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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Persuasion's Empire: French Imperial Reformism, 1763-1801

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Christian Donath

Committee in charge:

Professor Tracy Strong, Chair
Professor Fonna Forman
Professor Harvey Goldman
Professor Marcel Hénaff
Professor Alan Houston
Professor Anthony Pagden

2012

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The dissertation of Christian Donath is approved, and it is acceptable in quality
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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012

For my father,
who taught me to love political argument.

For my mother,
who taught me to wonder.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is the result of much traveling and I have been fortunate to have such excellent guides and companions along the way. I should like to begin by acknowledging my thesis committee. In so many ways, this project could not have been completed without Fonna Forman. Her willingness to treat me as a colleague from my earliest moments at UCSD allowed me to find my voice as a scholar. Her expressions of interest in my work have been an unfailing source of support. Her professional advice and observations have been indispensable. She kept me employed and on track during the process, and she has acted very much as a friend throughout. Fonna made this odyssey a truly enjoyable one and for this I am deeply grateful.

Shortly after I began thinking about empires, Anthony Pagden welcomed me into his “Political Theory of Empire” class at UCLA and this proved to be crucial for shaping the dissertation. I have been continually fascinated by his work and this, in turn, has helped to sustain my enthusiasm for studying the intellectual history of empires. I am particularly grateful, however, for his unfailing graciousness with me and his patience with my sundry and often chaotic inquiries. I have never felt that I have been particularly worthy of his hospitality, intellectual or otherwise, but he has been ever generous with it.

Alan Houston has the uncanny ability to ask questions that it usually has taken me weeks or months to begin to answer. I have often had the sense in my conversations with

him that if discussion or debate were a game, I was playing checkers while he was playing three-dimensional chess. This was of great utility for my project, particularly at the beginning and end. I am most grateful to him, however, for his patience, goodwill, and helpfulness along the way.

Marcel Hénaff has been a continuous source of inspiration in his intellectual versatility and his good humor. Ever willing to help, he has often gone far beyond the responsibilities of a thesis committee member and has always been a delight to converse with. Harvey Goldman asked a number of crucial questions at the beginning of this process, which helped me immensely in the years that followed. At key moments, his expressions of interest in my work were also a significant help.

Finally, I owe my presence at UCSD to my chair, Tracy Strong. It was his kindness in putting up with an undergraduate eager to talk about Nietzsche that brought me here and he has been a wonderful interlocutor and advisor ever since. His singular intellectual openness and light touch allowed me to find my way, while the originality and subtlety of his ideas have been a constant source of inspiration. He has kept me in good humor throughout the process and if I had a tendency to deposit myself in his office, it was only because of the pleasure I derived from the discussions that took place within. In addition to much else, he introduced me to the joys of being a scholar.

I also have been privileged to have such excellent graduate student colleagues. Allen Bolar, Aaron Cotkin, Ivo Gatzinski, John LeJeune, Dave Leitch, Andrew Poe, and David Selby all helped me work through my ideas in various ways and I am grateful for their camaraderie over the years. I should particularly like to thank Anthony Lyon and Adam Gomez for their friendship and readiness to offer thoughts about the project. James

Long has also been a superb friend and his work embodies the best virtues of social science inquiry even if he would perhaps protest at my saying so. Outside of the academy, Brian Dunne has kept me focused on the Marine and related areas, thereby helping maintain my spirits through the years.

From the beginning of this project, a number of scholars have been generous to me with their time and expertise. Cecil Courtney and Jenny Mander were kind enough to invite me to present a version of Chapter 2 at Cambridge. From this meeting, I thank Tony Strugnell, Anoush Terjanian, Ann Thomson, Sylvana Tomaselli, and especially Istvan Hont and Peter Jimack for their thoughts and comments. Tami Sarfatti also was working on the links between Raynal and Napoleon and offered helpful suggestions. Ken Margerison assisted me in better understanding debates around the suppression of the *Compagnie des Indes*. Jennifer Pitts has always been generous with her time and thoughts over the years when our paths have crossed. At the ‘Imperial Models in Early Modern Empires’ program at the Clark Library, Karuna Mantena was kind enough to discuss Henry Maine and theories of indirect rule with me.

My work has been supported by a fellowship and travel grant from the Dean of Social Science at UCSD, while my Arabic study was assisted by a U.S. Department of State funded Critical Language Scholarship in Cairo during the summer of 2009. The latter allowed me the opportunity to get a sense of the geography of the French occupation and, more importantly, enabled me to have my first ‘drink of the Nile.’

Above all, I must acknowledge my family’s assistance even if nothing I could say would approximate my sense of gratitude. My brother seemed to know instinctively that one should not try to think about modern European empires without close attention to the

ocean. With Sylvia Mandigo I would not know where to begin, and thus I shall only express my profound happiness that it has been nearly a century. This thesis is dedicated to my long-suffering parents because...well because of everything.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Persuasion's Empire: French Imperial Reformism, 1763-1801

by

Christian Donath

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Tracy Strong, Chair

Liberalism originated and developed during the progressive expansion of European overseas empires. Through its early history, the ideology was utilized both to reinforce and attack imperial endeavors. Even where liberal ideas bolstered imperial projects, the ideology often coexisted uncomfortably with empire given its emphasis on principles such as autonomy, freedom, and equality. To overcome this tension, liberal imperialists often argued that local peoples were not sufficiently civilized to choose their political fate.

This dissertation examines a different, though complimentary, approach to legitimizing empire: persuasion. Taking an influential group of eighteenth century French thinkers as my case, I demonstrate how moral anxieties about empire have been overcome by valorizing persuasion as a means to legitimate the establishment of colonies. The group included colonial administrators, politicians, and polemicists who worried about the justice of empire, particularly as it related to the treatment of the colonized. Rather than foreswearing empire altogether, however, they argued that rule could be established over local peoples by convincing locals to agree to an imperial

order. Such an order, they believed, would be in keeping with enlightened or liberal principles.

The central figure in the thesis is G.T. Raynal whose *Histoire des deux Indes* (1770) crystallized and propagated this vision. His history was among the best-selling works of the eighteenth century and shaped colonial debates in France and abroad for decades after its initial appearance. After explaining how Raynal and others came to believe that an empire founded on persuasion could work, as well as why they believed this approach to rule was legitimate, the dissertation traces how this idea persisted through the tumultuous decade after the French Revolution and shaped policy during Napoleon's military occupation of Egypt. The thesis then turns to local Egyptian observers writing in Arabic who recognized and critiqued the French ideology. One such thinker, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, moved beyond critique to articulate a counter-theory of how rule ought to be established through persuasion. Jabarti's conclusions about the role of ethics in persuasion are a rebuke to the French and constitute a more generalizable observation about the limits of persuasion across community boundaries.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation originated in a moment of astonishment. While reading the abbé Guillaume Thomas Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements & du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, I encountered a puzzling description.

Narrating the history of failed French colonization efforts in Madagascar, Raynal envisions an alternative approach to founding colonies:

It was impossible that so fortunate a revolution could have been effected by violence. A numerous, brave, and uncivilized people, would never have submitted to the chains with which a few barbarous foreigners might have wished to load them. It was by *the soft mode of persuasion* [*la voie douce de la persuasion*]; it was by the seducing prospect of happiness; ... the advantage of our police, by the enjoyments attending our industry, and by the superiority of our talents, that the whole island was to be brought to concur in a plan equally advantageous to both nations.¹

What precisely, I wondered, could Raynal have meant by ‘*the soft mode of persuasion*’?

The historian makes clear as he proceeds that the alternative path is also an imperial one, referring to “the system of legislation which it would have been proper to give these people.” But who has ever heard of an empire founded on persuasion?

At first reading the passage seemed a trivial fantasy or an idle utopian scheme imagined by a man of letters sitting comfortably in Paris, far from the ports of France and even further from her now diminished colonies and outposts, many languishing under a

¹ Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, *A philosophical and political history of the settlements and trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, tome 2, (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1783): 233-4. Italics added. Henceforth: *HDI* 1783 2.233-4

tropical sun in the aftermath of the Seven Years War (1756-1763). As I began to investigate this enormously popular work in the context of political developments in France and in her colonies, it became clear that Raynal's vision was part of a larger, more practical scheme to work out how to establish an empire with the consent of indigenous peoples. In so doing, Raynal and those who shared this vision argued that it might be possible to have an empire founded on justice rather than violation, one that would allow France to retain her overseas possessions while preserving the political and economic rights of locals. In effect, they hoped to establish a 'liberal' empire.

A primordial tension at the core of empire—between autonomy and rule—occasioned Raynal and his colleagues' peculiar vision. This tension can take a pragmatic form: how much autonomy should the periphery be allowed in order to secure the *success* of the empire? But it can also take an ethical form: how much autonomy should the periphery be allowed in order to secure the *legitimacy* of the empire? By 1770, this ethical tension was becoming particularly acute in France, especially among a group of thinkers who acknowledged that indigenous peoples might have legitimate claims against colonial incursions. The sense that locals might legitimately determine their own fate threatened to undermine a project that combined geostrategic necessity (maintaining overseas colonies) with the process of civilizing local peoples, which Raynal described as "equally advantageous to both nations." The reformist solution—empire by persuasion—aims to overcome this tension by collapsing the distinction between autonomy and rule, allowing local peoples the power to 'authorize' the establishment of imperial rule.

This vision of empire is of scholarly interest for both historical and theoretical reasons. First, empires have taken a variety of forms in history and it is precisely this

variety that makes the term ‘empire’ difficult to define for social scientists while remaining an easily, if imprecisely, deployed epithet in modern political discourse. This imprecision in contemporary debates has recently led scholars of empire to call for a careful examination of what empires actually have been in history.² Such an examination permits us to better understand what forms empire can take and, in doing so, better grasp what empire *is* (and equally important, what it *is not*). To do this however requires depth, in understanding the complex history of particular imperial projects, and breadth, in grasping the variety of forms empire has taken throughout history. This dissertation makes no pretensions to offer a definitive account of what empire *is*, although I will offer a provisional definition below for the sake of explaining the French case. Instead, I aim to contribute to a broader discussion of what empire has been, and what it might be, by exposing one overlooked mode of empire particularly evident in the French case.

One area of scholarly inquiry that will benefit from a more nuanced understanding of this particular case is in debates about the historical conjunctions of liberalism and empire. Building off of the work of Sankar Muthu, Jennifer Pitts has argued that there was a general shift among liberal thinkers from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.³ She argues that whereas in the eighteenth century such thinkers were, as Muthu terms it “against empire,” their nineteenth century relatives embraced imperial projects. Muthu reads imperial critiques in works by Diderot, Condorcet, and Raynal, as evidence that they were engaged in an anti-imperial project, and other scholars have repeated his

² Craig Calhoun and Frederick Cooper, “Introduction” *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

³ Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, (Princeton University Press, 2005), 1-2.

claim.⁴ This dissertation suggests that more careful historical scrutiny reveals that these three thinkers were in fact not *against* empire but instead tried to work out a mode of empire that would take into account the kinds of diversity Muthu commends them for recognizing. In this approach, I shall suggest, their imperial imaginings represent an overlooked and insidious mode of empire particularly relevant to the history of liberalism's episodic imperial entanglements.

To identify this story, however, it is necessary to get closer to the political context in which these works were written. My account thus relies less on canonical thinkers and instead explains how the notion of empire by persuasion flourished among a network of reformists. These reformists believed that French colonial policies needed significant revisions if the overseas establishments were to survive.⁵ The network emerged during and after the Seven Years War and was comprised of French polemicists, colonial administrators, travelers, ministers, diplomats, and merchants. Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* played a central role in the network by consolidating and promulgating the empire by persuasion model. The work's popularity helped colonial reformism persist longer than it might otherwise have, shaping debates about the proper treatment of local peoples through the Revolution and during Napoleon's Egyptian expedition. Thus I use the work and its reception as the organizing thread for the dissertation. To scrutinize this story is to understand how a vision of imperial legitimacy was built through interactions between

⁴ Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*, (Princeton University Press, 2003), Chs. 3-4; Guillaume Ansart, "Variations on Montesquieu: Raynal and Diderot's *Histoire des deux Indes* and the American Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 3 (2009), 402; Pitts 2005: 15; Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 182. This seems to be Jonathan Israel's view as well in *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790* (Oxford University Press 2011), 414-6.

⁵ On French reformism see Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières: Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot*. (Paris: F. Maspero, 1971), 194-226.

reformists in metropole and colony (Chapters 1 and 2), how it persisted (Chapter 3), was applied in the midst of a military occupation (Chapter 4), but was nevertheless detected and rejected in surprising ways by local inhabitants (Chapter 5). The final two chapters examine how the notion of empire by persuasion was translated into policy and how this policy was experienced and critiqued by local people.

Neither Raynal's *Histoire* nor most other works examined in the dissertation are especially noteworthy in their theoretical virtuosity at first glance. The questions they struggled over and the answers they came up with, however, were often sophisticated and subtle. In grappling with the question of imperial legitimacy, and especially in their turn to persuasion, they expose a basic paradox at the center of justifications of empire. They also raise fundamental theoretical questions about what empire is and what kinds of rule are or might be possible in an imperial relationship. Their search for consent and their solutions for its establishment reveal some of the pathologies associated with persuasion across community borders, especially in cases of power inequalities. The reflections of local Egyptian authors in Chapter 5 expose these pathologies particularly well. In offering a view from the 'other side' they provide a more comprehensive picture of how the ideology was actually experienced by a group that is normally silent or hopelessly distorted in European accounts. In sum, this overlooked and under-theorized story offers an opportunity for political theorists to pluralize the way we think about empire, rule, and the exercise of power across community boundaries.

The introduction proceeds as follows: In section 1, I explain in more detail what persuasion seemed to offer the reformists for establishing legitimacy in empire. Section 2 examines the concept of empire as the reformists imagined it, noting the tensions

engendered by the notion of an empire established through persuasion. Section 3 explains how the reformists might be considered ‘liberals’ and, after surveying recent debates about liberalism and empire, suggests how the reformist vision might inform these debates. Section 4 sketches some possible broader theoretical implications of the empire by persuasion model, pointing to questions about the ethics of persuasion across community borders in settings of power imbalance. Section 5 outlines the remainder of the dissertation.

(1) The Promise of Persuasion

To understand the reformists’ peculiar colonial vision and its theoretical significance, it is useful to begin by examining their method. After considering first what persuasion is (and what it is not), I shall explain its promise from the reformist standpoint. I then identify an apparent problem with their approach from a contemporary perspective and clarify why they seemed uninterested in dealing with it.

Persuasion is fundamentally an act of power. To persuade means to induce someone to do something, from forming an opinion to acting.⁶ In other words, when I persuade someone, I alter the state that I found him (or her) in. That persuasion is an act of power is evident in the language often used to describe the results of persuasion: when you are persuaded, you are *convinced*. To be convinced is, according to the Latin, to be entirely or wholly conquered.⁷ That persuasion was a kind of conquest seemed evident to Phillip III of Spain who wrote in 1609 “no attempt should be made to subdue the Indians

⁶ This, of course, is not the only way that power is expressed. See Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 29.

⁷ ‘*con – vincere*’

of Paraguay, *but by the sword of the word,*” while the *Histoire* would proclaim “Proud Europeans, ye have not always conquered by the force of arms.”⁸ The martial language functions to identify the results of persuasion with the results of coercion, *viz.* conquest.

Persuasion is, however, fundamentally different from coercion and this difference made it particularly appealing to the reformists. First, and most obviously, persuasion does not work through physical force. It relies on various kinds of speech (e.g. argument, emotional appeal) or through other forms of action to win over an audience. Throughout the dissertation, I explain and trace the various tactics of persuasion advocated and mobilized by the reformists. It is possible to imagine persuasive speech that is fundamentally coercive, for example, a verbal threat of force used to ‘convince’ someone to do something. Yet such threats defeat the very purpose, i.e. the moral function, of persuasion for the reformists. Their basic presupposition—and this was what problematized colonial rule over indigenous peoples in the first place—was that local peoples had a right not to be compelled (to trade, to be ruled, etc.). As moral beings, locals had the right to direct their lives as they saw fit. The point of persuasion, indeed what would make a colony founded on persuasion legitimate, was that the persuaded could ‘freely’ decide to be convinced, i.e. conquered.⁹ A threat of physical violence would undermine free choice.

The reformists turned to persuasion as a solution for a moral dilemma, *viz.* the problem of the (legitimate) freedom of the colonized. It is thus worth considering what

⁸ Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *The History of Paraguay. Containing ... a Full and Authentic Account of the Establishments Formed There by the Jesuits, from Among the Savage Natives ... Establishments Allowed to Have Realized the Sublime Ideas of Fenelon, Sir Thomas More, and Plato* (London: L. Davis, 1769): 249; HDI 1783: 2.428.

⁹ Bracketing what ‘freely’ might mean for the moment.

the reformists believed persuasion could do in relation to this problem of freedom. We must begin with a basic question: when I persuade someone to do something, who is responsible for that action? Presuming actual choice, it would seem the persuaded is responsible for the ultimate action.¹⁰ While I initiated this process, the persuaded chose to allow my (and now his) ends. Persuasion offered the reformists a way to induce local peoples to ‘freely’ adopt European ends. As we shall see, the reformists often argued that these ends (commerce and the like) were actually the ends of all peoples and as such they were acting to induce indigenous peoples to ‘their own’ ends. What all this meant concretely was that the reformists saw in persuasion a means to accomplish their commercial and political aims by making such aims the aims of locals. Danielle Allen has argued that persuasion works by transforming subjectivity into action, and in the case of the reformist vision, persuasion transforms subjects into actors.¹¹ What before was rule by an outsider becomes rule by self, as the ruled (‘freely’) adopt the goals of the ruler.

From a contemporary perspective, we might ask whether the reformist approach to persuasion is conducive to the free exercise of judgment. As many political theorists have pointed out, there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ forms of rhetoric or methods of persuasion, insofar as the goal is to maximize the autonomous judgment or free decision of an audience.¹² Given the basic moral intuitions of the reformists, *viz.* that it was important

¹⁰ Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship after Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 141.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 79. That local peoples might have agency in this process marks a difference from Pocock’s assessment in *Barbarism and Religion: Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 225.

¹² Steven Lukes criticizes Joseph Nye on precisely this point. See Lukes “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds: On bluntness of Soft Power” in *Power in World Politics*, eds. Felix Berenskoetter and Michael J. Williams (Routledge, 2007), 94. See also the exchange between Benhabib and Young in S. Benhabib, *Democracy and difference: contesting the boundaries of the political* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University

that the persuaded choose rather than be forced, it is tempting to interrogate reformist methods according to similar standards. This temptation should be resisted as this limits our ability to understand what counted as legitimate persuasion for the reformists. While they believed that choice must take place for the sake of political legitimacy, they did not deem it necessary that judgment always be directed by an autonomous reason divorced from emotions, passions, etc. That conceptions of the self and judgment in eighteenth century France (and, of course, Britain) were often more complex than critics of the enlightenment would have us believe is a well known story to scholars today.¹³ In light of this complexity, it seemed perfectly legitimate to the reformists to persuade local peoples by appealing not only to their reason, but also to their senses of greed, erotic desire, wonder, and other elements that would be characterized as ‘lower’ according to a model of the self in which reason is walled off as autonomous and supreme.¹⁴ Some passions, like emulation, were estimable precisely because they were founded on a conscious choice (see Chapter 2 below). With other passions, however, the divide between emotions and ‘independent’ judgment was less distinct. The absence of such a division allowed the reformists to imagine a variety of tactics (including non-verbal ones) aimed at winning over local peoples, and it may also be why they did not explore in detail the potential problems associated with forms of persuasion that tend to, in our contemporary

Press, 1996); Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: Rhetoric and Judgment in Political Thought* (Harvard University Press, 2006), 182, 185, and 192.

¹³ Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford University Press 2010), 6. Sharon R. Krause, *Civil Passions: Moral Sentiment and Democratic Deliberation* (Princeton University Press, 2008), Ch 3.

¹⁴ I explore this issue in my discussion of Diderot in Chapter 1.

jargon, alienate judgment.¹⁵ Furthermore, the reformists were likely less concerned with the distinction for a pragmatic reason: persuasion achieved their political aim (rule) in a manner that seemed manifestly preferable to the violent methods so common in the history of modern European empires.

(2) A Peculiar Imperial Vision

Having considered the reformist approach to persuasion, it is now necessary to examine their goal: empire. As a political concept, 'empire' is notoriously difficult to define. In the broadest sense, it is a form of rule in which one people or group rules over another. Rule usually extends from a power center, the metropole, which exercises control over a periphery.¹⁶ As noted above, the reformists hoped to establish a peculiar kind of empire, one whose legitimacy would be founded on the consent of the ruled.

To better understand the theoretical paradox their vision engendered, consider the two constituent parts of the definition above: 'another' and 'rule.' The distinction of the reformist vision becomes apparent when we examine how reformists described those who were ruled. In the most extreme cases, they described indigenous people as 'brothers' or even 'French' (eventually).¹⁷ This subversion of difference accomplished several things:

(a) It acted as an opening for empire itself, *viz.* it allowed self-conscious outsiders to justify interference by claiming that locals belonged to a larger community of which they

¹⁵ Garsten 2006: 207.

¹⁶ On the difficulty of defining empire see Maurice Duverger, *Le concept d'empire*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), 6-16; Alejandro Colas *Empire* (Malden, MA: Polity Press 2007), 3-30. Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Cornell University Press, 1986), 30-47.

¹⁷ This was neither the first nor the last time the French would describe local peoples as such. Richelieu and Colbert both did this (see Raynal chapter). For nineteenth and twentieth century examples see Frederick Cooper, "Provincializing France" in *Imperial Formations*, eds. Carole McGranahan and Ann Laura Stoler, (School for Advanced Research Press, 2007): 341-372; Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, (Stanford University Press, 2000).

had previously been unaware. This impulse has often been identified in iterations of cosmopolitanism¹⁸ and it was the (delayed) sameness of (the not-yet-civilized) locals that permitted reformists to articulate their claim to legitimate interference. (b) The subversion of difference also functioned to obscure rule itself. If all are brothers or Frenchmen in the empire, then in the starkest terms the distinction between center and periphery, ruler and ruled collapses. Rule becomes a collaborative venture, rather than something imposed from the outside. In this “zone of ambiguity,” the problem of imperial legitimacy, as posited by the reformists, evaporates.¹⁹ As post-colonial thinkers have pointed out, however, this denial of difference, the use of the pronoun ‘we’ in empire, also tends to subvert the very nature of empire itself. Such is the problem with assimilation: empire is founded on differentiation and too much similarity can lead those in the periphery to take the claim of ‘we’ seriously and begin to clamor for actual, rather than rhetorical, equality.²⁰ As formal or institutional equality increases between periphery and metropole, the polity begins to appear less an empire and more a federation or union.²¹ Most reformists did not seek to enact formal equality (at the very least, not in the short term). They would avoid the problem of formal equality by framing their project in terms of civilization: colonists would enable indigenous peoples to arrive at civilization, at—in the opinion of many reformists—their ‘true’ selves. Once locals began to actually

¹⁸ Some examples: Anthony Pagden “Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism” *Constellations* 7(1), (March 2000): 2 and Catherine Lu, “The One and Many Faces of *Cosmopolitanism*” *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 8(2): 251-3. On the distinction between moral and political cosmopolitanism see Nicholas Rengger “Political Theory and International Relations: Promised Land or Exit from Eden?” *International Affairs*, 76(4) (Oct., 2000): 763.

¹⁹ Ann Laura Stoler “Imperial Formations and the Opacities of Rule” in Calhoun et al. 2006: 56.

²⁰ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) 120-6. For other examples see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2005), 177.

²¹ For a discussion of this transition in eighteenth century Europe see Anthony Pagden *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500-c.1800* (Yale University Press, 1995), Ch 7. For an example of this in post-WWII France, see Cooper 2007: 358-72.

look like Frenchmen, in manufacturing capacity for example, there was no incentive left to perpetuate the colonial relationship. At this point, Raynal's relationship of 'mutual advantage' from the opening quotation above would no longer exist. This, fortunately or unfortunately, was a long way off.

This vision of empire, like many others in the modern period, was founded on a "promissory note" in which full equality would be deferred to a later date. Rule founded on consent functioned to diminish the force of this deferral.²² While consent would not be measured through plebiscite, there were earlier precedents in French colonial history where alternative expressions of consent functioned to establish colonial legitimacy. Patricia Seed has identified some of these precedents, explaining how French colonists tended to frame native participation in French-led ceremonies of possession as evidence of their consent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²³ Thus it is not surprising that reformist polemicists like Raynal could imagine consent established in non-plebiscitary forms, from the ongoing exchange of commodities to consanguineous marriages.²⁴ The two latter examples seem to conveniently elide a direct confrontation with the question of rule itself and instead rest on the presupposition that cooperation and collaboration (e.g. in the realm of economy) constituted consent to rule. The writings of the Egyptian authors in Chapter 5 identify this elision in particularly stark terms. In other cases, albeit ones reformists rarely dwelled on at length, there seemed to be a possibility that colonists might make their case verbally to locals, and I shall consider one such

²² On the notion of the promissory note, see Stoler and McGranahan's "Introduction" in *Imperial Formations* 2007: 8, 10.

²³ Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 41-68.

²⁴ Raynal's account of emulation however relied on recent changes in moral thinking that I trace in Chapter 2.

example in Chapter 2. Even in the midst of the disastrous military occupation of Egypt, reformist administrators assiduously recorded local manifestations of support as evidence of consent and thus legitimacy (Chapter 4). The local Egyptian sources of Chapter 5 demonstrate, however, that it was possible to appeal to locals with certain tactics without actually winning them over to imperial rule.

(3) Empire and Liberalism Entangled

Given my plea for greater historical sensitivity above, there is an obvious irony in using the term ‘liberal’ to characterize an ideology circulating in France and her colonies during the latter half of the eighteenth century. While there were a few notable exceptions, the term would not be used to describe a way of doing politics, and especially as a distinct ideology, until the nineteenth century.²⁵ Such an ideology however was the result of an accretion often traced back to debates in seventeenth century England.²⁶ Rather than summarizing the accretions that had taken place by the eighteenth century, I will suggest that the thinkers of interest to this dissertation had liberal tendencies even if they were not exactly ‘liberals.’ Among these tendencies was first and foremost their subscription to economically liberal ideas (and here the term *was* already circulating), which tended to advocate freedom of trade.²⁷ These ideas about trade, particularly among the physiocrats, were founded on a conception of property rights with profound

²⁵ One such exception is Hume’s *History of England* (1762), I. ii. 65. The first appearance in French appears to have been in 1818 (see “Libéralisme” in *Encyclopédie Larousse* <http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/nom-commun-nom/lib%C3%A9ralisme/65750#329968>).

²⁶ Stephen Holmes, *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 13-16; Steve Pincus, “Neither Machiavellian Moment nor Possessive Individualism: Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth” *The American Historical Review*, 103(3) (June 1998): 709.

²⁷ Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* IV.5.78 and in regards to colonies IV.7.46

implications for politics. Where Locke could use a pre-political (natural) idea of property to argue against sovereign encroachment on individual rights, the physiocrats used an account of property as essentially sacred in challenging feudal privilege.²⁸ The French reformists demonstrate economic liberalism both in their advocacy of free trade and in their concern about the property rights of indigenous peoples (albeit their Lockean standards tended to privilege colonists). Reformists also concerned themselves with the political rights of locals such as “civil liberty,” “religious opinions,” and the right of natives to retain their own laws.²⁹ Most significant of all, and this was a pillar of the reformist edifice, was the importance of establishing consent among the ruled. Insofar as the reformists had these concerns, their ideas are discernibly liberal. In this we can detect a sense that native individuals possessed a moral ‘autonomy’ that needed to be acknowledged. The reformist vision functioned to establish empire while, they believed, accommodating this ‘autonomy.’³⁰

In recent years, political theorists have identified liberalism with imperial projects in two related ways. First, commentators have noted that liberalism was founded and evolved in the context of European overseas expansion. James Tully demonstrated the extent to which Locke’s conception of property rights derived from his close involvement in North American colonies.³¹ Richard Tuck explained how modern notions of individual rights originated in the context of early modern colonialism and debates about

²⁸ Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 5.

²⁹ *HDI 1783*: 4.194

³⁰ Note: I mean the more general sense of the term, which should not be confused with Kantian autonomy.

³¹ James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, (Cambridge University Press 1993): Ch 5.

international right.³² In light of these historical reflections, a second group emerged which suggested that liberalism in its very assumptions contained imperial urges. Uday Singh Mehta and Bhikhu Parekh both used analyses of Locke and Mill to suggest that liberals possessed an essentialist understanding of human nature, unwillingness to countenance cultural difference, and universalism that both facilitated their happy coexistence with imperial projects in the past and continue to blind liberals today to important questions of cultural difference.³³ Summarizing post-colonial critiques, Duncan Ivison explains that liberalism's "universal claims about justice or reasonableness" actually means that it chooses certain cultural practices and ways of life as superior to others.³⁴ In so doing, post-colonialists argue, liberalism perpetuates the dynamics, legacies, and injustices of empire.

While often these concerns have tended to focus on issues of multiculturalism within a polity, these reflections also apply to power dynamics in the international realm. Some strains of liberal internationalism posit that national sovereignty should be predicated on liberal or democratic governance.³⁵ Critics of this position argue that liberals have thus come to justify modern-day civilizing missions and, in the more extreme cases, they have facilitated calls for powerful states like the U.S. to assume an

³² Richard Tuck, *Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

³³ Bhikhu Parekh, "Liberalism and colonialism: a critique of Locke and Mill" in *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge, and Power*, ed Parekh et al. (London: Atlantic Highlands, 1995): 96-7. Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

³⁴ Duncan Ivison, *Postcolonial Liberalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47

³⁵ On this approach see David Held, "The Changing Structure of International Law: Sovereignty Transformed?" in *The Global Transformations Reader*, ed. David Held and Anthony McGrew, (Polity, 2003), 164.

imperial burden.³⁶ Such calls only confirm critics' observations of a conceptual link between liberalism and empire.

In light of such critiques, a recent group of scholars has returned to history in order to show that liberalism has not always coexisted comfortably with empire. These scholars often cite thinkers who mobilized liberal ideas to attack empire. Pitts has noted that 'proto-liberals' in eighteenth century Britain and France offered robust critiques of empire, arguing that later liberals tried to accommodate empire due to contingent political circumstance rather than any inherently imperial logic embedded in their principles.³⁷ Andrew Sartori extends this argument noting that Mehta is inattentive to complex debates in the early-modern history of liberalism, pointing out that liberals "developed an elaborate critique of both territorial expansion and the activities of the East India Company."³⁸ Karuna Mantena has suggested that when confronted with the practical failure of liberal aspirations to integrate and civilize indigenous peoples in the empire, British administrators and thinkers tended to turn away from liberal justifications altogether, instead relying on notions of rule with less universalizing tendencies.³⁹ Here liberal ideas proved unsustainable for legitimating empire.

Even among those who identify conceptual links between liberal principles and empire, there is a persistent sense that the link is an uncomfortable one: on the one hand,

³⁶ Advocates of the imperial burden: Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*, (London: Vintage 2003); Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (Penguin, 2005). Those against: Eric Hobsbawm, *On Empire: America, War, and Global Supremacy* (Pantheon, 2008); Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire*, (Verso, 2005); Chalmers Johnson, *Sorrows of Empire*, (Verso Publishing, 2006).

³⁷ Pitts 2005: 1-7; See also Pitts "Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism" *Annual Review of Political Science* (2010): 218.

³⁸ Andrew Sartori, "The British Empire and Its Liberal Mission" *The Journal of Modern History*, 78(3) (September 2006): 629.

³⁹ Mantena 2010: 1-2.

liberals often make basic claims about human equality and the moral importance of self-determination; on the other, liberals have historically been able to countenance a mode of politics fundamentally at odds with these principles.⁴⁰ The common reading, starting with Locke, has been that this tension is overcome by conceiving of indigenous peoples as ‘child-like’ and not yet ready to determine their own fate.⁴¹ This notion is present in the French reformist case. However, there also is a crucial intermediate term in their vision that has not been examined at length in the liberalism-empire debate: persuasion. Insofar as persuasion was the central component of the reformist vision, indigenous people were less child-like in that they putatively would *authorize* their own improvement. In this scheme, locals theoretically possessed more agency and they could be convinced rather than commanded. By understanding this intermediate term and the way it was employed, we can begin to grasp how one form of liberal imperialism avoided immediate collapse under the weight of what today seems like such clear inconsistency. The use of persuasion to cultivate consent allowed these reformists to elide the basic question of imperial legitimacy from a liberal perspective because they believed that they had solved it by, in a way, staying closer to liberal principles of self-determination. We shall see that they failed grandly. Often their approach to persuasion and detecting ‘consent’ allowed them to claim that they had won over local peoples to rule when they had not. Persuasion thus became a justification for imperial rule, a means to assuage moral anxieties about the exercise of power over others, and gave new life to the imperial imaginings of a group

⁴⁰ Parekh 1995: 81.

⁴¹ Mehta 1999.

whose proclamations about the rights of locals conflicted with the realities of ruling an imperial polity.

It probably comes as no surprise to students of empire that persuasion would play a critical role in imperial rule. As the French found out, holding together an empire through coercion is costly. From the practical perspective of day-to-day rule, securing local cooperation through attraction rather than force seems entirely prudent. What is instead noteworthy about the emphasis of persuasion comes from its role in enacting legitimacy. Here the reformist model stretches the concept of empire by discursively collapsing distinctions between center and periphery, ruler and ruled. In this, it offers an excellent opportunity to scrutinize the category of empire itself.

(4) Persuasion and power across community boundaries

I have suggested thus far that this reformist story should be of scholarly interest for several reasons: Most broadly, it helps us better understand the variety of forms empire has taken in history and, in so doing, may help us better grasp what empire *is* (or might be). The story also sheds further light on the periodic historical entanglements of liberalism and empire. The specific case demonstrates that ‘liberal’ imperial engagements came in numerous guises, including ones sufficiently subtle and unfamiliar to have been recently misidentified as anti-imperial. The reformist use of persuasion provides one example of how a group starting with discernibly liberal imperatives employed ideas of consent to give new life to imperial endeavors.

The reformists also were grappling with a basic ethical question: how should power be exercised across community boundaries? Before outlining the dissertation, I

would like to tentatively consider the possibility that their answer might be of interest today beyond the questions of empire outlined above. Could this eighteenth century story provide theoretical insights for thinking more broadly about the ethics of persuasion and the exercise of power in modern global politics? Any such engagement would have to begin with, indeed be founded on, a recognition of the radical differences between the French story and present concerns. These differences might be so great as to make any analogies superficial, misleading, and of little analytical use.

On the other hand, the very foreignness of the case might also make its utility. Roxanne Euben has made this argument when discussing the theoretical use of travel narratives. She notes that exposure to “the unfamiliar” can facilitate precisely the kinds of dislocations that can allow us to return to our own concerns anew, gaining in the process critical distance that enables us to “discern formerly unrecognized patterns and connections.”⁴² Even if they are not precisely the same, foreign patterns and connections may offer the opportunity to reflect with renewed clarity on more familiar ones.

Let us assume for the moment that empires have disappeared, or that they have evolved such that their current forms are not comparable to those of the past. What possible interest could the reformist turn to persuasion have for us in the present? If empires have disappeared, analogous power dynamics in global politics have not. This may be partly why the term ‘empire’ persists in modern political discourse (assuming that the form does not). Hegemonic powers continue to exercise various forms of control over the affairs of other polities. In some cases, these exercises of power are accompanied by

⁴² Roxanne Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton University Press, 2008): 23.

an evident concern for securing consent or ‘local opinion’ in establishing the legitimacy of such interventions. One way to secure consent or ‘local opinion’ is through persuasion.

The reformist case seems to expose several problems associated with relying on persuasion to legitimate the exercise of power across community boundaries. Here the unfamiliarity of the case, particularly as it exists in the context of empire, may lead us to better recognize similar problems in modern cases where power disparities or aspirations of control are less distinct. I shall further explore possible sites of comparison in the conclusion, including debates about soft power and the place of public diplomacy in foreign policy. Here I will merely sketch several problems exposed in the reformist’s attempt:

First, the reformists began with an essentialized understanding of their audience (locals). Radical cultural and power differences exacerbated this problem. In the most extreme sense, essentializing locals allowed the reformists to claim that they could know the outcome before the encounter itself occurred.⁴³ The danger of this stance is that when locals did not react as expected, they could be dismissed as aberrant and unaware of their true interests. In Egypt, French observers at times seemed genuinely surprised when locals did not react as expected, while at others they dismissed locals as (currently) unpersuadable. More practically, by essentializing their audience the French necessarily were less effective: first, as it became less likely that they would win over locals and

⁴³ Here ‘consent’ becomes Hobbesian. It is worth noting that Doris Garraway has offered a related critique of Diderot and Lahontan’s respective ‘natives.’ She notes: “By figuring a critique of French colonial power through fictionalized colonized subjects, Enlightenment thinkers anticipated as well the consent of those imagined colonized peoples to the reform proposals implied within the critique itself.” See her “Of Speaking Natives and Hybrid Philosophers” in *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory*, Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 210.

second, because—and here I push the reformist logic of legitimacy into our own contemporary realm—such an understanding tended to fix locals’ identities in ways at odds with the goal of acknowledging their moral autonomy.⁴⁴

Second, the reformist approach to persuasion tended toward the intransitive.⁴⁵ Here the locals became an audience who either approves or disapproves of what is presented and is unable either to initiate or to alter the terms of what is meant to be common. This is endemic to the hierarchical nature of the political relationship the reformists hoped to enact, and as power disparities increased such modes of communication proliferated. Thus in Egypt we see examples of proclamations aimed at winning over locals rather than the kinds of discussions which some reformists advocated in Madagascar. This is not to say that the reformists were not eager to detect signs of assent. Examples from Egypt suggest that they were very eager indeed, but with the more intransitive modes of communication, colonial officials could convince themselves that they were seeing signs that did not exist and locals had little opportunity to directly correct them (apart, of course, from violent revolt).

Third, the reformist approach to persuasion was frequently founded on elision, where intermediary tactics tended to obscure their ultimate goal of imperial rule. Here locals could be won over in the realm of economy (i.e. they would trade with colonists) or in their interest in colonists’ knowledge, and colonists would take this as a sign of willingness to submit to, or even as a desire for, a colonial relationship. As we will see with the Egyptians’ responses, this was not the case. However, this elision allowed the

⁴⁴ This is effectively the multiculturalist critique of liberal approaches to deliberative democracy. See Young’s critique in Benhabib 1996.

⁴⁵ On the distinction between intransitive and transitive see Marcel Hénaff and Tracy Strong, *Public Space And Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 8-9.

reformists to avoid a direct confrontation with the question of rule either during the course of its establishment or in its ongoing perpetuation. The key figure in Chapter 5, al-Jabarti, shows that this elision did not escape locals' attention. Jabarti's comments reveal that the French had fallen into a fantasy in which they would create a just political order without actually attending to justice. The French approach to persuasion, particularly their reliance on elisions, had convinced them that this was possible.

(5) Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation proceeds as follows:

Chapter 1 considers empire by persuasion before it appeared fully formed in the *Histoire des deux Indes*. I suggest that Denis Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*, while often considered a model example of French anti-imperial sentiment, is better understood as a meditation on the possibilities of a just colonialism. By examining the broader debates in which the work was embedded, we find that the criticisms that Diderot marshals against colonial practices are mostly outdated and are ones with which contemporary explorers and colonial administrators agreed. I suggest that Diderot plays on the idea of commerce to envision a system in which individual erotic desires aggregate to social good. Here Diderot imagined a system of consanguineous exchange, which had precedents in French colonial practice and which he would praise in the *Histoire*. I conclude that the *Supplement*, while not an outright endorsement, is an exploration of the possibilities of a just colonialism.

Chapter 2 shows how empire by persuasion came to be a credible vision among French reformers. I focus on the work that would crystallize and promulgate this vision:

Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*. I consider three tactics that Raynal praises as a means to legitimate colonization: emulation, consanguinity, and discursive persuasion. I explain the historical developments that allowed Raynal to employ each tactic in articulating the reformist vision of empire, while also showing that his ideas about colonization were formed within a network of reformists both in France and overseas. The tactics set out in the *Histoire* connected Raynal to later reformist projects.

Chapter 3 functions as a bridge, showing that the reformist ideas articulated in Raynal's work persisted without significant alteration through the French Revolution. Where the issue of ruling native peoples persisted, such as in debates about colonizing West Africa, India, and the Barbary Coast, reformist ideas dominated. These ideas persisted because they provided a convenient position from which to attack British colonial practice and also because most of the projects imagined during this period were not implemented. I also trace the reception of Raynal's work, which ultimately led him to focus on colonization in the Mediterranean. In this he correctly anticipated broader French interest in such projects. Raynal's personal shift to the Mediterranean led him to meet two future members of the Egyptian expedition: the Orientalist Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis (with whom Raynal collaborated) and Napoleon Bonaparte (who as a youth aspired to emulate Raynal). I then consider evidence that Raynal might have influenced Bonaparte's colonial ideas or ideas about Egypt.

Chapter 4 suggests that in order to make sense of what the French thought they were doing in Egypt, it is necessary to attend to the overlooked legacy of French colonial reformism there. I consider the roots of key language and concepts on the expedition, and explain a number of French tactics for attracting local popular opinion as deriving from

the empire by persuasion model. In setting out the tactics, I elucidate how the French authorities came to believe they would work. I then focus on a senior French official on the expedition whose conduct and policies were founded on the reformist vision. Here we see the empire by persuasion model applied in the midst of a military occupation.

Chapter 5 explains what locals made of the empire by persuasion model in practice. I focus on the writings of two Egyptians, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti and Hasan al-‘Attar, as well as a Greek-Lebanese observer, Niqula al-Turk, who also recorded local reaction in Arabic. Here several problems in the French approach become apparent, including the difficulty of predicting what will attract (potential) subjects across community boundaries and the gap between French tactics and co-opting locals into French rule. The final portion of the chapter describes Jabarti’s counter-theory of persuasion, which posits that the way to persuade subjects is through just conduct rather than trickery. This counter-theory stands as a powerful rebuke against the French model even if it suffers from its own internal inconsistencies.

The concluding chapter returns to the question of empire as a political form as well as the place of the reformists’ vision in the history of liberalism and empire. I explain further how the reformists were able to sustain their vision for so long by relying on flawed understandings of persuasion and by discursively collapsing the distinction between ruler and ruled. I argue that in their emphasis on persuasion, they ignored the very questions about justice that had led them to search for an alternative mode of colonization in the first place. I then use the pathologies of the reformist approach to persuasion as a starting point for a broader discussion about the problem of persuasion across community boundaries. I note that the empire by persuasion story illuminates

problems associated with the use of 'soft power' and public diplomacy in foreign policy today.

CHAPTER 1

An Empire of Eros:

Colonizing through Desire in the *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*

An appropriate place to begin the empire by persuasion story is with an imagined dialogue between Europeans and indigenous people. Prompted by the description of Tahiti in Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's *Voyage around the World*, Denis Diderot wrote his *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage,"* in part, to think through colonial encounters at the most local level. Diderot narrates two dialogues that include Tahitian characters conversing with Frenchmen from Bougainville's party. These conversations range over various subjects but, broadly speaking, they offer critiques of European ideas and practices from religion to colonialism. It is critiques of the latter that have led many observers to characterize the work as an anti-imperial tract.¹ In this chapter, I shall argue against this view and suggest instead that Diderot was tentatively exploring the possibilities of exchange and colonization founded on a just relationship with locals. In so doing, he tried to work out how exchange might take place on locals' terms and for truly mutual benefit. His solutions are arresting but when understood in light of contemporary debates, they reflect his interest in an alternative mode of colonization.

¹ Yves Benot. *Diderot: De L'athéisme à L'anticolonialisme*, (Paris: F. Maspero), 1970; Peter Jimack, ed. *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (London: Grant & Cutler 1988), 18; Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, (Princeton University Press, 2003), 49; Sharon Stanley "Unraveling Natural Utopia: Diderot's Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville," *Political Theory* 37 (2009): 284.

A few scholars have recently begun to reassess the *Supplement's* orientation toward colonization.² This chapter departs from such reassessments by situating the work in a wider (and mostly ignored) context, including debates about colonization in the Pacific, discussions about population growth and state power, and specific French proposals for alternative forms of colonization, particularly in Madagascar. The context helps to reveal the political significance of the dialogue and its place in broader colonial reformist ideology. The work did not circulate amongst the public. Instead, its significance lies in its radical approach to exchange with locals and the possibilities this leaves open for later colonization. This radical vision allows us to understand what was conceivable within the reformist frame. The exchange modeled in the dialogue, while not unique in its outlines, is particularly noteworthy because it suggests the possibility of true mutuality in which Europeans also might be persuaded (like the priest who is convinced to give up his 'holy orders'). However, by modeling dialogue with natives rather than recording it, Diderot is able to imagine a form of exchange that creates a space for colonization, while at the same time accommodating the fictionalized views of imagined (potential) subjects.³ This colonization would be founded on 'consent,' but it also allows Diderot to imagine a solution to the colonial problem without having to truly confront what locals might actually want. Thus even in the *Supplement*, where dialogue between European and native is most developed and where the author avoids an open endorsement

² See James Klausen. *Primitives Accumulating: The Alien Encounters of Diderot and Rousseau*. (PhD diss, U.C. Berkeley, 2005); Sunil Agnani, "Doux Commerce, Douce Colonisation: Diderot and the Two Indies of the French Enlightenment," in Wolff and Cipolloni eds. *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, (Stanford University Press, 2007).

³ Doris Garraway "Of Speaking Natives and Hybrid Philosophers: Lahontan, Diderot, and the French Enlightenment Critique of Colonialism" in Carey and Festa, ed., *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 210 and 234.

of empire, problems associated with persuading native peoples appear. Later chapters will show that such problems would only get worse in other reformist schemes.

In this chapter, I argue that in the *Supplement* Diderot tries to imagine what he takes to be the foundation of a legitimate empire, i.e. one that respects the rights of native peoples. To do this, he sets out a system based on commerce, but not the kind of commerce that most Europeans by the eighteenth century considered to be crucial for a successful empire. Instead, Diderot plays on the double meaning of the term “commerce,” which carries a sexual connotation in addition to its standard mercantile meaning.⁴ This sexual commerce would be the product of local people and colonists pursuing their natural desires. It would result in colonies founded in consanguinity rather than coercion. Here it might be possible to have a legitimate empire in that native subjects would be led *by their own desires* to accept European rule. In the *Supplement* itself, Diderot does not endorse colonization. However, once we begin to understand the contemporary debates about colonization embedded in Diderot’s text, as well as his endorsement of certain colonization practices elsewhere, the *Supplement* appears as a reflection on the possibilities of founding a just empire rather than a rejection of empire itself.

I begin by considering the Old Man’s Farewell in the text. Here I suggest that the Old Man, though a critic of colonization, advances an outdated criticism. European

⁴ See for example the entry for “jouir” in the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, 4th Edition (1762)*. To enjoy relations with a woman is explained here in terms of having *commerce* with her: “On dit, jouir d’une femme, pour dire, avoir commerce avec elle.” Diderot was not original in using *commerce* this way. In the 1750s, the Swedish naturalist Peter Kalm described New France thus: “It is difficult to judge of the true conceptions of the savages, as their blood is mixed with that of Europeans due to their frequent commerce with the French, who, traveling in the country, contribute a good part of the growth of Indian families.” In Philippe Haudrère, *L’Empire des rois, 1500-1789* (Paris: Denoël, 1997), 260.

explorers who were searching for new colonies in the Pacific would have agreed with many of his arguments. The Old Man departs from contemporary colonial attitudes, however, in his attack on commerce as a means to colonization. He uses pleasure as the criterion for rejecting commerce with Europeans, arguing that the standard approach to commercial exchange will bring locals no pleasure. This provides an opening for the second Tahitian character Orou, whom I discuss in Part 2. Orou sets out a commerce founded on pleasure rather than the exchange of goods. In so doing, he articulates a system of free exchange in which both parties benefit. While the offspring of this sexual exchange are vital for Orou's system, mixed offspring also leave open the possibility for later colonization. I explore this possibility in Part 3 with a discussion of French citizenship rules applied to children of mixed parentage. Part 3 also sets the *Supplement* in context with contemporary schemes for colonization based on consanguinity and concludes by noting that Diderot himself praised such schemes in other work. In light of such praise, I suggest that the *Supplement* is Diderot's first exploration of the possibility of an alternative and possibly just form of empire.

(1) The Old Man

The Old Man's Farewell speech is a forceful assault on European practices of colonization. This portion of the dialogue has led a number of commentators to declare the *Supplement* an anti-imperial text.⁵ Other readers have suggested that the Old Man represents a closed approach to cultural interactions that Diderot would have us reject.⁶ In

⁵ Most recently Muthu, 49 and Benot. See also note 1 above.

⁶ Wilda Anderson, *Diderot's Dream* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), Ch. 4 and Claudia Moscovici, "An Ethics of Cultural Exchange: Diderot's *Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville*" *Clio*, 30 (3): 289.

what follows, I shall suggest that one can accept most of the Old Man's criticisms of colonization and still avoid labeling the *Supplement* a fundamentally anti-imperial text. Much of the Old Man's energy is directed at European colonization practices that were discredited even in the minds of contemporary explorers like Bougainville and Cook who were tasked to find new colonies in the Pacific. Examining the Old Man's speech in its contemporary context reveals that his criticism is, for the most part, only unique as it relates to commerce. Yet, even his criticism of commerce is not without its problems. The Old Man uses pleasure as the grounds to reject commercial exchange with Europeans. The other prominent Tahitian in the dialogue, Orou, will then use pleasure as the criterion for constructing a system of exchange with the Europeans. This exchange system ultimately leaves open the possibility of European colonization.

The Old Man's Farewell is a considerable obstacle to any pro-colonial reading of the *Supplement*. The speech necessarily tempers any such reading and demonstrates, at the very least, the intense ambivalence that Diderot felt toward imperial ventures.⁷ Bougainville also shared something of this ambivalence. "It is to be wished for the sake of the inhabitants that Nature had refused them items that attract the cupidity of Europeans. ... Farewell happy and wise people, may you always remain what you are," he writes in his journal—this a few lines before he records the act of taking possession of Tahiti for France.⁸ If Diderot's Old Man carries any ambivalence it is only that the

⁷ It is overhasty, however, to suggest as Jimack does that "there is no ambiguity about the way in which Diderot means us to read the speech." Peter Jimack, ed. *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (London: Grant & Cutler 1988), 18.

⁸ John Dunmore, ed. *The Pacific Journal of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, 1767-1768* (London: Hakluyt Society, 2002), 74-5. Bougainville wrote in his journal: "This country is finer and could be wealthier than any of our colonies" (ibid., 66). Cook also shared this ambivalence. Even while on a voyage to secretly reconnoiter new colonies for Britain, he lamented the change wrought by Europeans in the Americas.

Tahitians ought to have murdered the European explorers thereby keeping Tahiti in an uncorrupted state.⁹ The Old Man begins his speech by denouncing the Europeans as bringers of corruption and slavery, and then turns to the question of possession.¹⁰ From his point of view, the dispossession of native lands is a crime akin to brigandage. The Old Man's attack here can be summarized as the basic question for colonizers: By what right do these Europeans take possession of the land?

It is worth noting that the Old Man is not entirely consistent in his discussion of possession. He begins by criticizing the Europeans for their notions of property: "Here all things are for all, and you have preached to us I know not what distinctions between mine and thine."¹¹ On its face, this claim appears to be a rejection of the notion of property altogether. However, Diderot soon shows that the Old Man indeed knows about distinctions between "mine and thine" when it comes to land. He wonders by what right the Europeans can dispossess Tahitians of their land and asks—echoing earlier European critics of colonization—whether it would be legitimate for Tahitians to take possession of lands in France through equivalent symbolic acts.¹² The instability of the Old Man's position allows Diderot to critique both the presumption that property is natural and the

Europeans had introduced disease and wants hitherto unknown among peoples who had been content with what they possessed. "If anyone denies the truth of this assertion," Cook declares, "let him tell me what the natives of the whole extent of America have gained by the commerce they have had with Europeans" in Richard Landsdown, *Strangers in the South Seas: The Idea of the Pacific in Western Thought*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 72.

⁹ Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 187. Cited as *RN* hereafter.

¹⁰ Diderot didn't imagine the Old Man character: Bougainville writes in the *Voyage* "This venerable man seemed to be rather displeased with our arrival; he even retired without answering our civilities . . . his thoughtful and suspicious air seemed to show that he feared the arrival of a new race of men would trouble those happy days which he had spent in peace." See Louis de Bougainville, *A Voyage Around the World*. (New York: De Capo Press, 1967), 221. The old man does not, however, appear in Bougainville's original journal.

¹¹ *RN*, 187.

¹² For one example see Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*. (Northern Illinois Press, 1999), 43.

apparent injustice of European practices of dispossession at the same time (neither question is resolved decisively here). The Old Man's inconsistency also destabilizes his position as a persuasive speaker and functions to provoke the reader into considering his claims more closely.¹³

Further destabilization comes at the end of the Old Man's farewell in which one of the characters undermines the authenticity of the speech by noting: "I seem to detect a few European ideas and turns of phrase" in the Old Man's remarks.¹⁴ This observation comes after a series of criticisms that the Old Man advances against the Europeans. He attacks the hypocrisy of Bougainville's party, which reacted violently to petty thefts by Tahitians while simultaneously planning the theft of the country. The Europeans are shown to lack a proper sense of reciprocity and their desire to appropriate Tahitian land can only be a violation of natural law because appropriation will mean the enslavement of the local populace. Finally, as the Tahitians have violated neither natural law nor the law of nations, the Europeans are not within their rights to make war on the Tahitians and legitimately dispossess their land. These criticisms are to be identified with common European discourses, be they of natural freedom or the law of nations and would be familiar to Diderot's readers.

The detection of European ideas isn't superfluous however. It serves to undermine the reader's confidence in what has just transpired. Who is the Old Man? Is he

¹³ On the *broader* question of dialogue as a means to provoke reader reflection about their own political circumstances, see Dena Goodman "The Structure of Political Argument in Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*" *Diderot Studies*, 21 (1983): 123-137.

¹⁴ *RN*, 192.

to be believed? Does he speak as a Tahitian? He is “not a true primitive.”¹⁵ Indeed, he possesses political authority in the dialogue only to have his authority as a speaker destabilized.¹⁶ This produces a momentary uncertainty about him and about Diderot’s endeavor: is he (merely) ventriloquizing? In my conclusion below, I shall return to the broader colonial implications of Diderot’s impersonation of the Tahitians. For now however, it is important to examine Diderot’s solution to the uncertainty as it reveals the Old Man as advancing criticisms that most colonial authorities would have agreed with.

To deal with the uncertainty about the Old Man, Diderot adds a puzzling explanation, which ultimately reveals the character’s limited position:

You must remember that [the Old Man’s speech] is a translation from Tahitian into Spanish and from Spanish into French. ... Orou wrote down the old man’s harangue in Spanish and Bougainville had a copy of it in his hand while the old man was speaking.¹⁷

The Tahitians, in particular members of Orou’s family, had preserved the knowledge of Spanish through several generations. For many years the bulk of European traffic across the Pacific was Spanish galleons shuttling between the Americas and Philippines, exchanging silver for Chinese goods.¹⁸ At least one commentator has identified the presence of Spanish as Diderot’s attempt to use history as a means to make his account more credible.¹⁹ From this perspective, Spanish exists in the dialogue as a trinket that has been passed down through one family and anchors the dialogue in real historical circumstance. But the Spanish tended to have little interest in the islands between their

¹⁵ Christie V. McDonald: “The Reading and Writing of Utopia in Denis Diderot’s *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*” *Science Fiction Studies* (Nov., 1976): 251.

¹⁶ Diderot uses a similar strategy to destabilize his narrator’s authority in *Jacques the Fatalist*.

¹⁷ *RN*, 192.

¹⁸ Landsdown 2006, 7.

¹⁹ Marcel Hénaff in *The Libertine Reader* (NY: Zone Books, 1997), 57. For an alternative reading see McDonald 1976: 251.

colonies on the Pacific's edges. Magellan's voyage seems to have molded the Spanish imagination about the Pacific: he sailed twelve thousand miles across the ocean and observed only one atoll along the way.²⁰ In fact, Bougainville's account omits any reference to an earlier Spanish presence.²¹

To understand why Diderot includes this seemingly innocuous reference, it is necessary to understand what the Spanish signified in contemporary discussions about Pacific colonization. With this we can better understand part of Diderot's complex relationship toward colonization. While the Spanish didn't have a significant physical presence in the eighteenth century Pacific, their colonization experience in the New World continued to exercise dominion over the imagination and policy of European explorers. In 1756, Charles de Brosses published his *Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes*, a summary of the major voyages across the Pacific since the sixteenth century. The text served as a compendium of the little geographical and anthropological knowledge at the time, and called for increased exploration in the Pacific.²² In it, the Frenchman warns against following the Spanish example:

Supposing that by a fortune equal to that which Christopher Columbus brought to our neighbors, we were ever to make a complete discovery of the southern world, their example will serve as instruction to us: we will avoid the two vices which were those of the Spanish, avarice and cruelty.²³

²⁰ Landsdown 2006, 7.

²¹ This is not however to suggest that there was no indication of earlier contacts in Tahiti. See e.g. Hénaff 57-8. The English had landed on Tahiti in 1767.

²² Diderot was acquainted with de Brosses who was a member of the Academy of Dijon. They discussed at length the subject matter of the prize for which Rousseau would eventually write the *Discourse on Inequality*. Upon meeting Diderot, de Brosses remarked, "He is an agreeable fellow, very charming, very likeable, a great philosopher, a great arguer, but dealing in perpetual digressions. He made a good twenty-five of them in my room yesterday, from nine o'clock to one." in A. Wilson, *Diderot*, (Oxford University Press, 1972), 224.

