive terms, they tapped into their own personal memories, which contradicted and called into question the overt narrative they had also tried to maintain.

Conclusion: Active Melting

During my first meeting with a 75-year-old man who would later become a key informant and good friend, Mr. Mifsud explained that he had only recently thought about Malta: "I only discovered Malta six years ago!" he liked to tell me. Mr. Mifsud, a tall, thin man with thick white hair, blue eyes, and skewed teeth, was of mixed origin. His mother was originally French, from Provence, and his father was Maltese. He grew up in Algiers, and, until six years ago, he liked to tell me, he had no connection whatsoever to his Maltese heritage. The first time I met him and his wife privately, away from the hubbub of the large pied-noir meetings, he told me right off about his ambivalent relationship to his Maltese past:

I discovered Malta just six years ago! Only recently! I never thought of it before, never! You see, over there (là-bas, i.e. Algeria), we were blended together. All mixed together. But, well, the Maltese weren't very well thought of, so we wanted to blend in. Soon people didn't even know they were from Malta. Sure, I had friends with "those" names (i.e. obvious Maltese names), but there was no way to know for sure. At school, we wanted to be at least at the same level as the "Français de souche," the "vrais français," you know, those with names like "Jean Ballard" and so forth. So, we ate Provencal food. We didn't really have much of an identity (Tape 19).
Mifsud elaborated on his ambivalent identity several months later during another taped interview. Again he used the melting pot metaphor when he referred to assimilation of the different immigrant groups in Algeria, using the verb “fondre” (to melt). However, in this case, he describes this process as one which was actively pursued by the naturalized French to avoid discrimination. In the following passage, he first tries to explain why it was so important for people to hide their immigrant origins in Algeria. He begins this discussion using an impersonal third-person voice, yet towards the end of the excerpt, he reveals that this was also his experience as well:

In Algeria, people...melted together, really, uh...like I was telling you, people who were...the children of immigrants, didn’t want to call too much attention to the fact that they were immigrants’ kids. To be French, to receive all of the advantages, and then, and then...Well, no, especially because immigrants in general are people of a lower social class. Its not the rich who, who leave their country. It wasn’t the rich Italians, Spanish, or Maltese who left their countries, it was those who were really from a pretty lower class who left because they didn’t have any work, anything to eat. And they didn’t want people to be able to know that they were from that class of society...that wasn’t, well, rich, who came there because otherwise they would starve. Thus, it was a bit to save face, if you will, to retain their dignity, out of pride, not wanting to be recognized as one of those people. So, they tried to melt in, to melt together, to blend in, and me, during my entire youth, there was never a question of my being Maltese! And furthermore, I had a lot of education! I had civil and military training...and it was never a question of being Maltese. I was Mifsud, French, Mifsud, French. I never would have said, “I’m of Maltese origins.” Now, though, I say it....But in my youth, I never would have said it, never. I was French.” (Tape 16b, pp. 25-27; underlining, his emphasis; bold, mine).

In this passage, Mifsud describes a discrimination that we can assume he must have either experienced or observed. He interprets this discrimination as not racist but class-based. The Maltese and other immigrants were trying to hide the fact that their families were originally poor, and used a range of strategies in their attempt to be fully accepted.
A first step in this direction was to deny their ethnic heritage, and this was achieved to such a degree that eventually, as he told me later on, “I was Maltese without really knowing it.”

In Mifsud’s passage, the melting pot image shifts slightly. The usual subjects of this process are active participants here. Carrying the metaphor a bit further, he tells us that they tried to melt in. They were not simply passively “melted” over the generations, but made real efforts to blend in. As others have explained, the Maltese stopped speaking their language by the second generation born in Algeria at least, and usually sooner, and family members stopped all talk of Malta early on. Some were so embarrassed by their Maltese heritage that they frenchified their last names. Many threw themselves into their work, desperately trying to amass, through great wealth, some respect as well. As Mifsud says, “they didn’t want people to be able to think they were from that class of society.”

The avoidance of discrimination, according to Mifsud, was the underlying motivation for these efforts. In the cases of the other individuals, presented above, many others also discussed a pervasive anti-Maltese, if not general, anti-foreigner, sentiment in Algeria when they were growing up. The “pure” French in particular were described as a class above the rest, as the elite. Intermarriage especially into this elite class was difficult, and those of Maltese origin who managed to do so retained difficult memories of the reactions of their spouses’ relatives during this period.

This oral testimony reveals another key “assimilating tool” of colonial Algeria to add to the well-known institutions of the French schools, army, and legal system. Anti-foreigner discrimination and attitudes also provided another important impetus for
assimilation. The individuals I spoke with were not only motivated by their attraction to the new culture, as was Grech in his vivid description of growing up in the “cult of France.” While some talked about being drawn to positive aspects of France, they also wanted to avoid at all costs being singled out as “foreign,” and tried as best they could to blend in. They threw themselves into the melting pot, and in the process consciously suppressed all consciousness or manifestations of their former culture and heritage.
CHAPTER 8: “NOSTALGERIE” AND THE FRENCH RECEPTION OF THE PIEDS-NOIRS

Introduction

This chapter outlines the intricate relationship between two memory domains: the domain encompassing a nostalgic iteration of life in colonial Algeria, and the painful, open-ended domain of pied-noir difficulties with the Metropolitan French. One is a narrative of a paradise lost, an entirely positive variation on childhood memories, and is imbued with the idealized warmth of the childhood home. The other is a narrative of rejection, of not quite measuring up, the rejection of the pieds-noirs by the patrie, their fatherland. These two narratives are connected, and the memory domains dynamically reinforce each other. When experiencing yet another slight in their interactions with the Metropolitan French, other similar experiences of rejection are remembered and discussed with great emotion. Algeria is then introduced in contrast, representing a better time when life was easier and when they could do no wrong. Conversely, when indulging in their sweet memories of the forever-lost Algeria, they might turn in conversation to their poor treatment by the French, suggesting that if they had been better treated, they might not find it so hard to let go of Algeria.

The combination of this sense of rejection by France and the French, in conjunction with the unfinished rupture with their homelands, conspires to create for many pieds-noirs a feeling of drifting, of not belonging anywhere. Responses to this pied-noir predicament
Suicides were apparently common in the first decades, however those who managed often threw their energies into their families and work. Since their retirements, however, many are now led to a search for their “roots,” while others indulge further in “nostalgérie.”

Pied-noir Nostalgérie

Nostalgérie, the pied-noir longing for Algeria, has become an important aspect of the pied-noir experience in France. Nostalgia generally represents a desire to return to an idealized condition that is imagined to be located in the past, in some physically remote present, or sometimes in the future (Nosco 1990:4). The term “nostalgia” was coined in the late 17th century by physician Johannes Hofer from the Greek, combining nostos (return to native land) with algos (suffering or grief) to refer to “homesickness,” or the pain caused by the physical separation from one’s primary abode. Hofer viewed nostalgia as a Swiss illness that especially struck mercenary soldiers while serving abroad (Bullard 1997:187). Diagnoses of nostalgia became increasingly common in Europe, and by the revolutionary wars of the 1790s, French armies suffered “epidemics” of the disease (Ibid). The increase of mass mobility in the nineteenth century led to increasing diagnoses of nostalgia until the mid-century, when the diagnoses diminished, suggesting an acceptance of mobility and thus of homesickness as necessary features of the modern condition (Ibid).

Pied-noir nostalgia can be traced to some of the more salient features of the pied-noir exile. The departure from the colony, for instance, was extremely sudden. In most
cases, pieds-noirs realized that it represented the final rupture with their birthplace only after several years in France, and therefore few were able to prepare themselves emotionally for this dramatic transition.

Because many did not know that they would not be coming back, and because there was so little space on the ferries, most possessions were left behind. Depending on individual family circumstances, some managed to bring back family photos or small heirlooms, but much else remained in Algeria. This loss of possessions held great symbolic meaning for some I interviewed, but I did not understand the implications of this aspect of their exile until one day during a meeting with M. Grech. I was admiring his impressive collection of now rare books on North African history, many of which I had been searching for in libraries in France. “Yes,” he told me, with obvious pride, “it is a very rare collection.” I asked if he had been a collector his whole life, and he looked somewhat surprised. “Oh no!” he said, “I am not a collector—I still have my books because I was working for the army during the war and was allowed to ship everything to France!” I realized at that moment that I had not seen many books, paintings, or family photos in other pieds-noirs apartments or homes, and wondered if this reflected not the families’ priorities or incomes, as I had originally thought, but instead the precipitous nature of the pied-noir departure.

The abandonment of most material belongings had significant repercussions. The pieds-noirs had to abandon not only their homeland and their homes, but also their possessions, which, during their years in “exile” in France, might have allowed them to
reconnect at least symbolically and partially to the lost place and past life. Some of these possessions would have been passed down through the family, including relatives' tools, inherited dishes, furniture, or clothing, representing a material embodiment of the family past. This family past was abandoned not only indirectly through the loss of these material items, however, but in an even more concrete fashion as well: ancestors' remains were also left behind, in Algerian cemeteries. This loss caused particular pain to pieds-noirs during the annual All Saint's Day holiday on November 1st when people in France typically visit and beautify their ancestors' graves. Perhaps to avoid dwelling on the abandoned overseas tombs, many pieds-noirs families I knew went on outings to the Mediterranean that day.

**Life on Two Levels**

The sharp rupture with Algeria and the inability of most pieds-noirs to return out of a fear of reprisals have allowed an elaboration, and for some, even an indulgence, in a nostalgic orientation to the past in Algeria. Operating as a distorted parallel universe, this bittersweet memory domain was one that some did not want, or were unable, to leave. For many pieds-noirs I encountered, the tug of nostalgérie was quasi-permanent, and they lived a half-life, seemingly in France, but living mentally in Algeria as well.

Evidence of living in both worlds simultaneously occurred with surprising frequency in the form of unconscious slips. The first type of slip involved a confusion of verb tense. Individuals sometimes began talking to me about Algeria in the present tense
for some time before catching themselves. When these informants' children were present, they immediately, and sometimes harshly, corrected their parents, suggesting that slips of this kind had occurred more than once. One example of this phenomenon occurred during a visit with an alert elderly widower of Maltese origins at his tiny apartment in Aix overlooking the bus station. At one point during our conversation he got up to show me a book reproducing old postcards of his hometown, Philippeville. Turning to an image of the coastline, he pointed out to me, "Look, there is the lighthouse you can see from my house. There, that's my house—that is where I live, right there. OK, now this, this is another view of my house. This is the view you see from my living room window, and that, there, is the main street in the center of town." We continued to look as he turned the pages. "There, again, that's where I live, I mean, where I lived..." He only caught himself after several minutes, and seemed slightly embarrassed. This was the most animated I had seen him during our many conversations, and his wistful returning to old photographs of his beloved house and former home town left a very poignant impression.

