CHILDREN AND SLAVE EMANCIPATION IN FRENCH ALGERIA AND TUNISIA (1846-1892)

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By

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ABSTRACT

In the second half of the nineteenth century, both the slave trade and slavery were illegal in Algeria, Tunisia, and the rest of France’s colonial empire. Yet, from the fringes of the Sahara to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, thousands of slaves, mainly women and children, continued to be sold, bought and freed. This dissertation looks at the experiences of servitude and liberation of the children who were born or sold into slavery between the last three decades of the nineteenth century, when France was expanding its imperial territory in Africa and undergoing profound political and social changes in the metropole under the Third Republic. Two main arguments run through the dissertation. First, I argue that, during the fifty years that followed official abolition, sub-Saharan Africans living in Algeria and Tunisia still tended to perform the same economic and social roles as before 1848, and that official abolition reinforced and crystallized racial, class, and gender hierarchies in Algeria and Tunisia. The second argument is that the narrative of slavery, abolition and emancipation in modern North Africa is part of a complex trans-regional history that includes the Americas, metropolitan France, and sub-Saharan Africa. The Haitian revolution, abolition and emancipation in the French and British Caribbean, the Catholic Church’s politics in Europe, America and Africa, as well as the social tensions in the newly born Third Republic, shaped the policies and attitudes of French missionaries and colonial officials towards slavery in Algeria and Tunisia. By following the trajectories of the
institutions and the individuals involved in the emancipation process, the dissertation studies the structural and ideological connections between colonial politics in the Caribbean, the *Realpolitik* of imperialism in Africa, and social policies in metropolitan France.

I use the methods of micro-history to study these issues. My case studies include a school for freed slaves the White Fathers opened for boys they had bought out of slavery in Algeria and Tunisia, and the judicial affairs opposing owners to their slaves, who brought them to court to demand their liberation or reparation for the physical abuse they endured during their captivity.
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INTRODUCTION

A. Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation in North Africa and the French Empire

In January 1846, Ahmad bey (1837-1855), the ruler of Tunisia, issued an edict freeing all slaves in his country who wished to leave their masters:

… we decided, in the present interest of the slaves and in the future interest of the masters, as well as to prevent the former from seeking protection from foreign powers, that notaries will be appointed […] to issue manumission letters to any slave who requests them. The letters will then be sent to us to be affixed with our seal.¹

In Paris, two years later, in April 1848, the newly born Second Republic promulgated an edict banning slavery in France’s colonial territories: “slavery is entirely abolished in all French colonies and possessions.”²

The Tunisian text in principle provided an avenue to freedom to all slaves who wished to become free, without outlawing the institution itself: since the Quran specifically recognized slavery as a legitimate institution, a Muslim ruler could not ban it. But Ahmed bey presented the document as an abolition decree, which theoretically would, in time, ensure that nobody was enslaved in the Regency, and it was hailed as such by abolitionists in Europe. British anti-slavery activists even used it to put France to shame for its reluctance towards abolitionism, until the 1848 French decree ended the legal existence of slavery. The document banned the

¹ Ahmed bey, “Décret prescrivant l’affranchissement des esclaves et ordonnant des mesures pour ce faire,” in Code annoté de la Tunisie: Recueil de tous les documents composant la législation écrite de ce pays au 1er janvier 1901, ed. Paul Zeys (Nancy: Imprimerie Berger-Levrault et Cie, 1901), 384. This, and all the following translations from English to French, are mine.
institution of slavery in a growing empire, which, in addition to the West Indies, Senegal and Mayotte, included Algeria, and after 1881, Tunisia.\(^3\)

Abolitionism in the Middle East and North Africa was a product of European imperial politics. There never was a local anti-slavery movement in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Algeria or Tunisia. European (usually British) abolitionists promoted an international anti-slavery agenda with support from London. Diplomatic pressure from the British government in the 1840s and 1850s prompted the Ottomans and the Egyptians to promulgate measures against the slave trade, though the new rules remained a dead letter for over three decades.\(^4\)

In Tunisia, the anti-slavery legislation was a result of this larger British effort in the Arab and Ottoman world. It followed a series of gradual measures, such as the closing of the Tunis slave

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market and the banning of the slave trade to Tunis (1841) in the context of intense Franco-British rivalry over the control of the southern and eastern Mediterranean Sea. France had initiated the conquest of Algeria in 1830. Fearing French expansion over Tunisian territory, Ahmed bey cultivated diplomatic relations with London. Moreover, under the Capitulations, European powers used their consular courts to exert influence over Tunisian affairs, thus undermining Ahmad bey’s power over his own country. London pressured Tunisia to act against slavery in exchange for British protection of its sovereignty.5

Within that fraught international context, the abolitions of 1846 and 1848 targeted slavery in its legalistic dimensions by severing ownership rights: the law no longer recognized the masters’ claims over the slaves’ bodies and labor. The practice of slavery in each colony varied with local conditions and the legal framework.

In Algeria and Tunisia, as in the rest of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, the slave population traditionally included white slaves from the Caucasus or Europe, as well as black slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. The white slaves tended to belong to elite members of society and usually served as soldiers, concubines or domestics. Their numbers declined considerably in the course of the nineteenth century because of the Russian conquest of vast regions in the Caucasus, and the end of piracy in the Mediterranean.6 As a result, the proportion of black captive workers in the Middle East and North Africa increased significantly. Forced to migrate to the region through the desert,

5 Montana, 107-147.
and then by boat on the Nile, the Mediterranean or the Red Sea, black slaves played a multitude of economic and social roles. Although European Orientalist writings assumed that they were confined to the domestic sphere, recent scholarship has shown that, while the overwhelming majority were servants, nannies, and concubines, a significant number worked in the military, agriculture, and construction. In the Algerian Sahara, they were an essential element of the economy of the oases, where the men provided labor in the various stages of date production. Moreover, female slaves worked in the small-scale production of textiles and constituted valuable gifts exchanged during political negotiations or to maintain peaceful relations among the elites. In the Gulf, young boys and adolescents were important assets in the pearl industry, where they had to undertake the dangerous task of diving to collect the precious stones in the Red Sea, and where drowning and man eating sharks were a constant threat to their lives.\footnote{On the multiple roles of slaves in the MENA, see Eve Powell, \textit{A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan} (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 2003); Khaled Fahmy, \textit{All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ehud Toledano, \textit{Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East}; Benjamin Brower, \textit{A Desert Named Peace: the Violence of France’s Empire in the Sahara, 1844-1902} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Benjamin Brower, “The Servile Population of the Algerian Sahara, 1850-1900,” in \textit{Slavery, Islam and Diaspora}, eds. Behnaz A. Mirzai, Ismael Montana and Paul Lovejoy (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2009), 169-191; Roger Botte, \textit{Esclavages et abolitions en terres d’Islam}, Matthew Hopper, \textit{Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Jerzy Zdanowski, \textit{Slavery and Manumission: British Policy in the Red Sea in the First Half of the Twentieth Century} (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2013).}

Regardless of the slaves’ race and their activities, the Algerian and Tunisian iteration of slavery was based on Islamic law. The Quran recognized the slave as both a thing and a person, a paradox that framed the definition of slavery in North Africa. Slaves shared the legal characteristics of objects and animals: their masters, men and women, could purchase and sell them; they could hire them to third parties, give them away as presents or inherit them. The Quran and the Hadith also
encouraged masters to treat slaves with kindness, to feed and clothe them generously, and to manumit them after several years of service. If a female slave bore her master’s child, she gained the status of *Umm Walad* (mother of a child) and could no longer be legally sold. The child was born free and the *Umm Walad* had to be freed upon her master’s death. With their masters’ permission, male and female slaves could legally marry. They could own or manage capital and property. The generous stipulations of the Quran allowed both slave owners and European Orientalist writers to promote an image of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa as a mild institution. It was not until the 1980s that historians began to systematically challenge this “good-treatment thesis.” Scholars demonstrated that despite the protections offered by Islamic law, the masters’ rights prevailed over all the choices the slaves made within the legal framework, and exposed them to intense physical and psychological violence. A master could also at any moment, including at the time of manumission, confiscate all the slaves’ properties and money. Masters could beat their human property, impose sexual relationships to their female slaves without being married to them, and sell parents away from their children, husbands from their wives, and sisters from their brothers.

Though the abolition decrees officially changed the status of slaves by either allowing them to leave or by no longer recognizing the institution of slavery, the legalistic dimension of abolition tells us little about the ways it affected power relations in practice. It leaves in the dark the lived

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8 The Hadith is a saying attributed to the Prophet or to his Companions. Hadiths constitute, after the Quran, one of the most important sources of Islamic law.

experiences of enslaved people following the formal end of slavery. As slavery no longer existed officially in the second half of the nineteenth century, it retreated to the background of the historical record. Few surviving documents substantively reveal the complex unraveling of power relations after abolition. Though neither the French nor the Tunisian governments systematically applied their anti-slavery laws, the legislative measures they promulgated turned the trade and possession of people into a clandestine activity. It remained prevalent in both urban and rural areas, but state officials did not record it and local owners and traders increasingly tried to conceal it. Moreover, the vocabulary the French used to designate black Africans living in North Africa could be misleading. They employed the word “nègres” to refer to a slave or a freed slave, as well as to free agricultural workers of servile origin. The French sometimes could not distinguish between the different groups because of ignorance, a desire to conceal the perpetuation of slavery, or because they were misled by masters who wished to keep their slave ownership secret from their colonial rulers.  

As a result, the historiography of slavery in North Africa suffers from the absence of reliable demographic data. Benjamin Brower, who extensively studied military and civilian administrative documents, as well as commercial records at the French colonial archives in Aix-en-Provence, could not offer a definite number for the slave population of Algeria. He estimated that there were at least 10,000 slaves at the eve of abolition, but assumed that “it is likely that there were thousands more.” The numbers for Tunisia are equally uncertain. Historian Roger Botte estimates that black

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11 Brower, A Desert Named Peace, 160.
slaves constituted between 6% and 8% of the total population. But the widely varying numbers in the available sources renders educated guesses unreliable.\textsuperscript{12}

For most of the nineteenth century, abolition remained a dead letter in North Africa, as it did on the rest of the continent. As Frederick Cooper and others argued, more people were enslaved than freed in Africa after the two greatest imperial powers, France and Great Britain, formally banned slavery. It was not until the 1880s that the increased pressure from abolitionists and international public opinion forced the colonial governments to begin enforcing the abolition decrees. They started abiding by their own laws and slowly implementing effective measures against slave traders in sub-Saharan Africa.\textsuperscript{13}

Paradoxically, the new commitment of colonial powers against the slave trade beginning in the 1880s led to an increase in the number of children who were captured in sub-Saharan Africa, transported through the desert, and sold on the markets of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, French Algeria and Tunisia. Because children were small and physically weaker than adults, they


constituted a vulnerable prey, and became, with women, the principal targets of the slave trade.\(^{14}\) Martin Klein’s work on West Africa showed that beginning in 1880, some slave convoys only included children. The trend accelerated in the following decade and culminated during the first years of the twentieth century: when the French started to implement abolitionist laws more rigorously, the majority of captured people became women, and especially children.\(^{15}\) Therefore, the history of children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is a central element in the history of slavery.

This dissertation explores the experiences of the children who were captured in Africa and sold in Algeria and Tunisia between the 1870s and the 1890s, and contextualizes them within the history of abolition and emancipation since 1846. Many children remained enslaved after formal abolition, and those who had become officially free faced a reinforcement of the racial and class boundaries that had defined slavery.

Until the past five years, the dearth of sources extensively describing the experiences of children in the slave trade and slavery led historians to talk about them tangentially. Even the increased importance of gender studies has emphasized women’s experiences at the detriment of children’s, since historians only mention them in connection to the mothers’ reproductive rights. Madeline Zilfi and Ehud Toledano, when they demonstrated that the *Umm Walad* rule would not always effectively protect mothers, only tangentially addressed the experiences of the children


\(^{15}\) Klein, “Children and Slavery in the Western Sudan,” 127.
themselves. The recent publications of three edited volumes on enslaved children in Africa in the modern period will offer leads for scholars to look more closely at those who as the century was coming to an end, became the principal victims of clandestine human trafficking.

Because schools and the conversion of the youth were central to missionary strategies, missionary archives constitute a precious source for children’s history. Other documents include court records of trials brought about by freed parents who wanted to reclaim their children from their former masters and consular reports and correspondence between colonial administrators. These studies also show that the captivity and the exploitation of children took place through many forms after abolition, including apprenticeship, adoption, and education at mission schools. Most of these studies focus on the last three decades of the nineteenth century, when the outlawing of the slave trade by colonial powers had as an unintended consequence the increased vulnerability of the little girls and boys who fell prey to slave traders.¹⁶

In the absence of dependable quantitative data for North Africa, we must rely on qualitative evidence to analyze the experiences of child enslavement and emancipation. In this regard, sources on the Missionnaires d’Afrique (known as the White Fathers because of the color of their habit), a congregation of French Catholic missionaries founded by Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, 

based in Algeria, and involved in anti-slavery work in North and sub-Saharan Africa, provide a unique opportunity to explore in detail the experience of some of these children through the method of micro-history.

Two White Fathers wrote systematic, archive-based studies of their order’s nineteenth-century history: François Renault and Jean-Claude Ceillier. Working between the 1970s and the early 2000s, their purpose was to justify the actions of Lavigerie, to emphasize the benevolent nature of the order’s work, and to explain the conflict between Church and State as a violation by the French government of fundamental religious freedoms. Their portrayal of Lavigerie was almost hagiographic. Their interpretation of his anti-slavery work mirrored his own, and they uncritically praised his motives as being those of Christian charity. Nevertheless, their erudite knowledge of the archives is a precious source for the historians of French missions. Moreover, they remind us of an essential element of the missionaries’ work: the importance of faith in their motivations. While the modern historiography of both Anglophone and Francophone orders analyzed the political, economic and sociological factors that underlie missionary work, historians tend to forget the crucial role of faith as a motivation. The Fathers went to Africa to save souls before anything else, and this objective steered their actions in the colonies.


During the post-abolition period, the Missionnaires d’Afrique were actively involved in the emancipation process. The founder of the order, Cardinal Lavigerie, hoped to use anti-slavery work with children to convert Africans to Christianity, as well as to reinforce the political power of the Catholic Church in France’s colonial empire. By exploring the sources of the congregation, I was able to trace the personal trajectories of young boys captured in the sub-Saharan region and enslaved in North Africa until the Fathers bought and manumitted them. The priests opened small classrooms for them in Algeria and Tunisia, where they taught them reading, writing and catechism. They later sent the best students to Malta, where they attended medical school. The purpose was to train them as doctors and missionaries who would return to their native lands to convert Africans to Catholicism.\textsuperscript{19} The missionaries’ correspondence illustrates how the Fathers and their pupils redefined notions of freedom and subservience, in a racialized conceptual framework which the boys accepted when it was useful to them, but rejected when they felt it violated their rights.

Based on my case studies, two main arguments run through the dissertation. First, I argue that, during the fifty years that followed official abolition, sub-Saharan Africans living in Algeria and Tunisia still tended to perform the same economic and social roles (as agricultural workers, and providers of domestic and sexual services) as before 1848, and that, far from allowing for the social integration of sub-Saharan Africans, official abolition reinforced and crystallized racial as well as class and gender hierarchies in Algeria and Tunisia.

\textsuperscript{19} The White Fathers used the terms “médecins catéchistes” (doctor missionaries), though, as the dissertation will show, the boys received a medical training but were not awarded a medical degree by the university.
The second argument is that the narrative of slavery, abolition, and emancipation in North Africa after 1846 is part of a complex trans-regional history that includes the Americas, metropolitan France, and sub-Saharan Africa. The Haitian revolution, abolition and emancipation in the French and British Caribbean, the Catholic Church’s politics in Europe, America and Africa, as well as the social tensions in the newly born Third Republic, shaped the policies and attitudes of French missionaries and colonial officials towards slavery in Algeria and Tunisia. By following the trajectories of the institutions and the individuals involved in the emancipation process, the dissertation studies the structural and ideological connections between colonial politics in the Caribbean, the Realpolitik of imperialism in Africa, and social policies in metropolitan France. Once they became involved in North Africa, the State and the Church deployed the same political, religious or scientific arsenal that they had acquired in France when they were trying to understand or solve the problems and dangers caused by the presence of a massive poor population.

By analyzing the individual stories of the children, I contribute to our understanding of the history of slavery and emancipation on several levels. First, these stories show that for the Fathers, “freedom” did not necessarily entitle the African boys to independence and equality. The racial paradigm allowed the missionaries to think that the boys’ free legal status did not give them the right to choose where they lived, how they organized their social lives, or their professions. This perception complicates our understanding of freedom and servitude in the nineteenth century as binary concepts. As for the boys, their discourse was dual. On the one hand, they replicated the colonial trope by acknowledging the superiority of European civilization and despising Arabs and Africans when they became missionaries themselves. On
the other hand, they challenged imperial hierarchies by resisting when their teachers treated them like servile beings. By exploring the interactions between the missionaries and the boys, as well as the conflicts between the White Fathers and the French State, I show that children, rather than being at the periphery of imperial projects, were a central concern for colonial powers. The experience of these children in the colonies was also closely tied to French policies towards the urban poor in the metropole.

At the same time as Lavigerie’s missionaries were implementing their abolitionist agenda, the French State faced increasing court cases of women and teenagers who had been captured when they were very young and were unlawfully enslaved in Tunis. Confidential diplomatic correspondence and reports by officials of the French government in Tunisia reveal how the agents of the state understood the abolition decree, and how their perceptions of race and class impacted the lives of black people in the colonies. The documents also shed light on the power dynamics of domestic slavery, by showing that the brutal physical and psychological violence slaves endured during their captivity could still threaten them after they escaped their masters’ homes. I use these sources to reconstruct individual experiences of slavery and liberation, and through them, the social and political world in which slaves and former slaves lived. From that perspective, the dissertation contributes to North American, and more recently, Middle Eastern historiography’s effort to shed light on the violence of domestic slavery.\(^{20}\)

B. Microhistory

While abolition was a formal matter, defined by law and in principle supported by governments, the emancipation process unraveled through deeply personal commitments, on the part of slaves and former slaves, their masters, European abolitionists and French administrators. The dissertation studies these personal narratives within the historical forces that defined them, by relying on the methods of micro-history.

The genre of micro-history emerged in the 1970s, when early modern historians began looking for innovative ways to study the lives and agency of ordinary people, such as peasants and artisans, whose voices are often absent from academic work. Micro-history focuses on events which on the surface seem inconsequential beyond the microcosm in which they take place, such as a family, a neighborhood, or a small village nestled in the Pyrenees. The micro-historian’s dual task is to create a rich narrative that reconstitutes the world in which the stories’ characters lived and to connect it to the historical forces that shaped it.21 Early modern scholar Edward Muir compared the micro-historian’s craft to “Sherlock Holmes’ knack for noticing the apparently trivial” to solve mysteries.22 The method’s objective is to bring to the fore people whose lives tend to remain on the margins of historical inquiries because they left little or no written traces.

While the experiences of ordinary people are often at the heart of the micro-historical project, it also illuminates the intricate ways in which governments and religious establishments exercised

22 Muir, vii.
their power. The gap between what authorities contend they do and what they actually can, or are willing, to do, constitutes the lived reality of history. The dissertation examines the quotidian mechanics of authority through the minute interactions between powerful individuals and the people subject to their power. It emphasizes the multiple levels of negotiation, compromise, and violence that shaped the lives of enslaved children once slavery became illegal. The dissertation’s purpose is to contextualize and analyze the combined impact of abolitionist ideals, imperial social politics, French social reform projects in the metropole, and the tensions between Church and State on the life of the children between slavery and freedom, as well as on the social world they created for themselves.

Writing a micro-history of slavery is an arduous task. Very few slaves reached the notoriety of Harriett Tubman or Frederick Douglass and left written accounts of their lives. The fragmentary nature of the evidence about enslaved persons has led historians to favor accounts on larger groups. They used individuals as examples to illustrate larger trends rather than making them the core of analysis. It was not until recently that specialists of the Atlantic world turned to micro-history to study slavery. Though less famous than Tubman or Douglass, the people appearing in these books usually had an exceptional life, because they were religious leaders, were connected to prominent white families, became public figures after abolition, or were involved in famous trials.

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23 Muir, xxi.
In the past twenty years, scholars of the Middle East and North Africa have begun to experiment in micro-history.\textsuperscript{25} The pioneering research of Ehud Toledano, Eve Troutt Powell and Benjamin Brower indicates how studying the life journeys of individual slaves can shed light on the traumatic experiences of slavery and emancipation between sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt, the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the nineteenth century. Although they used individual destinies to illustrate arguments rather than to reconstruct the social worlds in which they lived, their work takes fragmented biographical information to reconstruct a larger narrative about slavery and emancipation.

My dissertation follows this historiographical path. Due to the fragmented nature of the sources, all the stories I tell in the following chapters are incomplete and rely to a considerable degree on hypotheses carefully checked against the evidence. When a prince of the Church resolved that freed boys should study medicine, or when a French judge chose to put a sixteen-year old victim of slavery in prison, how can we understand and interpret their decisions? What do their actions tell us about the emancipation process in North Africa? How do they nuance our understanding of power relations in the French empire? The objective is to “[identify] the

\textsuperscript{25} For examples of microhistory in Middle Eastern studies, see: Iris Agmon, \textit{Family & Court: Legal Culture and Modernity in Late Ottoman Palestine} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006); Nelly Hanna, \textit{Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Ismail Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant}. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Cem Behar, \textit{A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasal Ilyas Mahalle} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); Dana Sadji, \textit{The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).
complex motifs that connect an individual to an historically determinate environment and society.”

C. Historiography

To answer these questions and picture the choices people had within the social and mental framework in which they lived, I draw on the scholarship of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa, French social history, and missionary work. Moreover, the dissertation is heavily indebted to the historiography of slavery in the Americas and the Atlantic world, where historians have for a long time studied the methods of coercion that replaced the system of slavery after abolition. The principal methodological difficulty is to use the conceptual breakthroughs in American historiography while recognizing that slave systems across the world were not all the same. The integration of fields (Atlantic world, metropolitan France, and North Africa) that academia has often kept separate is a contribution to an understanding of slavery in the MENA region within a global context.

Within that global context, the dissertation analyzes France’s attitudes towards slavery partly as an extension of the State’s and the Church’s policies towards the white French working class in the metropole. The decade during which Lavigerie began thinking about the doctor-missionary project was a turning point in French political history. After the terrible defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1870, the Second Empire of Napoleon III (1852-1870) gave way to the Third Republic, which lasted until 1940, when a third war against the Germans tore Europe apart. The

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26 Ginzburg. xxiv.
political and social tensions that characterized fin-de-siècle France had a defining impact on experiences of slave emancipation in the colonial empire.

The events of the early 1870s in many ways set the tone for the following two decades. After the fall of the Second Empire and the deeply humiliating peace negotiations with the Prussians, the newly formed French republican government was led by conservatives, many of whom were working towards the restoration of the monarchy. When the French army was retaking possession of Paris after the departure of the Prussian troops, the poor among the people of Paris assembled in the streets and violently defied the government, in a movement that became known as the Commune. The ensuing confrontation was one of the bloodiest episodes of modern French history. The anti-government forces, who among other demands wanted a democratic, representative republican regime that would address social inequality, clashed with the army in May 1871. When the government launched its final military campaign against the communards, thousands of people (the estimates vary between 17,000 and 35,000), including children, lost their lives in the streets of the capital at the hands of the military and during summary executions. Even though members of the middle class had to a certain extent participated in the Commune, government repression mainly targeted the working class, based on social markers such as the accent (the inhabitants of the poor neighborhoods of Paris had a distinct way of speaking) or the roughness of a person’s hand (indicating that they were used to manual labor). Since the government suspected Russians, Germans and Poles of having instigated the Commune, Eastern Europeans who were caught on the street were often summarily executed. In historian John Merriman’s words, “you could be
gunned down simply because of you were."\textsuperscript{27} While Merriman sees this as a precursor of the mass killings of the twentieth century, my dissertation suggests that this is also an indicator of the connections between the ways in which the government perceived and treated poor people in the metropole and indigenous people in the colonies.

A contemporary even compared the merciless chase and killing of the communards to the search for fugitive slaves in the United States.\textsuperscript{28} As Alice Bullard argued in \textit{Exile to Paradise},

> the killings in the last week of battle combined with the mass exile of the condemned to New Caledonia amounted to a social cleansing of Paris. The Parisian working class was decimated in these events. In stark contrast to the revolution of 1789, in which the strength of the nation had lain in its people, the Third Republic began its life by denying that the people of Paris carried intrinsic moral authority. At the birth of the Third Republic the civilizing process effectively created a large group of ‘savages’.\textsuperscript{29}

After the Commune, when the conservatives mercilessly crushed the partisans of social reform, the political landscape became dominated by middle class elected officials whose political projects embraced the interests of their socio-economic peers, at the detriment of the urban working class. Two groups emerged victorious from the political battles of the 1870s: the bourgeoisie and the rural notables. Since the countryside was home to the majority of the population (67.5% in 1876, 61% twenty years later)\textsuperscript{30}, a government that was elected through universal male suffrage had a vested interest in catering to its electorate. The aristocracy had succeeded in maintaining a relatively powerful (if marginal) social and political presence, but only because it had established


\textsuperscript{28} Merriman, \textit{Massacre}, 209.