²³ Charles de Brosses. *Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes*. (Paris: Durand, 1756), 17. (My translation). Or even more forcefully in John Callander's appropriation of de Brosses's text: "Should we ever be fortunate enough to effectuate a discovery, and make settlements in the Southern world, the

The Black Legend, wherein fellow Europeans described Spanish colonizers as particularly rapacious and cruel, thus remained present in the eighteenth century Pacific.²⁴ The desire to avoid repeating what had transpired in the New World was manifest also in royal instructions for taking possession of newly discovered lands. Cook, who like Bougainville had read de Brosse, carried explicit instructions limiting the kinds of lands that he could take possession of. It was only in cases where native peoples were at the lowest stage of civilization—lacking rudimentary agriculture and social relations beyond family—that he could take possession of their lands. In these types of cases, most eighteenth century observers (including Diderot elsewhere) agreed that such lands could be appropriated.²⁵ Cook determined that the Aborigines in Australia fell into this stage of civilization and claimed their land for Britain.²⁶ According to de Brosse's British editor John Callander, the Tahitians emphatically did not fall into this lowest stage.²⁷ Cook also shared de Brosse's fear that the Pacific would see a repetition of the devastation caused by the Spanish in the Americas. He worried that Europeans would introduce disease and corruption. For Europeans thinking about exploration and colonization in the Pacific, the Spanish example served as a warning of what not to do.

In speaking through Spanish to communicate with Bougainville's party, the Old Man speaks through the language of a discredited colonizer. In Bougainville's account,

example of the Spaniards will prove a useful lesson, and teach us to avoid avarice and cruelty." *Terra Australis Cognita: or, voyages to the Terra Australis, or Southern hemisphere, during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.* (Edinburgh, 1766-68), 12.

²⁴ It should be noted that the Black Legend extends beyond colonization. For a good account of shifting attitudes toward the Black Legend during this period in Britain see: Gabriel Paquette, "The Image of Imperial Spain in British Political Thought, 1750-1800," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 81(2), 2004, 196-7

²⁵ For a discussion of Diderot see Chapter 2 below and Jimmy Klausen "Of Hobbes and Hospitality in Diderot's *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville*," *Polity* 37(3): 186-7.

²⁶ Landsdown 2006: 8.

²⁷ Callander 1766-8: 14.

the Old Man's actions, rather than words, communicate his displeasure with the newly arrived Europeans:

This venerable man seemed to be rather displeased with our arrival; he even retired without answering our civilities, ...very far from taking part in the raptures all this people was in at our sight, his thoughtful and suspicious air seemed to show that he feared the arrival of a new race of men would trouble those happy days which he had spent in peace.²⁸

By adding Spanish as a medium to his account, Diderot wants to express more than just the Old Man's displeasure. Diderot identifies the Old Man's farewell with the Spanish language, and indeed the Spanish experience.²⁹ Where Bougainville's old man communicates his displeasure with gesture, the only way that Diderot's Old Man can communicate is through the medium of an already discredited colonizing power. What Diderot's Old Man knows and laments of colonization is translated through the Spanish experience. Insofar as this is the case, the Old Man attacks a mode of colonization that contemporaneous European colonizers also attacked. In this everyone seemed to be in agreement: one should not emulate the Spanish example in the Pacific.

To reject Spanish colonization practices, of course, isn't to reject colonization itself.³⁰ While both Bougainville and Cook feared that their discoveries would lead to the same calamities as those of the New World, they did not reject colonization. De Brosse, after warning against following the Spanish example, continues on:

²⁸ Bougainville 1967: 221. Again, this incident is not present in Bougainville's journal. Note also that Tahitian solicitousness and the old man's displeasure were probably more related to their experience with the British who'd landed there in 1767 than anything else.

²⁹ While Orou is the translator, when we get to him in the dialogue we are allowed to forget that he is speaking in Spanish.

³⁰ Indeed this was a standard polemical move in discussions about colonization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Vincent Confer. "French Colonial Ideas before 1789" *French Historical Studies* 3(3), (Spring, 1964), 344.

Experience has taught us, that a solid and well-regulated commerce should form our principle object in those distant climes, and not the conquest of large kingdoms beyond the Line. To effectuate this, we need only to have a few colonies fixed in the most proper places... for the surest method of keeping these savage nations in a state of useful dependence, is, to take care, that they shall always find it for their advantage, to exchange the product of their country for that of ours.³¹

The model for de Brosse and Bougainville was, to a certain extent, that of the Dutch.³²

(Both hoped that French colonization might check further British overseas expansion.)³³

The empire would be expanded with a view to augment oceanic trade rather than land-based conquests. This was the aim of French exploration in the Pacific.³⁴ Bougainville was so taken with the Dutch model that, after arriving in Batavia (Indonesia), he wrote in his journal:

O my country, wake up, it is time. Neptune has not sworn you an eternal hatred. Is it not his custom to assist Venus's favorites? But it is only by an assiduous devotion that one obtains the sympathy of the gods.³⁵

Rather than pursuing the kind of wanton dispossession that the Old Man attacks in his farewell, the means of new colonization would be to establish mutually beneficial commercial relations with local peoples. The commercial relations would allow Europeans to establish colonies with the assent of local peoples and without the sort of

³¹ Here I use Callander's translation as it does not deviate significantly from de Brosse's original. Callander, 12. The "Line" of course referring to the division established by Pope Alexander VI's *Inter caetera divinae* (May 4, 1494) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (June 7, 1494) which partitioned the western hemisphere between the Portuguese and Spanish crowns.

³² Dutch insofar as oriented toward trade rather than territoriality, minus the monopoly and use of private companies. Partly this is to avoid praising their British competitors. Bougainville also notes Dutch despotism in Java (in *Voyage*, 431).

³³ See de Brosse, iv. It should be noted that for de Brosse this colonization should be the responsibility of the crown rather than a private trading company. For Bougainville, see following note.

³⁴ See for example Bougainville's original instructions from the crown: "since no European nation has any settlement on, or claim over, these islands, it can only be to France's advantage to survey them, and to take possession of them if they offer articles of value to her trade and her navigation." in Dunmore 2002: 67.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 155. Here Bougainville invokes Aeneas, the favorite of Neptune and Venus, and founder of a new empire. Recall also that the French had lost a significant portion of their overseas possessions in the Seven Years War though, unlike the sons of Troy, they hadn't lost all of their lands.

violence that plagued the New World. Commerce would be the means to avoid the Spanish precedent.

I shall ultimately suggest that Diderot agreed with this view, though in the *Supplement* he reinterprets what is meant by ‘commerce.’ To understand how Diderot reinterprets ‘commerce’ and explores the possibilities of new forms of colonization, it is first useful to review his critique of the commercial modes envisioned by many of his contemporaries (including de Brosse). The Old Man’s speech provides the means to do this. The essential presupposition of de Brosse et al. was that commercial exchange was mutually beneficial for Europeans and native peoples. Both groups could exchange their produce in an equitable fashion and without coercion. According to de Brosse, islanders in the Pacific were particularly interested in acquiring iron. In a provocative inversion he asserts that their desire for iron surpasses that of Europeans for gold:

The extreme avidity of the islanders in the South-sea for this metal is well known, or rather their insatiable avarice while they discover a stronger passion for it than the *Europeans* for gold.³⁶

Here the islanders are like the Spanish in their greed for iron. They are driven by a passion even stronger than those most avaricious of European colonizers. By constructing this equivalence, de Brosse is able to posit a form of colonization wherein the local peoples are driven by greed to exchange and ultimately accept colonization. Rather than luring colonizers as it had in the New World, metal lures native subjects into relations that eventually result in colonization.

Consider the Old Man’s response to the prospect of commerce with Europeans:

“We possess already all that is good or necessary for our existence.”³⁷ He summarily

³⁶ Callander, 11; de Brosse, 17.

rejects all commerce as useless and detrimental to Tahitian modes of living. In so doing, he functions as an extreme response to contemporary European enthusiasm for commercial exchange. Taken in moderation the Old Man's response has a certain power. Consider for example that in 1724 Daniel Defoe, ignoring the demands of local climate, breathlessly imagined the possibilities for English manufactures in the South Seas:

[the nakedness of local peoples would] consequently take off a very great quantity of English woollen manufactures, especially when civilized by our dwelling among them and taught the manner of clothing themselves for their ease and convenience....³⁸

While English wool seems to be the last convenience islanders in the balmy South Pacific might need, this is, of course, not the only form that commerce could take. As noted above, Tahitians appeared to be particularly interested in exchanging their produce for iron. This observation wasn't limited to de Brosses. Bougainville noted the exchange value of the metal as well. (He also feared that interaction with Europeans would bring on "the evils of the iron age".)³⁹ Indeed other members of Bougainville's expedition noted the enthusiasm with which Tahitians sought out European *techne*. Philibert Commerson, the expedition's naturalist, exclaimed, "how eagerly they came to examine and to take the dimensions of boats, sails, tents, barrels, and indeed of everything which they suppose could be imitated with advantage to themselves!"⁴⁰ According to French observers, the Tahitians were particularly interested in trade with Europeans. They eagerly sought European agricultural and technical knowledge. If this is correct, Diderot's Old Man, in

³⁷ RN, 188.

³⁸ In 1724. Landsdown, 60.

³⁹ From 4/18/1768. Dunmore, 74.

⁴⁰ In M. Ross, *Bougainville*. (London: Gordon & Cremonesi, 1978), 120. Commerson continues: "they wanted an explanation of every dish; if any vegetable seemed good, they asked for the seed of it, and, on receiving some, wanted to know where and how it should be planted, and when it should be ready for use. ...They followed and understood all the details of these matters. Indeed, often it was only necessary to tell them the half of it, for they understood or divined the rest."

rejecting commerce completely, sought to keep his people from pursuing what they found to be useful.

One way to understand the Old Man's behavior is to consider him obstinate. From this perspective he functions as an object of criticism for Diderot. He is either insufficiently attuned to the necessity of adaptation in an evolving world, or he mirrors the sense of cultural superiority that afflicts the Europeans.⁴¹ In either case, the Old Man rejects commerce because he would like to see his world remain fixed as it allegedly was before European arrival. This desire makes the Old Man utopian in his outlook and ultimately blameworthy. Coupled with Diderot's praise of commerce elsewhere,⁴² there is something to be said for this reading. If the Old Man is overly sentimental for a possibly fictitious past, so too are the Europeans who bring change reluctantly and with a sense of tragedy—such as Bougainville and Cook. (Here again he sounds like a European.) If the Old Man's position on commerce is blameworthy in its extremity, it nevertheless allows Diderot to explore the detrimental effects of commerce on native peoples while also positing the criteria for exchange that he explores with Orou later in the dialogue. I shall now turn to this exploration and the criteria that Diderot posits.

Above it was clear that the Old Man saw commerce as introducing unnecessary elements into Tahitian life. His judgment is based on an economy of pleasure and pain. It also illustrates something of a utilitarian calculus: “allow sensible people to stop when they see they have nothing to gain but imaginary benefits from the continuation of their

⁴¹ Anderson 1990: 151 and Moscovici 2001: 148, respectively.

⁴² For example in his contributions to the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique du commerce et des établissements des Européens dans les deux Indes*. See Jimack ed. *A History of the Two Indies*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 271 and 277.

painful labors.”⁴³ The benefits to be derived from commercial exchange are not worth the cost in painful labor and reduction in the pleasure of leisure. “When will we enjoy ourselves [*jouirons-nous*]?” asks the Old Man. According to him, “nothing” has been “more desirable” for the Tahitians than “leisure.”⁴⁴ Now, however, commerce threatens to introduce a boundless desire for acquisition. This desire, based on an endless accumulation of products, upsets the fixed amount of labor that the Tahitians (or is it the Old Man?) have established as sufficing for the necessities of life. By dislodging fixed labor amounts, commerce threatens to set Tahitian society in flux. No longer will the Tahitians have the time to pursue that organizing principle of their lives: enjoyment.⁴⁵ The desire to acquire goods is fine for Europeans if they like, the Old Man asks however that they leave the Tahitians “in peace.”⁴⁶

In many respects the Old Man offers criticisms of European colonization that European colonizers themselves advance. For this reason, his criticisms are to some extent obsolete. While Europeans were still dispossessing native lands, in the Pacific explorers imagined colonization founded on commerce rather than the conquest of large tracts of land. It is then therefore in his criticism of commerce where the Old Man deviates from contemporary thinking about colonization.

The Old Man uses enjoyment as the criterion for judging the benefits of commercial exchange with Europeans. He finds what they offer insufficiently valuable and thus rejects commerce. But what if one could have commerce based on enjoyment? The next section explores just such a commerce. It turns to the other main Tahitian

⁴³ *RN*, 189.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See note 5 above.

⁴⁶ *RN*, 189.

character in the *Supplement*, Orou, who functions as an alternative to the Old Man's viewpoint.

(2) Orou and the Eroto-economics of Colonization

Where the Old Man rejects commerce on the grounds of pleasure, Orou offers an alternative commerce based on pleasure. Orou sets out his account in a discussion with the expedition's Chaplain. The discussion is prompted by Orou's surprise at the Chaplain's refusal when the Tahitian offers his daughters to the guest. After the Chaplain explains his religious duties, Orou describes the Tahitian economy and the role that the French visitors play in it. Here children are carriers of communal wealth and the French impregnate Tahitian women in mutually beneficial sexual 'exchange.' Recent commentary has suggested that Orou advances a more favorable vision than the Old Man does. In this view, Orou models an ability to adapt in the face of inevitable change and a model for proper intercultural communication.⁴⁷ In this section, I shall use this reading as a starting point but suggest that Diderot uses Orou to explore basic questions about population growth and state power. In so doing, Diderot posits a system that, for him, is more consistent with basic human behavior and therefore is less coercive than that of Europe. When set in context, Orou's system appears less limited to a critique of European morality or idiosyncratically utopian, and more an artifact from a concrete political debate about state power. Finally, I will suggest that while Orou's system envisions an exchange relationship that places Europeans in an equal or subordinate position vis-à-vis the Tahitians, it also leaves open a very real possibility of later colonization. Diderot

⁴⁷ Again Anderson 1990: 151 and Moscovici 2001: 148, respectively.

includes such an opening in order to explore a unique kind of colonization that rejects coercion, while not fully endorsing colonization itself.

In Tahiti those with the most children are the wealthiest. The system works in the following manner: One-sixth of the country's total harvest is set aside for the support of children and the elderly. Wherever a child goes, her mandated portion of the community harvest follows. Thus as Orou puts it: "the larger the family a Tahitian has, the richer he is."⁴⁸ It quickly becomes clear that this approach to wealth structures familial and social relations. Women who leave their husband's huts take all of the children they originally brought to the relationship "as dowry," while those born during the marriage are divided equally between the parents.⁴⁹ In cases where the parents are not married, every fourth child goes to the father so as to entice men and women to produce as many children as possible. There are significant disincentives for "loose women."⁵⁰ Such women must forfeit their newborns in cases when two men have equally well-founded claims to be the father. When this happens, the mother is allowed only to choose which father to hand over the child to (thereby reducing her 'wealth'). Barren women must wear black veils signifying their inability to produce children. Any woman who sheds the veil and "offers [herself] to men" is "either exile[d] to the northern tip of the island or slavery."⁵¹ Youths who aren't ready to procreate are also made to wear symbols and punished for attempting sexual encounters. Thus sexuality is strictly oriented toward reproduction while even beauty is structured in these terms: "The Athenian Venus has next to nothing in common

⁴⁸ *RN*, 203.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 209-10.

with the Venus of Tahiti—the former is a flirtatious Venus, the latter a fertile Venus.”⁵² In short, “the point of sex is to create children to increase wealth, not satisfy desire”⁵³ and Tahitian strictures, e.g. those regarding barren women, reveal that Tahitian morality is quite severe. In this respect it is not unlike that of Europe.⁵⁴

Lest readers mistake Tahitian social relations for idle hedonism, Diderot repeatedly uses the language of economy to emphasize what is at stake. Thus Orou says to the Chaplain, “we have developed a kind of circulation of men, women and children...which is more important than trade in foodstuffs (which are only the products of human labor) in your country.”⁵⁵ Human beings circulate in a manner similar to traded goods. Children, become “object[s] of interest and value” because they carry a portion of the common wealth.⁵⁶ Orou even describes sexual encounters between the French and Tahitian women in the following manner: “we were levying the heaviest of all taxes on you and your companions.”⁵⁷ To understand what this might mean and how the French could have a role in all this, it is first necessary to consider the logic of Diderot’s Tahitian system.

The Tahitian social/economic system is structured to encourage population growth. Orou describes his country’s needs to the Chaplain:

We have vast areas of lands yet to be put under the plow; we need workers.... We have epidemics from time to time, and these losses must be made up.... We have external enemies to deal with and for this we need soldiers.... A neighboring

⁵² Ibid., 206. The Tahitian Venus is more Willendorf than de Milo.

⁵³ Anderson 136. Of course, desire is the efficient cause for the *telos* of wealth increase.

⁵⁴ Adriana Sfragaro, "La representation de la femme chez Diderot," *SVEC* 193(1980), 1895.

⁵⁵ *RN*, 207.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 206.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 211.

nation holds us in vassalage, and we have to pay an annual tribute to them in men.⁵⁸

These requirements constrain Tahitian life at the most basic familial level. More people are needed to cultivate fallow land. Soldiers are required for defense. Tributes need to be paid. Therefore, the population must increase.

Given the importance of population in eighteenth century political debates, it should not be surprising that Diderot would use demographic growth as the ordering principle for Tahitian society. Demography had been a locus of political contest since the seventeenth century. Louis XIV's minister of finance Jean-Baptiste Colbert (d. 1683) posited that his economic policies could be judged as successful by measuring population increase.⁵⁹ By the eighteenth century, Montesquieu was using the apparent depopulation of modern Europe (in comparison to classical antiquity) as a means to attack contemporary moeurs.⁶⁰ Those who wished to criticize clerical privilege and absolutist policies had, in the fear of depopulation, a convenient "high moral ground" from which to deploy their assaults.⁶¹ Most observers agreed that a state weakened as it became depopulated. Members of the influential physiocratic school such as Quesnay were, in part, motivated by the sense that France was facing population decline.⁶² Increases in population came to be identified with increases in beneficial commerce.

Keeping these preoccupations in mind, it becomes clear why Diderot would have Orou assess a moral code in terms of its productivity. Thus Orou asks the Chaplain, "Is

⁵⁸ Ibid., 211-12.

⁵⁹ Frederick Whelan. "Population and Ideology in the Enlightenment," *History of Political Thought*, 12 (1991), 38.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁶¹ Carol Blum. *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction, and Power in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 4.

⁶² Whelan, 42. Actually the population was not declining see Blum, 2-3.

our moral code a better or a worse one than your own?” The means to judge moeurs is purely functional. Can France “feed more people than it now has”? If it cannot, its moeurs are inferior to Tahiti’s (which can). The Tahitian system, as set out by Orou, subordinates moeurs to productivity and ultimately politics (state power). The system is oriented toward political ends.

While the aim of the Tahitian system is political and economic strength through population increase, this increase is achieved by aligning individual and social utility. As discussed above, Tahitians were encouraged with economic incentives to produce children. In addition to these incentives, the system is founded on a conception of *eros* that leads all participants to willingly engage in socially beneficial ‘commerce.’ As B. posits: “Nature...impels both sexes toward each other with equal force”⁶³ and it is only civil life that distorts this desire. The Tahitians have dealt with this distortion by making the consequences of such encounters—what would be bastard offspring in Europe—a source of wealth and esteem for both sexes. This is especially the case, according to B., for the woman whose “senses cry out for gratification, but she [at least in Europe] is afraid to listen to them.”⁶⁴ Natural *eros* combined with the proper incentives ultimately benefits the strength of the community.

From his early work forward, Diderot had been struggling with the problem of how to align individual and social good, and finding a way to balance these two goods was a persistent theme in his social thought.⁶⁵ Often he concluded that the individual must be subordinated to the social good. In the *Supplement*, the individual is essentially

⁶³ *RN*, 222.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ A. Strugnell. *Diderot's Politics*. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), 26, 101-2; 29, 35.

subordinated to the social (recall the harsh treatment for barren women who shed their veils). For the most part, however, the individual and social good are fulfilled in the same manner. According to Diderot, there is little conflict when the social good is produced by pursuing “an act to which nature invites us by so powerful a summons.”⁶⁶ By pursuing their natural desires, individual Tahitians contribute to the power of the community. Moreover, by aligning social institutions with individual desire, the Tahitians have avoided the problem so common to Europe where the “code of nature, the civil code, and the laws of religion” are out of sync.⁶⁷ Thereby, B. argues, the Tahitians avoid the need for the kind of severe penalties required by “arbitrary” prohibitions (i.e. those related to productive sexual ‘commerce’).

At first glance, Diderot’s alignment of individual and social goods resembles a paired-down version of Bernard Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*.⁶⁸ In both cases the pursuit of individual vice produces public benefit. Where Diderot departs from Mandeville is in suggesting that the ‘vice’ of the Tahitians may not be a vice at all. Indeed he pushes this logic to its apparent breaking point in suggesting that something as abhorrent to most Europeans as incest might be a perfectly reasonable practice. In questioning the moral content of such prohibitions for the sake of population increase, Diderot was participating in a vibrant contemporary discussion in which *philosophes* considered practices such as polygamy and divorce—and in the more extreme cases,

⁶⁶ RN, 222.

⁶⁷ RN, 218.

⁶⁸ Bernard Mandeville. *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

incest—as possible solutions to population decline.⁶⁹ By exploring these forbidden practices, Diderot reveals the degree to which he was willing to go in imagining a well-ordered polity oriented toward population growth and thus state power.

Much of the discussion between Orou and the Chaplain is a critique of European moeurs and their arbitrary prohibitions. However it is worth noting the kind of politics that the Tahitian system engenders. Through its unique alignment of individual and social good, the Tahitian system functions to reduce the need for severe penalties in guiding individual behavior. Wherein the European individual is torn between three competing authorities—the priest, the magistrate and God—in Tahiti, such authorities do not conflict.⁷⁰ Instead, natural desire is the authority but it is controlled in such a way that obedience to desire rewards both individual and community. The Tahitian system then minimizes the need for external coercion by channeling the ever-present natural desires of the individual toward a common good. Insofar as Tahitians are ruled by these internal desires, they are not ruled by the priest or magistrate, but from within. This rule from within is not ‘autonomy’ insofar as there is an ‘autonomous self’ ruling (i.e. one separable from desires). Instead the rule from within is driven by desires that are part of the individual. (Diderot’s materialism rejects the possibility of a self separated from its needs and desires.)⁷¹

⁶⁹ See Blum 2002 - incest: 122; divorce: 61; polygamy: 77. Hume describes a similar practice similar to Tahiti existing among the ancient Britons: “The ancient BRITONS had a singular kind of marriage, to be met with among no other people. Any number of them, as ten or a dozen, joined in a society together, which was perhaps requisite for mutual defence in those barbarous times. In order to link this society the closer, they took an equal number of wives in common; and whatever children were born, were reputed to belong to all of them” in *Essays: Moral Political and Literary*. (Liberty Fund, 1985), 183.

⁷⁰ RN, 200.

⁷¹ See Strugnell 1973: 3-4.

Because the Tahitian system rests on a foundation of natural desire, individual Tahitians act in an inherently predictable manner. Sexual *eros* and the desire for wealth drive each to behave in a way which is, for the most part, congruent with the common good. Again, this is the case because the political/social institutions have been structured properly. A noteworthy result of this arrangement is that while each remains a subject, the very predictability of individuals' behavior makes them as if they were *objects*. As will become clear below, this predictability allows Tahitian authorities such as fathers and village representatives to speak on behalf of their daughters or villagers because the speakers already know what those they 'represent' want (it is natural and encouraged by economic incentives). Because the 'authorities' know and encourage natural desire, rule in Tahiti is less harsh than in Europe according to Diderot. By constructing a system via natural desire and economic incentives, the Tahitians come as close as possible to ruling themselves.

(2.1) The French Role in the Tahitian System

When the French arrived, the Tahitians allowed the explorers to do what they "liked with [Tahitian] women and girls."⁷² The French were permitted this liberty not for the sake of hospitality, however, but instead for the benefit of the Tahitians:

We have a surplus of women and girls over men, and we have enlisted your services to help us out. Among these women and girls there are some with whom our men have thus far been unable to beget any children, and these were the ones we first assigned to receive your embraces.⁷³

Given the requirements of the community (workers, soldiers, etc.) the Tahitians began by trying to make 'assets' which heretofore had been unproductive, useful to the community. By allowing French men to engage in commerce with Tahitian women, the Tahitians

⁷² *RN*, 211.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

were seeking their own advantage. Thus Orou informs the Chaplain: “we were levying the heaviest of all taxes on you and your companions,” adding that the islanders had little interest in European money, food, or goods, but instead Tahitian “women and girls came to draw the blood out of your veins.”⁷⁴ In addition to impregnating heretofore-barren women, the French offer an opportunity for experimentation in eugenics. Diderot has Orou assert: “Although we are stronger and healthier than you, we have observed that you have the edge on us when it comes to intelligence. So we have immediately marked out some of our most beautiful women and girls to collect the seed of a race [la semence d’une race] superior to ours.”⁷⁵ In the event that the experiment fails, the mixed offspring will be sent as ‘debased currency’ to pay off the Tahitian tribute debt to another nation.⁷⁶

Compared to the Old Man’s account explored above, this is a significantly different orientation toward commercial exchange. Where the Old Man lamented the coming of the Europeans and rejected all commerce as useless for the Tahitians, Orou suggests that it is the Tahitians who benefit from interaction because commerce has taken place on *local* terms. The French have brought something valuable to the Tahitians and the exchange takes place unwittingly. Where the Old Man sees the end of a golden age, Orou sees an opportunity to increase the wealth of the community. “Just because we are savages,” Orou cautions the Chaplain, “don’t think we are incapable of calculating where our best advantage lies.”⁷⁷

Considering that Bougainville’s vessels hadn’t been ashore for around three months, it is perhaps silly to ask what the French got from this kind of commerce. Yet in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *RN*, 212.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Orou's formulation of the exchange, the Tahitians are the main beneficiaries. It should be noted however that the Tahitians didn't seek to be the exclusive beneficiaries of the exchange of 'blood.' This becomes clear upon recalling an earlier portion of the dialogue. Among the members of the expedition there was a young woman named Barré who had disguised herself as a man and entered the service of the voyage's naturalist Philibert Commerson.⁷⁸ Upon landing in Tahiti, "[s]everal Tahitians lads had laid hold of [Barré], stretched him[her] out flat on the ground...and were getting ready to render him[her] the customary politeness of the country [*faire la civilité*]."⁷⁹ The Tahitians had recognized her sex through the disguise and thus sought to affect an equivalent exchange to that between French men and Tahitian women. In Diderot's account there was thus the possibility of mutual exchange from the Tahitian point of view.

In comparing Orou's account of commerce to the Old Man's lament, an alternative emerges. Here the Tahitians can 'trade' with Europeans from positions of strength or at least equality. Both sides are subject to the same *eros* and therefore, in pursuing individual pleasure, can produce a mutually beneficial outcome. In a certain respect then neither is subject to the tyranny of another in this system of exchange as both parties are rewarded sufficiently.

At this point it is important to note two complicating elements here, both of which relate to the question of possession. First, ideally Orou's form of commerce would lead to the mutual satisfaction of all parties but the presence of European moeurs has undermined such an outcome. As the Old Man describes it, the European's have

⁷⁸ Diderot's account of the incident is more or less historically accurate.

⁷⁹ *RN*, 193.

introduced a conception of property heretofore absent from Tahiti. Where originally women and girls were “shared [*sont communes*],”⁸⁰ they became “mad” in European arms and the visitors “ferocious in theirs.”⁸¹ The Old Man attributes this conflict to a differing conception of property, which has led the Europeans to introduce notions of a fixed partnership beyond the wills of both parties.⁸² Thus European moeurs distort the possibility of free exchange because they attempt to limit free circulation. The solution, it seems, is to persuade the Europeans to disobey their own moeurs as Orou and his family ultimately do with the Chaplain. Here by reasoning with the Chaplain (and also through appealing to the Chaplain’s natural sense of *eros*) Orou gets the visitor to sleep with his three daughters and wife in direct contravention to his “holy orders.”⁸³

If this first threat to equitable commerce can be dealt with, more troubling is the second. While the Europeans seem to introduce a new form of possession, Tahitian men often describe Tahitian women and girls as what appear to be possessions. As mentioned above, the Old Man describes Tahitian women as “shared.”⁸⁴ Also when the Chaplain rebuffs Orou’s suggestion that he sleep with one of his daughters, Orou responds: “They are mine and I offer them to you.”⁸⁵ Finally recall that the heretofore-barren women were “*assigned*” to “receive [French] embraces.”⁸⁶ This seems to undermine any notion that such commerce could be free because the ‘unit’ of exchange is a human being whose wish seems subordinate to an alleged common good. Recent commentators have argued

⁸⁰ In *Diderot: Oeuvres Complètes*. (Paris: Hermann, 1989), Vol XII p. 590

⁸¹ *RN*, 188.

⁸² This is a synthesis of the Old Man’s position and that of Orou at *RN*, 199.

⁸³ *RN*, 195.

⁸⁴ See note 80 above.

⁸⁵ *RN*, 195.

⁸⁶ *RN*, 212 (ital added).

that this constitutes the limits of the Tahitian model in that it turns women into property for an exchange saturated with patriarchy.⁸⁷ While there is something to be said for such a reading, there are elements in the Tahitian system that defy the label (though the outcome is perhaps no less troubling for contemporary sensibilities). In short, the combination of *eros* and interest are presumed to lead all participants to an exchange willingly. Thus for the women (as with the men) the outcome is always already determined based on the incentives and universal desires of each participant. This then would allow a father like Orou to ‘offer’ his children because he can speak on their behalf (given that he knows what they will say). Orou’s daughter Thia provides evidence for this. She entreats the Chaplain: “Honor me in this hut and among my own family!”⁸⁸ She thereby reveals her own agency in this process. While the structure of the Tahitian system provides the (dis-)incentives for commerce, in the end, it is the girl’s agency which leads the Chaplain to transgress his “religion and holy orders.”⁸⁹ In Diderot’s model then, her desires are aligned with the needs of the community. Because of this alignment the social group needn’t coerce her into this relationship.

Orou’s notion of commerce functions to model a seemingly less coercive and more benign encounter with Europeans. Each party is driven by universal desire and there are incentives for local people to want to engage with the outsiders. Orou then presents an alternative reaction to the encroachment of outsiders from that of the Old Man. Orou shows how the Tahitians can adapt to a changing world and pursue their own benefit

⁸⁷ James Klausen. *Primitives Accumulating: The Alien Encounters of Diderot and Rousseau*. (PhD diss, U.C. Berkeley, 2005), 281. Also Moscovici, 149.

⁸⁸ 196

⁸⁹ 196

while doing so.⁹⁰ Although this approach might appear to turn individuals into predictable automatons, the system ultimately leads to better treatment for children who are now taken care of because they carry wealth wherever they go in Tahiti. A question remains, however, about the status of mixed offspring. Diderot does not specify their citizenship and Orou tells the Chaplain that if mixed offspring turn out to be somehow inferior, they will be used as tribute to another island nation. In the next section, I shall suggest that by leaving this status open, Diderot keeps the possibility of colonization at the center of the dialogue.

(3) Setting the *Supplement* in its Imperial Context

Up until this point, nothing in the discussion of commerce has necessitated colonization or empire. While the Old Man recognizes the intimate relationship between commerce and colonization, Orou's system envisions the Europeans departing (as they indeed did).⁹¹ With Orou's account it seems possible to imagine a relationship based on mutual trade with each side retaining its political autonomy. From this perspective, Diderot's *Supplement* would retain an anti-imperial tone. As mentioned above, a number of commentators have advanced this reading.⁹² It is worth resisting this approach.

In what follows, I shall suggest that in Orou's account of commerce between French men and Tahitian women, we see Diderot reflecting on a form of colonization that had historical and contemporary precedents in French practice. This alternative form was thought to avoid the kinds of coercion that Diderot attacked in the Old Man's farewell.

⁹⁰ Anderson 1990: 151.

⁹¹ At least for a time.

⁹² Bénét 1970 and Muthu 2003.

The best historical example is a French scheme in Madagascar to encourage marriages between colonists and locals, which appeared a few years before Diderot wrote the *Supplement*. In several important respects, the Madagascar scheme resembles Orou's system in Tahiti. While there are also some marked differences, I will suggest that Diderot is using the *Supplement* to explore this alternative form of colonization. That the Madagascar scheme so resembles the Tahitian system is not a coincidence.⁹³ Around the time that he was writing the *Supplement*, Diderot was reading the official correspondence between the court and the Isle de France (where most of the Madagascar projects were being conceived).⁹⁴ In another text, Diderot would also praise an equivalent scheme as a model for just colonization. In the same text, the Madagascar scheme in particular is singled out for praise. From this perspective, the *Supplement* takes on a greater significance in that it is Diderot's first attempt to explore the foundations of a just form of colonization.

At least since Jean-Baptiste Colbert established the *Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* in the 1660s, the French state had used marriage as a tool of colonization. Not only had citizenship rights been extended to all migrants to the Americas, but also children of mixed French-Indian parentage were automatically counted as "French natives, and as such entitled for all rights of succession, good laws, and other

⁹³ After the Revolution, Daniel Lescallier would make a similar comparison. See his "Mémoire relatif à l'isle de Madagascar, par le citoyen Lescallier" (17 fructidor an 9) in Jean Valette, *Lescallier et Madagascar*, (Tananarive: Imprimerie Nationale, 1966), 17-18.

⁹⁴ This included letters between Praslin (the Minister of the Marine) and the local intendant Pierre Poivre, who supported Maudave's scheme (which I describe below). On Diderot and the correspondence, see Gianluigi Goggi "Quelques remarques sur la collaboration de Diderot à la première édition de l'Histoire des deux Indes" in *Lectures De Raynal: l'Histoire Des Deux Indes En Europe Et En Amérique Au XVIIIe Siècle: Actes Du Colloque De Wolfenbüttel*, SVEC 286 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1991), 21; on Poivre and Maudave see Meyer et al. *Histoire De La France Coloniale*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1990), 223.

dispositions, without being obliged to obtain any letter of naturalization.”⁹⁵ Citizenship would be automatically granted so long as the offspring converted to Catholicism. For Colbert, granting citizenship to mixed offspring functioned to establish French power in the New World without depopulating the metropole.⁹⁶ In Colbert’s scheme, there is thus a historical precedent whereby one could imagine that children of mixed Tahitian-French parentage could ultimately be claimed as French citizens. Such a move would then establish grounds for empire in Tahiti without necessarily expropriating the land. Diderot has Orou’s daughter Thia pledge to the Chaplain that she will keep the child’s paternity in memory: “I will write your name on my arm and that of my child.”⁹⁷ While the French explorers will return home, their offspring in Tahiti will be tattooed with the names of their fathers. With such markings they could easily be identified as ‘belonging’ to France.⁹⁸

While Colbert’s schemes in the Americas provide a conceptual precedent which links colonization and marriage, a French proposal for colonizing Madagascar during the eighteenth century is even more interesting. In resemblance and temporal proximity, the Madagascar scheme is similar to Orou’s commercial system in Tahiti. First, some context: French interest in colonizing Madagascar dated to the early 1640s. It began, as so many colonies did, with a series of wildly exaggerated accounts of the riches and fecundity of the country.⁹⁹ After a series of false starts and repeated clashes with local

⁹⁵ In Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, (Yale University Press, 1995), 149-50.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁹⁷ *RN*, 196.

⁹⁸ For a discussion of colonial hybridity as sexual fetish in the ‘Supplement’ see Pamela Cheek, *Sexual Antipodes: Enlightenment Globalization and the Placing of Sex* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 182.

⁹⁹ Prompted by such titles as Walter Hamond’s *A Paradoxe, proving that the inhabitants of the isle called Madagascar... are the happiest people in the World (in temporal things)* of 1640 and Richard Boothby’s *A*

peoples during the 1660s, it was determined that French colonization efforts should be directed toward the more sparsely populated Mascareignes further east in the Indian Ocean.¹⁰⁰ Before this decision was made, Colbert sent a significant contingent of colonists and tasked them with organizing a colony that could serve as a stopover en route to the East Indies and would be administered such that native peoples were treated well.¹⁰¹ Ultimately a series of massacres drove the French out of their coastal enclave, but not before a French colonist had married the daughter of a local chief.¹⁰²

The 1760s saw a revival of interest in colonizing Madagascar. This interest was part of a larger attempt at colonial renewal directed by Louis XV's secretary of foreign affairs, the duc de Choiseul. After the significant colonial losses imposed on France by the Treaty of Paris (1763), in which France was denuded of most of its American territories and was significantly weakened in Bengal, Choiseul recognized that France would need to increase its colonial holdings if it were to continue to compete with the British. Upon presenting the Treaty of Paris to the king, Choiseul remarked that "all the wars conducted for one hundred years have been for commerce."¹⁰³ Madagascar could function as a strategic stopover for commerce between Europe and the East Indies, leading to increased French power in the Indian Ocean. (Around the same time Bougainville was establishing a similarly oriented colony in the Malouines/Falklands with Choiseul's support in order to control access to the Pacific.)

Briefe Discovery or Description of the Most Famous Island of Madagascar of 1646 which described the island as an earthly paradise, much as Tahiti would come to be described.

¹⁰⁰ Modern day Mauritius, Reunion, etc.

¹⁰¹ Meyer et al. 1991: 136.

¹⁰² Ibid., 134.

¹⁰³ Haudrere 1997: 287.

It was in this context that the comte de Maudave, a planter from the Isle de France (Mauritius), proposed a novel kind of colony to Choiseul in 1768.¹⁰⁴ It is worth quoting

Maudave's proposal at length:

La base de notre projet doit être de ne présenter l'esclavage sous aucune forme aux habitants du pays. ...Notre police interdit les mariages de sang-mêlé. Ce principe est bon dans une colonie où la population est divisée en deux classes, les maîtres et les esclaves. Mais le nouvel établissement est dans un cas tout différent. Il s'agit de policer un peuple libre et de nous l'incorporer en quelque sorte. La liberté indéfinie des mariages est un excellent moyen d'y parvenir.¹⁰⁵

The foundational concern for Maudave is that the local people not be subjected to any form of slavery in the colonization process. When a colony's population is divided into two classes, this can only be described as a relationship of slavery. Such an outcome would be a transgression of natural law. Thus Maudave sought to institute a colony based on respect for natural right.¹⁰⁶ His solution for respecting the rights of the colonized: intermarriage. To subject a free people to French rule, it was necessary to turn them into subjects by their own volition. Maudave reasoned that allowing French colonists and Malagasy locals to freely marry would produce a political order based on equality and the rejection of coercion. The new colony would be founded on "tenderness" and "attachment."¹⁰⁷

Maudave's scheme is an explicit attempt to establish empire while respecting the rights of the colonized. He recognizes that the Malagasies are free and suggests that the only way to establish a legitimate rule in Madagascar is through the assent of local peoples. By encouraging intermarriage at all levels of the social strata, Maudave seeks to

¹⁰⁴ Alternate spelling for Maudave: 'Modave.'

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Pluchon, *Histoire de la colonisation française: Tome première*. (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 282.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 283.

extend political participation to a large number of Malagasies. Where heretofore a chief would decide to subject his people to a foreign power, now all of the population is able to participate in this.

There are, of course, several key elements present in Tahiti and missing from Maudave's scheme. First, there is no evident economic incentive. Second, the Madagascar colony would be founded on 'tenderness' and 'attachment' precisely where Tahiti is founded on the vicissitudes of sexual desire. These differences can be explained in terms of Diderot's unique materialist orientation. He believed that marriage was essentially unnatural for humans who, as beings in a world of flux, are best described as constantly changing.¹⁰⁸ In Diderot's Tahiti, this shifting desire is channeled through material interest to establish the kind of lasting bonds that Maudave imagines can rest on affection alone. While Diderot's philosophical commitments are different from those of Maudave, each confronts the same problem (the coercive nature of empire) with the same solution (produce offspring of mixed parentage). Also, in the *Supplement*, Diderot does not openly advocate colonization as Maudave does. Given this difference it is tempting to reject a connection between Madagascar and Tahiti.

Elsewhere, however, Diderot singles out this approach as the proper means to found a colony. In a contribution to the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique du commerce et des établissements des Européens dans les deux Indes*, Diderot writes in a section entitled "The true art of founding colonies" that consanguinity is an

¹⁰⁸ This is evident in *Jacques the Fatalist* (Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 97): "The first time those two creatures of flesh and blood swore undying love to each other was at the foot of a crumbling crag. They bore witness to their constancy beneath a canopy of heaven which is constant only in changing. They themselves were changing even as they spoke and all changed around them, and they believed that their feelings were immune to change! Children! Eternal children!"

excellent method for establishing colonies without resorting to coercion. He imagines sending “to these distant regions a few hundred young men and a few hundred young women[.] The men would have married the women of the country and the women the men.”¹⁰⁹ Apart from the remarkable gender equality in this scheme,¹¹⁰ the putative ease of results is also noteworthy. The native subject would “have formed the highest opinion of these mentors [the Europeans] brought to him by the sea, who used only persuasion and restraint, and he would have committed himself to them unreservedly.”¹¹¹ Indeed, in the *Histoire* Diderot sounds more like Maudave:

Consanguinity, the most pressing and strongest of bonds, would soon have made the newcomers and the natives of the land one single family. ... This happy state of trust would have led to peace, which would have been unthinkable if the newcomers had adopted the lordly and domineering tone of superiors and usurpers.¹¹²

Elsewhere in the text, Maudave’s scheme is singled out as exemplary in its attention to justice:

The marriage of Malagash women to French settlers would have meant a still more important step in the great process of civilizing the island. This bond, at once so intimate and so manifest, would have put an end to those odious distinctions which fuel eternal hatreds, separating for ever peoples living in the same region and under the same laws.¹¹³

This passage was written after the failure of the colony, which was attributable to poor planning and the noxious character of the colonists (“vagabonds collected from the

¹⁰⁹ P. Jimack, ed. *A History of the Two Indies*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 123.

¹¹⁰ Which, incidentally seems to add more evidence for my reading of women’s agency in Tahiti, *viz.* Diderot imagined them as having essentially the same agency as men did.

¹¹¹ Jimack 2006: 123.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

gutters of Europe”).¹¹⁴ This said, the scheme itself is described as founded in “persuasion, “charms,” and “seduction.”¹¹⁵

Diderot then was familiar with the Madagascar scheme and endorsed its methods for use in colonizing the Americas. “Seduction” or the use of *eros* to establish a political relationship with native peoples was appealing in that it promised the possibility of empire without the use of coercion. It would allow potential subjects to willingly submit to foreign rule on the basis of passions other than fear and because ultimately it was in their interest to do so. This in turn would allow for an empire founded on real legitimacy where heretofore it had rested on the kinds of specious claims that the Old Man rejects.

Conclusion

In the foregoing pages, I suggested that Diderot’s *Supplement* is less an assault on the practice of empire than an exploration of possible means to a just empire. In the dialogue itself, he comes right up to the border of empire but does not enter into the territory. However, by setting his exploration in its contemporary political context, I argued that it is possible to tease out Diderot’s consideration of an alternative mode of colonization. This mode imagines empire founded on a rejection of coercion. It turns to *eros* in order to lure native subjects into the French political orbit and persuade them to adopt French rule on their own.

Reading the *Supplement* in this way leads not only to a revision of our understanding of Diderot’s political thinking at the time. It reveals two powerful elements

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 50.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 49.

at the center of reformist thinking about empire among French *philosophes*: on the one hand, there is the desire to establish colonies for the putative benefit of local populations and geostrategic reasons; on the other, is the recognition that native peoples possessed a cluster of rights which ought not be infringed upon, including a freedom from unwanted interference by outsiders. At its heart, of course, this is the basic conflict of liberal imperial legitimacy: the desire/need to interfere versus the rights of those on the receiving end of the interference. Empire founded on *eros* is one attempt to solve these conflicting elements.

It is not a coincidence that Diderot tried to imagine this process in the form of a dialogue: what better way to imagine a prelude to consent than by showing that locals benefit, indeed believe that their benefit in the encounter is greater than that of Europeans? By convincing the priest to surrender to his most basic desires and give up his 'holy orders' of celibacy, the Tahitians model the possibility that each side might be lured to alter basic cultural practices for the benefit of mutual exchange. In such a dialogue Diderot's imaginings are a more equitable prelude to what would later come to be the reformist vision of persuasion. However, in modeling the dialogue (rather than actually recording it), Diderot like his later reformist colleagues is able to anticipate and solve local objections before a real encounter. Diderot's aim is theoretical and not actually for such encounter, but his solution to the problem in effect negates the need for an actual confrontation with locals over founding a colony in that in the dialogue he has already dealt with their objections. This kind of closure is something that would take on an ever-larger role among reformists as they worked out and, more importantly, then

applied the persuasion by empire model. It is to the most popular and comprehensive articulation of this model, Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*, that I now turn.

CHAPTER 2

The Mechanics of Frictionless Empire: Colonization without Coercion in Raynal's

Histoire

"Proud Europeans, ye have not always conquered by the force of arms."

"I can never be convinced, that it is a matter of indifference, whether we make our appearance before foreign nations, in the character of infernal spirits, or in that of celestial beings."

Guillaume-Thomas Raynal's monumental *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements des Européens dans les deux Indes* was one of the best selling works of the eighteenth century. It surveys the history of European overseas colonization from early exploration in the fifteenth century through the second half of the eighteenth century. Over the course of several tomes, Raynal, Diderot, and other contributors compare European colonization overseas while declaiming against the injustices that these discoveries precipitated.¹ These declamations have led recent historians of political thought to characterize the text as fundamentally anti-imperial.² Such scholars take the

¹ As I have dealt with Diderot's approach to colonization in the previous chapter, I shall not parse out ideological differences between Raynal and Diderot here. It is reasonable to assume, as Jimack has, that by contributing extensively to the later editions of the text, Diderot "endorsed the opinions expressed in it by Raynal, just as by accepting Diderot's contribution, Raynal presumably accepted his." See Peter Jimack "The acceptable and unacceptable faces of colonization in the *HDI*," *L'Invitation au voyage, Studies in honour of Peter France*, ed. John Renwick (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation 2000).

² Sankar Muthu *Enlightenment against Empire*. (Princeton University Press, 2003), Ch 3. Jennifer Pitts *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, (Princeton University Press, 2005),

Histoire's criticism of European overseas empires to be evidence that the authors categorically rejected empire. Others have been more precise, noting that the text advocates for colonization, but they fail to adequately explain the kind of colonization that it endorses.³ Even in cases where scholars have done a better job of characterizing the *Histoire*'s support for colonization, these efforts have fallen short in that they fail to systematically explore the text's chosen tactics.⁴ Some readers see the text as pro-colonial but stress that its reformist tendencies are fundamentally utopian. From this perspective, the text doesn't attend to concrete colonial practice.⁵ I contest this view, and situate the *Histoire*'s pro-colonial stance in a broader political and intellectual context, arguing that the authors sought out concrete proposals and historical events in their pursuit of a more just form of colonization. That the authors would be interested in concrete policy should not be surprising. Raynal worked closely with the duc de Choiseul who led efforts to reform and salvage French colonies in the aftermath of the Seven Years War.⁶ Thus the *Histoire* should be understood as an artifact from a larger project of colonial reform. The

15. Guillaume Ansart, "Variations on Montesquieu: Raynal and Diderot's *Histoire des deux Indes* and the American Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 3 (2009), 402.

³ H. Lüsebrink "La critique de la colonization espagnole dans l'*Histoire des deux Indes*," *Voltaire Raynal Rousseau Allegorie* (SVEC, 2003) 208-210; A. Strugnell "The *Histoire des deux Indes* and the debate on the British in India" *Ibid*, 244. Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), Ch 5.

⁴ Jimack 2000: 185-193; Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières: Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot*. (Paris: F. Maspero, 1971); Sunil Agnani, "Doux Commerce, Douce Colonisation: Diderot and the Two Indies of the French Enlightenment" in Wolff and Cipolloni eds. *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, (Stanford University Press, 2007), 65-84.

⁵ Yves Benot "Diderot, Raynal et le mot 'colonie'" in *Diderot, les dernières années 1770-84: Colloque du bicentenaire 2-5 septembre 1984 à Edinbourg: Textes réunis et présentés par Peter France et Anthony Strugnell*. (Edinburgh Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 152. Jimack 2000: 185-7 and to a lesser extent: Lüsebrink "La critique de la colonization espagnole dans l'*Histoire des deux Indes*" in *Voltaire Raynal Rousseau Allegorie* (SVEC 2003), 210.

⁶ Anatole Feugère, *Un Précurseur De La Révolution: L'abbé Raynal, 1713-1796. Documents Inédits* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 60 and 92. Feugère notes however that the *HDI* was more critical of government policy than Raynal's earlier projects with Choiseul had been (61). Bancarel 2004: 107-9, 114. Duchet 1971: 130-132.

work's significance lies in its popularity, which facilitated the promulgation of reformist ideas to a broader reading public. It is also noteworthy as the most extensive articulation of the reformist project.

This chapter examines the tactics endorsed by the *Histoire* and suggests that they are best understood as different components of the same vision. The vision rejects the use of coercion (including the threat thereof) in colonization as fundamentally illegitimate. Rather than rejecting colonization completely, however, the *Histoire* posits an alternative process in which native peoples are incorporated into an empire through the use of *persuasion*. Here empire is founded on an appeal to the desires and reason of local peoples, who—Raynal and his collaborators believed—could be induced to willingly adopt European rule through a specific set of tactics. The authors believed that by convincing native peoples to adopt European rule willingly, it would be possible to establish a legitimate empire. Several recent commentators have identified persuasion as central to the *Histoire*.⁷ Michèle Duchet provides a developed account of this theme, identifying its importance in French reformist ideologies including that of Raynal and others around him.⁸ Duchet however fails to attend closely to the tactics constituting persuasion and neglects the theoretical import of what Raynal advocates.⁹ Doing this, she leaves the picture of French reformism underdeveloped.

⁷ Agnani 2007; Doris Garraway “Of Speaking Natives and Hybrid Philosophers: Lahontan, Diderot, and the French Enlightenment Critique of Colonialism” in Carey and Festa, ed., *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 233-9; and especially Duchet 1971.

⁸ E.g. Duchet 1971: 218.

⁹ Moreover, it is not clear that Duchet's characterization of French colonial practices is accurate in key respects. For example, she characterizes these practices as moving toward progressive integration of local peoples during the eighteenth century where before the policy had been one of peaceful coexistence. An examination of French policy in New France reveals that progressive integration had been a policy well before the eighteenth century. See for example: Guillaume Aubert, ““The Blood of France”: Race and

The key to legitimacy, according to the *Histoire*, would be the assent and agreement of local peoples. From a contemporary perspective, the practices endorsed by the text for establishing consent appear highly suspicious. It is hard to imagine how colonization might take place without *some* kind of coercion and in the text local peoples do not, for example, vote on whether to permit European settlement. Nevertheless, Raynal and his collaborators believed that assent could be established without coercion and set out methods for doing this.

Below I consider the three main tactics that the *Histoire* proposes for establishing a legitimate colony. I classify each as different forms of persuasion. Each has the same aim: to get the local people to *want* to be part of the empire as well as to ‘agree’ to it. The will of native peoples is central to this vision even if, again, their will is expressed in non-plebiscitary forms. Part of the aim of this chapter is to explain how Raynal and his collaborators came to believe that the three tactics could be effective. To this end, I concurrently explore contextual developments that help to illuminate the contemporary significance of each.

The chapter proceeds as follows: (1) As a prelude to explaining the tactics, I briefly describe how contemporary authors typologized colonies. I then use a typology from the *Histoire* as a starting point to explore the possible reasons why reformists so often omitted robust discussion of institutions for maintaining colonial rule once local assent had been established. (2) Having done this, I move to Raynal’s tactics and begin

Purity of Blood in the French Atlantic World,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (July 2004), and Saliha Belmessous, “Assimilation and Racialism in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century French Colonial Policy,” *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005). It should also be clear below that I think that Duchet’s characterization (210) of the Jesuit model in the *Histoire*—viz. Jesuit practice is *the* model for all other colonization projects in the text—is an overstatement. Such a view, among other things, severely underrates the importance of economic emulation in Raynal and Diderot’s thought.

with emulation. The *Histoire* frequently suggests that emulation is useful in founding a colony. Exogenous actors might be sent among or near native peoples in order to inspire them with the desire to emulate ‘civilized’ behaviors and to possess advanced technologies. I begin by explaining the import of emulation in eighteenth century economic and moral thought, as well as the developments that allowed Raynal to apply it as a tool for empire building. (3) The chapter then moves on to consanguineous relationships. Adding to material developed in the previous chapter, I explain the historical role that consanguinity played in French colonization efforts before the *Histoire*. I also identify primary sources that led Raynal to believe consanguinity could work in contemporary colonization efforts. (4) Next, I consider discursive persuasion—where Europeans seek to persuade local peoples through speech to adopt alien rule. I show that this tactic was firmly rooted in missionary practice and identified with Jesuit successes in the New World. (5) Then, I note complicating examples from the *Histoire* that appear to undermine my case and explain why my account remains plausible.

Each tactic in the *Histoire* functions to encourage local peoples to adopt alien rule and to include them somehow in the ruling process. Raynal and his collaborators believed that if native people could be engaged in this manner then what heretofore had been a series of injustices might become a legitimate form of rule. The ultimate aim was to appeal to the reason and desires of local peoples in order to lead them to agree to colonization and thereby to participate in ruling themselves.

(1) Colonial Typologies and Reformism's Institutional Underdevelopment

Shortly before the Seven Years War began, François Véron de Forbonnais defined 'colonie' in the *Encyclopédie* rather expansively as the "movement of a people, or portion of a people, from one country to another."¹⁰ In the entry, he notes that modern colonies take two forms. First are the commercial colonies established by European states in Africa and Asia, which are "trading posts and fortresses...for the convenience and security of [European] trade."¹¹ Such colonies are dependent on company monopoly and have "the ability to create and maintain diplomatic agreements."¹² While the companies appear to have certain trappings of sovereignty (i.e. deciding who trades in a territory, making agreements with local authorities, and wielding force from fortresses), Forbonnais observes that such colonies depart from "their original purpose" if they undertake territorial conquest, adding, "unless the colonizing country [takes] charge of their expenses."¹³ This type of colony is founded for commerce and, according to Forbonnais, does not require conquest. The second type of colony is most common in the Americas and combines both commerce and agriculture. "These colonies," he explains, "required the conquering of territory and the driving out of existing inhabitants, in order to import new ones."¹⁴ In establishing this typology, Forbonnais limits his remarks about justice to relations between colonists and the metropole. He thus ignores questions of legitimacy as they relate to local inhabitants.

¹⁰ François Véron de Forbonnais, "Colonie," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Vol. 3: (Paris, 1753): 648–651

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

By the end of the Seven Years War, it was clear to many colonial reformists that France needed to rethink her approach to colonization. She had lost an enormous amount of territory and wasted significant resources in trying to maintain control over her lucrative possessions in the Antilles. Thus they began to work out alternative colonial schemes that might conserve metropolitan resources and avoid the injustices that had plagued past colonization efforts. Among these concerns was the just treatment of locals in founding new establishments. Diderot took up this question in the *Histoire* while typologizing colonies. Rather than dividing colony type based on commerce versus conquest as Forbonnais had, he typologizes them based on the presence of indigenous inhabitants. “Reason and equity both allow the foundation of colonies” he proclaims “but they point out the principles from which we ought not deviate in establishing them.”¹⁵

He argues that three scenarios confront Europeans looking to found a colony. If the country has no inhabitants, colonists can take possession of the land through right of discovery. If the country is “entirely peopled,” Europeans may only demand rights of hospitality. Once provided with basics for survival, an outsider has no right to demand anything further from the indigenous inhabitants, as they possess rights of sovereignty over the territory. What constitutes an “entirely peopled” land is ambiguous, but Diderot provides a clue by citing China as an example. As he probably could have imagined *some* deserted Chinese territory (as critics of colonization frequently noted, France possessed a great deal of unimproved land),¹⁶ a further criterion is embedded in his typology:

¹⁵ *HDI* 1783: 4.192

¹⁶ Jean François Melon, *A political essay upon commerce. Written in French by Monsieur M ***** Translated, with some annotations and remarks, by David Bindon, Esq* (Dublin, 1739): 76

civilization. Chinese society is sufficiently developed that their authority claims over unused lands are acceptable or recognizable.

In Diderot's third scenario, local peoples are less civilized than the Chinese. In this "partly desert; and partly peopled" country, the question of rule over indigenous inhabitants begins to take shape.¹⁷ Ignoring the possibility that locals might possess right of discovery over the entire country, Diderot employs a Lockean vision of appropriation: "the deserted part belongs to me; for I may take possession of it by my labour." The "deserted part" has inhabitants but is desert insofar as the inhabitants have not been using the land efficiently enough.¹⁸ Thus colonists can settle among them, removing lands from what Diderot considers the commons. At this point he would deny that the colonists have any political authority over locals. Still, the colonists have the authority to organize a geography of dominion: "I may extend my domains to the confines of his."¹⁹

As individuals worthy of moral recognition, the indigenous inhabitants in this scenario possess rights against the colonizers. They possess the right to defend themselves and their property (what they have improved with their labor), to retain their "civil liberty," laws, and "religious opinions."²⁰ For the moment, the communities remain separate. Interactions are limited to an exchange of products, which is legitimate so long as both parties freely agree. Diderot stresses: any use of violence to take away products or to compel locals to exchange turns the colonist into a "thief who, who may be killed without scruple."²¹ As we will see in section 2 below, reformists concluded that the

¹⁷ *HDI* 1783: 4.192

¹⁸ Diderot refers to "the former inhabitant." *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁹ *HDI* 1783: 4.193.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

prospect of free exchange would lead local peoples to alter their behaviors, in some cases lead locals to ‘improve’ the land, seek to integrate their economy more closely with the colonists, and through this repeated interaction be drawn to European modes of living.