Another slip that indicated the entangling of two consciousnesses, the living along two mental tracks simultaneously, occurred when individuals responded inappropriately to simple questions, resulting in awkward confusions in everyday conversation. Slips of this nature occurred relatively frequently, and provide another line of evidence of some people's living on two conscious levels, and, most significantly, the dominance for some of the Algeria-based consciousness. The first example occurred while I was at a large outdoor picnic held annually at a regional park a good hour's drive from Aix. This
reunion of pieds-noirs from the department of Constantine usually attracted thousands of people from throughout southeastern France. This year, however, it had been raining in southern France for nearly a week. It was still raining hard on the day of the event, and the meeting location was changed to the covered area of a parking lot at a nearby village. The morning of the reunion was very cold. At one point I was talking with a group of elderly women. Most were wearing thin summer dresses and we found ourselves huddled together near grills where people were heating up their dinners. One woman asked her husband to get a blanket for her from the car, and turned to us to tell us how cold she was. Her friend was one of the few wearing slacks. “Thankfully I wore pants!” she said, and then, turning to me, she explained: “When we left, the sun was shining!” This surprised me and I realized that she must have driven quite far to the reunion because clouds were still blanketing much of southern France. “Oh really,” I asked, “where did you come from?” “Bône,” she responded, “like Michèle,” gesturing to a woman in our group. This reference to Algeria was immediate and caught me off guard, and at first I was unsure what she meant. Was there a Bône in France too, I wondered?

A similar slip occurred at another social gathering in Aix. During this formal dinner-dance, I was talking with Pauline, a woman in her seventies who was seated at my table. Her friends, sitting across from us, had driven up for the evening from Marseille, and many were complaining about how late the meal was and about the impending long drive home. I turned to Pauline and asked, “Did you come from Marseille as well?” “Oh
no!” she exclaimed, rather startled. “No, I was repatriated from Algeria! I arrived in Marseille only recently, 33 years ago!”

Again, I was rather surprised. The proper French way to ask this question is, “vous êtes venue de Marseille?” and perhaps, in trying to say, “vous veniez de Marseille,” trying to ask if they had made the trip up from Marseille, she understood me to be asking, “vous venez de Marseille,” or, do you come from Marseille?

I was somewhat at a loss for words, wondering how it was that she had misunderstood me so completely, particularly given the conversation immediately preceding my question. I was also struck by the fact that she knew exactly how many years she had been living in Marseille. Because she did not seem to want to talk about Marseille, I asked if she had been back to Algeria. “No, its impossible,” she told me. She sighed. “It is hard, very, very, very, hard. I think about my old house all of the time. It was terrible to leave, just terrible.”

In each of these cases, I had made a mistake in French in asking the individuals where they were from, and not where they were coming from. However, given the immediately preceding conversational context in which these confusions occurred, it should have been apparent what it was I was trying to say. Instead of interpreting my question from within that context, however, the individuals responded literally, referring immediately and inappropriately to Algeria, as if Algeria, and not the weather, or the long drive to Marseille, was the ongoing topic of conversation. It was clear in these instances that Algeria occupied a predominant place in the imaginations of these individuals, and
represented not some long-ago past life or former time, but was a time and space of considerable immediacy and presence in their everyday consciousness.

This double- or half-life of some pieds-noirs was vividly articulated to me towards the end of my fieldwork by a woman I met during a reunion of pieds-noirs from the town of Souk-Ahras. I had been invited to the annual two-day reunion by a group of pieds-noirs of Maltese origin I had met by chance in the National Library of Malta, and knew nobody else there. It was a few hours into the first day, during "tchache," chatting, or happy hour. People gathering that Saturday afternoon were boisterously greeting longtime friends who had traveled from across France. The noise level in the rented hall was incredible as people milled around, shouting, hugging, kissing newcomers, and dragging metal chairs against the concrete floor to make room for new arrivals at their tables. A crowd stood waiting at the bar to order pastis or oranginas and to secure some appetizers that they would bring back to their friends. I was told that 200 people were expected.

At first I wandered somewhat aimlessly, looking at the blown-up copies of old postcards of Algeria that were for sale, the large display of photographs of the people reunited that day at age five or ten in posed group shots of grade school classes and school "football" teams. The people who had invited me were deep in discussion with old friends, some of whom they had not seen since 1962, and I did not want to interrupt these emotional moments. One of the meeting organizers, a young woman in her late thirties, invited me to sit with her and her cousin. These two were by far the youngest individuals present. "Marie" told me she attended these meetings because they provided an
opportunity to spend time with her aunt and uncle, and mother. She liked seeing them so happy, she said. We talked. She was a linguist and had conducted research for her doctorate among African-Americans in Los Angeles. She told me there were many similarities between the pieds-noirs in France today and the African-Americans in the states, and outlined in her view their similar lack of integration and being generally misunderstood by the wider dominant society. I probably wouldn't be able to understand how it feels like to be African-American in the states, she told me, because, she explained. I am white. Since I was from the dominant culture, I would never be able to imagine how it feels to be part of the society, yet so separate, apart.

I asked if this is how pieds-noirs feel, separate, not a part of France. She paused for a minute, and then pointed over the crowd to a man who appeared to be in his early seventies, sitting and laughing with a group of men his age. “You see that man over there, my uncle? He is always talking about North Africa. Everything is always reminding him of his home, of his hometown, of Algeria. He’ll see a plant, and it will remind him of a similar species that grows back there. A tree reminds him of the one in front of his old house there. A shift in the light, the clouds...There are always echoes back...” She searched for words, for another way to explain this to me. “You see, these people here,” gesturing this time to the entire room, “they are not really here. They are not here. Sure, they are here physically, certainly, but not mentally. Mentally, we are all at this moment in North Africa.”
Others described this feeling of not quite belonging as a floating, drifting feeling, or having lost their bearings. “We are the shifting sands,” a woman told me at a party one day, “we don’t belong anywhere anymore.”

Even individuals consciously trying to integrate into French society, to move forward in their new lives in France, had great difficulties feeling rooted there. During a taped interview with a dynamic pied-noir, Louise, in her tiny apartment in Aix, I first asked about her Maltese ancestors. These questions were handled perfunctorily, and she became somewhat confused trying to explain exactly what year she left Algeria for France. As almost an aside, she explained that while at that time they were arriving in their patrie (fatherland, nation), France wasn’t their country (pays). “It’s our patrie, but it isn’t our country (pays). The most beautiful country in the world is the one in which one is born.” She went on to explain a bit more her feeling not entirely a part of France. “I am not completely integrated, a part of France...to the extent that I don’t feel chez moi. When I go to California, its as if, as if...I were in France. What I mean is that in California, I feel as much at home as I do in France.” She went on to admit that, of course, California is different from France: the languages spoken and the food are quite different, “but as far as nature is concerned, I feel better in California than in France!” She seemed a bit surprised at this declaration, and tried to explain it. “You see, in France, nothing reminds me of my country. I can go from the north to the south...and I don’t find the...plains, the, the mountains, the, the, the same landscapes (paysages), the same smells,...the same colors,
like *chez nous*. Thus, I get the feeling that I’m always *en voyage* in France. I’m floating...”

**Nostalgia and the Metropolitan “Accueil”**

There are two sides to nostalgia. The nostalgic yearning to return to a better time or place can also be viewed as representing a disappointment with the present time and place, a “disenchantment and disengagement from the here-and-now” (Nosco 1990:5). In his study of the nostalgic components to eighteenth century nativist movements in Japan, Nosco notes that nostalgia is not necessarily destructive, but can be a healthy response to certain circumstances (Ibid:5). He adds,

To the extent, however, that one attempts either to reenter or to reconstruct the erected nostalgic fantasy, one is through this quasi action evidencing a degree of estrangement and attendant dissociation from one’s environment, and is thereby articulating, however unconsciously or consciously, an implicitly critical posture toward that environment (Nosco 1990:5).

Disappointment with France is implied by the pied-noir nostalgic turn, and some articulate this disappointment quite overtly and consciously. Upon arriving in their “patrie,” their fatherland, sometimes for the first time, the disjuncture between what they had imagined France to be, and the France they encountered, was great. Even greater was the gulf between Algeria and the Metropole, and many outlined stories of suffering through the tremendous and relentless cold for the first time in their lives during the first winter in France.
But the disappointments that most profoundly marked the people I spoke with involved the French, or, more precisely, the Metropolitans, and their reception of the pieds-noirs, the French "accueil." "Accueil" is a rich word in French that carries multiple meanings, including "reception," "welcome," "accommodation," and "greeting." When using this term, pieds-noirs are referring to how they were "treated" by the French. In using "accueil," however, rather than some other word, like treatment, they seem to be implying that it was a welcome that they expected, and not simply a perfunctory accommodation.

When people talked to me about these disappointments, they were operating within a very well-defined memory domain that was frequently related in conversation to nostalgic memories of Algeria. Because disappointing encounters with Metropolitans continue to occur, this is an open-ended memory domain that is continuously expanded as successive layers of memories are added.

The earliest "strata" are comprised of narratives of their first months in France. I heard many surprising tales of cruelty: people purposefully blocking pied-noir cars, graffiti calling for their expulsion from France, the theft of their belongings from military warehouses, hotel managers one after another refusing to admit them to their hotels, and people taking advantage of their desperate circumstance and ignorance by selling them poor farmland at exorbitant prices or cars with hidden flaws. Later strata are comprised of other narratives of more recent experiences with Metropolitan French, and follow clearly defined themes.
Arrival Stories. I heard a long litany of stories outlining the miserable first year in France. Louise Martino outlined a terrible tale of her family’s repatriation. Because her husband held an important position in the army, their repatriation was ordered by the military. They were first required to hide in Algeria for nearly a week. Upon finally arriving in France with their four children, one of whom was stricken with polio, they found that no shelter was awaiting them. Hotel owners would only let them stay for one night, and her frustration grew each time her family was turned away. She finally broke down: she stormed into the offices of the local headquarters of the French Army and caused a scene, telling the general in charge that he would have to take her children because she did not have the courage to kill them herself. Only after this desperate action on her part did they receive temporary shelter. When they finally settled into an apartment several months later, she and her husband reported to the military center that stored the personal goods repatriated by the army, only to find that their wooden crates were empty; they had been robbed of all of their belongings.