\textsuperscript{30} Jean-Marie Mayeur, \textit{Les débuts de la Troisième République} (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 73
familial and business alliances with the bourgeoisie. Unsettled by industrialization, a pervasive social and political culture categorized the growing class of urban workers as dangerous rabble. The working hours, always long and often painful, the squalid housing conditions, and the ensuing health problems show how low the workers ranked in the Republic’s priorities. Though in principle equal before the law, in the social universe of the late nineteenth century, only men who had access to private property or who were self-employed were first class citizens. The factory workers were the victims of a merciless “social segregation.” In other words, the Third Republic’s political stability was based on a rigid class structure.\textsuperscript{31}

In that context, the juxtaposition of equality and freedom in the republican motto (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) capture a fundamental contradiction in the structure of France’s political regime in the late nineteenth century. While the Revolution of 1789 had in many ways been an aspiration towards a symbiotic relationship between Freedom and Equality, the Second and Third Republics were both torn apart by tensions between the partisans of “equality”, understood as social and economic equality, and the conservative supporters of “liberty”, which they defined as libertarianism and laissez-faire economics.\textsuperscript{32}

Moreover, unlike Bismarck’s Germany, the Third Republic was very parsimonious in its welfare policies. Child labor legislation constitutes a tragically eloquent example. The law of May 19, 1874, banned employers from hiring workers under the age of twelve. But it remained legal for factories to make children toil for twelve hours a day, and to assign night shifts to boys over sixteen. It took the Republic all of twenty years to elevate the legal working age of children to


\textsuperscript{32}Azema and Winock, 80
thirteen, and limit the number of daily work hours to ten. It was not until 1898 that the law forced employers to take responsibility for the medical fees of workers who had been injured in the workplace.\textsuperscript{33} As the end of the century unfolded and workers relentlessly fought abuses through unions, lobbying, strikes and demonstrations, the successive governments treated these aspirations towards social equality as threats to the very existence of the Republic. Two prominent historians of the period noted that “one of the greatest paradoxes of French history is that this regime based on the Revolution’s principles was unable to provide workers with a generous social legislation.”\textsuperscript{34}

In the context of the Republic’s governments’ failure to effectively protect the economic and social rights of its population’s poorest segments in the nineteenth century, a vast movement of social reform, spanning from the conservative to the liberal extremes of the ideological spectrum, emerged in the 1870s and became a central element of the country’s political life. Aiming at simultaneously helping and controlling the poor, it was a departure from earlier forms of philanthropy because of its scientific claims. It relied on methods of knowledge and expertise based on medicine and social sciences such as economics, sociology and criminology. Moreover, it criticized traditional charity for addressing the consequences rather than the roots of the “social question.” Reforming the school, the hospital, the prison, insurance, habitations for low-income families, work legislation, prostitution, and orphanages became the subject of numerous scholarly and journalistic publications, lectures and conferences. Men and women involved in reform belonged to a loose cluster of social circles, clubs, organizations, schools and churches. Historian Christian Topalov described these networks as a “nébuleuse,” to emphasize the complexities and

\textsuperscript{33} Mayeur, \textit{Les débuts de la Troisième République}, 73.
\textsuperscript{34} Azema and Winock, 198-199.
imperviousness of ties which were both institutional and personal. Organizations aiming at social reform, such as the Société Générale des Prisons or the Société Française des Habitations à Bon Marché, gained prominence during the last three decades of the century. The elitism of these organizations gave them access to the government, and they acted as pressure groups and advisors. Moreover, through publications, lecture tours and congresses, they could influence public opinion. As my dissertation will show, this nébuleuse shaped the political rise of politicians, colonial administrators and members of the clergy who were involved in the emancipation process in North Africa.

Until the mid-1990s, the historiography of the Third Republic tended to focus on the important questions of institutions, economic development and labor politics. Beginning in the 1990s, however, the social reform movement has become a central subject of study. By looking at the archives of reform organizations, religious congregations, publications by reformers, conference proceedings and personal letters and memoirs, historians have developed analyses of the Third Republic that recognized the interaction between civil society and the State in the elaboration and execution of social reform. This focus shed light on the role of women, who were simultaneously targets of welfare projects and participants in their elaboration and execution. Gender based studies of the Third Republic illuminated the importance of women in the public sphere, the participation


of Catholic and Protestant caritative associations (in which women were very active) in reform projects, as well as the international dimension of reformist work, through the study of congresses collaboratively organized by women from European countries and the United States.\textsuperscript{37}

Social reform contributed to defining political legitimacy in the nascent Third Republic. The clergy and the aristocracy, who had thrived under the monarchy and the Second Empire, lost much of their political power under the Republic, and relied on their involvement in social reform to maintain a presence in the public sphere, and cultivate connections with the government.\textsuperscript{38} In a parallel development, the new republican elites, who lacked the legitimacy that tradition and lineage could confer, became involved in social reform to build their social capital. Moreover, their projects, though they were in many ways innovative, built on ideas put forward under the Second Empire. While at first social reform triggered the Church’s opposition, the clergy rallied it because it realized it could regain its legitimacy on the national scene. Though the Third Republic was in many ways a rupture with the country’s political past, the formation of this reformist cluster connected the past to the present through individuals, institutions, and projects. During the 1880s

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\item The aristocracy maintained a degree of influence over government affairs through marriage with the upper bourgeoisie, as well as its presence in the diplomatic and military corps.
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and culminating in the 1890s, the new ideal of social reform was based on the collaboration between private organizations and the government. While the Third Republic became increasingly anti-clerical in the nineteenth century, in practice the implementation of reform projects at the local level required the participation of the clergy.\textsuperscript{39}

Historians have long suggested a contrast between Church and State cooperation on imperialism, and their conflict in metropolitan France, but the new historiography on social reform in the Third Republic shows how Church and State cooperated in certain sectors of French life, even as they fought over control of education. Through the reformist \textit{nébuleuse}, members of the Catholic elite participated both in the elaboration of the welfare policies, and once they were promulgated by the government, in their implementation. The government did neither have the means nor the infrastructure to implement social reform projects without the participation of the clergy. In that sense, there were continuities between the Second Empire and the Third Republic, both in the colonies and at home.\textsuperscript{40}


The connections between private and public welfare work allows us to nuance the narrative of state centralization in the nineteenth century. The nation state developed control over its territory, through the expansion and increased centralization of the bureaucratic apparatus, technological advances (such as an extensive, faster railway system), public education and the spread of French as the national language.\textsuperscript{41} Church and State fought a war to the death over control of primary education. The Ferry laws (1882) inaugurated a conflict that arguably reached its conclusion with the secularization law of 1905.\textsuperscript{42} At the same time, the clergy and lay Catholics cooperated with many of these secular forces in French metropolitan society with respect to social “reform” based on conservative values by no means at odds with those of the Church. The regeneration of prisoners through work, the moralization of working class women, or support for traditional family values were part of a common core of objectives that Church and State could cooperate to reach.\textsuperscript{43}

This social conservatism was exported to the colonies with the agents of the French state, and had a deep impact on the emancipation process. The Third Republic inaugurated its rule in Algeria by violence that paralleled the repression of the Communards. Between the beginning of

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the conquest in 1830 and the fall of the Second Empire, Algeria was under military rule. The consolidation of French power turned Algeria into a settler colony where the French administration exercised direct rule and replaced indigenous structures of power. In 1848, a decree made Algeria into three French départements. When Napoleon III’s regime was falling in 1870, the French settlers of the colony used the ensuing instability to promote their economic and political interests, leading to the replacement of military by civilian rule. During the transition, the French appropriated half a million hectares of land. In January 1871, rightly fearing that, unlike the military, the civilian regime would be unwilling to integrate local leadership in its governing structure, and that the land spoliation would continue, 200,000 people rose against the French. The insurrection lasted a year and ended with France’s victory. The ensuing repression was sanguinary: the republican government killed or imprisoned 20,000 people among the Arabs and Kabyles, branding the rebels and their supporters as savages who had defied the forces of civilization.44

Tunisia was an autonomous regency of the Ottoman empire until 1881, but French presence in Algeria, as well as economic and diplomatic influence by Great Britain and Italy, constantly weakened its government and undermined its sovereignty. In 1830, the bey had to submit to the Capitulations system, which gave Europeans economic and commercial advantages and allowed their consulates to exercise judiciary rights over their own nationals and their protégés among the local population. In the late 1860s, debt accumulation put the Tunisian economy under the

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authority of an International Financial Commission. In 1881, alleging that Tunisia was the base of attacks against Algeria, France sent its army across the border, and forced the bey to sign the treaty of Bardo (reinforced by the Treaty of La Marsa in 1883), establishing the French Protectorate over Tunisia. As in Algeria, tensions opposed the army to the civilian administration, the latter ultimately prevailing. Unlike in Algeria, the indigenous government remained in place, but it fell under French control. A French official, the Résident Général, reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, simultaneously represented France in the Protectorate and acted as the bey’s Foreign Minister. The Résident also headed the bey’s council of ministers and prepared legislative documents that the Tunisian ruler had to sign, therefore effectively depriving him of his sovereignty.45

When France’s rule over Tunisia became official in 1881, the Italians and the British continued to challenge Paris’ claims of sovereignty over a country strategically located between the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean. Moreover, the competition over the control of Tunisia took place in a larger context of the strife between European nations in Africa. In 1884-1885, European, US, and Ottoman diplomats (in the absence of any representative of African countries) met during the Berlin Conference to negotiate the rule of conquest, in order to avoid future conflicts between Europeans that would disturb the fragile equilibrium established in 1815. The conference failed to put an end to the violent competition for land and influence, inaugurating a period of intensified

struggle between the British and the French, leading to serious fears of protracted armed conflict during the Fashoda incident in 1898.46

In historian Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison’s words, France’s actions in Algeria (and arguably in the rest of its African empire) between the conquest and decolonization in the twentieth century, were the “blood wedding” of colonialism with republicanism and liberalism.47 Following Hannah Arendt’s study of the imperial origins of Europe’s totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century, the historiography of colonialism has argued that governments applied to their people at home the forms of brutal coercion and repression that they had developed in their overseas territories.48 By studying the question of child welfare and slave emancipation in North Africa, my dissertation shows how, within that larger context, methods of institutionalized violence and coercion also crossed the Mediterranean from North to South.

To contextualize these complex issues, the first chapter of the dissertation explores the historical context in which France abolished slavery in 1848 and the evolution of the Church’s stance on human bondage in the course of the nineteenth century. The story of abolition took place in the Caribbean, the metropole and Africa, and involved slaves, planters, anti-slavery activists, government officials and the clergy. Unlike in Great Britain, where a massive wave of popular support carried anti-slavery legislation, in France, abolitionism remained a largely marginal movement which only succeeded because of pressure by the British, the resolve of a

46 Manceron, Mariannes et les colonies, 146-153.
handful of French activists, the political contingencies of the 1848 revolution, and the determination of the slaves in the West Indies.

While the Catholic Church further weakened the anti-slavery movement by opposing liberation in France’s American possessions, the Vatican as well as the French clergy espoused abolitionism in Africa beginning in the 1840s. The chapter analyzes this divergence in the context of the Vatican’s ambitions within European imperialism, and therefore situates the White Fathers’ work in a geographical framework that extends beyond North Africa and the metropole.

The following three chapters analyze how this original reluctance towards abolition on the part of the French government and the clergy contributed to a slow, hesitant process of emancipation which unfolded over a half century, and shaped the lives of enslaved African children in Algeria and Tunisia under the colonial rule of the Third Republic.

Chapter II traces the origins of Cardinal Lavigerie’s doctor-missionary project to his failure to convert large numbers of Muslim Algerian children in the 1860s and 1870s. The French government in Algeria expected missionaries to cater to the spiritual needs of the European population and to offer medical and educational services. It forbade the clergy from attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity, fearing political unrest if the colonized population interpreted proselytism as an attack against Islam. After a devastating famine and deadly epidemics struck the Algerian population in the late 1860s, hundreds of children became orphans, and depended on charity for their survival. The colonial state, unable to afford to feed and shelter them, delegated their care to Lavigerie’s clergy, under the express condition that he would not proselytize. Lavigerie publicly accepted the condition but in reality instructed the priests and
nuns to discretely teach their wards the principles of the Christian faith. When he realized that both the children and their communities staunchly resisted his efforts, he turned to a population he considered to be more malleable, and beyond the control of the French State: enslaved African children he would buy out of slavery from clandestine markets in Algeria, convert, and send to Malta to train as doctors and missionaries.

The third chapter reconstructs the lives of these children from their boyhood to their young adult age, and through their experiences analyzes the implication of French notions of race and class for the emancipation process. The chapter emphasizes the connections between social reform policies in the metropole, directed at poor white children, and formerly enslaved boys in North Africa. The White Fathers’ archives, which include letters between the priests and their superiors, as well as the correspondence of the pupils, illuminate the impact of the tensions between Church and State, the Church’s imperial ambitions in Africa, as well as of a deeply entrenched belief in the innate racial and social inferiority of Africans, on French understandings of freedom for Africans. My findings suggest that the White Fathers’ brand of imperialism was based on a vision of Arabs and Africans as inferior beings who nevertheless had a potential for progress. The boys’ correspondence provides a rare historiographical opportunity to hear children’s voices during the emancipation process, offering a glimpse into the quotidian exercise of power within the system of coercion that replaced slavery after abolition in the French Empire.

The final chapter examines the consequences girls and women faced in Tunisia between the late 1880s and the early 1890s when they challenged this post-abolition system of coercion by going to court to demand that the Republic abided by its promise of freedom. Three of these
court cases triggered journalistic attention and reached international prominence. The press articles, as well as the diplomatic correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and officials of the Protectorate, offer fragmented but valuable insight into the emancipation process. The first case was a complaint by a sixteen-year old girl called Fathma, who had endured enslavement and abuse at the hands of a wealthy Algerian émigré, member of Tunis’ municipal council. The other two cases involved the slaves of two prominent Tunisian families, related to the bey, and who had suffered from, in addition to the illegal deprivation of their freedom, severe physical and psychological torture. While the prominence of the families involved and their ties to the ruling dynasty make these cases exceptional, they provide, in Robert Darnton’s words, “points of entry” that allow us to study the social world in which they take place.

In these four chapters, my dissertation addresses the question of freedom in post-abolition societies by arguing that the lived experiences of freed slaves in North Africa after 1848 were steeped in servitude. Marc Bloch lamented that “men failed to change their vocabulary every time they change their customs.”49 Scholars of North African slavery and abolition face the opposite problem: a radical change in the semantics of black labor obscured the permanence of old traditions of servitude during the period of emancipation. The objective of my dissertation is to emphasize this permanence, examine its logic, and analyze the experiences of enslaved and formerly enslaved children outside the discursive framework of triumphant imperial philanthropy under the Third Republic.

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49 Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft* (New York : Knopf, 1953), 34
CHAPTER I: A TALE OF THREE CONTINENTS: THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE FRENCH EMPIRE

A. Introduction

In the 1850s, Alexandre Dumas, author of the *Three Musketeers*, narrated an encounter that reflects a deep social fear that had tenacious roots in France’s violent relationship with slavery. In his inimitable style, he told in his memoirs a story that took place during the *Trois Glorieuses* revolution of 1830, a few weeks after the French monarchy had initiated the conquest of Algeria. During an attack on a fort, Dumas warned the military commander who was trying to block his entrance:

"Beware, Monsieur!" I said to him: "I am going to count the seconds "; and after a pause I began, "One, two, three! …" At this moment a side door opened and a woman burst into the room in a paroxysm of terror. "Oh! Mon ami, yield! yield!" she cried; "it is a second revolt of the negroes!" And, saying this, she gazed at me with terrified eyes. "Monsieur," began the commander of the fort, "out of regard for my wife ... " Monsieur," I replied, "I have the most profound respect for Madame, but I too have a mother and a sister and hope, therefore, you will have the goodness to send Madame away, so that we can thrash this matter out between men alone." "Mon ami!" Madame de Liniers continued to implore, " yield! Yield! I beg you! Remember my father and mother, both massacred in Saint-Domingue! " I had not until then understood what she meant by her words, "It is a second revolt of the negroes! " She had taken me for a negro, from my fuzzy hair and complexion, burnt deep brown by three days' exposure to the sun and by my faintly Creole accent, if, indeed, I had any accent at all, from the hoarseness that had seized me. She was beside herself with terror, and her fright was easily understood; for I learnt, later, that she was a daughter of M. and Madame de Saint-Janvier, who had been mercilessly killed under her very eyes during the Cap Revolt. 50

Alexandre Dumas’s father, Thomas-Alexandre, was born a slave in Saint-Domingue to a French marquis and a female black slave called Marie-Cessette Dumas. His father later manumitted him and took him to the metropole. After falling out with him, the young man adopted his mother’s last name. He married a white French woman; their son, Alexandre, became one of France’s most celebrated writers. First published under the Second Empire between 1852 and 1855, this episode in Dumas’ autobiography illustrates an element of French culture that had a lasting impact on colonial policies all through the nineteenth century.

Madame de Liniers’ visceral reaction to Dumas’ presence at the fort reflects more than a personal trauma. The revolution in Saint-Domingue had put France face to face with every colonizer’s greatest fear: the uncompromising, sanguinary and successful uprising of those they had wanted weak and helpless, and from whose subservience they had derived the prestige that was an essential currency in the political economy of international relations.51

The Haitian revolution prompted the legislators of the First Republic to ban slavery in 1794. This first abolition was short lived: Napoleon I, in an effort to protect France’s economy and reestablish its prestige as a colonial power, reinstated slavery in 1802. Forty-six years later, in the wake of the revolutionary wave that swept Europe, the Republic born in Paris formally abolished slavery in the French Empire a second time. By law, all slaves who lived and worked on French imperial soil were free. However, for decades, well into the twentieth century, abolition remained a contested victory all over the empire, from the West Indies to Africa. The situation would extend South with the Saharan penetration, and further East when Tunisia became French in the 1880s.

In North Africa, the French administration adopted a dual approach: officially, slavery was wrong and France no longer tolerated it on its territories; unofficially, in the distant oases of the Sahara and behind the closed doors of homes in Algiers, Tunis, and other urban centers, thousands of people remained enslaved. As for those who benefitted from the abolition decree and became legally free, the meaning of freedom and the experience of emancipation underwent a long period of negotiation based on economics, geopolitical considerations, and perceptions of Africans that combined racial and class discrimination. The actors involved were the slaves and former slaves, the Algerian and Tunisian masters, as well as representatives of the French State and of the Catholic Church, who sent missionaries to Africa with the objective of fighting slavery and converting Africans to Christianity.

The objective of this chapter is to explain the historical origins of this slow, hesitant process of emancipation. The roots of the problem were in the economic importance of slavery for the French West Indies through the 1840s, the political weight of the planters, the interests of the monarchy, the legacy of the Haitian revolution, rivalry with Great Britain, as well as the strong support the Catholic Church lent to the institution of slavery and serfdom between the Middle Ages and the mid-nineteenth century, in Europe as well as the Americas.

The first section of the chapter addresses the historical process that led to the second abolition of 1848. When the French National Assembly of the First Republic, born to the Revolution, banned slavery in 1794, the law reflected the efforts of a very small group of abolitionists as well as faith in the abstract principle of freedom. It did not stem from a widespread belief in the immorality of
human bondage.\textsuperscript{52} After the reinstatement of slavery and following the fall of Napoleon, the reluctance of the Restauration (1814-1830) and July Monarchy (1830-1848) governments to put an end to slavery was the product of political factors as well as concern for the economic prosperity of the empire. When the Second Republic banned slavery in 1848, political, rather than economic considerations dictated this decision.\textsuperscript{53}

The second part of the chapter analyzes the widespread opposition to French abolition within the Catholic Church. While the British and American abolitionist movements benefitted from the backing of various Protestant churches, Catholics remained, with a few significant exceptions, at the margins of French abolitionism. The French clergy argued for the education and catechization of slaves to better their lives, but believed that liberation would prove detrimental to both the slaves and the colonies. In that context, projects for the Christian education of enslaved children emerged among the priests and nuns of the West Indies. However, in the early 1840s, at the same time as the Vatican and the overwhelming majority of the clergy, in France and abroad, still defended slavery in the Americas, Catholic missionaries were initiating anti-slavery activity in sub-Saharan Africa, among the populations they encountered in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, with the fervent support of the Holy See. Like in the Americas, they promoted the education of black children, but, remarkably, also levied funds to buy them out of slavery. The striking dissonance between the attitude of the Church in the West Indies and in Africa suggests avenues for future research, which this chapter will address.

The third section of the chapter situates North African slavery and emancipation in the larger context of the French Empire. I argue that while administrators and military commanders framed their reluctance towards implementing the abolition decree in North Africa as a response to the diktats of Islamic and Arab cultures, their actions and hesitations were in reality consistent with French actions and hesitations all over the Empire, including West Africa and the West Indies.

B. The Abolitionist Movement in the French Empire

After the fall of Napoleon in 1814, the newly restored monarchy of the Bourbons had to accept British conditions to allow France to return to the international diplomatic arena. Under pressure from London, King Louis XVIII (1814-1824) had no choice but to sign a decree banning French ships from taking part in the slave trade. The formal ban, however, had no real impact. Both the planters and the colonial merchants from Bordeaux and Nantes who had built their wealth on the slave and sugar trades ignored the law, as did the government officials on the islands. Many high-ranking bureaucrats, such as the Minister of the Navy (1818-1821) or a Prime Minster (1821-1828), were drawn from the ranks of the planters and merchants and had a vested interest in the perpetuation of the slave trade. Moreover, the military institution, on which the kings relied heavily, supported slavery as well. In a period when the monarchy’s legitimacy was under constant attack, they did not want to challenge supporters who had remained loyal through the numerous upheavals of the previous thirty years. Under the Restauration, after the ban of the slave trade, the French sent over 125,000 captives from Africa to the Antilles in 700 shipments.54

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A small anti-slavery society called *La Société de la morale chrétienne* (the Society of Christian Morality) was founded in 1827 by liberal Catholic aristocrats. The organization adopted a gradualist approach to abolition. Just like the early British abolitionist movement, it focused on the slave trade rather than on slavery, insisting on the need to protect the property rights of slave owners. While the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had built its success partly through appeal to the masses, the *Société de la morale chrétienne* remained an elitist organization. Its membership was numerically small, limited to wealthy members of the bourgeoisie and nobility (it boasted 186 members in 1825). Many of these members became part of the government of the July Monarchy, which replaced the more conservative, authoritarian regime of the Restauration after the liberal revolution in 1830 (during which Alexandre Dumas met Madame de Liniers at the fort).  

As a result, the new government implemented measures of the Société’s gradualist program: a strict application of the ban on the slave trade, facilitation of the manumission process by eliminating the exorbitant tax the State used to make slaves pay for their liberation, and, to ameliorate the lives of slaves, a financial contribution for their education and Christianization. The government also agreed to allow the British to conduct searches of French boats suspected of carrying slaves. Though the number of manumissions rose in the 1830s and 1840s, the new measures did little to alleviate the harsh conditions of enslavement.

Moreover, despite the implementation of gradualist and ameliorationist measures, the abolitionist cause remained suspicious in the eyes of many in France because it was connected to

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56 Blackburn, 487-488.
Great Britain and Protestantism. London had established itself as the champion of the abolitionist cause in the world, and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society virulently criticized France for its failure to uphold humanitarian principles. When Great Britain abolished slavery in its empire in 1833 (with the notable exception of India), the French government began worrying about the potential reverberations in the Antilles. It feared missionaries would also be inspired by the British example and preach the virtues of freedom to the captives they encountered on the plantations. In addition to setting an example the French feared, the British right of search antagonized the French, who saw it as a breach of national sovereignty and an insult to national honor. The French often considered that by pressuring them into banning slavery, and most importantly by imposing the right of search on the seas, Britain threatened their sovereignty. The right of search, which remained in place until 1845, turned to be in all probability one of the most harmful impediments to the abolitionist cause.