Here a fundamental ambiguity in reformist thinking emerges. There is a clear theoretical gap between a trading relationship and a political relationship, one which Diderot takes pains to stress: the locals retain their freedom, both civil and in trade. But colonists needed local cooperation to trade and produce commodities. Ignoring the very real constraints that land appropriations placed on indigenous inhabitants, is there an identifiable relationship of rule in Diderot’s third colony? Taken schematically there is not, but colonies founded for the sake of basic economic exchange have a tendency to creep beyond their original limits.²² Indeed, many reformists believed that over time commercial relationships could be used to establish political ones. It is not difficult to imagine how such a transition might work: as locals are increasingly drawn to European commodities and manufactured goods, they work to provide commodities valuable to the colonists. In the more fleeting cases, locals would be subject to colonial authorities when coming to markets. Production could be expanded to include agricultural commodities, labor, or other goods that would require settlement around European colonies. Such settlement, if existing on territory claimed by colonists, would in turn place locals within the political jurisdiction of the metropole. Condorcet envisioned such a process: a colony founded by “industrious men” rather than “creatures of power” would “furnish locals with the means ... to arrive at civilization.” The locals, “treated as brothers by Europeans,

²² Calhoun et al. “Introduction” *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 15.

would instantly become their friends *and disciples*.”²³ Condorcet’s use of the term ‘disciples’ shows just how oblique reformists often were in setting out the exact, i.e. institutional, nature of the political relationship they envisioned. Similar examples appear in the *Histoire*.²⁴

Attention to reformist language reveals that the goal was political rule. The 1787 edition of Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s banned but exceedingly popular novel *L’an 2440* can help illuminate the link between commercial colonies and political rule over locals for many reformists.²⁵ He imagines a world in which France possesses a commercial empire with establishments in West Africa and Egypt. He describes “pacific establishments” in West Africa, where sugar would be cultivated by “free hands” and where locals “*protected by laws*, have regained their intelligence and their freedom.”²⁶ With Egypt he refers to the benefits of “*notre police*” for the country (established after freeing locals from ‘foreign’ tyrants). If the element of political rule was not clear enough, he adds “No power thought to cross our operations” and “our position ... increased in perfection and in modifying...the art of government.”²⁷ Here even if the transition from peaceful establishments and actual rule over locals is unclear, it is certainly evident.

²³ Marquis de Condorcet, *Outlines of an historical view of the progress of the human mind, being a posthumous work of the late M. de Condorcet*, (Philadelphia, 1796), 256 (italics added.)

²⁴ In describing a reformist scenario Raynal writes “In this intimate connection the savage inhabitant would soon have understood, that the arts and sciences conveyed into his country were very conducive to the improvement of his destiny. He would have entertained the highest opinion of the *persuasive* and mild instructors brought to him by the sea, and *he would have given himself up to them without reserve.*” *HDI* 1783: 4.360 (italics added).

²⁵ Louis-Sébastien Mercier. *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante. Rêve s’il en fût jamais*, vol 2 (n.p. 1787).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 226 (italics added).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

There are several possibilities why actual institutions of rule are so infrequently delineated in reformist polemics. First, colonies tended to vary so much in form that, as

Raynal notes

a writer can only mark out [a plan of colonial society] in a vague manner, liable to all the hypotheses that are varied and complicated by an infinity of circumstances too difficult to be foreseen and combined.²⁸

In light of such difficulties, attending to the broader question of foundational legitimacy perhaps seemed a more productive task. Once the principles for establishing a colony were delineated, administrators and colonists could work out precisely what form this would take in light of local conditions. As many potential new colonies existed in Diderot's 'partial deserts,' the social life of local peoples also possibly seemed insufficiently complex to require extensive reflection on civilizing institutions; in any event, Raynal noted, "the civilization of an empire is a long and difficult work."²⁹ We will see that it was not until reformist ideas confronted a large urban culture in Egypt (along with the practicalities of rule) that reformists had to deal with the question of institutions in significant detail. Until then, they could be content to imagine how locals might be won over while enthusing about the civilizing powers of commerce.

In other cases, reformists aimed to describe how already established colonies could be made legitimate. Here legitimacy would be enacted retroactively by winning over locals where the metropole had already claimed sovereignty. In such cases, working out specific political institutions became less important than winning over locals to an ongoing political relationship.

²⁸ *HDI* 1783: 7.431.

²⁹ Quoted in Starobinsky "Le mot Civilisation" *Le temps de la réflexion* (IV) 1983: 16. Here Raynal is discussing a kingdom but the point applies beyond the metropole. He is also loosely quoting Racine.

A further explanation for reformists' silence on political institutions was that in making locals into 'brothers,' they believed locals might become Frenchmen, and there already existed an institutional framework to govern relations between Frenchmen and the metropole.³⁰ The key move then would be to convince locals that they in fact were 'brothers.' In light of each possible explanation for the reformists' silence on institutions of rule, the tactics set out in the *Histoire* become especially relevant. I begin with emulation.

(2) Emulation

Before examining how the *Histoire* uses emulation, it is worth first considering what significance the term held for an audience in late eighteenth century France and how it came to be useful for Raynal. In his article on 'emulation' in the *Encyclopédie*, Louis de Jaucourt describes it as a "noble and generous passion, which admires the merit, the beautiful things [*belles choses*], and the actions of others, trying to imitate them or even surpass them, while working with courage for honorable and virtuous principles."³¹ These latter principles are what distinguish emulation from its more sinister cousins: envy and jealousy. Where emulation "surpasses a rival by laudable and generous efforts," envy "contemplates abasing itself in opposite routes."³² The distinction between estimable and blameworthy means is also present in one of Jaucourt's main sources: Jean de La Bruyère's *Les caractères: ou, Les mœurs de ce siècle* (1688). Like La Bruyère, Jaucourt

³⁰ Albeit one subject, at times, to challenge by reformists.

³¹ *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres. Mis en ordre & publié par M. Diderot ... & quant a la partie mathématique, par M. d'Alembert* Imprint Genève [Paris & Neufchâtel], Vol 5. 1772; 1754-72. pp. 601-2.

³² *Ibid.*

saw envy and jealousy as inherently base. These were violent passions whereas emulation was characterized by “softness [*la douceur*] and modesty.”³³

Associating emulation with non-violence wasn't limited to encyclopedic accounts of the passions. Its ability to motivate students without resorting to more violent forms of discipline made it a key pedagogical tool in Jesuit run schools in France.³⁴ Here teachers were to model desirable behavior and inspire students to imitate them. The *Histoire* would eventually take a similar approach and apply it to colonial development schemes.

Jaucourt also describes emulation as a “voluntary sentiment” whereas jealousy is a “violent movement” which is to be thought of as involuntary. The distinction between voluntary and involuntary passions is a critical one. If individual A is subject to an involuntary passion, the presumption is that ‘he’ is being acted upon, getting carried away without his own consent. This of course assumes a space between A’s self and his passions. Moreover, if the involuntary passion were provoked by another individual (individual B) we might say that B is ultimately responsible for setting A in motion as A is being acted upon in such a way that he does not experience the passion voluntarily. Jealousy and envy cannot be controlled in this version. Following this stylized account further: individual B might provoke a voluntary passion such as emulation. Here because emulation can be controlled (i.e. it is experienced *voluntarily* by A) a kind of responsibility can be attributed to A. In this way, when someone experiences emulation she does it through her own accord whereas with envy and jealousy it is without consent. Beyond the violent quality of the experience of envy and jealousy (i.e. the extremity of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Nira Kaplan, “Virtuous Competition among Citizens: Emulation in Politics and Pedagogy during the French Revolution,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 241-242.

the feeling) there is also another kind of violence associated with these passions not present in emulation: one experiences them as a kind of compulsion of the self in that they are not experienced willingly. For Jaucourt, emulation avoids the feeling of being acted upon because it is voluntary. This voluntarism was particularly appealing to Raynal et al. because, as will become evident below, it seemed to offer an alternative to the kind of violent colonial practices that the *Histoire* denounced.

Beyond its mildness and voluntarism, emulation had another component that would make it especially useful for Raynal: its ability to inspire activity. While La Bruyère had characterized emulation in terms of its voluntarism and mildness, Jaucourt departed from his seventeenth century source by emphasizing the sheer level of activity that emulation inspired. In this emphasis Jaucourt reveals that by the mid eighteenth century, emulation as a concept had been evolving in significant ways. Though La Bruyère recognized that the ultimate aim of emulation was activity, Jaucourt considered it necessary to repeatedly expose this component to his readers: “Honor,” he notes, “is in searching for dignities, charges, and employments.”³⁵ He is careful to add, “emulation [is] always active and open” and goes on to quote Corneille: ““The success of others...produces in me a virtuous emulation which makes me redouble my efforts....”³⁶ Emulation leads an individual to get to work and become productive, or as Raynal writes, “emulation augments the concurrence of efforts.”³⁷

Emphasizing the productive capacities of emulation became increasingly common by the middle of the eighteenth century. John Shovlin traces the origins of this process to

³⁵ *Encyclopédie* Vol 5: 601.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, vol. 7 (Paris, Chez Lacombe, 1778), 297.

debates about an economy founded on the pursuit of individual interest alone. Responding to Hirschman's account of *doux-commerce* in French economic thought, Shovlin notes that interest continued to be viewed with great suspicion due to its perceived destructive tendencies.³⁸ At the same time, many thinkers recognized that commerce was a basic component of state power. The solution then was to construct “[an] alternative economic order based on the pursuit of honor and distinction, harnessed to patriotic ends.”³⁹ Here emulation played a key role for authors trying to imagine such an order. Over time, opinion leaders tried to attach nobility to commercial activity by encouraging nobles to engage in commerce or arguing that successful merchants should be ennobled.⁴⁰ Montesquieu advocated the latter but warned that the former tended to destroy monarchies.⁴¹ For the most enthusiastic supporters of trade, however, associating commerce with nobility would provoke emulation among the right crowd: those who sought nobility rather than merely wealth. “Employed in this fashion,” Shovlin notes, “the concept of emulation played a significant role in mediating the development of a commercial society in France.”⁴²

Debates erupted as to who could be subject to such a noble passion. By the late 1770s one merchant argued that his fellow tradesmen were primarily motivated by

³⁸ John Shovlin, “Emulation in Eighteenth-Century French Economic Thought,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 224-230. John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 2006). Albert O Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph*, 20th ed. (Princeton University Press, 1997).

³⁹ Shovlin 2003: 229.

⁴⁰ An oft-cited example is Gabriel Francois Coyer's *La noblesse commerçante* (London, 1756). See Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined* (Cornell University Press, 2005), 116 and Shovlin 2006, 58. See also John Iverson, “Introduction,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 217-223.

⁴¹ Montesquieu *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), Book 20, Chapters 21-22.

⁴² Shovlin 2003: 129.

generosity, patriotism, and virtue rather than base interest.⁴³ A decade earlier, during the debates surrounding the suppression of the Compagnie des Indes, Jacques Necker described the company's merchant shareholders in similar terms: as patriots.⁴⁴ In fact, Jaucourt also identified emulation with patriotism arguing, "it is the love of duty and country which animates [emulation]."⁴⁵ Now those who acted on behalf of their country, even in the realm of commerce, were capable of emulation.

As the decades progressed, emulation became increasingly democratic in France. Where before emulation would encourage commercial activity among those desiring to become nobles, it came to be applied in other contexts as well. Farmers became potential objects of imitation as authors imagined unleashing emulation for the sake of provincial agricultural development.⁴⁶ The passion appeared in a variety of proposals for social and economic improvement.⁴⁷ Some authors went so far as to suggest that even vagrants were susceptible to its power. In the 1770s a prominent work on the subject argued that "the vagrant's taste for work could be reanimated through the use of emulation."⁴⁸ Where before emulation was a passion associated with honor and nobility, it came to be seen as a powerful tool for reforming all strata of the population. The democratization of emulation, particularly for the use of economic development, was a critical development

⁴³ Bedos, *Le négociant patriote* 1779 in Shovlin 2006: 130.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Margerison "The Shareholders' Revolt at the Compagnie des Indes: Commerce and Political Culture in Old Regime France" *French History* 20(1) (March 2006): 26

⁴⁵ *Encyclopédie* Vol 5: 601-2. Raynal notes that this kind of commercial patriotism existed as far back as during Colbert's time when nobles were eager to serve the king by supporting the Compagnie des Indes (See *HDI* 1783: 2.223). See also Edmond Dziembowski, *Nouveau Patriotisme Français 1750-1770: La France Face a la Puissance Anglaise a l'Epoque de la Guerre de Sept Ans (Studies on Voltaire & the Eighteenth Century)*, (Voltaire Foundation, 1998). 376-384. For an extended discussion of this theme in the Scottish context see I. Hont, *Jealousy of Trade* (Harvard University Press: 2005), 121.

⁴⁶ Iverson, 217.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Shovlin 2006: 131.

that would ultimately allow Raynal and his colleagues to identify the passion's utility for colonial development. As emulation was no longer limited to nobility and could reach even vagrants, it could also be applied to uncivilized native peoples.

Emulation was also considered useful on a larger scale between states and large communities. In such settings, Hume noted, "nothing is more favourable to the rise of politeness and learning."⁴⁹ The reverse was also the case: Helvetius attributed the lack of progress among the Moors to an absence of emulation rather than of genius.⁵⁰ Hume made a similar assertion, forecasting that Europe would suffer the same fate if emulation disappeared.⁵¹ Thus as emulation could stimulate development on an individual scale, it also could take place between states or larger communities. At this scale however, emulation—and the competition that it entailed—threatened to turn into jealousy. This is one reason why thinkers like Hume and Gibbon used the composite term "jealous-emulation" in describing competition between communities.⁵² The *Histoire* was acutely concerned with the negative effects of jealousy of trade, which Raynal labeled "one of the greatest evils that can befall mankind."⁵³ For this reason he was careful to emphasize moderation and moral rectitude in any program which encouraged emulation between communities. As will become clear below, Raynal believed that emulation could only

⁴⁹ David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, (Liberty Fund: 1987), 119.

⁵⁰ Helvétius, *A treatise on man, his intellectual faculties and his education* (London: printed for B. Law; and G. Robinson, 1777), 158.

⁵¹ Hume, 331.

⁵² Hont, 118; 221-2. As Hont also notes there was also a lively debate on this subject in France during the early eighteenth century, for example between Melon and Montesquieu. See Hont, 33-4.

⁵³ Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, *A philosophical and political history of the settlements and trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*.(London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1783): vol. 1 p. 322. All subsequent references to the *Histoire*, unless otherwise noted, will refer to this edition (cited as volume:page).

work when the ‘to be emulated’ group behaved in a manner that its values, in addition to its technologies, would appeal to the potential emulators.

To sum up: Emulation had been considered a useful passion before the eighteenth century. Unlike envy and jealousy, it motivated competition through laudable means and was characterized by its moderation. Furthermore, it also was a non-violent, voluntary passion. It moved individuals in accordance with their own wills and encouraged useful activity. As the passion became increasingly democratized during the eighteenth century—i.e. applied beyond nobles and aspiring nobles in the commercial realm—it appeared as a tool in a broad number of improvement schemes.⁵⁴ All of these aspects made it especially appealing for Raynal. As will become clear below, it seemed to offer the possibility of colonization through peaceful and voluntary methods. In much the same way that it might encourage development and commerce in rural France, it also could effect similar changes in overseas European possessions. In doing this, it promised to effect change without the violence that had plagued so many previous colonization efforts. It could seduce local peoples, draw them into political relationships with Europeans. In what follows I consider examples from the *Histoire* where Raynal sees emulation as a useful tool of colonization. I begin with a key example from the French empire (Guyana) and then move on to other examples that help clarify how Raynal thought the passion should be applied. Finally, I conclude by considering the theoretical import of the *Histoire*’s use of emulation for empire building.

⁵⁴ Iverson, 217-223.

(2.1) Emulation in the Colonies

France emerged from the Seven Years War denuded of her continental American possessions with one exception: Guyana. The equatorial colony became a focus of revitalization efforts even before the conflict was officially over. The duc de Choiseul believed that Guyana could be a site of significant colonial reform as well as a means to reassert French power in the Americas. It could function to protect the wealthy sugar colonies in the Caribbean from further British attacks.⁵⁵

The colony was initially to be populated by whites only. During the Seven Years War it had become clear that slave majority colonies were prone to troublesome revolts and many Frenchmen, Choiseul included, attributed Britain's North American success to its thirteen colonies.⁵⁶ Ignoring the slave majority southern colonies, Choiseul believed that the British colonies on the continent had been successful precisely because they were white majority (and, incidentally, permitted freedom of religion).

Without slaves in the new equatorial colony, another population would be needed to work in Guyana's torrid heat. To supply labor, Choiseul imagined attracting families of artisans from Bengal and China to work in manufacturing there. His friend and confidant, the abbé Beliardi, suggested a similar scheme.⁵⁷ Before implementing any such projects, Choiseul began a massive recruitment effort for European colonists. This effort

⁵⁵ France was willing to sacrifice her continental North American possessions (New France) in order just to retain Guadeloupe and Martinique.

⁵⁶ Philippe Haudrère, *L'Empire des rois, 1500-1789* (Paris: Denoël, 1997), 348 and Pierre Pluchon, *Histoire De La Colonisation Française* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 273.

⁵⁷ Pluchon, 276.

would result in “one of the largest movements of people...in the history of Atlantic migration” and would become “the first vast catastrophe in French colonial history.”⁵⁸

In the drive to recruit colonists for the new settlement, government officials used propaganda to enlist inhabitants from Germany and France as well as Acadians fleeing New France.⁵⁹ Colonists were offered free passage from Rochefort to Guyana.⁶⁰ In addition to renaming coastal islands from the ominous ‘Îles du Diable’ to the more welcoming ‘Îles du Salut,’ government authorities distributed pamphlets celebrating the fecundity of the colony. Interest in the expedition went beyond those who would travel to the new world. In addition to Choiseul, who made sure to carve out a sizable chunk of territory in the colony for his own personal use, many elites were caught up in the general enthusiasm. Anne-Robert Jacques Turgot, the physiocrat who would eventually become controller-general in the kingdom, originally brought the project to Choiseul. Turgot’s brother, Etienne-Francois Turgot, was appointed head of the establishment. The future finance minister and defender of the French East India Company, Jacques Necker expressed interest in the project.⁶¹ Diderot believed that the colony would be sufficiently successful that he encouraged his mistress’ nephew, Le Vallet de Fayolle, to establish himself there.⁶² Mirabeau saw Guyana as an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of wage over slave labor, and thus further reveal the power of free agricultural production.⁶³

⁵⁸ Emma Rothschild “A Horrible Tragedy in the French Atlantic” *Past and Present* 192 (Aug. 2006): 77.

⁵⁹ Christopher Hodson “‘A Bondage So Harsh’ Acadian Labor in the French Caribbean, 1763-1766” *Early American Studies* (Spring 2007).

⁶⁰ Rothschild, 73; Pluchon, 273.

⁶¹ Pluchon, 275.

⁶² Arthur M. Wilson, *Diderot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 449. See also M. Duchet’s “Un Ami de Diderot en Guyane: vallet de Fayrolle, a propos d'une lettre inédite” *Diderot Studies*, VIII 1966, p 15-21; and Rothschild, 75.

⁶³ Hodson 2007: 106-7.

The colony appealed to many among the *philosophes* because it was to be established in conformity with certain basic principles of justice, such as outlawing slavery and permitting freedom of worship. In addition to the prudential reasons discussed above (slave revolts), such a colony would better conform with “the views of justice and humanity” of the king.⁶⁴ With the Guyana colony founded on just principles, reformist officials believed that it could flourish over the long term.⁶⁵

While enthusiasm for the new establishment in Guyana was widespread, those with experience in the colony were more cautious. The proposal that Turgot and his brother brought to Choiseul came from Jean-Antoine Bruletout de Préfontaine who had spent two decades there. Choiseul took Bruletout’s plan, which called for keeping the slave population low and focusing on staple crops, and transformed it beyond recognition.⁶⁶ While Préfontaine believed that whites could be productive in the torrid zone, he did not endorse a colony of the size that Choiseul envisioned. There was also a persistent skepticism among those who had seen the colony that anything of use could be made out of it. A Huguenot who was familiar with it—and perhaps recalling the severity with which his community was forced from the colonies after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—bitterly remarked: “My people have preferred the galleys to Guyana.”⁶⁷

Given what actually transpired there, the galleys might have been preferable. Roughly 9000 of the original 14000 colonists quickly perished due to starvation, poor

⁶⁴ Haudrière, 348.

⁶⁵ See Duchet 1971: 170-4 for a discussion of the reformists and the *Histoire*.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Pluchon, 275; For the expulsion of protestants from the colonies see Meyer et al., *Histoire De La France Coloniale* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1990), 36-7.

planning, disease, and the sheer incompetence of officials.⁶⁸ Choiseul eventually pronounced Turgot's brother "insane and knavish [*fripou*] at the same time" in a letter to the king.⁶⁹ Others labeled the colonial authorities "state criminals" who merited "considerable punishment."⁷⁰

Considering the rancor attached to the disaster in Guyana during the 1760s, it is peculiar that Raynal would try to salvage the colony in his *Histoire*. Instead, we might expect that he would argue for its ultimate abandonment. In what follows, I shall suggest that Raynal continues to advance elements of Choiseul's original vision. Acknowledging the serious difficulties facing any successful colonization in Guyana, Raynal seeks a solution to these difficulties in the notion that emulation could be used to transform the colony. He notes that it had already made Europeans more productive and might also be used on native peoples. For Raynal, emulation held out the possibility that the colony could take root without resorting to further coercive methods.

After reviewing the disaster of the 1760s, Raynal notes that one of its consequences had been that the colony's "real evils" were exaggerated.⁷¹ He asserts that the climate is actually "very supportable" especially for a colony so close to the equator.⁷² Like Choiseul, Raynal notes that Guyana could be used to defend French Caribbean possessions and "attack those belonging to the enemies of France."⁷³ The colony's basic problem was a general lack of productivity. This could be attributed to

⁶⁸ Rothschild, 77.

⁶⁹ Pluchon, 280.

⁷⁰ Haudriere, 350.

⁷¹ *HDI* 1783: 6.38

⁷² *HDI* 1783: 6.39

⁷³ *HDI* 1783: 6.38

several causes. First, heavy rains tended to wash away the best soil.⁷⁴ Second, low-lying morasses were productive but needed to be drained and cleared. Finally, there was insufficient labor to accomplish all the requisite work and produce labor-intensive crops, particularly in the local climate.

Guyana's problem originated in the connection between labor, commodities, and climate. With the power of hindsight, Raynal did not believe that whites could produce significant quantities of salable commodities.⁷⁵ Although the climate of Guyana was "very supportable," these commodities required a level of exertion that many whites could not sustain in the equatorial heat. Thus unlike Choiseul in 1763, Raynal thought that a whites-only colony would instead only produce at a subsistence level. In the event that the colony functioned as a garrison of sorts for the Caribbean, this might have been sufficient. However, Raynal points out, "colonies have been founded only for the purpose of obtaining vendible commodities."⁷⁶ Whether or not he believed this, Raynal used it as the premise of his further reflections on Guyana.⁷⁷ From here he sets out to provide a solution to the labor problem. Part of the solution, Raynal believed, could be found in the concerted use of emulation.

In addition to requiring laborers who could tend crops in the torrid heat, the colony also required labor to establish farms in a land where torrential rains washed away the most productive soil. Here also, Raynal identifies emulation as a solution. In their nearby colony to the east, the Dutch had been struggling with similar erosion problems.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *HDI* 1783: 6.43

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Elsewhere in the text he writes: "The first object of a rising colony is subsistence and population: the next is the prosperity likely to flow from these two sources." *HDI* 1783: 7.429

After having “languished” on the higher grounds where soil would be quickly washed away, the Dutch colonists “at last succeeded upon plantations formed in morasses, which were drained off with immense labour.”⁷⁸ With this improvement, the Dutch plantations began to flourish. At first, this activity “did not make any impression” on their French neighbors.⁷⁹ It took the intervention of a new administrator to inspire them. The intervention helps us better understand how emulation worked according to Raynal.

Nearly a decade after the original Guyana disaster, Louis XVI sent Pierre Victor Malouet as an administrator to the colony in 1776. Malouet is best known today as a proslavery reformist who disputed with abolitionists like Condorcet, but before this he had established a friendship with Raynal serving as a valuable source of information about the colonies.⁸⁰ According to Raynal, it was Malouet who observed the Dutch reclamation efforts and employed them in Guyana “himself.”⁸¹ Following the Dutch example, the “place which he had rescued from the ocean was immediately covered with provisions.”⁸² Malouet’s example had a transformative effect on his fellow colonists at Guyana:

This circumstance hath inspired the colonists, with a spirit of *emulation*, of which they were not thought to be susceptible, and they wait only for the favourable assistance of government, to enrich the mother-country with their productions.⁸³

Several elements of this account are worth noting. Until Malouet provided an example, the colonists did not take note of Dutch success in Surinam. They lived in isolation

⁷⁸ *HDI* 1783: 6.41

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ G. Bancarel *Raynal ou le devoir de vérité*, (Paris : Champion, 2004), 335.

⁸¹ *HDI* 1783: 6.41

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *HDI* 1783: 6.41 (ital added).

(willful or otherwise) from the developments and innovations of other peoples. Here they seem similar to the many indigenous peoples who appear in the *Histoire*: apparently satisfied to remain in a 'lower' state of civilization. This satisfaction produced a kind of torpor that led observers to incorrectly conclude that the colonists were not susceptible to improvement (again like with native peoples).

In actuality, the colonists could be "inspired" with the proper methodology to become productive. To begin, it was Malouet who was inspired to emulate the Dutch. He observed their success, and hoped to replicate it in the colony that he had been charged to improve. Rather than actively pressuring the French colonists to imitate the Dutch, he instead presented his fellow colonists with a local example of success. This example inspired the French colonists. They wanted to be as successful as Malouet was in production and thus imitated his behavior.

Through emulation the colonists transformed their lands and themselves to such a degree that they surpassed observers' expectations. The lesson here is one that is repeated throughout the *Histoire*: those thought to be impervious to improvement can actually be changed, indeed be led to change *themselves* with an intermediary and the proper method. Here then emulation inspires voluntary activity.

Draining swamps for agricultural purposes is just the kind of activity that Diderot endorses elsewhere in the *Histoire* as a legitimate means of colonization. Following a Lockean model, in which improvement through labor constitutes ownership, Diderot

asserts that partially inhabited lands can be appropriated, and defended if attacked.⁸⁴ In Guyana, Malouet was engaged in precisely this kind of improvement.

While the Dutch could provide a model for land reclamation, laborers were still needed to actually do the work. Here Raynal considers the possibility of employing native peoples in such work. He acknowledges that it would be difficult to institute such a project. The commodities produced by native labor would be moderate compared to that of African slaves. His ultimate conclusion is influenced by Malouet's position, namely that any significant production in Guyana would need to be founded on imported slave labor.⁸⁵ This said, Raynal considers at length how native peoples could be brought to fix their habitations and ultimately serve as a source of labor for the colonists. He turns to emulation as the means to motivate change and thus, he believed, avoid the kinds of coercive practices that had existed in the Americas since the beginning of European settlement.⁸⁶ In applying emulation to native peoples, Raynal shows that the heretofore noble passion had become increasingly egalitarian.

The first step, Raynal informs us, would be to fix the habitation of "these perpetually wandering people."⁸⁷ In addition to structuring geographic space in a manner useful for further European appropriation, this step would help the natives begin their

⁸⁴ *HDI* 1783: 4.193

⁸⁵ Pierre-Victor Malouet, *Collection de mémoires et correspondances officielles sur l'administration des colonies, et notamment sur la Guiane française et hollandaise*, Volume 4. (Paris, [1802]), 115.

⁸⁶ In this respect, Rothschild's claim (108) that Raynal believed it impossible to have a free society in the torrid zone is not completely correct. While she notes that Raynal refers to tyranny as 'endemic' in the torrid zone, she fails to observe that this remark appears during a review of what had been said about Guyana and that Raynal later notes "This unhappy climate has been inveighed against with all the rancour with which resentment can aggravate it's real evils" 6.37-8. In any event, Raynal was quite certain that it would be difficult to establish a free society in this context.

⁸⁷ *HDI* 1783: 6.44

transition to the more advanced, agricultural stage of civilization.⁸⁸ These fixed points could then be used to expand settlement activity around hamlets and towns. Persuading the natives to fix their habitation would be no easy task however. Providing them with cattle might force them to clear jungle so as to sustain the animals but more difficult would be overcoming their prejudices toward “sedentary occupations” which were associated with “women.” Raynal laments, “This senseless pride degrades all kinds of labours in the eyes of men.”⁸⁹ Such pride could be overcome through the power of emulation. Much in the same way that authors tried to ennoble commerce and agriculture in metropolitan France through schemes of emulation, Raynal believed that this passion could also be an effective tool in the jungles of Guyana.⁹⁰ Indeed, the *Histoire* notes that “savage” nations tended to be governed by manner and example rather than legislation. For this reason emulation was perfectly suited to Guyana.

As in the case of Malouet and the Dutch, an exogenous actor would be needed to set the process in motion. Here it would be a missionary who would “ennoble the labours of agriculture” by his own example.⁹¹ The respected missionary would establish a farm amidst the natives and provide an example wherein he would demonstrate that agriculture was an activity ‘fit’ for men. The example however is not sufficient in and of itself. In order to diffuse this “new system of morality” beyond just impressionable youths, it would be necessary to “excite [the] desires” of the adults. Here the missionary would

⁸⁸ For an account of the ‘four stages’ of civilization see I. Hont, “The language of sociability and commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the theoretical foundations of the ‘Four-Stages Theory’” in Anthony Pagden, ed. *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*. (Cambridge University Press: 1990), 253.

⁸⁹ *HDI* 1783: 6.45

⁹⁰ *HDI* 1783: 8.122

⁹¹ *HDI* 1783: 6.45

provide a focal point for trade. He would cultivate desirable crops and the local people would in turn decide to cultivate their own so as to both be like him and be able to trade with him.⁹² Though Raynal does not use the term in this example, it provides a better idea as to how emulation works: through the excitement of desires. These desires are sufficiently powerful that they could ultimately lead wandering peoples to settle down, produce commodities, and, of course, become a source of labor for European colonists. Again, this would take place without coercion and the locals would *lead themselves* to profoundly alter their own behavior. As in the Jesuit schools in France, where emulation featured heavily in pedagogical theory, this kind of discipline would exist without resorting to violence.⁹³

Elsewhere in the *Histoire*, Raynal provides a more detailed explanation of emulation's power. Here again the focus is on moving 'natural' man to a more civilized state:

What method then can be contrived to shorten the duration of his indolence, of his stupidity, and of his misery? For this purpose, he must be made acquainted with active beings, and must be placed in constant intercourse with laborious people. He will soon open his eyes in astonishment; he will soon be conscious that he likewise hath had hands given to him, and will scarce conceive how it could have been possible that the ideal of making use of them should not have occurred to him sooner. *The sight of the enjoyments that are obtained by labour, will inspire him with the desire of partaking of them and he will work.* Invention is peculiar to genius, and imitation is peculiar to man. *It is by imitation that all scarce things have become, and will hereafter become, common.*⁹⁴

⁹² Here the distinction that authors like Coyer and Bedos made between commerce for the attainment of nobility versus for the attainment of wealth itself breaks down. Raynal acknowledges the power of the latter and the conveniences that it brings.

⁹³ François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry*, (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 74.

⁹⁴ *HDI* 1783: 5.375-6. ital added.

By merely interacting with a laborious people, the natural man is astonished. But rather than the kind of astonishment that stupefies and leads an individual to lose sensation, this astonishment does the reverse. The natural man comes to be aware that he too has hands. Indeed he jumps from a kind of bovine unconsciousness to reflexivity: how could he have not known his own powers all along?!⁹⁵ For Raynal, who had the horrors of previous European colonial practices in mind, this works without coercion. The natural man observes the labors and products of civilization. He desires partaking of them and this desire sets him in motion. Others do not force him to be productive. By observing others he is inspired to become productive. On a larger scale this desire makes scarce things (commodities) common.

At stake in the examples that Raynal cites approvingly throughout the *Histoire* is the difference between coercion and persuasion. One colony where this was especially evident was Guam in the Marianna Islands. Originally the Spaniards decided that they had not obtained a “sufficient number of subjects by means of persuasion” and thus turned to military force to advance their ends.⁹⁶ This, like in so many other colonies, eventually led to depopulation. According to Raynal, Spanish brutality was so severe that local people “took the desperate resolution of making their wives miscarry, [so as] not

⁹⁵ Compare this to an account written by one of Raynal’s sources on Madagascar (the comte de Maudave) who was charged with establishing a colony there. Of the locals he writes: “when they compare their paltry civilization, their errant life, unfortunate and agitated, the coarseness of their arts, with that which they can see of our moeurs and our manner of living, they fall into admiration, and they say what is in effect they are not more than animals compared to us.” Further on, he writes “I concluded...that there is in the spirit of these peoples a penchant for imitation which we can avail ourselves of” and “This people is naturally imitative. This taste is so powerful, that it overcomes their natural laziness.” See H. Pouget de St. Andre *La Colonisation de Madagascar sous Louis XV d’après la correspondance inédite du comte de Maudave* (Paris: Librairie Coloniale, 1886): pp 86, 92, and 179 respectively.

⁹⁶ *HDI* 1783: 3.386

[to] leave behind them a progeny of slaves.”⁹⁷ It was within this context that an “enlightened” administrator, Mariano Tobías, began to employ emulation.⁹⁸ Like Malouet in Guyana, he used himself as an example of productivity for the local people. Here the transformation was one from a population that loathed its Spanish rulers to one that achieved happiness and contentment. Tobías effected a transformation that moved beyond material circumstances and provided a scheme whereby Spanish rule came to be seen as legitimate by local subjects. The able administrator used persuasion where only force had once prevailed. The lesson according to Raynal: “so true it is that every thing may be accomplished by mildness and benevolence, since these virtues are capable of extinguishing resentment even in the mind of a savage [*sauvage*].”⁹⁹

The transformative power of emulation was evident in a number of other cases. It appeared in the Philippines where Chinese immigrants presented an example whereby local peoples sought to improve their lot:

[They] gave an habitual example of a life constantly spend in employment. Several of them even visited the Indian [Filipino] colonies, and, by making them timely and cautious advances, inspired them with the desire, at the same time that they furnished them with the means, of improving their situation.¹⁰⁰

The Chinese naturally presented themselves to give to the arts, and to agriculture, that activity which the laziness and the pride of the Spaniards denied them. ...[The] little good that has been done in these islands has been the work of these Chinese.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *HDI* 1783: 3.387. A similar image appears while Raynal discusses the cruelty of the Spanish in the Americas, see *HDI* 1783: 4.313.

⁹⁸ Here Raynal’s source was Lieutenant Julien Crozet who was traveling to the South Pacific. Among his tasks on the voyage was returning Aotourou (the inspiration for the character of the same name in Diderot’s ‘Supplement’) to Tahiti. Unfortunately Aotourou fell ill along the way and never made it home. See Robert F. Rogers, *Destiny’s Landfall: a History of Guam*. (University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 84.

⁹⁹ *HDI* 1783: 3.389. French version: *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes* (Nauchâtel & Geneve, 1783-4): Vol. 3, p. 254.

¹⁰⁰ *HDI* 1783: 3.84-5

¹⁰¹ *HDI* 1783: 3.79

Using the Chinese to inspire local peoples was “an infallible method of establishing at the extremity of Asia, a flourishing colony” but the Spanish rulers were insufficiently “sensible of this truth.”¹⁰² In this case, the catalyst for emulation came from neither the native group nor the European colonizers. Instead, another group functioned to provoke emulous behavior among local peoples. This reveals that productive emulation transcended European civilization and instead, Raynal reasoned, could be established by civilized non-Europeans as well.

Another scheme, this time of particular interest to Diderot, called for sending “free men from civilized countries” of Europe to the most fertile parts of Russia.¹⁰³ Here they would be provided with property and subsistence so that they could establish themselves. An authority without local ties would govern them and religious toleration would be granted. In this case the power of emulation is described as especially potent:

From hence the seeds of liberty would spread all over the empire: the adjacent countries would see the happiness of these colonists, and wish to be as happy as they. Were I to be cast among savages, I would not bid them build huts to shelter them from the inclemency of the weather; they would only laugh at me; but I would build one myself. When the severe season came on, I should enjoy the benefit of my foresight: the savage would see it, and next year he would imitate me. *It is the same thing with an enslaved nation; we are not to bid them be free; but we are to lay before their eyes the sweets of liberty and they will wish for them.*¹⁰⁴

This final example is particularly noteworthy. The sheer presence of the colonists would function to transform the local peoples. Moreover there is an explicit link between a

¹⁰² *HDI* 1783: 3.79

¹⁰³ See Denis Diderot, *Mélanges et morceaux divers: contributions à l'Histoire des deux Indes, tomo II* (Siena: [Università di Siena], 1977), 350-2. For Diderot's sources here see: Gianluigi Goggi "Diderot et l'abbé Baudeau: les colonies de Saratov et la civilisation de la Russie" *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie*, 14 (April 1993): 23-83.

¹⁰⁴ *HDI* 1783: 3.135. Ital added.

technical transformation and a political one. Liberty becomes a *techne*. Like the practice of building a hut, the benefits of liberty would become self-evident to Russian peasants. They need only be presented with a living example so that they might observe its fruits. This presentation, of course, is different from coercing peasants to abandon their traditional forms of agriculture and lifestyles. Instead the emphasis is on setting in motion the desires of local inhabitants. For Diderot, the relationship between liberty and technological superiority is transparent: technological superiority (i.e. better huts) is derived from liberty. As the native peoples will desire the products, they also will desire the moral *techne* that produces the physical improvements. Locals would rely on the authority of their own experience rather than the commands of others to alter their behaviors. If anything, the command would originate internally from the desire to possess the “sweets of liberty.”

It would be inaccurate to characterize this process as appealing to locals; an appeal connotes a level of active intrusion. The benefit of emulation, from Raynal et al.’s perspective, is that it is unobtrusive. In the Russian example, the colonists needn’t live in the midst of natives. Rather they are to exist in adjacent countries. Here the power of emulation operates from a distance and there is no need to usurp the lands of local inhabitants.

While the examples cited above emphasize the benefits accruing to the local inhabitants, the *Histoire* presents emulation as a tool of the colonizer. It is the means whereby a colonizing power can set in motion profound changes in the behavior of local peoples. The pull of emulation can alter settlement patterns, production, patterns of labor,

and morality itself. As employed by Raynal, it is a technique of rule. But, given the centrality of voluntarism within the passion, who is doing the ruling?

The examples above imply that within certain bounds, the local peoples are ruling themselves. *They* voluntarily alter their patterns of living and come to realize the benefits of ‘civilization’. A weakness in the models begins to emerge here. What happens if emulation fails? For Raynal there are enough examples to demonstrate that it can work. Yet, it is a long process, which might be disrupted at any point. Could force be used where emulation fails? For the *Histoire* the answer is ‘no.’ Force can only be used in the process of colonizing (partially) inhabited lands in very specific cases of self-defense.¹⁰⁵ Force erodes legitimacy and any resort to it would defeat the purpose of emulation: the establishment of legitimate European rule. If the question of sovereignty appears ambiguous in a situation where violence is deemed illegitimate, note that the *Histoire* is considering only cases where European sovereignty has already been claimed or established. From this perspective emulation appears as a fix for past abuses (such as in Guam) or preventative of future ones (Russia).¹⁰⁶ In this way it serves to establish *ex post* legitimacy for rule. Those who will emulate will appreciate the benefits of rule. That legitimacy would be established *ex post* through non-coercive means makes it difficult to see how emulation could function without being tainted by the original violence. Given the format of the *Histoire* (*viz.* history) it makes sense that Raynal would be concerned with legitimacy after the fact. Considering the confidence with which the text endorses

¹⁰⁵ *HDI* 1783: 4.193

¹⁰⁶ Of course, Russia is a peculiar case in that the empire is not overseas and thus the question of legitimacy here is more related to the alteration of local modes of living.

emulation, it seems likely that emulation could also be applied in newly discovered lands as well.

Above it was clear that in some cases emulation would not be sufficient to establish lasting bonds with local peoples. For example in the jungles of Guyana, missionaries hoping to spark emulation would have to rely on the youth to transform local practices. While emulation might spur local peoples to civilize themselves, their desire to possess advanced technology wouldn't keep them from aligning with other European powers if this seemed useful. Emulation then appears somewhat fleeting: on its own, an unreliable tactic for building a colony. The next section considers a tactic that Raynal and his collaborators believed could be much longer-lived: settlement founded on consanguineous relationships.

(3) Consanguinity

The *Histoire* identifies consanguinity as a tactic for legitimate colony building. While thinkers and colonial officials debated consanguinity in a variety of contexts, I shall here be primarily concerned with the concept as it applies to native peoples and Europeans. This is not to suggest that there was no link between ideas about consanguinity established with African slaves and those that I intend to examine, only that this relationship is less important for understanding the *Histoire*'s endorsement of it as a tactic for colonizing native peoples.¹⁰⁷

For the purposes of this discussion, the consanguineous individual will be defined as one who is the offspring of a European and a native non-European parent. Mixed

¹⁰⁷ See Aubert 2004.

parentage is usually what the *Histoire* refers to. The blood ties established by consanguinity, in the hands of Raynal et al., become the starting point for a legitimate political relationship. In much the same manner as emulation, consanguineous relationships function as a means to colonize without coercion.

The most comprehensive endorsement of consanguinity comes in Book IX. Here European explorers and colonists are likened to a domesticated tiger, which has been let loose in the woods and “is again seized with the thirst for blood.” “Such have all the Europeans,” the text continues, “indiscriminately shew’n themselves in the regions of the New World, where they have been actuated with one common rage, the passion for gold.”¹⁰⁸ Upon crossing into the hemisphere Europeans all become alike in pursuing their designs: “oppressive” and capable of “all [] enormities.”¹⁰⁹ Here all European nations are indicted. But Diderot wonders, was this the only way?

Would it not have been a more humane, more useful, and less expensive plan, to have sent into each of those distant region some hundreds of young men and women? The men would have married the women and the women the men of the country. Consanguinity, the tie that is the most speedily formed, and the strongest, would soon have made one and the same family of the strangers and the natives.¹¹⁰

The question posed at the outset of the quotation should be understood as rhetorical. French colonial officials had been periodically trying to use consanguinity as a means to bolster the empire since the seventeenth century in North America. Furthermore, Raynal singles out consanguinity elsewhere in the text as part of a strategy to colonize Madagascar.¹¹¹ Thus here the text presents consanguinity as an alternative to the violent

¹⁰⁸ *HDI* 1783: 4.359.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* [In the original: “*des étrangers & des naturels du pays, une seule & même famille*” 4.234]

¹¹¹ *HDI* 1783: 2.234,

and cruel conduct of the Europeans. Before considering further how this would work according to the *Histoire*, it is worth expanding the discussion begun in Chapter 1 and briefly exploring how opinions about consanguinity had been evolving up until the mid eighteenth century in France. Understanding this evolution will help to clarify the *Histoire*'s position on the subject.

Most historical evidence for French interest in consanguinity comes from the colonization of New France. From the outset, officials decided that mixed marriages would be useful for trading and settlement there. Early in the seventeenth century, the explorer and eventual administrator of the colony, Samuel Champlain proclaimed to a group of natives: "our young men will marry your daughters, and we shall be one people."¹¹² This policy of assimilation was not limited to local colonial authorities. In his charter grant to the Company of New France, Richelieu posited that

the Savages who will be led to the faith and to profess it *will be considered Frenchmen*, and like them, will be able to come and live in France when they wish to, and there acquire property, with the rights of inheritance and bequest, *just as if they had been born Frenchmen*, without being required to make any declaration or to become naturalized.¹¹³

Colbert went even further arguing that colonists and locals peoples ought to create a "commonwealth through intermarriage" by "constitut[ing] one people and one blood."¹¹⁴

Beyond the obvious benefits of tapping into local trading networks and allying with tribes, French officials came to see such marriages as a means to establish a more permanent and flourishing colony. By recognizing relationships that were already taking place, officials hoped that French traders and trappers could be encouraged to settle down

¹¹² Aubert, 452.

¹¹³ Ibid, 451-2. (Italics added).

¹¹⁴ Belmessous 2005, para. 15.

and found lucrative agricultural communities. Such relationships also promised to increase population on the cheap without draining labor from the metropole. The clergy also had an interest in endorsing mixed marriages. Efforts to discourage illicit sexual relationships between Frenchmen and Indian women had proved nearly impossible. Thus religious officials sought to retain some control over social order by providing legitimacy to relationships that they knew would continue anyway.¹¹⁵

While authorities in France and America believed that intermarriage could produce desirable results for the colonization project, there was little in the way of a coherent strategy.¹¹⁶ The crown underwrote a few projects such as the education of native girls in an Ursuline convent so as to prepare them for marriage with Frenchmen. Generally speaking however, there was little consistent policy on the ground.¹¹⁷ This lack of consistency, combined with rising concerns that Frenchmen were becoming more *savage* rather than helping to civilize native peoples, prompted increasing skepticism among officials about the success of consanguinity as a policy. While some exceptions existed—such as Cadillac’s plan to use marriage as a means to settle Detroit—by the beginning of the eighteenth century, consanguinity was viewed with widespread doubt, and by the middle of the century colonial officials had mostly abandoned it.¹¹⁸ The losses

¹¹⁵ Cornelius Jaenen “Miscegenation in Eighteenth Century New France” in Barry Gough ed., *New Dimensions in Ethnohistory: Papers of the Second Laurier Conference on Ethnohistory and Ethnology* (Hull Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991): 100-102. See also Jennifer M. Spear, “Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (January 2003): para. 17.

¹¹⁶ Belmessous, para. 17.

¹¹⁷ Jaenen, 96.

¹¹⁸ On Cadillac see Belmessous, paras. 35-6. However, for Cadillac’s hostility to such relationships see: Spear, para. 21. On abandonment see Jaenen, 107 and Spear, para. 19. As Spear notes: just because officials were dissatisfied with such relationships doesn’t mean they were abandoned. They continued in Illinois and elsewhere. Inheritance laws however became increasingly hostile to the offspring and widows of such marriages.

at the end of the Seven Years War had, in the minds of many, confirmed suspicions that the tactic could not work: the colony where consanguinity had been most widespread was ceded to the British.

Given that consanguinity was associated with a failed colony, it perhaps seems remarkable that it would appear in the *Histoire* as a partial solution to colonial woes. Hadn't it been discredited in the forests and river valleys of North America? There are a few reasons why Raynal continues to endorse it as a tactic in establishing colonies. First, it is important to note that interest in the tactic had not disappeared completely. The abbé Badeau in his physiocratic journal *Ephémérides du citoyen* continued to endorse it in 1766, while the King also recommended it in his instructions for the colonists in Guyana during the 1760s.¹¹⁹ Second, and more importantly, in the case of Madagascar Raynal's sources indicated that it would be particularly effective there. This was because the native peoples appeared to be especially inclined to establish such relationships. Third, Raynal's theory of sexual desire was influenced by climatic explanations. Madagascar had the right kind of climate to encourage intermarriage whereas the frigid North America hadn't. These socio-climatic explanations, in turn, generated related ethical reasons that made consanguinity appealing: *viz.* they would encourage colonization based on the desires and inclinations of the local populace and thus circumvent any need for coercion.

¹¹⁹ In reference to Native Americans: "il faudroit absolument les traiter en égaux, les adopter comme vrais Citoyens, & confondre, sur-tout [*sic*] leur enfants, avec ceux des nouveaux Colons, par des Mariages réciproques" and "c'est à dire, joindre un Amériquin [*sic*] à la fille d'un Colon né dans l'Europe, & une jeune Sauvage bien élevée à un François" in *Ephémérides du Citoyen ou Chronique de l'esprit national*, tome 5, 14 Juillet 1766 pp 60 and 62. The King's instructions: "Sa Majesté veut que, pour les y déterminer, il leur [the Indians] soit même liberté, des même privilèges et de la même protection [*sic*] que ses autres sujets établis dans cette colonie. Elle recommande même aux sieurs chevaliers Turgot et de Chanvallon d'encourager les mariages entre les nouveaux colons et les Indiens." In Jacques Artur, *Histoire des colonies françaises de la Guianne* (Petit-Bourg: Ibis rouge, 2002), 717.

I shall ultimately return to the ethical reasons after a brief consideration of the socio-climatic ones on which they are based.

From the early period of its colonization, French explorers and settlers advocated using consanguinity as a means to settle Madagascar.¹²⁰ By the eighteenth century there was historical evidence that intermarriage could be quite useful beyond mere trading relationships. For example an official named Le Rochelais Le Vacher (a.k.a. “La Case”) arrived in 1656 and promptly married the daughter of a local king. Upon her father’s death she became queen which, according to local custom, made La Case a Malagasche prince. He proceeded to use this title to extend local French authority.¹²¹ Several of Raynal’s eighteenth century sources on Madagascar also advocated consanguinity. Joseph-Francois Charpentier de Cossigny—who kept his own proposal for colonizing Madagascar unpublished until after the Revolution—corresponded with Raynal and was an advocate of establishing a French presence there based on “les lignes de consanguinité.”¹²²

According to the reports from Madagascar, locals were eager to have their daughters marry Europeans. Alexis Rochon who traveled there and also corresponded with Raynal wrote: “These people...pay the utmost respect to marriage; they forewarn

¹²⁰ A colonial official during Richelieu’s tenure named Pronis originally married a Malagasche chief’s daughter in the 1640s. In 1648 the newly designated governor Etienne de Flaucourt used Pronis’ wife as a trade representative. Upon his return to France, Flaucourt wrote a memoir describing why the colony had ultimately failed. In the second edition of the memoir (1661) he advocated intermarriage as a means to establish a more durable colony. See Deschamps *Histoire de Madagascar* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1961): 67-8 and 71-2.

¹²¹ Ibid, 72.

¹²² Quoted in Claude Wanquet, "Joseph-Francois Charpentier de Cossigny et le projet d'une colonisation «éclairée» de Madagascar à la fin du XVIIIe siècle" in *Regards sur Madagascar et la révolution Française. Actes du colloque d'Antananarivo 5 et 6 juin 1989* (Madagascar: Editions CNAPMAD, 1990), 85. For more on Cossigny see B. Foury *Maudave et la colonisation de Madagascar*. (Paris: Société de l'Histoire des Colonies Française, 1956), 126-7.

strangers to behave with decency to their wives; but they offer them their daughters and think themselves much honoured when they have children by them.”¹²³ Thus many of the *Histoire*'s sources advocated consanguinity and announced that locals sought such relationships.

Apart from the material benefits of these marriages, many European sources presumed that they also were in line with local sexual values based on climatic influence.¹²⁴ The article on Madagascar in the *Encyclopédie* reports: “The men feel all the influences of climate, the love of idleness & sensuality. Women who do indulge are not publicly disgraced.”¹²⁵ For this reason, observers of Malagasy sexuality later in the eighteenth century would compare it to Tahiti.¹²⁶ Raynal also takes up a similar view, noting that “every instant of an idle sedentary life... is dissipated in sensual pleasures.” He continues, “Most of them esteem themselves honoured in having illegitimate children, when they are of the white race....”¹²⁷ According to Raynal, dissipation in sensual pleasures occurs mostly because the climate of the tropics produces sufficient abundance, allowing people to focus on sensuality rather than feeding and sheltering themselves. If we compare this account to the *Histoire*'s description of indigenous sexuality in North America, a possible explanation appears for why Raynal et al. thought consanguinity might work in Madagascar when it had failed in North America. Raynal makes a point of

¹²³ Alexis Rochon, *A voyage to the Madagascar and the East Indies translated from the French...; to which is added, a memoir on the Chinese trade*. (London, 1792), 46. For more on Rochon and his correspondence with Raynal see Guy Jacob "Le Madecasse et les Lumiers: voyage a Madagascar d'Alexis Rochon" in *Regards sur Madagascar*, 47. This is the same Rochon who worked with Condorcet at the Academy of Sciences in Paris and who may have assisted d'Alembert in editing the *Encyclopédie* see Ibid, 44-8.

¹²⁴ For more on the link between climate, population growth, and colonization see 7.430.

¹²⁵ *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres. Mis en ordre & publié par M. ...* Volume 9. (Genève [Paris & Neufchâtel], 1772; 1754-72), 839.

¹²⁶ "Mémoire relatif a l'isle de Madagascar, par le citoyen Lescallier" 17 fructidor an 9, in Jean Valette. *Lescallier et Madagascar*. (Tananarive: Imprimerie Nationale, 1966), 17.

¹²⁷ *HDI* 1783: 2.230.

describing the native inhabitants of North America as suffering from a lack of erotic drive.¹²⁸ Their cold climate made survival sufficiently difficult that they could not abandon themselves to more sensual pursuits. The climate then would present one obstacle to a flourishing colony founded on consanguineous population growth. It is for this reason that the *Histoire* could advocate such relationships in Madagascar when they had apparently failed in North America.

After reviewing the history of colonization efforts in Madagascar, Raynal concludes that consanguinity ought to have been a key component of policy:

The grand system of civilization would still have been promoted, by the intermarriage of the women on the island with the French colonists. This tie, so endearing, and of so tender a nature, would have extinguished those odious distinctions, which cherish perpetual hatred and everlasting division, between people who inhabit the same region, and live under the same laws.¹²⁹

The argument here then is one about justice rather than mere utility. Raynal describes the inequalities prevalent in most colonies as “odious” and sees mixed marriage as a way to erase them. If this weren’t sufficiently clear, a glance at Raynal’s source here (and also the most vocal advocate for using consanguinity in Madagascar) only amplifies the message:

The basis of our project should be to avoid presenting slavery in any form to the inhabitants of the country. ... Our policy prohibits marriages of mixed blood. This principle is good in a colony where the population is divided into two classes, masters and slaves. But the new establishment is a quite different case. It consists in civilizing a free people and incorporating them somehow. The indefinite liberty [*La Liberté indéfinie*] of marriages is an excellent way to achieve this.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *HDI* 1783: 6.449 and 6.453.

¹²⁹ *HDI* 1783: 2.234.

¹³⁰ Maudave was a planter from the Isle de France (Mauritius). The text comes from his proposal for a colony sent to Choiseul in 1768. See H. Pouget de St. Andre *La Colonisation de Madagascar sous Louis XV d'après la correspondance inédite du comte de Maudave* (Paris: Librairie Coloniale, 1886): 18. Choiseul’s cousin, the duc de Praslin (who was alternatively the Secretary of State and then of the Navy) found Maudave’s proposal sufficiently compelling that he can be found repeating Maudave’s position on consanguinity (see Pluchon 1991: 284).

The author of this quotation, the comte de Maudave, reveals what is at stake in the minds of the French reformists advocating consanguinity as a tactic for colonization: the liberty of indigenous peoples. In order to incorporate a free people into the empire it would be necessary to do so without coercion. This means avoiding relationships that have the semblance of slavery. Given the proclivities of locals toward such intermarriage, it seemed reasonable to believe—according to Raynal and his sources—that marriage could promote a colonial relationship founded on liberty rather than slavery. It was part of a plan, Raynal asserted, “equally advantageous to both nations.”¹³¹ The advantages for the Malagasies would be both civilization and freedom from local tyrants—standard justifications for imperial endeavors. Raynal’s account then is remarkable because it exemplifies a common belief that local people might be brought to agree to accept French sovereignty through intermarriage.

Up until this point the sources that I have quoted have described consanguinity from a firmly patriarchal view. The examples have been of relationships between European men and native women, thus perhaps reinforcing our modern suspicions that this is a standard form of sexual domination recurrent throughout the history of European overseas colonization. It is important to recall however that this was not the only possibility considered by Raynal et al. The first reference in this section from the *Histoire* imagines a scheme wherein *both* sexes from both cultures would be involved in establishing a relationship and, of course, producing consanguineous offspring. This view appears again in the text elsewhere as a solution to colonial violence: “Let there be no

¹³¹ *HDI* 1783: 2.233.

arms and no soldiers: but a multitude of young women for the men, and numbers of young men for the women.”¹³² It is worth pausing to consider this. One explanation—which is in keeping with my account of the *Histoire*’s reformist orientation to colonization—is that both partners would be permitted liberty of choice without respect to gender identity. If this is correct, then Raynal sought to emphasize the agency of both partners further establishing, from his perspective, the absence of coercion in this process. It would not then be the familiar story of men from the outside exercising power over local women but instead would be a more complicated (and perhaps egalitarian?) system.¹³³

There is however another possible explanation for the gender equality of the *Histoire*’s proposal: in some cases, allowing European women to marry local men would further stabilize relations between colonizer and colonized. Here it is useful to consider an incident from 1674 that Raynal et al. were probably familiar with. In this unfortunate episode, a ship filled with young French women bound for the Isle de Bourbon (Reunion) wrecked in the harbor of Fort Dauphin in Madagascar.¹³⁴ As ships called there infrequently, the young women were stranded and promptly insisted that they be married to French settlers. Most of the male settlers already had Malagasy wives but the governor acquiesced to the demands. He ordered the men to renounce the native women and marry the shipwrecked European women. This decision ultimately led to the destruction of the colony: the Malagasies interpreted this renunciation as a dissolution of political bonds

¹³² *HDI* 1783: 4.361

¹³³ This is, of course, not to suggest that domination would not necessarily be present in such relationships.

¹³⁴ For more on this incident see Mike Parker Pearson, “Close Encounters of the Worst Kind: Malagasy Resistance and Colonial Disasters in Southern Madagascar,” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (February 1997): 401 and 409.

and promptly massacred around a hundred colonists during the marriage festivities.

Taking this incident into account, it would be tempting to see the gender equality of the *Histoire*'s proposal as solely founded in prudence—a means to avoid the kind of trouble that caused the collapse of Fort Dauphin in the 1670s.

This interpretation, however, overlooks the extent to which Raynal et al. emphasized the ethical component of a colony founded on such relationships. Intermarriage, without respect to gender, seemed to the reformists an extension of liberty to all residents of the colony while it functioned to bring native peoples into the French political orbit. Hence, while praising an earlier scheme to colonize Madagascar through the use of consanguinity Raynal notes that “the soft mode of persuasion; ...the seducing prospect of happiness; ...the allurements of a quiet life” would be critical to lead “the whole island...to concur in a plan equally advantageous to both nations.” Otherwise a “numerous, brave, and uncivilized people, would never have submitted to the chains with which a few barbarous foreigners might have wished to load them.”¹³⁵ Diderot elsewhere in the *Histoire* reinforces this view. After attacking the cruelties perpetrated by European colonists he writes:

The ship that should transport into your colonies healthy and vigorous young men, with industrious and prudent young women, would be the best the best laden of all your vessels. It would prove the source of eternal peace between you and the natives.¹³⁶

By encouraging intermarriage between native peoples and European colonizers, Raynal and his collaborators believed that it would be possible to establish a flourishing colony without coercion. They reasoned that intermarriage could be founded on the natural

¹³⁵ *HDI* 1783: 2.233

¹³⁶ *HDI* 1783: 2.429.

proclivities of locals and colonists, while the consanguineous offspring of such couplings would enable the French to create a lasting political bond in overseas territories. Raynal characterized this as part of a larger process of “persuasion” wherein local peoples would be brought to accept European rule through their own volition. While the foregoing sections have dealt with the volition to emulate and establish consanguinity, the next section considers persuasion explicitly. Here Raynal et al.’s belief that colonization could be founded on persuasion becomes even more apparent.