The Open Hostility of Bureaucrats

Upon arrival in France, pieds-noirs, among other rapatriés, were required to file various forms to “regularize” their status vis-à-vis French administrations. I heard many stories of difficulties with bureaucrats who either refused to accept their Algeria- or Tunisia-derived paperwork and forms, or who refused to accommodate their requests and who suggested outright that since the individuals concerned were born in Africa, they
were probably not French anyway. The treasurer of the Franco-Maltese association, Mr. Calleja, of Maltese heritage, had grown up in Tunisia. When he first arrived in 1961, his cousin told him to get his "carte d'identité" (identity card) first, because it would facilitate his encounters with interactions with French bureaucracy. Calleja only had a certificate of French citizenship obtained from the French embassy in Tunisia. He was asked by the French functionary for his "livret de famille," the state-prepared booklet listing births, deaths, and marriages. Calleja did not have one, for these were not mandatory in Tunisia. M. Calleja was informed that in this case, he could not obtain a card. Calleja then presented the bureaucrat with paperwork documenting his completion of thirty months of service in the French Army. The functionary still would not give him a card, and suggested since he was born in Tunisia, it was doubtful that he was really French. "Wasn’t really French!!!?" Calleja exclaimed to me. "My God, why would I serve in the French army for 30 months if I wasn’t French!?" Calleja found the attitude of the bureaucrat outrageous. He was very animated in telling me this story, and still quite obviously upset and hurt and especially offended by the suggestion that he might not be French.

**Metropolitan Rejection and War Service:** The Metropolitan calling into question of the French nationality of the pieds-noirs was remembered with special moral outrage. After having served in World War II for three long years, and after losing family members in both World War I and II, the pieds-noirs had felt that not only was their French
nationality unquestionable, but that they had, particularly through their World War II
service, demonstrated themselves to be the saviors of France, "more French than the
French." Their military service was thus cited by many pieds-noirs almost automatically as
one of the principal demonstrations of their Frenchness. Their outrage at earlier
Metropolitan challenges to their French nationality is illustrated in the following example,
directly linking service to national belonging. In a taped conversation with Mr. and Mrs
Perez, Mr. Perez began outlining his family's service record: "Me, my grandfather served
in the war of 1870. My father served in 1914-1918. Me and my brother, we did the war
of 39-45. All the brothers of my mother did the war...of of 14-18 and 39-45. Some never
came back. And, even still!"

His wife immediately added, "But when they asked for the carte d'identité, we had
to go back to the generation of our grandparents to prove that we were French!"

According to M. Perez, the most revealing aspect of their administrative assimilation into
French society was the codes given them for Social Security. Certain digits indicate the
department where one was born. For the French of North Africa, the number granted was
99, the same number given to foreigners living in France. According to Perez, the logic
was clear:

"For us, the French of North Africa, its 99. Like who else? Like all the foreigners
living in France. Voilà. 99, for all the foreigners in France: Italians, Arabs, blacks, ...thus
we are considered to be foreigners as well."
The pieds-noirs confronted a very different imagined community in these early encounters with French bureaucrats. The Metropolitan and North African French had two different visions of how the French nation should be delimited. The French of Algeria since the late nineteenth century had accepted the official ideology that Algeria was an extension of France, representing three overseas departments. For this reason, they explained, they were willing to serve their "patrie," their fatherland, France, when it was threatened during the wars of 1870, World War I and World War II. While the French of Algeria may have felt they were defending "la patrie" in 1914 and 1942, a reciprocal attitude was not common among Metropolitans fighting in the French-Algerian War. The discrepancy between the two loyalties, and the different nationalisms they represent, was sometimes noted by pieds-noirs, who viewed the Metropolitan attitude as a very clear rejection. A pied-noir author, during her lecture at the Maison Alphonse-Juin one night, stated, "the kids coming over to fight in Algeria (during the French-Algerian) war didn't see themselves defending the patrie, but instead, felt they were simply fighting for the economic interests of some rich families." The Metropolitan French did not feel they were sacrificing their children to "France" during the French-Algerian war, but felt they were losing their children in a futile effort to help out a few rich landed "colons." For some Metropolitans, Algeria was not a part of the French nation, and their military service in its defense was considered anomalous and resented. In contrast, the French of Algeria felt that not only was their heroic service ignored during the previous wars, but that after all
their sacrifices for France, the Metropolitans did not even view them or their territory as a part of the French nation worth defending.

_Differences in Hospitality Traditions_

The coldness and lack of hospitality of the French was another topic that featured prominently in pied-noir discussions about their disappointments with France. After years of feeling purposefully slighted socially, many pieds-noirs I met had begun to view these disappointments as reflecting less a malicious and purposeful stance on the part of the French, and instead as representative of what they saw as very peculiar Metropolitan customs. The pieds-noirs I knew spent considerable time trying to understand especially what they considered the marked lack of hospitality of the “French,” and their coldness to others. Was it fear? Was it laziness? I was often asked what I thought the answer to this “riddle” might be. For example, Mrs. Perez, a woman in her eighties who I met in her ground-floor apartment in Aix talked about what she perceived as the French hostility to neighbors: “The French are not a warm people, not like people from ‘là-bas’ (over there). Take this building, for example,” she said, pointing to the apartments above. “There are four apartments up there. We have lived in this building for 32 years, and I have never been invited inside anybody’s apartment. Never. That is how the French are.” I asked Mrs. Perez if she thought the French might be afraid of people they did not know, of strangers or foreigners. She took some time to answer my question, contemplating it carefully. “No, I don’t think that’s it, because from what I can tell, they are that way with
each other too.” She told me a story of a Metropolitan woman she knew, Thérèse, who had moved into a new home in a very chic renovated quarter of Aix. When Thérèse moved in, she sent the four or five neighbors sharing the courtyard an invitation to a house-warming party at her apartment. “That is the right thing to do,” Mrs. Perez explained, “when you move in, you want your neighbors to feel at ease about the new person. So, Thérèse made up invitation cards for the neighbors. A few called to say that they were busy, and the rest did not even have the courtesy to respond!” Mrs. Perez exclaimed. Thérèse told her that she sat there all afternoon waiting in her newly decorated apartment, with aperatifs ready, to no avail. “It was the most painful day of her life.” Mrs. Perez told me.190

That people would behave so coldly towards people living in the same apartment complex was shocking to some pieds-noirs, who told me that such behavior would have been unthinkable in North Africa. One woman told me that upon arriving in France, she was surprised to find that the pieds-noirs have better manners than the French. “If you stopped by somebody’s house in Algeria, you were invited inside for coffee at least,” she said.

An Outsider’s Perspective on Metropolitan Anti-Pied-noir Sentiment

I found the French antipathy towards the pieds-noirs widespread. Over the course of the 19 months fieldwork, when I explained my project to non-pieds-noirs, their reaction

190 A similar story was told to Jane Kramer by pieds-noirs she interviewed. See Kramer
was almost uniformly a combination of surprise and immediate distaste. One woman in her forties told me, "Oh, them, I really really dislike those people!" Some shuddered the first time I mentioned the word "pied-noir." When I asked why the pieds-noirs were so disliked, they sometimes described them as too loud and obnoxious, flashy dressers, or as having no artistic sense or taste. Others considered them to be "gros colons," rich colonialists with vast estates, or as extreme racists. Students in particular highlighted the alleged pied-noir racism and right-wing tendencies.

Ironically, while anti-pied-noir sentiment is often justified by purported pied-noir anti-"Arab" racism (a prejudice in France not confined to the pieds-noirs), I encountered an underlying French prejudice against the pieds-noirs based partly on their supposed cultural proximity to North Africans. At the reunion of the "Souk-Ahrasians," I had been talking for the past three to four hours with a boisterous group of Maltese-origin gentlemen at whose table I had been seated. After they got up to visit another table, Hélène, who was sitting diagonally across from me, moved closer. Hélène is in her late sixties, married to a pied-noir from Oran, but is herself from Lorraine. She leaned over and whispered, "There is something you must know. They are just drenched in Arab culture. Drenched. They miss that culture, that world, terribly." Hélène has considerable sympathy for pieds-noirs and was trying to help me understand the depths of pied-noir losses following their exodus from Algeria. However, she is both insider and

1970.

191 See Jordi 1993:188 for a summary of Marseillais anti-pied-noir attitudes.
outsider. The first part of Hélène’s statement asserting an underlying “Arab” quality to pied-noir culture was repeated more than once by other Metropolitan French during the course of my fieldwork.

A retired couple who ran the laundromat I used in Aix talked with me one day about how life in Aix took a dramatic turn for the worse following the arrival of all the pieds-noirs. According to this couple, the area was “swamped” by the “Français d’Algérie.” “They came here with their bad manners—you see,” the wife explained, “they had adopted bad habits over there in Africa, and now are like Arabs (‘comme des Arabes’), and this has exasperated the Aixois. Since their arrival, things have really gone down-hill.” Statements such as this occurred regularly and are pregnant with unstated but directly implied anti-Arab sentiments. Without conducting research directly on this problem, it is impossible to further explore the content of the anti-Arab attitudes indexed here, but it suffices for our purposes to note the equation of pieds-noirs with “bad habits,” “bad manners,” North Africa, and “Arabs.”

The “pied-noir” term

That there is a racist component to French antipathies towards the pieds-noirs is underscored by the term “pied-noir” itself. This term was first used widely during the French-Algerian war, and since their arrival to France and the consolidation of a pied-

192 “Il y a quelque chose qu’il faut que vous sachiez. Ils sont trempés dans la culture arabe. Trempés. Cette culture leur manque terriblement.”

193 Hureau suggests that the first use of “pied-noir” occurred in 1956 (1987:7).
noir consciousness and community, standard explanations for the possible origins of this
term have emerged. The most widespread is the legend of the "black boots." According
to this explanation, the first troops of the French expeditionary forces arrived in Algeria in
1830 wearing a uniform that included black lace-up boots (bottines). The indigenous
population supposedly thought that these men had black feet, and thus began to call the
French in Algeria "pieds-noirs," or "black feet."

This legend is interesting primarily for the paternalistic attitude towards the
Algerians that it reveals. It is preposterous to imagine that at that time indigenous
Algerians would not have seen Western shoes; by then, there had been regular contact for
centuries between Algeria and peoples from across the Mediterranean. Furthermore, this
"explanation" does not correspond in any way to linguistic evidence. If the term had been
developed first by Algerians in the 1830s, it certainly would have first appeared in Arabic,
Berber, or some other locally spoken language. This was not the case. In addition, not
only was the expression developed in French first, but it first appeared in the late 1950s; it
was unknown before then.