Moreover, as David Brion Davis argued in *Slavery and Human Progress*, memories of the Haitian revolution haunted the projects of abolitionists, who wanted to thwart off the dangers of a

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57 Blackburn, 475-495.
58 Before 1833, British abolitionists focused their efforts on Africa and the West Indies, and tended to consider that slavery in India was a humane institution. Moreover, the East India Company (EIC) feared that immediate abolition would endanger India’s economic prosperity and alienate the local elites, on whose cooperation the British relied to rule. As a result, Parliament did not include India in the 1833 abolition act, trusting the EIC to implement gradual measures that would ultimately lead to the end of human bondage in the subcontinent. However, during the following decade, the EIC was reluctant to abide by its anti-slavery commitment. In 1843, under pressure from the influential British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and Parliament, the EIC passed the Indian Slavery Act, which stated that slavery was no longer a recognized institution in India. The Act remained a dead letter because British administrators systematically turned a blind eye on the perpetuation of slavery. See Andrea Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772-1843* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012) and Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
similar uprising in other colonies or in the United States. Similarly, Seymour Drescher pointed out that French abolitionists needed to ensure the threat of social disorder did not taint slave liberation projects. French abolitionists operated within a restricted framework that did not allow for any policies that might threaten property rights or law and order, and had to adapt their projects to the fears the Haitian revolution had caused.

Critics of the July Monarchy, such as the eminent man of letters and future president of the republic Alphonse de Lamartine, argued that failure to address the issue of slavery was detrimental to the government’s credibility, since it proclaimed principles and refused to abide by them in practice. Lamartine connected the issue of slavery to the failure of the government to address socio-economic equalities in the metropole, and believed that it undermined its legitimacy. A new anti-slavery society, with a more immediatist approach, was created in 1834. Its creation followed closely the liberation of slaves in British territory. Among its most prominent members were Lamartine, Alexis de Tocqueville and Victor Hugo. Victor Schoelcher, a fervent abolitionist,

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61 David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, 115. A notable exception to the literature on helpless black slaves in need of white saviors was the work of Abbé Raynal, an eighteenth-century French abolitionist (and former Catholic priest) who wrote in 1770 that slaves in the Americas needed a Spartacus drawn from their own ranks. See David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 47 and 173.


63 In 1826, Hugo published a novel entitled *Bug-Jargal* set in 1791 Saint-Domingue at the beginning of the revolution. The main character, a plantation slave named Pierrot, was one of the leaders of the
became an outspoken militant for immediate liberation, believing that both gradualism and ameliorationism had failed. During the decade leading to the 1848 Revolution, he tirelessly promoted an immediate end to human bondage. His pleas met a wall of staunch resistance from the colonial planters and merchants and their supporters in the government, and by a wall of either indifference or hostility from almost everybody else. The French abolitionist movement only appealed to a numerically and politically insignificant small group of supporters, and unlike its British counterpart, never attracted the political and financial support of the masses. Moreover, it was largely restricted to Paris, and to an even lesser extent, to Lyon, and was always limited to a small elite. It also remained, in the 1840s, with the exception of Schoelcher and a few of his followers, attached to the idea of gradualism. In 1847, the French abolitionist society circulated a petition calling for abolition: it had collected fewer than 13,000 signatures nationwide, a negligible proportion of public opinion. During the same year, the legislative assembly categorically refused to outlaw slavery in the colonies.

In that context, Schoelcher’s success in imposing the legal abolition of slavery was due to a combination of political forces and personal connections. In the upheaval of the 1848 revolution, he took advantage of his personal acquaintance with François Arago, the newly appointed Minister revolution under a secret identity (Bug-Jargal). He possessed the qualities of the romantic hero, such as honor and bravery, and sacrificed his life to save the white woman he loved from certain death. At the same time, Hugo portrayed revolutionaries in the novel as a mass of sanguinary savages, in a way that is possibly similar to his depictions of the French masses when they revolted in his other novels. Hugo was a royalist when he wrote the first version of Bug-Jargal at age 16. Later, he became a republican but was never a socialist, which perhaps partly accounts for his generally negative depiction of the masses. See Victor Hugo, Bug-Jargal (Paris: U. Canel, 1826).

64 Blackburn, 482-495. Gradualism an abolitionist strategy aiming at putting an end to slavery by banning the slave trade, and gradually cutting off the supply of forced labor. The objective of the ameliorationist strategy was to improve the living conditions of slaves.

65 Jennings, French Anti-Slavery, 230-289.
of the Marine and the Colonies, to convince him that would France not immediately abolish slavery, thousands of slaves, inspired by the revolutionary events in the metropole, would revolt in the West Indies. Since the government was weak and unstable, it was in the nation’s best interest to avoid a potentially successful, generalized uprising in the colonies. Laurent Dubois’ analysis of the impact of slave rebellions on the thinking of Enlightenment philosophers holds true for the nineteenth century as well. Dubois situated the emergence of a human rights discourse in Europe in the context of the Atlantic world. Slave resistance in the colonies forced Europeans to adapt how they ruled, which in turn caused them to adapt their perception of the people they ruled. These perceptions redefined ideas, on both sides of the Atlantic, about who was a person and, possibly a citizen. The Declaration of 1789 established a dualism between man and the citizen, the second enjoying more rights than the former. The fact that these ideas were communicated to us through the work of literate Europeans should not lead us to underestimate the contributions of slaves and freed persons who did not leave a written record.

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66 Jennings, French Anti-Slavery, 276-282.

67 See for example, “Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen de 1789,” Articles X and XI: anybody had the right to their opinions, but only citizens benefitted from the right to freely express them within the limits of the law.

68 Laurent Dubois. “An Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking the History of the French Atlantic,” Social History 31, no. 1 (February 2006): 1-14. On the impact of slave resistance on European abolitions, see Blackburn, 527. Not all historians accept that slave resistance was a major contributor to the development of abolition movements. Lawrence Jennings contended that slave resistance was never a real threat to the plantation economy and had as a result little bearing on the abolition movement in France. French abolitionists occasionally tried to pressure the government by arguing that slaves might revolt if they were not freed, but the strategy proved unsuccessful. It was only after slavery was abolished in 1848 that the threat of violence by slaves prompted the government to immediately apply the abolition decree rather than imposing a waiting period. See Jennings, French Anti-Slavery, 122-124. Christopher Brown argued that though prominent slaves and freed slaves were able to publicize the horrors of the slave trade and turn them into a “scandal” that served the abolitionist cause, their participation remained marginal in the development of British abolitionism in the eighteenth century. See Christopher Brown, Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 285-286. At the same time as these developments were taking place in the Atlantic world, notions of human rights
Because of what was happening at home and in the West Indies, abolition became the only solution. Arago wanted to wait until a National Assembly was elected, but Schoelcher insisted that the issue was urgent, that any delay would precipitate chaos and bloodshed. This argument prompted the government to commission the drafting of the decree and to sign it. Had Schoelcher not had influence over the minister, and had an Assembly been elected before his intervention, the abolitionist project might once again have been delayed.69

On April 27, 1848, the French Provisional Government signed the decree that put an end to the legal existence of human bondage: “slavery is entirely abolished in all French colonies and possessions.” Article 3 of the decree stated that “the governors and general commissairies of the Republic are in charge of applying all the necessary measures to ensure freedom in Martinique, Guadeloupe and their dependencies, on the Island of Réunion, in Guiana, Senegal and the other French establishments on the West Coast of Africa, on the Island of Mayotte and in Algeria.” The document’s preamble justified these measures by the idea that slavery was incompatible with “human dignity” and with “the republican dogma: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.”70

The provisional government affixed its stamp under these radical statements without the approval of a legislative assembly (none had yet been elected in April), and most importantly without any popular support. As historian Robin Blackburn argued, abolition took place at a time when the plantation economy was still profitable. France did not abolish slavery for economic

were slowly extending in Europe to integrate European “savages,” such as inhabitants of “uncivilized” regions such as Brittany, peasants, and the urban poor. Future research could shed light on the connections between the development of human rights notions for metropolitan and colonial “savages.”

69 Jennings, French Anti-Slavery, 230-289.

interest, or in the name of free trade, but as a response to political necessities both at home and in
the colonies.  

The ways in which the governments in Paris as well as the civil administrators and military in
the West Indies managed the implementation of the decree in the following six decades show that
this initial reluctance towards abolition lasted through the century and would later have deep
repercussions on the lives of slaves and former slaves on French soil, including in North Africa.
As the following chapters of the dissertation will argue, the attitudes and policies that characterized
French officials’ approaches to emancipation in the West Indies were later replicated in Algeria
and Tunisia. Beyond republican politics, abolition posed problems in connection with colonial
interests in the Caribbean. When Parisian salons, newspapers and parliamentary assemblies hosted
debates about abolition, practitioners of empire warned of the dangers the end of slavery and the
slave trade would entail for economic production and the social order. In the West Indies, planters
and traders argued, these problems were economic: slave labor as the foundation of the colonies’
prosperity. Without them, French cash crop production could no longer meet the world market’s
demand for sugar and coffee. Moreover, according to them, black people were naturally lazy: if
they were not forced to work, production would stop on the islands. Despite the government’s

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71 Blackburn, 505. For a long time, Eric Williams’ theory about the abolitionist movement as product of a
decline of the plantation economy, dominated the historiography, but historians have contested, or at least
complicated the connection between economics and abolitionism. Seymour Drescher, for example, argued
that colonial economy was prosperous when Great Britain put an end to bond labor. See Seymour
University Press, 2002). Stanley Engerman similarly argued that in Brazil, slavery ended because of
British pressure, not because of a decline in production. See Stanley Engerman, Slavery, Emancipation
72 Blackburn, 505. Even though slave labor was still profitable at the eve of abolition, the plantation
economy adapted to the end of the old forced labor system and remained prosperous in the second part of
the nineteenth century.

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sympathy for the planters, colonial officials in Martinique and Guadeloupe applied the abolition decree immediately after its promulgation. Originally, the government had planned an interval of several weeks before its implementation in order for the local authorities to have time to prepare the ground for emancipation. Enslaved workers themselves disrupted this schedule by demanding immediate liberation. In a volatile context, fearing a potential uprising, and still remembering the bloodshed of Saint-Domingue, the French opted to free the servile population without further delay.\textsuperscript{73}

The West Indies still needed cheap labor to sustain their sugar production, which was the basis for their prosperity. To replace bond labor, planters resorted to two strategies. The first one consisted in hiring former slaves as salaried workers. They would offer them low wages and impose harsh work conditions. The abuses, which were akin to those of slavery, caused widespread resistance among the workers. The planters had recourse to a second stratagem: they imported indentured servants from Asia and Africa.\textsuperscript{74} It was only after the British vociferously challenged the strategy that the French government banned it.

This indentured labor system was designed to satisfy abolitionists while meeting the demands of a plantation economy. In order to legitimize this practice, its apologists had recourse to the same rhetoric that had justified slavery: for instance, the African indentured servants would be freed from their native barbarity by landing in French territory and working for French employers. Moreover, the French expression that designated these men (\textit{engagés volontaires}) implied that


they joined the work force by their own volition. Between 1852 and 1861, the West Indies and the Réunion received almost 50,000 *engagés volontaires*. Few voices in France denounced this practice. Even within the French abolitionist circle, the *engagés volontaires* system appeared as a humanitarian and rational approach to the problem of production and economic profitability in the West Indies.\(^75\) Historians disagree about the implications of indentured servitude. Most scholars have compared the system to slavery. Others, such as Robert Steinfeld, Stanley Engerman and David Northrup, sought to nuance this assessment by arguing that “reading modern conceptions of freedom backward in time obfuscates understanding of the historical process by which ideas of free labor evolved […] The line between ‘free’ and ‘unfree’ labor is not self-evident or natural but is a legal and cultural convention that has been repositioned several times during the last two centuries…”\(^76\) By cautioning us against the temptations of anachronism, these historians pose two fundamental problems in the historiography of emancipation: what is freedom? What is free labor? As David Northrup wrote: “the key issue was not whether [Africans] had been freed in accordance to the law nor whether they had the right to choose among different post-emancipation fates, but whether they saw […] a step towards greater liberation or assented to it. The evidence for assessing their states of mind is limited.”\(^77\) These considerations can nuance the study of indentured labor, but also studies of the larger process of emancipation, because they challenge the freedom-slavery binary and shed light on the grey zones in between. Nevertheless, indentured servitude was, before

\(^{75}\) Cohen, 191.  
\(^{77}\) Northrup, 215
and after abolition, a brutal system of exploitation, based on violence, that left deep physical and psychological scars on the victims who survived its abuses.\textsuperscript{78}

These developments in both the West Indies and Africa were in no way historical accidents that forced the French government to deviate from the principle of abolition. The principle of abolition itself, as it was understood by most of the people who crafted and applied it, was based on the idea that the legal freedom of former slaves was in nature different from the freedom of white colonists. The commission that wrote the decree prepared a questionnaire for the consultants who assisted in the drafting process. Among the questions were the following: “Within which limits could the State force the freed person to take a given job? … What justifications could be requested from a slave in order for him not to be arrested as a vagrant?” The question regarding the work needed from former slaves was of particular interest to the commission. If “love” for the masters was not sufficient, which coercive methods could be used?\textsuperscript{79} In other words, they were discussing the legislative means through which they could maintain control over the former slaves’ labor after their juridical status had changed.

The repressive legal arsenal that the State developed in the colonies to control former slaves bore significant resemblances to the laws which controlled the movements of vagrants in


metropolitan France. Significantly, the legal framework that allowed the government in the colonies to arrest free black people for vagrancy had emerged in France during a period where the metropole was experiencing the impact of the Industrial Revolution. Republican and Napoleonic governments used the fight against vagrancy to show their populations that their rule entailed peace and security, not social anarchy. In that context, the government increasingly targeted men who did not have a fixed job and a documented Résidence. Not having a fixed address and living on the streets became a crime that allowed the State to arrest people who threatened social cohesion.\(^8^0\) That was the repressive legislation that the French government exported and adapted to the colonies to control former slaves, which emphasizes the connections between race and class, and between the metropole and the colonies. The racial and class prejudice that had legitimized slavery had to continue defining the work and lives of black people after 1848.

This brief overview of the impact of the decree in the French West Indies indicate that it reflected neither a firm commitment on the part of the government in favor of abolition nor a strong popular enthusiasm for the anti-slavery cause. In that sense, the Algerian and Tunisian cases fit within a larger pattern of the French State’s (in its monarchical and republican forms) reluctance towards emancipation in its colonies in America and Africa. The following section of the chapter will look at the attitudes towards the abolitionist process of the first half of the nineteenth century of another institution which would later become an important protagonist of the anti-slavery in North Africa: the Catholic Church.

**C. The Catholic Church and Abolition**

The general consensus among historians is that the Catholic Church did not, as an institution, support the movement that led to the abolition of 1848. The Vatican legalized the practice. As late as 1812, slaves, often Muslims captured during the battles between the Vatican and North African pirates, rowed the boats of the Holy See’s (and other European states’) navy in the Mediterranean. Throughout the Renaissance, domestic slavery remained a common practice in Catholic Italy, Portugal and Spain. The Vatican’s acceptance of the legitimacy of slavery is of crucial importance for an institution where dogma and practice were, at least in principle, centralized and disseminated from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy. The Catholic Church justified slavery by arguing that it put heathens in contact with Christians, and brought about the possibility of conversion and the salvation of their souls.

When Spain and Portugal, two important Catholic powers, conquered large empires in the Americas beginning in the fifteenth century, it was in part Catholic missionaries’ concern for the religious salvation of the Native Americans that led to the massive enslavement of black Africans. The intensive use of Indian slave labor by the Spanish and the Portuguese contributed

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84 Lehner, 181-182.
to the decimation of the autochthonous population. Dominican friar Bartolomeo de Las Casas, who worked on the island of Hispaniola, was a vocal advocate for the end of Indian slavery and its replacement with the importation of forced laborers from Africa. It would save the Indians from extinction and would, in the long term, civilize black slaves through Christianization. He did not cause the beginning of the African slave trade to the Americas, but contributed to its legitimization by the Church. The Spanish adopted the project with the support of the Vatican, and black slavery fueled the prosperity of the empire. In a similar fashion, when the French conquered Guadeloupe and Martinique in 1635, Guyana in 1677 and Saint-Domingue in 1697, they used black slave labor as well to man their plantations, since the demographic impact of European conquests on the Indian populations had also been catastrophic. Catholic congregations often owned slaves and relied on bond labor for their prosperity.85

To regulate the labor and lives of the empire’s servile population, which constituted the majority of the islands’ inhabitants, Louis XIV issued in 1685 an edict that defined the rights and obligations of masters and slaves: the Code Noir. It defined slaves as property, specified the physical punishments for offenses they committed (from whipping to the death penalty, depending on the nature of the offense), and imposed severe restrictions on the activities they could lawfully engage in (such as conducting business or travelling). At the same time, the Code Noir was the uncompromising expression of the monarchy’s Catholic allegiance. The first eleven articles affirmed the prominence of Catholicism over other religions, banned the practice of any other faith, and exiled Jews from the islands. It stated that the schedules of the slaves, as well as their marital and family lives, had to abide by Catholic principles and be sanctioned by Catholic

rituals (such as the sacraments of marriage and baptism). Moreover, the masters had the duty to ensure that their slaves received proper Christian education through catechism:

Article III: All the slaves who will be in our Islands will be baptized and instructed in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion. We charge the planters who will buy newly arrived nègres to inform the Governor and Intendant of the said islands within a week at the latest or face a discretionary fine, these [officials] will give the necessary orders to have them instructed and baptized within an appropriate time.  

In the nineteenth century, the planters and the clergy rarely applied the third article, though it was a central element of the Code’s stipulations. The priests and nuns often lived too far away from the plantations to have any contact with the slaves, and the owners tended to be reluctant to let slaves receive any sort of education, fearing it would encourage them to resistance and rebellion.  

It was not until the Church and the July Monarchy began to hesitantly embrace gradualism that the Code Noir’s rules pertaining to education became a priority.

Individual clerics at times opposed slavery, or at least its excesses, but their voices remained marginal and did not represent a wider ecclesiastical movement in favor of abolition. The clergy generally either opposed slave liberation or believed in a slow, gradualist approach, which in reality would indefinitely postpone emancipation. The planters, or at times their own superiors, punished those who defied the established order. Several factors account for the reluctance of the Catholic Church to embrace abolitionism in the first half of the nineteenth century. First,

abolitionists often leaned towards the liberal wing of French politics, while the Church tended to be conservative and in line with the monarchical government. The clergy viewed abolition as a challenge to the monarchy and refused to support a cause that would defy the king. Moreover, the clergy associated abolitionism with the troubled and violent times of the French and Haitian revolutions, when the Church’s power and legitimacy came under attack. The connection between the abolitionist movement and Abbé Grégoire, a revolutionary and a regicide, further alienated the clergy.\textsuperscript{88} It is also plausible that the Catholic Church did not want to identify with a movement Protestants had founded and shaped.

At the end of 1839, Pope Gregory XVI issued an apostolic declaration in which he condemned the slave trade and violence by masters against slaves. While Catholics in the late nineteenth century hailed this declaration as evidence that the Church had embraced abolitionism in its early days, in reality it did little to change the attitudes of the majority of the clergy. In 1846, the Seminary of the Holy Spirit, which trained the clerics sent to the colonies, still taught that slavery was an acceptable practice, compatible with Catholic theological beliefs. The Superior of the seminary sent a letter to a national periodical in which he proclaimed that supporting slavery was part of Catholic teachings.\textsuperscript{89}

Sarah Curtis argued that the papal bull nevertheless prompted many priests and lay Catholics to embrace gradualism. Colonial priests who believed emancipation was possible in the future

\textsuperscript{88} Delisle, “Eglise et esclavage,” 56.
promoted the Christianization and religious instruction of slaves as a necessary step towards future liberation.\textsuperscript{90}

Recent studies of slavery and abolition in the French empire attempted to present a more nuanced interpretation. Works by Philippe Delisle, Sarah Curtis, and Theo Freay, while recognizing the reluctance of the Church towards abolition, called attention to the diversity among the clergy, arguing that the Church should not be understood as a monolithic institution. The majority of priests and nuns did not support abolition, but the minority who did should not be dismissed as insignificant actors. Clerics who believed in gradual (or much more rarely, immediate) abolition, contributed to the French anti-slavery campaign by publishing in the press articles about the moralization of slaves as a necessary step towards liberation. Moralization became a central element of the gradualist abolitionist campaign, especially under the July Monarchy.\textsuperscript{91}

This dissertation suggests that while the clergy in the West Indies did not directly contribute to the abolitionist process, their gradualist policies towards enslaved children set a precedent that would later become an important element of anti-slavery work in Africa in the period of New Imperialism. A book by Abbé J. Hardy, the head of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit, in charge of training the colonial clergy, illustrates this argument. The book’s title: \textit{Liberté et travail, ou moyens d’abolir l’esclavage sans abolir le travail} (Freedom and Work, or the Means to Abolish Slavery without Abolishing Work) pointed to Hardy’s main concern. If France was to abolish


slavery in the future, how could the ideal of freedom be compatible with the economic needs of the islands? Hardy stated that the end of slavery was a noble goal, shared by the clergy as well as by the planters. The latter “loved” their slaves, but feared the consequences of immediate abolition because it would entail loss of labor. Left to their own devices, without the light of Christianity, slaves would refuse to work. The planters’ ownership rights over their plantation workers were legal, and according to Hardy, depriving them of these rights would be “blatant injustice.” He also sided with the planters by accusing the abolitionists of the metropole to be ignorant of the realities of the islands when they wrongly claimed that the planters showed cruelty towards their slaves.92

Moreover, he contended that liberation without adequate preparation and discipline would be the source of violence in the colonies. He described the sanguinary tendencies of the slaves, which freedom would unleash: “Let us remember the deplorable disasters of Saint-Domingue. As soon as the standard of liberty is raised, the blacks arm themselves and the whites are massacred […]. Didn’t a stream of French blood flow on these faraway beaches?” Not only was the Haitian revolution the cause of massacres, according to Hardy it was also detrimental to the newly freed slaves themselves because they stopped practicing the Christian religion.93 To avoid the harm liberation could cause to both slaves and masters, the moralization of slaves through Christian education was necessary. Once they had acquired these virtues, they would be ready for liberation.94

93 Hardy, 33 and 107.
94 Hardy, 170.
The most effective ways of inculcating these principles in a new generation of slaves would be to educate the children among them. Hardy proposed that the French government opened educational institutions for enslaved children, called *champs d’asile*. His source of inspiration was the system of *salles d’asile*, which were charitable institutions for the little children of poor working women in metropolitan France.\(^95\)

The system was created by a philanthropist called Emilie Mallet. She was a member of a prominent Protestant family, and was involved in various charitable projects, including the care of female prison inmates in Paris. Her objective in founding the *salles d’asile* was to provide child care while the mothers who could not afford to stay home were at work. The first *salle* opened in 1826, and was run by a female Catholic congregation. Under the July Monarchy, three hundred of these institutions took care of children who were too young to go to school or to hold jobs.\(^96\)

Hardy adapted Mallet’s project by calling his proposed educational institution a *champ d’asile*, using *champ* (field) instead of *salle* (room) to qualify the shelters he envisioned for enslaved children. In addition to learning the tenets of the Catholic religion, the slaves had to learn how to work the land. Hardy believed that they could only internalize Christian values if they learnt the love and discipline of work. A system of rewards and punishment would ensure that they follow the orders of their superiors. Their training would take place under the

\(^{95}\) Hardy, 169.

supervision of benevolent planters as well as the congregation of the Frères de l’Instruction Chrétienne (also known as the Ploërmel Brothers).  

Most importantly, the children must be separated from their parents. Arguing that children learnt by example, Hardy stated that if they were only surrounded by the planters and the Ploërmel Brothers during their formative years, they would acquire the training and principles they needed to lead virtuous lives. If they stayed with their parents, they would replicate the very behaviors Hardy wanted to eradicate from the new generation. He added that the mothers would also benefit from the separation, because they would be relieved of the care for small children and could devote themselves “to work with as much ardor as pleasure.”  

Again, this was in their interest as much as in the interest of the planters who benefitted from their labor.

Hardy assigned the financial responsibility of the project to the government. He thought the cost would be low, because the children’s work would pay for the upkeep of the champs d’asile. Nevertheless, the government would have to reimburse the planters for the losses they incurred due to the prolonged absence of the children from the plantations.

After an unspecified number of years at the champs d’asile, children who had shown an aptitude for work would acquire the status of freed persons. Those who were lazy or undisciplined would remain enslaved. The freed people would return to their owners’ plantations and work there for ten years. Hardy insisted that they would work as free persons, not as apprentices, but he did not mention whether they would earn a salary.

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97 Hardy, 170-172.
98 Hardy, 170-174.
99 Hardy, 176.
100 Hardy, 174.
The findings of the two following chapters of the dissertation suggest that Hardy’s project, though it was never implemented in the West Indies, bore striking resemblances to the projects for freed black children Catholic missionaries implemented in Africa in the late nineteenth century: they were inspired by projects for poor children in the metropole, they separated the children from their communities, they involved forced labor for the missionaries, required a strict disciplinary system and expected the children to embrace the profession the missionaries had chosen for them, regardless of their personal aspirations. Future research might be able to trace the ways in which projects for children in the West Indies were transferred to Africa. Were they part of the text books missionaries studied during their training? Did the Vatican centralize information about these experiments and encourage missionaries to apply them? Did individuals who worked in the West Indies travel to Africa? Finding answers to these questions might be an arduous task, because of the difficulty historians face in accessing Catholic congregations’ archives. But, as the dissertation will show, historians of colonialism have begun investigating Catholic missionary work in Africa with promising success.

