

## Notes on Sources

### The Anxious Origins of a French Colonial Monument: The *Duc d'Orléans* in Algiers

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Colonial monuments burst into broad public consciousness in March of 2015, when South African students at the University of Cape Town launched the Rhodes Must Fall movement demanding the removal of a statue of the notorious British colonialist Cecil Rhodes from their campus. In a move that would be echoed by sister movements in Oxford, England and elsewhere, the protestors took the 1934 Marion Walgate statue as a shorthand for the institutional racism that survived the fall of apartheid in 1994. Calls for the statue to be taken down went hand-in-hand with demands to “decolonize” the university, including admissions, faculty hiring, and curriculum policies that had failed to keep up with South Africa’s transition to majority rule.<sup>1</sup> Similar arguments were advanced in challenging monuments to imperialists, enslavers, and white supremacists around the globe: removing the symbols honoring the heroes of a bygone racial order was a necessary first step towards addressing the systemic inequalities perpetuating that order in the present.

But postcolonial debates about colonial monuments are primarily about their demise and rarely ask how they came to be. The document reproduced in figure 1 is an 1842 appeal from a group of French military, administrative, and commercial elites in Algeria for contributions to the erection in Algiers of a statue of the deceased heir to the French throne, the duc d’Orléans, that gives us a glimpse of the origins of one such monument. This version of the fundraising call was published in the “unofficial” section of the *Moniteur algérien*, the official organ of the colonial administration in Algeria, but I’ve found individually printed copies in the French military, colonial, and national archives in my research into the statue’s “biography.” These attest to the breadth of its circulation as well as to the importance that French officials on both sides of the Mediterranean attached to the project.

What I find especially useful about this document is the explicit view it gives us of the birth of a statue that would become an icon of French domination in North Africa. The membership of the organizing commission tells us who was behind the monument,

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<sup>1</sup> For more on Rhodes Must Fall and related movements, see Roseanne Chantiluke et al., eds., *Rhodes Must Fall: The Struggle to Decolonise the Racist Heart of Empire* (Zed Books, 2018).



Figure 1: The appeal in the *Moniteur algérien* on August 10, 1842, under the title “Souscription pour l'érection sur la place Royale à Alger d'un monument à la mémoire de S. A. R. Mgr. le Duc d'Orléans” (Subscription for the erection on the Place Royale in Algiers of a monument to the memory of H.R.H. the Duc d'Orléans).

and the rhetoric of the text spells out their goals to a public they hoped to enlist in funding the project. That the group issued its call less than a month after the duc d'Orléans was killed in a carriage accident on 13 July 1842 attests to the urgency they felt at a moment when the futures of both the French monarchy and the French colonization of Algeria appeared to be in jeopardy. In our current postcolonial moment, colonial monuments are seen as expressions of imperial dominance over colonized populations. We tend to share Frantz Fanon's view of the old statues of colonial generals and engineers as markers of a colonial world “cocksure of itself, crushing with its stoniness the backbones of those scarred by the whip.”<sup>2</sup> The fundraising appeal shows that this particular monument

<sup>2</sup> Frantz Fanon, “On Violence,” in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 2021), 15.

originated less in a sense of arrogant power over Algerians than in feelings of fearful weakness vis-à-vis France itself.

Three interrelated contexts are essential for understanding the anxious origins of the *Duc d'Orléans*, which was ultimately completed by the Franco-Italian sculptor Carlos Marochetti and inaugurated on the Place Royale (future Place du Gouvernement) of Algiers in October 1845: the status of the French military conquest of Algeria, the state of European settlement in the colony, and the situation of the French monarchy at home.<sup>3</sup>

The French invasion of Algiers, which was then a part of the Ottoman Empire, began in 1830 as a vain, last-ditch effort to save the Bourbon monarchy that had been restored after the French Revolution. The Bourbon king, Charles X, was overthrown just weeks after his expeditionary forces captured Algiers, but his successor, King Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, maintained and expanded the French presence in North Africa. Over the next decade, French troops pushed out from the capital and sought to quell Algerian resistance across most of the former Ottoman regency. The colonial army, known as the African Army, swelled from just over 17,000 in 1831 to over 70,000 in 1842; this was the "Army" to which the statue commissioners directed their appeal. Meanwhile, the area under ostensible French control grew to encompass Algeria's major cities and their hinterlands. The ballooning costs of the conquest, along with shocking corruption and brutality within the colonial army, drew ongoing criticism from both liberal and conservative opponents of the Orléanist regime. By the time the young duke died in 1842, opposition lawmakers were threatening to cut funding for the African Army, limit the occupation, or even withdraw from Algeria altogether.