M. Mifsud was well aware of this problem, and outlined his concerns to me one
day. He explained that, having grown up in the suburbs of Algiers, he was a real
"pataouète" speaker (slang of Algeria): he grew up in the neighborhoods playing with little
kids from Naples and Algerians, he said. He was thus truly integrated, he told me, and yet
had never heard the word "pied-noir." He remembers vividly the first time he heard this
term used:
In 54-55, 57...maybe 57, there was a professional meeting...I was a member of the General Confederation of Senior Managers...and at a meeting of Metropolitan managers in Oran, an engineer was talking about the “pieds-noirs.” I said to my colleague next to me, I said, “Who are these “pieds-noirs,” and he said, “Well, it’s us!” “Oh, it’s us, the pieds-noirs?” It was a word I had never heard before, never. It’s a word that came from France. And afterwards we learned why they called us (that)...it seems, the legend, is that the first French who came to Algeria wore black shoes, or boots, and the Arabs said, “They have black feet.” But what surprised me is that my whole family—my parents were born there, I was born there, and we never heard this name. Never, never. We never heard this word “pied-noir.” We only heard it first during the événements (French Algerian war) (tape 19, pages 27-28).

When I pointed out that it almost seemed as if the “black boot” legend had been invented much later, M. Mifsud agreed, and added that if so, it had been invented more than a hundred years after the fact, which he found very odd.

While the pied-noir legends for the origins of the term tend to attribute the term to Algerians, I heard an entirely different explanation from Algerians living in France.

According to a young professional soccer player who I will call “Azziz,” the origins are obvious: it is a term with barely disguised racist undertones. The French who began to confront the colonists migrating back from the failed colonial enterprises found those from North Africa particularly different. They were referred to as “pieds-noirs” as a kind of warning to other French: these French imposters might look “white” at first, but if you look carefully at the bottom of their feet, you will see that they are really “black.”

Although a thorough study of French attitudes towards the pieds-noirs would require considerably more interviews with Metropolitan French, a long discussion about the pieds-noirs within one family yielded some striking information. This discussion took place at the home of the Mifsuds, the Maltese-origin pied-noir family from Algiers I
interviewed many times. Their daughter, Camille, is in her fifties, and was frequently at
their home with a recently divorced friend of hers of the same age, Francine. Francine is
from France. Mrs. Mifsud one day began describing her difficulties with the French upon
arriving in France. Francine responded by trying to explain how the pieds-noirs were
viewed at that time by the French. In the following excerpt from our taped conversation,
we had been discussing the use of the pied-noir term. Mr. Mifsud suggested that it
sometimes seems insulting. At this point, Francine joined in:

Francine: Yes, its pejorative now.

Mrs. Mifsud: No, not at all

Mr. Mifsud: There are even associations, associations of...rapatriés, that use an image of
a black foot. OK, I don't like that, but they use the black-foot symbol to
identify themselves.

Francine: However, whenever French use the term "pied-noir", one senses...a certain
animosity.

Mrs. Mifsud: There are people who even wonder if we are French. They don't know if
we are Arabs, if we are Jews

Mr. Mifsud: They wonder about us!

Mrs. Mifsud: Some haven't learned anything at all! I lived in Paris in 1950, and I had a
concierge who asked me one day, "Do you eat pork? Do you wear a veil?
Do you go to church?!"...
As Francine listened to the family continue with their stories about the amazing ignorance of the French regarding the pieds-noirs, she first considered the media’s role in disseminating anti-pied-noir sentiment, interjecting, “I remember, I was a little girl, and they made us believe that the pieds-noirs were massacring the Arabs. I saw that, I lived through that. I didn’t understand very well, I was only 8 or 9 years old, but we watched the TV screen, and they told us, “The pieds-noirs are really savages.” As the conversation proceeded, she finally blurted out: “But the pied-noir was seen as a completely different breed, according to the French. I mean, according to the French of France.”

This statement, in contrasting the pieds-noirs and the French, already carried an implicit insult. Francine began talking about the pieds-noirs and the French as if they were two distinct groups, and quickly corrected herself. Her identification of the pied-noir as not just from a different culture, but representing an entirely different breed (or race), seems consonant with the initial intention behind the Metropolitan term for these people, a term that still carries racist undertones for some Metropolitans today.

Because of the pervasive anti-pied-noir sentiment in France, many pieds-noirs told me that they did not tell their new colleagues or neighbors right away where they were from. When Martine Buttigieg told a colleague at the school where she taught that she was born in Algeria, the colleague was shocked, and exclaimed, “But you aren’t black!” And this was an educated woman, Martine explained, somebody working in the national school system.

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194 “Mais le pied-noir, c’etait une race a part pour le Francais. Enfin pour le Francais de
For some, anti-"pied-noir" discrimination had a much earlier origin. Families with means sometimes traveled to France for vacations. Some described to me a similar miscomprehension they encountered during these early trips. One such family, the Flournoy, quite proud of their "pure" French heritage, recounted several stories of discrimination they experienced in the 1930s. Mr. Flournoy's uncle was sent to France for his military service and met a woman there he wanted to marry. Her parents refused to permit it, however, because they would not believe that he was not really an "Arab." They finally accepted years later. But following the wedding, the couple had tremendous difficulty finding an apartment, for every time the husband was asked where he was born, he answered, "In Algeria," and the response was inevitably, "Well, then, you aren't French!" Finally, fed up with this treatment, he began to tell potential landlords that he was born in Marseille.

Mrs. Flournoy visited this family in the 1930s. She brought gifts from Tunisia, where she was then living, items she had purchased at the souks, including a vase. One day she picked some flowers and put them in the vase while her friend was out shopping. The next day, she noticed that the vase was gone, and found it hidden in the kitchen cupboards. She figured her friend had put it there without thinking while cleaning, so she took the vase out and put it back on top of the radio in the center of the room. Later that day the vase was again hidden. This went on for a few days, and she began to become intrigued. Mrs. Flournoy continued with her story:

France, je dis bien."
So, one day Germaine said, ‘No, Henriette, don’t keep taking out the vase... Because, when we leave, I am sure that everyone is looking in the windows.’ And then she showed me. We went up to the attic, and there was a huge trunk, and inside was linen from Algeria, bibs, slippers, things like that. She said to me, ‘Look,’ and she took them out. They were all new. Completely new. She said, ‘I never put them on the kids.’ So, the whole family had been sending presents, and to be original, we didn’t send French things, we sent Arab baby clothes, things like that. She said to me, ‘Look. I have never dressed the kids like that... Everyone was already saying that Marcel (her son) was an Arab—just think if I had dressed him like that!

During her stays there, neighborhood woman dropped by regularly to borrow coffee or sugar, or on some other pretext:

Whenever we were there, every day a neighbor stopped by, ‘Oh, Mrs. Vogel, I don’t have any more coffee—can you lend me some, I will go buy some and return it.’ Another time, it was another woman, for sugar, you see? And one day, Germaine said, out of the blue, ‘Henriette, they never visit me, never! This is just to get a look at you, to see if you aren’t an Arab, to see if you aren’t black!’

**Memory Domain Summarized**

The pied-noir history of difficult encounters with Metropolitan French stems in most cases from after the 1960s and the massive pied-noir migration to France. However, in some instances, the narratives derived from much earlier experiences, and reveal a deep and pervasive French mistrust of the real “Frenchness” of these colonists. Sometimes this mistrust was articulated in such a way as to reveal a racialized basis, as in the Metropolitan invention of “pied-noir,” a term with possibly racist undertones. On other instances, the pieds-noirs are described as culturally different. Claims of a pied-noir cultural difference were sometimes still clearly linked to French stereotypes about North Africans and thus not far removed from French anti-Arab attitudes. At other times, the animosity was
described in more politico-cultural terms, and anti-pied-noir animosities were founded
more on their purported association with colonialism, racism, or right-wing political
positions.

Regardless of the underlying reasons for Metropolitan anti-pied-noir animosity,
many pieds-noirs are still deeply wounded by this attitude. Negative encounters with
Metropolitans left many pieds-noirs feeling frustrated or dissatisfied with their new home,
and unable to truly “integrate.” They were left in limbo, feeling disassociated from the
other members of their imagined national community, and in response, some turned to
each other for emotional, material and moral support and/or found the tug of nostalgia
difficult to resist. This pied-noir nostalgic turn, therefore, cannot be viewed as stemming
only from some strange quirk in their culture, or solely from their failure to move forward,
as is sometimes suggested, but reflects as well the difficulties they continue to experience
in France, and their associated yearning to be elsewhere.

Pied-noir Responses to Nostalgia and Rejection

In response to their loss of Algeria and a need for a greater sense of rootedness,
some dedicated themselves to learning more about France or carry out genealogical
research to determine where in France their ancestors originally lived. For some, these
villages or regions of France play an increasing role in their self-identity. The ancestors of
Mrs. Buttigieg, the school-teacher from Algeria discussed above, for example, had left for
Algeria from Alsace at the end of the Franco-Prussian war. She has conducted
considerable research about her Alsatian family history and has visited the area several times. When I left France she and her husband were planning to spend the next summer there to conduct additional research.

The Dumonts, another family of French origins, had never been to France until their repatriation. Since his retirement from Crédit Lyonnais, M. Dumont has become an avid photographer, and I spent much of the time in their tiny apartment in a large high-rise building near the highway to Marseille admiring his impressive collection of photographs. During my first visit, he proudly showed me one of his multiple albums covering the various regions of France. "I discovered France as an adult!" he proudly told me, and proceeded to instruct me, too, on the wonders of the diverse landscapes, cheeses, housing designs, and flora of the regions of France.

One day he brought out an earlier family album that included pictures taken in Algeria. One photo was a posed family portrait of his wife in her 40s with a girl about 10 and a small boy of 4. Mrs. Dumont was wearing thin cigarette slacks, sandals, and had short cropped blond hair. They were posed in front of a remarkably ornate Mosque, sitting on the steps. It struck me how casual the pose was, as if there was no conscious statement being made about the mosque; it was simply the nicest building in town to serve as a backdrop for the photo, it seemed.

The second photo, again of Mrs. Dumont, showed her on a ferry waving off to some mountains in the distance. "That is my wife saying good-bye to Algeria," he told me, matter-of-factly. While his voice betrayed no special emotion, the power of the
photograph was stunning. Mr. Dumont's fascination with France seemed all the more touching, and all the more obvious of a way to help move forward in his attempt to make France his new home. Even Mr. Dumont, who claimed early family connections to different regions of France, and who had made a conscious effort to immerse himself in his new home, had strong feelings about Algeria. I asked one day if he would ever go back to visit, and he responded, "No, never. Never, never, never, never, never. Never. I will never go back, never ever." This litany was powerful, and laden with an underlying rigid determination. I understood better his France "fetish." France (in his case, the nation in the abstract and not the French people), has provided a much needed frame of reference to replace his beloved Algeria.