A remarkable feature of the connections between missionary work in the West Indies and in Africa is the difference between the Church’s attitude towards enslaved children on each side of the Atlantic before the abolition of 1848. While in the West Indies, the clergy wanted to educate enslaved children and opposed their liberation for the foreseeable future, in Africa, members of the Catholic clergy had begun the education and conversion of black children, but freed them first by buying them out of slavery.

Father Olivieri, an Italian priest from the Mediterranean port city of Genoa, was among the first to engage in the work of rachat. It is unclear how he began his work. His biographer, who
wrote an almost hagiographic account of his life, traced his motivations to a religious revelation he had in a dream, where he saw black people in need of salvation. After the dream, Olivieri asked a ship captain to bring him an enslaved child from his next trip to Egypt. The captain arrived to Genoa with a little black boy in 1838. Olivieri adopted the boy, baptized him, changed his name to Joseph (we do not know what his original name was). Olivieri sent Joseph to Catholic school in Genoa during four years, and, when he was older, to the Vatican where he studied theology. Joseph later became a missionary in Guinea. In the following years, Olivieri commissioned several of his friends and acquaintances in Egypt to buy children out of slavery on his behalf, and to bring them to Europe, where he would send them to various convents, often in France (in Toulon, Nice, Avignon, Gap, Angers, Chambéry and Grenoble). By 1846, he had bought sixteen children out of slavery, most of them little girls. He founded an organization called the \textit{Oeuvre de rachat des négresses}, with the support of Pope Pius IX.\footnote{J.-M. Villefranche, \textit{Vie de Nicolas J-B Olivieri, Prêtre gênois, fondateur de l’Oeuvre pour le rachat des jeunes négresses} (Bourg : Imprimerie J-M. Villefranche, 1880), 5-47.} He obtained the papal benediction in 1847, when the Catholic Church was still opposed to the abolition of slavery in the West Indies.

During the same decade, the French congregation of Notre Dame de Charité du Bon Pasteur, based in Angers in northwestern France, who had received some of the children Olivieri had bought, also began buying slaves in Africa. Beginning in 1845 or 1846 (the date is unclear), they sent missionaries to Egypt, where Sudanese slaves were available for sale. They bought them and
sent them to France to be educated in the Christian faith and baptized. Just like Olivieri, they acted with the assent and blessing of their Catholic hierarchy.\textsuperscript{102}

The work of Olivieri and of the Bon-Pasteur illustrate the development of the Catholic Church’s attitude towards slavery as it sought to develop its influence in Africa. In the Antilles, the Church supported slavery. At the same time, in Africa, anti-slavery work was an efficient method for the Church to establish its presence in a continent that had not, for the most part, been colonized. The use of children by missionaries first in the West Indies and then in Africa suggests that the clergy adopted methods of coercion developed in the American colonies to support their anti-slavery agenda in Africa, pointing to continuities between both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, it sheds light on Atlantic origins of the work of the missionaries who educated freed children in Africa, and who constitute the subject of Chapters II and III.

The attitudes of the members of the clergy towards slaves and freed slaves I discussed here were compatible with their lay compatriots’ perceptions of slavery. When France conquered a large territory in North Africa beginning in 1830, these attitudes faced the Algerian, and later Tunisian iteration of slavery and emancipation. In the following section of the chapter, I will present projects French people involved in Algerian and Tunisian affairs penned for black Africans.

**D. Redefinitions of Freedom in the Period of Emancipation**

Abolition was a radical legislative revolution that prompted a conservative reaction in French colonial societies. The authors of the sources I analyze here recalibrated their semantics to fit the

\textsuperscript{102} Archives Historiques de la Maison Mère du Bon-Pasteur d’Angers, HC-34, De Seré, Henri, \textit{Notice relative à l’établissement des dames du Bon-Pasteur au Grand-Caire pour le rachat et l’éducation de jeunes éthiopiennes} (Angers : Imprimerie-Librairie de Veuve Pignet-Château, 1846).
new legal framework, but the principles and practices on which they based their understanding of black people’s roles were the same as during the old days of slavery. By comparing documents written before and after 1848, the following section of the chapter shows that servitude rather than freedom was at the heart of French projects of emancipation.

The overwhelming majority of authors who discussed slavery in Algeria prior to abolition emphasized the mild character of the enslavement of black people in Muslim lands. Members of the military, scientists and lay travelers concurred: masters treated their slaves with kindness and generosity, and considered them to be a part of the family. The Quran and tradition encouraged this lenient attitude, and as a result slaves loved their masters and chose to stay with them even when they had the option to leave. For instance, in 1845, a publication by the Ministry of War painted the following picture: “slavery, in Algeria, is nothing like slavery in our other colonies. It is a form of domestic work (domesticité). The slaves are members of the Muslim family and enter it through blood connections. As a result, their condition is very mild (douce).”

In the rare cases in which a slave was unhappy with his master, they could appeal to the judge (cadi) and request to be sold to another owner. The adjective “mild” (doux) is a leitmotiv in the sources describing slavery in Algeria. The documents emphasizing the familial character of slavery abound. They usually explain the generosity and humanity of masters by referring to the Quran: the Prophet encouraged the faithful to show kindness towards their human

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property. Even though the injunction did not have force of law, most people chose to abide by it.\textsuperscript{105}

These ideas, disseminated to the public through travel accounts, scientific periodicals and newspapers, served to legitimize France’s policy towards black labor after abolition. The government and its overseas emissaries subordinated emancipation to colonial interests, and framed this subordination in terms of the French ideals of colonization. When they needed the cooperation of the indigenous elites, or when servile labor proved to be necessary for agricultural production (such as dates), they allowed the local populations to retain their slaves. They had recourse to this tactic in the interior of the continent, to which travelers had little access and which was beyond the reach of international, especially British, surveillance. By contrast, in the littoral regions, which were under the constant scrutiny of European visitors, black workers could (but as Chapter 4 emphasizes, not always) did accede to freedom. They still performed manual labor, but they received wages for it.\textsuperscript{106}

In that context, according to the overwhelming majority of available published French sources, the 1848 abolition decree had left blacks working happily for their former owners (now employers), for their own good, the prosperity of the colonies, and the benefit of the French motherland. Among the published documents I examined, only one offered, in 1852, an account of the sufferings of a female slave at the hand of her cruel master, who beat her and broke her teeth. The same source also stated that in the plains, masters mistreated their slaves because they


could not be seen by the French authorities. As Chapter 3 of the dissertation demonstrates, many Africans living in North Africa after 1848 suffered considerably at the hands of their employers. But the sources tended to ignore this cruel fate because the French colony needed the labor of these black men, and because challenging the subservient relationship between master and slave was dangerous for colonial rule. The French administration in Algeria and later in Tunisia often chose to ignore the law and to leave slavery untouched. The literature available to the public presented justifications for the continued use of black labor, which should remain the same as before 1848, even though their official status had changed.

The recurrent argument that justified this intensive recourse to black labor was racial in nature. It combined the perceived physical strength and docility of black men with the alleged inherent laziness of Arabs. The following quote from an 1872 issue of the *Revue d'Histoire Africaine* illustrates that trope: the black man’s “temperament does not lead him to sit or lay down for most of the year, as so many Arabs do. [The latter] are so fatalist and so stupid that they would let themselves starve rather than work.” Arabs were consumers reluctant to produce anything. Whenever left without the service of black men, they neglected agricultural work and their oases become impoverished. Algeria needed “trained and solid arms, that can

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stand the preliminary work of clearing.”¹¹¹ They were the only workers with the biological immunity against malaria.¹¹² Moreover, according to other observers, “blacks have the physical ability to resist the heat and work in climates which had proven inhospitable to European settlers: in the Sahara, “only they can defy the sun.”¹¹³ Paul Topinard, Broca’s successor at the prestigious Anthropology School of Paris, backed these ideas. He stated for instance that black people in Algeria strived in the most insalubrious swamps.¹¹⁴

Despite this predisposition to work, black people could not be left to their own devices. The sources emphasized their alleged “primitive” state, which called for the discerning guidance of the French to accomplish the tasks assigned to them and to reach higher levels of civilization. In the sources, there is an abundance of comments about the infantile nature of black men: they “are very gentle, joyful, and a bit childish. Carefree, they often live on a day to day basis.”¹¹⁵ They needed to learn not to abuse their freedom. This could only be accomplished through work:

Service of more enlightened masters is the only school where barbarian populations learn work, and work is the instrument with which civil and political liberty is conquered and maintained. The nations that are the most proud of their civilization have gone through this apprenticeship; the Hungarians, the Poles, the Russians have not finished it yet. Excluding Negroes from this process would be a disservice to the them.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ De Mortillet, 355.
The implications of these ideas are that they could neither choose the nature of their work nor their employers. In that sense, freedom was an abstract notion that had, at least for the time being, very limited practical implications. Therefore, even though they were free on a theoretical level, the interests of France and their own required them to work in conditions very similar to those that prevailed before 1848.

Another way for providing much needed work for the colonies and saving Africans from barbarity was to initiate a process of immigration to Algeria. To my knowledge, the first person to elaborate such a project was Jean-Jacques Baude in 1841, when abolition had not been voted yet but was already on the discussion table. Baude occupied various high-ranking administrative and political posts during the 1830s and 1840s, such as member of parliament, under-secretary of state and head of the Parisian police forces (préfet de police). In August 1836, he traveled to Algeria on a government mission and in 1841 published a travel account in which he shared his observations on French colonization. By 1841, France had banned the slave trade (though not slavery) in its empire. As a result, when France conquered Algeria, the trans-Saharan slave trade became officially illegal. Baude argued that the end of the slave trade was detrimental on two accounts. First, it threatened France’s economic interests. Second, the end of the trade blocked the arrival of workers who were both strong and obedient. He argued that the government should allow the colony to resume its importation of human merchandise from sub-Saharan Africa. Upon arriving to Algeria, they would serve the colony’s economic interests and their own, since they would escape paganism, war, and laziness.117

In 1859, a decade after abolition, Ausone de Chancel, a bureaucrat in Algeria, and collaborator of General Daumas in his literary work on the colony, used a different terminology to propose the exact same project in a widely circulated book: *Cham and Japhet, or On the Emigration of the Negro to White Men’s Lands Considered as a Providential Way to Regenerate the Negro Race and to Civilize Africa’s Interior.* De Chancel stated that Baude was right in believing that black labor was necessary for the colony as well as for black people’s own interests. He also argued that even though the abolition of slavery was in principle a noble accomplishment, in reality it stemmed from “ignorant philanthropy”. It condemned black people to the eternal darkness of servitude and barbarity, because they could no longer be redeemed through contact with Europeans. In the same vein as Baude, de Chancel argued that Algeria needed workers for numerous construction and agricultural projects. Moreover: “God only submits the Negro to the White man in order to allow the latter to school the former.” Black people should be taken to North Africa for their own good, even though, in their immature, child-like minds, they might be unable to recognize the necessity of such a measure. De Chancel elaborated these projects at a time when liberal European intellectuals were striving to reconcile human rights ideals with notions of inequality among races. De Chancel’s work was published in 1859, the same year as John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*: “Despotism is a legitimate
mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.”123

De Chancel only differed from Baude on the mode of emigration. Rather than advocating for a resurgence of the slave trade, he argued that the best source of labor would be the emigration of free black people to the colony. But in his project, emigration would play the same role as the old slave trade: “the janua vivaria, the gate of life through which the spared gladiators could escape the arena. The Janua vivaria was the slave trade. Now it is emigration.”124

Ausone de Chancel, just as Baude did, explicitly criticized the blind idealism of French abolitionists. According to him, philanthropists misinformed the French public about the actual situation of the slaves in Algeria. He listed with a remarkable accuracy the Muslim laws that protect slaves, and supported his statements with excerpts from the Quran and the Hadiths.125 De Chancel thus sought to prove that an informed, rational decision could only lead to the so-called “emigration” of the Africans as a salutary measure that would serve the blacks’ interests.

From his point of view, such a measure would be in harmony with principles of abolition as well as with Republican ideals. A fundamental theme in his argumentation is, significantly, that the mission to civilize and free the primitive peoples of Africa was inherent to the meaning of the French presence in Algeria. According to him, the idea of abolition stemmed from the French philosophy of the Enlightenment. He did not even mention British influence over the formation

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124 De Chancel, 55
125 De Chancel, 19-20. A Hadith was a saying attributed to Prophet Muhammad or his Companions, and was an important source of Islamic law.
of the French abolitionist movement.\textsuperscript{126} “The honor of this great idea belongs, as everyone
knows, to French philosophy.”\textsuperscript{127}

Baude’s ideas were thus echoed in works published after 1848, and which despite the legal
ban on human servitude, reflected a similar ambiguity regarding the free or servile status of black
men. For instance, as late as 1883, an author wrote:

A very competent publicist, Mr. Denys de Rivoyre, recently proposed to
establish in Ourgala, El Golea and other isolated oases, free markets, where,
under our control and protection, there would be permanent large markets. He
even proposed, to feed these markets, not exactly to reestablish slavery, but to
allow under specific conditions the brigading (embrigadement) of negro
workers, who would first carry on their backs merchandise from the Sudan,
and would then settle in Algeria, where they would become excellent workers.
This project could very well not be a utopian ideal.\textsuperscript{128}

In 1866, Charles de Saint-Amant, a former colonial administrator in the West Indies who
retired in Algeria, penned another immigration project: the importation of a workforce from the
American continent to Algeria.\textsuperscript{129} After the end of the Civil War in the United States (1865), he
planned a displacement to the other side of the Atlantic of the newly emancipated slaves of the
United States South. They would populate Algeria, provide it with a solid labor force and
constitute a necessary counterbalance to the laziness of the autochthonous population and its
reluctance to progress: the local inhabitants of Algeria were “refractory to civilization because of

\textsuperscript{126} Lawrence Jennings demonstrated that British influence was a fundamental factor in the formation of
the French abolitionist movement. See Lawrence Jennings, \textit{French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the
\textsuperscript{127} De Chance, 14.
\textsuperscript{128} Clamageran, 548.
\textsuperscript{129} Saint-Âmant, \textit{C. L’Algérie et les nègres libres des Etats-Unis} (Algérie: Chez tous les libraires de la
ville, 1866).
their nature and their centuries-old customs." Black people, on the contrary, when properly supervised, were excellent workers. Left to their own devices, they would lapse into laziness, but under the engagement contract, they would provide Algeria with much needed manpower for a long list of construction projects: railroads, roads, reservoirs, wells, canals, and military fortifications. Their labor would also be essential in clearing forests, agricultural productions and mineral extraction. They would use the salaries they earned to repay their ocean crossing, which would be financed by the Transatlantic Company and credit banks. They would live in their own communities, the “villages nègres” and have access to small plots of land on which they would grow their food.

His book recycled a project he had first discussed in 1822, in a long study of the French colonies he had published after his two years as the secretary of the French governor of Guyana. In his Des Colonies françaises, he was responding to an offer President Monroe made to provide France with black immigrants from the population of the free northern states. Saint-Amant objected in 1822 that this project would be dangerous for Guyana because “the independence and the freedom [American blacks] enjoy in New England would make contact with them contagious for Guyana’s slaves. It would give rise to the desire to throw off their yoke, which they are already too much inclined to break… They would turn Guyana into a new Saint Domingue.” Four decades later, after the Civil War, Saint-Amant believed that US blacks could now become an asset for a French colony, because this time they would be

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130 Saint-Amant, L’Algérie, ii.
131 Saint-Amant, L’Algérie, 37-40.
133 Saint-Amant, Des Colonies, p. 146-147
southerners, that is former slaves who had already been broken into obedience (or so he thought), and who would be fit for a new life in servitude.\footnote{134}

The French never implemented these immigration projects in North Africa. But they did in their American colonies, where they used the indentured labor of immigrants from British India, Malaysia, China, Indonesia and West Africa, including Liberia and Sierra Leone. Indentured labor was an answer to the labor supply problem caused by the end of the slave trade and later slavery in European colonies, especially in the Caribbean. On most islands, former slaves chose not to work for their former owners, who then had to find an alternative that would not force them to pay more than under the previous system of servitude.\footnote{135}

This is an excerpt from the generic contract used in 1852 by a Parisian company hiring West African workers for Guadeloupe:

Contrat d’engagement entre les soussignés M. …… capitaine au long cours […] et le Sieur … , noir libre, né au village de … […] et en présence du délégué de l’administration a été conclu ce qui suit: Le Sieur … s’engage formellement et de son plein gré à se mettre au service du Sieur … pendant la durée de six années […]. Arrivé dans cette colonie, le Sieur … s’oblige à s’occuper de tous les travaux indiqués par Monsieur … ou son représentant et notamment ceux de culture de la canne à sucre, des cafés ou autres produits de la colonie, à donner tous son temps et à remplir toutes les obligations en général de l’engagé envers l’engagiste […]. Il s’engage en outre […] à donner sans augmentation de salaires, avec continuité, tout le travail nécessaire par la fabrication en temps de récolte […]. Mr … se réservera le droit de transférer le présent engagement à l’habitant de la Guadeloupe qui lui conviendra […].\footnote{136}

\footnote{134}{On the exportation of slaves from the US South to Cuba after slavery became illegal in the United States, see Rothman, Beyond Freedom’s Reach.  
\footnote{135}{Northrup, 204.  
\footnote{136}{MAE 1 ADP Afrique, Box 42, Contrat d’Engagement de la Compagnie Maritime Internationale (1852).}
This document shows that immigration projects were not abstract, romanticized notions in the minds of de Chancel and Saint-Amant. During the second half of the century, colonial planters, under the aegis of the French administrators in West Africa, contracted the labor of African men in condition marked by the unmistakable brand of human bondage. The workers’ tasks were at the employer’s discretion and the contract did not predefine them: in other words, even people who could read the official agreement did not know what they were signing up for. It forced the workers to surrender their right to reject an assignment. It also forced them to toil for an unspecified number of hours during harvest season. Finally, their labor could be sold (which is what is implied by the less loaded term “transfer”) from one planter to the other, without allowing them a say in the matter.

In the West Indies, these indentured workers often earned a salary that was twice to four times inferior to the remuneration of freed slaves. Between the abolition of slavery and World War II, hundreds of thousands of indentured laborers left Asia and Africa to work for the French, the British, the Danes and the Dutch in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The men and women who signed these contracts did so because they suffered from acute poverty or famine, and because the recruiters swayed them with false promises. In many cases, they could not read French or English, and they signed contracts without being aware of their content. Numerous abuses plagued the workers’ lives: they suffered from malnutrition, the number of hours during which they worked was excessive, and they often did not receive their salaries at the dates they had

agreed on. Numerous acts of resistance, such as absconding and riots, were reminiscent of the
days of slavery.\textsuperscript{138}

Moreover, diplomatic correspondence reveals that many of the African \textit{engagés} were former
slaves whose freedom the French had purchased from their captors in West Africa. The British
government strongly condemned this practice, comparing it to the slave trade.\textsuperscript{139} But Napoleon
III had legalized it in 1853, and it had become part of France’s Atlantic commerce. London was
later able to pressure Napoleon III into banning the \textit{engagement} of African workers in 1862, and
the French resorted to recruiting Asian indentured laborers.\textsuperscript{140} The arguments a French envoy in
London used to defend the practice echo Orlando Patterson’s argument on slavery as a substitute
for death: “the interior state of the African populations in which war is a normal situation, and
which make prisoners for the barbarous pleasure of massacring them when they cannot hope to
make a profit out of them.”\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{E. CONCLUSION}

European abolitionists focused their actions on the ownership aspect of enslavement. Once
states outlawed property rights over other human beings, philanthropists and governments could


\textsuperscript{139} The British government rejected the practice only when the French hired indentured workers. After
1833, over one Million Indian men, women and children were shipped to the four corners of Her
Majesty’s Empire to work in conditions akin to slavery. Denmark and the Netherlands also had recourse
to indentured servitude in their overseas territories after the abolition of the slave trade.

\textsuperscript{140} MAE Paris, Affaires Diverses et Politiques, Box 42, Letter from the Bureau du Régime Politique et du
Commerce to the Minister of War and Colonies, (Paris, April 11, 1857).

\textsuperscript{141} MAE, Affaires Diverses et Politiques, Box 42, Letter from the French Ambassador in London to the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris (London, May 2, 1852). Baude used the exact same argument: “In a
certain state of civilization, slavery intervenes to soften the sanguinary laws of war: the vanquished buys
his life with his freedom,” 308 Saint-Amant offered a similar argument (p. 2). So did De Chancel, 51.
easily declare that slavery was no more. The chapter argued that our understanding of the past needs a narrative of emancipation that complicates this understanding of freedom by studying the lived experiences of slaves and former slaves in North Africa. While abolition brought about important changes, it failed to fundamentally and systematically alter the existing socio-economic structures and cultural norms that were at the heart of slavery. Moreover, abolition took place in the upheavals of the 1848 revolution, when neither the planters, nor the local and metropolitan governments had planned the social and economic mechanics of the transition to production without slave labor.

After formal abolition, in the French West Indies, in Haiti, in West and North Africa (former) slave owners and the government strove to find a way to turn former slaves into a docile working class. They recruited workers from Asia and Africa under indentured labor contracts that were in fact a thinly disguised form of servitude. These stratagems did, in the words of historian Roger Botte, “prolong social relationships that the slavery system had regulated for nearly three centuries.” While race structured these relationships, they were also based on a solid class system. With abolition, a new system of forced labor made people work for the State for free, or to engage in contracts with private companies in conditions akin to slavery. Even in Haiti, after slavery had become illegal, the necessities of the economy made the revolutionaries have recourse to forms of coercion and control that echoed the days of human bondage.

Two factors contributed to this state of affairs. First, slaves and former slaves belonged to a race that was allegedly inferior to both the white colonizers and their Arab colonial subjects. But
race alone did not justify the perpetuation of slavery-like practices. Class also shaped the process: in addition to being black, slaves and former slaves were poor. David Brion Davis drew a parallel between these stipulations and the New Poor Laws that came into existence in England the same year (1834). The law allowed colonial authorities in the West Indies to retain their coercive power over the freed slaves. They could inflict corporal punishment and, through vagrancy laws, controlled where they had the right to live. 145 In a similar vein, Frederick Cooper argued that in the century following abolition, the French tried to adapt to the colonies the methods of labor control they had developed at home.146

The vocabulary of victorious philanthropy dominates the sources that discuss the emancipation process and dissimulates the complex reality this chapter presented. The power of words is such that it is difficult to see beyond them. The following chapters of the dissertation will follow a similar strategy to study the lived experiences of emancipation in North Africa. The archives of the Missionnaires d’Afrique, a French Catholic religious order based in Algeria and founded in 1863 with the paternalistic purpose of converting Africa’s heathens and liberating them from slavery, open the door to an interpretation of history that takes into consideration the lived experiences of emancipation.