(4) Discursive Persuasion

According to Raynal, persuasion is at the center of legitimate rule. In a passage attacking the notion of enlightened despotism, he argues that monarchs may not legitimately deprive their subjects of rights even when it is for their own good. In cases where subjects refuse to do what is best for themselves, he suggest that compulsion is illegitimate and that instead a monarch must “bring them to juster notions by the means of persuasion.”¹³⁷ He believed that this kind of persuasion could also be applied in the colonies.

Discursive persuasion is the final colonization tactic that the *Histoire* praises repeatedly. This term applies to cases where Europeans seeking to establish a colony try to persuade local peoples through speech to allow it. As with the other tactics discussed above, discursive persuasion often is (or should be) employed in a bundle. It might be combined with the promotion of emulation and/or consanguinity. In this section, it is

¹³⁷ *HDI* 1783: 8.31.

worth continuing to pull apart these bundles so as to better understand what Raynal et al. believed that discursive persuasion could accomplish.

Since the sixteenth century, church officials in the New World had debated how discursive persuasion could be used to convert native peoples.¹³⁸ The Spanish Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas argued that European rhetoric could be applied without alteration among the Indians because their intelligence was the same as that of Europeans. The Jesuit José de Acosta however believed that there were significant differences between Indians and Europeans, as well as between Indian groups themselves. These differences could be observed in the structure of each group's writing system, which in turn required discursive persuasion at varying levels of complexity. This said, Acosta acknowledged that barbarism was only customary and that local peoples could be educated and ultimately persuaded to convert. As a Jesuit—and, incidentally, a descendent of *conversos*—Acosta was particularly concerned with effecting sincere conversions and this desire is evinced in his careful attention to the question of persuasion.¹³⁹

During the eighteenth century, it was common among French sources to emphasize the role of persuasion in Jesuit missionary practice. This was especially the case when it came to the Jesuit colonies in Paraguay. Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, who was both a Jesuit and a source for the *Histoire*, described Jesuit

¹³⁸ For more on this discussion see D.P. Abbott, *Rhetoric in the New World: Rhetorical Theory and Practice in Colonial Spanish America* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996). On Las Casas and Acosta see pp. 64-9.

¹³⁹ Youssef El Alaoui, *Jésuites, morisques et indiens: étude comparative des méthodes d'évangélisation de la Compagnie de Jésus d'après les traités de José de Acosta (1588) et d'Ignacio de las Casas* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006).

missionary practice there as “persuasion.”¹⁴⁰ For Charlevoix, the Jesuits were supported in this tactic by the King of Spain who in 1609 had written: “no attempt should be made to subdue the Indians of Paraguay, but by the sword of the word; ...making them submit willingly to the Spanish yoke, by making them sensible to the advantages that would attend such submission.”¹⁴¹ Louis Antoine de Bougainville, who witnessed the expulsion of the Jesuits from South America in 1767 before his arrival in Tahiti, described Jesuit conduct in similar terms: “Indeed, if one casts a general view at a distance upon this magic government, founded by spiritual arms only, and united only by the charms of persuasion, what institution can be more honorable to human nature?”¹⁴² Among Raynal’s contemporaries then this was a common theme. For this reason, as well as due to the order’s demonstrable successes, Raynal found Jesuit examples to be instructive.

The *Histoire* identifies the Jesuits as particularly effective in the use of discursive persuasion. The authors spend a significant amount of time examining and praising the Jesuit run colonies in Paraguay. These colonies are described as “The most beautiful edifice that has been raised in the New World,” while in assessing the process of ‘civilizing’ local peoples Raynal speculates: “Perhaps...so much good had never been done to men, with so little injury.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *The History of Paraguay. Containing ... a Full and Authentic Account of the Establishments Formed There by the Jesuits, from Among the Savage Natives ... Establishments Allowed to Have Realized the Sublime Ideas of Fenelon, Sir Thomas More, and Plato* (London: L. Davis, 1769): 249. For Charlevoix as source for the *Histoire* see Ludlow "The legacy of the Spanish conquest of the New World in the 'Histoire des deux Indes'" in *Voltaire Raynal Rousseau Allegorie* (SVEC 2003), 225.

¹⁴¹ Charlevoix, 242-3.

¹⁴² Irving Leonard, ed. *Colonial Travelers in Latin America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 184.

¹⁴³ 1783: 4.237 and 4.254. This account is somewhat different from what we see in Voltaire’s *Candide*. In the latter the Jesuits are described as interested in the latest war tactics and live in luxury while their native charges live in abject poverty. Voltaire, *Candide*, (New York: Bantam Classics, 1981), 52-4.

What had the Jesuits accomplished according to the *Histoire*? In short, they had established rule or “empire” without the use of coercion.¹⁴⁴ This becomes especially clear in the text where the Jesuits are compared to the Incas.¹⁴⁵ Here Raynal notes that the Jesuits followed Incan maxims in governing their empire. The rule of both could best be characterized by mildness, particularly in establishing rule. The *Histoire* repeatedly describes Jesuit conduct in terms of its mildness.¹⁴⁶ While the Incas had armies, the Jesuits “confined themselves to the arts of persuasion.”¹⁴⁷ This reliance on the ‘arts of persuasion’ allowed “a few missionaries [to] change[] little wandering clans into several great and civilized nations...while multitudes of [Spanish] soldiers were employed in changing two great and civilized empires into deserts inhabited by roving savages.”¹⁴⁸ The image of the Jesuits assembling wandering clans into great civilized nations resembles one which the Roman rhetoric teacher Quintilian (who was a source for Jesuit rhetorical education) employs in his *Institutiones Oratoria*: “I cannot imagine how founders of cities would have made a homeless multitude come together to form a people, had they not moved them by their skilful speech.”¹⁴⁹ While the Jesuits in Raynal’s account resemble city founders from classical antiquity in their ability to create nations through speech, the comparison to Spanish soldiers underscores the power of persuasion in contrast to coercive methods. The Jesuits were able to make “progress...in

¹⁴⁴ *HDI* 1783: 4.234

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ E.g. Marquette’s conduct is described thusly: “mild and benevolent manners secured to him the general affection of all the inhabitants [of Quebec].” *HDI* 1783: 7.15

¹⁴⁷ *HDI* 1783: 4.234

¹⁴⁸ *HDI* 1783: 4.382. (The two empires being those of the Incas and the Aztecs.)

¹⁴⁹ Quintilian, *Institutiones oratoriae*, Vol. 1 (Loeb ed., 2001), 373.

a very short time” while “the forces and navy of Spain and Portugal” had not been able to effect positive change “in the space of two centuries.”¹⁵⁰

Jesuit “progress” in settling and collecting native peoples came from their reliance on persuasion. In establishing the colonies in Paraguay they went in search of native peoples and “*prevailed upon them* to renounce their old customs and prejudices...to enjoy the sweets of society.”¹⁵¹ Here the Jesuits sought to convince local peoples to adopt new modes of living and submit to European rule. This was accomplished through speech.

For Raynal, certain members of the order were quite adept at this kind of persuasion. He recounts one particularly difficult case in which a Jesuit missionary accompanied by “a Negroe” set out into the jungles of Guyana to round up a group of Maroons (escaped African slaves). Here the Jesuit is reported to have “assembled all the deserters by ringing a bell,” set up an altar, “said mass to them, harangued them, and brought them all back, without exception, to their former masters.”¹⁵² Raynal posits that the Jesuit’s success in this rather incredible example was due to his knowledge of “the human heart.” By knowing his audience sufficiently, the Jesuit was able to persuade the Maroons to renounce their freedom. The example is certainly more extreme than the cases that Raynal et al. praise in Jesuit Paraguay. The method however is similar and reveals the power that the Jesuits had in employing persuasion through speech. It is also important to recognize that where the Maroons might have surrendered their freedom completely, Raynal emphasizes that the Jesuit colonies in Paraguay were established on

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ *HDI* 1783: 4.235 [ital. added]

¹⁵² *HDI* 1783: 6.47

“voluntary submission, ...inclination founded on conviction, ...and...nothing is done [there] but from choice and full approbation.” The evidence for this was that

whole nations came voluntarily to incorporate themselves into [the Jesuits’] government, and none have ever thrown off the yoke. It cannot be pretended that fifty missionaries could have been able to compel a hundred thousand Indians to be their slaves, who had it in their power either to massacre their priests, or to take refuge in the deserts.¹⁵³

The Jesuits then were estimable because they had established empire (rule over local peoples) without recourse to coercion.¹⁵⁴ This said, there were a number of problems with their rule. While the *Histoire* judges the Paraguay establishments in glowing terms, they also tended to suffer from the Jesuits’ excessive zeal. Among the many things missing in the colony were emulation and the economic growth it could provoke.¹⁵⁵ More tellingly, the establishment “resembled rather a religious community than a political institution.”¹⁵⁶ This made life ultimately rather dreary for the native inhabitants even if it had initiated them to “the highest degree of civilization to which it is possible to bring recent nations.”¹⁵⁷

While some of the *Histoire*’s sources suggested using the Jesuits to colonize French lands based on the Paraguay model,¹⁵⁸ Raynal and his collaborators recognized the limits to the model.¹⁵⁹ This said, they also believed that it might be possible to secularize Jesuit practice to some extent. In Madagascar, Raynal suggests using a

¹⁵³ *HDI* 1783: 4.241-2. Further on Raynal describes the colony as such: “...people, who were freely attached to the kings of Spain” 4.245.

¹⁵⁴ Though Voltaire’s mocking portrayal of Jesuit Paraguay as a militarized state reminds us that the Jesuits armed native peoples so as to repulse predation from Spanish and Portuguese colonists. See Voltaire 52-54.

¹⁵⁵ *HDI* 1783: 4.252

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *HDI* 1783: 4.253

¹⁵⁸ Bessner, for example, suggests this in 1776 but was quickly thwarted by Malouet. See David Lowenthal, “Colonial Experiments in French Guiana, 1760-1800,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 32, no. 1 (February 1952): 33.

¹⁵⁹ *HDI* 1783: 4.252-3

missionary model—using only the “young men, who, formed by our institutions, would...become political missionaries, and might have increased the number of proselytes to the system of government.”¹⁶⁰ Maudave made a similar argument about the role of colonists in Madagascar: “Colonists should be considered as a sort of apostles of the state [*Apôtres d'État*], destined to procure by the example of their work and by the regularity of a good order [*bonne police*], the knowledge and enjoyment of the advantages of society to savages who have nearly no idea of it.”¹⁶¹ Maudave also believed that discursive persuasion was an effective tactic for convincing local people to adopt French rule. In a letter he reported that he had invited a number of local Malagasy chiefs to meet with him in order that he could: “explain to them how the settlement that we plan to make there is advantageous (to them). I will speak with them of the resources that they will gain from an assiduous commerce with the French.”¹⁶² Thus before establishing a new settlement he sought to persuade local authorities of the benefits of permitting it.¹⁶³

Discursive persuasion then is the final tactic that the *Histoire* endorses for legitimate colonization. While it appears less frequently in the text compared to the other tactics, it embodies the overarching principle that links all of the tactics discussed above. This principle requires that colonization be accomplished through a rejection of coercive methods and with the assent of the local peoples. For Raynal and his collaborators, the Jesuits accomplished this in Paraguay (even if their rule was objectionable for other

¹⁶⁰ *HDI* 1783: 2.234

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Foury, 39.

¹⁶² Pouget de St. Andre, 33.

¹⁶³ It should be noted, however, that when Maudave's policy of 'douceur' failed, his tactics became increasingly harsh. See Foury, 75.

reasons). The *Histoire* reveals that the French reformists believed Jesuit methods could be applied for expressly secular goals.

(5) Complications

Up until this point, I have only made the case for the *Histoire*'s endorsement of colonization by considering the tactics that it endorses. In this section, I examine two complications to my argument and suggest that neither fully undermines the picture that I have drawn of the *Histoire*'s reformist ideology. The first is an oft-cited portion of the text—the so called ‘speech of the Hottentot’—that appears to provide the strongest indication that the authors categorically rejected empire (rather than endorsed an alternative form of it, as I have been arguing here). The second complication is an example in which the authors endorse the use of violence in the invasion and ultimate colonization of Barbary. Here I explain why this special case can coexist with the kind of colonial vision that I described in the sections above.

The most significant challenge to my account of text's reformist position appears in a discussion of the Cape colony. After a rather derogatory account of the Hottentot inhabitants, which includes some tired tropes about ‘savagery,’ the author criticizes aspects of European civilization. Here civilization is subjected to criticism from an ostensibly savage perspective.¹⁶⁴ The idea, of course, is not to return to savagery—neither Raynal nor Diderot were primitivists—but a criticism of the pretences of civilization. For this discussion, the most important component is the following (addressed to European colonizers): “You are proud of your knowledge; but of what use

¹⁶⁴ For problems associated with the faux-savage criticism, see Garraway 2009.

is it to you; or of what service would it be to the Hottentots?”¹⁶⁵ The question is founded on the premise that this knowledge has not made Europeans more virtuous nor will it make the Hottentots such.

This claim is rather peculiar given the praise that emulation receives elsewhere in the text for *precisely* its ability to inspire virtuous activity among local peoples. Moreover, at this point in the text the Hottentots have just been described as slothful beings: “equally regardless of the future, and the past, they sleep, smoke, and intoxicate themselves.”¹⁶⁶ In fact, the text quickly moves away from a criticism of civilization per se and into one aimed at the hypocrisy of European conduct overseas. “[T]here would be some excuse,” the authors note, if the “design had been to lead the Hottentot to a more civilized kind of life,” but instead the aim was to subject local peoples and usurp their lands.¹⁶⁷ While this account of the civilizing mission is more of an endorsement *in comparison to* an unjust alternative, it does temper the criticism of colonization broadly speaking.

Finally, the author directly addresses his “barbarous” European audience: “If you should be offended at my words, it is because you are not more humane than your predecessors; it is because you perceive in the hatred I have vowed against them, that which I entertain against you.”¹⁶⁸ At first glance this acidic remark appears to be an assault on colonization itself. It is worth noting, however, an alternative interpretation which limits the scope of the criticism—i.e. those (legion) colonists who are *not* more

¹⁶⁵ *HDI* 1783: 1.310

¹⁶⁶ *HDI* 1783: 1.305. Rousseau makes a similar claim in his play *The Discovery of the New World*. See Tracy Strong, *Jean Jacques Rousseau: The Politics of the Ordinary*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 20.

¹⁶⁷ *HDI* 1783: 1.310-1

¹⁶⁸ *HDI* 1783: 1.312

humane than their predecessors would certainly be offended by the criticism and rightly so. In other words, those colonists who continue to engage in the kinds of abuses that the *Histoire* chronicles deserve the audience's "hatred." This of course leaves open the possibility for colonists, who *do not* follow the example of their predecessors in their treatment of local inhabitants, to avoid such censure. From this perspective, the Hottentot's speech is less damaging to my account than it first appears.

The *Histoire*'s discussion of colonization on the Barbary Coast also seems to undermine my account of Raynal et al.'s reformist ideology. Here the text endorses the use of violence in order to conquer and ultimately colonize North Africa. The authors call for a European "confederacy" to attack the region and divide the spoils amongst themselves.¹⁶⁹ Such aggressive expansionism seems hardly in keeping with the colonization through persuasion model articulated above.

For Raynal et al., there was no obvious inconsistency between their reformist colonial model and their calls for violence toward the Barbary states. The ongoing plague of Barbary piracy in the Mediterranean led them to consider an attack on the region as an act of self-defense. With European invasion and colonization "this race of pirates, these sea-monsters, would be changed into men by salutary laws, and examples of humanity."¹⁷⁰

The invasion would be legitimate over the longer term because it would also be an act of liberation. Raynal drew a distinction between the piratical rulers and the local populace—a distinction that, incidentally, recurs in different iterations in French rhetoric

¹⁶⁹ *HDI* 1783: 5.183

¹⁷⁰ *HDI* 1783: 5.184

before Napoleon's Egyptian expedition and then during the nineteenth century before the invasion of Algeria. The "Arabs, ...the Moors come out of Spain, ...the Jews, who are despised, oppressed, and outraged: all the people...of that continent, detest the yoke which oppresses them."¹⁷¹ From this perspective, the local Turkish rulers are an obstacle to colonization through persuasion and the local populace would support the use of violence to overthrow them. It would result in "the happiness of the vanquished" who would "no longer...leave a country uncultivated" and would "ever recollect, with gratitude, the memorable era which had brought [the Europeans] to their shores."¹⁷²

Properly executed, European invasion and colonization in North Africa would be the "noblest and greatest of enterprizes [*sic*]" and provide an example wherein "[w]ar, for once, at least, will then become useful and just."¹⁷³ In fact, the Barbary case would be a "new kind of conquest which presents itself to us, [and] would amply compensate for those, which, during so many centuries, have contributed to the distress of mankind."¹⁷⁴ Thus while the *Histoire* clearly endorses violence in the colonization process in Barbary, the violence was construed as defensive and liberative. In this special case, the authors viewed coercion as legitimate in that it was an exercise in self-defense and was in keeping with the perceived desires of local inhabitants. The discussion of Barbary ends with a solemn declaration: "if the reduction and subjection of Barbary would not become a source of happiness for them as well as for ourselves...may the project which humanity hath now dictated to us...be buried in perpetual oblivion!"¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ *HDI* 1783: 5.182

¹⁷² *HDI* 1783: 5.184

¹⁷³ *HDI* 1783: 5.183

¹⁷⁴ *HDI* 1783: 5.185

¹⁷⁵ *HDI* 1783: 5.186

Conclusion

In the pages above, I argued that Raynal's *Histoire* is a pro-colonial text. Rather than accepting colonization as it had been practiced in the majority of European overseas colonies, the text instead advances an alternative vision for founding colonies. This vision rejects coercive methods and seeks to persuade local peoples to adopt European rule and participate in it. Emulation would appeal to the imitative capacities of native peoples and their desire to possess European *techne*. Consanguinity would form lasting bonds between colonizer and colonized based on the natural inclinations of both peoples. Discursive persuasion would work via reasoning with local peoples and explaining the benefits that would accrue to them under European tutelage.

Surveyed from a modern perspective, this reformist vision seems to be something of a naïve fantasy, which was founded on reports from explorers and colonial administrators as well as shifts in moral and anthropological theories at the time. The vision tended to rest on the belief that the desires of indigenous peoples could be anticipated and co-opted for the sake of European ends. Even where Raynal envisioned actually engaging local peoples in discussion, he seemed unsettlingly certain that potential colonists could show locals their true interests.

What Raynal and his collaborators saw in persuasion was a means to square the circle of empire: to get the ruled to participate in and agree to being ruled without coercion. From this perspective it appeared possible to salvage certain European overseas colonies and provide them with a legitimacy that they had previously lacked. In so doing, Raynal speculated that it might be possible create an empire without the kind of violent

friction that was so apparent in the history of European colonization. In light of the simplicity and utility of the solution, as well as the popularity of Raynal's text, the empire by persuasion idea would persist in ensuing decades. It is to this persistence that the next chapter turns.

CHAPTER 3

The *Histoire*'s Reception, Colonial Debates, and the Turn to the Mediterranean

In the middle of May 1781, rumors were circulating around Paris that Raynal had been imprisoned in the Bastille. Soon it became clear that an arrest warrant had been issued, but he had already fled the kingdom under the pretext of taking the waters at Spa.¹ While the *Histoire des deux Indes* had been in France for more than a decade, as copies of the new 1780 edition were smuggled across the border from Geneva, they entered a political context rather different from that of a decade before. The king's foreign minister, the duc de Choiseul, who was Raynal's greatest patron and protector had long been disgraced and forced out of power. To make matters worse—despite earlier reports that the new edition would remove passages which had so “scandalized the clergy and partisans of despotism,” thereby leading the legal authorities and high clergy who had censored it in 1775 to “adorn” their libraries with the new version—it became clear that Raynal had added objectionable material instead.²

Raynal's troubles with the authorities did not begin in 1781, but had persisted through the 1770s. Negative official reaction tended to be restricted to domestic concerns, stemming from the various bold admonitions against sovereigns and priests appearing in

¹ Bachaumont *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France...*, (Londres/Amsterdam: John Adamson, 1783-88), vol. 17: 177, 191.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 15: 214; vol. 17: 177.

the *Histoire*.³ In 1772, the chancellor Maupeou⁴ acting as the king's highest legal official ordered the work suppressed having found in it "things reprehensible against religion, priests, and kings" and containing "propositions inappropriate, dangerous, reckless & contrary to good moeurs & to the principles of religion."⁵ Among the most energetic of Raynal's critics were high-ranking members of the clergy, who circulated a letter in December 1775 which singled out Raynal as one of the "most seditious writers amongst the modern unbelievers."⁶ A survey of journal commentary on the *Histoire* confirms the domestic explanation for Raynal's troubles, suggesting that his ideas about legitimate colonization remained acceptable and (I will suggest below) popular in France.⁷

³ To take one example, Raynal warns sovereigns "if you are desirous that your laws should be observed, take care that they never should be made in opposition to nature." He continues: "I should say to priests: take not your morality proscribe innocent pleasures." *HDI* 1783: 2.54.

⁴ Whose coup against parlement had made Diderot an enemy, despite the fact that Maupeou married the cousin of Diderot's mistress Mme Epinay. See A. Strugnell *Diderot's Politics: A Study of the Evolution of Diderot's Political Thought after the Encyclopédie* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973): 173.

⁵ Anatole Feugère, *Un Précurseur De La Révolution: L'abbé Raynal, 1713-1796. Documents Inédits* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970): 266 and Bachaumont vol 6: 245, respectively.

⁶ Bachaumont vol. 8: 289.

⁷ Journal commentary provides more precise criticism while amplifying the domestic and religious (rather than colonial) concerns of the government. Even before the *HDI*'s suppression, one chronicle described the history as being "so bold, so true, so contrary to the principles [of]... the current despotism" it was unlikely that it would be tolerated "for very long" (Bachaumont vol 6:142 [May 1772]). A leading conservative journal, *l'Année littéraire*, later noted Raynal's "irreligious morality" (H. Guénot, 'La réception de *l'Histoire des deux Indes* dans la presse d'expression française', *SVEC* 286 [1991]: 79). It used the publication of Francois Bernard's book-length rebuttal of the *HDI* in 1775, as an opportunity to amplify criticism of the history (François Bernard. *Analyse de l'histoire philosophique & politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*. Amsterdam, 1775). Raynal, the journal noted, "exposed his bold ideas on the nature of the liberty of man, on virtue, societies, religion, governments" using the *HDI* as a "new canvas" on which to paint his devious morals (Guénot 79). Bernard himself asserted that the *HDI* should be condemned as blasphemous and tending to incite men against their sovereigns. Apart from an ambiguous comment that the work advocated "vice," Bernard's severest criticism was directed less at Raynal's account of the colonies and more at the "principles" which supported his work: the "fanaticism of liberty" and the "fire" that would result from it within society (Bernard 48).

To Raynal's literary supporters, such as at the *Journal Encyclopédique*, these attacks on domestic grounds were especially alarming. The journal spent most of its defensive energy in its review of Bernard's work defending Raynal from charges of irreligiousness and rebellion against royal authority. This defensive focus is further evidence that Raynal's work was considered subversive less for reasons of colonial policy and more those of religion and domestic authority.

While precipitated by domestic political concerns, Raynal's exile would prove fortuitous.⁸ After some years of travel, he settled in Provence where he monitored increasing trade out of Marseille. His presence in the southern port anticipated a deliberate shift in French imperial ambitions: from the Atlantic world to the Mediterranean. During his time in Marseille, he evinced a growing interest in the potential for colonizing Africa and the Near East, one that a number of other polemicists and colonial administrators shared. This chapter explores the shifting focus in France away from the Americas and explains how the reformist ideas articulated in the *Histoire* shaped ongoing debates about establishing new colonies for France into the 1790s. Here I trace how colonial reformism would be continually deployed up until the French began thinking about invading Egypt.

The question of rule over native peoples is central to the chapter. In part 1, I explain the relative scarcity of comment on this theme among journalistic reviews of the *Histoire*, in terms of a general lack of interest in the subject through the 1770s. In short, there was less discussion of the tactics mentioned in the last chapter because the majority of French colonial trade at the time came from establishments founded on slavery (where questions of rule over native peoples were less relevant to practical experience as the indigenous inhabitants in the Caribbean had been largely wiped out). The issue of rule over local peoples did not die out completely, however. Authors and colonial officials in France had a growing sense that colonies founded on the slave trade were fundamentally unsustainable. For this reason, they began to imagine free labor colonies in West Africa where the reformist notions of rule by persuasion were once again central to proposed

⁸ This included conflict with Church authorities in France.

settlement schemes. The issue of rule over native peoples also remained present in debates about empire in India. Here French polemicists explored this question in a negative fashion while attacking British despotism there. In part 2, I follow Raynal to Marseille where his interest in the possibilities of colonizing the Mediterranean expanded. Here I identify Raynal's remarks about rule in North Africa as part of a growing trend of interest in settling the Barbary Coast, though I conclude that Raynal's notions of rule were the most defined of the lot. In part 3, I discuss Raynal's relationship with two future key members of the Egyptian expedition: Jean Michel Venture de Paradis, an Orientalist who acted as head translator, and Napoleon Bonaparte who led the expedition. Here I consider evidence from before the expedition that Raynal's notion of rule might have exercised influence over the two men.

(1) Rule over Native Peoples

Although the *Histoire* scrutinized and regularly denounced European ruling practices over indigenous peoples, few reviews attended to this theme. For example, neither the most prominent physiocrat journal nor Francois Bernard (who published a book length response to the *Histoire* in 1775) seemed especially interested in the question as presented by Raynal. Instead they tended to deal with the legitimacy of rule only insofar as it related to metropolitan rule over European colonists. This was in part because the most productive French colonies were in the Caribbean where native peoples had mostly been wiped out long ago and slave plantations posed a rather different set of questions. The proceeding sections of the chapter will describe why focus remained on the Caribbean, how this began to change, and some exceptions (such as in Africa and

India) where authors and colonial officials considered the topic of rule over local peoples at length. First however it is worth examining the one journal that *did* note the theme's importance in its review of the *Histoire*. The review, which appeared in the pro-*philosophe Journal Encyclopédique* in March 1776, defended *philosophes* generally and Raynal in particular from charges of sedition. It also worked to repeat to its audience the *Histoire's* criticisms of European colonial practices and offered support for colonization by persuasion.

The reviewer rehearsed the *Histoire's* points about colonization without censure because he approved of Raynal's views and wanted to summarize them for readers who could not obtain the banned and expensive work. He outlines the *Histoire*, beginning with Raynal's assault on papal authority in usurping native lands and progressing through a review of the various unjust European practices in the Indies. The reviewer makes a distinction between different nations' rule noting that while the Dutch founded their empire on a "different principle" from that of the violent Portuguese—one which promised "advantages and a useful alliance to the peoples"—ultimately they too revealed themselves as unjust despite their primary focus on commerce.⁹ He further notes that the Indians had been driven to hate all the Europeans who had quickly become "imperious and harmful guests."¹⁰

In addition to recording the *Histoire's* criticisms of colonial practices, the *Journal Encyclopédique* review repeats some of the work's reformist colonial ideas, at times elaborating on them. An example is Jesuit rule in Paraguay, which had so intrigued

⁹ Mars 1776 II.iii 426 (new version XLI p 259).

¹⁰ Ibid 431 and 427 (nv 259, 260)

Raynal and Diderot. The review describes the Jesuits: “not able to acquire empire by arms, [they] obtained it through persuasion.”¹¹ In repeating the *Histoire*’s account of the *reducciones*, the reviewer appeals to the authority of Montesquieu for further support.

In *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu had referred to the *reducciones* while enumerating examples of wise legislation.¹² Here the Jesuits were compared favorably to the Samnites, whose marriage practices made them difficult to subdue by the Romans. The Samnites allowed the most virtuous among their young men first choice of wives from the community and this practice was often cited with approval by eighteenth century reformers, such as the physiocrats, arguing for institutions which would channel natural individual inclination toward aggregate social benefits (the argument went that the youths would strive toward bravery knowing that their reward would be the most desirable women in the community).¹³ Montesquieu also compared the Jesuits’ activities to those of Lycurgus, and his modern, peaceful version William Penn. Each was an example of rule established over free men wherein desires were shaped for public benefit.

¹¹ Ibid 432 (nv260)

¹² Raynal met Montesquieu in 1750, two decades before the *HDI* was published. See Robert Shackleton. *Montesquieu, une biographie critique* (Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1977), 302-3 nt 40.

¹³ In the physiocratic journal’s review (*Ephemerides* 185) of Raynal’s *HDI* the Samnites appear also but here as a rebuke to Raynal who has gone too far toward libertinism in approving the Shinto practice of populating shrines devoted to gods of love and fertility with prostitutes as a means to increase population and thus (in Raynal’s mind) economic growth. Raynal’s rather racy account appears in *HDI* 1770 v1: 103-4. This eventually disappeared in later editions (removed from 1776 English translation, and eventual from the French 1778 ed.). Whether the physiocrat reviewer would have endorsed the use of consanguinity for the promotion of colonization (as discussed in the Raynal chapter) is unclear. It is clear however that contemporary audiences, who remained interested in the Samnite institution during the 1770s, recognized that it could be tyrannical for women in that only men chose women, not the reverse. In June 1776 a comedic opera written by Barnabé Farmian du Rosoy entitled *Les Mariages Samnites* was performed in Paris, and reviewed a month later in the *Journal Encycloédique* 5th tome, 2nd part, p 310. (Mozart incidentally wrote eight variations based on Gretry’s march in the work.) The reviewer notes that during the second act, one of the Samnite women (Eliane) objected to the “tyranny of the laws” in forcing the “hand” and “heart” of women. (See *Journal Encycloédique* Tome XLII Juillet-décembre 1776, Slatkine reprints geneve 1967, 85).

By citing Montesquieu, the *Journal Encyclopédique* review provided its pro-*philosophe* readers with an authority who, like Raynal, saw Jesuit colonial practice as an alternative to coercive practices. In a passage resembling the *Histoire*, Montesquieu writes of the Society: “By repairing the pillages of the Spaniards, it has begun to heal one of the greatest wounds mankind has yet received.”¹⁴ Thus like Raynal and his collaborators, Montesquieu saw an alternative form of rule, rather than the abandonment of rule, as a solution to previous colonial violence. The *Journal Encyclopédique* then sought to present Raynal’s case in a favorable light by employing Montesquieu’s authority as support.

While European rule over local peoples figured prominently in the *Histoire*, only the *Journal Encyclopédique* considered the subject at length. This was not because debating the legitimacy of European tactics (and rule) could land journalists in trouble with the authorities, indeed chapter 2 demonstrated that authorities themselves were very much engaged in this debate and, at least early on, supported Raynal’s work. Instead the relative silence of the press was because the *Histoire*’s appearance in print marked something of a lull in French overseas expansion. It is to this lull—and the few examples of continued discussion of rule over local peoples—that we turn to next.

(1.1) The ‘Lull’ in Debates about Ruling Natives

Even before the *Histoire* appeared, the Treaty of Paris (1763) made clear that France was willing to surrender enormous amounts of colonial territory to retain her

¹⁴ *Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge University Press, 1989): 37. Montesquieu often relied on Jesuit sources such as the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* when writing this work (see p. 111 nt. 40).

lucrative Antilles possessions. Ceding Louisiana and Canada, the French negotiated the return of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Lucia from British occupation. The Caribbean colonies, especially Saint-Domingue (Haiti), came to produce the vast majority of French colonial exports and by the 1780s it was clear that France's overseas commerce was firmly centered in the Antilles.¹⁵ Debates in the metropole reflected concerns endemic to these colonies. Thus questions about free trade and, as the 1780s progressed, colonial representation were primarily inflected by the Antilles colonial experience. This would continue to be the case during the first decade of the Revolution, as evinced by the overwhelming dominance of the topic in National Assembly colonial debates.¹⁶ Slave owners, colonists, and colonial merchants had long chafed under metropolitan economic restrictions and they used the revolutionary developments in France to clamor for more autonomy. Soon mixed race property owners and free blacks insisted that they be afforded equal rights.¹⁷ Most well known among this group was Toussaint Louverture who ultimately led an army of former slaves in a bid to end slavery and secure greater autonomy (not independence) within the French empire.¹⁸ The success of the slave rebellions during the early 1790s, combined with British and Spanish encroachments in Saint-Domingue, led French officials to abolish slavery in October 1793.¹⁹ These developments created a host of questions about citizenship for individuals of African

¹⁵ Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'ancien régime: L'évolution du régime de "l'Exclusif" de 1763 à 1789*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972): 733-4

¹⁶ David Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession during the Constituent Assembly," *The American Historical Review* 94, no. 5 (December 1, 1989): 1290-1308; Herbert Priestley, *France Overseas Through the Old Régime; a Study of European Expansion* (New York: D. Appleton, 1939): 316-7; Madeleine Dobie *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Cornell University Press 2010): 14.

¹⁷ Geggus 1989: 1298

¹⁸ On the latter point see Frederick Cooper "Provincializing France" in *Imperial Formations*, eds. Stoler et al. (School for Advanced Research Press, 2007): 351.

¹⁹ Ratified by the French National Convention in 1794.

heritage in the colonies as well as about the rights of colonies in relation to the metropole.²⁰ Before such questions could be pursued to lasting effect, the Constituent Assembly in France—under the influence of metropolitan merchants—acted to maintain administrative control in the colonies, while the exigencies of the plantation economy led colonial authorities to ignore the rights claimed by the former slaves.²¹ This focus on topics related to the plantation economy during the 1780s and 1790s created something of a lull in discussions about how to establish legitimate rule over indigenous peoples in overseas colonies.

The lull however was not complete. Criticisms of the brutal slave economy grew through the 1780s in France as a number of polemicists called for its end.²² Even those who had argued for the necessity of slavery in the Antilles such as Dubuc and Victor Pierre Malouet (both friends of Raynal and Diderot), acknowledged it as a necessary evil required to compete with other commodity exporting nations.²³ Beyond growing dissatisfaction with the slave trade, the 1770s and 1780s were filled with numerous challenges to French control in the Antilles. These challenges included interstate warfare, the episodic collaboration of French planters with the British, slave revolts, and—as would become especially clear during and after the American War of Independence—rising costs for policing and maintaining access to the colonies.

²⁰ Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

²¹ Geggus 1989: 1304 and Dubois 2004: 121, respectively.

²² See for example Condorcet's *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres* (Neufchâtel 1781).

²³ See Dubuc *Lettres critiques et politiques sur les colonies et le commerce des villes maritimes de France, adressées à G.T. Raynal* (1785) and Malouet's response to Condorcet's attack on the slave trade *Mémoire sur l'esclavage des nègres* (1788).

(1.2) Rule in Africa

Some authors, particularly those in physiocrat circles, saw Africa as a possible site for new colonization. Here, they argued, France could avoid the pitfalls of the Caribbean plantations while producing the same commodities. Most vocal among this group was the abbé Pierre Joseph André Roubaud, who argued for such colonies in West Africa in his *Histoire générale de l'Asie, de l'Afrique et de l'Amérique* (1770-5). Africa possessed a number of advantages according to advocates seeking to supplant American colonies with African ones. Africa's proximity to Europe would make colonies easier and cheaper to defend, while trade could also be carried on at a reduced cost. Moreover with its abundant local population, there would be no need for slavery. Africans could be paid for their labor²⁴ as planters avoided the costs of transporting slaves and export costs diminished (due to shorter voyages to the metropole). Finally, French planters could easily obtain concessions from African kings who presided over land just as fertile as that of the Americas. From this perspective it would be possible to establish colonies without the kinds of usurpations that Raynal had so criticized in the *Histoire*. Indeed for Roubaud African colonies might entirely supplant the need for colonies in either of the two Indies.²⁵

Like Raynal, Roubaud was particularly concerned with the coercive nature of European overseas colonization. Also like Raynal, Roubaud didn't abandon the idea of

²⁴ In 1798, Dupont for example argued that free Africans could be paid to produce sugarcane for French colonies in West Africa. See Carl Ludwig Lokke, "French Dreams of Colonial Empire under Directory and Consulate," *The Journal of Modern History* 2, no. 2 (June 1930): 238

²⁵ Pernille Røge, "La clef de commerce'--The changing role of Africa in France's Atlantic empire ca. 1760-1797," *History of European Ideas* 34, no. 4 (December 2008): 432. For a different reading of Roubaud, one that emphasizes his general hostility to commerce, see Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Harvard University Press, 2010): 156-7. For a similar trend among the British abolitionist movement see Deirdre Coleman *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery* (Cambridge University Press, 2005): Introduction.

colonies because of this but instead tried to imagine an alternative, non-coercive model wherein local peoples could be subdued and civilized through trade and example. Europeans could accomplish this through the power of emulation: “Europeans can cultivate a part of these products in their African colonies, their example will enlighten and encourage neighboring nations.”²⁶ Thus much like the colonies in Russia that Diderot envisions in the *Histoire*, Roubaud imagines Europeans transforming local African peoples through force of example.²⁷ Furthermore, Roubaud argued that Africans could be reasoned with, persuaded that it was in their interest to submit to European tutelage:

show them, by trading with them, by communicating to them your knowledge, by teaching them..., that you seek their interests as much as your own. Win their confidence and they will open their treasures to you.²⁸

Like Raynal’s source on Madagascar, the comte de Maudave, Roubaud envisioned establishing a colony by engaging in discursive persuasion with local peoples: convincing them that it was in their interest to permit European colonies. These notions were similar to those advanced in the *Histoire* but also contained an element which Raynal and Diderot would have found fundamentally regressive: Christianity. Eschewing the anti-clericalism of the *Histoire*, Roubaud suggested that local peoples should also be converted to Christianity in the process of establishing colonies.

Despite Roubaud’s enthusiasm, the push for colonies in Africa during the 1770s was anemic. One official proposal to establish a colony on or around Goré (modern day Dakar) appeared in 1770, and in 1774 Turgot and Dupont de Nemours sketched a similar

²⁶ Røge 436.

²⁷ For the Russian colonies see preceding chapter (particularly the emulation section).

²⁸ Røge 436.

plan.²⁹ Beyond these examples, it took until the abolition movement in France had become more of a political force—and the Revolution was underway—for official attention to return to Africa as a potential colonial site. The question of rule accompanied this renewed attention and reformist ideas flourished. If the abolitionist abbé Grégoire was correct in citing Dupont de Nemours as one of the originators of free colonies in Africa, then we can understand why so many advocates for the African colonies believed that cultivation and trade could be encouraged through a reformist program.³⁰

One abolitionist who was particularly enthusiastic about the possibilities of African colonies was Carl Bernhard Wadström, a Swede who had been sent by Gustaf III with French support to reconnoiter possible sites on the West African coast in 1787-8.³¹ Wadström is noteworthy because of his influence in British and French abolitionist circles, and because his reformist conception of colonial rule resembles that of Raynal and his co-authors.³² During his travels he wrote:

Let us then form new settlements along the African coast; settlements which shall have no other aim than that of *inviting those nations to the riches* which will arise from the cultivation of their own country and thence the *enjoyment of civilization*.... Let us make them feel the nobility of their origin, that *under our tuition they may become generous from sound political interest*.... Let us...freely assist them in tilling the fine country they inhabit. Let us prove...*by the force of example*, that they possess the most fertile soil. Let us also, by example, teach them no longer to suffer themselves to be torn from their native shores.³³

²⁹ Røge 440 (nt 76). Yves Benot and Marcel Dorigny, *Grégoire et la cause des Noirs: combats et projets, 1789-1831* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 2000).

³⁰ Henri Grégoire, *De la littérature des nègres* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1971): 166.

³¹ For background on Wadström see Coleman 2005: Chapter 2; François Manchuelle, "The 'Regeneration of Africa': An Important and Ambiguous Concept in 18th and 19th Century French Thinking about Africa" *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 36, no. 144 (January 1, 1996), 574.

³² For his influence in French abolitionist circles see Manchuelle 574 and 576.

³³ C.B. Wadström, *Observations on the slave trade, and a description of some part of the coast of Guinea, during a voyage, made in 1787, and 1788, in company with ...* (London, 1789), 60-1. (Italics added.)

While Wadström is rather more transparent about his paternalism than some of the French authors (he describes, with approval, the colonial relationship as “a paternal yoke”), he articulates a vision in which local peoples are “invited” and persuaded by “force of example.” Here then he envisions a colony founded not on usurpation and slavery, but instead on the agreement of Africans. Colonists would reason with local peoples, show them through example and discussion that it was in locals’ interest to allow and participate in colony building. Again, like in the *Histoire*, by presenting local peoples with the proper example they could be motivated to rouse from their idleness and get to work producing useful commodities.

Beyond reasoning with Africans, European colonists would also obtain their assent by luring them with the prospect of “enjoyment” of European goods. In a later work, Wadström recounted a meeting with a local king:

His courtiers soon surrounded my hut, entreating me to furnish them also with buttons, which I did with pleasure, reflecting that this fondness of the natives for European baubles might one day come to be made subservient to the noblest purposes.³⁴

By channeling local desires for European *techne*, Wadström thought it might be possible to establish colonies beneficial both to locals and Europeans.

In comparison to earlier French reformist debates, Wadström articulated little in the way that was new, particularly when it came to the question of rule over local peoples. That said, by exercising influence over the *Société des amis des noirs* in France

³⁴ C.B. Wadström, *An essay on colonization, particularly applied to the western coast of Africa, with some free thoughts on cultivation and commerce*, Vol 1. (London, 1794), 21.

after the revolution, he helped sustain French interest in reformist colonial schemes.³⁵ Among those interested in such schemes were the abbé Gregoire and Condorcet.³⁶

Wadström's proposals continued to be debated under the Directory and on the day Napoleon was appointed commander of the army that would occupy Egypt, a member of the Council of Five Hundred presented a report on the subject of colonization, which addressed Wadström's proposal.³⁷ Moreover Napoleon would himself take Wadström's writings to Egypt. Thus while proposals to colonize West Africa failed, they demonstrate that the reformist notion of ruling by persuasion persisted in France through the 1780s and 90s.

(1.3) Rule in India

The question of ruling local peoples also was sustained by continued French interest in India. As Kate Marsh has argued, increasing British power there helped to shape France's conception of its own colonial rule. While the British came to be characterized as despotic in India, many authors and officials argued that France should act as liberator on the sub-continent. Rather than suggesting that this 'liberation' would be from European colonization, these authors often noted that France might colonize India with more justice and popular support than *la perfide Albion*. Diderot and Raynal

³⁵ For his influence over the *Soci te*, and a general discussion of French abolitionist support of such colonies see Marcel Dorigny, *La soci te des amis des noirs 1788-1799: contribution   l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris:  ditions UNESCO, 1998), 312-4 and 36-9 respectively. See also Manchuelle 574-6 for Wadstrom's influence over the abb  Gregoire and other French abolitionists.

³⁶ Condorcet *Outlines of an historical view of the progress of the human mind: being a posthumous work*. (London: 1795): 324. It should be noted here that I therefore extend the same criticism which I have advanced against Muthu applied to Diderot and Raynal, to that of Condorcet as well (Muthu 2003: 322). Passages from the final chapter of Condorcet's *Outlines* demonstrate that he ultimately was not against colonization, but instead objected to the way in which it had been conducted in the past.

³⁷ Lokke, *France and the Colonial Question*, (Columbia University Press, 1932), 181-2.

articulated such a view in the *Histoire* and it persisted through the 1780s and 90s.³⁸

Interest in India was in large part driven by the desire to check British power and it is difficult to separate this desire from commercial arguments for (re)establishing French rule there. Nevertheless it is clear that developments in India sustained French attention during this period, that reformist notions dominated these discussions, and that these notions retained an essential continuity before and after the Revolution.

When Diderot praised “mildness in administration” and exclaimed, “Proud Europeans, ye have not always conquered by the force of arms” in the midst of a discussion on India, he was not the only author imagining an alternative vision for rule there. Around the same time the French Orientalist Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron wrote, “the French are regarded as generous warriors, upon whose word an unfortunate prince can count.” For this reason, he concluded, French soldiers “despite our extensive conquests” would never be subject to the barbarous treatment inflicted on the British.³⁹ In other words, Indians viewed the French differently because of their moderate conduct. It was because of this that Anquetil-Duperron could envision the presence of a new exclusive company to direct French trade in India, supported by the French state and working in cooperation with local notables. Here he advocated, what one scholar has described as a “project for an enlightened commercial colonialism.”⁴⁰

³⁸ For a discussion of the HDI’s treatment of the British in India and French rule as an alternative, see Strugnell “The ‘HDI’ and the debate on the British in India” *Voltaire Raynal Rousseau Allegorie* (SVEC 2003)

³⁹ Kate Marsh, *India in the French Imagination: Peripheral Voices, 1754-1815* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 137.

⁴⁰ Siep Stuurman, “Cosmopolitan Egalitarianism in the Enlightenment: Anquetil Duperron on India and America,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 2 (2007): 271. Stuurman also points out the problems associated with Frederick Whelan’s picture of Anquetil-Duperron which implies that he was fundamentally against European colonization. See Whelan, “Oriental despotism: Anquetil-Duperron’s response to Montesquieu” *History of Political Thought* 22, no. 4 (2001): 644-5.

Had the French triumphed over the British in India during the American War of Independence, the historian Antoine Etienne Fantin-Desodoards argued in 1796, “Not only would the French, regarded as the liberators of Hindustan, have acquired immortal glory, but the most vast and most lucrative territorial possessions would have been the reward for their efforts.”⁴¹ In ‘liberating’ India, the historian argued, the French would have been rewarded with India. From the 1770s until at least the 1790s French commentators continually returned to reformist colonial ideas in imagining an India where the British were either contained or evicted and French trade—as Fantin-Desodoards indicated, this would likely be founded on territorial acquisition—could go about its business.

Beyond histories and dispatches from colonial boosters, the French distinguished their mode of rule from that of the British in fictional accounts as well. The general trend in such accounts was toward emphasizing British despotism as the 1770s progressed. Often French audiences were made to identify with the suffering of Indians, most prominently that of the sultans of Mysore (Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan) who were allied with the French and by the 1790s were vilified in British accounts.⁴² In other works set in India, French characters were presented as embodying liberty in comparison to British ones.⁴³ As these have been surveyed adeptly elsewhere, I will focus on only one example because of its multifaceted relationship to the *Histoire*.⁴⁴

By the time Napoleon Bonaparte’s brother Lucien published a sentimental novel titled *La Tribu indienne, ou, Édouard et Stellina* (1799), the anecdote on which it was

⁴¹ Marsh 2009: 83.

⁴² Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (Anchor Press, 2004), 298-9.

⁴³ Marsh 2009: 99-104.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 94-6.

based had been circulating in France and England for more than a century. The story first appeared in 1616 in Jean Mocquet's *Voyages en Afrique, Asie, Indes Orientales et Occidentales*, and describes an Englishman who during a slaving expedition on the Caribbean mainland is saved by an Indian woman after local Caribs fall upon his crew.⁴⁵ After hiding, feeding, and offering herself to him, the Indian woman accompanies the Englishman back to his vessel and travels with him back to civilization. Upon returning, the malicious Englishman promptly sells his unfortunate rescuer into slavery. The story's popularity through the eighteenth century is a testament to its power over French and British public opinion alike. Like many of his contemporaries, Raynal was horrified by it, repeating "this shocking instance of avarice and perfidy, to be abhorred by posterity" in his *Histoire*, holding it "out to the detestation of all foreign nations."⁴⁶

Using geographic information from the *Histoire*, Lucien Bonaparte adapted the anecdote, setting it in Ceylon rather than the Americas. Here the outlines of the story are essentially the same, although in Bonaparte's novel the Englishman is on a trading rather than slaving expedition (and the Portuguese are also criticized for their conduct). Beyond the obvious conclusion that this an attack on the barbarous treatment of local peoples in European colonialism, a few details of Bonaparte's work are noteworthy. First, it is emphatically anti-British:

Never was there a Portuguese so cowardly to so outrage love and beauty. Neither Italy, nor Spain, nor France produce [such] men... Only a speculator from Plymouth, an Englishman could calculate his fortune [based on] the tears of his mistress.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Lucien Bonaparte, *La Tribu Indienne, Ou, Édouard et Stellina; édition critique établie et présentée par Cecilia A. Feilla* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2006): 8.

⁴⁶ HDI 1783, Vol. 6: 293

⁴⁷ Bonaparte 2006: 98

Contributing to the general sense of British depravity is the fact that the woman in the story is carrying the Englishman's child when he sells her into slavery. While this isn't present in the *Histoire* version, it seems possible that Bonaparte emphasized this detail not only for dramatic effect but also as a political statement. As an enthusiastic reader of Raynal (I shall return to this relationship below), Lucian Bonaparte would have been familiar with the colonial tactics praised in the *Histoire*, including that of consanguineous relationships for colony building. From this perspective, emphasizing the willingness of an Englishman to sell his 'wife' and child into slavery was not only an argument about his individual wickedness, but also a suggestion that the British were not fit to conduct the kinds of moderate colonial rule articulated by reformist partisans in France.⁴⁸ The British are willing to break what Diderot terms in the *Histoire* "the tie that is the most speedily formed, and the strongest" in order to quench, Bonaparte concludes, "the immoderate thirst for riches" thereby "smother[ing] nature."⁴⁹ Where in the *Histoire* consanguineous relationships function to found a just and solid colony, in Lucian Bonaparte's account an Englishman uses this relationship to perpetrate one of the most monstrous crimes imaginable.

The last two sections (on Africa and India) demonstrated that the question of colonial rule did not go entirely dormant in France through the 1780s. Be it in negative terms as was the case with the British in India, or more straightforwardly as in Africa, French authors and colonial officials continued to debate how native peoples ought to be

⁴⁸ The child is not yet born but Bonaparte does not allow the reader to forget its presence. As the mother is dying he describes it in an appallingly graphic image: "the infant who was tearing at her womb made her last moments horrible" Ibid. 112. Any possibility of establishing bonds between the English and Indians end in horrid pain for the local people.

⁴⁹ HDI 1783, Vol. 4: 359 and Bonaparte 2006: 114 respectively.

ruled in terms resembling those advanced in the *Histoire*. What is particularly noteworthy about the Africa and India discussions is that there is an essential continuity among reformist ideas before and during the Revolution in France. Here then despite the profound political shifts in France, colonial reformism continued to shape debates through the Revolution.⁵⁰

(2) The Mediterranean Turn

After fleeing France in 1781, Raynal traveled around Europe for several years where he met various royals and men of letters, including Gibbon and Goethe. The latter was sufficiently taken with Raynal that he set up a reading group devoted to the *Histoire*.⁵¹ In Geneva, Raynal proposed himself as a mediator between competing political factions; though perhaps recalling with pique his arrogance in remarking to a Bernese historian that he had known the Swiss “for a long time and better than the Swiss themselves,” the Genevans ignored the offer.⁵²

Raynal returned to France in 1784. Rather than going to Paris he settled in Provence, first at the port of Toulon and then establishing himself in Marseille. He claimed that he was in the south for his health, but in truth the authorities only allowed him to return to the kingdom if he remained outside of the jurisdiction of the *Parlement* of Paris.⁵³ Marseille was not merely an important French trading port, growing in

⁵⁰ Several scholars have pointed to an essential continuity between *ancien regime* and revolutionary colonial ideas; one early example is Priestley 1939: 316.

⁵¹ Upon meeting Raynal, Goethe wrote “he speaks the truth to kings and flatters women, is banished from Paris and knows very well how to deal with any small court” Gilles Bancarel, *Raynal ou le devoir de vérité* (Paris: Champion, 2004): 159, see also 26.

⁵² Feugere 1970: 82.

⁵³ Bancarel 2004: 27.

prosperity and outranked only by Bordeaux and Nantes in the African Atlantic trade, it was also the port of origin for the majority of French commerce in the Levant and North Africa.⁵⁴ By settling there, Raynal seemed to anticipate the coming shift in French imperial ambitions: from the Americas to the Mediterranean.

(2.1) Barbary

French commerce in the Mediterranean prospered under Louis XVI. While the *Compagnie des Indes* had been suppressed because it continually lost money, the *Compagnie royale d'Afrique*—which was created in 1741 and held a monopoly over the Barbary trade—flourished from its reorganization in 1767 through the 1780s. The company was primarily involved in importing grain and raw materials from the regencies of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers, as well as exporting European products to North Africa. Unlike the *Compagnie des Indes*, which had relied on the government to fund its expenditures, the *Compagnie d'Afrique* flourished. In 1789 it held a reserve of more than three million pounds even after it paid out large dividends to its shareholders. Because of their success, the crown allowed the directors of the Africa Company to effectively dictate French policy in the Mediterranean during the 1780s. When the sultan of Morocco wanted to form an alliance with France, two Marseille merchants acted as intermediaries between the monarchs.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ For trade with the Americas see G Rambert *Histoire de Commerce de Marseille* Tome VI (Paris : Plon, 1949-): 654-655. For levant see Robert Paris *Histoire de Commerce de Marseille* Tome V (Paris : Plon, 1949-): 600-1. Raynal saw Barbary very much as part of Africa and thus necessarily related to the issue of slavery. While in Marseille he proposed an academy prize about what to do about the slave trade, whether slaves should be given their freedom in America, and whether this could be done without upheaval in the colonies (see Bancarel 2004: 277).

⁵⁵ Priestley 1939: 280.

Upon arriving in Marseille in 1789, the English political economist Arthur Young sought out Raynal, noting that to be there “without seeing Abbé Raynal, one of the undoubted precursors of the present revolution in France, would be mortifying.”⁵⁶ He found the aging historian at the home of Dominique Bertrand who in addition to being an enthusiast for the “English constitution” and close friend of Raynal, was also the director of the *Compagnie royale d’Afrique*.⁵⁷ Bertrand spent much of his career either engaged in or advocating on behalf of Marseille’s commercial interests. As the Revolution progressed he became a particularly active defender of Marseille’s traditional monopoly over the Levant trade.⁵⁸ It is not altogether surprising that Raynal would be found spending the day discussing politics and commerce in the house of one of the most prominent merchants in Marseille. The historian’s growing interest in Barbary was evident in passages from the *Histoire* and would culminate in his history published posthumously under the title *Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Commerce of the Europeans in North Africa*.⁵⁹

Raynal likely came to know Bertrand through their mutual acquaintance, the former colonial official Victor Pierre Malouet. As I noted in Chapter 2, Malouet was an important source for Raynal in writing the *Histoire* and Raynal praised his use of

⁵⁶ Arthur Young. *Travels during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789: undertaken more particularly with a view of ascertaining the cultivation, wealth, resources, and national prosperity, of the kingdom of France*, vol 1. 1793: 374

⁵⁷ For Bertrand on the English constitution see his *Lettre à monsieur Raynal*, Marseille [1788?].

⁵⁸ Marcel Courdurié, “AUDIBERT, Dominique, (1736-1821), député de la Chambre de Commerce Marseille” *Revue du Souvenir Napoléonien*, 310 (Mar 1980)

http://www.napoleon.org/fr/salle_lecture/biographies/files/audibert.asp

⁵⁹ The work included a discussion of Egypt and was published as *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans l’Afrique septentrionale* (Paris 1826). For what Raynal wrote versus what the later editor Peuchet added see Anne Thomson “Raynal, Venture de Paradis et Barbarie” *Dix-huitième siècle* 15 (1983): 333 [nt 2].

emulation as an effective colonial tactic in Guyana.⁶⁰ Michel Duchet has gone so far as to suggest that when it came to French colonial reform politics, Malouet was among “the head thinkers and Raynal the spokesman.”⁶¹ Malouet had urged Raynal to come to Marseille while the historian was in exile and in 1790 worked to have his arrest warrant removed in Paris.⁶² Bertrand and Malouet were both members of the Académie of Marseille, and like Bertrand, Malouet advocated an expanded Levant trade:

The colonies then are useful; and it is important to keep them. It is important to maintain and increase the merchant and military marine to protect our commerce on the Guinea coast, to expand it in the Levant.⁶³

Not to be excluded from commercial affairs in his new home, Raynal proposed and funded a twelve thousand pound prize to be managed by the *Académie* of Marseille which called respondents to address the “Causes of the increase of the commerce of Marseille and the means to assure the prosperity.”⁶⁴ If Gilles Bancarel is correct in suggesting that Raynal funded academy prizes as a means to sustain interest in and sales of his works, it is possible that Raynal hoped to create a market for his history of North Africa in proposing the prize.⁶⁵

While interest grew in Barbary, there was less of a consensus about what to do there. For centuries many Europeans viewed Barbary, particularly the regency of Algiers, as inhabited by what Raynal describes as a “race of ...sea monsters” whose only activity

⁶⁰ Raynal also appears to have lived with Malouet for some period in Provence. See Denise Brahimi “Un informateur de l’abbé Raynal: l’abbé Poiret, auteur du <<Voyage en Barbarie>>” *Dix-huitième Siècle* 1972 No 4.

⁶¹ Michèle Duchet “Un Ami de Diderot en Guyane: valet de Fayrolle, a propos d’une lettre inédite” *Diderot Studies*, VIII (1966): 19.

⁶² Bancarel 2004: 26 and Feugere 1970: 377-8.

⁶³ Lokke 1932: 84.