**Pieds-noirs Associations and Returning to “La-bas”**

Pieds-noirs associations are another response to the drifting, rootlessness many pieds-noirs feel, and association functions are for some a means of returning, at least in spirit, to Algeria, or as they say, simply, “la-bas” (over there). During association meetings, parties, and picnics, people often talked about the beaches back home, the mountains, a special plant or type of tree. “It was a paradise,” was the litany I heard again and again, Algeria was a “région paradisiaque.” During the dinner-dances (soirées dansantes), the music played was that of the 1940s and 1950s. The dancing often started with the peal of a trumpet, at which point everyone stopped their conversations and shouted in unison, “Oh lé!”—at that point, many jumped out of their seats onto the dance
floor. “You should have seen us là-bas,” one man told me coming off the dance floor with his wife, “any excuse for a party! We were always singing back there!”

Individuals returned to Algeria not only mentally during association events. Events held by the association of Bônois (people from the former town of Bône, now called Annaba) were so large that they were usually held at rented municipal buildings in the outskirts of Aix. In order to guide the hundreds of pieds-noirs trying to find the hall, signs were regularly posted along the way, stating simply “Bône,” with an arrow. In Algeria, the city “Bône” no longer exists; it is now called Annaba. However, it was not to Annaba that the elderly pieds-noirs were returning to during these reunions, but to a fantasy city they have constructed in their imaginations, their nostalgia-imbued version of colonial Bône.

The demarcation of space for the “Souk-Ahrasian” reunion was even more pronounced: a sign was even posted along the national highway indicating the proper exit to take, stating simply, “Souk-Ahras ->.” As we followed the directions, impromptu road signs were posted as if we were driving in Algeria: “Souk-Ahras, 10 km,” “Souk-Ahras, 5 km” and finally, in front of the rented vacation complex where the reunion was held, a sign announced, “Souk-Ahras, 0 km!!” For the duration of their reunions and parties, pieds-noirs create in this way a new Bône, or Guelma, or Souk-Ahras, and hold their reunions in these symbolic spaces where they can return together to colonial Algeria.

At the annual meeting of the former residents of Souk-Ahras, the atmosphere throughout the weekend was lively and boisterous. Much of the time was spent at long
meals talking with friends. There was clearly no need to go anywhere to sight-see, for
they were already all happily back in Algeria, talking about the “good old times there.” At
my table, former playmates, now in their seventies, were doubled over with laughter
during much of our meals together talking about their childhood antics: the time when
Colette, the association president, was put in a baby-buggy by the slightly older Jean-
Claude, who proceeded to push her down a steep hill, resulting in some calamity and
Colette’s mother chasing Jean-Claude around the village with a hatchet. Then there was
the time during the dreaded catechism class at church with the very strict village priest,
when Jean-Claude and his buddy, Marc, the one with the wooden leg from the knee down,
were sneaking around upstairs trying to find pigeon eggs in the bell tower, when somehow
Marc’s wooden leg became unhinged and came crashing down through the rafters into the
middle of the Sunday school class like a message from God, to the hilarious amusement of
the children gathered below.

The Missing Neighbors

Pieds-noirs reunions, parties, and associations tend to attract only certain segments
of the former population of Algeria, the Christian colonists. There was considerable anti-
Judaism in colonial Algeria, and the strict social segregation that occurred between
Christian and Jewish communities there has been maintained and reproduced to a certain
extent in France. I became painfully aware of the ramifications of this life-long
segregation, when, during the reunion of the Souk-Ahrasians, a “stranger” and his wife
entered the room. The 200 attendees were eating dinner as the couple made their way to
the association president. The conversation in the room noticeably faltered as people
seated at the various tables tried to determine who the visitor was. This was
understandable--pieds-noirs often met each other for the first time in 35 years at these
reunions, and the changes brought about by the passage of time had often rendered even
the closest of childhood friends unrecognizable. The former town elementary school
teacher, seated at our table, finally got up to meet the gentleman, greeting him warmly.
After a good five minutes conversation, she came back to finish her dinner. “It’s Roland
Lévy,” she announced. This news passed down the table, “Lévy, oh, c’est un Juif” (it’s a
Jew). “Do you know him?” “Nah...” Nobody seemed to know this man, or if they had,
did not act as if they did or as if they cared. Much of the boisterous joking had ceased,
and Lévy’s presence seemed to put a damper on the group in general. He and his wife
seemed eager to meet others, and stayed in the center of the room talking to the four or
five individuals who had come forward. But the remaining hundreds just kept eating and
watching. Finally, after what seemed to me to be 25 excruciating minutes, Mr. Lévy went
out into the adjacent hallway. When I went out, ostensibly to use the restroom, I found
him crouched down in front of some old photos of school classes, laughing to himself. I
introduced myself, and he was quite pleasant, telling me how nice it was to meet some of
the “old-timers” from his home town. He and his wife left soon after that.

Lévy was not warmly welcomed, and his presence seemed to cause considerable
discomfort. Before he arrived, the conversation about the good old days had been
consistently positive, and recounted glowing terms. People made a point of telling me especially of the comraderie and companionship between individuals of all backgrounds and religions. However, judging from the nearly unanimous reaction to his arrival, it seemed clear that relations between Christians and Jews in at least some parts of Algeria had been strained at best. Lévy's presence, then, placed the golden nostalgic vision of the colonial past in question. Unable to break their old habits, or defy the will of the group, people remained in their seats, and in doing so, demonstrated the great gaps between the nostalgic vision of the past they were indulging in during the reunion, and their deeper memories of how they actually lived and should continue to treat others.

While Jews were not automatically or officially excluded from pieds-noirs functions, I met no individuals of openly Jewish origins in the pieds-noirs functions I attended in Aix. The one individual of Protestant faith pointed out his minority status as the lone Protestant on several occasions. Others excluded from these functions included Algerians, although I wondered on many occasions what individuals from Algeria would think about the signs posted along the highway, and wondered if anyone ever ventured into one of the events organized by the pied-noir associations. Communists and other leftists were also rare participants in pieds-noirs events. Thus, the reunions reuniting former friends and neighbors from the same village presented a partial and distorted version of that village. A new "Souk-Ahras" or Guelma was created temporarily in these symbolic spaces, one that better matched the nostalgia-shaped memories of this past time and place that these reunions celebrated and perpetuated.
The Double Marginalization of the Maltese-origin Pieds-noirs

Mrs. Flournoy, who visited France in the 1930s, is of French ancestry and quite proud of it. Nevertheless, her "Frenchness" has been questioned much of her life because she was born in Algeria, as were her parents. It is not only her French culture that was called into question, or her French nationality, but on a much more basic level, her belonging to the French "race," something her neighbors felt they could verify only by seeing her in the windows, by noting her appearance. The pieds-noirs of non-French origin, like those of Maltese descent, do not have the internal certainty, like Mrs. Flournoy, of belonging to France, of having French ancestry, and are thus doubly marginalized. Like Mrs. Flournoy and other pieds-noirs, their Frenchness is questioned by Metropolitan French due to their North African birthplace, and secondly, by other pieds-noirs, due to their non-French ancestry.

Origins of the Maltese Association Movement

The Franco-Maltese associations provide a means for individuals doubly marginalized in this way to find others in a similar predicament, and to find common strength in their own unique identity. This movement began spontaneously. Pieds-noirs of Maltese origin who were dissatisfied with their lives in France began to consider, independently, to visit Malta. Not only were many of these early journeys their first visits to Malta; often the individuals' parents had never been there as well.
These first voyages to Malta were described to me in intricate detail, and for some
represented an important turning point in their lives. The narrative of M. Grech was
particularly vivid. He first outlined his complete disinterest in Malta when living in
Algiers: "Malta was Malta--well, we were preoccupied with other things." His story
outlining his discovery of his Maltese heritage began with the loss of Algeria:

Et c’est avec le choc de 1962, quand on a dû quitter notre terre natale, qui était
notre patrie, mais notre patrie dans le cadre français, qu’on a été chassés,...on
s’est trouvés sans racines. D’autant plus que y’a eu une véritable...sorte de
guerre civile entre les Français d’Algérie et la plupart des Français de
métropole...Huh?...Le maire de Marseille avait dit de nous: ‘Qu’on les pende,
qu’on les fusille et qu’on les jette à la mer.” Gaston Defferre. Hein! Bon. Et on
était rejetés...fallait montrer son identité, on était suspects...Et on s’est retrouvés
vraiment, on s’est retrouvés coupés complètement de notre pays, de nos
racines...Moi, je trouve que c’est ça, qui, tout personnellement,
instinctivement...Et je me suis interrogé. Parce que j’ai dit, bon je suis Français,
mais je suis pas d’ici... Et que je sois à Marseille, que je sois à Paris,...ce sera
jamais chez moi...Tiens, j’ai dit: “Ben, j’vais essayer de connaître Malte.”
Tape 25. 195

195 "It’s with the shock of 1962, when we had to leave our birth place, our fatherland, but
our fatherland in the French context, that we were chased...and we found ourselves
without roots. This was even more so because there was a real...kind of civil war between
the French from Algérie and the French of the Metropole. Huh? The mayor of Marseille
said about us: ‘We should hang them, shoot them, and throw them into the sea.’ Gaston
Defferre. See? So, we were rejected, we had to show our identity papers, we were
(treated like) suspects. And we found ourselves really...completely cut from our country,
our roots. Me, I think its this, that, personally, instinctively...and I questioned myself.
Because I said to myself, sure, I’m French, but I’m not from here. Whether I’m in
Marseille, in Paris...it will never be my home. So, I said, I’m going to try to get to know
Malta.”
Grech left for Malta only four years after leaving Algeria, in 1966. At this time, little or no tourism was developed there, and getting to Malta was an adventure in itself.

He left with a cousin, and after days of travel, landed in Malta:

Donc, il s’est passé un...anecdote...qui m’a marqué. Donc, on descend du bateau. On descend du bateau, et j’avais mon passeport français. Et il y avait un douanier qui était en bas, un vieux douanier, et alors que nous en France en 62...et le vieux douanier quand on lui montre nos passeports, il regarde: ‘Grech! Maltesis!’ et je l’aurais embrassé. J’ai vu en cet homme l’image de mon grand-père. J’ai dit: “Enfin, je suis accueilli.” “Enfin, je suis reconnu. Enfin je suis pas dans un, dans un pays étranger dont on nous chassait, ou on ne peut pas nous accueillir.” Ça a été une, une, une étincelle. ‘Grech, Maltesi!’ Là, je le garde dans mon coeur: ‘Grech, Maltesi!’ Donc là après j’ai dit: ‘Je vais...je vais...je...’ et j’ai recherché ma famille”196 (Tape 25).

Mr. Grech became involved in one of the earliest associations of Franco-Maltese pieds-noirs, which was formed in Paris in the late 1970s. He was secretary, then president for many years, and finally editor of a quarterly publication of the association. Following a schism between association members, and a divorce which led him to move out of the Paris region, he stopped participating in that particular association, but occasionally gave lectures at the other regional Franco-Maltese associations.