Because of the nature of their work, which included proselytization but also education and healthcare, missionaries were in close, quotidian contact with slaves and former slaves. The missionaries recorded aspects of slaves and former slaves’ lives that are absent from travelogues,

145 Davis, Slavery and Human Progress, 122.
scientific articles, and the French administrative and military archives. They also exchanged a correspondence with freed slaves. These letters allow us to build a narrative that enriches our understanding of emancipation in North Africa.
CHAPTER II: THE WHITE FATHERS AND THE POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION IN FRENCH NORTH AFRICA

A. INTRODUCTION

In 1868, Charles Allemand Martial Lavigerie (1825-1892), the bishop of Algiers, founded a missionary order that would play a significant role in the history of abolition in Africa during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The Missionnaires d’Afrique, more commonly known as the White Fathers, were involved in France’s colonialist endeavor through their anti-slavery work and the creation of charitable and educational institutions all over the continent. They actively tried to baptize Algerians and Tunisians, but their central objective lay further south, beyond the Sahara, with populations they considered to be in need of salvation through conversion to Catholicism. From their headquarters in Algiers, in the three decades following the foundation of their order, they expanded their network of missions and schools to the Saharan desert, the Great Lakes region, and the Belgian Congo. By the death of their founder in 1892, 278 White Fathers worked in Algeria, Tunisia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and the Congo. In 1900, they established their presence in French West Africa by creating a mission in Ouagadougou, in the country that is today Burkina Faso.147

Born to a bourgeois family in the city of Bayonne in southwestern France in 1825, Lavigerie expressed from his early days a desire to join the Church. He studied at the seminary of his

147 The headquarters remained in Algiers until 1952, when they moved to Rome. Today, 1370 Missionnaires d’Afrique are active in 42 African countries. They are also present in Jerusalem, where they focus on dialogue with Oriental Christians. For details, see Jean-Claude Ceillier, “Présentation de notre société,” Site international des Missionnaires d’Afrique, http://www.africamission-m afr.org/presentation_societe.htm (accessed April 29, 2016).
native town before his teachers recommended him to the prestigious Séminaire de Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, a preparatory school for lay Catholics and future clerics. He later enrolled at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, a Parisian institution that trained the elite of the French clergy. He was ordained priest in 1849. He concomitantly prepared a doctorate in literature and theology at the Sorbonne, where he taught between 1854 and 1856. He then became the director of the Oeuvre des Ecoles d’Orient (Association of Oriental Schools), an organization founded by Catholic professors of the Sorbonne. Its objective was to come to the help of the Christian children of Mount Lebanon, during a period when France used its self-proclaimed status as the protector of Oriental Christians to exert political and economic influence in the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{148} In 1860-1861, a conflict that spread from Mount Lebanon to Damascus caused the massacre of large numbers of Christians. Lavigerie travelled to Ottoman Syria as a representative of the Oeuvre des Ecoles d’Orient to come to the rescue of the Christian children who had survived but suffered from the consequences of the killings. Though the roots of the conflict included tensions between local and Ottoman powers, the economic and political intrusions of European countries in the region, as well as the abuses committed by landlords against peasants, Lavigerie only understood it as a sectarian war that was symptomatic of Islamic despotism. It was his first contact with the Arab world and his vision of the Lebanese massacres molded his future missionary work.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{149} For a detailed analysis of the conflict in Mount Lebanon, see Leila Fawaz, \textit{An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860} (London: Taurus, 1994).
Upon his return to Europe, he worked at the Vatican, where he became involved in the often tense political relationship between the Church and the French government. He later became the bishop of Nancy. But rather than pursuing a promising ecclesiastical career in France, he was inspired by the accounts of Catholic missionaries who had worked in distant lands such as China, and motivated by his recent trip to the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{150} At the death of the bishop of Algiers, Marshal Patrice de Mac-Mahon, the Catholic governor general of the colony, offered him the vacant seat and he agreed to cross the Mediterranean to lead the Catholic Church of North Africa.\textsuperscript{151} Fifteen years after his arrival to Algeria, in 1881, he pompously announced the opening of a school for freed black boys near La Valette, on the Mediterranean island of Malta. He wanted to train his pupils as doctors and missionaries, who would then travel to sub-Saharan Africa to convert the local populations to Christianity and promote the fight against slavery.

This chapter will analyze the historical developments that explain the opening of the Institut Apostolique des Nègres. Why were French missionaries targeting slavery, when almost nobody else in their country had any dedicated interest in abolition? Why was the Institut located in Malta, outside of France’s growing empire? How did the White Fathers understand the relationship between marginalized children in the colonies and their self-proclaimed European benefactors?

To answer these questions, the chapter situates the White Fathers’ project at the intersection of colonial and metropolitan histories. First, this chapter analyzes their work in the context of


\textsuperscript{151} This account of Lavigerie’s life is based on Louis Baunard, \textit{Le Cardinal Lavigerie} (Paris: C. Poussielgue, 1896).
the imperial politics of the Third Republic. While anti-clerical measures, such as the closure of religious schools, became more frequent in the metropole, the French government led a more tolerant policy in its overseas territories, where missionary congregations provided educational and medical services that the State could not afford on its own. This was consistent with the State’s need for religious congregations in the metropole, where, despite anti-clerical politics, the elaboration and implementation of reform projects necessitated the participation of the Catholic Church and its lay supporters. Nevertheless, the colonial administration remained deeply suspicious of the missionaries’ motives, and strove to limit their influence. The administration was suspicious because it feared the clergy was more loyal to a foreign ruler (the Pope) than to the French government. It also worried the Church might use the colonies to develop a strong political presence during a time of struggle between State and Church at home. In that context of ambiguous policy, Lavigerie, as the head of the bishopric of Algiers and of the Missionnaires d’Afrique, used his position overseas to attempt to restore the Church’s political influence with the French government. Anti-slavery work was an essential tool in this effort.

The White Fathers used two methods to impose their presence and legitimacy to often reluctant colonial administrators and potential converts. First, they offered charitable, medical and educational services, usually for free, to the European settlers and native inhabitants. A second method consisted of presenting their proselytizing work as an answer to the problem of slavery in Africa: only the conversion of Africans to Christianity would eradicate human bondage. Cardinal Lavigerie orchestrated elaborate media campaigns, including widely advertised international lecture tours and publications in both Catholic and mainstream newspapers, in and outside of France, to promote his project and raise funds.
To understand the ways in which the White Fathers thought they could solve the problem of slavery in the colonies, the dissertation suggests we need to look at how both the French State and the Catholic Church addressed the issues of poverty and marginalized populations at home. In the rural and urban areas of France, they developed an arsenal of legislative measures and social policies to establish a welfare system that was simultaneously paternalistic and repressive, designed to protect society from its poorest segments while satisfying the humane ideals of either the Republic or the Catholic Church. With the colonial conquest, this system expanded to the colonies where the same institutions – the State and the Church- attempted to regulate the lives of poor children.

B. The Historiography of French Missions in the Nineteenth Century

The important contribution of Catholic missionaries to nineteenth-century imperialism has not loomed large in the historiography of modern France. While British and American Protestant evangelists have been the subjects of a rich scholarship, it was only in the past decade that historians began to systematically explore the experiences of the cadres of nuns and priests who followed (or in many instances preceded) the armies of soldiers and administrators France sent to conquer and exploit distant lands in the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific in the nineteenth century.\footnote{In contrast to the literature on French missions, recent studies of British and American missionaries built on a rich historiographical tradition. See for example: Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Heather Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), Meredith McKittrick, *To Dwell Secure: Generation, Christianity, and Colonialism in Ovamboland* (Portsmouth: Heineman, 2002), Shobana Shankar, *Who Shall Enter Paradise? Christian Origins in Muslim Northern Nigeria, ca. 1890-1975* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).} The literature is still remarkably thin.
Historiographical representations of missions closely paralleled France’s overseas ventures. When France owned the world’s second largest empire, history books oscillated between a perception of missionaries as the courageous champions of civilization and images of lunatic priests and nuns whose proselytizing agenda threatened their country’s political and economic interests. After World War II, with decolonization, scholars tended to vilify missionaries as instruments of empire who collaborated with administrators and the army to ruthlessly exploit colonized populations.153

The historiographical trends outlined above are problematic on two accounts. First, missionaries were not the mindless servants of empire. Their main objective was to convert people to their brand of Christianity and they skillfully negotiated with the colonial administration to establish and maintain their presence. Missionaries were also often in open or muffled conflict with the administration either because of anti-clerical policies or because they wanted to protect their local clients from wanton abuse. Second, these studies failed to show that local populations were able to ignore, resist, or take advantage of the missionaries’ presence, depending on their material interests and cultural preferences.

Five recent studies by J.P Daughton, Julia Clancy-Smith, Elizabeth Forster, Sarah Curtis and Chantal Verdeil complicate perceptions of the colonial encounter by emphasizing the plurality of experiences on the sides of both colonizers and colonized.154 Following the lead of scholars of

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British and American missions, they show how the significance of missionary work extends beyond religious issues and has deep political and social ramifications.\textsuperscript{155}

While the shifting relationship between Church and State featured predominantly in the historiography of modern France, books on colonialism tend to mention it in passing. It was not until the publication of \textit{An Empire Divided} by J.P. Daughton in 2006 that a systematic analysis of the political implications of the rivalries between the two institutions under the Third Republic received due attention. In his case studies of Tahiti, Madagascar and Indochina, Daughton argued that the official policy of cooperation cloaked changing, unpredictable relationships between the clergy and colonial representatives on the ground. Metropolitan politics, such as the conflict over education in France, spread to the colonies. Elizabeth Foster, in her study of missionary congregations in Senegal, demonstrated that the actors involved did not replicate arguments made in the metropole, but adapted their responses to the realities they faced overseas.\textsuperscript{156}

Daughton contended that French missionaries’ evolving perceptions of race in the late nineteenth-century was a response to these tensions. Beginning in the 1880s, they actively promoted ideas of racial hierarchy, emphasizing French racial superiority set against the primitivism of colonized people. While this discourse was not absent from missionary writings before then, the clergy, fearing the repercussions of anti-clerical policies, decided to emphasize their commonalities with their compatriots by calling attention to race as a primary marker of identity. The same concern led them to endorse the ideal of the civilizing mission. Earlier in the century, they were solely interested in their duty to convert non-Christians. A deeply unsettling,

\textsuperscript{155} Sharkey, “Introduction,” 4.
\textsuperscript{156} Foster, 1-20.
overarching problem developed in the course of the century: was Christianity part of the French civilizing mission or was religion an irrational, obscurantist element of France’s past for which there was no space in a modern empire? As anti-clericalism compromised their position, they fully embraced the civilizing role of religion to prove that their work was in conformity with the modern ideals of the Republic. As this chapter will show, on the ground, the moral principles of the Church and the Republic often proved to be compatible.

These missionary attitudes contrasted with those of their predecessors in the 1830s and 1840s, which Sarah Curtis analyzed. In the first half of the century, missionaries laid emphasis on the ontological equality among all people in the eyes of God, despite the existence of important social differences. They did not inherit their belief in the spiritual brotherhood between all people from the Enlightenment, but from Catholic principles. Curtis’ work addressed the work of female missionaries, who, in a profession dominated by men, used the socially acceptable role of women as educators and nurses to establish a strong presence in the early days of modern missions in North Africa.

Both male and female orders perceived empire as a pool of potential converts, which led them to establish close relationships with indigenous populations, and as a result, they often considered it their duty to protect the latter from abuse on the hands of the French government. Since they could benefit from the educational or medical services the missionaries administered, local populations did not necessarily always view the Catholic clergy as an enemy. Moreover,

\[157\] Daughton, 244.
\[158\] Curtis, Civilizing Habits, 125-136.
missionary education, in its religious and academic components, could have a deep transformative effect on people and shape the relationships between colonized and colonizers.\textsuperscript{159}

Foster argued that while missionary work could empower women, it could also make their gender the target of republican polemicists. In 1886, an anti-clerical newspaper spread a rumor concerning the alleged pregnancy of one of the Sisters of Saint Joseph de Cluny, an order based in Senegal. The allegations unleashed political passions among the colony’s Catholic and anti-Catholic European population, and the nun’s body became a source of contention over the morality of missionary work.\textsuperscript{160}

In addition to their religion, nationality, and gender, a forth factor contributed to defining the identity of missionaries: they were migrants in a globalized world. In \textit{Mediterraneans}, Julia-Clancy Smith studied the population movements in the southern Mediterranean basin, linking Algeria, Tunisia, Malta, Italy, and France in multiple flows of migration caused by economic, social and political factors. This geographical mobility, which goes back to Antiquity, created in Tunisia a mixed society with an aggregate of national, religious and cultural identities. In that context, the opposing categories of indigenous and foreigner are not useful analytical tools. Missionaries, who often spent decades in their posts, must be understood in their status in light of their creolization.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{159} Sharkey, “Introduction,”1-28.
\textsuperscript{160} Foster, 21-42. While women have been the focus of gender studies in the small body of literature on French missionaries, the study of masculinities is an important subject that future work will need to address. The next chapter of the dissertation will show that the archives of the White Fathers can be the bases of such studies.
\textsuperscript{161} Clancy-Smith, \textit{Mediterraneans}, 47-48.
Though they were creolized in their language and their relatively close, long term contacts with local populations, the Catholic missionaries’ perception of themselves could remain that of outsiders whose religious ideals separated them from the mass of the locals they sought to convert. As Chantal Verdeil argued in the introduction of a rich edited volume entitled *Missions chrétiennes en terre d’Islam*, this was particularly the case of Catholic missionaries in the Levant and North Africa, where they considered both Muslims and indigenous Christians as uncivilized people in need of salvation. In the eighteenth century, savants among the European Catholic clerics studied Islamic theology, and occasionally engaged in theological polemics with their Muslim counterparts. In the nineteenth century, ignorance, contempt and fear had largely replaced this relative intellectual curiosity, and Catholic missionaries often knew little about their potential clients’ religious beliefs when they disembarked in the ports of Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon or Palestine. There, because of restrictions imposed either by the Ottoman state or the French colonial authorities, proselytism among Muslims was banned. As a result, their efforts usually concentrated on local Christians, like the Armenian Orthodox or the Lebanese Maronite, whom they tried to bring back to what they considered legitimate Roman Catholic dogma and cult, as well as on education and medical services, which allowed them

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access to the Muslim population, and which they often used to proselytize in secret. Their work with local Christians was only marginally successful and their main achievement was their medical and educational system, through which they contributed to training local elites. The edited volume, which includes chapters on Protestant and Catholic missions from France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Sweden, reminds the readers of the complex varieties between the objectives and methods of different orders. While Protestants tended to emphasize the teaching of local languages, Catholics strongly favored French, since (as Daughton also argued) they strove to present themselves as patriots as well as servants of God. In that context, Claire Fredj’s chapter showed that Lavigerie’s work stood in sharp contrast with that of other Catholic missionaries, on two accounts. His objective was to convert non-Christians to Roman Catholicism, and he believed that education in local languages was a key aspect of the process. The dissertation studies the political challenges of his project in the empire of the secular Third Republic.

C. The Political History of Missionary Work in North Africa

French Catholic presence in North Africa, formerly called by Europeans the Barbary Coast, was since the sixteenth century connected to the practice of slavery. In the medieval and early modern periods, two orders, the Trinitarians (also known as the Mathurins, founded in 1198) and

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164 Julia Clancy-Smith noted that Europeans often considered that the Catholics from Malta and Sicily shared inferior racial characteristics with Africans. See Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830-1962,” 169.
the Mercedarians (founded in the thirteenth century) organized fund raising campaigns to free European Christians captured by Muslim pirates on the Mediterranean and sold in Tunisia or Algeria. The objective was to free the captives’ bodies but also to protect their souls from alleged forced conversion to Islam. The Chamber of Commerce of Marseille, which was a State institution, helped them financially when it was necessary, to protect the economic interests and political sovereignty of the French government.166 Other orders later joined the Trinitarians and Mercedarians in their redemptive efforts in North Africa: the Congrégation de la Mission (also called the Lazarists, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul, who had begun their mission by catering to the needs of the poor in the French countryside before expanding overseas) and the Recollet order (a branch of the Franciscans). French provincial estates contributed to these efforts by sending money to ransom Barbary slaves and return them to Europe.167 Catholic missionary orders were also active in other parts of the world during the early modern period, due to the expansion of Spanish, Portuguese and French empires in the Americas and Africa. In the eighteenth century, the Vatican banned missionaries from allowing converts to incorporate local religious beliefs to their new Catholic faith. This decision alienated potential Christians and as a result missionary activities declined considerably in the eighteenth century. They were dealt a violent blow by the French Revolution and the Terror.168

It was not until the beginning of the 1800s that they experienced a period of revitalization and expansion. In North Africa, the installation of large numbers of Spaniards, Italians and Maltese

167 Weiss, 45.
168 Daughton, 125.
favored the arrival of a Catholic clergy.\textsuperscript{169} In France, only gradually did the Church begin to suffer from the upheavals of the 1790s, at home and abroad. During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the presence of a Catholic presence in North Africa, though ancient, had become limited to the European consulates. During the first part of the century, Catholic missions, only slowly beginning to reestablish their presence in parts of Asia, the Levant and North Africa, were less enterprising and ambitious than their Protestant counterparts. In North Africa, the turning point was the French conquest of Algeria in 1830, which opened the door to the arrival of several missionary congregations. As early as 1831, tense negotiations erupted between the Vatican and Paris regarding the appointment of clergy members in the colony. At first, the French government decided that the army chaplains’ service sufficed to fulfill the religious needs of Algeria, but as the colony expanded, the introduction of additional clerics became necessary. The government agreed to allow the arrival of members of the Lazarist order, whose rules required that the Superior was always French. Other congregations then followed the Lazarists, such as Emilie de Vialar’s Sisters of Saint-Joseph de l’Apparition, the Trappists, the Filles de la Charité, the Jesuits and the Sisters of Saint-Vincent de Paul. The French government could no longer object to the Vatican’s desire for the appointment of a bishop, but insisted that Paris, not the Pope, would choose the prelate. Antoine-Adolphe Dupuch, from the clergy of Bordeaux, became the first bishop of Algiers. His effort to develop parishes and build churches and local seminaries drained his meager resources, and his inability to balance the

\textsuperscript{169} Verdeil, “Introduction,” 19.
Church’s budget forced him to resign in 1845. His successor, Louis Antoine Auguste Pavy, pursued the expansion of the Church, creating the dioceses of Oran and Constantine.¹⁷⁰

Sarah Curtis contended that women were important actors in this expansion of the Church in Algeria, and faced fierce opposition from their male counterparts, who accepted their presence but wanted them to remain in a subservient role. Whereas biographies and accounts written by members of the clergy generally portrayed a man’s world, recent research uncovered women’s active involvement in the development of Catholic missions. The first missionary order to set house in French Algeria in 1835, the Sisters of Saint Joseph de l’Apparition, was founded by a woman, the formidable Emilie de Vialar. Heiress to the family fortune accumulated by her grandfather, she used her money to found an institute for the poor and the prisoners in her native town of Gaillac, in the south-west of France. The institute attracted other pious young women with a similar interest in charity work. What began as a lay Christian enterprise soon became an official Catholic congregation under the auspices of the local archbishop.¹⁷¹

De Vialar’s metropolitan enterprise turned into a colonial venture when her brother, a globe-trotting nobleman who had settled in Algeria where he was organizing emergency medicine infrastructure, asked her to join him because the new colonial government desperately needed hospitals and schools. De Vialar and two fellow sisters crossed the Mediterranean Sea in 1835 on board of a military ship, in the company of a general sympathetic to the clergy, and who later introduced them to elite officers living in the colony. Upon reaching their destination, the sisters untiringly provided health care to European and local victims of the terrible cholera epidemic

¹⁷⁰ Fredj, 163-164.
¹⁷¹ Curtis, Civilizing Habits, 125-136.
that was devastating the region that summer. Afterwards, other sisters of their congregation joined them and they assiduously catered to the educational and medical needs of the populations of Algiers, Bône, Constantine and Oran. Three decades before the arrival of Lavigerie and his White Fathers, women were running the first important French Catholic order in colonized Algeria. The French government was favorable to their presence because they provided services which would have otherwise been too costly for the State, and because of their potential moralizing influence on the French military. After an acrimonious dispute over ecclesiastical hierarchy with Monseigneur Dupuch, de Vialar relocated to Tunisia, where she pursued her charitable enterprises with equal determination and without the patronizing intervention of her male superior. Curtis pointed out that missionary work provided opportunities for French women to travel without men, to embark on a professional career, and to exert influence over public affairs.172

While this dissertation addresses the role of the Catholic Church in Algeria by focusing on a male order, it should not obliterate the fact that the French Algerian clergy consisted of women as well as men, and that both were involved in the care of orphans and freed slaves.173 The White Sisters in particular, who are not included in this study because their archives were closed to researchers, were an important asset of Lavigerie’s project. Founded by Lavigerie in 1869, their congregation participated in the care and education of little Algerian girls and young freed female slaves in North and sub-Saharan Africa. The correspondence of the White Fathers

172 Curtis, 125-142.
173 For a list of charities ran by lay women or female clerics in the 1840s, see AGMafr, Archives Lavigerie A 16264, L’Evêque d’Alger, “Quelques notes intéressantes à consulter à l’occasion de sa démission “ (January 1, 1846). For examples of White Sisters taking care of freed girls, see AGMAfr C6-40, Letter from Labartin to his Reverend Father (Biskra, May 14, 1877).
portrays the women as working in the shadows of the men, but Emilie de Vialar’s example indicates that women’s roles were in reality more prominent than male orders’ archives tend to reveal.

Efforts to develop the presence and the power of the Church, led by male and female orders, continued under the Third Republic. Some of the most iconic religious monuments of France’s cities were built during that period: the statue of Notre Dame de la Garde in Marseille (1870) or the Sacré-Cœur basilica in Paris (built between 1876 and 1919) participated in the Church’s effort to establish its presence in the modern urban landscape. Frequent religious processions allowed the Church to display its social influence in the cities and countryside. 174

A number of new congregations came into existence during that period, and older groups, such as the Jesuits, reconnected with their overseas aspirations. France became the prime provider of Catholic missionaries and funds for the global proselytizing effort: French donors alone gave 293 of the 500 Million Francs the Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi (the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, the organization that attempted to centralize the missionary effort) used overseas in the nineteenth century. Moreover, every year, French Catholics gave 4 Million francs to the Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance (the Holy Childhood

174 Paul d’Hollander, “The Church in the Street in Nineteenth-Century France,” The Western Society for French History 32 (2004): 172. Opponents of the Church often expressed their anti-clerical views by demonstrating in the streets at the same time as the processions, and the demonstrations were often larger than the processions. See Merriman, Red City, 144-145. For the French Left, the Sacré-Cœur basilica symbolized the alliance between the Church and the newly established, socially and economically conservative Republic. Moreover, though many new churches were also built in the poor neighborhoods of Paris, the inhabitants did not attend mass in large numbers partly because they resented the association of the Church with the bourgeoisie. See Merriman, Massacre, 245.
Association, which worked towards the conversion of children in the colonies).\textsuperscript{175} Under the Third Republic, 75\% of all Catholic missionaries were French.\textsuperscript{176}

To garner financial and political support, missionary orders publicized their campaigns: they published and sold religious literature emphasizing the suffering of heathens overseas and the heroism of the missionaries who wanted to save them, organized public meetings and lecture tours and extensively used the media. In a period when a large proportion of adults read newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and posters, publications such as \textit{L’Univers} (1833-1919) or \textit{La Croix} (1880-present) attracted a wide readership that was often willing to contribute financially to the missionary effort. Publications for children also encouraged little Catholics to offer their pocket money to the Church.\textsuperscript{177} Though the individual amounts tended to be small, their combined numbers provided a significant portion of the missionaries’ funding.\textsuperscript{178}

These developments were simultaneous with the beginning of the period of New Imperialism (1870-1914), when Great Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany would compete to carve out colonial territories on the African continent. In addition to Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, France laid claims to large stretches of West Africa from Senegal on the Atlantic coast to Niger, as well as the eastern Congo, Chad, and Gabon in Equatorial Africa. Though the conferences of Berlin (1884-1885) and Brussels (1889-1890) in principle regulated possession rights, intense rivalries pitted European powers against each other well into the twentieth century. In North

\textsuperscript{176} Curtis, \textit{Civilizing Habits}, 15.
\textsuperscript{177} See, for example, Gaume, Jean-Joseph, \textit{Suéma, ou la petite esclave africaine enterrée vivante : Histoire contemporaine dédiée aux jeunes chrétiennes de l’ancien et du nouveau monde} (Gaume Frères et J. Duprey Editeurs, 1870).
\textsuperscript{178} Daughton, 11.
Africa, Italy and Great Britain continued to challenge France’s possession of Tunisia long after the establishment of the Protectorate in 1881. Missionary orders from these countries participated in the violent power struggles and deep social transformations that colonialism brought about.

Paradoxically, while the period of the Third Republic witnessed a strong revival of Catholic activities in France and overseas, the late nineteenth century was also the time when the French government espoused radical anti-clerical politics that threatened the Church’s political and social influence in the country. The most radical and most contested of the measures were the restrictions the government imposed on the Church’s right to maintain and expand its vast educational system in the country. These changes took place through long, intense, parliamentary debates that opposed the partisans of a conservative, traditionalist, ideology to those of anti-clerical policies— the “two Frances”. Since this took place just as France was dramatically developing its overseas empire, the same ministers and members of parliament who legislated against the Church at home relied on missionary work in the colonies, in order to reduce the financial costs of imperial rule. In Gambetta’s famous phrase, “anti-clericalism is not an article for export.”

The reality on the ground was more complex. Tensions arose between Catholic colonial administrators, army officers and missionaries on the one hand, and fiercely anti-clerical

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180 Daughton, 8.
members of the bureaucracy and military forces on the other, even though they all were under strict orders to avoid confrontations. Lavigerie had instructed his missionaries to “never express opinions against either the French or the indigenous authorities. Rest assured that the slightest word we say against them would be hawked about and would cause us much trouble.”

Despite this and other warnings, priests and nuns channeled their opposition to the government by publishing provocative articles in the press, lobbying for their cause in their correspondence, requesting meetings with officials, or taking to the streets. Both groups also publicly accused their opponents of terrible crimes or immoral behavior, such as theft, assassinations and sexual indiscretion.

In that fraught political context, Lavigerie had to tread carefully to achieve his objectives: give prominence to the White Fathers among other missionaries present in North Africa and expand south, ensure that the French government would not encroach on his ecclesiastical authority, establish his role as the leading crusader against slavery, collect the funds he needed for his projects, and convert people to Catholicism.