⁶⁴ Bancaral 2004: 484.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

seemed to be slaving and preying on European ships.⁶⁶ While this often conveniently ignored European groups like the Order of Malta engaged in similar activities, the opinion persisted.⁶⁷ European sovereigns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries periodically bombarded North African ports in retaliation but more often, as Jean Baptiste d'Argens pointed out in his *Lettres juives* (1738), they were more content to pay off local rulers to allow their ships to pass hoping that their rivals' commerce would be disrupted by piracy.⁶⁸

Anne Thomson has noted a shift in European opinion toward Barbary during the second half of the eighteenth century: where before authors and officials were content to call for retaliatory attacks, more extensive projects (including those of conquest) appeared in the closing decades of the century.⁶⁹ But where would such projects occur? Travelers such as the botanist René Desfontaines who traversed Barbary in 1783 noted that the regencies were not all the same. He pointed out that the inhabitants of Tunis were civilized because of their enlightened approach to commerce (as demonstrated by their unwillingness to attack merchants whose countries they were warring with), while those of Algiers were “insolent” pirates who mocked the honest profits brought by commerce.⁷⁰

His fellow botanist and Barbary traveler the abbé Jean Louis Marie Poiret recorded similar differences in 1785 pointing out that the government of Tunis was “much milder than that of Algiers, and Europeans enjoy under it more security and more

⁶⁶ *HDI* 1783 5.184.

⁶⁷ The Order would, incidentally, would be destroyed by Napoleon on his way to Egypt.

⁶⁸ Ann Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment: European Attitudes Towards the Maghreb in the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1987): 128

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 127-31

⁷⁰ Brahim 1972: 447-8.

liberty than in any other city of Barbary.”⁷¹ He would later note however that the Bey of Tunis was forced to pay tribute to the Dey of Algiers “whose power he dreads.”⁷² While Poiret describes Tunis as a hereditary monarchy and Algiers a “republic,” the latter could only be understood as a republic in procedure: the Turkish militia which comprises the regency assembles and appoints the new ruler who, if he can survive the tumult of ascendance, rules as despot over the local (Moorish) populace.⁷³ As Poiret argues in his introduction, this despotism and the ignorance that accompanies it, “have changed the most beautiful country of the world into a desert [*sic*].”⁷⁴ He views this as the outcome of the revolutions of history and takes this decline as evidence of “the vanity of human grandeur.”⁷⁵ While Poiret avoids calling for a European invasion of Algiers—indeed he claims that taking the city would be exceedingly difficult—he bemoans the fate of “the finest country in the world” which had been turned into desert by misrule.⁷⁶

Also unwilling to call for an invasion was a Marseille merchant named Audibert-Caille who in a letter to then minister of foreign affairs Vergennes dated 1783, argued that there were two options to deal with the “Barbary powers”: first, coordinate among other European sovereigns to end all commerce with Barbary, evacuate their citizens, and cease diplomatic relations. This would “surely reduce them to the conditions of peace” that the Christian powers wanted. The second option was for France to go directly to the

⁷¹ Poiret *Travels through Barbary, in a series of letters, written from the ancient Numidia, in the years 1785 and 1786, And containing an Account of the Customs and Manners of the Moors, and Bedouin Arabs.* (London 1791): 21. Poiret was also a source for Raynal (see Brahimi 1972).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 327.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 327-8; 60.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 330-1; 334.

Sublime Porte and ask the Ottomans to pressure the Barbary States.⁷⁷ Having been a diplomat in Istanbul, Vergennes knew that the Ottomans were more focused on Russian and Austrian encroachments even *had* they the ability to bring the Barbary States to heel (this was a matter of debate).⁷⁸ The first proposal was problematic because, as d'Argens had noted nearly fifty years earlier, there was little appetite among European sovereigns to coordinate when they could use Barbary predation to diminish the commerce of rivals.

Others argued that it might be possible to use military force to overthrow the local Turkish rulers, who European consensus branded as the “dregs of the [Ottoman] Empire...a foreign militia ruling a cowed and sullen population in an alien land.”⁷⁹ The consul for Algiers one M. de Kersey took a particularly belligerent stance in 1782, arguing that France should send 30,000 troops, seize Algiers along with its allegedly immense treasury as compensation, demolish its fortifications, transport its canons back to France or throw them into the sea, and destroy its government.⁸⁰ Rather than occupying Barbary (he seems to have been more interested in France’s acquisition of Egypt), Kersey counsels that France make it clear to the Moors that French intentions were only to “free their compatriots from the oppressive yoke, and restore the liberty for which they are so avid and multiply their enjoyments.”⁸¹ While Kersey believed that the best way to accomplish this was through an autonomous indigenous government—and that geography ensured that France’s commerce with Algiers would flourish more than “other

⁷⁷ F. Charles-Roux, *France et Afrique du Nord avant 1830 : les précurseurs de la conquête* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1932): 339-341.

⁷⁸ Venture de Paradis, for example, arguing that they could, while others like Raynal arguing that they lacked the military power necessary to project force in Barbary.

⁷⁹ Thomson 1987: 51.

⁸⁰ Charles-Roux 330.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 332.

nations”—the issue of occupation, however brief, is clearly present in his proposal as is the desire to have a ‘partner’ which could be economically exploited with greater ease.⁸² Other authors called for this same kind of ‘regime change’ and in a later memorandum Kersey was more sanguine about the possibilities of post-invasion relations referring to “the power that the French would retain for a long time in the kingdom of Algiers.”⁸³

More concretely imperial still was a proposal by Desfontaines who suggested that France use the fortress at Tabarka—which sat on an island near the modern border of Algeria and Tunisia—to dictate “the law to all of the Barbary powers.”⁸⁴ What this meant is not entirely clear beyond intimidating local powers into respecting French commerce and completely excluding the British from the Levant trade. However the proposal evinces a growing sense that France might need to firmly establish itself on Barbary territory in order to carry on the kinds of commerce that many merchants and officials sought.

Even more strident was Raynal who, as we saw at the end of Chapter 2, called for an invasion of Algiers followed by European colonization. Raynal dismisses Audibert-Caille’s suggestion that the Sublime Porte might exercise influence over the Barbary States, arguing that the Ottomans lacked a navy and its “military power is continually decaying.”⁸⁵ He also notes that no one European power could subdue Barbary but instead maritime powers ought to form an alliance and coordinate an attack. To do this would require each power to restrain its sense of “jealousy” toward the commerce of its

⁸² *Ibid.*, 332-3.

⁸³ E.g. Rebhinder, a German who knew Venture de Paradis. See Thomson 1987: 129; for Kersey see Charles-Roux 357-8

⁸⁴ Charles-Roux 341-2. Today a narrow strip of land links Tabarka to the Tunisian coast.

⁸⁵ HDI 1783: 5.182-3 and here he contradicted Venture de Paradis.

European rivals.⁸⁶ But a mere coordinated attack and retreat, Raynal argues, “would be inconsistent with the present improvements of reason.”⁸⁷ Instead he calls for a division of the lands among the European conquerors who would remain secure in cultivating the “happiness of the vanquished.”⁸⁸

Raynal suggests that encouraging commerce among local peoples could produce this “happiness.” Much in the same manner as Wadström would enthuse on using European baubles to lure West Africans into colonial relationships, Raynal posits that the inhabitants of Barbary could be brought to “have wants and the resources to satisfy them” under European tutelage.⁸⁹ As I suggested in the preceding chapter, Raynal’s account of Barbary fit into his broader reformist vision for colonial rule. That he is more aggressive (and thoroughly imperialist) than many of his contemporaries on the Barbary question is further evidence of his belief in the possibilities of the empire by persuasion model.⁹⁰

His commitment to the model gains definition if we compare it to the text from which he lifted much of the passage: *An universal history, from the earliest account of time* (1747-1766). Raynal follows this British source in calling for a coordinated attack on Barbary by European powers, but he differs in key details about how colonization should be conducted after dividing lands among European states. Where the *Universal History* calls for “supplanting or removing [the Moors] from a situation which they have greatly forfeited by their depredations upon other nations,” Raynal argues that the conquests would be most solid (and just) if the colonizers attend to the “happiness” of the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 184.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 185.

⁹⁰ (Even if it was necessary to first use violence to drive out the ‘foreign’ rulers there). See my preceding chapter.

vanquished.⁹¹ He then goes on to explain how locals could be brought to this point through the persuasive tactics that I discussed above. Although the British history notes the aim is not to “root [the Moors] out as a nation,” it also proposes that they be “driven up farther into the country” in what can only be described as a kind of ethnic cleansing.⁹² Raynal’s alternative is, as he writes, to make gradual “progress,” to “impart knowledge,” “treat them as brethren,” “consider them as friends,” and create a colony organized by “mutual advantage” where “we would no longer see them leave a country uncultivated.”⁹³ With these ideas Raynal provided a reformist vision for those who would consider the possibilities of colonizing Barbary during the coming decades.

(3) Encounters with an Egyptian future

(3.1) Venture de Paradis

Raynal called for the colonization of Barbary in the first edition of the *Histoire* (1770)—some fifteen years before his sojourn in Provence. Thus, the idea of colonizing North Africa did not originate in his exile in Marseille. That said, his interest in Barbary and the Levant grew during his time in the south of France.⁹⁴

This interest was fed by information from travelers returning from the region, most notably the French diplomat and Orientalist Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis. A native of Marseille and the son of the French consul in the Levant, Venture first traveled to Constantinople while still a teenager in 1755 as an Arabic and Turkish interpreter for

⁹¹ Thomson sets these texts side by side in *SVEC* 333 1995: 146-7 “La Barbarie de l’*Histoire des deux Indes* aux ‘Mémoires’ de Raynal.”

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ HDI 1783, Vol 5: 184 and 186.

⁹⁴ Hédia Khadhar, “La description de l’Afrique dans l’*Histoire des deux Indes*,” ed. H.-J. Lüsebrink and A. Strugnell, *SVEC* 333 (1995). In fact this growing interest is evident in the later HDI editions.

the French ambassador. He traveled throughout the Levant and North Africa over the course of his career accompanying the baron de Tott on his travels around the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵ Venture is of particular interest because he collaborated with Raynal and eventually became the head translator for Napoleon's Egypt expedition. He had responded to written queries about Tunis while Raynal was preparing the first edition of the *Histoire* in 1769.⁹⁶ During one of his infrequent trips back to France, and before departing to Barbary for two years in 1788, Venture met Raynal at a salon in Marseille where he agreed to assist with Raynal's planned history of North Africa.⁹⁷

Much of what is known about the working relationship between Venture and Raynal comes from Raynal's unpublished manuscripts. Among Raynal's papers are items that have editorial notes from Venture on commerce and history in North Africa, the Sahara, the Levant, and other parts the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁸ Some of these notes were meant for Raynal's work the *Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Commerce of the Europeans in North Africa*, which was published posthumously in 1826, only a few years before the French colonized Algeria. As mentioned above, Venture also contributed information to the early editions of the *Histoire*.

His comments on Raynal's manuscripts can help us distinguish their differing attitudes toward North Africa. For example, Venture differed from Raynal in explaining the general absence of civilization in Barbary. Where Raynal viewed Barbary as home to a civilization in decline (brought on by despotic rule), Venture saw its inhabitants as

⁹⁵ De Tott happened to be the nephew of the French foreign minister Vergennes, who had also served as a diplomat at the Sublime Porte during the 1750s and 1760s. Both Venture de Paradis and de Tott appear to have departed for Constantinople in the same year (1755).

⁹⁶ Khadhar 149, nt 4.

⁹⁷ Brahim 481.

⁹⁸ *Bibliothèque nationale de France*: m.s. français 6429-6431.

having not yet attained civilization. Thomson describes this distinction as one of an Enlightenment tradition versus that of Orientalism: the former (Raynal) being more willing to see positive elements in local culture compared to the latter (Venture).⁹⁹ Origins of barbarity aside, Venture and Raynal did agree on the civilizing effects of commerce in North Africa, noting that Tunis and Tripoli had made significant progress in agriculture and trade. They believed that the predations of Algiers hindered further development in the other Barbary States (though they observed that Algiers itself was slowly becoming more civilized through commerce).¹⁰⁰

While Venture avoided openly calling for an invasion in his own history of Algiers, he concludes the work with a critique of the “memoire” of “M. Ricaud” who in 1754 had set out a plan for invading the regency. He argues that Ricaud’s landing site is ill suited and claims that a military force ought to attack Algiers from a less fortified direction.¹⁰¹ It would be a mistake to think that this was merely an academic question. While in Algiers, Venture worked as an agent of the ministry of foreign affairs; his superior was Kerzy who, as we saw above, was keenly interested in the possibilities of a French invasion. Venture offered similar remarks on one of Raynal’s manuscripts. Here he criticized a plan for landing at the port of Cherchell (55 miles west of Algiers), arguing that the coast just west of Algiers would be better because the land there was low and the water good, sourly concluding about a Spanish plan: “one cannot help but say that they had no desire to succeed, or they didn’t know the place they wanted to

⁹⁹ Thomson 1987: 99.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 101-2; 126-7.

¹⁰¹ Venture de Paradis, *Alger au XVIIIe Siècle*, E. Fagnan (ed.) (Alger 1898): 168-9.

attack.”¹⁰² If we combine this with Venture’s agreement with Raynal about the civilizing effects of commerce and his participation in Raynal’s works (which envisioned a commerce-driven colonial relationship in North Africa), it seems safe to conclude that Venture broadly agreed with Raynal’s vision for the colonization of Barbary.

Venture offered more pronounced arguments for invading Egypt around 1790. In one memorandum, he suggested that France might seize Egypt as a kind of compensation while the Austrians and Russians aggrandized themselves by encroaching further into Ottoman territory.¹⁰³ During his collaboration with Venture, Raynal’s interest in Egypt grew as well. In early versions of the *Histoire*, he had emphasized Egypt’s commercial importance in the ancient world, noting with approval that Alexander sought to make it the “commercial center of the universe”¹⁰⁴ By the time Raynal returned to “the great warehouse of the world” in his history of North Africa, he gushed about the effects of commerce under Alexander and the Ptolemies, describing a rapid flourishing of arts, letters, and sciences there:

The new Athens [Egypt, Alexandria in particular] became a famous school where one came to be shaped in politeness, taste, and philosophy. Never has one seen a happier reunion of riches, pleasures, and magnificence.¹⁰⁵

It was Egypt’s “unique point” as a commercial link between Asia, Africa, and Europe which allowed this civilization to flourish among local people and those who flocked

¹⁰² Thomson 1983: 330. The issue of good water, incidentally, would plague Venture and others members of Napoleon’s expedition when landing on the Egyptian coast a decade later.

¹⁰³ Charles-Roux 361. This was during the Russo/Austro-Turkish War (1787-92). Russia was the major winner, further consolidating control over the Crimea, while Austria made rather minor gains in Croatia.

¹⁰⁴ HDI 1770: 1.49.

¹⁰⁵ Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans l’Afrique septentrionale: ouvrage posthume*, Vol. 1 (Paris 1826): 301

there. Moreover, Egypt's fertility gave it enormous agricultural potential. Poor government, he complained, currently prevented Egypt from attaining this potential:

If Egypt should ever emerge from the state of anarchy in which it is plunged; if an independent government should be formed there; and if the new constitution should be founded upon wise laws, that region will again become what it formerly was, one of the most industrious and fertile countries of the earth.¹⁰⁶

By "independent," Raynal meant freed from nominal Ottoman and actual Mamluk control.¹⁰⁷ The passage comes not during a description of government in Egypt where it might be expected, but instead after a discussion of European commerce and the best season to travel there. This abrupt sequence makes it tempting to speculate whether Raynal thought that Europeans might help Egypt emerge from anarchy but neither during his time in Marseille nor after did he openly call for the invasion of Egypt as far as we know. Venture de Paradis who worked on Raynal's history and would take up a central role in the invasion, certainly agreed that a new government in Egypt was necessary.

(3.2) The Teenage Bonaparte

While in Provence, Raynal's interest in Mediterranean trade and North Africa expanded. This was in part fueled by his collaboration with Venture de Paradis who had extensive experience in the Ottoman Empire and North Africa, and explored the possibilities for French territorial acquisition in the Near East. Raynal's exile in the south also led to chance encounter with an enthusiastic teenager who a decade and a half later would enlist Venture de Paradis as a translator and carry Raynal's *Histoire des deux*

¹⁰⁶ HDI 1783: 1.154.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 147-9.

Indes at the head of the first modern European invasion of the Middle East. This teenager was Napoleon Bonaparte.

Bonaparte was only an infant when the first version of the *Histoire* was published, but by sixteen he was a zealous reader of Raynal's history. He hoped to emulate the famous historian by writing a philosophical and political history for his native Corsica, and sent the following letter to Raynal, now in his seventies:

Monsieur l'abbé,

The lot of great reputations is to attract importunity: each novice wants to attach himself to an established celebrity. [As a] novice historian of my country, it is your opinion that I would like to know; your patronage would be dear to me, would you be kind enough to grant it to me? I am not yet eighteen years old and I write; it is the age when one must learn. Won't my audacity attract your mockery? No, without a doubt; because if indulgence is to give a share of true talent, you must have a great deal of indulgence. I attach to my letter chapters I and II of the *History of Corsica* along with the plan of the others. If you encourage me, I will continue; if you council me to stop, I will not go forward. Excuse my audacity and do not reproach me for the time I believe you are going to lose.

I am, monsieur l'abbé, with a high admiration for your writings, and a profound respect for your person, your very humble and very obedient servant,
Buonaparte, officer of artillery

Napoleon wrote this around 1785. He was six- or seventeen at the time and Raynal's letter of response has been lost.¹⁰⁸ Lucian Bonaparte's memoirs provide several precious details about Raynal's response to his brother's history:

One of the manuscripts was addressed by [Napoleon] to the Abbé Raynal, whom my brother had known on his passage to Marseilles. Raynal found that work so extremely remarkable, that he decided upon communicating it to Mirabeau, who, on returning the manuscript, wrote to Raynal that that little history appeared to him to announce a genius of the first order. The reply of Raynal accorded with the opinion of the great orator; and Napoleon was enchanted.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Bancarel 2004: 126-7.

¹⁰⁹ Lucien Bonaparte, *Memoirs of Lucien Bonaparte (Prince of Canino): part the first (from the year 1792, to the year 8 of the Republic)*, (London: Saunders and Otley, 1836): 59

It is clear from this account that Bonaparte actually met Raynal in Marseille, probably some time around 1789. While Lucian probably overstates the impression that his brother made on the elderly historian, the exaggeration reveals just how important Raynal's approval was to his brother. Napoleon's schoolmate and personal secretary in Egypt, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne also confirmed a relationship: "[Napoleon] turned his attention to political science. During some of his vacations he enjoyed the society of the Abbé Raynal, who used to converse with him on government, legislation, commercial relations, etc."¹¹⁰ According to Gilles Bancarel, Napoleon's affinity for Raynal was in part driven by the historian's sympathetic remarks about Corsican independence and they may have bonded over the subject.¹¹¹ Related to the question of independence was that of commerce, and Napoleon wrote to Raynal about Corsica's lackluster commerce identifying poor governance (in the guise of outside interference) as an explanation for the lack of progress there.¹¹² The importance of good governance for flourishing commerce, as we shall see in the next chapter, would be a key claim in justifications of the invasion of Egypt.

Napoleon's enthusiasm for Raynal and his work sustained itself beyond questions about Corsica. Through the 1780s and 90s Raynal funded a number of academy prizes which, like the one mentioned above dealing with the commerce of Marseille, were meant to attract bright minds to explore and, where relevant, offer solutions to the

¹¹⁰ Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, Vol. 1 (NY: Scribner and Sons 1891), Chapter 1.

¹¹¹ Bancarel 2004: 127-9.

¹¹² Ibid. Napoleon addresses Raynal in a 1789/90 letter: "Monsieur, Friend of free men, you are interested in the lot of Corsica which you love: its character calls it to liberty; the centrality of its position, the number of its ports and the fertility of its soil calls it to a great commerce. Why has it never been either free or commercial?"

pressing problems of the day. Subjects included agricultural development, commerce, history, and politics. In December 1789, Raynal proposed as a prize the topic, “Which truths and which sentiments are the most important to inculcate in men for their happiness?” and soon thereafter Bonaparte began drafting a response. Napoleon begins the rambling essay with a quote from Raynal, “There will be [good] mores when governments are free” and again tries to identify himself with the historian. He addresses Raynal directly: “The question with which I will be occupied is worthy of your chisel, but, without aspiring to its caliber, I have told myself [along] with Corréggio: *I too am a painter.*”¹¹³

There is little in the way of discussion about colonization in the essay, although Bonaparte makes reference to Voltaire’s play *Alzire*, which dealt with the cruelties of Spanish rule in the Americas. While the notion that government ought to transform the *moeurs* of a populace is obviously applicable to the question of native peoples in empire, it is also sufficiently vague that, on its own, it cannot be taken to have a direct influence over what Bonaparte might have been thinking about colonization at the time. The essay, which did not win the prize, only serves as confirmation of Raynal’s general influence over Napoleon’s thinking and aspirations during this period.

Most provocative among Bonaparte’s engagements with Raynal were his reading notes from the *Histoire*. The notes are limited to the first book of the work, which deals with the rise of the East Indies trade. Skipping over Raynal’s discussion of Phoenician commerce, Bonaparte devotes a few lines Portuguese navigation and then

¹¹³ Napoleon, *Manuscrits Inédits, 1786-1791* (Paris: A. Michel, 1927): 538-9. The final line of the letter comes from the preface to Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*.

focuses on Egypt as a commercial center in the ancient world. He explains its dominance of the Indies trade, “All commercial nations went to Egyptian ports to obtain the goods of the Indies,” and lists the variety of commodities and exotic goods that could be obtained there under the Ptolemies.¹¹⁴ Following Raynal’s explanation (which is enlarged in later tomes of the *Histoire*), Napoleon attributes the commercial decline of Egypt to Islam: “The birth of the Mahometan Empire weakened the commerce of Egypt, and the Indies commerce took two other routes.” Napoleon’s notes show that he took Raynal’s message in the first book of the *Histoire* to be, among other things, that Egypt was central to the Indies trade and that misgovernment had led to its decline in commercial importance. He notes that the Italian city-states and others came to dominate the Indies trade in Europe by persuading the “Mamluks, sovereigns of Egypt...to [permit their attempts at cultivating] the commerce of the Indies.”¹¹⁵

Although Bonaparte in essence was only summarizing the *Histoire*, what he *chose* to summarize is significant. The portion of Raynal’s history worth summarizing in his personal notes was that which looked to the East Indies and saw Egypt as a key commercial link for this trade. The reading notes demonstrate that early on Napoleon was acutely interested in the Indies commerce and the position of Egypt in facilitating this trade. This interest was not merely antiquarian. Bonaparte copied another passage from Raynal’s history, one that would become highly significant for the young man who would lead an army into Egypt and viewed himself as a new Alexander:

In view of the position of Egypt, lying betwixt two seas, and in fact betwixt the East and West, Alexander the Great conceived the design of establishing the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 143.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

capital of his world-wide empire in that country, and of making Egypt the center of world commerce. This most enlightened of the conquerors realized that if there was any practical way of amalgamating his conquests into one consolidated State, it was by this use of Egypt, created as a point of union between Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Thirty years after he inscribed Raynal's passage into his copy-book and long after the catastrophic failure of his Egyptian expedition, Napoleon could still recite this passage from memory.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the empire by persuasion model in the decades following the *Histoire's* publication. The most practical explanation for the model's persistence is in the popularity of the vehicle itself: the text. By 1780, the work had gone through at least four French editions and publishers sold numerous pamphlets with excerpted passages. As the *Histoire* was an indispensable reference on the colonies, anyone interested in European overseas endeavors would also have confronted the alternative colonial vision set out in the text. There is however another reason for the persistence of the empire by persuasion model: its theoretical utility. The model allowed polemicists, officials, and others to imagine a colony that had solved the fundamental question of imperial legitimacy that had become so common in colonial debates after the Seven Years War. With this solution, many in France could imagine founding new colonies while, as we saw in India, advancing rhetorical attacks against their British competitors. The model also persisted because its advocates were never actually presented with a test wherein the exigencies of rule might come into sustained confrontation with the

¹¹⁶ Emil Ludwig, *Napoleon* (New York: Liveright, 1954): 11.

theoretical principles. The next chapter argues that Egypt would provide the opportunity for such a confrontation.

CHAPTER 4

The Black Legend on the Banks of the Nile: French Colonial Reformism in the Occupation of Egypt

People of Egypt, it will be said they come to destroy your religion: do not believe it! Respond that I respect God, his prophet Mohammad, and the Koran more than the Mamluks! ... Cadis, sheiks, imams, chorbagris, tell the people that we are also true Muslims!

(Bonaparte's first proclamation to Egypt)

Many imbeciles say and many fools repeat...that I am more attached to the inhabitants of the country than to the French.... Do these ignoramuses who amuse themselves gossiping on my account have the first notion of the *means that are necessary to employ in order to found a colony?* ... *Do these imbeciles who reproach me perhaps for having married a Muslim woman know that it is politics and the love of my country which directed me?*

General Jacques Abdullah Menou

In 1799 General Jacques Menou, now Jacques *Abdullah* Menou, wrote a letter to a fellow officer announcing that he had been married. "I must let you know, my dear General," he wrote, "that I have just taken a wife. I believe this measure will be useful to the public interest."¹ Describing his Egyptian bride, Zobeida, he noted to another correspondent "she is good-natured, and I find that she accepts many French customs with less repugnance than I expected. ...I have not yet urged her to show herself unveiled among men; this will come little by little."² Due to custom, Menou was required to

¹ J. Christopher Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 370.

² *Ibid.*

convert to Islam in order to marry Zobeida and he cheerfully reported that as she was a *sherifa*, or descendent of the Prophet Mohammad, “all the green turbans” (the *ashraf*) were now his “cousins.”³

At the time, Menou was acting governor of Rosetta. The French had taken this port city shortly after landing on the Mediterranean coast with twenty thousand troops and hundreds of civilian scientists and administrators. Before arriving in Egypt, the French armada, which included thousands more sailors, seized Malta, plundered its treasury, and liberated Arabic speaking captives of the Knights of Malta. These Arabic speakers would be used in Egypt as translators and, it was hoped, as propaganda vessels to convince local Egyptians that the French should be considered friends.⁴ After taking Alexandria and Rosetta, the French army marched southward toward Cairo. The trek was brutal but ended with the army crushing the Mamluk forces, which had been arrayed to meet the invaders. The French established themselves in Cairo by the end of July 1798, suppressed a large-scale revolt, after which Napoleon departed for Syria in hopes that he could pressure the Ottomans into accepting the French position in Egypt. His links to the Mediterranean had been cut off by a British fleet in August 1798, shortly after the army had disembarked. The campaign in Syria was a disaster and soon after the army’s return to Egypt, Bonaparte departed for France in the fall of 1799 under the pretext of having been recalled to pressing business in Europe. The occupation would continue for another two years, first under Jean-Baptiste Kleber, who resolved to end the expedition as rapidly as possible, and then under Menou who believed that, from among the variety of reasons

³ Georges Rigault, *Le général Abdallah Menou et la dernière phase de l’expédition d’Égypte (1799-1801)* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1911), 45. *Ashraf* is the plural of *sherif*.

⁴ Juan Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 30.

for the French invasion, it was his duty to establish a flourishing colony there. Under pressure from English and Ottoman forces, Menou would ultimately be forced to capitulate and withdraw French troops in August 1801.

While Menou's marriage was obviously strategic, he also was particularly concerned with how to turn a military occupation in Egypt into a flourishing colony. He often wrote about how the French ought to rule there and saw his marriage to a local woman as one way to establish a legitimate colony while minimizing coercion over the local inhabitants. As the final commander-in-chief presiding over the occupation of Egypt, his tenure proved longer than his predecessors, Bonaparte and Kleber. Menou argued that in order for the French to retain Egypt as a colony, it would be necessary to win over the locals with "mildness [*douceur*] and by persuasion."⁵ Menou happened to be addressing Bonaparte when describing winning over the native inhabitants in this fashion. The young Corsican, who was directing a massive expeditionary force in the first modern European invasion of the Near East, most certainly agreed with his general's formulation.

Scholars seeking to understand French policy in Egypt—particularly the behaviors that the French described as constituting 'mildness' and 'persuasion'—have characterized the expedition as heralding a new "liberal colonialism," which should be best understood as the result of French revolutionary ideology applied to colonization.⁶ There certainly is a great deal of evidence for the influence of revolutionary ideology in

⁵ Rigault 1911: 41.

⁶ Henry Laurens, "La Révolution française et l' Islam: un essai de perspective historique," *L'Image de la Révolution Française: communications présentées lors du congrès mondial pour le bicentenaire de la révolution*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Pergamon Press, 2005), 890; Juan Cole "Mad Sufis and Civic Courtesans: the French Republican Construction of Eighteenth-Century Egypt " in *Napoleon in Egypt*, ed. Irene Bierman, (Ithaca, 2003), 50; Cole 2007: 248; Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East 1750-1850* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005), 124.

Egypt. The French employed festivals, a practice with significant precedent in France during the revolutionary period, to cultivate local popular opinion. During celebrations they tended to blend revolutionary symbols with Islamic ones. Officials employed the language of republicanism and at times, revolutionary fault lines opened up between officers (in one case over whether land should be redistributed to local peasants).⁷ The French described their expedition as one of liberation of the local inhabitants from Mamluk or Ottoman tyranny, which Juan Cole has attributed to their revolutionary republicanism.⁸

Focusing on the French rhetoric of newness and the obvious connections to revolutionary ideology, scholars have however ignored the powerful influence of pre-revolutionary colonial ideas on the expedition. For example, Egypt was not the first case in which the French justified a possible overseas intervention with the language of overthrowing tyrants. As the previous chapter demonstrated, reformists used the same justifications before the revolution when advocating intervention in Algiers and India. Moreover, despite using rhetoric that described the expedition as unprecedented, many French officials had a deeper historical sense of French policy in Egypt, citing *ancien regime* French colonial practice as inspiration for their conduct. In what follows, I shall suggest that to understand what Menou described as a policy of “mildness” and “persuasion” in French rule, it is necessary to attend to the legacy of *ancien regime* colonial reformism on the expedition.

⁷ Herold 1962: 180.

⁸ Cole 2003: 50.

What reformism offered (and what revolutionary republicanism did not) was a vision of how to establish a colony with local participation after the overthrow of local tyrants. Reformism had long been concerned with the question of transforming local non-European populations. When it came to such transformations, much needed to be done. Local inhabitants possessed radically different modes of social organization, belief structures, and economic practices. While revolutionary republics also required (re-)educating a general populace, a colony entailed more profound changes in a setting with a qualitatively different threat of tyranny. Foreign invasion and rule generated an additional question of legitimacy (by what right do the invaders rule?), which in turn required special attention to the question of rule. If native modes of living were to be altered—without the kinds of tyranny reformists and then republicans claimed to abhor—it would be necessary to accomplish such changes through a collaborative process, which functioned to obscure the profound cultural differences between ruler and ruled. Reformist thinkers and officials had turned to examples from the history of European colonization in formulating their ‘collaborative’ vision. As I suggested in earlier chapters, this vision functioned to ensure that the transformations, and thus the colony itself, was legitimate from the French perspective. Of course, officials on the Egyptian expedition were often both republicans and colonial reformists. Indeed reformism seemed to compliment revolutionary principles, in that local inhabitants could be integrated into the process of ruling, be it through representation (by local religious authorities, the *ulama*) or through more diffuse forms of participation. While the two traditions tended to compliment each other, revolutionary republicanism cannot sufficiently explain French policy toward local inhabitants. In order to understand how French officials could

conceive of the establishment of a legitimate colony, and how they could come to believe that certain strategies for cultivating popular support could work, it is necessary to acknowledge the influence of the reformist tradition on the expedition.

To make this case, I turn to French propaganda (announcements, records of festivals, newspapers circulating in Egypt), official dispatches and correspondence, as well as personal letters. These sources can be exceedingly biased in their explanations of actual historical events. Yet, they reveal quite clearly how French officials constructed a narrative of legitimacy regarding their occupation of Egypt. There is, of course, something grotesque in characterizing a brutal military occupation as one of “mildness” or “persuasion.” The French army burned uncooperative villages to the ground, had locals beaten during ‘tax’ collection, and engaged in numerous others forms of abuse. Despite this conduct, French officials doggedly insisted on conceptualizing their rule in terms of “mildness” and “persuasion.” This chapter aims to understand how they made sense of this rule and to demonstrate that they employed pre-revolutionary reformist ideas and tactics when trying to accomplish their goals.

There were competing ideas among French officials about just what they were doing in Egypt. Initial justifications for the expedition had included: to punish the Mamluks for abusing French merchants in Cairo; to reestablish French trade in the Near East; to reestablish trade with India; to use Egypt as the staging point for an attack on the British in India in coordination with the Sultan of Mysore (Tipu Sahib); because the Russians, British, or Austrians, sensing Ottoman weakness, might take it before the French could; the establishment of a colony to make up for French losses in the Americas. Once the army was on the ground, many of these explanations disappeared and

two basic positions remained. Those who believed that they were there to establish a colony, such as Menou, tended to rely more on reformist precedents. Others, as we will see below, tended to believe that the expedition was primarily aimed at overthrowing the Mamluks and merely reestablishing French trade (without French political control). As the occupation dragged on, those who wanted to evacuate argued that these goals had been met and that the French presence in Egypt was a military occupation. Regardless of what both camps thought about the aims of the expedition, they all tended to believe (at least initially) that the presence of the army, as a coercive apparatus, was meant to be directed at the Mamluks, who as a ruling class of Circassian then Albanian origin, were distinct from the Egyptian people. The ‘true’ Egyptians would welcome their liberation. The notion seemed to be that violence would only then be directed at the ‘foreign’ tyrants and that, after ridding Egypt of them, the French could rule with consent and through popular opinion. This is certainly not what happened in practice, but the distinction between Mamluks and populace allowed some French officials to believe that despite their military invasion it would be possible to eschew coercion in ruling and instead turn to persuasion.

One author who had earlier warned against invading Egypt, precisely because it would be necessary to make war on its populace, was the traveler and Orientalist the comte de Volney. Noting in 1788 that “the French name is held in abhorrence” in Egypt, he concluded that “It is at home, and not beyond the seas, we should look for an Egypt and for Caribbee Islands. ... We should rather think of improving than of enlarging our

possessions.”⁹ Despite these warnings against invading Egypt, Volney exercised some influence over the planning of the expedition. His *Travels through Syria and Egypt* was one of several guides, ethnographic and otherwise, for the invasion. In recounting his memoirs, Napoleon would cite Volney’s argument that a French invasion would require wars against the Ottomans, British, and Egyptians. It is also certainly the case that Volney exercised a great deal of influence over French thinking about Islam. However scholars such as Edward Said and Henry Laurens have overstated Volney’s influence, particularly on French “indigenous policy” to the detriment of deeper historical precedents.¹⁰ Indeed Napoleon’s indigenous policy in certain respects seemed to be in willful defiance of Volney’s warnings.¹¹ Volney ultimately came around to support the expedition but by the time he expressed this support openly, the occupation was ongoing. I will suggest below that even Volney relied on notions rooted in *ancien regime* reformism to describe his support for Bonaparte in Egypt.

While recent historians have overlooked the influence of colonial reformist ideas on the Egyptian expedition, Carl Lokke early in the twentieth century, noted the continuities.¹² Lokke attended to the reformist debates in France that led up to the expedition, beginning with Talleyrand who articulated a vision of colonies in which interest would take the place of coercion in the relationship between colony and metropole, and who would go on to argue that the French would be welcomed by the

⁹ Constantin-François Volney, *Considerations on the war with the Turks* (London 1788), 82.

¹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books 1978), 81; Henry Laurens, *Les origines intellectuelles de l’expédition d’Egypte: l’orientalisme islamisant en France (1698-1798)* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1987), 190.

¹¹ Describing a possible French occupation in Egypt, Volney concludes “The character of both nations, being diametrically opposite in every respect, would become mutually odious.” (Volney 1788: 74).

¹² Carl Lokke, *France and the Colonial Question* (Columbia University Press 1932).

people of Egypt.¹³ Lokke also cited the presence of reformist authors, including Raynal, in written work by members of the expedition. Where his account is incomplete however, is the extent to which these reformist ideas shaped actual policy in Egypt and the extent to which French officials relied on such ideas when conceptualizing and explaining their rule.

The chapter proceeds as follows: In section 1, I argue that in making sense of their conduct in Egypt, French officials had a deeper historical memory than recent scholars have acknowledged. More specifically, I show that French officials cited *ancien regime* French colonial practices and ideas as sources of inspiration. In section 2, I review language and concepts employed on the expedition rooted in French colonial reformism. Section 3 considers various French strategies for attracting local popular opinion, with an attention to how the French thought such strategies could work. I argue that each (3.1 French religious propaganda, 3.2 festivals, 3.3 the use of *techne*) should be interpreted as part of a larger reformist project and is best understood as drawing on pre-revolutionary precedents. Section 4 provides examples of two French officials who enthusiastically embraced reformist ideas, one attempting to implement them in Egypt (4.1 Menou) and one sent in a last ditch effort to salvage the failing occupation (4.2 Lescallier). Both officials confirm the enduring importance of reformist ideology on the expedition. I conclude with reflections on the expedition.

¹³ Charles Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord, *Extrait d'un essai sur les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles dans les circonstances présentes; lu par le cit. Talleyrand à la séance de l'Institut national du 15 messidor, an 5* (n.p. 1797). See also C. La Jonquière, *L'expédition d'Égypte 1798-1801*, Vol. 1 (Paris: H. Charles-Lavauzelle, 1900), 154-168.

(1) The Black Legend on the Banks of the Nile

As I suggested above, French officials in Egypt possessed a deeper historical sense than recent scholars have acknowledged. Indeed, they frequently cited the Black Legend, which described the Spanish as particularly bloodthirsty colonizers as an example of what the French were not. They extended the Black Legend to the British and, in a move often present in reformist polemics decades earlier, the French used the Legend to argue that they had a distinct, and just, set of national colonial practices. Such distinction extended back in time, before the revolution and into *ancien regime* colonization.

Even before the Army of the Orient descended on Egypt, at least one expedition member noted parallels between French soldiers and the Spanish *conquistadors* in the New World. Francois Bernoyer, who was in charge of clothing the army, described a game of cards among the troops as his ship sailed off the coast of Italy: “the table was covered with gold, and to see it” one would think that they were the conquerors “of Peru” he reported to his wife.¹⁴ Taken in isolation the remark seems innocuous, but Bernoyer wasn’t alone in making the comparison. Menou later used similar language historically associated with the *conquistadors*, at one point denouncing French administration in Egypt as “detestable” because the “thirst for gold has dominated, so that all the principles of honor and morality have been forgotten.”¹⁵ When Napoleon received this letter from Menou, he would have most certainly understood ‘thirst for gold’ in terms of the Black Legend.

¹⁴ François Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte en Égypte et en Syrie, 1798-1800 dix-neuf lettres inédites* (Abbeville: Les Presses françaises, 1976), 20.

¹⁵ François Rousseau, *Kléber et Menou en Égypte depuis le départ de Bonaparte (août 1799-septembre 1801)* (Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1900), 249.

Comparisons to Spanish conquests in the New World during the Egyptian expedition were not limited to personal correspondence. The *Courier de l'Égypte*, the official French newspaper in Cairo, drew the comparison as well. Here the Black Legend was expanded to both Indies and to include the British who were described as equally detestable in their colonial practices. The official propaganda functioned to assure and remind the French that they were unlike the Spanish and British, and that Egypt was indeed *not* comparable to the Indies colonies denounced by earlier reformists like Raynal. After the French brutally suppressed the first Cairo revolt in late October 1798, the *Courier*, seeking to reassure its more historically-minded French readers, proclaimed:

The French struck their enemies with vigor; but they did not submit to blind anger. They act in view of History and know with what severity she has chastised the cruelty exercised in America and in India by the Spanish and by the English.¹⁶

Such readers were in need of reassurance: the revolt was suppressed by bombarding entire neighborhoods from the Citadel overlooking Old Cairo; a group led by General Dumas¹⁷ charged into, took over, and desecrated the Azhar Mosque¹⁸ (where rebels had taken refuge); and at the end of two days of fighting, two to three thousand Egyptians were dead along with three hundred Frenchmen. While there had been clear signs of impending trouble before the uprising, the French were taken almost completely by surprise.¹⁹ For those who thought the colony might be established without coercion toward the local populace (once the French army had defeated the Mamluks and was

¹⁶ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 18 (Kaire, Imprimerie nationale 1798-1801).

¹⁷ Father of Alexander Dumas.

¹⁸ A Fatimid structure associated with one of the oldest universities in the world.

¹⁹ Herold 1962: 189-191.

situated in Cairo), the mass uprising and its suppression must have come as a profound shock.

The use of violence to suppress the first Cairo uprising and throughout the occupation did not prevent the French from reiterating the national comparison. More than two years after the first Cairo uprising, the *Courier* described expanded commerce in Egyptian ports and repeated the distinction between French and Spanish-English rule:

Confidence appears to be establishing itself among all the foreign merchants. It is by justice and beneficence that the French inspire the attachment of the peoples of the Orient; ...it will always be honorable and useful for the French Republic to have founded an untarnished reputation in Africa and Asia. It is in this way that powers honor themselves. It is in this way, despite what some false or perverse spirits say, that one acquires a great consideration in the political world. *We remember what happened during the surrender of Canada: a part of the inhabitants preferred better to surrender their property and abandon all that which attaches men to their land of birth, than to stay under the domination of the English. We recall equally what happened when we surrendered Louisiana: the inhabitants were there for eight years without wanting to obey the Spanish. This attachment for the French was due only to the probity and the morale of those who governed these two countries.*²⁰

Thus not only were the French republicans avoiding the colonial mistakes of the Spanish and British, they also conceived of their rule in Egypt by drawing on *pre*-Revolutionary French colonial precedent. In this precedent local peoples became “attached” to the colonizers. French officials in Egypt took a longer view in explaining their policy, a view that was often tangled in the language of the revolution and one that scholars today have largely ignored. The view, as demonstrated in the *Courier* excerpt above, was that *ancien regime* colonial rule in North American was conducted with probity and morality which, in turn, engendered popular support among the colonized. Here French colonial rule (first

²⁰ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 99. (Italics added.)

pre-, and now post-, Revolution) is fundamentally different from the other European powers whom reformists denounced in the 1770s and 80s.²¹

What the French journal does not note, of course, are the profound dissimilarities between largely European settlers in North America and the populace of Egypt. The settlers who chose to leave Canada rather than stay under English “domination”, as well as those in Louisiana, would primarily have been French nationals rather than autochthonous inhabitants. Their “attachment” to the French was largely that they *were* French. While the analogy of French colonial practices in North American and Egypt was flawed, it demonstrates that French officials relied not solely on revolutionary precedents to legitimate their rule in Egypt but also on colonial ideas from the *ancien regime*. Because the *ancien regime* reformist ideas imagined a colonization based on a kind of popular support (as demonstrated in Chapter 2) they would be particularly useful in the post-revolutionary context. By using terms like “beneficence,” “justice,” and “attachment” to characterize French rule in Egypt, the *Courier* in the passage above provides a glimpse of the narrative which French officials hoped to construct about their occupation of Egypt. The following section will examine this narrative more closely and decode what French officials meant when employing such terms in correspondence and official communications.

²¹ A similar comparison appears in the journal of the Institute, wherein Citizen Nectoux—citing the authority of Raynal—describes French colonial practice as superior to that of the Spanish due to its industry: “The Spanish, following the observation of *Raynal*, looked for [gold] mines in the entrails of the earth; the French, more industrious, would found them on the surface of Saint-Domingue. They are also on the surface of the earth in Egypt: this country presents a unique soil on which we can cultivate the produce of the four parts of the world.” *La Décade Égyptienne*, No. 4 (Kaire: Imprimerie Nationale 1798-9): 108.

(2) Narrative of Principles

The sheer frequency with which French officials made reference to colonization in the Indies suggests that they were exceedingly anxious about the comparison. Accepting the premises of *ancien regime* reformism (which argued that European conduct in the Indies had mostly been unjust while suggesting that colonization itself might be accomplished legitimately), they sought to distance their conduct from that of the Spanish and British while drawing on earlier French precedents. Hoping to undermine any uncomfortable comparisons, they adopted the language of reformism wherein local peoples were described as ‘happy,’ colonial rule was ‘mild’ and legitimized discursively through French ‘observations’ of local demonstrations of support. Before exploring in detail how the French tried to establish such a rule in practice, it is first useful to consider generally how they characterized their rule in Egypt using tropes from *ancien regime* colonial reformism.

The first issue of *La Décade Égyptienne*, the journal of the newly created *Institut d'Égypte*, in announcing the formation of the Institute proclaimed that a new era of colonialism had dawned:

We no longer live in times when victors spread only destruction wherever they go, greed for gold determines their actions and devastation, persecution and intolerance are their companions. Today, by contrast, the French respect not only the laws, customs and conventions, even the prejudices of those whose countries they occupy. It is left to time, reason and education to bring about those changes for which philosophy and the enlightenment of the century have prepared the way, and which every day come nearer.²²

²² *La Décade Égyptienne*, No. 1.

Here the former member of the Committee of Public Safety and now editor of the *Decade*, Jean-Lambert Tallien articulates the ‘new’ principles of French colonial rule: the French establish themselves without destroying local modes of life and with respect for local prejudices by working to change them gradually and without coercion. At the center of this model is a tension between non-interference and change. Tallien acknowledges that past attempts at change (albeit ones starting from misguided purposes such as obtaining gold or proselytizing) were mired in violent coercion. It wasn’t the push to change local peoples that was illegitimate in itself, but instead the motivations and the means by which change was attempted in the past.

In order to legitimize the change they sought in Egypt, French authorities used a language of gradualism to distinguish their project. The language often appears in French proclamations. Napoleon for example wrote in his parting instructions (to the generals assuming command in Egypt upon his return to France):

It is necessary to accustom these people little by little to our manners and to our manner of life, and in the meantime leave them great latitude in their interior affairs; especially not meddling in their justice....

Change ought not take place too quickly, but instead another official noted in a personal letter:

Our role, ... is to ameliorate [*soulager*] these unfortunate people introducing our usages and customs little by little. We have begun by smashing their monstrous politics and the tyrannical power [of the Mamluks]....

‘Smashing’ was to be only directed at the Mamluk rulers who, according to French, were foreign occupiers anyway. The aim as Louis Alexander Berthier, Napoleon’s chief of staff, wrote to a general was to “make [the local people] friends and only make war on

the Mamluks.”²³ One way to do this was through the use of gradualism in introducing change and, as Napoleon announced to his troops upon landing in Egypt, by conforming to local practice: “You will find here practices different from those of Europe; you must become accustomed to them.”²⁴

If the French were not meant to war on the local inhabitants and instead to cultivate their friendship, it was necessary to effect change in a different fashion. Beyond gradualism, they would use a ‘new’ approach (announced in the *Courier*):

We will give to the world the first example of a conquering a legislator. ...
We will win them over by the triumph of reason, more difficult than of arms; and we will show ourselves as superior to other nations, that Bonaparte [is greater than] Genghis.²⁵

Dispelling any notion that the French would be like the Mongolian hords who conquered Asia through violence, they would effect their conquest with reason rather than force and change local practices through a triumph of rationality. This would be the way to establish friendship with local peoples: avoiding coercion and reasoning with them. What precisely the editor of the *Courier* meant by ‘reasoning’ is something that will be fleshed out in the remainder of the chapter, for now it is important to note that this process of ‘amelioration’ was ideally to take place without the kinds of violent conquests seen in the past. By separating the Mamluks from the ‘native’ Egyptians, it seemed possible to imagine such a conquest taking place: First, smash the Mamluk tyrants, then use reason rather than arms to “attach the inhabitants to the French cause” as the officer Desvernois put it.²⁶

²³ F. Charles-Roux, *Bonaparte, gouverneur d'Égypte* (Paris: Plon, 1935), 34.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁵ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 11.

²⁶ Cole 2007: 110.

Writing shortly before the first Cairo uprising, another Frenchman noted evidence that such an attachment was taking place:

the inhabitants of Cairo, seduced by the familiarity of our character, demonstrate to us the greatest enthusiasm. Thanks to the mildness [*douceur*] of our government, a complete security reigns in all classes of the society.²⁷

Here, as local Cairenes become accustomed to French rule, security (peace) reigns in the city. Particularly noteworthy is the formulation of how this security was established: ‘mildness’ of government and ‘seduction’ produce popular local support. These characterizations of colonial government, despite the revolutionary overtones of official French propaganda, were in fact not new. “Mildness” in colonial government had often appeared in *ancien regime* reformist discussions as a key principle for founding a legitimate colony, and as with Egypt, it was founded on the notion that local inhabitants would be ‘seduced’ or come to have ‘affection’ for the French.²⁸ “Mildness” was also a term that expedition members frequently used to characterize French government in Egypt (even if sometimes to criticize coercive French practices—e.g. using ‘Mamluk’ methods such as beatings during tax collection)²⁹

What exactly constituted ‘mildness’ often seemed easier to determine in the negative than the positive. It was *not* mild to beat local people who could not or would not pay their taxes: this was to adopt means of the tyrannical Mamluks. It was *not* mild to try to force conversions on locals as the Spanish had done, even conversions to the more

²⁷ Charles-Roux 1935: 198.

²⁸ Or praising particular administrators. See Chapter 2. Raynal for example had directed readers’ attention to the example of the Jesuit Marquette who with “mild and benevolent manners secured to him the general affection of all the inhabitants [of Quebec]” *HDI* 1783: 7.15.

²⁹ As General Morand put it: “the tyranny exercised by the Mamluks is still [perpetuated] by some of us, despite our *mild character*. It is perhaps good to wait for an end to it, so that our moeurs and our practices can be better known by the people.” In André Raymond, *Égyptiens et Français au Caire, 1798-1801*, (Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1998), 286.

estimable goal of enlightenment (in some cases French authors used such religious terminology when describing their goals).³⁰ Coercive practices in changing locals' behavior was at odds with 'mildness.' Instead mild government had the peculiar effect of allowing colonizers to "seduce" the colonized. In the example above, "seduction" took place through the informal way that the French conducted themselves with local people who in turn reciprocated with demonstrations of support. That the French had a kind of seductive affability that could help them in colony building was not an original idea: Pierre Francois Page, a rabidly anti-British planter from Saint-Domingue, argued in another context that it was this affability which "inspires estimation, confidence and attachment among the indigenous inhabitants of the countries [the French] visit" and among "the colonizing peoples, only the French" possessed this characteristic.³¹

Affability, however, was only part of the broader strategy of "seduction." Religious appeals, presentations of European *techne*, and other means would encourage the process. In order to know that such tactics were working however, it was necessary to observe and record signs of popular support. In personal and official correspondence, as well as government publications in Egypt, French officials sought to construct a narrative of popular support that could bestow legitimacy on their rule. Thus they carefully recorded instances where the Egyptians demonstrated their support for French rule through acclamation (often during festivals), their participation in parades, and signs of their 'happiness' or 'contentment.' These manifestations of support, combined with a system in which religious notables were institutionalized as popular representatives,

³⁰ The French planned to use freed slaves from Malta as their 'apostles' in Alexandria (Cole 2007: 31).

³¹ Pierre François Page, *Traité d'économie politique et de commerce des colonies* (Paris, 1801): 267. See also Lokke 1932: 231-2.

provided French officials with material to claim that the establishment they aimed to construct in Egypt was being founded with the consent of the colonized, through a kind of voluntarism. While the occupiers could find willing accomplices among locals, periodic mass revolts in Cairo and elsewhere provided robust evidence that broad swathes of the populace would not submit voluntarily to the European invaders. Nonetheless, the narrative persisted among the French even after the uprisings and continued to be informed by the language of *ancien regime* reformism.

(3) French Strategies

(3.1) “Cadis, sheikhs, imams...tell the people that we also are true Muslims!”

Certainly among the most astonishing facets of Napoleon’s strategy in Egypt for gaining the assent of local people was his Islamic policy. While Volney had warned against colonization in Egypt because of the three wars France would have to wage—against the Ottomans, British, and Egyptians—the “most heavy and dangerous” would be with the Egyptians. He prophesied that

should the enemies of God and the Prophet [the French], dare to invade them, Turks, Arabs, and peasants, would fly to arms. Fanaticism would supply the place of skill and courage; fanaticism has been ever found a most formidable enemy, and it still rages throughout Egypt in all its pristine fury, The French name is held in abhorrence, nor could a footing be ever obtained there without absolutely depopulating the country.³²

This religious antagonism was merely one of many obstacles which led Volney to conclude a decade before the expedition that an Egyptian colony was both undesirable and unfeasible. Napoleon, having the example of Alexander in mind rather than Louis

³² Volney 1788: 75.

IX,³³ thought that he could avoid Volney's third war by persuading locals that the French were not hostile to Islam. To do this, the young general hoped to identify the French with the faith, going so far as to suggest at different moments during the occupation that the French: (1) were protectors of Muslims, (2) were Muslims, or (3) would become Muslims. He hoped that through the cynical use of (often ham-fisted) religious propaganda he could "lull fanaticism to sleep before" uprooting it altogether.³⁴ Here, of course, there was no precedent in previous colonial practice, but this 'adoption' of local beliefs with the aim of altering native modes of life was the kind of strategy that earlier reformists had advocated. Here religious propaganda would be mobilized precisely with the aim of avoiding military coercion and instead to win over local public opinion through persuasion. The strategy was to construct a narrative of hybridity in which differences between colonized and colonizer were obscured so that the project of establishing legitimate rule could proceed.

Preparations began even before the army landed in Egypt. Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis, the career translator and diplomat who had worked on Raynal's history of French establishments in North Africa and the Levant, translated what would become Napoleon's first proclamation to the people of Egypt.³⁵ It was printed aboard the flagship *l'Orient* with an Arabic printing press stolen from the Vatican. The proclamation attacked the tyranny of the Mamluks, claimed support from the Ottoman Sultan and tried to preempt any religious claims against the French:

³³ Louis IX (subsequently St. Louis) was the French crusader king who, with the blessing of Innocent IV, invaded Egypt in the thirteenth century. He was captured and subsequently ransomed for nearly twice the annual income of France.

³⁴ To Kleber. See Laurens 2004: 154

³⁵ Jabarti records the proclamation with excoriating commentary. (I shall return to this in the next chapter.)

People of Egypt, it will be said they come to destroy your religion: do not believe it! Respond that I respect God, his prophet Mohammad, and the Koran more than the Mamluks! ... Cadis, sheiks, imams, chorbagris, tell the people that we are also true Muslims! ... Is it not us who destroyed the Pope who said that it was necessary to make war on the Muslims? Is it not us who destroyed the Knights of Malta because these madmen believed that God wanted them to war with the Muslims? Is it not us who have been for all these centuries friends of the Grand Seigneur (may God accomplish his desires) and the enemies of his enemies?³⁶

While pointing out that it was the French who destroyed traditional European enemies of Islam such as the Pope and the Knights of Malta, Napoleon also hoped that France's long tradition of alliance with the Sublime Porte might convince locals that the French were friends of Islam.³⁷

Beyond these historical events, Napoleon's most peculiar claim was that he respected God, Mohammad, and the Koran, and, even further, that the French ought be described by the *ulama* (religious scholars) as "true Muslims." Juan Cole has rightly suggested that here the French tried to play on what they saw as an ambiguity associated with the term 'muslim,' which at times in Arabic could be used to denote someone who believed in one God.³⁸ The French hoped that Enlightenment Deism (which acknowledged one God) would provide a credible equivalence to Muslims who also rejected the divinity of Christ. When a Maronite translator from Syria who worked for the French described them as Christians like him, the French made light of his faith so as to distance their Deism from Christianity.³⁹

³⁶ Charles-Roux 1935: 27-8

³⁷ De Tott had earlier envisioned a proclamation to locals explaining French conduct as follows: "the Emperor of France wants nothing more than to avenge the violation of treaties, and will only serve as against those who would pretend to detract from the evasion of his power... the disturbance of good order" in F. Charles-Roux, *Les origines de l'expédition d'Egypte*, (Paris: Plon-Nourrit etc., 1910), 89.

³⁸ Cole 2007: 129.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

There were obvious differences between Deism and Islam, despite Napoleon's attempts to obscure them. Most important among these were the role of the Prophet as messenger and the Quran as the word of God. Most French Deists were not prepared to accept these integral components of the faith, even had they been sincere in their interest in doing so. While Napoleon appears to have maintained a certain respect for Mohammad as a political leader even after the expedition, and although he often met with members of the *ulama* under the pretext of discussing passages from the Quran, neither his political admiration for the Prophet nor his attempts to appear interested in textual questions translated to a good faith effort to accept the tenets of Islam. More often than not, the French quietly noted that their professions of synchronicity were cynical attempts to cultivate local popular support. (These attempts would mostly be dismissed as such by educated Egyptians.)⁴⁰ As Pierre Jaubert, an Orientalist who acted as an expedition translator and would go on to cultivate French relations with Persia, wrote to a correspondent:

you will laugh outright, perhaps, you witlings of Paris, at the Mohametan proclamation of the commander-in-chief. He is proof, however, against all your raillery; and the thing itself will certainly produce a most surprising effect.⁴¹

The intended effect was to, as others had put it, 'seduce' the local population so that there would be no need to wage war against them. War would lead to depopulation, which, the historically-minded French believed, was precisely the problem with Spanish conduct in the Americas. If the French could convince the Egyptians that they were 'religiously'

⁴⁰ A subject to which I shall return in greater detail in the following chapter.

⁴¹ Cole 2007: 32.

similar enough to seem innocuous, it would be possible to establish a solid footing in what would become, as Menou put it, “the finest” colony for France.⁴²

The proclamations seemed to produce some effect initially, at least according to Joseph-Marie Moiret. He wrote, “Imagine their surprise—even their admiration—to see shining in us that moderation, that gentle humanity which we had so often shown in other countries.” Continuing, he noted:

[Napoleon’s] proclamation produced an immediate and beneficial effect. It dispelled the people's suspicion of us and they showed us more friendliness, some even offering their help.⁴³

Ignoring the fact that this “help” probably originated more among political opportunists than anyone seriously convinced by French propaganda, it was clear from the outset that mere propaganda would be insufficient to cultivate and maintain broad support in matters of religion. A major problem was how to restrain French soldiers, many of whom had served in Italy, where in some cases (such as the seizure of Milan) they had engaged in mass plunder and rape.⁴⁴ There, Napoleon had proclaimed to his army “I will lead you in to the most fertile plains on earth. Rich provinces, wealth towns, all will be yours for the taking.”⁴⁵ Egypt however called for more restraint, particularly given the power of local religious sensibilities. Bonaparte forbade his men from entering mosques and threatened them with prompt execution if they contravened this order.⁴⁶ Forgetting army plunder in Italy and focusing on what he saw as its record of respect for religion there, Napoleon proclaimed to his troops upon disembarking:

⁴² Menou to Bonaparte (March 19, 1800) in Rousseau 1900: 249.