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196 “So, what happened was a...story that marked me. So, we get off the boat. We get off the boat, and I have my French passport. And there was a customs agent down below, an old customs agent, while in France, in 62...and the old customs agent, when we show him our passports, he looks: ‘Grech! Maltesi!’ and I would have kissed him. I saw in this man my grandfather. I said, ‘Finally, I am welcomed. Finally, I am recognized/accepted. Finally, I am not in a foreign country where they chase us, where they cannot accept us. This was an, an, an...awakening. ‘Grech, Maltesi!’ That, I will keep close to my heart. ‘Grech, Maltesi!’ So, there, afterwards, I said, I am going to...and I began to research my family history.”
Franco-Maltese Associations and Trips to Malta

The Franco-Maltese associations are the only pieds-noirs associations I encountered based around European immigrant origins. These had been organized since the 1970s in several French cities: first in Paris, and then regional branches were formed in Lyons, Marseille, Toulouse, and Aix-en-Provence. How does the ethnic basis of these associations influence the kinds of activities they engage in, their associative practice? The calendar of these Franco-Maltese associations resembles that of many other pied-noir organizations: most hold an annual meeting during the afternoon “Galette des Rois” cake-party held every year in late January or early February, an outing during Ascension Day in May, and an early summer lamb roast or mechoui. What most distinguishes the Franco-Maltese from the other pieds-noirs associations is their annual trip to Malta. Most associations organize a week-long voyage in spring or fall for their members.

When I attended the annual trip to Malta with 20 members or friends of the Aixois Franco-Maltese association in September 1995, I was particularly curious to learn what it was about Malta that attracted these elderly French pieds-noirs. I had anticipated at the start of my project that there might be a continuous line of social memory linking these individuals back to specific regions or parishes in Malta, and thought they might make the journeys to visit their former family parish church or village. As I have noted in chapter 6, however, I found through the course of my fieldwork that there was little to no memory of Malta remaining among the pieds-noirs I interviewed. They were not only unclear which town they were from, but most did not know if their ancestors had come to Algeria from
the island of Gozo or Malta. They did not know what kinds of occupations their ancestors
had had in Malta, and recounted no stories to me of their ancestors’ lives there. Malta,
from their family history perspective, was empty of meaning.

Our visit to Malta was therefore more that of a group of tourists than of people
returning to their homeland. We visited the main tourist attractions: the impressive
fortifications of the Knights of Malta in Valletta, the popular neighborhoods of the nearby
Three Cities, the Neolithic ruins that dotted the southern part of the island and Gozo, the
more impressive churches on both islands, a created-for-tourism artist colony housed in
former barracks of the British Royal Air Force, and the painted boats of the harbor towns.

But the principal attraction, the features of Malta most commented on by the
elderly travelers, were of the natural world: the landscape, plants, and sea. Mr. Dumont,
who had spent his youth in Morocco, was one of the passengers of my car throughout
much of the week-long vacation. He was continually amused by the street signs,
announcing to nobody in particular that Maltese was actually really 90 percent Arabic.
Whenever we passed the old crusader fortresses, he would announce, “Ah, here’s another
Ksar!” (the name for Berber fortress-towns in Morocco), annoying his wife to no end. On
a rough back road through a rare piece of rural Malta on our way to see the film set of
“Popeye village,” Dumont suddenly asked me to stop the car. Along the way, he had been
repeating to himself, “on dirait Maroc...Oh, on dirait Maroc” (one would say Morocco).
He leaped out the car with his camera to take photos, and finally returned, announcing to
his wife that he would show these pictures to his friends and tell them he had just been to North Africa.

The similarity between the plants of Malta and those of North Africa was commented on regularly. We spent a good hour one day in the blazing sun inspecting some greenery growing up the side of an old crusader wall several yards away from us. One of the pieds-noirs thought it might be a caper plant. A pied-noir in our group who had grown up in Tunisia insisted that capers only grow as bushes; the “Algerians” were sure that they could be climbing plants as well. The discussion became heated until finally the association secretary consulted the amused parking attendant sitting nearby, and, to the satisfaction of the Algerians, determined that these were, in fact, caper plants.

The prickly pear cactus, or, for the pieds-noirs, the *figuiers de Barbarie* (North African or Barbary figs) was the plant that best symbolized North Africa and their past lives there for these elderly pieds-noirs. A woman in her eighties, also in my car, kept pointing out to abundant groves of these hardy cacti. “Look, look, whole fields of Barbary figs!” “Look, there’s some more!” “Wow, this is really the area of the Barbary figs!,” and we all looked over to where she was pointing to find them growing wild, like weeds. From time to time, the passengers in my car would ask me to slow down when a particular grove we were passing was particularly well-kept, or had abundant or especially ripe fruit.

Conversations led from comments on the plants, the fish served in the restaurants, and other natural features, to reflections on the similarities with North African flora and
Conversations led from comments on the plants, the fish served in the restaurants, and other natural features, to reflections on the similarities with North African flora and fauna, and then to North Africa in general. One day while eating at a fish restaurant, I overheard Carmel Schembri and Mr. and Mrs. Attard talking about the coastline. “It was a paradise, a real paradise, we had everything there!” They retraced the Mediterranean shoreline, describing in detail every corner from Schembri’s beloved western Tunisia to Attard’s Philippeville in Algeria. “Did you ever go fishing over in X and Y cove?....”

The indulgence in North African nostalgia culminated on the last day of the trip. We were waiting for the ferry to take us back from Gozo to Malta, and were parked on a hill looking out over the bay so we could watch the ferry coming in. It was cold and damp, and the sun was setting. But right next to the parked vans along the side of the road was one of the more abundant groves of Barbary figs. It was just too much. Giggling like little kids, the folks in the car ahead of me began making a commotion, taking photos of each other, and rummaging through their bags. It was time for a Barbary fig orgy! The secretary of the organization had come prepared with a special pair of thick leather gloves and began picking off dozens of fruits. Men got out their pocket knives, and began cutting away the spines. People began gorging themselves on the delicious ripe fruits, taking photos of their friends with the red juices dripping down their mouths. One usually rather tense, brittle woman, began talking to me with enthusiasm. “Oh, this is just like my youth!” she kept exclaiming. “You know, it has been exactly 33 years since I’ve eaten any of these,” she told me, “How they remind me of the good old days!”
Toward a Conclusion

For the pieds-noirs travelers of Maltese-origin who attended the trip to Malta that year, the trip served less as a pilgrimage to the ancestral homeland than a pilgrimage to the travelers’ “real” homeland, their *pays*, Algeria (or in some cases, Tunisia). These individuals had little in common: they had grown up in different parts of North Africa, in cities and rural areas, from both poor and quite wealthy families. They now lived in different parts of France. But they engaged in a common nostalgic return to a former place and time during their voyage to Malta. Some were also united by their common sense of discrimination due to their Maltese heritage, a discrimination they felt from Metropolitan French as well as other pieds-noirs, and which is echoed in some of their memories about the past. However, as I was driving these elderly individuals around crusader castles, famous churches, and important monuments, they were talking almost exclusively about life *là-bas*, back in North Africa. While Malta is a place they traveled to where they felt they finally belonged, on a deeper level, they traveled there not so much for Malta itself, but to be able to travel back home to a certain version of Algeria, to travel to an Algeria without anti-Maltese discrimination or other conflicts, to an Algeria that in many ways has never existed.
CHAPTER 9: ARCHIVAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES COMPARED:
DOMAINS IN FRANCO-MALTESE SOCIAL MEMORY

Selectivity in Memory

From the perspective of an individual, the "past" is an infinite and constantly changing expanse, comprised of memories and discourse about life-experience, and of stories told by others about an earlier point in time. One could spend a lifetime talking or thinking about just a few months of time. In the process, one's relationship to and memories of the "events" comprising these months would shift. In other words, our memories are not unchanging discrete entities that pile up like individual grains of sand; considerable selection, sorting, and re-shaping occurs constantly. Furthermore, memories are not simply stored chronologically, as documents are stored in a file cabinet, but are linked through whole different processes in which the symbolic capacity of the brain, together with the emotional bases of memory, allow one to quickly make connections between memories unrelated by topic or chronology.

For this reason, life histories are problematic. It is impossible to summarize a life without selecting out much of the nearly infinite number of "events" or memories about the past that we are capable of recounting. Thus, the way an individual explains his or her life will vary each time as only certain "events" are considered at any given moment to be worth telling, and the selection of these events will be guided by feelings and perspectives of the moment. While it can be useful for historians to talk to people who have lived through a specific historical process or moment to learn how these processes
have been experienced and lived, collecting “life stories” may be more useful for analyzing the present orientation of the individual to the past than for developing a history of the individual’s life.

Social memory, or the ways a group of people talk about the past, involves an even greater degree of selectivity as people talking with others are constrained by many factors. People rarely have identical shared experiences, and thus much of what we remember cannot be discussed without straining the conventions of “reportability,” for it is usually unacceptable to talk at length about something to which others present have no understanding or relationship. Certain whole topics may be off-limits in a group setting for other reasons: politics, disinterest and avoidance of inter-personal conflict are some of the principle sources of collective silencing. Therefore, in a study of social memory, selectivity is just as important, if not more so, as it is in individual memory.

In order to determine which memories have been selected, it is necessary to have another perspective on the same past. It is for this reason that I have conducted considerable archival research in conjunction with ethnographic fieldwork and why I provide substantial historical background in the first chapters here. The archival record allows us to develop an array of potential topics that the Maltese-origin pieds-noirs could remember and talk about. We can then compare this array of potential topics with those actually addressed in conversation. From this comparison, we can determine which topics or events have been highlighted in the social memory, as well as those which may have been silenced or withheld from discussions about the past.
Archival Indications of Potential Topics

A complete list of potential topics concerning the past that Maltese-origin pied-noirs might discuss would be infinite, but archival and historical research revealed several key themes I felt should be significant, as outlined in chapters 2 to 4. I began this project because I found the existence of the Franco-Maltese association noted in Donato’s book (1985) puzzling. The Maltese, among other Europeans, had been in Algeria for 150 years, and like the other ethnicities and nationalities there, are assumed by historians to have completely assimilated first into the French colonist culture in Algeria, and subsequently into French society in France. Why then have those of Maltese origin maintained their own distinctiveness? The special place of the Maltese in the colony suggests a potential explanation, and through my historical research, I found substantial evidence of not only Maltese liminality, but also considerable anti-Maltese discrimination in the first decades of colonialism. Unfortunately, because archival sources are not yet available for the Maltese of Constantine after the turn of the century, it is difficult to determine just how long this discrimination lasted, but anti-Maltese jokes told publicly during collective pied-noir functions suggests that this discrimination persisted in Algeria through the 1960s. I believed that the existence of the Maltese associations in France today might be associated with a collective memory of this discrimination, a related turning of the group onto itself, and thus the perpetuation of a distinct identity.