To circumvent the order and the hostility of civilian administrators, the missionaries tried to use their influence within the army. Tradition, cultural similarities and pragmatism tied French Catholic missionaries to their compatriots in the military forces. Since priests and soldiers often preceded the civilian administration in colonized territories, the two groups socialized because they were the only French people within hundreds of miles. Moreover, at home and overseas, the Church and the army shared deep connections. Catholic ceremonies celebrated military victories.

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183 Daughton, 6.
The clergy and the officers also tended to belong to the same conservative band on the French political spectrum, especially under the anti-clerical republic. The elite military schools, Saint-Cyr and the Ecole Navale, had deep connections to the Catholic establishment and tradition, and their graduates were often members of the conservative and Catholic bourgeois and aristocratic circles. The establishment of the Republic in the 1870s intensified the anti-liberal feelings of a large number of officers, who, in tandem with the Catholic Church, remained the champions of a conservative France.\textsuperscript{184} Algeria was under military rule until 1871, when it became a territory administered by civilians. The Saharan territories were an exception and remained under the control of the army because the conquest was fragile. In their letters and diaries, the White Fathers repeatedly lauded their personal camaraderie with French soldiers stationed in Algeria.\textsuperscript{185} Lavigerie maintained regular epistolary contact with several high ranking officers.\textsuperscript{186}

The relationship between the missionaries and the officers in the Sahara illustrates the trend. Lavigerie sent small missions to oases in the desert to establish bases from which they would later travel south. Their arrival and installation depended to a considerable extent on the ideological leanings and personal feelings of the commanding officers. The head of the missionary expedition to Ghardaia in the Mzab (a region in the Southern Algerian Sahara) wrote to Lavigerie that he had to proceed with caution and in secret while trying to find a suitable plot of land to establish the mission. He feared the hostile reaction of the local population as well as

\textsuperscript{184} Foster, 28  
\textsuperscript{185} For example, the diary of the White Fathers’ post in Saint-Louis include an entry about an unnamed French military commander playing with the little boys the Fathers had freed, and posing with them for a picture ( AG MAfr, Diaire de Saint Louis de Carthage. 1875-1888, entry of April 19, 1878).  
\textsuperscript{186} Bertrand Taithe, “Algerian Orphans and Colonial Christianity in Algeria, 1866-1939” French History 20, no. 3 (September 2006): 247.
the antagonism of the French authorities, who did not want missionaries to further alienate the natives by their presence. Moreover, since abolition provided local resistance against the French with a rallying cause, the presence of the missionaries with an open anti-slavery agenda ignited hostilities that the government wished to avoid. Unwelcome by both the local population and their government, the missionaries sought protection and intelligence from a lieutenant and a captain who were “devoted to the Catholic cause” and used their influence to allow them to settle safely.\(^{187}\)

In territories administered by civilians, the White Fathers’ task was more arduous. To attract sympathy and loyalty, Lavigerie framed his missionary work in a French nationalist discourse. The missionaries were not only doing the work of God, they were also serving their country’s interests. He sought to legitimize this perceived association between the Church and the State by showing that it had a long history.\(^{188}\) To do so, he reclaimed what he presented as the ancient Christian heritage of Tunisia. In 1830, the bey of Tunisia had given to France a small plot of land where King Louis IX (more commonly known as Saint Louis) had died while leading a crusade in the thirteenth century. His reputation for piety and the lobbying by French cardinals at the Vatican had earned him canonization. In 1875, six years before Tunisia would become French, Lavigerie had claimed authority over the plot of land and made his priests guardians of the chapel. The maintenance and liturgical service of the chapel had been in the hands of Italian Capuchin friars until then, but Lavigerie was determined to take over. He negotiated with the Vatican and the French government his appointment as Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate

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\(^{187}\) AG Mafc C5/56-225, Letters from Father Desaignies to Lavigerie (Ghardaia, May 29, 1890 and June 28, 1890).

\(^{188}\) Daughton, 247.
of Tunisia, which effectively placed the Capuchins under his leadership. His appointment took place just after the French and Tunisian governments signed the Treaty of Bardo in 1881, which gave France authority over Tunisia and effectively incorporated it in the French Empire as a protectorate. The appointment of a French apostolic administrator over Tunisia reinforced the cultural and social hold over the newly conquered country, at the detriment of the Italians who had been competing with the French over Tunisia.

Lavigerie opened a school next to the chapel, the College of Saint Louis, where 29 Catholic and Muslim children began attending classes based on the French curriculum in 1880, before the treaty of Bardo. Lavigerie considered the College to be an important element of his missionary strategy. Paris deemed it to be a useful asset in the competition with the Italians, since it would allow the French to teach their language to the local elite, influence its way of thinking and its culture, as well as develop its respect for France and its representatives. Lavigerie still had to recognize the cosmopolitan nature of Tunisian society: in addition to French, the students took Italian and Arabic language classes. Many of the freed children who later attended the Malta Institut began their education at Saint-Louis, where they followed classes separately from the other students. Chapter 3 will explore their story.

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189 Previously, they had been under the leadership of an Italian prelate, Bishop Sutter. See Curtis, *Civilizing Mission*, 139. Italian missionaries had been losing influence in the MENA since the 1850s: French, English and German had replaced Italian as the language spoken at the majority of missionary schools, though Italian remained the official language of the Catholic Church (Verdeil, 37-38).


After the Protectorate was established, Lavigerie moved the school to Tunis, where he hoped it would attract more students and exercise a stronger influence. Renamed Collège Saint-Charles, after his own patron saint, the school was located near the city’s European quarter. Since he was devoting most of his human and financial resources towards the evangelization of sub-Saharan Africa, his congregation could not provide the funds and teachers Saint-Charles needed. In 1886, Lavigerie gave the State control over secondary education at the school. From then on, the government appointed secular teachers, trained in the metropole’s State university system, while the administration remained in the hands of the clergy. Saint-Charles still failed to attract a large student body, and Lavigerie, in financial distress, had no choice but to sell it to the French Protectorate in 1889. Secular staff replaced the ecclesiastical administrators, and the school briefly became the Lycée Sadiki (in honor of the bey), before being named the Lycée de Tunis.

While Lavigerie’s vision of the school was inclusive and had space for both European and Arab Muslim students, the French government constructed it as an educational facility for Europeans, and select, high-ranking members of the Tunisian elite. Once the secular administration expelled over fifty indigenous students, French families became more willing to send their children to the lycée. Under ecclesiastical administration, less than 300 students had attended Saint-Charles. By 1905, it boasted 846 registered pupils, most of whom were European, Christian and Jewish. 193

The transition between the ecclesiastical and the secular administration of the school took place through the cooperation between Cardinal Lavigerie and the French Résident Général.

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193 Machuel, 7-13. The Lycée de Tunis later became the Lycée Carnot, named after Sadi Carnot, president of the Republic between 1887 and 1894. In 1983, it became the Lycée Bourguiba, in honor of nationalist leader and first Tunisian president, Habib Bourguiba (1957-1987), who was a former student of the school Lavigerie had founded.
Justin Massicault (1886-1892). Massicault, a former journalist from the Cher region in the center of France, had been a radical republican during the Second Empire. He became involved in national politics after Napoleon III’s fall. He moved in the circles of the reformist nébuleuse. and his interest in the social question earned him a position as a prefect of the Haute-Vienne département in 1870. In 1876, he joined the Ministry of the Interior as director of its press services in 1876. In 1877, he received a second appointment as a prefect in the Haute-Vienne, followed by prefectoral appointments first in the Somme, then in the Rhône, where the important city of Lyon was located. Massicault’s political success was due to his connections within the reformist networks. The Interior minister, Jules Simon, was himself a member of the reformist networks, with a particular interest in prison reform. Simon was an anti-clerical republican, but his involvement in the non-governmental reformist organizations, which included members of the Catholic clergy, had convinced him of the need for collaboration between public and private reformists. In a similar fashion, Massicault, who was a leftist republican, with strong anti-clerical principles, had to adapt his political ideology to political needs on the ground. When the government named him Résident Général of the Tunisian Protectorate in 1886, he realized he had to work with Lavigerie to govern effectively.¹⁹⁴ In that sense, the management of the lycée’s transition from Catholic to public administration was representative of a larger trend of difficult but necessary collaboration between the State and the Church, beyond the ideological divides of the Third Republic.

Despite the need, recognized on both sides, for this uneasy co-existence, the power struggles between the Church and the State shaped political life in the Protectorate. In addition to the chapel and the school, Lavigerie decided to build a cathedral on the site of Saint-Louis. The political ramifications of his project shed light on the deep tensions surrounding the colonization of Tunisia. Though Lavigerie could not secure state funds to build the cathedral, the government wanted to ensure that the symbols that adorned it showed allegiance to the Republic. A letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Lavigerie insisted on the importance of not displaying a fleur-de-lis flag, the emblem of royalty: a piece of fabric with the fleur-de-lis could appear on the building in honor of Saint Louis, but it should not be a flag that would rival the national flag. The government suspected the Church of using the symbol to express loyalty to the monarchy rather than to the Republic. After the inauguration of the cathedral, the Résident Général received a missive from the Ministry, expressing displeasure at the presence of a Vatican flag over the cathedral, and requesting details about the relative positions of the French, Tunisian and pontifical emblems over the building.\footnote{MAE Nantes, ITU/V/1427, Letters from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Résidence Générale (May 16, 1890 and May 17, 1890).}

The tensions surrounding the flags illustrate the impact of European politics on missionary work in the colonies. In 1873, following the upheavals of the Commune, royalists supported by the Catholic Church tried to reinstate the monarchy in Paris. Their candidate to the throne was the Count of Chambord, a descendant of the Bourbons.\footnote{France was ruled by the dynasty of the Capetians, to which Saint Louis belonged, between 987 and 1328. Beginning with the reign of Henri IV (father of Louis XIII and grandfather of Louis XIV), the Bourbons took over the monarchy until King XVI was beheaded during the Revolution. Bourbon rule was briefly revived during the reigns of Louis XVIII (1815-1824) and Charles X (1824-1830), but the 1830 revolution put an end to it. Bourbon contestants to the throne, such as the Count of Chambord, 196 The President of the Republic, Mac-}
Mahon (the former governor general of Algeria), was a Catholic and a royalist and agreed to negotiate with Chambord a possible return to monarchic rule. A large section of the national Assembly, which included a majority of royalists, was willing to support his candidacy. The project ultimately failed, partly because Chambord’s vision of the nation was at odds with the government’s. He had announced his intention of replacing the tricolor flag with the white flag of King Henry IV (1589-1610), his ancestor. The republican press and even moderate royalists rejected the white flag as a symbol of a return to the past, anti-constitutionalism, and a reinstatement of the temporal power of the Church (and the Vatican) in France. When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Résidence Générale expressed concern at the presence of a royalist fleur-de-lys flag, or the Vatican’s flag, they were worried that Lavigerie was using his influence in the colonies to challenge the legitimacy and supremacy of the Republic.

The diplomatic incidents connected to the cathedral were symptomatic of the deteriorating relationship between the Church and the State. In 1889, parliamentary elections in the metropole marked the defeat of monarchist Catholics, and signaled the political ascendency of anti-clerical Republicans. Pope Leo XIII, who since his accession to power in 1876 had tried to maintain peaceful relations with the Republic, was striving to dissociate the French Church from the monarchy. The newly unified Italian nation-state threatened the political and territorial integrity of the Vatican, and the pontiff needed the French government’s support. Lavigerie was the only high-ranking member of the French ecclesiastical hierarchy who agreed to publicly back the Pope’s project. Lavigerie had come to the realization that his African ambitions could not

succeed if he was locked in a constant struggle with republican authorities. Moreover, he calculated that a grateful Pope would be a useful asset in the competition with Italian missionaries. On November 18, 1890, during a reception party organized for French naval officers, he gave the following speech, which became known as the Toast of Algiers:

> When the will of a people has been clearly asserted when the form of a government contains in itself nothing contrary, as Leo XIII recently proclaimed, to the principles by which civilized Christian nations can live, when unreserved loyalty to this form of government becomes necessary in order to snatch one’s country from the abysses which threaten it, then the moment has come … to sacrifice all that conscience and honor permit, even command, each one of us to sacrifice for love of our country.\(^{198}\)

The navy officers, who traditionally belonged, with the Church, to the conservative, anti-republican element of French society, were surprised by the unexpected content of the toast. Moreover, the Catholic hierarchy in the metropole, deeply suspicious of the government, was either recalcitrant towards Lavigerie’s initiative, or radically hostile to it. It was not until 1892 that the clergy, pressured by the Holy See and unable to regain political influence at home, half-heartedly agreed to recognize the Republic as a legitimate regime, in a movement called the *Ralliement*.\(^{199}\)

Lavigerie’s bold embrace of the Republic, though it gained him the papacy’s support, did not give him the advantages he expected from the authorities of the Protectorate. An episode illustrating the continued tensions with the State was a conflict involving the French, the Italians and the Vatican, and which began in June of 1891. On that day, the news spread like wildfire

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\(^{199}\) Mayeur and Reberioux, 152-153.
among the Catholic community of Tunis. The Italian Capuchins, who had been catering to the
spiritual, medical and educational needs of the Catholic city dwellers for three centuries, had
received orders from the Vatican to leave the Regency. Although only nine monks represented
the Capuchins in the country, their work was important to the students, patients and churchgoers
who benefitted from their services. In addition to their Catholic faith, they shared linguistic and
cultural affinities with the Maltese and Italian inhabitants, who formed the overwhelming
majority of the Tunisian population of European descent. The Capuchins and their flock
immediately accused Cardinal Lavigerie of having used his privileged relationship with the Pope
to ship the Italian monks out of the country, in connivance with the French government.
According to his detractors, he had maneuvered to establish the preeminence of his White
Fathers and to rob Italy of its influence in North Africa. Tensions arose in the city. Capuchin
supporters organized heated public meetings, wrote petitions, and sent a delegation to the
Vatican.²⁰⁰

The opposition to Lavigerie was led by Count Raffo, whose personal history illustrates the
significance of Mediterranean slavery in the social make up of Tunisia.²⁰¹ Raffo was the
grandson of Gian-Battista, a watchmaker from Genoa who had been captured on the
Mediterranean by Barbary pirates in 1771, and sold as a slave to the court of the bey of Tunis.
His professional skills allowed him to become an important member of the palace’s staff, and
subsequently rise in the hierarchy of the court. Gian-Battista’s son, Guiseppe, was also a member

²⁰⁰ MAE Nantes, ITU/1/17/1423, Reports from the police commissioner to the Résidence Générale (May
16, 1891 and June 18, 1891).
²⁰¹ MAE Nantes, ITU/171/1423, Letter from the French Embassy in the Vatican to the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs (June 29, 1891).
of the court, and under the patronage of the bey, became a wealthy entrepreneur, involved in the lucrative tuna canning business that flourished in Tunisia. His work led him to travel to Europe, where his wealth allowed him to be received in the highest circles of government. The Italians offered him a noble title, which his son, Count Raffo, the protagonist of this story, continued to carry. Both father and son remained devout Catholics and were received in the Vatican. Though both were Catholic and faithful to the Pope, Lavigerie and Raffo’s national loyalties prevailed in this conflict.

In the face of growing popular agitation, Lavigerie sent from Algiers a telegram to his representative in Tunis, instructing him to forward his side of the story to Count Raffo as well as to the press. According to his public version of events, the Capuchins had to leave because they had become unable to perform their duties satisfactorily, since their numbers were too small. They faced staff shortages due to the anti-clerical politics of the Italian government, which had closed the Capuchin novitiates in Italy, and drastically limited the number of clerics allowed to leave the country to serve in foreign missions. Lavigerie claimed these difficulties had discouraged the Capuchins, who for a long time had tried to close their Tunisian mission. During four long years, Lavigerie himself had restlessly struggled to maintain the order’s presence in Tunisia- he had even asked the Pope to prevent a single one of them from abandoning their post. But because their low numbers prevented them from properly serving the Catholic community, he decided to allow the Capuchins to leave as they themselves had wanted to, and as the Capuchin Superiors in Rome and the Holy See wished. Lavigerie concluded his telegram by

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vowing his complete submission to papal orders, and expressing the hope that the delegation led by Raffo would be able to lobby the Italian government into abrogating its anticlerical laws. 203

The Capuchins’ supporters, led by Count Raffo, rejected these statements as blatant lies and publicly declared that Lavigerie, rather than working in the interest of his flock, acted as an agent of the French regime. Italian newspapers, close to the government in Rome, echoed these claims: “However, our friends will learn that it is impossible to pretend to beat the priests on the fields of astuteness and treacherousness (fourberie). The question at hand here is political […] It is not true that the Capuchins left Tunis willingly.”204

Count Raffo, with a delegation of pro-Capuchin Catholics, travelled to Rome, where he requested an audience with Leo XIII. The Pope was reluctant to grant the audience and the delegation waited for days before he agreed to see Raffo as a personal favor, not as the leader of the delegation. The pontiff praised Raffo for his devotion and obedience, but declared that he would not revoke his decision.205

For part of the Italian public opinion, the Pope was at an important crossroads: he could either repeal the order recalling the Capuchins, or demonstrate that he sacrificed spiritual duties to political ambitions. 206 If he rejected the plea of the delegation, he would reveal that in collusion with the French State, he was maneuvering towards the reinforcement of his earthly power, at the detriment of his spiritual duties. His attitude negatively impressed public opinion in

203 MAE Nantes, ITU/171/1423, Telegram from Lavigerie to Tournier (unknown date and place).
204 MAE Nantes, ITU/171/1423, Handwritten copy of excerpts of an article from the newspaper La Liberté (July 2, 1891).
205 MAE Nantes, ITU/171/1423, Letter from the French embassy in the Vatican to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Vatican City, July 8, 1891).
206 MAE Nantes, ITU/171/1423, Handwritten copy of excerpts of an article from the newspaper La Liberté (July 2, 1891).
Italy and the British papers echoed these accusations. According to the Daily News, the “measures adopted by Lavigerie had only one purpose: to franciser the European colonies of Tunisia because the French clergy could replace the Capuchins and influence popular consciousness…”\(^{207}\)

After the Capuchins’ departure, Lavigerie also took over their Tunisians lands and buildings. The Capuchins demanded a monetary compensation, since these had been built with the financial contribution of Sicilian kings, not with the money of the Church. That protest was also made in vain.\(^ {208}\)

The Résidence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs followed the events with concern. They worried about the popular unrest among the Maltese and the Italians of Tunis, which the Italian government could take advantage of. They collected and translated articles of Italian newspapers on the affair.\(^ {209}\) They also feared that the expulsion of the Capuchins from a French territory might create a dangerous precedent. Other European powers might decide to expel French missionaries from their colonial territories, which would be detrimental to French cultural influence in Africa.\(^ {210}\) The Minister of Foreign Affairs asked the Résidence to let Lavigerie’s representative in Tunis know that the government disapproved of his initiative.\(^ {211}\)

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\(^{207}\) MAE Nantes, I/TU/171/1423, Telegram from Castelnuovo to the Résidence (June 20, 1891).

\(^{208}\) MAE Nantes, I/TU/171/1423, Translation of an article of L’Unione (August 26, 1891) and letter from the French embassy in the Vatican to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Vatican City, July 20, 1891).

\(^{209}\) MAE Nantes, I/TU/171/1423, Excerpt from an article of the Corriere di Napoli (May 28, 1890); letter from the French embassy in the Vatican to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (June 29, 1891).

\(^{210}\) MAE Nantes, ITU/171/1423, Letter from the French embassy in the Vatican to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Vatican City, July 20, 1891).

Lavigerie’s correspondence with the French government confirms part of the accusations against him. In letters to the Résident in Tunis, on June 19, 1891, he presented a narrative different from his public response. He explained, in unambiguous terms, that he had premeditated the departure of the Italian Capuchins. He explained his actions as an effort to promote French interests in the Regency, by expelling a dangerous counter power. He argued that according to old regulations promulgated by the Vatican, if for any reason the seat of the Archbishop of Carthage became vacant, then the Capuchins would gain preeminence over the ecclesiastical affairs of the Regency. The Capuchins nursed “nationalist passions” and would use their spiritual influence to promote Italian interests in the region. The Cardinal triumphantly wrote:

It is true that the Maltese, the Italians, they all wanted to scream together as soon as they had been informed by the Capuchin Fathers of the blow they had been dealt. They held meetings, they are sending a delegation to the Pope, but they have not been successful. I have the certitude that the delegation will not be received by the Holy Father…

The letter also shows that the French government had not invested Lavigerie with the mission of expelling the Capuchins: “… I did not want to tell you about it earlier because I wanted to take full responsibility for everything and I didn’t want to cause any political difficulties for you, while rendering a service I owed to France”. 

In reality, the Cardinal’s motivations were more complex and not as selfless as he presented them at the beginning of the letter. He wanted official recognition, by the government, of his, and by extension the Church’s participation in government affairs. His specific request was a

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212 MAE Nantes, I/TU/V/171/1423, Letter by Lavigerie to the Résident Général (Algiers, June 19, 1891)
213 MAE Nantes, I/TU/V/171/1423, Letter by Lavigerie to the Résident Général (Algiers, June 19, 1891) and letter from M. Laffitte to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (June 23, 1891).
government salary, for himself and his missionaries. Over the years, Paris had refused. He blamed Parliament for that decision, and expressed his surprise at the refusal, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, of providing him with a financial compensation for his service to the nation.\textsuperscript{214}

Just after the Capuchins had received their marching orders, Lavigerie, whose health was ailing, asked to embark on a government boat, the \textit{Hirondelle}, to travel from Tunisia back to Algiers. The now older and sick prelate feared a long train ride would fatigue him. The government denied him the authorization on the premise that the government paid for the boat and the Cardinal was not a State employee.\textsuperscript{215} Lavigerie was furious. He qualified the move as an act of public cruelty…Such an act, Monsieur le Ministre, so profoundly wounds my personal dignity and all the rules of the most elementary justice after all I have tried to do for my country during so many years, that it is absolutely impossible for me to accept the continuation of this state of affairs…”\textsuperscript{216}

The reference to his dignity is more than an allusion to his wounded pride. In the nineteenth century, as it did under the Ancien Régime, the word \textit{dignité} designated an important official function within the State or the Church.\textsuperscript{217} Lavigerie was accusing the government of violating the integrity of his function as a high-ranking member of the Church, and by extension, of the Church itself.

\textsuperscript{214} MAE Nantes, 1/TU/V/171/1423, Letter by Lavigerie to the Résident (Algiers, June 19, 1891). Lavigerie’s account is confirmed by a letter sent the same day from the French embassy in the Vatican to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Vatican City, June 19, 1891).

\textsuperscript{215} MAE Nantes, 1/TU/V/171/1423, Letter from the Bellue, Captain of \textit{L’Hirondelle} to the Résident Général (May 17, 1891); letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Résident Général (Paris, May 26, 1891).

\textsuperscript{216} MAE Nantes, 1/TU/V/171/1423, Letter by Lavigerie to the Résident (Algiers, June 19, 1891).

Since the government refused to assist him by allowing him to use the boat, he requested a salary that would allow him to pay for the trips his work necessitated. He concluded: “I have always been ready to sacrifice everything for France, but even to France I cannot sacrifice my honor.” More than a colorful expression of Lavigerie’s fiery temperament, this episode emphasizes the dilemmas faced by the Church and the State as they needed each other but also competed for political power and legitimacy. It contributes to account for Lavigerie’s choices in his abolitionist campaign, discussed in the last section of this chapter.

The role of the Pope in these international tensions in Tunisia, as in other places where Catholic missionaries were present in Africa, explains why the Vatican saw anti-slavery work as a political tool to exert influence through the Catholic missions that covered a large expanse of territory between Algiers and Cape Town. As early as the mid-seventeenth century, the papacy had established the rules that would govern missionary work in the modern period. The main objective of the missionaries was to convert people of distant lands to Catholicism, not to support their country’s imperial ambitions in these lands. Moreover, their loyalty should reside with the universal community of believers, not with their compatriots. This normative framework did not prevent the development of deeply seated hostile rivalries between missionaries from different countries. The apogee of the French missionary movements coincided with the rise of nationalism in Europe, and the Vatican had to compete with the appeal of political power and ideological strength of the nation state.

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The Vatican had to carefully adapt its universalist ideal (and agenda) to the necessities of national politics by agreeing, for instance, to assign missionaries to colonies ruled by their home countries. The politics of missionary work became particularly delicate for the Vatican after the Risorgimento when the newly unified Italian nation threatened the territorial integrity and ruling legitimacy of the Vatican. The nationalist leaders of Italian unification had challenged the Pope on several fronts. They took away lands that had traditionally been under papal jurisdiction and suppressed the Church’s juridical power over people living in the former Italian states. In that context, the Pope needed to reassert his legitimacy and temporal power by turning his attention to international affairs. The missions were a central instrument in this political project and anti-slavery work became the spearhead of Catholic politics in Africa.220

It was in this charged political atmosphere that Lavigerie designed projects for the care, education and professional training of children in Algeria, Tunisia, and the island of Malta.