The "civilian Population" addressed by the fundraisers, meaning the European settler population, was in an even shakier position as these threats intensified. The number of European colonists in Algeria had grown from a few thousand in the early 1830s to 44,500 by the end of 1842.<sup>4</sup> But they continued to fall short of colonization advocates' visions of a settler colony like British North America or Australia, where French families would replace the indigenous inhabitants and transform the territory into an extension of the mother country. Europeans remained vastly outnumbered by the Algerian majority, estimated at some three to four million in this period, and their demographic profile failed to meet colonialist ideals. Over half of the Europeans living in Algeria in 1842 were Spanish, Italian, or Maltese, rather than French. There were twice as many men as women. And most were not living on rural farms, but in towns and cities. Efforts to recruit French farming families to settle on confiscated Algerian land in 1841 largely attracted poor urban workers not the "families of small landowners, with excellent morality, including able-bodied, working-age children, able to bring at least 1,500 to 2,000 francs to the colony"

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<sup>3</sup> I discuss these in greater detail in my book, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Cornell University Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> *Tableau de la situation des établissements français dans l'Algérie (1842–1843)*, 73.

administrators had hoped for.<sup>5</sup> These disappointing results added fuel to bitter debates raging among political economists and policymakers about how to colonize Algeria and whether it was worth the financial and administrative costs to do so at all. Europeans already in the colony in the early 1840s lived in fear of losing the military protections and the investments in colonial development on which their physical and economic survival depended.

Finally, to understand why the men of the monument commission wished to erect a statue of King Louis-Philippe's eldest son in Algiers, we must understand the situation of the French monarchy in the 1840s. Brought to power by the July Revolution that overthrew Charles X, Louis-Philippe d'Orléans was a constitutional monarch who appealed to the meritocratic ideals of the bourgeois nineteenth century to justify his claims to power. Orléanist propaganda argued that the new king had earned his right to rule through military service (in the French revolutionary armies in 1792 as well as the revolutionary National Guard in 1830). His five sons hoped to prove the same by taking part in the conquest of Algeria. The eldest, Ferdinand Philippe, duc d'Orléans, participated in three Algerian campaigns between 1835 and 1840, telling his aide-de-camp they allowed him "to prove myself and to offer guarantees of not only bravery, but also capability as heir to the throne."<sup>6</sup> His experiences in North Africa also made the duc d'Orléans the most vocal supporter of continued conquest and colonization in Louis-Philippe's circle of close advisors. The unexpected death of the popular, charismatic crown prince, a new father just two months shy of his thirty-second birthday at the time of his fatal accident, was thus felt by colonial elites as a body blow to their hopes for the future.

Together, these three contexts allow us to interpret the call in this document to commemorate the colony's lost champion, to be depicted in his lieutenant-general's uniform astride an Arabian horse, in the center of the colonial capital. They help us to see why the monument commission presented its appeal in the name of the African Army and the slow-growing settler community, and why the public they imagined for the statue included metropolitan France, its "august Leader," and the prince's orphaned son, as well as their own "nephews" among the colonists of the future, but not indigenous Algerians. When the finished statue was finally inaugurated on 28 October 1845, some speeches emphasized that it would impress upon Algerian colonial subjects the grandeur of France and the permanence of the French presence on their lands. But the French king and

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<sup>5</sup> *Tableau*, 75, 186–87, 138, quotation p. 180. On the difficulties of determining the indigenous population in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Kamel Kateb, *Européens, 'Indigènes' et Juifs en Algérie (1830-1962). Représentation et réalités des populations* (INED, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Letter to François de Chabaud-Latour, 31 July 1837, quoted in Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 87.

Algeria's European settlers remained the primary audiences the monument's anxious organizers sought to reach.

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## Appendix: English source translation

*Le Moniteur algérien*, 10 August 1842

Subscription for the erection on the Place Royale of Algiers of a monument to the memory of H.R.H. the Duc d'ORLÉANS

The civilian Population and the Army having expressed to M. the Governor-General the wish to open a subscription for the purpose of raising, on the central square of Algiers, a monument destined to perpetuate the memory and the image of H.R.H. the Duc d'ORLÉANS, M. the Governor-General greeted this request with lively sympathy, and consequently he decreed that a Commission would collect the donations and take the necessary dispositions for the erection, on the Place Royale of Algiers, of the bronze statue of H.R.H. the Duc d'ORLÉANS.