The fact that the Franco-Maltese associations in France today make regular trips to Malta suggested that Malta too might be an important subject in the Maltese social memory. The Maltese in Malta are known for their dedication to their Catholic faith, and
the first generations in Algeria were often given the first names of the patron saints of their hometown parish. I predicted that these trips to Malta might involve "pilgrimages" to the former parish churches.

Other topics we could predict to have significance to the Maltese-origin pieds-noirs include the long French-Algerian war, which spanned the first decade of their adult lives, their relationships with the local Algerians, their experiences in World War II, and memories of their relatives.

Selectivity in Maltese Social Memory

How do the domains I identified in Maltese social memory contrast with the topics I found of interest through archival research? The first important finding was the absolute silence regarding Malta. Very few individuals knew where in Malta they were from, and many told me that their family members had never talked about their lives there. Despite the fact that Malta was not very far and the informants' parents or grandparents sometimes returned for funerals or other important events, they talked very little about these trips when they returned to Algeria. Malta is not a topic that emerges in discussions about the past. This is a domain that previous generations silenced so effectively that the subject has disappeared from the social memory altogether.

Memories of discrimination emerged, but the informants had a very ambiguous relationship with this subject. Stories about discrimination emerged in a compound domain comprised of memories of family migration histories, stories of ancestors, stories

197 These domains are presented schematically in Illustration 7, page 198.
of upward mobility, and genealogical data, and the way this domain was manifested in
conversation was very much determined by audience. People did not talk about ancestors
in Algeria when the second or third generation was in the room, or when French from
France, or the “pure” French of Algeria were present. When I met informants of Maltese
origin alone or with their spouses, they first approached these topics in a patterned way as
described in more detail in chapter 7. Most presented genealogical information in a
conventionalized format. Stories about ancestors followed, but in a fairly random and
certainly not chronological order. Some inhabited this compound domain without
referring directly to discrimination, indicating that this was a taboo or perhaps
uninteresting subject for them. In the process, however, “clues” often emerged that
indicated for most its lasting effects.

This compound family history domain was often collapsed or summarized by
reference to the melting pot metaphor. The ambivalence of this metaphor as employed in
the United States (see Green 1991) rarely emerged here, and instead, the metaphor was
related to what I have termed the “official” French representation of assimilation—the
supposedly complete and early assimilation to French culture of the various ethnic and
national groupings within the European population of Algeria. However, this metaphor,
as the over-arching symbolic representation of the memories within this complex domain,
presents an overt ideology that is sometimes in direct contradiction with the details it is
purportedly summarizing. Some individuals noticed this contradiction, but most did not.

When a small number of pieds-noirs who knew each other well were present,
conversations that started within this family history complex sometimes traveled to a
private and bittersweet domain of nostalgia. Nostalgia about Algeria, “nostalgie,” is so much a part of the pied-noir experience and culture that it is openly acknowledged and discussed. It is not only an emotion that most are familiar with, but for some it is viewed as a kind of self-imprisonment or trap, a means of dissociating oneself from one’s present life, and thus a domain from which one might never return. Some people view nostalgia as not unlike a drug, then, and self-consciously attempt to guard themselves against over-indulging. Unlike the war, which is a domain that is walled-off because of the horrors that emerge, nostalgie is protected because it is both beautiful and painful.

The French-Algerian war is a highly defended, walled-off domain. The “fortifications” around these memories are so consistently developed that at first I almost did not notice when people were avoiding or skipping over the war. These “fortifications” involve not only self-surveillance, however. Individuals so quickly and successfully “rescued” others who began to stray into this forbidden territory that it became apparent that group surveillance was not only constant, but masterful. This suggested not only the expenditure of considerable emotional effort, but also indicated that this surveillance has been perfected, and thus practiced, for years.

The Maltese, like other pieds-noirs, spend considerable amounts of time talking about their first impressions of France and their reception by the French. This domain, involving mainly memories from the 1960s through the present, was entered through two very different mental pathways. In the first instance, people who had recently had a negative experience with a Metropolitan often recounted the story to others. The underlying emotions motivating the individual to tell his or her story were quite familiar
to most other pieds-noirs, and a string of memories connected by the same underlying emotional thread often followed. While these memories might stem from recent experiences, others might have occurred in the 1960s. The underlying theme was the same, however: a feeling of being terribly misunderstood, the pain of rejection, and the moral outrage at having sacrificed so much for the Metropolitans only to be treated so dismissively.

Memories of their initial reception in France were often associated with the protected nostalgic memories of Algeria. When lost in nostalgic reminiscences, individuals sometimes shifted the subject of conversation as if to put an end to that particular train of thought or emotion by referring to the very unwelcoming reception they had received by the French. The linkage between these two very different domains is interesting, and suggests that individuals viewed their indulgence in nostalgia as representing not so much a failure on their part, but an inevitable response to their having been so systematically rejected by the French. Because they are prevented from moving forward in their lives, they must continually return to Algeria in their minds.

If the Maltese-origin French have so little connection to Malta, why then do they make regular visits there? I believe that the answer to this puzzle is associated with their negative experiences in France and their ever-present longing for Algeria. Throughout the entire week I spent in Malta with the elderly informants, they talked about North Africa. The climate and vegetation in Malta is fairly similar to that of Algeria. Many of the same crops are grown there, and the ever-presence of the Mediterranean, the air, the prickly pear cactus (*figuiers de Barbarie*), and the Arabic-like language were
continuously remarked upon by the pieds-noirs as reminding them of "home." Over dinner, the conversation quickly shifted from a discussion about the food being served, for instance, to the similar but much wider range of fruit/fish/pastries, and so forth, in Algeria, and onto the best fishing spots, and outings they used to take with their families to the beach. The existence of the Franco-Maltese associations may indicate the members' perception of a faint but continued ostracism on the part of the other pieds-noirs and the Metropolitan French, and thus may be linked to a common memory of discrimination. Malta itself, however, is completely disconnected from any kind of family or "primordial" ethnic memory, and instead provides a way to return to Algeria. Trips to Malta are thus not pilgrimages back to the ancestral homeland, but represent pilgrimages of nostalgia.
CONCLUSION: THE COLONIAL IN POSTCOLONIAL EUROPE

Competing Representations of Colonial Algeria

Representations of the past are viewed in current anthropological research as social constructions of central importance to the symbolic constitution of social, ethnic, or national groups (Alonso 1988; 1992; Boyarin 1994; Brow 1990; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Because nations, communities, and other social units are not homogenous, alternative identities develop in conjunction with alternative versions of the past. Divergent pasts can be threatening to those in power, and the conflict between dominant and subordinate pasts, as representative of the struggle between competing social groups, is a topic of considerable interest today.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to elucidate several competing representations of colonial Algeria. The "official" historiography, as exemplified by the classic French histories (Ageron 1968, 1979; Julien 1964) presents one version of the past which, while acknowledging the key role played by the settlers throughout the colony's history, does not analyze this role in detail. These works were written following decolonization. Perhaps the settlers' pasts were not a primary focus for this reason: the historians concerned may have been all too ready to relegate these histories to a former time, not unlike the progressive social scientists discussed in Stoler and Cooper (1997:15).

Treated even more cursorily are the histories of the non-French subset, the primarily poor, subaltern colonists who comprised over half of the settler population.
The experiences of these people have been completely silenced until only recently. This silencing may have originated early. Dominant participants in the colonial enterprise may have shared an unstated goal of consolidating and homogenizing colonist histories to symbolically unite these factions and thus better buttress themselves against the numerically dominant Algerians.

The development of an alternate history of the non-French has begun. In France, this has commenced through the writings of pieds-noirs themselves, who, as historians, have chosen subjects close to their own families' experiences and have begun to fill in some of the gaps in French historiography on colonial Algeria (Crespo 1994, Crespo and Jordi 1991, Donato 1985, Jordi 1986). But these works, largely published by pieds-noirs presses, have yet to enter into the main stream of French historiography on colonial Algeria. More research is needed, particularly on the problem of how diversity among Algeria's settlers has shaped the trajectory of colonial Algerian history. The special stresses placed on colonists of lesser stature, on "subaltern" colonists, is still largely overlooked, even though herein may lie the key to understanding some of the more violent episodes of the colonial past. The late nineteenth century mass naturalizations of indigenous Jews and later of non-French of European origin led to intense debates in the colony and in France about French identity. Was French citizenship to be available to anyone? If the Arabic-speaking Maltese could gain citizenship in this way, would the masses of fellow Arabic-speaking Muslims be next? If religion instead was to be the pivotal criteria determining access to this privileged status, why should indigenous Jews be accepted? These debates were heated in the late nineteenth century, and subaltern
colonists reacted violently at times. While the severe anti-Jewish riots of the late nineteenth century had complex roots, preliminary research has shown that for the non-French and naturalized colonists, participation was in part motivated by an effort to demonstrate that they were more “French” than the French, as several leading anti-Jewish propagandists in Algeria claimed (see Iancu 1980; Laloum and Allouche 1987:61; Schwartzfuchs 1980; Sivan 1980:169). Much more work is needed to better understand the evolution of anti-Judaism and other racisms in colonial Algeria; I believe that a good place to start is by considering the experiences and stresses placed on the subaltern colonist faction. This dissertation represents a first step toward research along these lines.

Silencing the Colonial Past

The silence among Maltese-origin pieds-noirs regarding the French-Algerian war was a finding I had not anticipated. At the outset of the project, I had anticipated hearing too much about this conflict and tried to stave off discussion of this period. Instead, I found that the war was rarely mentioned, not because it was insignificant, but rather because it was too powerful to contemplate, at least for now. Research among the wider pied-noir community suggests that this is not solely a “Maltese” phenomenon; in fact, it appears to occur on a national scale. The silencing of the war has been noted by oral historians working with former French conscripts (Pascaud 1986), and is the subject of Benjamin Stora’s masterpiece, La gangrène et l’oubli. La mémoire de la guerre d’Algérie (1992). What can we make of this silencing?
Some of the reticence to talk about the war is undoubtedly linked to traumas experienced during the eight long war years. Despite Fanon’s very early work outlining the “psychotic” disorders he observed among both the victims and administrators of torture during the war (1963), surprisingly little research has been conducted since on this subject. Jordi reports that the integration of pieds-noirs into metropolitan society has been accompanied sometimes by traumatic psychological disturbances, resulting in unusually large numbers of suicides, but points out that few serious studies have been conducted on this subject, and most of these have been the work of former rapatriés themselves (1993:185-188). But while he directly addresses the issue of pied-noir psychological disturbances, he too does not consider those specifically associated with the war, reflecting the absence of research on this subject in the psychological literature.