⁴³ Joseph-Marie Moiret, *Memoirs of Napoleon’s Egyptian Expedition, 1798-1801* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2001), 42-3.

⁴⁴ Alan Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997): 48.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

The people with whom we are going to live are Mohamatans, their first article of faith is this: there is no other God than God and Mohammed is his prophet. Do not contradict them; act with them as you acted with the Jews and with the Italians; have regard for their muftis and their imams, as you had for the rabbis and the bishops. ... have for the ceremonies prescribed by the Quran, for the mosques, the same tolerance that you had for the convents, for the synagogues, for the religion of Moses and of Jesus Christ. The Roman legions protected all religions.

Insults against religion would not be tolerated; religion would be protected. The reference to the Romans is meant to hearken back to an army whose policy was far more flexible and ecumenical toward religion in conquest than the more recent European colonial expeditions. Moiret later observed other officers citing Roman practice as a possible model for French conduct in Egypt. Such officers pointed out that “rather than forcing [the conquered] to adopt the gods of the Capitol, [the Romans] placed there the gods of Athens and Carthage.” Bonaparte, according to Moiret, was sympathetic to this strategy.⁴⁷

Napoleon’s proclamation to the army continued with an admonition:

[The peoples who you will encounter] will treat women different from us; but, in all countries, he who violates them is a monster. Pillage enriches no more than a small number of men; it dishonors us, it destroys our resources; it turns into enemies the people whom it is in our interest to have as friends.

Those who would engage in theft or violation of local women, Napoleon warned them, would also be subject to a penalty of death. The threats of swift discipline were necessary to keep the army in check and prevent any sense among the Egyptians that the French were hostile to Islam. As Napoleon counseled Kleber in his parting instructions, a minor incident could ruin public opinion gains:

⁴⁷ Moiret 2001: 76-7.

It is necessary to give the most care to persuade Muslims that we love the Koran and that we venerate the prophet. ... Only one poorly calculated stumble could destroy the work of several years.⁴⁸

Even with a well-behaved army and effective propaganda, the French recognized that they needed the support of religious authorities if their professions of respect for Islam could be sustained. For this reason Napoleon, following the advice of the French merchant Magallon and Talleyrand, made it his policy to win over key segments of the religious elite.⁴⁹ To do this, he moved to co-opt them by quickly creating the *Diwan*, a council composed of respected jurists, to act as “intermediaries” between the French and Egyptians.⁵⁰ Bonaparte believed that “the *ulamas* [*sic*], and the great sheikhs are the chiefs of the Arab nation; they have the confidence and the affection of the all the inhabitants of Egypt.”⁵¹ He hoped that by selecting such religious notables and integrating them into the structure of French rule, any accusations of hostility toward Islam would seem hollow. Moreover, in conceiving the *ulama* as the natural representatives of the local popular opinion, the French could tell themselves that by establishing the *Diwan* they were not replicating the narrow (tyrannical) rule of the Mamluks but were establishing something more akin to a republic.⁵² “By gaining the support of the great sheiks of Cairo,” Napoleon wrote to Kleber, “one gains the public opinion of all Egypt.”⁵³

⁴⁸ Charles-Roux 1935: 371.

⁴⁹ Magallon convinced Talleyrand of the importance of cultivating the support among and empowering the *ulama* (Laurens 1987: 94).

⁵⁰ Raymond 1998: 96.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² The Iranian Revolution demonstrates that this would not be the last time this logic was applied in conceiving of ‘popularly’ founded clerical rule.

⁵³ Herold 1962: 145.

Bonaparte used a variety of tactics in cultivating the support of the *ulama*. In his memoirs of the Egyptian campaign, he characterized his dealings with them as founded on respect, adding that he sought “to gain their trust by discussing the Koran, by having its chief passages explained to him, and by displaying great admiration for the Prophet.”⁵⁴ In turn, the notables would then go to the mosques “where the people were assembled,” there they would assuage the fears and suspicions of the general population. In doing this, “[t]hey rendered very positive services to the army.” At times Napoleon moved rhetorically far beyond expressions of mere respect for Islam. In seeking to gain the support of an important cleric from Alexandria, he effectively promised that the French would establish the *sharia*: “a uniform regime, founded on the principles of the Quran, which are the only true ones, which can alone ensure the well-being of men.”⁵⁵ To bring such a regime into being, Cole points out, would have meant that French army officers—many of whom were self-professed products of the Enlightenment—would have created the first Islamic republic.⁵⁶ By setting up the *Diwan* council and relying on its members to establish French legitimacy amongst the populace, the French were in fact giving the ‘high’⁵⁷ *ulama* in Egypt powers that had not existed under the Mamluks. The *ulama* had acted as intermediaries between the people and the Mamluks, but they had not been delegated such broad legislative powers. Bonaparte informed the council that they were to decide how to form provincial assemblies, establish and codify laws, reform the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 186.

⁵⁵ Cole 2003: 131.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 131-2.

⁵⁷ On the ‘high’ versus ‘low’ *ulama*, see Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid Marsot “Social and Political Change after the French Occupation” in Bierman 2003: 102.

system of taxation and property as well as the rules of inheritance.⁵⁸ With the *Diwan* and provincial assemblies, the logic went, Egyptians would gradually become accustomed to a kind of self-government. After the first Cairo uprising in fall 1798 however, Bonaparte disbanded the *Diwan* as ‘punishment’ and it would not truly get back to the kinds of reforms that Napoleon envisioned until Menou’s tenure, which began in June 1800.

To retain support among the *ulama*, Bonaparte at times held out the possibility that the entire French army would convert to Islam. To heighten the effect, the French paid soothsayers to predict that Napoleon was “about to be circumcised, would adopt the turban and the religion of Mohammed, and his entire army would follow his example.”⁵⁹ He hoped to obtain a ruling from the *Diwan* to the effect that the French were Muslims, but there were two sticking points in the negotiations: Napoleon informed the council that his soldiers would not accept circumcision nor could they give up the consumption of wine. After some deliberation and consultation with scholars in Mecca, the sheikhs responded that neither would obstruct the French from becoming Muslims, though the consumption of alcohol would result in their being unable to reach paradise in the afterlife.⁶⁰ Napoleon used this ruling as an excuse to demure and when the *Diwan* pressed him on his commitment to conversion, he is reported to have responded rather preposterously: “I did not promise you anything.... nevertheless, know that I am [a Muslim], and, perhaps, a better one than you; if you do not mend your ways, I shall again become a Christian to punish you.”⁶¹ At other times he tried to identify himself with the Mahdi (the eschatological bringer of justice and restorer of true faith). For example, in

⁵⁸ Ibid., 101.

⁵⁹ Moiret 2001: 76.

⁶⁰ Moiret 2001: 121.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the aftermath of the Cairo revolt, he claimed that his coming had been foretold in the Quran and that he possessed supernatural powers.⁶² Moiret reported a split within the army regarding these methods:

The philosophers, those we called the freethinkers, jeered, or, shrugging their shoulders, announced that they had not shaken off the prejudices of Europe only to adopt those of the Orient, and that only the truth should be spoken to people. Those of a political bent argued that, on the contrary, the safety the Army demanded such things should be done.⁶³

Resistance from the army notwithstanding, Napoleon in later years seems to have bought his own propaganda, mentioning the real possibility of having his army convert and referring to plans that he ordered drawn up for “a mosque large enough to contain the entire army.”⁶⁴ From his captivity in St. Helena years later, he wrote “if I'd stayed in the Orient, I probably would have founded an empire like Alexander's by going on pilgrimage to Mecca.”⁶⁵ Bonaparte's secretary in Egypt, Louis Bourrienne supports the claim: “I will not go so far as to say that he would not have changed his religion had the conquest of the East been the price of that change.”⁶⁶

Bonaparte reported that the head of the *Diwan*, urged him to convert thus:

you want the protection of the Prophet, who loves you. You want the Muslim Arabs to enlist under your flag. You want to restore the glory of Arabia, and you are not an idolater. Then become a Muslim yourself. A hundred thousand Egyptians, 100,000 Arabs will come to join you from Arabia, from Mecca and Medina. With them under your leadership and

⁶² Moiret (2001: 76) records the bizarre announcement:

Let the people know that, since the creation of the world, it is written that, having destroyed the enemies of Islam and torn down the crosses, I shall come from the distant West to fulfill the task allotted to me. Let the people understand, as it is written in more than 20 places in the holy book of the Koran, that that which is happening has been foreseen, and that which is to come has also been made clear.

I am able to demand from each one of you an explanation for even the most secret wishes of your heart; for I know everything, even those things which you have not told anyone.

⁶³ Ibid., 76-7.

⁶⁴ Janasoff 145.

⁶⁵ Herold 1962: 186.

⁶⁶ Moiret 2001: 20.

discipline you will conquer the East and you'll restore the Prophet's fatherland in all of its glory.⁶⁷

While Bonaparte's report is most certainly false, it reveals the extent to which popular support was central to his narrative of legitimacy. Conversion, he believed, would have led local peoples to flock to French standards, and the new empire Napoleon sought would be established. During the expedition and with a particularly fanciful flight of imagination, Bonaparte even entertained the possibility of installing Menou who had recently converted to Islam as "sherif of Mecca."⁶⁸ How the French would have gone about convincing the Islamic *umma* to accept the corpulent, aging 'convert' from central France as steward of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and governor of the Hejaz was never clear.

In the meantime, Bonaparte was content to cultivate relations with Mecca and the surrounding region. He sought to have himself declared *amir al-hajj*, who was responsible for protecting pilgrims on route to Mecca and Medina, and in trying to cultivate his position as such he ordered that pilgrims returning through Cairo be provided with a lavish welcome.⁶⁹ In the beginning of 1799, Bonaparte declared himself as protector of the Kaaba and printed correspondence from the sherif of Mecca who described the Corsican as an "emir."⁷⁰ Cultivating this image was meant not only to bolster the esteem of Muslims in Egypt but also to cultivate links with other authorities in the region. As the head of the *Diwan* allegedly reported to Bonaparte, the French might find support in the Arabian peninsula, both against the Ottomans and for building a

⁶⁷ Ibid., 184.

⁶⁸ Nicolas Desvernois, *Memoires du général Bon Desvernois*, (Paris: E. Plon, 1898), 255.

⁶⁹ Cole 2007: 132, Moiret 2001: 54.

⁷⁰ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 24.

colony. Beyond the obvious prestige benefits of having good relations with the authorities in the Hejaz, Bonaparte hoped that it might be possible to find common cause with them against the Sultan in Istanbul. The same applied to the Barbary States. For this reason, Menou trumpeted his political gains with Tunis and Algiers in a letter to Talleyrand: “making peace with these two powers will be of an extreme advantage for the colony of Egypt” as the French act as trading partners and protectors of Barbary pilgrims traveling to and from Arabia.⁷¹ When an expedition force sent by Napoleon in 1801 (to land in Libya and march overland to relieve the blockaded French troops in Egypt) was prevented from even landing in Libya, it became clear just how useful gaining the friendship of the Barbary States might have been.

Beyond the strategic benefits of alliance with neighboring authorities, Napoleon also aimed to convince the Egyptians that the French were ‘true Muslims’ or at least friends of Islam. Here then, as with the more direct forms of propaganda, the empowerment of the *ulama* and claims to French conversion, he hoped to persuade locals that the invaders were not a threat and thereby lay a foundation for the kinds of gradual enlightenment which French officials referred to in their correspondence. While there were no real colonial precedents for such a campaign—in which religious hybridity functioned to minimize differences between colonizer and colonized—the hope that such a hybridity might be established through the means of persuasion and by appealing to the local inhabitants certainly would have been recognizable to the reformists of decades past.

⁷¹ July 25, 1801. Rousseau 1900: 393.

(3.2) Festivities

While the *ulama* existed as representatives of the people, the French also employed festivals as a means of enacting broader public support for their rule. They celebrated republican, Islamic, and pre-Islamic Egyptian holidays, using decorations to envision a hybrid colonial future in which French and Egyptian would become unified. Among the early examples was the first celebration of the Festival of the Republic in fall 1798. In preparation for the festival the French erected a series of decorations in Azbakiya square. These included a series of columns representing the various departments of France all linked together with a “double garland, emblem of the unity and the indivisibility of all parts of Republican France.”⁷² The French also constructed an *arc de triomphe* dedicated to the battle of the pyramids (wherein they defeated the Mamluk army) and on the other side of the square a portico was set up with Arabic inscriptions. One of them read: “there is no God but God and Mohammed is his Prophet.” They placed an obelisk seventy feet high in the center, which had engravings commemorating the founding of the French Republic and the expulsion of the Mamluks in French and Arabic. Later that evening, the French and Egyptians adjourned to a banquet where the theme of integration continued. Moiret reports:

this was the first time that the flags of France and Turkey, the Turban and a Cap of Liberty, the Koran and the Declaration of the Rights of Man had been placed together on the same altar; the first time that the circumcised and uncircumcised had been seated at the same feast.⁷³

The mixing of symbols as staged in the festival was of course part of the larger strategy of winning over the locals. Moiret reported that it appeared to work in this case: “The

⁷² André Peyrusse, *Expéditions De Malte, d'Égypte Et De Syrie: Correspondance, 1798-1801* (Maurepas: Vouivre, 2010), 33

⁷³ Moiret 2001: 65.

consideration and courtesy [the Egyptians] met with on this occasion seemed to give them pleasure and to flatter their pride. ... In fact everything went off perfectly.”⁷⁴ The French also tried to extend this logic to Egyptian festivals as well, by participating in and supporting celebrations of the Prophet’s birth and the Nile Festival (which initiated the growing season). During the second Nile Festival, for example, Menou made a point of leading ceremonies with an Egyptian official. The General in Chief directed the throwing of coins into the crowd while the “*agha Waly*” oversaw the opening of the dikes.⁷⁵

Most important for the French during the festivals was public support. In official reports, French officials made sure to note large crowds of Egyptians and popular participation in the events.⁷⁶ French republican symbolism in celebrations and the importance of festivals in Revolutionary France (and therefore in Egypt) should not be overlooked.⁷⁷ To suggest however that revolutionary ideology is the only or even primary way to understand the French emphasis on popular participation in festivals reinforces the mistaken view that the French had no pre-Revolutionary colonial precedents to draw upon when conceptualizing their rule. Keeping this expanded historical memory in mind, it is thus too hasty to conclude as Cole has “that the French appear seriously to have expected the conquered Egyptians to join in, demonstrates how little they conceived of their own enterprise on the Nile as a colonial venture.”⁷⁸ In fact, it seems likely that it is precisely *because* the French conceived of their enterprise on the Nile as a colonial

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 78

⁷⁶ See *Courier de l'Égypte*, Nos. 1, 10, 37-9, 72, 78, 82, 84 for various examples of celebrations and notes of local enthusiasm and participation.

⁷⁷ On festivals in the revolution see Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁷⁸ Cole 2003: 61.

venture that they expected Egyptians to join in. By overlooking French colonial history, Cole is forced to conclude that French officials, despite their use of the term itself, did not conceive of their project in Egypt as a colony. Pre-revolutionary precedents can help us understand why the French expected locals to participate, and why this was necessary for the colony to be legitimate.

Above, I noted that French officials made frequent reference to colonization in the New World, arguing that the French nation (specifically during the *ancien regime*) practiced colonization differently than the ‘brutal’ Spanish and English. In comparing ceremonies of possession among European states in the New World, Patricia Seed has demonstrated that the French had a uniquely ‘collaborative’ process for enacting sovereignty over native lands and peoples.⁷⁹ In order for the possession to be legitimate for the French, demonstrations of local ‘consent’ had to be recorded during specific ceremonies. These ceremonies were often processions led by local notables and Frenchmen (followed by more natives), wherein locals made acclamations that symbolized their consent, as did the dressing up of local notables in the colors of France, and which usually terminated at a cross or obelisk. In order for the colony to be legitimate, it was necessary to explain to local inhabitants the symbols in the procession while the French assiduously recorded the “joy” and “happiness” of locals as signs beyond mere ceremonial participation that they assented to French colonization.⁸⁰ When it came to festivals in Egypt, French observers frequently noted similar practices. The *Courier* records a procession during the second Festival of the Republic in Rosetta: it

⁷⁹ Seed 1995: “holding a parade in which natives participated. . . gaining apparent indigenous consent—marked nearly all the peaceful French establishments of power in the New World through the mid-seventeenth century” 46-7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

began with the arrival of respected sheikhs who brought “troops of musicians, of dancers” and after a meeting at the local French general’s residence, “from there the procession, preceded by music, and surrounded by a platoon of grenadiers, went to the altar of the fatherland.”⁸¹ The emphasis in the *Courier* article, as with the records of other such processions, was on active local participation, and like in the New World, French observers diligently recorded local acclamations of support demonstrations of happiness during the festivities.⁸² General Desvernois records an informal procession during the Nile Festival:

the people escorted [the French contingent], chanting praise for the Prophet and the French army and repeating to the general in chief: 'we clearly see that you were sent by the Prophet, when you have achieved your victory and the most beautiful Nile ever seen.'⁸³

Napoleon would also seek to have the local *Diwan* members wear shawls of French colors, and while the head of the *Diwan* furiously threw his to the ground after Napoleon tried to place it on his shoulders, the *Courier* reported that the *Diwan* came to wear “the tricolor pen, and [Bonapare] was assured that soon all the inhabitants of Egypt would wear it.”⁸⁴

From the perspective of earlier colonial practices, the diligence with which French observers noted local participation—be it in processions, through acclamation, expressions of happiness, or the wearing of French colors—becomes comprehensible. These demonstrations of local support were meant to establish and confirm legitimate French rule over Egypt. By confirming “happiness” and “joy” among the Egyptians in

⁸¹ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 84.

⁸² Examples of each: local support *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 38; expressions of happiness *Courier de l'Égypte*, Nos. 78, 82.

⁸³ Desvernois 1898: 137.

⁸⁴ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 6.

such festivities, the French sought to convince themselves that, as a French voyager in the New World had written over a century earlier, they had “gained the friendship and assured the allegiance of the people of these new lands without employing other arms than persuasion and good conduct.”⁸⁵ The festivals then served to enact popular legitimacy, thereby bolstering the legitimacy of French rule.

(3.3) *Techne*

In addition to using religious propaganda and mobilizing public participation in festivals, the French mobilized science and technology in hopes of attracting Egyptians to their rule. Surveying the place of science on the expedition, General Desvernois explained that it functioned to “conciliate the affection of the Egyptians.”⁸⁶ Science was meant to produce affection among locals in the following fashion: by presenting the products of Western science, the French believed they could elicit what they described as “wonder” or “astonishment” among locals; as a result of these feelings of fascination, Egyptians would desire to emulate the French and would therefore seek out French tutelage. The *Courier* thus described French rule as linking technology, astonishment, and the justice of French rule: having “astonished the Egyptian by the spectacle of the arts of Europe, and having treated as a brother the inhabitants of a conquered country.”⁸⁷ Early on at least, some official observers saw promising signs:

the slightest attention to what surrounds us shows that the Egyptians profit from our lessons, and if we find them regressed by several centuries, they

⁸⁵ Seed 1995: 61.

⁸⁶ Desvernois 1898: 140.

⁸⁷ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 93.

are *imitative* spirits and their dexterity [will allow them] to regain a century in the lapse of a year.⁸⁸

The belief that European technology could lure local peoples (willingly) into a colonial relationship through the medium of imitation had, as was clear in Chapters 2 and 3, been common among French reformist thinkers in earlier decades. The French expedition in Egypt however was the first opportunity to enact the strategy on a massive scale. Bonaparte and other French officials sought to institutionalize the presentation of science and technology to locals through the *Institut d'Égypte* and public spectacles. These presentations were far more advanced than the “baubles” which Wadström had envisioned using in West Africa (see Chapter 3), in part because of the greater complexity of life in urban Egypt and the specific scientific history the French attributed to the Arabs. Nevertheless, the aim in both cases was to attract and transform local peoples by presenting examples of technology, which they would then want to emulate. The setting for this emulation, of course, would be French colonial rule.

While the work of the *Institut d'Égypte* is today most often remembered because of its focus on the aggrandizement of French science back in Europe (the best example being the encyclopedic *Description d'Égypte*), a significant part of its mission was to present products of Western science to Egypt. Thus in the first edition of the *Institute's* journal *La Decade Égyptienne*, the founding charter stated that its first function was to occupy itself with “the progress and propagation of enlightenment in Egypt.”⁸⁹ To do this, local notables were encouraged to attend *Institute* meetings and make use of its library, which contained more than twenty-five thousand works, including authors such

⁸⁸ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 40.

⁸⁹ *La Decade Égyptienne*, No.1, p. 9.

as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Raynal, as well as scientific volumes. In the next chapter, I shall explore in detail the ambivalent reactions of educated Egyptians to their visits to the *Institute*, for now I focus on French ideas about local participation there. The official propaganda noted that the Savants (those who comprised the Institute) enjoyed popularity among the locals. Napoleon would later describe it thus:

the native population was very slow in understanding what that assembly of grave and studious people was, who neither governed, nor administered, nor served any religious function. They thought that they were making gold. Eventually, however, they formed a correct opinion of them. Not only the sheiks and notables but even the lowest class of the people held the savants in high esteem.⁹⁰

Recording this esteem helped to bolster a French narrative in which their rule became legitimate through popular support. While in truth the vast majority of Cairenes never set foot in the Institute, the French sought to characterize its aims as cultivating the broadest possible audience. Thus under Menou, the *Courier* reported that:

in the public library we will open a particular room in which those desiring its different services may meet, so that those who desire to perfect their knowledge will find elementary books there that they can study; and the members of the mathematics group of the Institute are invited to give them [any] explanations of which they would be in need.⁹¹

The Savants then would be present to tutor locals in mathematics, while the volumes of the library would be open to anyone who sought “to perfect their knowledge.” Some issues later, the journal reported “the library of the Institute is open to the public every day, except quintidi and decadi [two of the ten days of the revolutionary week], and is very popular.”⁹²

⁹⁰ Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoleon I*, Vol. 29 (Paris 1858-70), 493.

⁹¹ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No.75

⁹² *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 88. Quintidi and decadi were two of the ten days of the revolutionary week.

Other Savants began plans to establish schools for Egyptians. The artist André Dutertre sought to establish a school of fine arts specifically for Egyptians while the botanist Hippolyte Nectoux planned to establish similar agricultural colleges.⁹³ Having reversed his earlier opposition to colonizing Egypt, Volney emphasized the political function of such education projects in Egypt. His ‘observations’ were reprinted in the summer of 1799 in the *Courier* describing Bonaparte’s policy,

[Bonaparte] instituted schools of instruction for the people; military colleges, where French, Copts, Arab young people teach themselves in Arabic, French, geography, mathematics, the exact sciences: *in a word, he creates a nation.*⁹⁴

Despite Volney’s use of the past and present tenses, the education projects never really took shape apart from opening the Institute to curious Egyptians. Far less taxing on French resources were presentations of technology to locals in hopes that this would provoke feelings of astonishment, a desire to emulate, and an openness to embrace French rule. Two examples are particularly noteworthy: the printing press and the balloon.

Although the French brought the first printing press to Egypt, it was not the first press in the Ottoman Empire. Members of the *Diwan* in Cairo were familiar with the technology, some having seen presses in Istanbul and Syria. The *Courier* reported that some sheikhs were particularly impressed by the technology and its possibilities. In an article printed during Menou’s tenure, the journal reported on a visit by sheikh al-Bakry, a frequent visitor to the national press. His questions as described by the French journal were meant to encourage French readers that one of the more powerful Egyptian religious

⁹³ Herold 1962: 174.

⁹⁴ *Courier de l’Égypte*, No. 33. (Italics added.)

authorities had been convinced of the need to “civilize” the country and that he sought to understand the role that printing presses could play in the process. Thus he is reported to have been “quite astonished” to learn that Russia possessed “typographical establishments” but “this state had not commenced to truly civilize itself.”⁹⁵ He continued to engage those present on the relationship between printing and civilization:

He asked then what influence a press could have on the civilization of a people, and appeared to understand and find the following reasons specifically to his taste: 1st of the ease of multiplying and spreading a great number of examples of good works, which, as manuscripts, could not be known to more than a few people; 2nd of the impossibility that all of these examples be lost or totally suppressed by any kind of event.... He said then that there existed a great number of good Arabic books whose publication would be infinitely useful in this country, where they are ignorant of the greatest number and that he sincerely desired that they be widely spread by way of the press. He finished by saying that all the sciences came from God, and that God wanted it....

Here an encounter with the printing press precipitates a discussion about the nature of ‘civilization.’ Technology becomes a means to produce reflection within a local notable on the need to alter traditional modes of life. The incident happens when al-Bakry, of his own accord, makes a visit to the national press. He has been there before and is obviously attracted by this tool. His conclusion is no less remarkable in its resemblance to enlightenment tropes about the need to spread and preserve useful knowledge. Even more significant is his conclusion “all the sciences came from God, and [] God wanted it.” Here the collaborating official integrates the French push to alter local practices into a traditional religious framework. The spread of enlightenment becomes the will of God. As the incident was reported to French readers, the aim is to demonstrate how the mere

⁹⁵ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 102.

presentation of technology to local inhabitants could convince them to welcome the trappings of colonization.

While the printing press functioned to spread information on a large scale, it still was aimed, at least in the near term, at the literate elite. The balloon, on the other hand, functioned to present French science to the masses. Napoleon hoped to include a balloon demonstration at the first Festival of the Republic in September 1798, but it was not ready in time. The first demonstration came in December and was something of a disaster. The balloon caught fire and came crashing to the ground soon thereafter. The *Courier* cheerfully reported the incident:

the view of this experience made the greatest impression on the people of the country; they refused to believe in its possibility; their incredulity endured for the entire time that we worked in preparing it; but they were seized with admiration when they saw this grand globe moving by itself.

The journal added, when the balloon caught fire the locals panicked, fleeing it

with looks of consternation; when they saw debris from the machine following, they concluded that it was a machine of war, that we could direct at will and match we would employ to burn the camps of our enemies.⁹⁶

Al-Jabarti, to whom I shall return in the next chapter, was less than impressed by the machine, comparing it to a kite.

It is tempting to dismiss the balloon demonstrations (there were more) as cheap stunts, which the French thought they could use to astonish unsophisticated ‘savages’ as the journal report seems to imply. This would be to misunderstand what the balloon meant to many among the French administration in Egypt. From its earliest days, ballooning in France had been associated with scientific endeavor. In fact, Gaspard

⁹⁶ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 20.

Monge, the head of the *Institut d'Égypte* under Napoleon, had been a member of a committee at the French Academy of Sciences during the *ancien regime* charged with overseeing, supporting, and controlling the production and testing of the new aerostats.⁹⁷ Balloons were used by provincial scientific academies in France to encourage enthusiasm for science among a broader public.⁹⁸ In Lyon a monument was constructed commemorating a flight that showed the public hailing both a balloon aloft and the enthroned king below.⁹⁹ While the *ancien regime* elites initially sought to exclude the rabble from the demonstrations—such crowds were beneath the dignity of the serious scientific work involved—balloon flights rapidly became public sensations and France was gripped with what one member of the British Royal Society described to Benjamin Franklin as “Ballomania.”¹⁰⁰

More than one hundred thousand spectators gathered in Lyon to see a demonstration, and as the balloon drifted in the wind people chased after it in carriages, on foot, “floundering through the mud left by melting snow” in a field where the craft came to a rest.¹⁰¹ Napoleon may not have been completely immune from the mania: he appears to have been in Paris for the first demonstration of a hydrogen balloon. Bonaparte’s secretary¹⁰² Bourrienne takes pains to state emphatically that the teenage military cadet who, upon being rebuffed in his demands to be taken aloft in the craft, furiously drew his sword, chopped at its mooring ropes and attacked the balloonist, was

⁹⁷ Richard Gillespie, “Ballooning in France and Britain, 1783-1786: Aerostation and Adventurism,” *Isis* 75, no. 2 (June 1, 1984): 250.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 262

¹⁰¹ Charles Gillispie, *The Montgolfier Brothers and the Invention of Aviation, 1783-1784* (Princeton University Press, 1983), 76

¹⁰² Bourrienne also was head of the political economy section at the Institute in Egypt.

"was not young Bonaparte, as has been alleged, but one of his comrades, Dupont de Chambon, who was somewhat eccentric."¹⁰³

Given the sensational power that balloons had over the public in France, it is less surprising that the French administration expected similar results in Egypt. They persisted in sending balloons aloft, despite the setback of the first demonstration, because they believed that this was a powerful example of European science, which was particularly well-suited to astonish locals and attract public opinion in favor of the French. Even the initial Egyptian confusion about the purpose of the craft (as war machine) could be remedied: after all, during the early experiments in France, peasants were known to have also panicked at the sight of the balloons tending to attack the downed machines with pitchforks or anything else they could lay their hands on.¹⁰⁴ More troubling however for French observers were those Egyptians who seemed to be completely uninterested in the craft:

We have been struck by the absolute incuriosity of some individuals, and we are not the only ones who have remarked on it; one saw it [when the first balloon was] traversing Esbequieh Square [when locals did not] deign to turn their eyes toward the point which fixed the gaze of everyone.¹⁰⁵

While it would be possible to correct locals' misunderstanding of the function of the craft, the French had difficulty making sense of those who seemed to be completely uninterested in the presentation. The *Courier* continues: "The voyages of *Anson* and of *Cook* offer examples of a similarly extraordinary indifference" and cites Canton and New Zealand as examples.¹⁰⁶ Both lands had offered resistance (albeit in different forms) to

¹⁰³ Bourrienne, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, Vol. 1, (New York, 1889), 5.

¹⁰⁴ Gillespie 1983: 33.

¹⁰⁵ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 25.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

European colonization attempts. In the case of Egypt, those uninterested in the technology were essentially impervious to the aim of the demonstration: their ‘affections’ could not be ‘conciliated’ as Desvernois had put it. Dolomieu explained the problem thus “the people have neither curiosity nor emulation. ... Nothing surprises [the Egyptian] because he pays no attention to that which he does not know.”¹⁰⁷ Without curiosity or emulation on the part of the locals, the French would lose the attractive power of *techne*. That the *Courier* would find this “extraordinary” reveals a misplaced (though understandable, given historical experience in France) confidence in the power of these sorts of presentations to capture public opinion. By labeling local people as being without emulation, French observers meant to suggest that they might not be susceptible to the kinds of ‘improvement,’ or rather the methods of ‘improvement’ which earlier colonial reformists had called for. Without this core desire to emulate, to become like the other, the project of founding a colony with the agreement of native inhabitants would founder. While some on the expedition would conclude from this, as Moiret did, that “the time for her rebirth had not yet dawned for Egypt,” others remained hopeful and continued to pursue the policy of mobilizing *techne* to attract local opinion. One such holdout was the third and final commander-in-chief in Egypt, General Menou.

(4) Reformist Officials

(4.1) General Jacques-Abdullah Menou and “*the means of mildness and persuasion*”

It would be difficult to find a better example of the legacy of French colonial reformism on the expedition than Jacques-Abdullah Menou. Unlike his predecessor, who

¹⁰⁷ Raymond 1998: 294.

sought to end the expedition as rapidly as possible, Menou zealously checked any suggestion that the French ought to leave Egypt, preferring, even as it became clear that their position was untenable, to enthuse about the colonial possibilities of the Nile basin and implement political reforms aimed at strengthening the French position there.¹⁰⁸ This self-proclaimed expert on colonies was a follower of Raynal and sought to create a colony through methods strikingly similar to those that had appeared several decades before in the pages of the *Histoire des Deux Indes*. While it is an exaggeration to suggest, as Lokke has, that “not even Raynal could have complained of Menou’s conduct in Egypt”—indeed, Menou at times resorted to threats against locals who would resist his decrees—it is certainly the case that Menou hoped that he might help establish a colony akin to those called for Raynal and other reformists.¹⁰⁹

Menou is best known for his conversion to Islam and marriage to an Egyptian, which I described at the beginning of the chapter. Describing his marriage further in a letter to the French consul in Algiers, Menou wrote “I made the folly of getting married; I am a Muslim nearly as much as Mohammad.” A month later, he exclaimed in reference to these developments “my life is a veritable novel.”¹¹⁰ Despite the frivolous tone, Menou viewed his marriage and conversation as part of a larger political process.

Although Jabarti reports that marriage, accompanied by *pro forma* conversions, became increasingly common between French men and local Muslim women, evidence

¹⁰⁸ Menou to Gen. Damas [March 29, 1800]: “when I made reports on cotton and on sugar, I have fulfilled a sacred duty, because the French came here in order to found a colony, it was to prove that Egypt is the most beautiful acquisition that the Republic could make, but here she should rediscover the Antilles and reestablish our commerce. That is why I am personally opposed to a system of evacuation. ” Rousseau 1900: 255.

¹⁰⁹ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 87.

¹¹⁰ Rigault 1911: 45.

of actual marriage beyond various forms of concubinage is rather scant in the French sources.¹¹¹ While French memoirists report encounters with local women—Bernoyer for example provides details of a number of escapades—few seemed to conceive of such relationships in terms of ‘the public interest’ as Menou did. One who got close to doing so was Moiret who recorded a chance encounter with “Zulima” who was the former wife of a Mamluk. As a result of the initial encounter, Moiret noted “If the colony should flourish and become established in the country, I should have a wife ready for me....”¹¹² After some subterfuge Moiret was able to meet alone with the woman who after expressing dissatisfaction with the tyranny of local practice toward women, asked that Moiret take her to France should the chance arise.¹¹³ Zulima appears to have resisted Moiret’s gallantries by asking him to marry her. Conversion for Moiret (a requisite for marriage) was more a problem than it had been for Menou:

to muffle my head in a turban, and undergo that humiliating operation which distinguishes the Jew and the Muslim, and to forswear forever that strengthening liquor invented by Noah. I shall never follow in the footsteps of our General Abdallah, who has scandalized the entire army. I should be the object of the jests of my comrades. There are prejudices—if prejudices they are—which should be respected, and how could you expect me to be faithful to the vows I make to you if I should be unfaithful to those which bind me to the religion in which I was born and brought up?”¹¹⁴

It is unclear whether if the colony had succeeded, Moiret would have been any more willing to convert; it seems unlikely. Unlike Menou, Moiret seems to have not seriously considered what a marriage to a local woman would mean, or perhaps he believed that once the colony was “established in the country” it would be unnecessary to

¹¹¹ Not to mention the exceedingly hypocritical use of female slaves as such.

¹¹² Moiret 2001: 113.

¹¹³ Ibid., 115-6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

abide by Islamic norms (which forbade non-believing men from marrying Muslim women).

Exasperated by the jokes and criticisms circulating in the army regarding his marriage and conversion, Menou explained in more detail to Kleber how this was meant to serve the “public interest”:

Many imbeciles say and many fools repeat... that I am more attached to the inhabitants of the country than to the French.... Do these ignoramuses who amuse themselves gossiping on my account have the first notion of the *means that are necessary to employ in order to found a colony?* ... Do they know that the possession of Egypt can only help the Republic recover that which she has lost in the Antilles and conserve her commerce in the Levant and [the Mediterranean]? Do they know that *in order to possess Egypt... it is necessary to gain the opinion and the confidence of the inhabitants?* ... *Do these imbeciles who reproach me perhaps for having married a Muslim woman know that it is politics and the love of my country which directed me?*¹¹⁵

Here Menou outlines his basic idea [philosophy] of colony building: To found a colony it is necessary to “gain the opinion and confidence” of the local inhabitants; one must have broad support (assent) among the colonized for the colony to flourish. Marriage is a political act as it becomes a tool for gaining local support.

While Menou was unique in the detail of his vision and reviled in the army for his methods, he was not entirely alone in connecting the marriage of local women with colony building. Volney wrote an enthusiastic summary of Bonaparte’s strategy for founding a colony there, which included the use of marriage:

[Napoleon] flatters their self-love, and adopting many of their practices, so that they adopt ours. ...He married his soldiers to women of the country. ...[A]nd the franco-arab colony is strengthened.

¹¹⁵ (November 24, 1799) in Rigault 1911: 25. (Italics added).

The implication of this claim, reprinted in the *Courier* for the edification of French readers, was that Napoleon conceived of marriage as part of an exchange of practices that would trend toward the eventual triumph of French customs. Thus marriage functioned as a tool for strengthening the “franco-arab” colony. Volney’s piece is the closest we come to a clear connection in Bonaparte’s policy between marriage with local inhabitants and colony building. While the young general had tried to take on a Mamluk concubine (without success), and his generals did so, there is little evidence beyond Volney’s remark that Napoleon had anything resembling a coherent policy to encourage marriages. In practice, relationships between Frenchmen and local women were more in keeping with a typical early modern invading army than anything resembling the relationships envisioned by earlier colonial reformists.¹¹⁶

Menou, on the other hand, had a clear sense about the political use of marriage. In positing such a view, Menou—who asserted later that he had “traversed much of the world ...[and] especially examined with great care the regime of European colonies”—drew on the long-standing notion among French colonial administrators and polemicists that marriage was one way to bring local peoples to accept colonization.¹¹⁷ As Chapters 1 and 2 have shown, this notion was common in seventeenth century discussions about colonizing North America and was then adopted by reformists like Diderot and Raynal who thought consanguineous relationships could mitigate the injustice of European colonial practices and establish legitimate colonies. Such colonies would be composed of a blending of colonizer and colonized such that locals would come to have affinity for the

¹¹⁶ Of the some three hundred French women who accompanied the Army of the Orient, little evidence for relationships with local men existed beyond one woman who was abducted and ‘married’ to a Bedouin sheikh.

¹¹⁷ Rigault 1911: 33.

French and seek to maintain a colonial bond with the metropole. The notion that consanguineous marriage as a means to establish a legitimate and durable colony thus traveled from the wilds of North America, to the rugged coast of eastern Madagascar, finally to arrive in the sun-baked Nile river valley.

Menou's irritation at the raillery shows just how much the army rank and file supported his marriage and conversion. In beginning his "endless" orders of the day with the profession of faith "There is no God but God and Mohammad is His prophet," Menou attracted mockery from the soldiers who would in breaking up for the day shout at one another: "Who goes there? ...Abdullah!" As the general Desvernois later explained:

Menou hoped perhaps to persuade little by little the troops to follow his example in order to regain the favor of the population of the country; an absurd project with Christian soldiers like us, but to him would conciliate the favor of the Egyptians.

The *Courier* seemed to provide further evidence of Menou's intentions as it began to print brief explanations of Islamic practices, in one issue praising the "genius" and "enlightenment" of the prophet Mohammad.¹¹⁸ The troops, hostile to the possibility of following Menou's example, preferred to mock even the thought that they might become 'Abdullahs' regardless of whether it would "conciliate the favor of the Egyptians."¹¹⁹ The soldiers' unwillingness to adopt or even take seriously Menou's strategy was—in addition to the obvious prejudices—encouraged by their exceedingly low morale more

¹¹⁸ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 76. The article continues by noting the presence of civil laws in Islam (thereby following Anquetil-Duperron in rejecting the idea that in Islamic polities only tyranny reigned), and offers the following conclusion to reassure the French readers: "the perfection which can be found amongst the Muslims is because of the principles of universal morals, independent of religion, in which will end by superseding all; and that the most destructive cause to the grandeur and power of Muslims is in the dogma of predestination which has made them neglect the acquisition of knowledge which provides us, in all genres, so great a superiority."

¹¹⁹ Desvernois 1898: 255.

than two years into the expedition, having been long cut off from France by British blockades and having had their hopes of a return home dashed, in large part, they believed, because of the split loyalties of their new commander. According to Moiret the army initially thought of Menou thus:

He was a renegade, they said, a man who had renounced his country in order to embrace the law of Mohammed and to place a turban on his head; is he then fit to command us? He has bound his fate and his affections to a woman of this country. Will he, then, contemplate abandoning his new family and returning to France where he would be despised? ... Will he not do everything he can to keep us in Egypt as supporters of his power and to be his companions in his voluntary exile? Such were the subjects of conversation, which if they were not free of prejudice, appeared to have some truth in them.¹²⁰

The prejudice that Menou was a renegade intent on detaining the army in Egypt for his own personal benefit eased over time as the soldiers came to appreciate his policies and method of leadership:

Although we had, at first, felt some prejudice against Gen. Menou as a result of his change of name and his affection for Egypt, we soon came to appreciate his excellent qualities, his orderliness and economy, his care for soldiers and his great knowledge of administration as well as his moral virtues. Understanding the human heart so well, he sought to lead us by persuasion rather than by the severity of his orders....¹²¹

Of particular interest is Moiret's account of Menou's approach to leadership: understanding the human heart, Menou tries to lead through persuasion. While here Moiret characterizes the general's policy toward the soldiers, the characterization mirrors the language that Menou used to describe his policy toward local people. In a letter written to Napoleon in the early months of the expedition, Menou explains his policy thus: "The inhabitants are becoming accustomed to us; *I employ as much as I can, vis-a-*

¹²⁰ Moiret 2001: 146

¹²¹ Ibid., 155.

vis them, the means of mildness and of persuasion, and they understand reason.”¹²² Here Menou articulates his basic principle about how one ought to found a colony: use mildness and persuasion with local inhabitants, reason with them. What colonial reformists had tried to imagine and prescribed decades earlier, Menou claimed that he was enacting. Of course, he acknowledged that the practicalities of ruling prevented mildness and persuasion at all times, but the realities of military occupation did not prevent him (and others on the expedition) from continually describing his policy in terms of mildness and persuasion, reasoning with the colonized.

Some members of the expedition acknowledged the significance of Menou’s ideas. The division commander Jean Reynier, for example, explained that “his change in religion was useful for improving the Egyptians with their consent.”¹²³ The key to improvement, and the aim of mildness and persuasion, was to effect change among the local populace with their consent. In other words, Menou hoped to establish the colony with the agreement of the local populace. This agreement among the local inhabitants constituted the basic principle of reformist colonial politics in earlier decades, functioning to provide an alternative to earlier European colonial practices that reformists had deemed illegitimate and unjust.

Upon assuming control of the army, Menou sought to institute a series of reforms which would fashion the colony according to his vision. Before he could do this, he had to overcome opposition among his fellow officers, some of whom disputed whether Egypt was even a colony at all. This question emerged well before Menou’s assumption

¹²² Jonquiere 1900: Vol. 3, p. 109.

¹²³ Rigault 1911: 212.

of supreme command and was evident in Menou's conflict with his predecessor Kleber. As noted above, Kleber took as his goal to return the Army of the Orient to France as quickly as possible. When informed that he had been placed in command after Napoleon absconded to France in the middle of the night (shortly after the disastrous campaign in Syria), Kleber reportedly snarled: "Friends that bugger has left us with his breeches full of shit. We'll go back to Europe and rub them in his face."¹²⁴ As Kleber negotiated capitulation to the British (and Ottomans), Menou wrote him letters detailing objections. Finally, Kleber responded:

I am profoundly convinced that, by means of that treaty, I had succeeded in putting a reasonable end to an insane enterprise. Even today I remain convinced that we shall receive no help from France and that we shall never... found any colonies in Egypt unless the cotton plants and palm trees should soon produce soldiers and bullets.... You, General, have you are face turned toward the East; mine is turned to the West. We shall never understand each other.¹²⁵

He further offered Menou the governorship of Cairo so long as he ceased trying to engage Kleber on questions of the political economy of colonies.¹²⁶ Kleber conceived of the enterprise in Egypt as a military occupation rather than a colony. This idea persisted among a number of officers after Kleber's assassination.¹²⁷ Such officers used the distinction to challenge Menou's authority in introducing reforms aimed at making Frenchmen and Egyptians subject to the same laws.¹²⁸ When Menou sought to make the French pay the same taxes as Egyptians, the 'Kleberists' protested, arguing that because Egypt was ruled as an occupation rather than a colony, it was illegitimate to subject the

¹²⁴ Herold 1962: 341.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 357.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 371

¹²⁷ Kleber was assassinated by a Syrian student who had been sent on the mission by Ottoman officials.

¹²⁸ Rigault 1911: 186.

French to the same laws.¹²⁹ The tax issue was part of a larger push to establish a kind of civil equality between French and Egyptian, which included standard customs for all, regulations for the production and sale of alcohol, and equal inheritance laws.¹³⁰ The objections offered by many French officers to these reforms demonstrate the intensity with which Menou pursued his colonial vision, as well as the obstacles within the army to any progress. As the army continued to wait for instructions and reinforcements from France, already low morale spilled over into outbursts of insubordination.

Despite the hostility within the army, Menou pressed on in trying to build a colony. In addition to reforming the tax system, establishing records for land ownership as well as for births and deaths, he reinstated the *Diwan* (which had been dissolved after Kleber signed the capitulation of El-Arish¹³¹) extending its powers to deal specifically with judicial matters.¹³² He also continued to employ the attractive powers of the *Institute* to appeal to local Egyptians. Hoping, as Napoleon had, to lure educated locals through the wonders of Western science, Menou ordered that the Institute's library hours be significantly expanded and that access be provided for their benefit. He also ordered that a new Arabic journal be created with the rather prosaic name *Tanbyeh* [Announcement] in order to "maintain the confidence and union which establishes itself more and more between the people and the French."¹³³ Here the aim was not merely to inform readers

¹²⁹ On the factional split in the army, see Desvernois 1898: 256.

¹³⁰ Amaury Faivre d'Arcier "L'application de la législation Française en Egypte" in *L'image de la Révolution Française: communications présentées lors du congrès mondial pour le bicentenaire de la révolution*, Vol 2 (Paris: Pergamon Press, 2005), 879.

¹³¹ Meant to permit the evacuation of French troops from Egypt but subsequently rejected by the British Admiral Lord Keith.

¹³² Darrell Dykstra, "The French occupation of Egypt, 1798-1801" in *The Cambridge history of Egypt*, Vol 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30. Jabarti incidentally would become a member of the *Diwan* when it was reinstated.

¹³³ *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 91.

about government doings, or provide them with instructive articles “on morals and the principles which should direct all good government,” but also about the latest developments in commerce and the sciences, thereby amplifying the French ability to attract locals with the means and products of enlightenment.¹³⁴

In discussions with a committee formed to investigate the possibility of establishing manufactures in Egypt, Menou wrote “one of the surest means to accelerate the splendor of a colony is to instruct the inhabitants by all means possible.” Even here Menou faced opposition from protectionists who noted that the “imitative genius of the Egyptians [would] harm the manufactures of France.”¹³⁵ Here unlike when it came to the balloon and other forms of French *techne*—where, as noted above, some French observers complained the Egyptians were not sufficiently curious and imitative—with manufacturing others worried that the Egyptians were *too* imitative and curious, and might challenge the metropole if they learned its trade secrets. Menou rejected their protectionism, responding to the committee that it ought “read with attention the sublime reflections that the abbé Raynal made on this subject.”¹³⁶ It would be difficult to establish a flourishing colony of the sort Menou envisioned without enabling local inhabitants to partake in the fruits of commerce, something that Raynal believed to be integral to a successful colony.¹³⁷

In his communications with the local populace Menou employed language much in the way that Bonaparte had, announcing for example “the French Republic and her first consul Bonaparte have ordered me to make you happy; I will not cease working to

¹³⁴ Rousseau 1900: 375.

¹³⁵ Rigault 1911: 170.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ See for example *HDI* 1783: 2.430.

execute their orders.” “My duty, and that of all the commanders and administrators,” he continued, “is to listen to you, give you aid and protection.” Such would remain the case so long, he added, wary of another revolt in Cairo, as “you behave well.”¹³⁸ He also went much further than Napoleon had in characterizing the political relationship between colonizer and colonized. He admonished his soldiers to act justly toward local peoples, composing his orders with what must have been for the soldiers a most preposterous claim: “please be generous towards the Egyptians: but what am I saying? *the Egyptians today are French*, they are your brothers.”¹³⁹ The claim that the Egyptians *were* French was not merely a flight of propagandistic fancy meant to inspire sympathy in the average French soldier; Menou appears to have actually convinced himself of this. In a letter to Poussielgue, he declared: “The French are the masters of Egypt and all the inhabitants are supposed to be French, there is thus no longer any plausible reason to differentiate between the French Egyptians [*Égyptiens français*] and the French born in France.”¹⁴⁰

For Menou’s critics in the army, his declaration of equivalence between French and Egyptian served as further proof of the suitability of his epithet among the soldiers: “Abdullah the Renegade.” To them, Menou’s attempts to enact a civil equality through political rhetoric and several legal innovations demonstrated that he aimed to elevate his wife’s countrymen and his ‘coreligionists’ above his fellow Frenchmen. For Menou however, making the Egyptian and Frenchman equivalent was the logical conclusion of his reformist ideas. He was not alone in calling for such an equivalence. Louis Desaix, who distinguished himself pursuing the remnants of the Mamluk army in upper Egypt,

¹³⁸ Rousseau 1900: 370-1.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 344.

¹⁴⁰ Yves Laissus, *L’Égypte, une aventure savante 1798-1801*, (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 351.

had argued that by giving Egyptians the rights and privileges of Frenchmen, "the people of Egypt then would be, if I could say it, incorporated into the French nation."¹⁴¹ Desaix was not around to support Menou in his endeavors: by the time Menou assumed command he had returned to Europe with Napoleon and died in battle in Piedmont. That Desaix had similar ideas about colonization is evident in the eulogy read at his memorial back in Egypt:

[H]e thought that we must respect all peoples, however one arrives on their territory. He pushed the Mamluks into the deserts and crags of Syenne: from that moment there was more than a conqueror in upper Egypt, and it would have been difficult to recognize if he was a conqueror, or if he was an old friend to whom the inhabitants gave an honorable hospitality.¹⁴²

For Menou the only way to establish a colony founded on mildness and persuasion (in the long term) was by subverting a traditional colonial hierarchy of colonizer and colonized. Menou imagined that he was doing just this. The traditional hierarchy would be replaced with the notion that through agreement and civil equivalence to the colonizer, the colonized could *become* the colonizer. The colonized would want and agree to the colony (perhaps retroactively) and the problem of illegitimacy of colonies that had so worried earlier reformists would evaporate.

Even as it became clear that the French would leave Egypt, Menou tried to maintain appearances, declaring to the *Diwan* some weeks before the French evacuation:

Take note that Egypt has definitely become a possession of France. You must convince yourself of this truth and believe in it with the absolute faith with which you believe in the unity of God.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Charles-Roux 1935: 294.

¹⁴² *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 88.

¹⁴³ Herold 1962: 374.

By this point however Menou knew that his claims about French jurisdiction over Egypt and the equivalence between French and Egyptian were not true nor would they come to be. Thus he wrote to Napoleon in France requesting that his son “Soleyman Mourad; [who] is equally a *sherif*” be granted French citizenship in the event that Menou perished while holding out against the British in Alexandria.¹⁴⁴

Menou survived the siege and ultimately signed an agreement of French evacuation. After some tussles with the British over the vast collection of artifacts assembled by the savants—the most prominent being the Rosetta Stone, which Menou unsuccessfully claimed as his personal property—he evacuated to Europe with his wife and son along with the rest of the army. Although Napoleon is reported to have been angry that Menou had ‘given up’ Egypt, he assigned him as governor of Venice, where he lived in “Asiatic luxury” until Napoleon, tired of his excessive spending and misbehavior, considered recalling him France.¹⁴⁵ Ultimately Menou perished from a fever in Venice and his son, Jacques-Soleiman-Mourad, inherited the title of count.

(4.2) A last ditch effort

While Menou was the most important administrator with affinities for earlier colonial reformism, he was not the last to be appointed by Napoleon to rule Egypt. Late in the expedition, Daniel Lescallier was directed to travel to Egypt where he would become the head civilian administrator of the colony. Lescallier began his career as a colonial administrator in Haiti in the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years War. He

¹⁴⁴ To First Consul (July 11, 1801). Rousseau 1900: 411.

¹⁴⁵ Rigault 1911: 389.

served throughout the Caribbean, including as director of French occupied Dutch Guyana as well as French Guyana itself. Having served as an administrator in the port of Toulon and eventually on the Council of State with Pierre Victor Malouet (the former administrator of Guyana cited by Raynal for exemplary use of emulation in a reformist scheme), Lescallier was an advocate of expanding France's colonial reach by using reformist strategies.

In the early 1790s, Lescallier was appointed the governor of Reunion and tasked with investigating the possibility of recolonizing Madagascar. Here he, like so many colonial reformists before him, attributed French failures to the ill treatment of locals by greedy and dishonest European adventurers. Considering this lesson, Lescallier suggested that local sexual *moeurs*, which he noted were best compared to those of Tahiti, could be used to establish consanguineous offspring who in turn would permit a colony founded on "the consent of the people."¹⁴⁶ Of course Maudave, and then Raynal in the *Histoire*, had articulated this vision. Lescallier went further, asserting that colonization in Madagascar would be easier than Raynal had suggested.¹⁴⁷ In comparing the sexual *moeurs* of Madagascar to those of Tahiti, Lescallier carefully explained that like Tahiti (as Bougainville and then especially Diderot had argued), the 'ease' of sexual *moeurs* should not be confused with libertinage but instead the following of "the natural impulsion of nature" which, again, could be put to use in founding a legitimate colony.¹⁴⁸ Upon completing his tenure in the Mascareignes, Lescallier returned to France where he directed the Bureau of Colonies until the invasion of Egypt, after which he was sent to

¹⁴⁶ "Mémoire relatif à l'isle de Madagascar, par le citoyen Lescallier (17 fructidor an 9)" in Jean Valette, *Lescallier et Madagascar*, (Tananarive: Imprimerie Nationale, 1966), 6, 17, 19.

¹⁴⁷ R. Griffiths. *The Monthly Review*, 40. (London 1803), 508.

¹⁴⁸ Valette 1966: 17.

establish a French colony on Corfu as part of the push to consolidate French control over the Near Eastern trade. It was to Lescallier, an avowed reformist who advocated similar colonial strategies to those advanced in the aftermath of the Seven Years War, that Napoleon turned in a last ditch effort to retain the colony in Egypt.¹⁴⁹ Bonaparte appointed Lescallier as the supreme civilian authority of Egypt in the waning months of the occupation, but the appointment came too late: Lescallier's ship was forced to return to Toulon upon learning that Egypt had fallen to British-Ottoman forces.

While the late appointment of Lescallier remains something of a footnote in the broader history of the expedition, it shows that the ideology of *ancien regime* colonial reformism did not die with the revolution, nor was it limited in Egypt to the eccentricities of General Menou and a handful of others. Instead Bonaparte's choice of Lescallier reveals that the ideas which reformists had articulated decades earlier about how to establish a legitimate colony, one founded on local popular opinion and established through the 'means of persuasion', would persist even at the end of the ill-fated French military occupation.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, I argued that French officials relied on pre-revolutionary colonial reformist ideas when conceptualizing their rule in Egypt. These reformist ideas emphasized the importance of 'mildness' and 'persuasion' in ruling subject populations. Officials in Egypt also mobilized and adapted reformist strategies for capturing local

¹⁴⁹ M.C. Mullié, *Biographie des Célébrités Militaires des Armées de Terre et du Mer, de 1789 a 1830, Tome Second* (Paris 1852), 215-6.

opinion. Even as the realities of a large-scale military occupation over a (primarily) hostile population became evident, many French officials continued to cling to language and strategies rooted in colonial reformism. I suggested that the French understood their project in Egypt, not merely as the result of revolutionary expansionism but instead in relation to a more extensive history of French colonization. While I have emphasized the importance of reformism, which I argued has been mostly overlooked by recent scholars, I also acknowledged the language of revolution present in French propaganda and elsewhere. Indeed, in many respects revolutionary ideology, which included notions of overthrowing tyranny and including the people in the ruling process, was complimented by the ideas of colonial reformism. Where revolutionary republicanism lacked an articulated vision of how to legitimately rule over such different peoples, reformism provided a model that claimed to extend popular participation, avoid tyranny, and alter local modes of life without coercion among radically different peoples. Indeed by trying to obscure the differences between colonizer and colonized (e.g. French claims to be Muslims) the aim was to construct a hybrid identity in which rule of other would be transformed into rule of self. As I suggested in previous chapters, this is precisely what earlier generations of reformists hoped to do in imagining a colony founded not on the kinds of usurpations so prevalent in European colonial history, but instead on local participation and agreement. Thus with reformist resources, French officials could imagine building a legitimate colony in Egypt and employ a seemingly coherent vision of rule.

While ruling, the French tried to transform Egypt though what they took to be local institutions. Most prominent was the *Diwan*, which was meant to translate French

policies to locals as well as local appeals to French authorities through the medium of the *ulama*. Rather than conceiving of the *Diwan* as a means to rule through proxy or to conserve local modes of living—which, Karuna Mantena has argued, signaled the failure of liberal transformational projects in the British empire during the nineteenth century—the French believed that this institution could instead help introduce locals incrementally to the notion of representation in government.¹⁵⁰ Here the function of ‘proxies’ was to soften the force of transformation rather than preserving (i.e. codifying) cultural difference after the fashion of, for example, Lugard’s *Dual Mandate*.¹⁵¹ I shall return to this distinction in my concluding chapter.

The next chapter explores in detail critical local Egyptian reactions to the ideas and policies of the French. The outlines should already be clear: local peoples were ultimately unconvinced. There was often a transparent incongruity in French conduct and rhetoric, one evident (and at times remarked upon) even in personal letters where there was no native audience to convince. Of course, the French themselves needed to be convinced that they were not replicating the kinds of tyranny they had meant to expunge or that they were not unjust occupiers trying to transform an unwilling and resistant population. To acknowledge such evidence would have been to recognize the fundamental illegitimacy and failure of the project itself.