D. The Social History of Missionary Work

In the past ten years, children studies have enriched the historiography of colonialism by bringing to the fore a group of people historians have largely ignored, or mentioned tangentially in works on gender. The difficulty of finding published and archival sources, as well as the fact that children were often under the care of adults made them less visible in the sources. Since missionaries often focused on the education and conversion of children, the historiography of missions has opened the way to the inclusion of childhood as an important category of analysis in the studies of French colonialism. This emerging scholarly field builds on the methodological strengths of gender and subaltern studies, and focuses on the agency of children in the analysis of

220 Powell, Tell this in my Memory, 166-171.
educational systems that were often built to canalize or subdue their will. In 2006, a collection of essays edited by Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller and Lorene Sisquoc, addressed the experiences of Native American children enrolled, either willingly or by force, in the boarding school system established by Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the United States in the nineteenth century. Following an old tradition going back to the Spanish conquests, missionaries opened schools were they hoped to save Indian children from their own communities, by inculcating them with Christian religious principles and European education. The book’s overarching argument is that children, though they were subjected to a strict disciplinary system and separation from their families, were not powerless. Despite the frequent psychological (and sometimes physical) pain they endured at the hands of the missionaries, they could use their education to empower themselves, and find ways to reinforce the Native American identities their teachers hoped to eradicate. This and the following chapter of the dissertation show that unintended consequences similarly characterized the White Fathers’ projects with Arab orphans and freed slaves.

Another important contribution of American historiography is a work by Mary Mitchell, *Raising Freedom’s Child: Black Children and the Vision of the Future after Slavery*. Mitchell argued that white education projects for freed black children in the United States paradoxically reinforced racial inequalities. Missionaries and other philanthropists designed education projects as a means to serve the interests of whites through a civilizing mission that, as this chapter will emphasize, showed remarkable characteristics with Lavigerie’s projects in Algeria and Tunisia.

The French government categorically banned its nationals from engaging in Catholic proselytism among Muslim colonial subjects. Though Algeria officially became a French
territory in 1848, the imposition of colonial rule faced a violent opposition from Algerians over several decades. Between the 1850s and the 1870s, the French faced a violent rebellion in Kabylia and the Aurès, which they met with merciless and sanguinary repression. Colonial administrators did not want overt disrespect towards Islam to exacerbate anti-French feelings and spark rebellion. They imposed this policy from the beginning of the occupation, well before the Third Republic. Regardless of the necessities of colonial rule, the ban on converting Muslims negated the *raison d’être* of the missionaries, and Lavigerie was determined not to let politics stand in his way.

His arrival in 1867 coincided with the aftermath of several catastrophes that simultaneously struck the Algerian population between 1866 and 1869. Drought, followed by swarms of locusts, had a destructive impact on harvests. Low temperatures during the winter decimated part of the livestock. A cholera epidemic followed the natural disasters. Mass migration from the southern regions, which were more severely affected, led thousands of refugees to the cities of the north. The French government, worried about maintaining law and order, and having a poor knowledge of the demographics of the country, was overwhelmed by the number of refugees, who often lived in camps. The appalling hygiene and health conditions in the camps led to outbreaks of typhus.

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221 Kabylia is a mountainous region on the Mediterranean coast, home to the Berber population of Algeria. The Berbers were native inhabitants of North Africa before the medieval Arab conquests. Today, they live in Algeria and Morocco but are also present in small communities in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Mauretania. The Aurès mountains were part of the Saharan Atlas in Algeria.

222 Taithe, “Algerian Orphans,” 245. Between 1830 and 1875, approximately 825,000 Algerians died because of the violence and disruptions the wars of conquest brought about. An additional 800,000 people died in the late 1860s. See Brower, *A Desert Named Peace*, 4.
This humanitarian crisis proved to be an opportunity for missionary work. The State lacked the financial resources to feed and shelter the children and had to delegate their care to Catholic organizations. Under the authority of the archbishop, Catholic congregations sheltered over a thousand boys and girls in convents and monasteries all over the country. The justifications the Catholic Church put forward to explain their acts of charity illustrate the power dynamics of philanthropy. Abbé Burzet, a member of the French Algerian clergy who professed a great admiration for Lavigerie, wrote a memoir of the tragic events of 1867-1869. His description of the suffering of the indigenous population of Algeria, who, because of poverty, poor nutrition and unsanitary living conditions were struck harder by illness and hunger than Europeans, was tainted with both pity and contempt. The fate of children in particular was the object of dehumanizing depictions: “The women, carrying their little children squatting like monkeys on their backs, dragged themselves, panting and exhausted.”

Moreover, the image of mothers desperately trying to save their children was overshadowed by multiple examples of adults (including parents) Burzet portrayed as criminals who wanted to take advantage of the suffering of children:

I have myself seen one of these Arabs, young and robust, pushing in front of him a haggard and distraught child, pinching him to make him cry, so that passersby, thinking that hunger made him cry, showed more generosity […]. An Arab woman carried in her arms a child […] who was completely naked. Housewives, moved to tears by such a situation, hastened to find baby blankets to cover this poor wretch who was dying of the cold. The same woman reappeared the following day, holding the same child, naked like the day before.

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223 Renault, Cardinal Lavigerie, 94-95.
225 Burzet, 75.
226 Burzet, 80.
According to Burzet, Algerian adults went as far as murdering little children to steal the little food or clothes they had in their possession. Even in cases where they could rob the child without assassinating them, they were so blood thirsty they killed them for pleasure and watched their agony. Stories of children victims of cannibalism, which Burzet might have invented to touch his readers, also appeared in his reports. Adults, including relatives, killed children or preyed on corpses to feed themselves.

Burzet’s graphic descriptions of children’s suffering, at the hands of their own communities, parents, uncles, and friends, participated in the justification of missionary work. By sheltering them in his orphanages, Lavigerie was not only rescuing the children from hunger and destitution, he was also saving them from their undeserving parents and communities, who rather than properly educating and providing for them, exploited, tortured and killed them. The historiography of colonialism emphasized the central importance of the family in imperial projects because Europeans justified their actions in the colonies partly by criticizing the familial relationships among the indigenous population. They accused men of mistreating their wives or daughters by excluding them, and their children by exploiting or physically abusing them. Colonialists, in this case the French clergy, insisted that indigenous parents were not proper caretakers of their own children. Removal from their parents’ guardianship was beneficial to children, because Europeans would lead them towards a more civilized life. Mary Mitchell,

227 Burzet, 92.
228 Burzet, 100-103. Adults were also victims of cannibalism. According to Burzet, the Moniteur Algérien counted a total of 16 victims.
who studied education projects for freed children in the United States, similarly argued that missionaries planned to save them from the nefarious influence of their parents (whom the missionaries considered to be lazy and immoral) as well as to make them useful members of society who knew how to farm or to practice artisanal professions, the assumption being that they could not learn these skills without the missionaries’ charity.\footnote{Mary Niall Mitchell, \textit{Raising Freedom’s Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future after Slavery} (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 106-107 and 172-173. Unlike the Indian children, however, freed slaves were never the victims of a systematic process of “removal” from their families. Matthias Gardet and David Nigget, in their studies of French institutions for juvenile delinquents in metropolitan France observed that one of the objectives of these institutions was to protect the children from the negative influence of their families, by separating them. See Matthias Gardet and David Nigget, “Enfances (dé)placées : Migrations forcées et politiques de protection de la jeunesse, XIXè-XXè siècles. Introduction générale,” in \textit{Revue d’histoire de l’enfance irrégulière} 14 (2012): 29.}

Officially, the clergy in charge of the children did not have the right to attempt to convert them. In reality, they routinely taught them the elementary rules of catechism and secretly baptized the dying among them. Lavigerie deeply believed in his duty as a Christian pastor to save their souls and in his letters to the clergy he insisted that they fed the children even if they had barely enough resources to buy food for themselves.\footnote{Lavigerie, “Letter to the Father Superior of the Missionary School of Saint-Laurent-d’Olt” (date missing) in \textit{Ecrits d’Afrique}, ed. H. Hamman (Paris: Grasset, 1966), 32.} But the charitable project was also part of a missionary strategy.

Because they were young, orphans, and were completely dependent on the missionaries for their survival, Lavigerie anticipated that these children would be less resistant to conversion than other Algerian Muslims. Moreover, since the government was relieved of their care by the congregations, it would not inquire into the missionaries’ activities. Whereas officially he maintained that his objective was to shelter the orphans, Lavigerie’s letters to other missionaries
revealed a different objective. When he began assembling the children, Lavigerie instructed his clergy in the following terms:

“I am ready to receive and raise for free all the orphans that will be sent to me, boys or girls. I only impose two conditions. The first is that they are completely orphaned, of father and mother, or abandoned by their parents. The second condition is that they are less than ten years old. It would be useless to send me children that would not meet these two conditions. Experience has shown that because of the Arabs’ fickle spirit, it is impossible to keep them in our institutions if they are past that age.”

Lavigerie’s orders reflected an objective that was not limited to humanitarian ideals. He wanted children who were completely dependent on him, who had lost any means of support and subsistence outside of the Church, and who would be easy to influence because of their young age.

Officially, Lavigerie claimed he would not attempt to convert the orphans, and insisted that the clergy would make this point clear. It was only when the children were old enough (he did not specify when) that they would themselves make a decision about their conversion. Despite the formal denegation that he publicized for the benefit of the French government, he wanted to teach the orphans the tenets of the faith and baptize them. In a letter to the director of the Ecole des Oeuvres d’Orient, he outlined ambitious plans for the future: in the orphanages, the children will be trained in agriculture, or in the [jobs and skills] related to it, in order for them to one day be able to easily and usefully support themselves. The girls will be put in the care of the Sœurs de la Doctrine Chrétienne. They will also be trained in agricultural work and in the tasks needed to take care of a rustic household. Under no circumstances do I want to make urban workers (ouvrières de ville) out of them, because of the almost insurmountable perils.

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232 Letter from Lavigerie to his clergy (January 17, 1868), quoted in Burzet, 105.
233 Mary Mitchell noted that missionaries in the southern United States preferred to work with freed children (rather than adults) for reasons similar to Lavigerie’s. For the missionaries, children were an “untouched, if untamed, field ready for cultivation.” See Mitchell, 112.
234 Burzet, 105.
that such a position would hold for them, and because what is needed here, above all, are families of European settlers and also of indigenous settlers. [If we succeed...] we will have, in a few years, a fertile nursery (pépinière) of useful workers (ouvriers), who would be supporters, friends of our French colonization, and let us say the word: Arab Christians. These poor children, deeply ignorant of everything, knowing nothing either about their religion or other religions, have no prejudice, no repulsion against us, and I do not doubt that taught by our words and our example, they will one day ask for baptism. This will be the beginning of the regeneration of this people and of the veritable assimilation that we seek without ever finding it, because we look for it with the Quran, and with the Quran, in a thousand years just like today, we will be Christian dogs and it will always remain commendable to slit our throats or throw us in the sea.

His anti-Muslim rhetoric caused a rift with Mac-Mahon, the Catholic governor of Algeria who had originally invited him to become the bishop of the colony. Mac-Mahon accused Lavigerie of threatening French interests by antagonizing Muslims and attempting to convert them. He also accused Lavigerie of exaggerating the sufferings of the Algerians and the inaction of the government during the famine. The governor and the prelate exchanged letters which Lavigerie shared with the press in order to gain the support of France’s public opinion. He also pleaded his cause in front of the Emperor, first in writing then in person during an audience in May 1868. His efforts did not convince the government to allow more freedom to the missionaries. Napoleon III only conceded to recognize Lavigerie’s right to open schools, but

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235 In Native American boarding schools, girls also had to learn the domestic skills required from housewives. See Katrina A. Paxton, “Learning Gender: Female Students at the Sherman Institute, 1907-1925.” In Boarding School Blues, 176. The reinforcement of gender norms through education was not specific to colonial contexts. In metropolitan France, schools taught girls and boys the skills and behaviors they needed to fulfill their socially accepted economic and family roles. See for example Judith Surkis, Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

236 Letter from Lavigerie to the Director of the Oeuvre des Ecoles d’Orient (April 6, 1868), quoted in Burzet, 107-108). He reiterated the same ideas in letters to various French periodicals, where he published calls for donations. See letter from Lavigerie to the editor of the Moniteur de l’Algérie (Algiers, May 8, 1868).
reiterated the ban on proselytism.237 The conflict between Lavigerie and Mac-Mahon indicate that the uneasy relationship between Church and State in the colonies after 1871 stretched back to the early decades of the French occupation, and sheds light on the continuities between the Second Empire and the Third Republic.

The program Lavigerie presented in the letter, as well as his anti-Muslim diatribe, both of which he reiterated in his other writings, were based on a series of assumptions that would later define his work with freed black boys. His belief in the malleability of children, shared by most European missionaries, led him to focus on education as the key to the Christianization of Africa. As Karen Vallgarda noted in her study of Catholic Danish missionaries in India, missionary education aimed at turning pupils into adults who were radically different from their parents. Basing her argument on Durkheim’s definition of education as a “continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously,”238 she described Catholic education in the colonies as an effort to transform local societies to make them compatible with European social norms and political interests. Since missionary education was an integral element of the French colonial enterprise (despite the complex tensions between Church and State), children were a central part of imperial history and their experiences require more systematic scholarly attention.239

237 Letter from Lavigerie to the editor of the Moniteur de l’Algérie (Algiers, May 8, 1868); Letter from Lavigerie to Mac-Mahon (Algiers, April 23, 1868); Letter from Lavigerie to Napoleon III (Algiers, April 12, 1868). Lavigerie published these letters in an edited volume in 1884: Cardinal Lavigerie, Oeuvres choisies de son Eminence le Cardinal Lavigerie, Evêque d’Alger : Première partie, concernant les missions (Paris: Librairie -Poussielgue Frères, 1884), 168-189. See also Renault, Renault, Cardinal Lavigerie, , 95-98.
238 Emile Durkheim, quoted in Vallgarda, 6.
239 Vallgarda, 6.

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As Lavigerie wrote in the letter, an essential element of the children’s education was their professional training. In addition to catechism, boys and girls should learn how to work on farms, with the girls also acquiring domestic skills. Later, he hoped the lay people among them would marry other converted orphans, have Christian children and in time create an indigenous Christian community. Those who had been ordained priests would conduct missionary work among Arabs and spread the faith. Lavigerie strongly believed that the path to Christianization was through an autochthonous clergy, because the natives would have more influence over their own people than foreigners. Moreover, he hoped conversion would create a community of Algerian Christians who would be more willing to accept the rule of a Christian nation. This method was also cheaper, because the orphans would have learnt a trade and become self-sufficient.

The economics of Christian charity were a common theme across national and denominational lines. A constant obstacle religious orders faced in the colonies was insufficient funding. Though fundraising campaigns in Europe as well as, especially in the case of British Protestants, government subsidies contributed to the financing of missions, money often remained a central preoccupation and shaped the projects priests and nuns put in place for the children in their care.

In addition to the hopes of solving recurring economic hardship by teaching the children professional skills, self-sufficiency was part of how they envisioned the children’s place in the racial and class universe of the colonies. Children converts needed to make a good living to relieve the mission of a financial burden, but also to occupy a position as respectable members of

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society, in a higher social class than the non-Christian indigenous people. The missionaries’ concern with the clothes the children wore participated in the same logic: the pupils’ physical appearance was a reflection of the success of the mission, as well as of the degree of civilization the children had achieved. For the White Fathers, physical appearance was so important that when, as was often the case, they couldn’t afford to properly clothe the children under their care, they sometimes forbade them from leaving the mission’s garden in order to prevent them from being seen by outsiders in such a ragged condition, which was a sartorial mark of savagery, and, by extension, of the mission’s failure to civilize the children.

Lavigerie congregated the children in orphanages. The State as well as the Association of the Holy Childhood offered subsidies to feed the orphans, but the funding was never sufficient. He also unsuccessfully tried to convince people of means to “adopt” them by providing money for their upkeep and education. In 1870, the war between France and Prussia exacerbated his financial difficulties. To solve the problem, he decided that the orphanages had to become self-sufficient, and the children would have to produce their own food. He settled them on agricultural lands he had bought with private and state subsidies and created farms where they would grow their sustenance. Lavigerie bought land 160 kilometers south of Algiers, in a commune called Les Attafs, where he created two villages, Saint-Cyprien and Sainte-Monique. The land, of poor quality and without the water resources necessary for sustainable

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241 Mitchell, 130-135.
242 AGMAfr C6-27, letter from Father Labartin to his Reverend Father (Biskra, month illegible 20, 1875). In boarding schools, the missionaries took away the children’s own clothe, to replace them with European-style uniforms, a symbol of civilization. See Clifford, Keller and Sisquoc, “Introduction,”17.
244 Saint Cyprien was a third-century convert to Christianity who became the bishop of Carthage and later died as a martyr at the hands of the Romans. Lavigerie used his story to emphasize the ancient Christian
agricultural work, became the home of the Arab orphans. The French government provided most of the funds for the original establishment of the villages. The lack of reliable water supplies made it impossible for the villagers to support themselves in the long run and expand, as Lavigerie had hoped. 245

The inadequacy of the Attafs for settlement was not the only reason Lavigerie failed. First, following the aftershock of the famine and the epidemic, their communities and families began reclaiming many of them. Available sources do not provide numerical estimates, but the departures shook Lavigerie’s confidence. The second reason was that the children themselves were not always willing to cooperate. They rejected the discipline of monastic life and did not necessarily accept conversion. 246

Unable to maintain order in the orphanages, Lavigerie sent 211 boys across the sea in the early 1870s, to a Catholic institution for juvenile offenders located in Marseille, the center of Saint-Pierre-es-Liens, more commonly known as the Orphanage of Saint-Pierre. Its official role was to provide an alternative to jail to French boys who had been sentenced by a court of law. The orphanage offered them a shelter and professional training in order for them to be able to integrate society upon the end of their sentence. The Algerian boys stayed there for several years but the experiment failed because they refused to submit to the discipline demanded by Father

heritage of Tunisia and legitimize his missionaries' work and presence in North Africa. In addition to naming a commune after him, he built a chapel in La Marsa in 1885 and decorated it with a representation of Saint-Cyprien on stained glass. He ordered the artists to use his own traits to paint Saint-Cyprien's face. See Les Missionnaires d'Afrique, "Le Cardinal Lavigerie et son projet pour les Missionnaires d'Afrique." http://www.africamission-mafr.org/lavigerieprojet.htm (accessed September 12, 2016).

246 Renault, Cardinal Lavigerie, 110-112 and 166-174. Since we do not have biographical information about the children, we do not know whether they came from urban or rural areas, and whether they were at all familiar with agricultural work.
Arnaud, the superior of Saint-Pierre. According to François Renault, the historian of the White Fathers, who was himself a member of the order,

“there were of course bound to be initial problems of adaptation, but other problems also arose. Some of the boys were recalled to Algiers before they had completed the expected period of apprenticeship and Arnaud complained that he had been involved in useless expense by setting up workshops and engaging teachers for boys who left before they had finished their training […] Arnaud and his confrères found themselves involved in more complications. Some of the boys became homesick when they saw their comrades returning to Africa. As they got older, they found the boarding school discipline more and more irksome, and a number ran away.” Because of these problems, and because he ultimately did not believe that an urban setting was the proper environment for moral regeneration, Lavigerie ended up sending all of them back to Algeria in 1876.\(^{247}\)

Judiciary records tell a different story. In 1880, the tribunal of Marseille put Father Arnaud on trial for exploiting the children under his care. He rented them out to two neighboring workshops for fifty centimes a day per child. The first one manufactured ropes and the other specialized in marble work. In May 1880, a government inspector reported that these workshops violated the labor law of 1874, which banned the work of children under 12, and limited the number of daily hours minors could work to 12. The tribunal ultimately acquitted Arnaud and the rope maker because the legislation did not apply to charitable institutions, but only to manufactures. The court of appeal in Aix-en-Provence confirmed the verdict in 1881. The judge explained the decision by arguing that “Mister Arnaud’s main objective was not to profit financially from the work of children employed in these workshops, but to train them.”\(^{248}\) The fact that several of the

\(^{247}\) Renault, *Cardinal Lavigerie: Churchman, Prophet, Missionary*, 164-165. The year when Lavigerie began sending the children to Marseille is unclear. We only know that by 1872, 211 of them were at Saint-Pierre.

children were between seven and ten years old, and that they had to do hard physical labor between six in the morning and six in the evening was not in contradiction with the law of the Republic.

Since none of the 211 boys left a written record of their experiences, we do not know whether four years before the trial, when they were still in Marseille, they experienced similar abuse. This episode still illustrates the strong connections between the White Fathers’ charitable projects in the colonies and the policies towards marginalized children in the metropole.

Beginning in the late 18th century with the French revolution, French law began establishing a categorical difference between minors who had committed crimes but were not responsible for their actions, and those who were considered responsible. Irresponsible minors would either be released to their parents or to specialized institutions in case the parents were dead or deemed unfit by the court. As for the minors who were considered to be responsible, then they would go to prison like adults. Even though this distinction dated back to the 1790s, it was not until 1836 that the first institution came into existence: the government institution of la Petite Roquette, in Paris. Based on the panoptical vision of Bentham, it was supposed to be directed at the reeducation of the children, but in practice, it functioned more as a penitentiary institution than as an educational one. The Church also opened several such institutions (often called “colonies”) for the reeducation of juvenile offenders.


250 Bourquin, 260.
The fact that Lavigerie sent children who had not committed any crime to a center for sentenced juvenile offenders indicates that he thought about the orphans under his care as a potentially dangerous group over whom he had disciplinary rights. He was trained as a priest within an institution that was deeply involved in this disciplinary system, and when he went to the colonies, he applied this system first to the Arab orphans, and when it didn’t work, to black African children, because slavery had separated them from their communities and made them completely dependent on him for their survival.

In France, both the Catholic Church and the government designed other projects based on the same principle were agricultural colonies for children and teenagers. The principle was to “let the settler save the land and the land save the settler.” These ideas proliferated during a period of demographic crisis, when agricultural production suffered from a shortage of labor due to lower fertility rates and urban migration. The first agricultural colony was founded three years after La Petite Roquette. The purpose was to save “guilty innocents”, whose crimes were often connected to vagrancy (the vagrancy of minors remained a crime in France until 1935).251

Beginning in the 1860s, the idea of the child being potentially dangerous to society became stronger and more common. Positivist criminological science developed the idea of the born criminal, replacing Rousseau’s ideal of childhood and education. Cesare Lombroso, the founder of modern criminology, argued that people committed crimes because they were born with a

251 Bourquin, 260. Mary Mitchell noted the connection, in the missionaries’ mind, between the need to civilize freed slaves and the poor, especially in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. Philanthropists often compared poor children in American cities to “savage” Arabs or Native Americans. See Mitchell, 100 and 110-111. For the parallels Protestant missionaries drew between the British poor and colonial “savages”, see Alison Twells, The Civilizing Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The Heathens at Home and Overseas (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).
moral deviancy. In that sense, vagrancy was an outward expression of this innate, biological
desire to commit crimes. Delinquent children were not victims but perpetrators and in order to
protect society from them, discipline was necessary. If the discipline imposed on them was not
sufficient, a stricter regime had to be imposed.  

These penitentiary projects in rural settings were based on the idea of displacement as a
salutary measure for both the children and society. Within that conceptual frame, the agricultural
colonies appeared as beneficial to both the children and society. Ecclesiastical or government
authorities would take away the children from their natural milieu to an environment that was
better suited to their development. Experts often considered the urban setting to be dangerous
and ripe with immorality and temptation. A transfer to the countryside would expose delinquent
children to the purifying power of nature and would help save them and protect society. Two
logics coexisted: saving the child while simultaneously punishing them. In addition to that,
children had to work: The penitentiary colonies were lucrative, both in the countryside and in the
cities, as the example of Father Arnaud’s Saint-Pierre orphanage in Marseille shows. Lavigerie
designed his project at a time when states and social reformers in several regions of the world
considered that the displacement of children from their native communities could be beneficial
for both the children and society: poor British children were shipped to Canada or Rhodesia,
Rom children in Europe were forced to leave their parents to live with sedentary host families,
boys and girls from the Réunion, Madagascar and other colonies were forcibly taken to
metropolitan France to be civilized. At the same time, social reformers thought that the

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252 Bourquin, 260-262.
emigration of poor or delinquent youth from metropolitan France to Algeria would save them from crime and immorality, while providing the colony with the cheap labor force it needed.\footnote{Gardet and Nigget, 30.}

Lavigerie sought to implement a similar project of displacement. When he failed with the Arab orphans, still believing that children were the key to his success, he turned to a group of people he considered to be more malleable: freed African slave children, who had been sold on the markets of the Saharan oases, Algiers, and Tunisia. This plan, which culminated with the opening of the Institut in Malta in 1889, was a byproduct of the political developments I outlined earlier in the chapter, as well as a perpetuation of Catholic projects other missionaries had attempted before him, beginning in the 1840s.