This Commission is composed of the following:

MM. Comte GUYOT, Director of the Interior, *president*;  
Colonel MARENGO, commander of the Army Base, *vice-pres.*;  
F. LACROUTS, President of the Commercial court, Colonel of the Militia<sup>1</sup>;  
CARRON, Colonel and Director of the Army Engineers;  
LEBLOND, Colonel of the 48<sup>th</sup> line regiment;  
BOUNEVIALLE, President of the chamber of Commerce;  
BRANTHOMME, Notary, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Militia, *treasurer of the Commission*;  
DE SAINT GUILHEM, landowner;  
SUQUET, Judge at the Commercial court;  
LAUGIER, *ditto*;  
BOURNICHON, *ditto*;  
LIGHTLING, Member of the chamber of Commerce;  
GUIAUCHAIN, Provincial Architect, battalion Chief in the Militia;  
TIOCHE, Defense attorney, battalion Chief in the Militia;  
GAILLOT, Landowner, battalion Chief in the Militia;  
Baron VIALARD, battalion Chief in the Militia, *secretary of the Commission*

Thus constituted, the Commission immediately issued an appeal to the Population and the Army as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> Modeled on the metropolitan National Guard and charged with maintaining public order and self-defense, the African Militia was made up of European landowners, merchants, and artisans.

In losing the Prince, who had been placed in the leadership of a new generation by his great intelligence, elevated spirit and virtues, even more than his rank, Algeria lost its strongest supporter [and] the Army the fairest appreciator of its service and the most zealous defender of its rights.

When Algeria was seen by many men of State as nothing more than an awkward burden for France, when colonisation was dismissed as a chimera, the Duc D'ORLÉANS had already understood the full significance of the conquest and seen the ways to make it bear fruit.

Three times, he tore himself from the arms of his august family to share in the glory and the perils of the Army in this country; he, Prince Royal, heir apparent to the throne, he, husband and father, he fought the royal advisors to return to Algeria again. The sense of great things was the north star of his politics; he was led by the attachment he had for this country; and wherever there was new glory for the French flag to win, that's where his thoughts went.

He returned to join the ranks of the Army at the moment when the crisis was greatest and to console the Colonists when their distress was at its highest.

To whom amongst us did he not give advice, hope, encouragement? "The harder the work," he said to us, "the greater the obstacles, the more the perseverance of those who devote themselves to this noble task must be honored; they have earned the country's recognition."

Which parts of Algeria has he not visited, whether crisscrossing the provinces and leading the Army over the Bibans<sup>2</sup>, or touring farms and workshops, inquiring in person into their needs, failures, and successes?

Colonists and Soldiers share their tears. Each believes their loss to be greater. The latter because the Prince spent more time living among them, because they have had no Chief who combined such great dignity with greater simplicity, goodness, and kindness; because they loved him both as a father and as a brother in arms. The Colonists, because he came forward to embrace their love, because that love for him was even more intense when they saw their hopes evaporating and they had the greatest need for his sympathy and his blessing.

But who did not weep at the news of the catastrophe that sent such merit, such virtue, such a future into a tomb, which stole from France and the World a Prince that the patriot desired for the happiness of the Country, that the philosopher dreamed of for the good fortune of humanity?

Even foreigners, the peoples who only knew him by reputation, have given in to grief, and all of Europe shares in our mourning.

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<sup>2</sup> A strategic mountain pass east of Algiers first crossed by a French expeditionary force under the duke's command in 1839.

As for us, the Soldiers of the African Army who can still see him reviewing the ranks with a commander's vigilance and a father's concern, or, animated by noble ardor, leading to new victory the flag that jealous fate would not even leave him as a shroud; As for us, Colonists of this country who can still hear his voice, the first to proclaim Algeria a Colony forever French and saluting Algiers as the capital of a new France, vain regrets are insufficient to express our pain and our gratitude.

Let his beloved image arise on the principal square of this city! Let it remind the Mother Country and its August Leader of their beloved son's wishes; let it also one day remind the orphan who will have to bear the weight of the crown of the feelings of his unfortunate father for Algeria and the Army! Let our nephews learn to know our benefactor by contemplating it! And let this homage, rendered before a tomb, also testify of the gratitude of the People and the Army and serve as a noble lesson in the future.

It matters little that the Soldier's pay is small, that the Colony is poor and few in number to raise a monument worthy of a Prince, mourned like Germanicus by the great people<sup>3</sup> whose memory France revives here. The heart has needs that are more urgent than material needs. Every one of us will rush to add his meager offering to the work of patriotic recognition. We have no need to fear falling short on sympathies. Devotion, love, patriotism will provide for all.

Debated and unanimously adopted by the Commission.

Algiers, 7 August 1842

Signed, the members of the Commission

M. Branthomme, notary and treasurer, and all the members of the Commission are authorized to receive contributions.

The Commission will announce the names of its contributors later.

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<sup>3</sup> A reference to the Roman Empire, which the French claimed to be restoring in Algeria.