The sheer cynicism of French behavior (e.g. the Islamic policy) leads to the question of whether there was something in the nature of the material position of the

¹⁵⁰ Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton University Press, 2010). Napoleon wrote that the idea was to accustom “the notables of Egypt to the ideas of assemblies and of government” and that the invasion had ushered in an era of “representative government” in Egypt. (Herold 1962: 179 and Cole 2007: 160)

¹⁵¹ Lugard *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: Archon Books 1965), 228.

army which required a reliance on ‘persuasion’ rather than, for instance, just acknowledging that the Egyptians were conquered peoples who should therefore submit to rule. One contemporary Arab observer, who we shall consider in the next chapter, made sense of French conduct in these terms, *viz.* that because of the weakness of the army, the French needed to extensively deploy the tools of persuasion. A recent scholar has made a similar point in arguing that Bonaparte’s Islam policy was unplanned and more a response to ongoing local resistance than a coherent project.¹⁵² While there were obvious strategic benefits to winning over the occupied, the idea of ruling through persuasion certainly existed even before the French landed: Bonaparte’s first proclamation, which claimed the French were true Muslims, was composed at sea. To suggest that a policy (or discourse) of persuasion was merely the result of weakness or in response to local resistance, however, is to overlook the importance of legitimacy in the French narrative. What the rule through persuasion model offered was an explanation as to how the French were different from the earlier invaders of the Americas, whom everyone seemed to agree were brutal and illegitimate tyrants.

¹⁵² Jasanoff 2006: 138.

CHAPTER 5

The Failure of Reformism: The Locals Reply

But the Egyptians did not have a tranquil spirit: “all that is nothing more than a ruse and deception,” they said, “it is done to possess us.”

Niqula al-Turk

For God has created nothing sweeter to the taste than justice, and nothing more soothing to the heart than equity.

‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti

Among the more troubling aspects of the empire by persuasion model is the cheerful presumption held by many French reformists that locals could simply be convinced to surrender their political autonomy in one form or another. That this would be accomplished, in part, by obscuring French aims through commerce, appeals to *eros*, or presentations of learning seems as pernicious as it does naïve. More often than not, there was little space for local peoples to respond to such attempts beyond the problematic ventriloquizing of the sort appearing in Diderot’s *Supplement* and the *Histoire*’s speech of the Hottentot.¹ While often acting as criticisms of historical European colonization efforts, these characters repeated European concerns rather than providing any true understanding of the attitudes of indigenous colonial subjects. Put differently, they constitute a colonizer’s view of the problems of colonization. If an empire by persuasion were possible, it would be necessary to understand to what extent

¹ See Chapter 1 for more on this problem.

local peoples could be convinced to adopt colonial rule. The previous chapter explored how French officials in Egypt constructed a narrative about local support for the occupation. This chapter considers what local observers actually thought.

Several local authors recorded their reactions to the French invasion and thus provide us with a unique opportunity to glimpse local sentiments. More felicitous still, these authors were particularly interested in policies bearing the mark of French colonial reformism. Here, albeit through a series of translations—from French theory to French practice to Egyptian experience to Egyptian theory—we can begin to understand what one prominent group of locals made of the empire by persuasion model. Such observations do more than provide a more complete story of French reformist ideology, they also identify some of the ideology's basic flaws.

The responses suggest that while some French tactics could appeal to local notables, a gap usually persisted between appealing, for example, to a local's interest in Western learning and actually convincing him² to collaborate actively with the occupiers. This gap was a conceptual problem endemic to colonial reformism and was present in Raynal's work. While Raynal and his circle constructed their vision of empire during the 1770s by drawing on historical precedents, reformists would have to wait decades until the Egyptian expedition to have an opportunity to implement their ideas on a grand scale. Here the ideas would be applied in the midst of a military occupation. Moreover, tactics that had been praised in the context of mostly small-scale, rural, and undeveloped potential colonies (Guyana, Madagascar, West Africa) were mobilized among a large urban population with complex political structures. This then was the first time that

² In this story, it is a him.

reformists were confronted with the need to establish an intricate administrative regime, which in turn required significant local participation beyond the kinds of commodity exchange relationships envisioned by earlier reformists. It required consistent local participation in the processes of ruling such as tax collection, the administration of justice, and the keeping of public order. This ongoing participation implied a deepening and broadening of the locals' commitment to the colonial relationship as it required that locals move beyond merely producing commodities for export to helping maintain a functioning bureaucratic apparatus. Furthermore, because Egypt's population was concentrated in urban areas (often at key transit points along the Nile), the French needed to win over locals just to gain a foothold in the country and this had to be accomplished *before* any cultivation of commodities could take place. Thus luring locals through trading relationships would have to wait. Instead the French needed to convince Egyptians that this massively intrusive force of foreigners could provide the benefits of governance that had been missing under the Mamluks. While the reformists assumed that presentations of technology would help win over locals, the local authors reveal that it was just as possible to be attracted to such presentations and reject collaboration.

The local authors' reactions reveal another basic flaw in the reformist model: the presumption that what persuades one audience will persuade another. The best example here is in presentations of learning. In some cases (e.g. the balloon exhibitions), locals like al-Jabarti, who otherwise were taken with French *techne*, reacted with suspicion rather than admiration or wonder. Such suspicion ultimately undermined French efforts as it left viewers with the impression that the invaders meant to trick the populace. Tricking locals to accept a colonial relationship was fundamentally at odds with the *spirit*

of French reformism in that the whole aim was to bring subjects to want and agree to become subjects. The implication was that it was possible to convince local people to desire such a relationship and it seems unlikely (even if Raynal et al. advocated tactics that obscured the colonists' aims) that the reformists would have accepted the legitimacy of trickery. Instead, as such ideas were never extensively tested the reformists could proceed under the impression that tactics such as presenting learning could smoothly integrate with the establishment of rule without having to articulate how this would work institutionally.

To tell this story, I rely primarily on the work of three authors writing in Arabic. Most important is the celebrated historian 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti. Jabarti was a member of the elite who inherited an administrative position at al-Azhar in Cairo.³ Family wealth allowed him the freedom to pursue a life of letters and he wrote three different histories dealing with the French invasion.⁴ He began his first history (the *Muddat*) early in the occupation in 1798; his second history (*Mazhar*) came in 1801, immediately after the Ottomans and British expelled the French; the third history (*'Aja'ib*) appeared around 1804-5. Much has been written about the differences among the three works but for the purposes of this chapter, I primarily use his third history (*'Aja'ib*) with a few references to the first. I exclude his second history because it lacks the evenhanded treatment of the French that appears in his other histories. Scholars agree that Jabarti authored the second history to attract the good will of the Ottomans and to

³ The Azhar functioned as the center of Islamic learning in Egypt. On Jabarti's position at al-Azhar see Jan Hathaway *Al-Jabarti's History of Egypt* (Princeton, NJ : Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009): xix.

⁴ [1] *Tarikh muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr: Muḥarram - Rajab 1213 A.H., 15 Yūnyū - Dīsambr 1798 A.D.* (Lidan: Brill, 1975). [2] *Maḥzar al-taqdīs bi-zawāl dawlat al-Faransīs, al-Ṭab'ah 1.* (al-Qāhirah: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 1998). [3] *'Aja'ib al-Athar fi 'l-Tarajim wa'l-Akhbar* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994).

clear himself of suspicions of collaboration (he had collaborated).⁵ I primarily rely on his third history because here Jabarti had lost faith in Ottoman rule and was more willing to explain the benefits (along with the disasters) of French rule. This greater neutrality allows us to gauge his more complex reactions to French persuasion attempts. Jabarti is central to the chapter because he offers a critique of French imperial practices but goes even further to set out an alternative theory of political persuasion.

The other authors dealt with here offer no alternative theory of rule but instead reinforce and add diversity to Jabarti's critique of French conduct and, more specifically, the empire by persuasion model. Niqula al-Turk, was a Christian of Greek origin who had been sent to Damietta by the emir of Lebanon to spy on the French. There he acted as a translator for the occupiers and recorded his observations.⁶ His account provides a relatively detached narrative of local reaction. As an outsider able to communicate with both the invaders and locals, he provides a more comprehensive picture of local sentiment as, unlike our Egyptian authors, he had no need to fear close association with the occupiers and could thus record local reaction as he saw fit. This can help us test some of Jabarti's reactions against an alternative voice.

The third author used in the chapter is Hasan al-'Attar, who was a friend of Jabarti's and may have contributed to Jabarti's second history.⁷ 'Attar wrote an intensely

⁵ On variations among Jabarti's histories see: Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid Marsot "A Comparative Study of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarit and Niqula al-Turk" in *Eighteenth Century Egypt: The Arabic Manuscript Sources*, ed. Daniel Creelius (Claremont, CA: Regina Books 1990): 116-7; Jack A Crabbs, *The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: A Study in National Transformation* (Wayne State University Press, 1984), 45-8; Lars Bjørneboe, *In Search of the True Political Position of the 'Ulama: An Analysis of the Aims and Perspectives of the Chronicles of Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1753-1825)* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2007), 205-215 and 242-261.

⁶ Nicolas Turk *Chronique d'Egypte 1798-1804* (Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institute Francais d'Archeologie Oriental, 1950). For background on Turk see Marsot 1990: 115.

⁷ Crabbs 1984: 45

personal account of his experience of being lured by French learning and would ultimately become the head of the Azhar under the modernizing ruler Mohammad Ali in the 1830s. ‘Attar is of interest today not only as an eloquent witness to the persuasions of empire but also as the energetic modernizing teacher of Rifa’al-Tahtawi (who traveled in the first delegation of Egyptian students to France and is considered one of the founding thinkers of Islamic modernism).⁸

The chapter begins by charting local accounts of French governance broadly speaking (section 1). It considers Jabarti and Turk’s responses to French propaganda about the origins of the French Republic and then describes both authors’ treatments of French governance in Egypt. Their ambivalence toward French governance and rejection of the French republican narrative sets the stage for section 2, which explains local reactions to the empire by persuasion model as embodied in specific French policies and propaganda. Section 2 explains local suspicions about French ‘mildness’ in rule before focusing on critical reaction to particular tactics that were meant to ensnare locals in a colonial relationship. Here several problems in the French approach become apparent, including the difficulty of predicting what will attract (potential) subjects across community boundaries and the gap between French tactics and co-opting locals into French rule. Finally, section 3 describes Jabarti’s counter-theory of persuasion, which posits that the way to persuade subjects is through just conduct rather than trickery. This counter-theory stands as a powerful rebuke against the French model even if it suffers from its own internal inconsistencies.

⁸ Albert Hourani *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Oxford University Press, 1970), 69-71; Roxanne Euben *Journeys to the Other Shore* (Princeton University Press, 2006), Ch. 4.

(1) French Governance

(1.1) Origins of the *masheikhat al-fransawiyya*: Turk and Jabarti on the French Republic

In the previous chapter, I noted that scholars have often overemphasized the importance of republicanism when explaining French policy in Egypt. That said, the French hoped they could use their revolutionary narrative in winning over local Egyptians. This section explores Turk and Jabarti's critical engagements with this narrative and the extent to which it failed to win over educated Arab observers.

Turk attends closely to the origins of the disorders in France and the birth of the Republic. This is partially due to form, *viz.* he narrates history, explaining the Egyptian expedition as the culmination of French territorial expansion in Europe. His readiness to relay French explanations of their political system, while useful for his patron in Lebanon,⁹ also demonstrates his willingness to accept the justice claims advanced by the republicans. He narrates their claims as follows: the French people attributed the “horrid disasters” which afflicted France to “the absolute power of the king.” The people also argued that the king, princes, and nobility enjoyed all goods while the rest of the population lived in humiliation and contempt.¹⁰ For this reason, the people rebelled

⁹ Amir Bashir Shihab in Lebanon was obviously concerned with French government in Egypt and his worries about a French threat would be confirmed by Napoleon's failed expedition to the Levant.

¹⁰ Using the terms: king (*malik*), princes (*amara*) and nobility (*ashraf*). Niqūlā ibn Yūsuf al-Turk, *Mudhakkirāt Niqūlā Turk / Chronique d'Égypte, 1798-1804*, ed. et trad. par Gaston Wiet (Cairo: Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1950), 3. My citations primarily come from Wiet's translation but, where relevant, I cite from the original Arabic text which constitutes the other half of the work. Below I will cite 'al-Turk 1950' to refer to the Arabic portion of the text.

against the “present order”¹¹ demanding that the king give neither order nor make a decision alone, but only with the approval of popular representatives (*mashaykh al-sha‘ab*). The representatives are described as sheikhs of the people, a term which would eventually come to translate as ‘senator.’ The king, in face of the people’s vehement demands, relented out of fear, claiming that he too sought the wellbeing of the country. The people in turn expressed their jubilation. Thus far, the narrative describes the destitution of the people and the decline of France as cause of the people’s revolt, while indicating a kind of negotiation between king and populace culminating with the establishment of popular representation. Turk’s reader is allowed the impression that the popular revolt, and the system itself, had its origins in a desire for justice.

From this point Turk’s account turns increasingly negative. The popular representatives push the king further, demanding the complete abolition of the monarchy. The king attempts to flee and gain succor from Austria, is brought back in contempt to Paris where he is executed with his wife and children. While this day became one of commemoration for the French (they celebrated it in Egypt), it also led to the country’s ruin in Turk’s estimation. He describes how the French overturned basic conventions such as the calendar (“contrary to practice”), how the revolutionaries attacked the Church, and how the country abounded in violent insurrections. Here Turk reports the true result of the king’s overthrow: chaos and ruin.¹² For all the French claims about the benefits of overthrowing tyrants, Turk concludes that the revolution produced mostly devastation. He continues, describing how that devastation expanded beyond the borders

¹¹ Al-Turk 1950: 3, “*al-tarteeb al-mujud*”

¹² Wiet 1950: 5. Turk was a Catholic and therefore most likely found attacks on the Church outrageous.

of France as the French army came to threaten monarchs throughout Europe while pillaging Venice and Rome.¹³ According to Turk, the one noteworthy benefit of this fighting and disorder was that it allowed Bonaparte, a man with “exceptional bravery, always happy in combat,” to become a military hero. The only positive result of the revolution seemed to be the rise of the powerful military man who would invade Egypt.

It would be too hasty to extrapolate from this that Turk approved of Bonaparte’s invasion: he did not. As several scholars have pointed out, Turk relied on elite patronage and, as a rule, tended to express his admiration for the powerful.¹⁴ For this reason, he could find among the negative results of the revolution a positive consequence in the emergence of a great military man. Such an emergence, combined with the original domestic justice claims of the French people, did little to convince him of the validity of French principles or their narrative about coming to Egypt to overthrow local tyrants.

While Turk acknowledged the people’s justice claims in describing the origins of the revolution, Jabarti is interested in its origins only insofar as they help his readers understand the principles of republicanism as made manifest in Bonaparte’s first proclamation. For the Muslim historian, the tumult in France began as a mob rebellion that culminated in the execution of the French king.¹⁵ There was little need to elaborate on the justice claims of the French populace because this was not required to comprehend the French system.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴ Marsot 1990: 118, 112; Crabbs 1984: 59-60.

¹⁵ ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī, *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabartī’s Chronicle of the French Occupation of Egypt, 1798* (Princeton: M. Wiener Publ, 1993), 28. I shall return to Jabarti’s attitude toward the mob below.

Jabarti's account of the French Revolution only appears in his first history (the *Muddat*), which was written during the occupation. References to the revolution disappeared from the histories he wrote after their departure. Any fear that someone within his audience might find French principles attractive would, of course, have been most evident during the occupation. Thus in explaining the principles enunciated in Bonaparte's first proclamation, Jabarti was keen to set out the (negative) practical results of French ideas. He warned anyone who might be drawn to French ideas by connecting French rhetoric about liberty and equality with their bizarre and outrageous customs. Jabarti found evidence for their ideas about governance in the army where the French "appoint persons chosen by them," including officers and administrators, "on the condition that they were all to be equal and none superior to any other in view of the equality of creation and nature. They made this the foundation of their system."¹⁶ The notion that all were equal through "creation and nature" meant to signify the underlying French principle of natural rights rather than Jabarti's approval. Indeed he goes on to attack the idea both in theory and practice:

They follow this rule: great and small, high and low, male and female are all equal. Sometimes they break this rule according to their whims and inclinations or reasoning. Their women do not veil themselves and have no modesty....¹⁷

The French overturn natural hierarchies. The way they apply the principle itself is even more blameworthy, in that they are hypocrites using reasoning to justify not abiding by their own basic principles. Jabarti's audience is meant to associate this reasoning process with the French's materialist philosophy and, therefore, their irreligion (these related

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 28-9.

themes appear regularly in his analysis of the proclamation). More powerful still, are the consequences of their principle: it has led them to overturn the order between genders, which in turn has enabled women to “not care whether they uncover their private parts” and has produced a general lasciviousness among both genders.

He further connects French ideas about liberty and equality to the appalling lack of hygiene among the invaders as evidenced in their willingness “to perform the act of nature” wherever it strikes a Frenchman, “even in full view of people.”¹⁸ Jabarti’s scatology aims to deflect even the slightest appeal of French ideas by showing their practical consequences in the basest form. With French principles—forgetting even their inconsistent application—the world turns upside-down: the private becomes public; the vulgar is elevated.

Turk and Jabarti’s accounts of the French Revolution demonstrate how little traction the revolutionary narrative had with elite local observers at the outset of the occupation. The more sympathetic Turk saw the republic as the result of an attempt to gain justice that went out of control, whose results despoiled France and much of Europe. The only benefit to all this was that it allowed for the emergence of a great military figure in Bonaparte. Jabarti targets French notions of liberty and equality, suggesting to his readers that the abhorrent social practices of the French derived from their leveling of the social order. The revolutionary narrative won over neither historian.

¹⁸ Ibid.

(1.2) Jabarti (and Turk) on French Government in Egypt

If both observers were ultimately clear in rejecting the French revolutionary account, they were more ambivalent in their treatments of French governance in Egypt. Of particular interest here are Jabarti's varied remarks as a sometime collaborator and critic who observed the workings of French government from Cairo, the center of the occupation. Particularly after the departure of the French and having had time to reflect on what he took to be the disappointing conduct of the Ottoman authorities, Jabarti provides a relatively even-handed analysis of the injuries and benefits of French government in Egypt. Before considering Jabarti, 'Attar, and Turk's critical engagements with French attempts to establish rule specifically through persuasion, this section considers Jabarti's (and to lesser extent Turk's) treatment of French policy and government more broadly. By understanding their ambivalence toward French governance broadly speaking—including the extent to which they were won over—we will be better prepared to understand their specific engagements with French tactics of persuasion.

As the previous section demonstrated, Jabarti was particularly concerned with the practical consequences of French notions of liberty and equality. As a member of the elite, he was disturbed by the French disregard for traditional hierarchies and basic customs of public behavior. Among the many problems associated with French rule, both Jabarti and Turk noted the leveling nature of the occupier's policies. Turk summarizes:

Basically, the French occupation ameliorated the situation of the low classes, the vendors, porters, artisans, donkey drivers, groomsmen, procurers, prostitutes: in sum the dregs of the population were well off, because they profited from the liberty. But the elite and the middle-class

encountered vexations of all sorts, because imports and exports were suspended.¹⁹

Jabarti also expresses contempt for the lower classes early in his narrative. He characterizes them as a mob and rabble, mocking their efforts in response to the approaching French army.²⁰ Once the French had taken Cairo he noted the disturbing way in which the French supported popular and, in his opinion, corrupt religious practices, which the occupiers used to divert the populace from the true religious path. He records one festival thus:

the French permitted this to the people since they saw in it a transgression of Islamic law, public gathering of women, pursuit of carnal desires, diversion, and the committing of sins.²¹

Thus the French empowered the lower classes in the realm of religion by supporting popular heretical religious practices such as celebrating saints whom Jabarti considered charlatans. The message here is that the French encouraged the masses to move away from religious orthodoxy, while the implicit idea is that in so doing, the masses were straying from the (legitimate) guidance of the *ulama*.

Unfortunately, no accounts written by lower class Egyptians detailing their thoughts on French policies exist in the historical record. It would be particularly interesting to know whether members of the ‘rabble,’ who Jabarti and Turk agreed were beneficiaries of French policies, would have agreed with the elite historians’

¹⁹ Wiet 1950: 45.

²⁰ In the preparations, he notes, “the masses, the rabble, the mob made a great noise and raised their voices. . . as if they were fighting and doing battle with their screaming and clamoring. [The more intelligent people] pointed out to the mob that the Prophet and his companions and warriors used to fight with the sword, the lance and deadly strokes, not by raising their voices, shouting, and barking.” ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti’s History of Egypt / ‘Aja’ib al-Athar fi ‘l-Tarajim wa’l-Akhbar* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994), 13.

²¹ Jabarti 1994: 128

characterization.²² The absence of lower class voices means that any story about local reactions must necessarily be incomplete, as large portions of the population—indeed those who local elite observers claimed were the greatest ‘beneficiaries’ of the occupier’s policies—are unable to directly reveal their attitudes. In light of the silence of the lower classes and the testimony of elites like Jabarti and Turk, one modern historian has concluded, seemingly without irony, “the entire population, excepting the marginalized, regarded the occupation as a disaster.”²³ While in many ways this claim is accurate, it is necessary to acknowledge the important implications of “excepting the marginalized” for trying to paint a complete picture of local reaction.

For Jabarti, more alarming than even the elevation of the lower classes was the way in which the French disturbed the hierarchy between Muslims and Coptic Christians. The French found willing collaborators among local Copts, giving Christians authority to collect taxes from Muslims. This practice quickly resulted in widespread abuse, as Christian tax collectors (along with French soldiers) came to “attack houses, and drag people away of all classes – including even women.” In this Jabarti saw a dangerous example of the subversion of hierarchy as the *dhimmi*s (traditionally protected religious minorities) assaulted the majority population:

The Copts and Syrian Christians became insolent toward the Muslims, cursing and beating them. They slandered them and showed their hatred of them, leaving no place for peace. They announced the end of the Muslim community and of those believing in one God.²⁴

²² It should be noted that Turk and Jabarti were focused on the urban rather than rural poor, the latter, being tied to land, were especially susceptible to French taxation.

²³ Afaf Lufti al-Sayyid Marsot "Social Political Changes after the French Occupation" in *Napoleon in Egypt*, ed. Irene Bierman (Ithaca, 2003), 102.

²⁴ Jabarti 1994: 169.

Of course, Copts had served previous Muslim rulers as well often working as scribes and professional administrators. According to Jabarti however, the French elevated them beyond precedent, a decision that threatened the destruction of the Muslim community itself. Indeed, the historian reports that in face of French policy and the abuse of the tax collectors, “the people were severely oppressed. They wished for death but could not find it.”²⁵

In the same vein, Jabarti describes the first council of local authorities established by the French in exceedingly negative terms: “In the form of this *Diwan* the French established a basis for malice, a foundation for godlessness, a bulwark of injustice, and a source of all manner of evil innovations.”²⁶ He offered this characterization in his first history, in part, because Bonaparte initially allowed Copts an unwarranted place on the council, and further because he saw the council itself as a means to facilitate rapacious French tax policies. What he would not report, even in his third history (the *‘Aja’ib*),²⁷ was that he participated on the later *Diwan* established under Menou. This *Diwan* excluded Coptic participation.

Jabarti recounts a variety of other French abuses. One case details an oil merchant whose customer reported to the French that he had been purposely hoarding supplies so as to weaken the occupiers. French authorities summoned and detained the merchant with his son, and “the very next day, the son was put to death along with four others whose crime was unknown.” Jabarti somberly concludes, “They vanished like the passing

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jabarti 1993: 67.

²⁷ This was written after he had become disappointed with Ottoman rule.

day.”²⁸ In another example, he reports French brutality in suppressing the first Cairo revolt. Here he describes the French soldiers who after bombarding entire neighborhoods with heavy cannon fire, rushed into the quarter “just as if they were devils or Satan’s troops.”²⁹ He describes the horrific scene that then unfolded at the Azhar where the rebels had established themselves:

[The French] created havoc....They plundered all possessions they found....They threw...copies of the Koran as refuse on the ground, trampling on them with their feet and shoes. They defecated and pissed on them and blew their noses on them. They drank wine.... They ripped off the clothes of everybody they encountered there.³⁰

The frenzied desecration of the Azhar and the extrajudicial killing of the oil merchant’s son are merely two examples of French abuses visited upon the local population. Such examples, combined the Jabarti’s frequent maledictions against the French, can easily leave the reader with the impression that Jabarti considered French government to be solely destructive in Egypt.

His assessments are more complex however, as he also praises French administrators and policies. Thus he reports the installation of an unnamed French official in the district around the Husayni Shrine as a positive development. The official

showed friendship for the Muslims and treated them with kindness. He frequented the houses of the neighbors, accepted pleas for intercession, and exalted the *faqih*s³¹ highly, and honored them; he abolished the stationing of armed soldiers which was their custom in other districts. Likewise he prevented the police from oppressing the people in various ways.³²

²⁸ Jabarti 1994: 220.

²⁹ Ibid., 42.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ A *faqih* is an expert in Islamic jurisprudence.

³² Jabarti 1994: 64

Such comments were not limited to local functionaries. In one incident, Jabarti describes Bonaparte as particularly concerned with establishing justice in punishing (private) crimes committed by Frenchmen against the local population. Here “a gang” of soldiers reportedly broke into and robbed the house of local sheikh. At the time Bonaparte was outside Cairo, but upon learning about the incident at his return, he “was distressed and showed anger and rebuke for whoever did this deed.” Jabarti provides his readers with a sense of the commander’s justice observing that the general’s anger derived from “the disgrace affecting him.”³³ Bonaparte resolved the crime by going to “great length to investigate who did this and execute him.”³⁴

Turk also praises individual French administrators whom he took to be competent and just functionaries. Echoing French propaganda, he celebrated the estimable qualities of General Desaix (who was sent to track down the remnants of the Mamluk army and to act as governor of Upper Egypt). According to Turk, Desaix acted “with an intelligence, administrative sense, finesse, courage, zeal and an admirable magnanimity, so well that upper Egypt was better governed than the Delta.”³⁵

Jabarti also applauds specific French policies. He approves of French moves to prevent grain price spikes, including by rebuking and intimidating traders who hoarded. Here, he exclaims, “but for divine grace a great rise in prices would have occurred,” associating the occupier’s actions with divine intervention. Elsewhere he explains French efforts to prevent the spread of plague and criticizes local resistance to these measures. The resistance, he points out, was the product of ignorance and misplaced suspicion as

³³ Ibid., 61.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Wiet 1950: 48 (cf. *Courier d’Égypte*, 88).

locals' "imagination[s] led them to fantastic conclusions." Many locals took the requirement that they lay out all clothing outside as a ploy to "discover the location of people and their belongings" rather than what Jabarti characterized as French "fear of putridity and pestilence."³⁶

More noteworthy still are Jabarti's favorable comparisons of French to Ottoman policies. These comparisons show that he found some French policies attractive. The comparisons appear in his third history (*'Aja'ib*), which was written after the Ottomans attempted to reestablish their authority over Egypt. Commentators have suggested that by then Jabarti was disappointed with Ottoman conduct and his comparisons to the French originated in this disillusionment.³⁷ This began even before the French departed, when the Ottoman army tried to evict the French from Cairo in March 1800 (the French would defeat the Ottoman expedition and remain for more than a year after this). Jabarti describes Ottoman military conduct thus:

the Ottoman soldiers did such great harm to the people, snatching away anything they found in their possession, that the people wished for their disappearance and the return of the French to the position they had previously held.³⁸

Similar sentiments appear even after the Ottomans established themselves in Egypt. As the Ottomans restored tax collection, Jabarti notes that the French had "preferred a more proper way" than the Mamluks (and by association the Ottomans) in collecting taxes from peasants and other farmers.³⁹

³⁶ Jabarti 1994: 126.

³⁷ Marsot 2003: 99 and Bjørneboe 2007: 269.

³⁸ Jabarti 1994: 158.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 298.

Jabarti provides the most striking comparison between the French and Ottomans in recounting the trial of Kleber's assassin. The significance of the trial—which aimed to investigate and punish the “reckless stranger [who] treacherously attacked their leader and chief”—is evident from the sizable space that the historian devotes to it.⁴⁰ Jabarti includes all of the trial transcripts he could obtain, including records of interrogations, witness depositions, and other reports. He was particularly interested in the fact that the French, despite having found “the deadly weapon spattered with the blood of their commander and leader” on the assassin, did not “proceed to kill either him or those named by him, on the mere basis of his confession.”⁴¹ This impressed Jabarti deeply and he describes the court procedures instituted by French. Such procedures enabled one individual who had been caught up in the aftermath of the attack to be released.

Concluding his description of the events, Jabarti proclaims in reference to the Ottomans:

This is quite different from what we saw later of the deeds of the riff-raff of soldiers claiming to be Muslims and fighters of Holy War who killed people and destroyed human lives merely to satisfy their animal passions.
42

The French are superior to the Ottomans in their approach to criminal justice and their restraint toward the people. Yet the criticism appears shortly after Jabarti describes documents associated with the trial as “indicative of the legal investigation and court procedure of the French who hold reason supreme, and do not profess any religion.”⁴³

The world seems to be upside down: the unbelieving philosophers have more justice than

⁴⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 181.

the ‘Muslims.’⁴⁴ Here he is primarily concerned with demonstrating precisely how unjust the Ottomans had been, rather than advocating for the exclusive reliance on reason as a means to achieve justice. That said, the thoroughness with which Jabarti treats the proceedings indicates he was interested in more than just rebuking the Ottomans for their conduct. One commentator has observed that Jabarti’s praise of French criminal justice indicates that he was considering the possibility that the French might have been just rulers and (had they been willing) effective enforcers of the *sharia*.⁴⁵ In section three below, I shall devote more attention to this argument; what is certainly clear from Jabarti’s treatment of French procedural justice is his willingness to acknowledge the admirable elements of French policy during the occupation.

By acknowledging his admiration for French judicial procedures, Jabarti reveals an ambivalence in his account of the occupation, particularly when considered in light of the Ottoman restoration. While heaping execrations on the French for their lack of religion, injustice in tax collection, subversion of legitimate traditional hierarchies, and other forms of abuse, he also acknowledges examples of justice from among their policies, administrators, and procedures. In this, he is certainly a more effective historian, offering a more comprehensive picture of events so as to better fulfill his aim of providing a means to “discover the lessons to be gained from these events.”⁴⁶ A reader can learn both from French injustices as well as their estimable policies. In acknowledging the justice of some French practices, Jabarti also is a witness to what

⁴⁴ Around the turn of the twentieth century the prominent modernist Muhammad ‘Abduh would express sentiments akin to this: “I went to the West and saw Islam, but no Muslims; I got back to the East and saw Muslims, but no Islam.”

⁴⁵ Bjørneboe 2007: 269.

⁴⁶ Jabarti 1994: 2.

much later would be described as the fundamental ambivalence felt (especially) by the local elite in a colonial relationship: both the repulsion and attraction of the occupying power.⁴⁷ His even-handed historical treatment of French policy is thus a meta-commentary on the complexities of how empire is lived by some of its subjects. It also helps us begin to understand how it was that Jabarti and others could recognize and critique French tactics of persuasion while also, at times, being susceptible to their influence.

(2) Making Sense of Empire by Persuasion

Given French brutality in Egypt, it is perhaps surprising that local authors would carefully attend to the occupier's 'friendliness,' 'mildness,' and various attempts at winning over the local people. This is precisely what Jabarti, Turk, and 'Attar did, each reflecting on French policies aimed at enacting what I described in previous chapters as empire by persuasion. The authors range from Turk's relatively detached outsider's account to 'Attar's intensely personal confession about his experiences at the *Institute*, but each deals directly with French attempts at persuasion. They offer a unique and early glimpse of how the (to be) colonized understood and critiqued French reformist ideology as it came to be implemented in Egypt. Such critiques move beyond merely (and obviously) providing evidence for the 'agency' of the colonized or helping us understand the texture of local ambivalence, they provide a varied account of the promises and pitfalls of the ideology itself. The local authors understood what the French were trying to do, and such an understanding provides the starting point for what Jabarti would later

⁴⁷ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 120-1.

offer: an alternative vision for how a ruler ought to persuade the ruled. In section 3, I shall explain Jabarti's alternative model of persuasion. First, however, it is necessary to examine what local observers made of French attempts at persuasion, and thus what they made of the empire by persuasion model as enacted by the occupying force. Section 2 begins with Turk and Jabarti's explanations of French conduct, and what they generally made of French 'friendliness' and attempts to win over locals (2.1). For Turk, such attempts were born of weakness rather than humanitarian concerns. Jabarti advances a similar account in places but more often describes French conduct as an attempt to trick locals. I suggest that Jabarti's emphasis on trickery is meant to distinguish immoral persuasion (as manifest in French propaganda) from his own vision of morally legitimate persuasion (section 3). Next, the section explores locals' critical engagements with other tactics of persuasion such as mobilizing Islam and *techne* to appeal to the populace (2.2). Here Jabarti and 'Attar become particularly useful as they identify several basic problems with such tactics, including the gap between presentations of learning and convincing locals to collaborate.

(2.1) Turk and Jabarti on French 'friendliness': weakness and deceit

According to Turk, the obstacle to French success in persuasion was cultural difference reinforced by historical memory. "The Egyptians," he wrote, "could not absolutely support the French, because of differences of religion, language and custom."⁴⁸ Such differences were made more pronounced by "the old enmity" that persisted between the two peoples as a result of the last French invasion of Egypt during

⁴⁸ Wiet 1950: 35.

Louis IX's crusade in the mid 1200s. If local enmity seems terribly antiquated here, it is worth observing that Leibniz tried to convince Louis XIV to crusade against Egypt in 1671 and Russia often justified its encroachments against the Ottomans in explicitly religious terms during the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ Historical grievance and profound cultural difference made any attempt to win over the Egyptians a futile exercise. Ignoring these obstacles, the French proceeded with policies aimed at doing precisely this.

For Turk, attempts to win over locals originated in French weakness, both cultural and political. First, he observes that “the French were very libertine” consorting with prostitutes, contracting various diseases, and suffering from the effects of climate. These factors tended to weaken the occupiers and once the British blockaded Egypt, the French position diminished even further. Weakness impelled the French to resort to persuasion. Echoing local sentiment, Turk reports “[the French] remain destined to always diminish and never increase” and for this reason “there remained nothing left to do then but make appeals to equality and fraternity: they testified to the population of their sentiments of amity to *attract their affection*.”⁵⁰

From this perspective, the French aimed to win over locals not out of a concern for establishing a just and legitimate political order, but instead because they “had lost confidence” in their ability to rule the population, especially after the first Cairo uprising. Attempting to attract the attachment of locals was a manifestation of their weakness more than anything. Turk does not speculate as to how rule might have been established had

⁴⁹ Leibniz, *Consilium Aegyptiacum* (1671). The Russians frequently claimed that they had authority to interfere in the Ottoman sphere to protect Ottoman Christian subjects (the Ottomans also did the reverse). The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) would provide a foundation for Russian claims.

⁵⁰ Wiet 1950: 43 (italics added). Turk 1950: 30 “*yajalebūhum ille maḥibbtum* [attract/win their attachment / affection].”

the French been reinforced. Instead he pronounces their attempt as doomed from the start: trying to convince locals of French amity was “against human nature” due to the profound differences between the peoples. These differences tended to be reinforced by French conduct especially as:

Egyptians saw their women and their daughters circulating in the streets faces uncovered, that they appeared to be in public the property of the French, that they accompanied them in the streets, that they cohabitated with them. In face of these facts, the Muslims were dying of shame. It was sufficient for them to see the taverns which were opened in all of the markets of Cairo, even in certain mosques. The spectacle made the atmosphere unbreathable for the Muslims and each instant they wanted to die.⁵¹

Because of such conduct, the French presence in Cairo, and thus their ability to win over the general population, was fundamentally “unsupportable.”

Turk also saw evidence for French weakness in specific policies aimed at winning over locals. Among French building projects under Menou, the historian notes that most were “towers and forts” rather than improvements that would benefit the local populace. Again he attributes such defensive building projects to French numerical inferiority. In another case, he describes French clemency in the aftermath of an uprising in Mansoura (Lower Egypt) as originating in prudence rather than “the law of the French people [which] specifies that one cannot pronounce any condemnations to death without an in-depth investigation, formal proof and testimonies.”⁵² Here French ‘mildness’ in administration derived not from concerns about justice (as would impress Jabarti during the trial of Kleber’s assassin), but instead their desire to hold on to the city in which “they had the intention of installing themselves indefinitely” and their inability to do this by

⁵¹ Wiet 1950: 45.

⁵² Ibid., 36.

any other means.⁵³ From Turk's perspective these attempts to win over locals, to persuade them to submit to French rule, were nothing more than a demonstration of their inability to rule in a more traditional fashion.

Turning to French propaganda, Turk observes that locals took Napoleon's pronouncements as attempts at trickery. Here because the French could not establish themselves through force, they are compelled to use fraud. Turk describes Bonaparte's intention in using such propaganda as an attempt to "make the country fall asleep."⁵⁴ The local Muslims however recognized what Bonaparte was trying to do: they "knew perfectly" these proclamations were filled with "lies."⁵⁵

Jabarti also identifies French propaganda attempts as aimed at tricking locals. He characterizes Napoleon's first proclamation to the Egyptian people as "weak minded deceit"⁵⁶ and often pronounces French communications as "nonsense," "tales," "silly talk," and "absurdities."⁵⁷ Such dismissals show how inept French overtures were in Jabarti's opinion. Their appeals to the people were particularly absurd as they were filled with obvious grammatical and stylistic errors. He records that the French, by their own admission, aimed to "attract the hearts of the people and [] preserve a good reputation" but Jabarti found little to like in this formulation.⁵⁸ Instead, there was too much evidence that in practice their ideas were "false" and filled with "presumptions."⁵⁹ As we saw

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Jabarti 1993: 112.

⁵⁷ Jabarti 1994: 247, 247, 277, 287 respectively.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 36-7.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 59.

above, such ideas undermined legitimate hierarchies and the occupiers were inconstant in their application.

Compared to Turk, Jabarti is less clear about why precisely the French behaved in this fashion. He notes in one case that their urban ‘improvements’ were less about winning over the locals and more about “fear” (that “stone might be used to build barricades should riots occur again”).⁶⁰ Beyond this however, Jabarti does little to explain why the French made such nonsensical claims in their proclamations. Where Turk posits the material origins of such claims, i.e. French weakness, Jabarti seems content to merely inform his readers that the claims were false and that the principles embedded within them were flawed.

Jabarti ignored material causes and focused only on the falsity of French propaganda so as to focus his reader’s attention on the moral depravity of the occupier. Turk’s explanation worked as a kind of excuse, allowing readers to understand that the French *had* to be untruthful as this was the only recourse left to them given their weakness. In fact, Turk’s apologetics would go so far as to explain French brutality in suppressing the first Cairo uprising in terms of compulsion: he posits that French were “compelled [*fii ‘abaad*] into a policy of burning and pillage.”⁶¹ Such material explanations are generally at odds with Jabarti’s treatment of French persuasion. As I will suggest in Section 3 below, the Muslim historian offered an alternative model for how a ruler ought to use persuasion with the ruled, specifically one that emphasized justice as a foundational component in proper persuasion. To provide a material explanation for

⁶⁰ Ibid., 252. Here a comparison might be made with post-revolutionary urban “improvements” in Paris, which were meant to make it more difficult for Parisians to erect street barricades.

⁶¹ Wiet 1950: 35 – Turk 1950: 23 “*fii ‘abaad*” [literally: ‘made slaves’] 25.

French propaganda would be to reduce Jabarti's contrast: French propaganda as an example of immoral and false persuasion, the kind of persuasion that needed to be distinguished from morally legitimate persuasion. Given this purpose, there was little need to explain why the French used such "absurdities" and "weak minded deceit" but only to note *that* they did so, leaving the reader to conclude that these attempts at persuasion further demonstrated their insidiousness.

(2.2) Assessing French Mobilization of Islam

As Islam figured prominently in French policy for winning over locals, Jabarti was particularly attentive to French professions of faith and amity. His most sustained engagement with French claims about Islam comes in his assessment of Bonaparte's first proclamation to the Egyptian people. Here the historian proceeds with a line-by-line critique, informing his readers of its various falsehoods and indications of unbelief. Thus he points out that while the French claim to be Muslims and their asserted belief in the unity of God might lend credence to this claim, in fact, they reject the central tenants of Islam: the messengership of the Prophet and the miracle of the Qu'ran.⁶² Further evidence indicating that they were not Muslims comes in their treatment of the text itself, which, in at least one case, they used as a support for "the door of the toilet" in one of their houses.⁶³ Such behavior would be abhorrent to any Muslim. Moreover the French misunderstood the nature of God, a fact made evident when they attacked the Mamluks as invaders, demanding to see the "title-deed" which permitted the former rulers of Egypt

⁶² Jabarti 1994: 6-7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7.

to exercise authority there. Pointing out the obvious, “God,” Jabarti noted “does not give men possession of anything by writing a title-deed.”⁶⁴ Instead, possession of a country passes from the hands of one master to the next, through conquest, compulsion, or inheritance. Thus, he informs his readers, the French were not Muslims at all despite their attempts to persuade locals otherwise.

According to Jabarti, the French in their “words and deeds” “agree with the Christians” but as they deny the Trinity, they cannot be considered as such. Moreover their conduct, which included “killing [] priests, and destroying [] churches,” further confirmed that they were not Christians.⁶⁵ He also raises the possibility that they might be Jews given their emphasis on the unity of God, but dismisses this as well (though noting that “among them” was “a group of true Jews” as well as Christians both of whom hid their faith from their fellow Frenchmen). His conclusion:

What becomes clear from their principles is that they are not interested in religion.... Each of them follows a religion which he contrives by the improvement of his mind. ...The creed they follow is to make human reason supreme and what people approve in accord with their whims.⁶⁶

Here French reliance on reason to the exclusion of religious faith is equivalent to a kind of subjectivism: belief and principles are founded on people’s whims. Whether it is individual whims or the whims of the people is unclear. If the latter, the critique is directed at the very idea of popular sovereignty which, as an inversion of legitimate hierarchies, Jabarti would have been exceedingly hostile toward. If Jabarti meant that the creed was the product of an aggregate of individual whims, the picture would be bleaker still as this would in essence be anarchy. He continues, emphasizing their unbelief:

⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 6, 8.

You see they are materialists, who deny all God's attributes, the Hereafter and resurrection, and who reject prophethood and messengership. They believe that the world was not created...that nations appear and states decline, according to the nature of the conjunctions and aspects of the moon.

Here Jabarti mobilizes a series of potent criticisms which had circulated in Islamic thought at least since al-Ghazali (d. 1111) rebuked Ibn Sina and al-Farabi for their materialism, heretical accounts of creation, denial of bodily resurrection, and so on.⁶⁷ Framing French unbelief in these terms normalized the occupier's threat to locals. It made French ideas familiar and comprehensible to Jabarti's educated readers and thereby easier to dismiss as something that had been seen before and resolved long ago. The French became associated with the followers of *falsafa* (Greek philosophy) who had long been associated with heresy in the mainstream of Sunnism. By framing French ideas in this way, Jabarti worked to ensure that his readers could easily dismiss the occupier's mobilization of enlightenment ideas while trying to win over locals.

Jabarti is not the only local author to deal with French unbelief and materialism. A key collaborator, Sheikh 'Abdullah al-Sharqawi who acted as the head of the *Diwan* and al-Azhar under the French, also characterized them as philosophers.⁶⁸ In a short history, which may have been written in response to Jabarti's condemnation of his collaboration,⁶⁹ Sharqawi describes the French somewhat differently. Here French reliance on reason has led them to deism and the belief that the prophets were sages and

⁶⁷ Al-Ghazzālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahāfut Al-Falāsifah: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, 1st ed., Islamic translation series (Brigham Young University Press, 1997). For resurrection see 208, on materialism see 123.

⁶⁸ Reprinted in Gilbert Delanoue, *Moralistes et politiques musulmans dans l'Égypte du XIXème siècle (1798-1882)* ([Lille]: Service de reproduction des thèses Université de Lille III, 1980), 95-6.

⁶⁹ Bjørneboe 2007: 171.

lawgivers who provided rationally derived rules for their epochs.⁷⁰ The basic problem was not that the French were unbelievers according to Sharqawi, but instead that they were liars in professing amity towards Islam and the local people. The reason why people (i.e. he) had been so docile toward the French and limited their resistance was, in part, because of such lies. French rational deism, which encouraged them to erect institutions of consultation populated by sheikhs, did not preclude collaboration from Sharqawi's perspective. Indeed, by collaborating, the *ulama* would be able to arbitrate conflicts between rulers and ruled as the French continued to respect Islam.⁷¹ With Sharqawi then, French claims about Islam worked to persuade many until French conduct proved their duplicity.

Continuing his assessment of Napoleon's proclamation, Jabarti suggests mockingly that French materialism has led them to conclude that astrology (rather than the will of God) drives historical and political change.⁷² The suggestion is rather odd given that he had just associated the French with a philosophical tradition in Islam that criticized or repudiated astrology (e.g. Ibn Sina),⁷³ but it is also the case that the growth of interest in astrology coincided with growing interest in Greek philosophy in ninth century Abbasid Baghdad. In any event, like *falsafa*, by the late eighteenth century, serious religious scholars had mostly repudiated astrology. Thus associating the French with this disreputable practice would have further diminished their status in the eyes of Jabarti's readers.

⁷⁰ Delanoue 1980: 96.

⁷¹ Bjørneboe 2007: 168-9.

⁷² A move which Cole notes is particularly bizarre. Juan Cole, "Playing Muslim: Bonaparte's Army of the Orient and Euro-Muslim Creolization" in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, 1760-1840*, eds. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 130.

⁷³ e.g. *Risāla fī al-radd 'alā al-munajjimīn* (Treatise replying to the astrologers)

Jabarti sustains his dismissal of French Islamic policy throughout his histories, particularly when it comes to French propaganda. Thus when Napoleon announced that he had been sent by God to liberate Egypt, his coming had been foretold in the Qu'ran, and he had powers associated with the *Mahdi*, Jabarti reproduces the proclamation “to show the false ideas and presumptions it contains.”⁷⁴ Beyond overt propaganda, he notes that in trying to “please” locals the French gave free reign to the people to “proceed[] as usual with the accustomed heresies” (such as “celebrating [saints’] birthday festivals at the shrines,” a practice which elite religious scholars rejected as contrary to proper practice).⁷⁵ Beyond winning over the public, French religious permissiveness also helped the French, according to Jabarti, in their covert desire to transgress Islamic law.⁷⁶ More forceful examples indicating that the French were false in their professions of amity for Islam included the desecration of the Azhar during the first Cairo uprising and rumors that the French had conspired to blow up a mosque.⁷⁷

Turk tends to confirm Jabarti’s general assessment that French Islamic policy was unpersuasive and that many local Muslims were perfectly aware of what the French were trying to do. Thus he reports:

during all the times of his stay in Egypt, by his remarks, by the proclamations that were affixed in the markets of the city, for passersby to read, Bonaparte affirmed his love for Islam, promising to establish a mosque which carried his name and assured the Muslim community of his benevolence. But the Egyptians did not have a tranquil spirit: “all that is nothing more than a ruse and deception,” they said, “it is done to possess [*yatamalak*] us.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Jabarti 1994: 59.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 128.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 42 and 227, respectively.

⁷⁸ Wiet 1950: 78 – Turk 1950: 60. The term *tamalak* carries the connotation of political subjugation.

Turk adds that these suspicions persisted even as the French financed various religious festivals, “They acted in this way to attract the affection of the Egyptians. But, as we will come to say, [the Egyptians] were suspicious.”⁷⁹ Here French attempts to “attract” local affection were perfectly transparent and if some, like Turk, dismissed this policy as founded in weakness, local Egyptians appeared to view it more warily. They were aware that the occupiers sought to persuade them to become subjects and viewed this as proceeding through a kind of trickery. Included among such trickery was the conversion of Menou, whom, according to Turk, locals dismissed as a sycophant and imposter.⁸⁰ Given this awareness there was little chance such observers would be won over with French religious policy.

Despite the suspicion, even Jabarti was not completely (even if he was mostly) immune from French attempts to use Islam in winning over locals. The historian seemed particularly impressed with French conduct during the first Ramadan of the occupation. Life in Cairo had regained some normalcy and people celebrated as was their custom. The French required local Christians to respect the fast in public, about which Jabarti notes, “All this the French did to attract the hearts of the people.”⁸¹ The occupiers also invited notables for the *iftar* and *sahur*⁸² meals, serving them food prepared by Muslim cooks in the traditional fashion. In all of this, the French according to Jabarti “displayed a most remarkable adaptation and graciousness to the people.” Then—in spite of his earlier

⁷⁹ Wiet 1950: 79 – Turk 1950: 60 “attract the affection [*yejadhbūhum ille maḥibbtum*].” Here it is worth noting that Turk uses the root *jadhaba* which in addition to connoting attraction, in form III (with a *shaddah* over *dh*) also can connote engaging someone in conversation or involving someone in a discussion.

⁸⁰Wiet 1950: 123.

⁸¹ Jabarti 1994: 72.

⁸² Evening and morning meals between the fast.

recognition that this was an attempt to “attract the hearts” of locals—he adds “God knows best”⁸³ as if to excuse the observation or indicate a kind of mystery in French graciousness. There is a sense of ambivalence and puzzlement embedded in this addition. Jabarti is aware of what the French are trying to do, and yet there is nevertheless something clearly appealing in their conduct. While he admits to his readers that French behavior during Ramadan has been attractive, he immediately disavows it as something beyond analysis, something only God could explain. This is the closest Jabarti comes to admitting being won over by French Islamic policy and it hints at the disorienting tensions which persuasion can engender in (potential) subjects. Jabarti knew the colonizers sought to win over locals and, despite the recognition, he seemed to admit having been—in this instance at least—attracted by French conduct. At the same time, he is in on the trick and among the tricked. To resolve this bifurcation of self, he surrenders to the oneness and omniscience of God, thereby reasserting the ultimate difference between occupier and occupied: true faith and by association, the wholeness of the *umma* or community of believers. In so doing, he checks any further movement toward the French as they have already proven themselves to be outside of this community.

Ultimately the French use of Islam in propaganda and policy was a failure, particularly among educated local elites. (While there are indications of minor, initial successes among rural peasants, as with the urban poor, we can only wonder how extensive and short-lived the effects were.)⁸⁴ Jabarti provides the most damning evidence

⁸³ Roughly equivalent in English to ‘God only knows.’

⁸⁴ Cole notes, for example, that rural peasants initially believed that the Ottomans had sent the French to get rid of the Mamluks. See Juan Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 34 and 66. Herold notes that a Frenchman in the service of Mohammed Ali thirty six years after the departure of the French from Egypt encountered an elderly Egyptian in Suez whose house Bonaparte had

for this failure and Turk corroborates his account of general suspicion among locals. With Sharqawi (the collaborating head of the *Diwan*), we find a more nuanced account as he suggests that French unbelief was less the obstacle to submission than was their deceit in claiming to respect Islam while abusing locals. While Bonaparte's most outlandish claims about Islam were clearly unpersuasive even to Sharqawi, the Sheikh al-Azhar seems to have hoped that the French respected Islam sufficiently to rely on the wisdom of the *ulama* in ruling over locals. This proved not to be the case. With Jabarti, French Islamic policy was transparently deceitful and, thus, fundamentally unpersuasive. His response to French conduct during Ramadan demonstrates that while particular practices could draw potential subjects toward the occupiers, such tactics were often too diffuse, too suspect, and insufficient to win over locals to French rule. Although his reactions to French religious propaganda suggests their unbelief constituted an insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of legitimate French rule, he hints at the possibility of rule by non-believers elsewhere in his history. Such a possibility would require that the French radically revise their approaches both the rule and persuasion (I shall return to this revision in section 3). Before turning to Jabarti's notions of just rule through persuasion, it is worth considering another French tactic of persuasion that had more success among local elites: the use of learning and technology. Here we can see how close local elites could come to being won over as well as several key problems associated with French tactics.

slept in and who praised him as friend of Islam: "let his name be great forever among men!" (J. Christopher Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt* [New York: Harper & Row, 1962], 200).

2.3 *Eros and Wonder: the Lure of *Techne*...the Lure of Empire?*

As seen in earlier chapters, French colonial reformists commonly argued that presentations of technology and learning could lure local peoples to agree to colonial subjection via the passion of emulation. However, while the attractive power of *techne* seems plausible enough, there is a large gap between interest in a technology or learning and a willingness to submit to occupation. With Hasan al-‘Attar and Jabarti, the *Institut d’Égypte* served to bridge interest in learning and collaboration. It provided a physical place that attracted and welcomed educated locals with its promises of learning, while functioning as a site where they would be seen by their countrymen interacting, discussing, and studying with the occupiers. Such a spectacle functioned to normalize the occupation as average Egyptians could see local scholars and sheikhs in scholarly pursuits with the new rulers. For this reason, it is little wonder that after the departure of the French, the authors felt impelled to explain (‘Attar) or omit (Jabarti)⁸⁵ their visits to the *Institute* in their respective narratives. Both authors exhibit an intense ambivalence about French learning and, in different ways, reveal the power and limits of this form of persuasion. ‘Attar’s highly erotic personalized encounter helps us understand its luring force, while Jabarti’s comments suggest that not all presentations of learning necessarily attract across cultural boundaries. Both authors further show that mere presentations of learning were insufficient to convince potential collaborators.

⁸⁵ Peter Gran has suggested that ‘Attar’s *Maqama* may have been written in 1801 (the year that the French left Egypt—though in other places Gran argues that it was written in 1799 [e.g. Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840* (University of Texas Press, 1979), 77]) but Bjerneboe has argued that it may have been written earlier during the occupation in 1798/9, perhaps around the siege of Cairo by French forces after the defeat of the Ottomans at the Battle of Heliopolis when “retribution was in the air” (see Bjerneboe 2007: 174).

‘Attar’s account appears in the form of a *maqama*, a literary genre in Arabic similar to European picaresque fiction. The account is also exceedingly personal as it narrates his encounter with French learning and testifies to the overwhelming power of the French tactic. It provides an idiosyncratic glimpse of how the attraction of learning could lead to collaboration as well as an astonishingly vivid treatment of one mode of resistance: flight.

The narrative begins with rumors circulating about French brutality. ‘Attar’s sources are “various profligate wine-drinking people” so he is uncertain even about French abuses before departing from home. Though “afraid and unsettled” he is “drawn” as “if by an unalterable fate” to the area of the city where the French have established themselves. He further characterizes his feelings as “a mixture of foreboding and yet desire, a feeling of venturesomeness” as he approaches the neighborhood.⁸⁶ The draw for ‘Attar is rumors that the French

know obscure fields of learning...their hearts are filled with philosophy...[they] make experiments...cherish what they acquire from [] books.... They esteem intellectual labor and reflection, and they seek out those who have knowledge of it and they would have the deepest conversations with them.⁸⁷

Here French learning and *techne* are the attractive force for ‘Attar, one which moves him to overcome his apprehensions and proceed toward them. He is assisted in this upon recalling a further rumor “from knowledgeable people who had traveled in different countries that these people were not cruel except to those who make war on them.”⁸⁸ This rumor, coming from more reputable sources, is in keeping with the narrative of

⁸⁶ Gran 1979: 189.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

‘mildness’ in rule from French propaganda: French cruelty as essentially defensive. With this conclusion it becomes possible to submit to the overwhelming desire to encounter French learning.

It becomes clear that desire is the correct term to characterize ‘Attar’s experience as quickly his search for learning becomes eroticized upon meeting the Frenchmen. He gets carried away, describing them as “like bridegrooms” and moving into other erotic images. At least one commentator has argued that such characterizations were meant to denigrate the French as somehow un-masculine, thereby constituting a kind of resistance, but passages ‘Attar wrote elsewhere makes such a conclusion implausible.⁸⁹ As ‘Attar proceeds, the more plausible explanation gains definition: knowledge and *eros* came to be confounded in his encounter with the French. Whether this was for literary purposes, i.e. solely to provide his readers a sense of the sheer allure of French learning,⁹⁰ or whether the blend of knowledge and *eros* was less metaphorical in ‘Attar’s experience, is less important than the overwhelming sense of attraction he conveys to his readers.

The Frenchmen welcome his attentions and ‘Attar notes that one youth among them could speak Arabic without the kinds of grammatical and stylistic mistakes that Jabarti had so vigorously attacked in Bonaparte’s proclamations. The extent of this youngster’s knowledge proved astonishing for ‘Attar, as the young Frenchman listed a

⁸⁹ Shmuel Moreh "Napoleon and the French Impact on Egyptian Society in the Eyes of al-Jabarti" in *Napoleon in Egypt*, ed. Irene Bierman (Ithaca Press, 2003): 81. See for example where Jabarti quotes ‘Attar (Jabarti 1994: 170).

⁹⁰ As Colla has noted, this would not be out of the ordinary in certain Sufi traditions that “eroticized and gendered” pedagogy (Elliott Colla, “‘Non, non! Si, si!’: Commemorating the French Occupation of Egypt [1798-1801],” *MLN* 118, no. 4 [2003]:1064).

variety of Arabic scientific and literary classic texts in his possession.⁹¹ All of this, ‘Attar confessed, made him “dizzy” with wonder.⁹² Not only did he find that they were familiar with “our famous writers,” he also discovered that they too had a “love for literature.”⁹³ As the Frenchman recited a verse he had translated from Arabic to French, “a passion stirred in [‘Attar] which [he] had not felt for a long time”: that for literature. Here a French (re-)presentation of Arabic learning to ‘Attar, stirs him to return to a long dormant passion for literature. This presentation of the familiar from such an unexpected source leads ‘Attar through a sleepless night of composing poetry about the Frenchman. Here learning and the Frenchman are confounded and the following day ‘Attar returns to the *Institute*, where he finds them “preoccupied with obscure areas of learning.”⁹⁴

The savants welcome ‘Attar again and, after a moment of disapproval (the French were “beginning to let flow the wine”), he takes the opportunity to peruse their collection of books. Some of these were unfamiliar to ‘Attar while others were “famous.” Then, the savants encouraged him to examine their “astronomical and engineering equipment” which they eagerly discussed with ‘Attar, recording his responses. Later they asked him to clarify passages from the *Burda*⁹⁵ and other poems. In this visit ‘Attar moves from a wondering recipient of French learning to an active contributor to it. He thus more actively collaborates with the occupiers in expanding their knowledge of the country and

⁹¹ Gran (1979: 248) suggests that this was probably Louis Remy Raige, one of the Arabic translators on the expedition.

⁹² Gran 1979: 190.

⁹³ Ibid. 189 and 190 respectively.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 190.