Even the *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Disorders* (1993) does not devote a section to this conflict. This standard reference for the field of traumatic stress studies is comprised of 84 chapters. The section on “War Trauma and Civil Violence” includes four chapters reviewing research on veterans of World War II. A subsection on post-World War II conflicts includes two chapters on the Vietnam War, one on Israeli veterans of the brief war in Lebanon, another on research with British veterans of the Falklands conflict, and two chapters summarizing work on the subjects of violence in Northern Ireland. No studies are presented on the French or Algerian veterans of the *Guerre d’Algérie*, despite the fact that this war lasted far longer than some of the other conflicts featured in the chapter-long reviews and involved far greater losses.

Furthermore, the proportion of French who served in this war was greater than even the
Vietnam war: 4.6 percent in contrast to 1.2 percent (Stora 1992:292-3). Why then has so little research been conducted on the war’s long-term effects on French veterans or civilians?

The changing contours of the silencing of this war on a national scale is the focus of Stora’s Le gangrène et l’oubli (1992). Stora points out that the war was silenced even when it was underway. The French government never issued a declaration of war; the logic at the time being that Algeria was France and such a declaration would be absurd and could symbolize a tacit acceptance of the idea of a “France-less” Algeria. While some war veterans have begun to publish eyewitness accounts, in part in reaction to the more generalized lack of interest, there are still no commemorative sites, and the key dates of the war are not fixed in national calendars, as are those of the world wars. This widespread “forgetting,” which has occurred for decades, is unhealthy, Stora argues. As a result, the war has not yet been admitted, and guilt has not yet been assumed for its darker secrets, like the practice of torture (1992:318).

I believe that the silencing of the French-Algerian war is related to a much greater silencing in France, however—that of an equally, if not darker past which has a much longer history: that of French imperialism in general. The denial of the colonial past in France is pervasive. The population in France I knew best, the pieds-noirs, were very attuned to and frustrated by the insignificant role played by this past in French consciousness. An alternative understanding of the importance of colonialism to French history expressed by the pieds-noirs I met was not simply the heroic version of that past that one might expect. While many individuals I met enjoyed outlining the hard work their ancestors engaged in
and the positive benefits for Algeria (the classic colonist trope), they were also well aware of the degree to which France benefited from these projects. “Look at all this,” one elderly man gestured to me as we drove through the center of Marseille. “The city was built on the profits of colonialism! The great buildings are monuments to the wealth sucked out of North Africa, monuments to the hard work of my dead grandparents, wealth brought back here by the state and by French capitalists! How can anyone pretend that this is not so?! This country was built on the profits brought back from the colonies!” Some pieds-noirs stressed that France today would be a very different place if it had not at one time colonized much of the world.

The silencing of French imperialism is also related, I believe, to the widespread anti-pieds-noirs attitudes I encountered in France described in chapter 8. The pieds-noirs are sometimes treated as if they alone were responsible for French colonialism in North Africa. Responsibility is thus shifted from the nation and onto this minority population. When some Metropolitans told me that they find the pied-noir “unwillingness to simply blend in” grating, I wondered if this was perhaps because, as a result, the pieds-noirs remain visible reminders of French imperialism, and on a less conscious level, of the wider and yet-unacknowledged national guilt for the whole long and shameful enterprise.

Writing this in the state of Arizona a few miles from the Tohono O’odham reservation and a few more from some of the bloodiest and most shameful episodes of my own nation’s colonial past, I cannot feel free of guilt myself. Again, in my encounters with the elderly pieds-noirs, I was regularly reminded of this. The parallels between “my” history and “theirs” were constantly remarked upon. They often referred to Algeria as the
“Wild West,” and to the history of Algeria as their “Western.” “The only difference,” one woman explained to me at dinner one day, “is that we didn’t exterminate our ‘Indians.’” Maybe that was our fatal flaw!?” That the histories of colonial Algeria and of the settling of the United States could be viewed as parallel was further highlighted for me by the recognition that many of the people I interviewed had ancestors who were in Algeria generations before my ancestors arrived to the United States. Similarities between these histories were brought home during fieldwork on one particular occasion. An elderly woman was showing me photographs from her cherished family album. Upon glancing at the first one, I froze: here was an image of a rural farming family at the turn of the century. The elderly man was white-haired, bearded, and wearing overalls; the woman had hair pulled back in a bun, several long cotton skirts, and a severe expression. They were standing in front of a wooden wagon with two small children. This photograph was strikingly similar to one of the earliest images from my Ohio/Kentucky farming ancestors. From that point on, I realized that I could no longer distance myself morally from the pieds-noirs, imagining that they were somehow the guilty colonists, and that my past was pure.

Colonialism and the Anthropology of Europe

The contemplation of colonialism can help us further “decolonize” anthropology (Harrison 1997), a project that involves researching dominance as well as subordination, and
which requires an honest recognition of our own position in global power relations. Such a project can greatly benefit from further collaboration between the anthropology of Europe and the anthropology of colonialism. Until recently, European involvement in colonial projects has received little attention in anthropology, suggesting that Europeans are somehow natural “dominators,” or that the process of becoming a colonizer is a straightforward or unproblematic one. The following dissertation has developed from the directly opposite perspective: learning to be a colonist is viewed here as a problem deserving further study. We have more to learn about the fate of the Europeans who emigrated to the colonies and how it was that the diverse European and other migrants contributed to the formation of new colonizer societies.

In conducting this research, I have tried to take into account the statements of Césaire (1955), Fanon (1963) and Memmi (1957), who argued that the dynamics of colonial life was damaging to colonists as well as to the colonized portion of the population. Césaire, in his *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955), claimed that the brutalization inherent in colonialism would have lasting negative consequences not only for colonists overseas, but for Europe as well. With the end of French colonialism in North Africa, and the return of nearly two million colonists to France in the 1950s and 1960s, Césaire’s statements today

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On this point, I find Said most eloquent: “I am impressed that in so many of the various writings on anthropology, epistemology, textualization, and otherness that I have read...there is an almost total absence of any reference to American imperial intervention as a factor affecting the theoretical discussion” (1989:214). Earlier in this essay, he writes: “(t)o practice anthropology in the United States is therefore not just to be doing scholarly work investigating “otherness” and “difference” in a large country; it is to be discussing them in an enormously influential and powerful state whose global role is that of a superpower” (1989:213-214). For additional reflections along these lines, see Smith 1994.
seem prophetic. While the direct force of French colonialism in the colonies has ended, and North Africa, among other regions, has entered a new “postcolonial” phase, it is not so easy to claim an equally sharp postcolonial break for Europe.

There have been complex changes in Europe since decolonization. Immigration, xenophobia, and the integration of foreigners are the subjects of a burgeoning literature.\(^\text{199}\) Scholars usually focus on aspects of the “new” Europe related to the growing populations of more visibly different ex-colonized peoples whose arrival is considered a starting point for racial strife or proto-fascist nationalist movements across the continent. Few have examined the role played by the return of less “visible” former colonists who have also settled by the millions following decolonization. How has Europe changed with the return “home” of these migrants? Along with the former colonists, France and other European nations also have become hosts for colonial cultures, ideologies and racisms. We have yet to determine to what extent these colonial contributions have given new impetus to ongoing racist organizations or beliefs, or how they might shape European polities and cultures in the late twentieth century. By silencing Europe’s colonial past, by ignoring the return of the colonial to Europe, we may be contributing to the promulgation of a gangrene not unlike that identified by Stora regarding the silencing of the French-Algerian war. Could we argue then that the poisoning of Europe predicted by Césaire has only just begun?

APPENDIX A: LIST OF ARCHIVES CONSULTED

FRANCE

Paris

Archives du Ministère de la Guerre, Chateau de Vincennes
Archives Nationales
Bibliothèque Nationales
Centre des Hautes Etudes sur L'Afrique et L'Asie Modernes

Nantes

Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Archives Diplomatiques

Aix-en-Provence

Archives de France d'Outre-Mer
Centre de Documentation sur l'Algérie Contemporaine (CDHA)
L'Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman (IREMAM)

MALTA

National Archives, Rabat
National Library, Valletta
TUNISIA

Tunis

Les Archives Nationales de Tunisie
Institut Supérieur de l'Histoire du Mouvement National (IHMN)
Institut de Belles Lettres Arabes (IBLA)
Institut de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain (IRMC)

UNITED KINGDOM

London

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Bénichou, Marcel

Bennoune, Mahfoud

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Bertrand, Louis

Blondy, Alain
Boussevain, Jeremy

Bourdieu, Pierre

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Boyarin, Jonathan


Brasier, Roger

Briggs, Charles

Brincat, Joseph

Brow, James
Brown, John

Brubaker, Rogers

Bullard, Alice

Cairns, Walter and Robert McKeon

Calmein, Maurice

Castles, Stephen, Heather Booth and Tina Wallace

Césaire, Aimé

Chouraqui, André

Christelow, Allan

Clayton, Anthony
Clifford, James and George Marcus, eds

Cohn, Bernard

Comaroff, Jean and John

Comaroff, John

Connerton, Paul

Cooper, Frederick and Ann Stoler

Corrigan, Philip and Derek Sayer

Courtin, Jean

Crapanzano, Vincent

Crespo, Gérard and Jean-Jacques Jordi
Crespo, Gérard

Cutler, William

Davis, Natalie Zemon and Randolph Starn

Delivré, Alain

Demontès, Victor

Diaconoff, Susan

di Leonardo, Micaela

Donato, Marc

Donzelot, Jacques

Douglas, Mary

Dubois, Colette
Eisenbeth, Maurice

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Friedman, Elizabeth
Fremeaux, Jacques

Gallisot, René

Gignoux, C.F. and Bernard Simiot, ed.

Gilead, Sarah

Goasse, Eric

Gordon, Milton

Goutalier, Régine

Green, Nancy

Guha, Ranajit

Guth, Suzie

Halbwachs, Maurice


Harrison, Faye, ed.

Hendricks, Janet Wall

Henry, Jean-Robert

Hirschberg, H.Z.

Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds.

Holbrook, Wendell P.

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Horne, Alistair

Hooker, M.B.

Hyman, Paula

Iancu, C.

Jordi, Jean-Jacques


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Joutard, Philippe

Julien, Charles-André

Kramer, Jane
Lacoste, L.

Lakoff, George

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Lallaoui, Mehdi

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Lanly, A.

Leach, Edmund

Lees, Christiane

Le Goff, Jacques

Lorcin, Patricia M. E.
Luttrell, Anthony


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Mallia-Milanes, Victor

Marcus, George and Michael Fischer

Memmi, Albert

Merry, Sally Engle

Meyerhoff, Barbara

Meynier, Gilbert

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Rheinstein, Max

Ricoux, René

Rosaldo, Renato
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Said, Edward

Salloum, Habeeb

Schnapper, Dominique

Schultz, Joseph

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Shostak, Marjorie

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