⁹⁵ Among the more celebrated Arabic poems, composed by al-Busiri supposedly after having been miraculously cured when the Prophet threw his cloak (*burda*) over his shoulders during a dream.

its traditions.⁹⁶ This continues as the savants asked him to explain “certain linguistic terms” which they recorded in a phrasebook or dictionary. To help elucidate his explanations, he composed verses for them to demonstrate the “meaning of various words.”⁹⁷

After hearing his compositions, the Frenchmen in turn were astonished to “no end” and it is at this point that they “urged [him] to live with them.”⁹⁸ The invitation confirms the movement in the *Maqama* toward a two-way exchange between ‘Attar and the savants, but it also constituted a dangerous move further into the territory of collaboration. While inviting members of the *ulama* and other scholars to visit the *Institute* functioned to normalize French occupation, having a local scholar living with the savants would institutionalize that occupation: the scholars wouldn’t go home (back to their community) at the end of the day but instead dwell among the French. By dwelling with the French such scholars would come to identify and be identified with the occupiers and (so the French hoped) become like the occupiers. In this case, the fusion of French and native identity—wherein locals take on the preferences of the colonizers and in so doing participate in ruling themselves—would, in a small part, achieve the aims of the empire by persuasion model.

‘Attar was perfectly aware of the implications of moving in with the savants. He confesses, “I kept putting off giving an answer and kept it a secret...knowing that if I had gone ahead with this matter, rebukes and hostility would have awaited me as well as the

⁹⁶ While ‘Attar’s contribution to French learning would certainly mean an expansion of the kind of power that Edward Said described in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), it is also the case that there was more exchange in this encounter as the French savants were beholden to ‘Attar for insight into local knowledge. See Colla (2003:1055) for more on this point.

⁹⁷ Gran 1979: 190.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

scorn of society.”⁹⁹ Despite being nearly overwhelmed by French learning and the possibilities of exchange, ‘Attar “returned to [his] senses.” He had nearly been convinced to take the final step toward an institutionalized collaboration but fear of social censure checked him. Noting that he “lack[ed] authorization” (possibly referring to a powerful Egyptian patron who might have allowed him to move to the *Institute*), he thought it best to keep the whole incident a secret.¹⁰⁰ He would ultimately ignore the invitation and fled Cairo sometime thereafter, concluding his account “May God forgive me for what I have done.”¹⁰¹

If he deemed it necessary to keep the incident a secret at the time, why would he later write about? Here the uncertain publication date of the *Maqama* becomes particularly troublesome. If the work circulated during the occupation, it might have functioned as a vivid and immediate warning to fellow scholars about the powerful lure of French *techne* and learning. As such it would constitute an act of resistance. Whether ‘Attar could have done this without revealing the extent of his ‘collaboration’ is unclear, indeed his explanation of why he demurred implies that it was fear of social censure rather than any intrinsic problem with the *Institute* itself. In the event that the work began circulating after the departure of the French, its function might have been to rehabilitate ‘Attar from charges of collaboration by acknowledging his visits to the *Institute* but emphasizing his ultimate rejection of it and his sense of shame, asking God’s forgiveness (though directing the plea more toward the literate elite). Why he would need to do this rather than remain silent, as Jabarti (apparently with ‘Attar’s contribution) did in his

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Bjørneboe 2007: 174.

¹⁰¹ Gran 1979: 191.

Mazhar, is also unclear.¹⁰² The story does reveal how powerful French presentations of learning could be to local scholars, the ambivalence that such interactions could engender, the overwhelming counterweight of local public opinion against working too closely with the occupiers, as well as one common mode of resistance: flight. As a tool for cultivating empire, the presentation of *techne* and learning nearly succeeded but local public opinion kept ‘Attar from being won over as a colonial subject.

Decades after the French departed, Hasan al-‘Attar began a career working for the modernizing ruler of Egypt, Muhammad Ali. ‘Attar had left Egypt shortly after the end of the occupation, traveling to Istanbul and the Levant in order to study and teach science, medicine, philosophy, and theology. Upon returning to Cairo in 1815, he began teaching, acted for a short time as a tutor for Muhammad Ali’s son Ibrahim, and eventually became the head of the Azhar.¹⁰³ Muhammad Ali found ‘Attar sympathetic to his modernizing program which included translating European scholarly works into Arabic, hiring European technical advisors, and sending promising Egyptian students to study in Europe.¹⁰⁴ Most well known among the latter group was Rifa’a al-Tahtawi, a student of ‘Attar’s who would ultimately record his reflections as an imam in Paris, enthusiastically read works of European political thought, explicate and praise the French constitution for Arabic readers, and advocate for the idea of an Egyptian *watan* (homeland or nation).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² On ‘Attar’s contribution to Jabarti’s *Mazhar*, see Crabbs 1984: 45.

¹⁰³ Gran 1979: 115:

¹⁰⁴ ‘Attar was a leading figure in the group that took on translating into Arabic the technical knowledge brought back by Egyptian students from Europe (Gran 1979: 113). The push for translations of European works was institutionalized in the School of Languages, which aimed to train students for professional schools, technocrats requiring foreign learning, and translators to spread useful foreign learning to a broader audience. The School was established in the mid 1830s. See Hourani 1970: 71.

¹⁰⁵ Tahtawi was especially keen on Rousseau and Montesquieu (see Hourani 1970 69-71; for Tahtawi’s dislike of Hobbes, see Moreh 2003: 91). Among the works that Tahtawi translated into Arabic were Fenelon’s *Les Aventures de Télémaque* and a biography of Alexander the Great to whom many Islamic

Given ‘Attar’s later importance as a modernizer, it is tempting to speculate about the extent to which his encounters at the *Institute* during the occupation shaped his modernizing tendencies. Such a question mirrors the larger scholarly debate on the extent to which the French invasion influenced or precipitated the Egyptian modernization movement in later decades. Several scholars have demonstrated that modernizing reforms were already taking place in Egypt before the expedition while also pointing out that it took several decades after the departure of the French for modernization to gain significant momentum under Muhammad Ali.¹⁰⁶ Thus the notion the invasion *caused* the move toward modernization is a crude oversimplification.¹⁰⁷ As Peter Gran has suggested, ‘Attar’s work drew on indigenous theological developments in Ottoman lands which mobilized earlier rationalist schools of Islamic thought such as the *Maturdiyya kalam* tradition in support of local commercial developments.¹⁰⁸ Thus even here it is difficult to come to a definitive conclusion regarding the magnitude of his initial experience with the French. The question is relevant insofar as it would help us understand how enduring French presentations of learning were for ‘Attar, and thus the elasticity or duration of the tactic’s persuasive power. As mentioned above, there was no indication that ‘Attar ultimately made the jump from longing for French learning to longing for the accompanying subjugation. Fear of social censure prevented any movement in this direction and some thirty years after the occupation, ‘Attar retained this

traditions ascribe the identity of *Dhul-Qarnayn* in sura 18 of the Qu’ran. For more on Tahtawi see Crabbs (1984: Ch. 4).

¹⁰⁶ Gran 1979: xii and Marsot 2003: 104, respectively.

¹⁰⁷ For one such account see Moreh 2003: 79, 94

¹⁰⁸ On the *Maturdiyya kalam* tradition, see Gran 1979: Ch. 5.

fear along with a desire to interact with learned Europeans. A French diplomat recorded meeting ‘Attar in 1833 thus:

The chief of the religion of Cairo (the *sheikh al-islam*) Hassan, a man enlightened and sage said to me: I receive with pleasure Europeans, but I invite them to come at an hour when one does not have the habit of coming to my house, otherwise I would be wrong in the mind of the *ulama*.¹⁰⁹

It seems that even with the occupation long ended and having ascended to a position of great authority, ‘Attar remained attentive to the dangers of associating too openly with Europeans, even while again succumbing to the attractive power of European learning. As a tool for colony building, French presentations of learning were too diffuse, unable to convince local scholars like ‘Attar to jump from enthusiasm for foreign knowledge to support for foreign rule. Such presentations however remained potent enough to lead the Sheikh al-Azhar, one of the highest religious officials in Egypt, to furtively welcome visitors at odd hours of the night so as to avoid censure from other members of the *ulama*.

Jabarti’s account of French learning is rather more complex than that of ‘Attar. He is more discerning in criticizing French presentations and yet we know that he formally collaborated with the occupiers as well (serving on the *Diwan* during Menou’s tenure).¹¹⁰ Throughout his three histories, Jabarti remains silent about his participation on the *Diwan* while only in his second history (the *Mazhar*) does he suppress mention of his visits to the *Institute*. This middle work functioned to rehabilitate him in the eyes of the Ottomans and indicates that in the most immediate events after the French departure, it was imprudent for Jabarti to even admit having visited the *Institute* as this would have been to

¹⁰⁹ Delanoue 1980: 330-1.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Philipp "The French and the French Revolution in the Works of al-Jabarti" *Eighteenth Century Egypt: The Arabic Manuscript Sources*, ed. Daniel Creelius (Claremont, CA: Regina Books 1990), 138.

admit having been won over by the occupiers at an impolitic moment. By the time Jabarti composed his third history (the *'Aja'ib*) in 1805-6, he deemed it safe to include a discussion of the *Institute* and French technologies as further 'marvels' in history useful for the edification of his readers.¹¹¹ Here he was obviously attracted to French learning but was less prone to taking leave of his senses (and critical faculties) than 'Attar was.

Where 'Attar was especially interested in French literary learning, Jabarti also recorded French technologies with enthusiasm. Among the noteworthy items were those of obvious utility such as a complex sundial, the wheelbarrow, and a windmill, which he described as "turning in the wind in wondrous fashion."¹¹² Jabarti expressed sympathies toward the French in describing their technology, particularly that related to astronomy. His father had been well known an authority on mathematics, astronomy, and others sciences; thus Jabarti would have been better prepared to appreciate innovations in these areas compared to other members of the *ulama*.¹¹³ He reacted with disapproval when, during the first Cairo uprising, the "mob" upon encountering "many strange mechanical and optical devices, instruments for astronomy, engineering and mathematics...removed and smashed everything."¹¹⁴ Identifying with the French, Jabarti notes "Each instrument was priceless for whoever knew its function and use."¹¹⁵ In some cases he was clearly impressed by technology while recognizing that he did not fully understand how it worked. After observing one presentation in which a savant created an explosion by

¹¹¹ For accounts of the changes over the editions see Marsot 1990: 123; Philipp 1990: 131-2; Crabbs 1984 46-7. On dates for the *'Aja'ib* see Crabbs 1984: 45.

¹¹² Jabarti 1994: 52-3 and 85.

¹¹³ Crabbs 1984: 44; Scientific study tended to take place outside of formal institutions of learning during the eighteenth century in Egypt (Bjørneboe 2007: 54).

¹¹⁴ Jabarti 1994: 49.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

hammering a white powder, Jabarti notes “It made a terrifying noise like the sound of a carbine. We were alarmed by it – but this amused them.”¹¹⁶ After recording a demonstration of electrical current, Jabarti concludes of the *Institute* “They had strange things in this house and devices and apparatus [*sic*] achieving results which minds like ours cannot comprehend.”¹¹⁷ Unlike, for example, one sheikh who dismissed such presentations as mere sorcery, Jabarti continued to be fascinated by the projects in the *Institute*, describing the technology there as “marvelous and valuable.” His fascination kept him returning.¹¹⁸

Jabarti was also impressed by the openness of the *Institute* as well as its more humanistic works. “Anybody who wished to do so consulted the books for his own purposes” he noted, “even their lowest ranking soldiers.”¹¹⁹ He was particularly struck by how locals were treated:

If any Muslim came to them who wanted to watch this, they would not prevent him from entering their most honored places, but would receive him with cheerful smiles and express their happiness about his coming to them. If they recognized in the visitor receptivity or knowledge, or a striving to study the disciplines of knowledge, they would be especially generous in their friendship and love for him.¹²⁰

Here he shows little of the suspicion about French motives as he had when dealing with, for example, Bonaparte’s propaganda. In fact, upon encountering a picture of the Prophet in one of their books, Jabarti, who might otherwise have attacked the figurative depiction as sacrilegious, instead notes that the French “had drawn a picture of his noble figure

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 56.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 57.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 57, nt. 63; 55.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 54.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 54.

according to the level of their knowledge and independent judgment.”¹²¹ There is little sense that the French were trying to trick local people or that the *Institute*'s presentations were akin to the nonsense of their propaganda. In this respect, French learning and *techne* were more successful in winning over Jabarti. It is tempting to suggest that this was only the case because such encounters lacked the political weight of, for example, the French mobilization of Islam but that he kept his *Institute* visits out of his second history indicates otherwise.

Even when it came to French *techne*, Jabarti was not completely won over however. When describing two balloon presentations in Cairo, Jabarti's suspicions about French intentions are evident. In the first case, he concludes after a lengthy description of the airship and its ultimate crash:

In the end, their claim that this was a kind of ship that travels on the wind by an artificial device and that people would sit in it traveling to distant countries to gather information and to send messages was not proven. Rather, it became apparent that it was like the kites which servants construct for holidays and weddings.¹²²

Thus what the French had promised turned out to be false, the balloon was not a wondrous ship at all, but nothing more than a toy. French perfidy is on display in this case and is further confirmed in the second demonstration. This time the balloon actually got aloft and made it to the nearby hills “where it came down.” He concludes, “If the wind had helped it and it vanished from sight, the trick would have been complete, and they would have said that it had traveled to a distant country as was their claim.”¹²³ Here Jabarti identifies the balloon presentations as another French attempt to trick local people.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 51.

¹²³ Ibid., 65.

Why he saw these presentations as akin to French propaganda but did not express the same feelings about the technologies in the *Institute* is not entirely clear. That balloons were presented in public to the masses whom he so distrusted probably contributed to his negative feelings (elites in France had similar reservations when balloons were first demonstrated in Paris).¹²⁴ Beyond the spectacle, it was probably more difficult for Jabarti to see the utility of such a craft, especially when it continued to malfunction.¹²⁵

The balloon example suggests a further problem with presentations of learning as a means to draw locals into subjection: despite the cheerful certainty of many French observers at the time, it wasn't always clear which technologies or modes of learning would actually be appealing. While Carl Bernhard Wadström had been certain that mere trinkets could be used to attract locals in West Africa, until such a tactic was widely tested in a particular region there was little certainty it would work.¹²⁶ With the balloons, the French were sufficiently convinced that the presentations would win over the local Egyptians, that when the journalists at the *Courier d'Egypte* observed locals going about their business without deigning to glance at the ascending airship, they concluded with derision that many Egyptians suffered from an "absolute incuriosity" implying that, in this respect, they were thus fundamentally unpersuadable.¹²⁷ The testimony of 'Attar and Jabarti demonstrates the obvious fact that local people were just as curious as any other, but that certain demonstrations of learning were more attractive than others. Such unsophisticated dismissals obviously limited the French's ability to win over locals and

¹²⁴ See preceding chapter.

¹²⁵ Here also a comparison to Europe is useful as there was a lively debate about what precisely the uses of balloons were. See Richard Gillespie, "Ballooning in France and Britain, 1783-1786: Aerostation and Adventurism," *Isis* 75, no. 2 (June 1, 1984): 250.

¹²⁶ See Chapter 3.

¹²⁷ See preceding chapter.

indicate the difficulties associated with trying to persuade across cultural boundaries. A similar case—one which shows that not all Egyptians who visited the *Institute* were as impressed by what went on there as ‘Attar and Jabarti—occurred when one of the savants read a paper detailing some findings about the fish in the Nile only to have a sheikh in the audience ask for the floor and point “out the vanity of such research: the Prophet had settled the matter by declaring that God had created thirty thousand species, ten thousand of which inhabited the land in the air, and twenty thousand in the water.”¹²⁸ Not all French scientific inquiry then served to attract locals, indeed in this example their studies sent the wrong message: one of striving against the truth as set out in the Qu’ran, and one which would repulse rather than attract locals.

(3) Jabarti’s Counter-Theory of Rule: Persuading with Justice

While Jabarti criticized French attempts at persuading locals, he also argued that persuasion ought to be a central pillar of political rule. He begins his third history (the *‘Aja’ib*) by setting out a political theory that emphasizes the importance of persuasion in any durable polity. He disagrees with the French over precisely how a ruler should win over subjects. Theoretically, the French reformists hoped to enact a just and legitimate rule by persuading local peoples to want and adopt a colonial relationship. The way to do this, according to the reformists, was to present products of European learning, establish familial ties, and reason with locals about the benefits of colonial rule. In sections 1 and 2, several Egyptian authors showed that as reformist ideas were translated into policy in Egypt, there were profound obstacles to their success. The French failed in Egypt,

¹²⁸ Herold 1962: 175.

Jabarti's theory suggests, because they tried to enact a rule that ignored the most persuasive 'tactic' of all: justice. The way to secure lasting rule, Jabarti argues, is by winning over subjects through establishing justice. He believed that Islam provided the proper framework for doing this, and as we saw above, he dismissed French attempts at aligning their rule with Islam. In what follows, I broadly explain Jabarti's political theory. I focus on the central role of Islam in enacting justice as this helps us understand his vision of how a ruler ought to persuade subjects. Jabarti's vision leaves open the possibility of a legitimate empire founded on persuasion while implying that most French reformist tactics were ineffective and illegitimate.

Political society originates in the natural insufficiencies of human beings according to Jabarti. Unlike the other animals, God made humans "dependent on each other" for sustenance, indicating they "should collaborate and cooperate" to provide for basic needs.¹²⁹ By dividing labor it was possible to accomplish this, but a further problem arose: as God created "both justice and injustice" in mankind, and men have a tendency to "demand justice from their opponents, but are not equitable with them," it was necessary to establish rule to adjudicate conflict and ensure justice.¹³⁰ God therefore provided the "Book" and the "Balance," or knowledge and justice, which he instilled in "the hearts" of certain human beings, particularly prophets. Prophets brought the standard of justice and, Jabarti states, "the establishment of justice cannot be properly

¹²⁹ Jabarti 1994: 9.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 9 and 12 respectively.

accomplished without knowledge, which is conformity to the rules of the Book and the *sunna*.”¹³¹ Thus prophetic revelation provides the means to know and enact justice.

As Muhammad’s message was complete, it was necessary only that it be preserved and interpreted by those who came after. Those who held the *khilafa* (“successorship”) were meant to limit themselves to “carrying out the orders and prohibitions” of the messenger. After the prophets came the *ulama* who as “heirs of the prophets” functioned to support their call, spread their wisdom, articulate justice, and establish guideposts to strengthen the foundations of justice.¹³²

While the *ulama* are “the stewards of God in the world,” they also are not the ruling power responsible for actually maintaining justice in a society. Here it is temporal authorities, “kings and rulers,”¹³³ who act to maintain justice within the community. They do this, first and foremost, by creating order. This order is required for everything else according to Jabarti, including religious practice, scholarly learning, and trade. Here he articulates a position deeply rooted in medieval Islamic thought, wherein a number of thinkers, such as Mawardi (d. 1058) and Ghazali (d. 1111), argued that the origin of a particular rule was less important than a ruler’s conduct once he achieved power. These notions developed as the *caliph*’s power diminished and most observers recognized that

¹³¹ Ibid., 11. The Book of course refers to the Qu’ran, the *sunna* is the complementary record of the Prophet Muhammad’s sayings and actions.

¹³² Ibid., 11.

¹³³ Jabarti’s terms carry a specifically temporal connotation here: *muluk* and *walat al-umur* [in: *al-Ta’rīkh al-musammā ‘Ajā’ib al-āthār fī al-tarājim wa-al-akhbār, li-‘Abd al-Rahmān Jabartī* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘āmirah al-sharafiyyah, 1322 [1904/5]), 8]. *Malik* (pl. *Muluk*) refers to what Hourani has described as natural kingship [Hourani 1970: 11], while it also came to be used in contrast to the more religiously associated offices of the *caliph* and *imam*. During the Umayyad era, for example, the dynasty’s critics tended to refer to its leadership as *mulk* (kingship) rather than the more religiously legitimate *khilafa* (successorship) [see Ayalon, A. "Malik." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, et al. Brill, 2011]. *Walat al-umur* was effectively governorship, a position associated with appointees of the *caliph*.

governorships in practice were often founded on usurpation rather than delegation. Such ideas culminated in the following blunt formulation from ibn Jama‘a (d. 1333): “We are with whoever conquers.”¹³⁴ What ibn Jama‘a meant, and Jabarti agreed, was not that might makes right but instead might provides the opportunity for right, and all other benefits of human society, to flourish. Identifying legitimacy with the results rather than the origins of rule allowed for invading or usurping forces to claim some measure of legitimacy within an Islamic frame. Such an account, of course, leaves open the possibility that an empire might establish rightful rule without addressing potential problems associated with its historical origins.

According to Jabarti, the ruler should be guided by justice as revealed in prophetic revelation (the *sharia*), which in turn was to be interpreted and explained by the *ulama*.¹³⁵ Jabarti was particularly interested in the role the *ulama* should play in the political order (Mamluk and French).¹³⁶ Attendant on this theme is the question of consultation (*shura*), a principle celebrated in the Qu’ran and present in many canonical works of Islamic political theory.¹³⁷ While Jabarti believed that rulers ought to consult the *ulama*, he tended to be less clear about how this should take place. When setting out his political theory in the *‘Aja’ib*, he warned against corrupt scholars who focus on honor, riches, and position. It was better for them to remain “hidden under domes of obscurity” than get too

¹³⁴ On ibn Jama‘a see Hourani 1970: 15. On Mawardi and Ghazali see Joseph Schacht, *The Legacy of Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 413-4.

¹³⁵ Jabarti 1994: 13.

¹³⁶ Bjørneboe 2007.

¹³⁷ *Shura* is not limited to advice literature as Bjørneboe (2007: 23) suggests. Consultation is an important theme in e.g. Mawardi, Ghazali, and ibn Taymiyya. It took on a new centrality in debates with ‘Attar’s student Tahtawi and continues to be a foundational principle for those who advocate democracy within an Islamic frame.

involved in politics.¹³⁸ That said, he also believed that the *ulama* should act as a mediator between ruler and ruled, including during the French occupation.¹³⁹ Before Napoleon's invasion, they played this role between the 'indigenous' population and the Turkish and Mamluk military classes.¹⁴⁰

But the *ulama* could only go so far in acting as an intermediary between the ruler and the people. Thus Jabarti suggests that a ruler must also attend to winning over the people more directly through just conduct. To succeed at this would mean that

[p]eople will make him king over their hearts. ... Obedience to him will be considered a religious injunction, and all of his subjects will continue to be his soldiers. *For God has created nothing sweeter to the taste than justice, and nothing more soothing to the heart than equity.* But there is nothing more bitter than oppression, and nothing more hateful than injustice. ...Hearts will be filled with love for him.... The pillars of his rule will be sounder and his reign more durable, for justice and equity to subjects are the most effective means to the preservation of the realm¹⁴¹

If the ruler is just, then his subjects will be won over and his rule will be durable.

Persuasion appears in Jabarti's emphasis on winning over hearts. Justice is sweet and soothing to subjects. They come to love the ruler rather than merely complying: "If he is like this, he will win the loyalty of men's souls and the love of their hearts."¹⁴² But in order to persuade, the ruler must model just conduct and a moral character: "The justice of an individual cannot influence others unless it first influences himself, for one can hardly influence that which is distant before influencing that which is near."¹⁴³ The aim is to influence subjects without compelling them; but in order to influence at a distance, it is

¹³⁸ Jabarti 1994: 11.

¹³⁹ Bjørneboe 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Hourani 1970: 12.

¹⁴¹ Jabarti 1994: 13 (italics added).

¹⁴² Ibid., 16.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 14.

necessary to cultivate the qualities necessary for persuading subjects and attracting them to subjection. One way for a ruler to accomplish this is through emulation.¹⁴⁴ Jabarti notes that mimesis in virtue leads to moral growth, and once a ruler has cultivated these qualities in himself, he will be prepared to win “the hearts” and “souls” of his subjects.

Beyond cultivating personal moral qualities, the ruler also ought to consult the *ulama* and adhere to the *sharia* in order to win over subjects. The most estimable *ulama* are those who toil away in obscurity, but these same scholars are “keys able to open the locks of hearts” and who can guide the perplexed onto the proper path.¹⁴⁵ They are thus useful allies because they can inform the ruler whether his actions are in line with justice as revealed by the prophets. At the same time, such scholars can convince the people of a ruler’s legitimacy. By “articulat[ing] justice” the *ulama* shape the preferences of the people who, in turn, are then won over by gauging whether the ruler’s actions are in conformity to such articulations.¹⁴⁶ As believers, the people are thus to be convinced through an Islamic frame.

At first glance, Jabarti’s pronouncements about the importance of behaving justly sound rather like the advice literature churned out in various forms for centuries past.¹⁴⁷ Read in the context of the French invasion however, his account becomes more provocative: a rebuke to the French vision of empire by persuasion. What would justify such a reading? In describing the proper role of rulers, and immediately before

¹⁴⁴ It should be noted that at least in this particular passage Jabarti’s account of moral emulation does not carry the same connotation of competition as had developed in Europe during the eighteenth century.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Advice literature (or ‘mirrors for princes’) tended to vary and the kinds of admonitions present in Jabarti’s work were not elsewhere limited strictly to advice manuals for princes. See L. Marlow, “Surveying Recent Literature on the Arabic and Persian Mirrors for Princes Genre,” *History Compass* 7, no. 2 (March 1, 2009): 523-538.

articulating his account of persuasion, he posits: “Whether the state be Muslim or non-Muslim, the foundation and pillars of the realm, the stability and framework of the nation, are justice and equity.”¹⁴⁸ As we saw before, Jabarti believed that those rulers who ruled justly would oversee a more durable reign as subjects were persuaded to support the ruler, taking obedience as “a religious injunction.”¹⁴⁹ This maxim, it seems, equally applied to non-Muslim rulers as well.¹⁵⁰ But given that one of Jabarti’s objections about the French was that they were not Muslim, how would the logic apply to the French occupation?

One way to solve the problem would have been to force the French to take their professions of affinity for Islam seriously. Had the French really wanted to win over local people and rule for more than a few chaotic years, they ought to have accepted the just dictates of prophetic revelation. Most concretely this would have meant protecting the persons and properties of subjects rather than meting out abuse and taxing properties traditionally beyond the authority of rulers.¹⁵¹ Also it would have meant not trying to co-opt the *ulama* but instead respecting their position as independent arbiters between subjects and rulers. It is unclear how such a relationship might have been institutionalized. Jabarti sat on the *Diwan* established by Menou, and one commentator has suggested that he perhaps was willing to collaborate because of Menou’s alleged conversion.¹⁵² This seems unlikely given Jabarti’s consistent suspicions about Menou, but it was also the case that Menou’s *Diwan* was limited only to Muslim authorities (rather

¹⁴⁸ Jabarti 1994: 11.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁵⁰ Bjerneboe 2007: 251-4.

¹⁵¹ For example, *awqaf* which traditionally had been exempt from taxation for religious reasons (they were funded by *zakat*).

¹⁵² Crabbs 1984: 47-8.

than including Copts as Bonaparte had). This perhaps offered the possibility that the *ulama* could assume its place as advisor to the ruler, although such institutionalization could pull them deeper into politics than Jabarti thought acceptable.

Beyond the institutional questions, Jabarti's emphasis on justice in persuasion also functions as an attack on the kinds of trickery that he identified in French propaganda and policy. The French sought to win over local people through a kind of 'bait and switch,' in that they professed affinity for Islam or presented technology when it was clear to everyone that their aim was to actually convince subjects about something broader: French rule itself. Jabarti's counter-theory offers a more transparent approach to persuasion, one that embeds persuasion in rule itself. The people are won over to the ruler as rule is conducted and this winning over is accomplished through the means of just conduct. The kind of displacement that the French approach entailed (luring with *techne* for the sake of rule), instead becomes a more straightforward appeal (luring with just rule for the sake of rule). Jabarti's account of persuasion then stands as a rebuke not merely toward French policy in Egypt but also of two of the three tactics advocated by Raynal and other colonial reformists: *techne* and consanguinity. Both tactics functioned to obscure a more direct appeal to locals in regards to establishing colonial rule. Both functioned to enmesh potential subjects via other means (a relationship of learning or family), which in turn would lay the foundation for political rule. The only tactic left unharmed by this problem is discursive persuasion, or reasoning directly with potential subjects. Here Jabarti's emphasis on a ruler's actions seems to subvert even the need for a discursive approach in that a ruler's case for subjects' support is founded on action rather than words: exhortation is accomplished through just conduct rather than explaining such

conduct. The subjects then act as judges of whether the ruler is in compliance with the dictates of justice and, if not, they will be less willing to actively cooperate with him.

Taken schematically, Jabarti's approach seems more likely to generate trust between ruler and ruled in that the ruler is continually proving his case through deeds. This allows subjects to judge the ruler as such. Insofar as this is the case, Jabarti's account of persuasion appears more in keeping with the kind of 'good' persuasion identified by Aristotle (and recently taken up in the work of Danielle Allen). This 'good' persuasion allows an audience to judge a case based on its merits rather than the kinds of displacements associated with sophistry.¹⁵³ Treating subjects in this fashion acknowledges their stature as morally independent beings capable of autonomous judgment.

Of course, Jabarti's approach to persuasion has its own significant problems. First, it is not entirely clear whether subjects' judgments contain any moral relevance for Jabarti. The end of persuasion, as he describes it, is primarily prudential: if you persuade subjects through just conduct, you will have a more durable reign. Winning over the people becomes a means to an end rather than something with any apparent intrinsic value. This perhaps is unfair to Jabarti as his format is history, and he describes his task in the *'Aja'ib* as specifically articulating what makes rule durable. Also, as the subjects too want a stable and durable reign, the ruler is achieving their putative goals at the same time. Moreover, prudence is not the only reason to win over subjects for Jabarti. As a king has more power than an average person, he is thereby more able to magnify his good

¹⁵³ Danielle Allen, *Talking to strangers: anxieties of citizenship after Brown v. Board of Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 141.

deeds and become favored in the eyes of God.¹⁵⁴ Winning the love of his subjects by appealing to their judgment, the king fulfills a religious duty.

A second problem with Jabarti's account of persuasion is that he essentializes subjects in comparable ways to the French reformists. As prophetic revelation establishes what justice is, Jabarti assumes that all believers will, in so far as they are such, be persuaded on the same terms. Just as Raynal et al. worked from a basic premise that humans are sufficiently similar that the same tactics could persuade them, Jabarti implies that the 'tactic' of justice will win over all subjects. In his account, those who disagree about what constitutes justice become heretics if they challenge orthodox understandings of justice in political rule. In binding justice to prophetic revelation, Jabarti also constricts justice claims to the parameters of the text(s), entrenching the privilege of the literate elite as arbiters of right and implying that those who would raise questions about justice outside of the purview of the text(s) could possibly be accused of blameworthy *bid'a* or innovation (and implying that the Qu'ran / *sunna* is incomplete).

Beyond this, Jabarti does not provide an explanation of what subjects should do when they are not persuaded, particularly as rule is ongoing. History shows that a ruler's reign will be less durable, but it's not clear what would (or should) happen in the short term in Jabarti's opinion, i.e. how (or whether) subjects could legitimately resist. While the relationship between ruler and ruled is not completely intransitive in that the populace has the *ulama* to act as a conduit for criticism and negotiation, such mediators further constrain any exchange of views between ruler and populace, making average subjects less able to respond with judgments about the ruler. Finally, as with French reformism,

¹⁵⁴ Jabarti 1994: 12.

the problem of power imbalance makes any persuasion accomplished by the ruler rather suspect. The question remains: what can subjects legitimately do if they are not convinced? Jabarti offers no concrete answer.

Jabarti's account of persuasion does not exclude the possibility of empire, but it is a clear rejection of French policy in Egypt. Rather than trying to trick locals through obscuring their actual aims, the French needed to win over local people through just conduct. This conduct required an adherence to the strictures of Islam and allowing subjects to judge the rulers based on their merits as rulers rather than as scientists, teachers, etc. Jabarti's schema identifies the original core concern of French colonial reformism, viz. just treatment of local subjects, in order to rebuke the French occupiers on terms that, even if in disagreement about what constitutes just treatment, would have been recognizable to partisans of colonial reformism.

Conclusion

The reformist vision failed in Egypt and it is tempting to conclude from this that its methods were fundamentally flawed from the beginning. Jabarti and 'Attar's reactions tell a more complex story however. Both attested to the attractive power of certain French policies and practices. This power is all the more surprising given French violence and abuse during the occupation. In this respect, Egypt was perhaps among the worst possible locations for implementing the reformist vision. The local population already possessed a sense of historical grievance toward the invaders and the kinds of 'doux' or soft policies that reformists like Raynal had envisioned seemed better suited for less developed and densely populated lands. Even on the sparsely populated coast of Madagascar, Raynal

suggested that it might be necessary to bypass a whole generation of older locals who were already set in their ways. In the more complex society of Egypt, the task of transformation was of a different order of magnitude. Also, reformists believed that local tyrants could be overthrown with force while the broader local population would be persuaded. In thinking about such cases however, they ignored the very real problems associated with maintaining an occupying army.

Despite the difficulties of the Egypt case, Jabarti's critiques do not imply the impossibility of *any* empire founded on persuasion but only that the approach advocated by the reformists would not work. His reactions, along with those of 'Attar, suggest that the outsiders had some success in winning over locals but more durable influence required a careful attention to local ideas and values in ways that the French could not anticipate even had they the desire to do so. Local reaction to the balloon exhibitions shows that it would have been difficult for the French to attempt to win over locals with confidence that their strategies would not backfire. While the French had, in their own way, tried to be sensitive to *some* local norms, they would have needed to be far more sophisticated and sensitive in trying to win over locals. Having an army at their disposal also proved far too easy for the French to dispense with persuasion altogether in the face of local resistance.

Jabarti's reactions also suggest that the reformist approach rested too often on the notion that locals could be won over in realms meant to stand-in for politics. Looking at Madagascar, the reformists saw evidence that marriages could be employed to establish

political relationships,¹⁵⁵ but the reformists moved far from such cases to conclude that economic cooperation or, in the case of the *Institut d'Égypte*, scientific interest could function as a stand-in for political cooperation or consent. 'Attar demonstrated that such elisions could lead locals to the brink of collaboration, but local majority opinion was often far stronger in preventing the final jump. More importantly, Jabarti's observations demonstrate the basic problem with such elisions: often reformists sought to avoid a confrontation over the actual question of rule, preferring to invest other realms with political significance as a means to bolster colonial legitimacy. Jabarti's reply that rulers ought to win over locals through justice (i.e., in the realm of rule) retains the possibility that a ruler might accomplish 'persuasion' but his solution, which included a traditional and independent role for the *ulama*, required that the French abandon the transformational aspirations upon which the reformist vision was founded. From this perspective, the reformist vision failed not due its aspiration to empire but instead its unwillingness to rule on terms that could retain local support in a sustainable manner. Ruling in such a fashion would have required the reformists to address actual rather than fictionalized or simplified local attitudes and preferences. This is not however to suggest that the reformist vision could have been successful given better conditions. When actually implemented in the context of international commercial competition it seems unlikely that, given the chance, most officials would have been able to resist the temptation to give up on persuasion and employ coercion when faced with local opposition.

¹⁵⁵ (As a group of colonists found out when they *en masse* divorced local women only to be attacked by locals who took this to be a dissolution of the political relationship between colonists and locals.)

CONCLUSION

(1) Persuasions of Empire

Jabarti was able to scrutinize French rule so closely because of his institutional collaboration with the occupiers. In addition to being a frequent visitor to the *Institut d'Égypte*, he served on the *Diwan*, a council of religious scholars established by the French to act as an intermediary between colonizer and colonized. The *ulama*, the French reasoned, had traditionally acted as a mediator between 'locals' and rulers such as the Ottomans and Mamluks, therefore why not use these traditional authorities to facilitate French rule? From a distance, the mobilization of traditional institutions for imperial rule perhaps resembles the strategies of indirect rule so common in the British empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this light, the French seemed headed toward using 'proxies' for rule in a way that would have been familiar to Henry Sumner Maine or Lord Lugard. Closer scrutiny reveals the comparison to be a false one and the differences between French reformism in Egypt and later theories of indirect rule are instructive, particularly for understanding the uniqueness of the 'empire by persuasion' model as envisioned by the reformists.

Karuna Mantena has argued that the growth of British theories of indirect rule in the late nineteenth century were a reaction to the failure of the transformational aspirations so prominent in previous liberal imperialist projects. Where liberals during the early nineteenth century hoped to, in essence, transform natives into Europeans, events

such as the Indian Rebellion (1857) led British observers to abandon such ambitions and construct a theory of rule which aspired to a kind of “cultural tolerance and cosmopolitan pluralism.”¹ Proponents of this theory, like Maine and Lugard, argued that native customs ought to be recognized and respected, which in turn entailed a “political logic of protection, preservation, and restoration of traditional society.”² To do this, native institutions of authority would be used to promote native agency within an imperial context. Proponents of indirect rule hoped to replace the universal essentialism of liberalism with a cultural essentialism founded on the interpretation and codification of native tradition.³

By contrast, the reformists on Napoleon’s expedition did not look to the *ulama* and the *Diwan* as a means to preserve tradition. Instead they saw these institutions as tools to alter it. The idea was to use such institutions to win over local people, facilitate profound changes, and to legitimize those changes based on the ‘will’ or ‘agreement’ of locals. For this reason, the French were prepared to give the *Diwan* much more power, including that of legislation, something unheard of under the Mamluks. By empowering these traditional representatives of the people, the French reasoned, it would be possible to translate French rule into a local political idiom. If the *ulama* were the traditional representatives of the people, perhaps they could become the foundation for a new order based on popular representation. Napoleon had proclaimed that the invasion would usher in an era of "representative government" in Egypt, and a first step in this strategy would

¹ Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 178 (see also 48-53).

² *Ibid.*, 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 184-5.

be to accustom “the notables of Egypt to the ideas of assemblies and of government.”⁴ In other words, the ‘traditional’ institution was supposed to facilitate a complete reorganization of the political order. What role the *ulama* would play in the new order was unclear, but it certainly would not be a traditional one. Such a reorganization is in keeping with the essentialist universalism attributed to strains of liberal imperialism, as it relied on the basic belief (to take one example) that all peoples should live under a representative government, even if in the short term this required the intervention of a group which seemed rather unrepresentative. Reformist attempts to win over local people and lure them into a relationship of rule was aimed at legitimizing precisely the kinds of profound social alterations that the British theorists of indirect rule would, years later, deem a failure. According to Lugard, this remained a problem among the French even in the twentieth century: “The French system proceeds on the hypothesis that the colonies are an integral part of France, and its inhabitants are Frenchmen.”⁵ This approach had led the French to deprive “native chiefs” of their traditional (and legitimate) roles and to try to assimilate them into French-constructed positions of authority. According to Lugard, it was in cases where the French had opted to maintain them in traditional roles that they were most successful. The criticism thus was on the grounds of justice and prudence: trying to treat locals as Frenchmen only led to the destruction of traditional, legitimate authority structures and, in any event, it tended to fail.

In French reformist policies in Egypt, we can see the outlines of the approach that Lugard criticizes. Beyond transforming the traditional role of the *ulama*, the reformists

⁴ (Herold 1962: 179 and Cole 2007: 160)

⁵ Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1965), 228.

also tried to alter customary laws. Menou, for example, tried to implement laws aimed at establishing equality between Egyptians and French in areas such as taxation.⁶ He was, in part, motivated by the notion that French and Egyptian should (eventually) be equal.

What such equality might have meant beyond the few laws he tried to pass is unclear: he faced revolt from his fellow Frenchmen and was ejected from the country along with the army before his experiment could proceed. From Lugard's perspective, however, Menou's attempts only functioned to remove locals from their traditional authority structures and practices, and thus constituted an illegitimate intrusion into indigenous affairs.

The reformist approach was therefore more intrusive in its aspirations than later theories of indirect rule. While both aimed to integrate native peoples into the imperial system, theorists of indirect rule believed that the best way to do this was in preserving what they took to be traditional cultural and political practices where possible. Integration into the empire meant taking locals 'as they were' or 'had been' before outside intrusion. The reformist approach instead started from the presupposition that locals were fundamentally the same as the outsiders, only requiring a push from outside to achieve this (latent) sameness. This was why in France the democratization of the notion of emulation was so important, as reformists like Raynal could construct an order founded, in part, on the idea that indigenous people (like Europeans) were motivated by the power of emulation and this could be used to motivate them to participate in the empire. Unlike *eros* and reason, which seemed more likely to be universal, the idea of emulation had to

⁶ Amaury Faivre d'Arcier "L'application de la législation Française en Egypte" *L'image de la Révolution Française: communications présentées lors du congrès mondial pour le bicentenaire de la révolution*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Pergamon Press, 2005) : 879-883

undergo significant shifts in France before it was ready to be applied to indigenous people. The intrusiveness of the reformist approach is also the reason why Jabarti was so troubled by the role of the *ulama* in the French order. What had already been a debate in Islamic political thought about the proper relationship between religious scholars and rulers became more pressing as the French tried to co-opt the *ulama* for transformational ends.

It should then come as no surprise that reformists tended to think in terms of individual rather than cultural agency in constructing a narrative of legitimacy. They envisioned an order reliant on individual desires such as emulation or *eros*, or the process of reasoning with locals. With *eros*, the order would be founded on a disruption of native familial structures, or at least European intrusions into them. (Examples from Madagascar suggested that these intrusions were not necessarily always unwelcome among local peoples.)⁷ Theories of indirect rule would locate justice in the preservation or restoration of such structures and thus avoid the kind of mixing that the reformist tactic required. In short, the basic question was: where to locate the ‘authentic’ self of the native? Was it as an individual who would benefit from integration into a larger political order, or was it as a member of a traditional group that would benefit by being preserved within a larger political order? The answer had concrete political implications. For reformists, the essential similarity of colonizer and colonized meant that the ultimate goal of the empire would be equal citizenship. For theorists of indirect rule, equal citizenship would have been unjust to the ‘authentic’ selves of natives, which were located precisely in their cultural difference from colonists. The latter vision also functioned to avoid the

⁷ See Chapter 2 for this example.

kinds of pesky questions (about equality, rights, etc.) that could undermine the very differentiation upon which imperial order tends to rest. The logic of equality in reformism on the other hand generated a tension between local autonomy and exterior rule that persuasion was meant to mitigate.

The two approaches to empire also differed in their understandings of authorization. I have argued that a central pillar of the reformist edifice was the principle of consent and that persuasion functioned to cultivate the consent of the colonized. Reformists tended to detect consent in local cooperation and, in some cases, believed that it could be established by direct discussion with locals. Theorists of indirect rule on the other hand, tried (if at all) to locate authorization in their mission of cultural preservation, further displacing the question of consent. Here the way to cultivate popular opinion among the natives was to leave their traditional social and political structures in place as much as possible. The presumption was that legitimacy could come from preserving or restoring traditional structures and that natives would thus not need to be asked for their permission because the outsiders were not changing anything. While part of the difference comes from the fact that the reformists were often interested in *founding* a colony whereas theorists of indirect rule tended to be interested in rule itself, the distinction is not complete: reformists also believed that their approach could legitimize ongoing political relationships. It is perhaps better to observe, as Mantena has, that the theory of indirect rule originated in the failure of earlier transformative projects (French reformism was one example) and thus the only place where legitimacy might still reside would be in preserving the very traditions that had been so intractable.

The institutional implications of these differences are significant. In the reformist vision, control (and authorization) would need to transcend traditional hierarchies and authority structures, instead reaching the most local level. On the other hand, indirect rule required that, in essence, control extend to traditional local authorities. Raynal imagined young people in Madagascar acting as ‘apostles of the state’ in cultivating local support for colonization, but noted that it would probably be necessary to entirely bypass the older generation, as the elders were far too set in their ways to fully cooperate with the Europeans. In Egypt this meant that institutions, such as schools, would be directed by the French rather than local authorities.⁸ For theorists of indirect rule like Lugard, educating natives could *only* be effective with the cooperation of the latter.⁹

Given the integrationist logic of the reformist model and periodic remarks of reformists that locals might become Frenchmen, it is worth considering what sort of empire this might entail. If all are citizens and all have equal (or equivalent) political rights in the polity, would it be appropriate to describe such a polity as an empire at all? This perhaps seems like idle speculation given the spectacular failure of reformism in Egypt, but between 1945 and 1964 this was a basic question in the French colonial system. Léopold Sédar Senghor (the intellectual and first president of Senegal) along with other progressives in the colonial establishment sought to dispense with the term ‘empire’ and instead replace it with a vision of a “multinational polity.”¹⁰ In 1945, France went from being an “Empire” to a “Union.” As one advocate of this change put it, France

⁸ Thus several members of the Institute drew up plans to establish agricultural and arts colleges for locals.

⁹ “This co-operation... must extend to native chiefs, on whose help and good will the education officer must largely depend for his prestige and standing in the native estimation, for the removal of prejudices, and for the popularity of his work.” Lugard 1965: 430.

¹⁰ Frederick Cooper, “Provincializing France” in *Imperial Formations*, eds. Carole McGranahan and Ann Laura Stoler, (School for Advanced Research Press, 2007): 341-2.

was to become “a more or less federal ensemble in which each French country, morally equal to each other, including the metropole, will be capable of following its distinct vocation, while sharing in the rights and obligations of the same human society.”¹¹ In practice this movement was an attempt to reform the empire in the face of anti-colonial uprisings, but it also was (rhetorically, at least) an attempt to imagine a polity in which the oppressive sorts of differentiation that plagued the empire would be removed and locals would have equivalent rights to citizens of the metropole. History has shown that this vision was a failure beyond the residual collectivity known in France today as the *DOM-TOM* (*Départements d'outre-mer - Territoires d'outre-mer*).¹² But it is worth inquiring whether such attempts are, in part, the result of a logic embedded in the French approach, specifically the notion of an equality between colonizer and colonized, or that the colonized are or might be French citizens. If so, could similar presuppositions, which drove reformists to try to win over local peoples, also have impelled reformism in the direction of ultimate union or federation? In other words, given the reformists' basic claim about 'equality' among colonizer and colonized, was their imperial vision essentially self-destructive? At the moment actual equality or equivalence was established, would the empire cease to be an empire at all? If this is the case then perhaps the early reformists were so vague in articulating imperial institutions because the logical conclusion of their approach would be something other than an empire: with local (true) consent and agreement the polity might look less like an empire and more like a 'union.' This might have been the logic of reformism but the practice, of course, was far different.

¹¹ Ibid., 359-60.

¹² Even here a sizable portion of local citizens (e.g. in Tahiti) would object to the notion that the DOM-TOM system has been a success.

While Egypt was a particularly poor attempt to enact the reformist vision, none of the reformist projects in Madagascar ever succeeded. Indeed the utility of the reformist approach was that it provided cover to proceed with exploitation and the exercise of what otherwise might have been considered illegitimate power. It allowed colonial authorities to deny (through deferral) the rights of locals. From this perspective the ideology functioned to disarm critics and allow colonial actors to tell themselves a story about the justice of their endeavors. It is to this function and the question of liberalism and empire that I turn next.

(2) A 'Liberal' Empire

I have suggested that the 'empire by persuasion' model's great peculiarity is that it was founded on the sense that local peoples should be allowed to exercise (or demonstrate) 'choice' or 'consent' regarding their incorporation into the empire. Insofar as reformists viewed locals as possessing moral autonomy and a cluster of political and economic rights, I argued that this imperial project had a discernibly liberal tenor. The significance of the reformist story to scholars interested in liberalism's various entanglements with empire is in exposing one way that distorted notions of consent have been used to perpetuate imperial projects, particularly in response to rising objections about the rights of the colonized. Persuasion allowed reformists to envision a legitimate order in which locals could authorize rule and eliminate the basic criticism that colonies were nothing more than unjust interference in the lives and autonomy of locals. By consenting locals would exercise their rights while submitting to colonization. This of course was often an exceedingly cynical act of prestidigitation but its persistence among

polemicists, administrators, merchants and others—both in colony and metropole—reveals just how powerful it could be as a justification of empire. The key element of the ideology's coherence was that it relied on oftentimes-distorted notions of what it meant to persuade others and how one could detect their agreement. These distorted notions allowed colonial boosters to defer actual confrontations with locals about the legitimacy of the imperial project while also misinterpreting signs of cooperation as demonstrations of broader political consent. As I noted in my introduction, the reformist vision, like better-known liberal imperialisms, relied on tropes of 'civilization' to justify the relationship of political tutelage. The reformist ideology's distinction is in its emphasis on the idea of winning over locals and founding colonial legitimacy on authorization. Insofar as this is the case, the reformist vision aimed in a way to be a more 'liberal' imperialism than has been explored in recent scholarship, one that relied on the 'consent' of the governed as a cover for colonial exploitation. It was meant to be, as Raynal and his reformist colleagues put it, a "soft" empire. In the next section, I should like to explore the possibility that understanding the pathologies of the reformist approach might be useful in thinking about questions of more transparently contemporary concern.

(3) Persuasion, Soft Power, and Modern Global Politics

In my introduction, I suggested that the problems that the reformists struggled with need not be thought of only in terms of imperial rule. In essence, they confronted a basic question: how to exercise power across community boundaries with justice? The implementation of their response, along with the critiques of Jabarti and 'Attar, illustrated a number of pathologies in the reformist solution. As I suggested above, the reformists

employed distorted conceptions of consent and persuasion in order to legitimize exercises of power that tended to be unjust even according to the logic of the reformists' stated principles. Ethical questions associated with exercising power across community boundaries did not disappear with the close of the eighteenth century, nor have more specific ethical questions about the role of persuasion in such exercises of power.

In the past decade, persuasion has become an increasingly prominent theme in debates about the use of power in global politics. The most common example of its appearance is in the use of 'soft power.'¹³ Joseph Nye first coined the term in 1990, but it was not until shortly after the U.S. invasion of Iraq that he deemed it necessary to devote an extended monograph to the subject.¹⁴ Iraq showed, he argued, the limits of coercive power as American policymakers launched a war whose global unpopularity threatened the very "cooperation" required to achieve critical American foreign policy objectives, such as tracking cross-border flows of weapons, money, and militants.¹⁵ The power required to maintain such cooperation, Nye argued, was 'soft power.' Unlike coercive or 'hard' power, soft power works by attraction. Nye elaborates: "If I am persuaded to go along with your purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place...soft power is at work."¹⁶ He argued that soft power is more fitting for democratic states and forecasted that it will become an increasingly important tool in global politics with

¹³ Examples of work using persuasion rather than soft power: Richard Ned Lebow "The Ancient Greeks and Modern Realism: Ethics, Persuasion, and Power" in Duncan Bell, ed. *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford University Press, 2009). Neta Crawford "Homo Politicus and Argument (Nearly) All the Way Down: Persuasion in Politics" *Perspectives on Politics* 7(1) (2009): pp 103-124.

¹⁴ Joseph Nye Jr. *Soft Power, The Means of Success in World Politics* (NY: Public Affairs, 2004), xii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7

growing information flows and the diffusion of power to non-state actors.¹⁷ Nye's work precipitated scholarly debates among international relations scholars but it also rapidly seeped into the language of international politics and diplomacy. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called for "strengthening our capacity to use soft power" in 2007, while Secretary of State Hilary Clinton often has used Nye's term "smart power" which denotes a 'smart' combination of both soft and hard power.¹⁸

While Nye characterizes the theory as fundamentally descriptive and lacking in normative content, his exchanges with critics reveal that this is not entirely true. It is thus not surprising when he posits: "values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunity are *deeply seductive*."¹⁹ In an exchange with Steven Lukes, he acknowledges the importance of attending to a subject's autonomy during the exercise of soft power. Lukes had criticized Nye's concept for not distinguishing between "indoctrination and that ideal form of persuasion that consists in securing conviction through the freely exercised judgment of others"²⁰ and Nye responds by acknowledging that further research ought to attend more closely to this problem.²¹ While Nye might reject the normative overtones of such a project, he also acknowledges the importance of promoting autonomous judgment for the sake of the *effectiveness* of soft power. In other words, he believes exercises of soft power that promote autonomous judgment among an

¹⁷ Joseph S. Nye Jr, *The Future of Power* (NY: Public Affairs, 2011), 6 and 84.

¹⁸ "US defense chief urges greater use of 'soft power'" *AFP* (November 26, 2007); Eric Etheridge "How 'Soft Power' got 'Smart'" *New York Times* (January 14, 2009). Chinese policy makers have also taken up the idea: At the 2007 National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, President Hu Jintao also argued that China needed to enhance its soft power. "Hu Jintao calls for enhancing "soft power" of Chinese culture" *Xinhua* (October 15, 2007).

¹⁹ Nye 2004: x. (Italics added.)

²⁰ Steven Lukes, "Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds: On Bluntness of Soft Power" *Power in World Politics*, eds., Berneskoetter and Williams (Routledge, 2007), 94.

²¹ Joseph Nye Jr. "Notes for a soft power research agenda" in *Ibid.*, 163 and 169.

audience tend to be more powerful than those that do not. His argument that effectiveness is the *sole* reason that a subject's autonomy should be attended to, however, is fundamentally flawed. Presumably it would be possible to *appear* attentive to the autonomy of an audience without actually being so—it just might require better propaganda. If attending to an audience's autonomy is an important element in the exercise of soft power, then it is worth considering potential obstacles to autonomy, along with the related pathologies that can arise in the process of persuading across community borders. It is here then that the reformist story might offer a useful site of comparison. I will focus on one modern method of deploying soft power: public diplomacy.

The first problem with the reformist understanding of persuasion is that it relied on an essentialized account of its audience. Reformists operated under the assumption that all could be persuaded in the same way but the reactions of local Egyptians demonstrated that this was not the case. For example, while some scientific presentations had the desired effect on local observers, others in fact actively alienated locals, such as an incident where a *sheikh* objected to the delivery of a paper about the fauna of the Nile on religious grounds. Here the assumption that all scientific presentations would have a positive effect on locals, proved to be detrimental to winning public opinion. In the context of modern exercises of soft power, particularly by liberal states, this is a problem that should not be underestimated. A particularly egregious incident during the tenure of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes illustrates the problem. In the course of her 2005 euphemistically termed “Listening Tour,” which was meant to sell U.S. policies in the Middle East to uniformly hostile audiences, Hughes attempted to construct an ethos of being a family-oriented character as a means to appeal to the

‘family-oriented’ (a.k.a. traditional) locals. As one observer noted at the time, this approach was perceived as “deeply patronizing, infantilizing, and condescending.”²² By implying that local women were somehow only interested in such questions, Hughes both alienated her audience and also seemed to deny them the agency to reveal their own identities and values in the exchange.

The reformist approach to communication and persuasion also tended toward intransitivity. While there were cases, such as in Madagascar, where reformists envisioned actual discussions with locals, more often than not persuasion was to act in one direction or relegated the audience to a position of approving the message rather than engaging, reforming, or criticizing it. The most transparent example of this is the use of proclamations in Egypt. Intransitivity tends to deny the audience autonomy or agency in judging a message largely because they become recipients rather than participants in the process. The audience is not able to answer through the same medium and is thus denied a place in what masquerades as a dialogue. In modern public diplomacy intransitive forms of communication such as press releases or staged press conferences with audiences selected for their utility (i.e. pliability) rather than their ability to engage in discussion as autonomous actors is a problem to which policy makers ought to be attentive. Not only do such limitations on the autonomy of an audience limit the effectiveness of persuasion (as the audience feels alienated from the communication process), it also treats the audience as tools to legitimize or bring authenticity to a message.

²² Mark Lynch “The Karen Hughes Rainbow Tour”
http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2005/10/the_karen_hughe.html

A final insight from the reformist story originates in the problem of elision: the reformists came to believe that they could use intermediary tactics to win over locals to rule while obscuring the core of their fundamental project of establishing rule. In essence, they believed that winning over locals in spheres of learning or economy could function as a proxy for legitimating the exercise of imperial power. Hasan al-‘Attar demonstrated that it was possible to be won over in one realm (learning) while completely rejecting the broader project (rule). More significantly Jabarti’s comments are a pointed attack on the reformist approach as he suggests that the only way to justly win over local peoples to rule is to in fact enact justice. What the French were trying to do from Jabarti’s perspective was to create a world through speech that was obviously contradicted by action. In contemporary politics, this is a basic problem with public diplomacy as it often functions as an attempt to spin or ‘explain’ policies or actions that to an audience seem unjust or illegitimate. Here the “Listening Tour” example cited above also is relevant. While in Turkey, Hughes spoke about increasing cooperation in the region on women’s rights, only to be interrupted by audience members who explained such discussions were of little use in light of the ongoing occupation of Iraq.²³ Here Hughes was confronted with one of the basic sources of negative public opinion that her tour was (ineptly) meant to elide. This of course is a problem endemic to certain approaches to public diplomacy and one akin to that which Jabarti identified in his assessment of French policy in Egypt: it is difficult to win over local people in speech when policies are transparently unjust according to local public opinion.

²³ Lucy Jones, “Karen Hughes’ ‘Listening Tour’ and Its Aftermath: Selling America to the Muslim World” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (December 2005): 24-26.

Conclusion

The concluding passage of the *Histoire des deux Indes* reads as follows:

Under the auspices of philosophy, may there be one day extended, from one extremity of the world to the other, that chain of union and benevolence which ought to connect all civilized people! May they never more carry among savage nations the example of vice and oppression! I do not flatter myself that at the period of that happy revolution, my name will be still in remembrance. This feeble work...will doubtless be forgotten. But I shall, at least, be able to say, that I have contributed as much as was in my power to the happiness of my fellow-creatures, and pointed out the way, though perhaps at a distance, to improve their destiny.

Raynal died in 1796—two years before Napoleon Bonaparte, the energetic young man with whom he'd exchanged letters and conversed, led a massive expeditionary force into Egypt. While the elderly historian most certainly would have denounced the army's violence along with its abuse of local people, less clear is what he would have made of the attempts to extend the “chain of union and benevolence” to what had once been the “center of world commerce.” In his later years, Raynal wrote a letter denouncing the revolutionaries in France who had claimed him as an inspiration. The revolutionaries had gone too far the historian argued, and their enthusiasm had led to anarchy and abuses. Whether Raynal would have made a similar argument about the occupation of Egypt, suggesting that reformists like Menou who cited him as an inspiration had misunderstood and corrupted the message of the *Histoire*, is unclear. But then, texts can take on lives of their own and sometimes solutions meant to solve transparent outrages can generate their own sets of injustices.

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