Italian missionaries were among the first to target African populations in their proselytizing campaign. It was a difficult endeavor, because the clergy at home and the missions’ patrons were skeptical of the Africans’ ability to reject polytheism. Moreover, before the introduction of quinine, many missionaries succumbed to malaria and other tropical diseases against which they had not developed immunity. The results they obtained were not satisfactory, and they had to think about an alternative solution. In the 1850s an Italian priest called Nicola Mazza founded an institute in the Northern Italian city of Verona with the purpose of training black African Catholics as missionaries who would later participate in the effort to Christianize Africa. The students would travel from their home to Italy, where they would acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for missionary work. Another Italian priest, Father Olivieri, joined Mazza to create a program that would redeem former slaves by converting them and giving them a
European education in convents in Italy or France. A third priest, who was going to become the most famous, was Daniel Comboni.²⁵⁴

He was a missionary posted in the Sudan, and who for a while tried sending freed slaves to Mazza’s Institute. In 1864, Comboni authored one of the most important texts on missionary work of the period: “Plan for the Regeneration of Africa.” It was a response to the missionary problem on the continent. Since the beginning of the century, missionaries had failed because of health issues: they got very sick and often died during their travels, making it impossible for them to attempt the conversion of the local populations. Comboni argued that the solution was to Christianize African by Africans. He would find young slaves, buy them, free them, educate and train African former slaves in the periphery of Africa (like Egypt or Algeria) and then return to the sub-Saharan region and convert its inhabitants. They would have immunity to diseases that killed white missionaries. They were also supposed to be able to communicate with Africans, because in Comboni’s conceptual world all Africans thought in the same way. If they were sent to Europe, two things might happen. They might die because they were not accustomed to the climate or they might adopt European culture, which would prevent them from being able to communicate with Africans upon their return. The role of European priests in this project was to offer the required leadership. They would still have to go to Africa but would not have to stay for more that short periods in order not to endanger their health. Once enough Africans had been trained, there would no longer be a need for the presence of white missionaries. In time, a native

²⁵⁴ Powell, *Tell this in my Memory*, 149-172.
clergy would come into existence and do the footwork for the conversion of Africans, under the authority of European missionaries.\textsuperscript{255}

In 1867, Comboni created a school in Cairo, the Instituto di Neri. It became the center of his work in the Egyptian Sudan, from where he sent his missionaries to the Darfur. It also sheltered and trained freed slaves, who either stayed in the Sudan or joined convents in Italy, in the skills of missionary work. Eve Powell noted that Comboni expected his protégés to be pious, but also “docile”: they needed to abide by the rules the missionaries set, accept the social roles they assigned to them, and live by the moral rules of Christianity. When they disobeyed, the missionaries immediately blamed their African nature, which was undisciplined, inclined to passion and laziness. For instance, when a little girl who, in the twelve years since her birth, had been captured by slave raiders in sub-Saharan Africa, travelled by foot to the Sudan, was sold and resold to several masters, and adopted by missionaries who shipped her to Italy, tried to escape by climbing the walls of the convents where her rescuers had confined her, they declared that she was unruly because she was African. It did not cross their minds that she was in all probability suffering from unimaginable trauma and that being locked in a confined space with strangers whose language she could not yet understand must have been terrifying. Despite the prescriptive context in which their education and lives after liberation took place, several of Comboni’s students learnt how to navigate the world of Catholic philanthropy to build a career and a fulfilled social life.\textsuperscript{256}

\textsuperscript{255} Powell, \textit{Tell this in my memory}, 149-172.
\textsuperscript{256} Powell, \textit{Tell this in my Memory}, 149-172.
In 1865, Lavigerie had met with Father Comboni, and according to François Renault, it inspired him, though the letters and instructions sent by Lavigerie to his missionaries do assign the paternity of the project to Lavigerie himself, not to Comboni. When the projects with the Arab orphans was failing, he needed an alternative pool of converts and future missionaries. As early as 1869, he thought about African children: since despite the official abolition of the slave trade so many of them continued to be sold and mistreated, if the missionaries could save some of them, it would be possible to buy them and train them as missionaries to be sent back to sub-Saharan Africa.\textsuperscript{257}

In 1874, the creation of the International African Association under the aegis of Belgian King Leopold II, after the Geographical Conference of Brussels, prompted the head of the Propaganda Fide\textsuperscript{258} to consult missionary orders as to the best ways in which the Church could play an active role in the European imperialist venture. The Geographical Conference brought together the European specialists of Africa and of Africans: explorers, geographers, army officers, abolitionists, British missionaries and businessmen. The avowed objective of the Conference, in Leopold’s words, was to determine the “location of routes to be successively opened into the interior, of hospitable, scientific, and pacification bases to be set up as a means of abolishing the slave trade, establishing peace among the chiefs, and procuring them just and impartial arbitration.”\textsuperscript{259} The attendants decided to further these aims through the creation of the

\textsuperscript{257} Renault, \textit{L'Esclavage}, 156-157.
\textsuperscript{258} The Propagande Fide was the Vatican institution in charge of missionary work.
International African Association, which received worldwide attention and the financial support of influential Europeans, like the Rothschilds.\textsuperscript{260}

As Lavigerie later told his missionaries, the White Fathers could not let other Europeans take precedence over them in Africa:

A Society has just been founded in Belgium, with the mission of bringing modern civilization to the African continent. This society is made of free thinkers, free masons, and Protestants; they have banned the Cross. Let us not have to be ashamed of arriving after these free masons, of letting them distance us. They do this for money, and the Catholics would remain simple spectators.\textsuperscript{261}

He wrote a long memoir to the intention of the Propaganda Fide, outlining his plan for the training of African doctor-missionaries, whom he imagined would open the continent for them. For him, the matter was urgent: “the first to get there and the first to be ready will have all the advantages and every day of delay threatens our success.”\textsuperscript{262} The enemies were the Protestants and “secular civilization.”\textsuperscript{263}

To counter them, the Catholic Church needed the services of Africans, who, with the proper training, could transform Africa from the inside, the assumption being that Africa was a big monolithic entity where everyone shared similar cultural traits. To find the future apostles, Lavigerie tapped into the slave trade. Since the illegal sale of human beings continued to exist near the missions, he commissioned his priests to find and negotiate the price of little boys. They could either find them at the markets, or ask their friends in the military to give them the children they found with slave traders during their rounds in the desert. The priests began buying little

\textsuperscript{260} Hochshild, 42-46.
\textsuperscript{261} Lavigerie, “Du zèle envers les infidèles- Quatrième conférence de la retraite de 1877,” in Ecrits, 85.
\textsuperscript{262} Lavigerie, Mémoire secret, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{263} Lavigerie, Mémoire secret, 26-27.
boys in the 1870s, in Algeria. They would first send them to a school at the White Fathers’ headquarters in Algiers, or at Saint-Louis in Carthage, where they would learn to read and write, and the basics of catechism. Then they would go to Malta, where Lavigerie built the Institut Apostolique des Nègres to house and educate them. During their stay there, they would attend the medical school of La Valette, were they would receive a training they needed to practice as doctors and missionaries in sub-Saharan Africa.

**E. CONCLUSION**

By analyzing the ways in which political conflicts in the metropole and overseas were translated into actions on the ground, this chapter emphasized tensions between declared political principles and their implementation. The experiences of the famine’s orphans, whom Lavigerie perceived as blank slates on which he could write a new chapter of a Catholic French Algeria, lived in the space between what authorities stated they did, and what they were able or willing to achieve.

As the Cardinal realized that his project of converting Muslim Algerians failed, he turned to enslaved children to find potential converts and missionaries, who would, he hoped, become the instruments of the evangelization of sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, he joined a trans-national movement. Anti-slavery had become, in the early nineteenth century, the first international human rights movement, centered in the United States and Britain, with ramifications in Europe, the Atlantic world, the Middle East and Africa. Several international movements with humanitarian objectives developed in the course of the century: Protestant and Catholic missionaries’ charities spanning from the Americas to East Asia, the movement to define rules protecting civilians during
armed conflicts which led to the Geneva Convention of 1864 and the campaign against the trafficking of (mainly white) women.264 In a parallel development, European social reform movements developed through transnational networks solidified during congresses organized by activists from Europe and the United States.265

While these movements relied heavily on the cooperation between different countries, they remained intensely nationalistic. Internationalism was a powerful tool in the hands of abolitionists, who used diplomatic pressure (especially from London) to advance their agenda. Nevertheless, the anti-slavery movement allowed Great Britain, France and Belgium to justify their national colonial ambitions. Moreover, anti-slavery allowed them to justify the deployment and use of their armies in Africa.266 Catholic and Protestant missionaries, though in principle they worked for a Christian community beyond borders, cultivated and sought protection from their national identities. The social reformist system in France sought legitimacy from the support of an international community, and gained scientific credibility by showing that its principles were universally applicable, but its objectives remained connected to national interests.267

In the cosmopolitan world of the southern Mediterranean, formerly enslaved children would become actors of this international power play. Lavigerie’s project involved the purchase of boys

265 Chatriot, 18-19.
on the fringes of the Algerian Sahara, their early education in the White Fathers’ schools in Algeria or Tunisia, followed by their training in Malta, outside of France’s empire and beyond the reach of the secular Republic. The following chapter of the dissertation will show that the lived experiences of emancipation were at the intersection of colonial politics, religious zeal and gender dynamics.
CHAPTER III: EMANCIPATION AT WORK: THE WHITE FATHERS’ INSTITUT APOSTOLIQUE DES NEGRES

A. INTRODUCTION

The White Fathers began purchasing little boys in 1872. They bought them from merchants on the markets, manumitted them, and immediately initiated their Christian education. At first, the newly freed boys lived with Arab and Kabyle orphans the Fathers had also taken under their wing. But Lavigerie wished the African boys to remain true to what he defined as their African culture and did not want them to stay in contact with their Algerian peers. For that purpose, in 1876, he founded the College for Orphan Negroes (Collège des nègres orphelins) in the Tunisian city of Carthage. The first three boys arrived on October 29. The following year, thirteen other children joined them. In 1878, Lavigerie presented to the Vatican the ambitious project he had been nurturing for years: he wanted to train the boys as doctor-missionaries, who would return to their native sub-Saharan Africa to convert uncivilized heathens to Catholicism. In 1880, he leased a house on the island of Malta, close to La Valette, the capital, where the Medical School was located. The house became the seat of the Institut Apostolique des Nègres. Between 1881 and 1894, approximately 40 boys lived and studied at the Institut. Some fulfilled Lavigerie’s dream and became doctor-missionaries in sub-Saharan Africa. Others became teachers or members of European colonial bureaucracies. Others still disappeared from the historical record, and we do not know what happened to them after they had left the island.

Their stories connect real people to historical forces. Adrien Atiman, Charles Faraghit and Joseph Gatchi were dedicated students and became the first doctor-missionaries to join the White
Fathers’ ventures during the Scramble for Africa. Michel Abdou and François Gogé were determined boys who did not allow their superiors to dictate their professional choices. Their decisions led one of them to work for the British colonial administration in Entebbe while the other died defending a French Catholic mission against a British Protestant attack in rural Uganda. Paul Sokoro was ambitious and chose to embrace France’s colonial fortunes in Mali to build his career as a secretary and later as an army interpreter. When he was a little child, Joseph Coro was smuggled to North Africa in a bag on the back of a camel. When he completed his studies, his life trajectory had been such that he could proudly say to an unscrupulous employer he would “categorically” refuse to work for him without a proper salary.

This chapter, drawing on the well-preserved archival collection of the White Fathers’ Malta Institut, attempts to reconstruct the social, political and cultural world in which these children came of age. The documents include the successive regulation books of the school, reports to Lavigerie by the inspectors who visited it, as well as the letters written over the years by the priests, their superiors, the students and alumni. The purpose of this reconstruction is twofold. First, it is to re-center the narrative of emancipation around the experiences of the boys themselves. They were captured and sold like cattle, then bought out of slavery and into the morally ambiguous world of colonial philanthropy. Showing that in reality they had at times negotiated with, resisted against or cooperated with their self-proclaimed saviors depending on their own interests is an essential task for the historian. Second, even though their numbers were small, their experiences provide us with the possibility to understand the implications of emancipation for children in very practical terms and to attempt to extend some of the chapter’s
conclusions to the experience of other former slaves beyond the Institut’s microcosm. These objectives underlie the chapter’s organization.

The first section of the chapter draws on the recent historiography of the enslavement of children in Africa to reconstruct the travels of the boys from their homes in West Africa to Algeria and Tunisia.

The second section of the chapter complicates the notions of freedom and slavery, which French Republican semantics have traditionally presented as binary opposites.268 By measuring Lavigerie’s project against Orlando Patterson’s definition of slavery as “social death”, I argue that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, formal abolition, rather than challenging the cultural and social elements that constituted slavery, allowed them to flourish in new forms and within a new semantic framework. Through these new forms, which were integrated in the quotidian life at the Institut, the disciplinary practices of slavery permeated the process of emancipation.

Based on that premise, the third section of the chapter argues that the White Fathers strove to frame the boys’ lives in a discourse that incorporated imperial, patriotic and religious ideals in strategies seeking to protect the hierarchy of a society stratified along class and racial lines. The children adopted or challenged the roles the Fathers assigned to them, depending on their needs and ambitions. The archives of the Malta school open for us the doors to a world bracketed

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268 Tyler Stovall argued that in France, unlike in the United States, slavery was in principle incompatible with the principles of a republican government and as belonging to the era of the Ancien Régime. See Tyler Stovall, “The Myth of the Liberatory Republic and the Political Culture of Freedom in Imperial France,” Yale French Studies no. 111 (2007), 96.
between servitude and liberation, in which the African boys and the White Fathers attempted to define and impose their perception of their respective places in the world.

The Institut’s archives shed a precious though flickering light on that little known world. They provide us with a rare glimpse into the ways children understood and navigated the treacherous waters of slavery, liberation, and everything in between.

**B. Children and the Slave Trade in the Period of European Colonialism**

Many of the boys who studied in Malta were born and captured in West Africa. Their forced migration to Algeria and Tunisia illustrates a pivotal moment in the history of the slave trade during the period of New Imperialism. When European powers, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, slowly began implementing measures against the capture of people (more due to the influence on public opinion of abolitionists than to a genuine commitment to the abolitionist cause), slave traders had to conceal their activities. In the context of an increasingly clandestine trade, they sought a human merchandise they could hide and control, and which would have difficulty escaping.269

The children entered captivity either as a result of the practice of pawnship in West African societies, or through brutal kidnappings during slave raids. Pawnship, which tended to involve girls more than boys, took place in times of economic difficulty or famine. Parents pawned their children to pay their debts or in exchange for a compensation in cash or in kind. They could retrieve the children if they reimbursed it. When poverty prevented them from paying it back, the

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people who had taken the children kept them, used their labor, or sold them to slave traders. For the French administration in West Africa, pawnship was a grey area between freedom and slavery, and they more often than not turned a blind eye to it, therefore allowing an important avenue for the sale of children to remain virtually untouched by the law.270

The second way in which children were enslaved was kidnapping during violent armed raids on villages. Women and children escaped while the men fought. When the raiders emerged victorious, they were usually able to catch the fugitives who were hiding. Raiders also targeted women and children when their work (like fetching water or herding cattle) made them walk to isolated places.271 Such a raid, which took place around 1875, appears in the biographical narrative co-authored by one of the White Fathers’ freed children called Emmanuel Farraghit and by a teacher at the mission.

I was born in Kaffouan, on the borders of the Niger. I was two when my father died. I stayed in my tribe with my mother and my little sister; we occupied our time by cultivating rice and maize fields, or by making baskets with palm leaves. One day, my mother found herself with my sister and me and a few other inhabitants of our tribe, in a village near Kaffouan, when we were suddenly surrounded by slave traders who told us: ‘Surrender without screaming; if you say a word, you will be killed immediately.’ And these mean thieves scared us by showing us their daggers and their sticks. A negro who was with us cried: Help! He was immediately thrown to the ground, killed like a fly, with a strong blow of a stick. An old man, captured with us, wanted to defend himself. He threw on the merchants an arrow he had on him, but the weapon reached them without force and only excited the brigands’ rage. They stabbed the old negro with their daggers and made him die. Finally, after thus killing all those who screamed or wanted to defend themselves, they took us to the Bambara tribe. Tuaregs bought those of us who were the strongest. My mother, who was judged to be good and strong enough to work, was bought immediately. A cruel man separated me from my mother, without letting me say goodbye to her. I stayed alone with my little sister, and I never saw my mother again. Since that terrible day, I

270 Klein, “Children and Slavery in the Western Sudan,” 132-133.
271 Klein, “Children and Slavery in the Western Sudan,” 127 and 132-133.
see her in my dreams, and very often, upon waking up, I shed many tears. I was about six years old, and my sister was four (big tears appear in Emmanuel’s eyes).

Emmanuel’s story was the subject of a short book the missionaries published in French in Belgium in the early 1880s (the exact date is unknown), when he was still a youth. The objective was to encourage readers to contribute financially to the White Fathers’ work in sub-Saharan Africa. The use of pathos (such as the mention of the boy’s tears when he talked about his mother) was part of a fund raising strategy. In addition to pathos, the missionaries used the images of former slaves who were docile, pious, and eager to learn under their authority. Photographs of the black students sitting around a Father reading to them, or posing standing up behind a priest sitting on a chair, always in impeccable clothing, reflected the images of success.

In Raising Freedom’s Child, Mary Mitchell argued that in the United States, northern abolitionists also used the images of docile, clean, well-dressed black children to promote their cause. Rather than reflecting a concern for the children’s wellbeing, this method imposed a disciplinary civilizing mission on them. In the case of the Institut, when they were not posing for pictures, the boys’ clothes were ragged because the missionaries could rarely afford to renew their wardrobe as they were growing up, and as a later section of this chapter will show, harmony based on obedience did not always characterize the relationships between teachers and students.

The book includes two sections: a foreword by Father Van Den Bash, who worked for the Missionnaires d’Afrique, and the narrative of Emmanuel’s enslavement and redemption by the priests, written in the first person. In the foreword, Van Den Bash, after describing the horrors of

272 AG Mafr B1 287.7 Van Den Bash, Gustave. Farraghit le jeune esclave (Malines: Institut des Missionnaires du Père Lavigerie : No date), 7-8.
273 Mitchell, 135.
enslavement taking place while Europeans were busy enjoying their military successes on the continent, presented the book as being

the story of one of these poor negroes, enslaved for a long time, bought by Cardinal Lavigerie, and who has for a while now become a useful auxiliary in the evangelization of his native country. The narrative reproduced here is distressing. It was written under dictation by the principal hero, by which we mean the victim, whose story we are telling.274

Eve Powell’s analysis of redeemed slaves’ narratives in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan provides a useful framework for understanding Farraghit’s story, and through it, the experiences of children caught in the slave trade and who experienced liberation by the priests. Powell argued that Protestant missionaries used the autobiographies of former slaves they had freed and educated to justify their own presence in Africa. An adult freed slave writing a book was a living proof of the missionaries’ success, evidence that their work as well as the money benefactors gave them had come to fruition. At the same time, they sought to exert control over autobiography authors, through a careful editing process and a selection of the people whose publications they encouraged. They picked authors who had adopted the language of religious piety, expressed gratitude towards the missionaries, and who had succeeded in the profession (usually as teachers and missionaries) that their benefactors had chosen for them. Because European missionaries often attempted to control the lives of freed slaves (by funding them, and by playing the role of intermediaries with other Europeans and potential employers) the publications tended to reflect their perspective. Despite the narrow framework in which they operated, adult authors had enough intellectual autonomy and maturity to impose their own mark on their work, and to share

274 AG MAfr B1 287.7 Van Den Bash, Gustave, Farraghit le jeune esclave (Malines: Institut des Missionnaires du Père Lavigerie : No date), 5.
ideas and memories that provide historians with rich information on their experiences of enslavement.275

In a similar fashion, the narrative puts in Emmanuel’s mouth the vocabulary Europeans used to categorize Africans (“tribe”, “negro”) and most importantly strips him of agency by explicitly identifying him as a “victim” rather than a “hero.” Unlike the adult writers whose work Powell analyzes, Farraghit’s young age at the time of publication allowed Van Den Bash to appropriate the narrative by reminding the reader at the end of the foreword that he is the one telling the story.

Emmanuel Farraghit’s account of his capture, channeled by Van Den Bash, is thus based on the rhetoric missionaries used to justify their work and appeal for funds: innocent children who had been separated from their parents, and subjected to terrible trauma because of the actions of evil Muslim traders. Blaming the existence of slavery on Muslim outsiders characterized most of Catholic missionary writings on Africa and served to justify their proselytizing work: by converting people from Islam (a religion that allowed slavery) to Christianity (a religion that allegedly didn’t), they would eliminate the scourge of human bondage on the continent. At the same time, by eliminating slavery, the missionaries would weaken “mahometism” because Muslim societies could not survive without human bondage.276 The modern historiography of Africa discredited these claims by emphasizing the participation of Muslims and non-Muslims

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275 Powell, Tell this in in Memory, 77-113.
alike, and indicating that the factors that allowed slavery to exist in African societies were as much local constructs of class and race as the involvement of outsiders such as the Muslim Tuareg.\textsuperscript{277}

Despite these limitations, the biographical details in the story shed light on the experiences of children sold in North Africa. Farraghit’s separation from his mother illustrated a strategy slavers used to control the people they wanted to sell. They often separated parents from their children to deprive them from even a small degree of protection, and lessen their ability to maintain attachments to their kin and former communities. The slavers wanted the children to be completely dependent on them, because this would discourage disobedience and absconding.\textsuperscript{278}

It was particularly tragic for children sold in North Africa, where they often lived alone or with a few other slaves in a household, without the little measure of support and protection a numerically large community such as the ones that existed in American plantations could provide.

According to the narrative, Farraghit experienced separation from his mother and community when he was six years old. The precision of the age provided in the book is problematic, because research has shown that in most cases, neither the children nor their enslavers were able to measure the young captives’ age in terms of calendar years. Height was often an element slavers used to determine how old their captives were. Teeth also allowed them to measure age. Puberty could be a marker as well.\textsuperscript{279} The missionaries who bought him from his slavers would have

\textsuperscript{278} Roberts.
\textsuperscript{279} Klein, “Children and Slavery in the Western Sudan,” 125.
assessed his age either based on the merchant’s estimate, or according to his physical appearance.

Regardless of his precise age, Farraghit was very little when he experienced a second deeply traumatic event: the slavers murdered his little sister. After two days of a forced march across the desert, the four-year old girl became too tired to keep up with the convoy. One of the traders killed her by hitting her with a stick, because her failing health would detract prospective buyers. They hit Emmanuel too, threatening him with immediate death if he did not continue walking.280 This episode illustrates the intense physical and psychological trauma that children underwent during their forced migration to the north. Slave traders were even more violent towards children than adults, and whips and sticks were part of the daily routine during the voyage. In addition to breaking children into obedience, the objective was to ensure that the caravan moved fast. Speed was an important element in the slave trade because the merchants wanted to sell their human merchandise as quickly as possible, and strove to reduce the cost of feeding their convoy. Little babies in particular fell victim to this concern for expediency. Many of them were killed along the slave trade routes.281

Farraghit had no choice but to keep up with the caravan. During the long voyage that ultimately led him to North Africa, he was sold several times, passed on from master to master until traders heading to the Algerian Sahara purchased him. He was eleven years old when he reached Ouargla in 1880. A White Father posted there was present at the arrival of the caravan, looking for little children he could buy. By that time, the physical strain of his capture, and the

281 Klein, “Children and Slavery in the Western Sudan,”128.
violence at the hands of his owners had exhausted the little boy. His weakness lowered his monetary value, and after long negotiations, the Father bought him for a hundred francs.\textsuperscript{282}

The \textit{rachat}, the practice of buying slaves out of slavery was common among Catholic (and to a much lesser degree, Protestant) missionaries. Between the 1870s and early 1900s, with the support of Pope Leo XIII, they considered that using purchase to save people was a sound anti-slavery strategy. They were able to collect funds for that purpose, through individual donations and the participation of organizations such as the Holy Childhood Association. It was not until the early 1900s that they began realizing that this method benefitted slave traders, who found in foreign priests an eager clientele. The very limited success of Lavigerie’s doctor missionaries project, and other similar Catholic endeavors involving the \textit{rachetés} also contributed to this realization.\textsuperscript{283}

Regardless of the problems inherent to the \textit{rachat}, Farraghit’s story is steeped into the rhetoric of redemption that characterizes missionary abolitionist propaganda. At first, according to the story, he was afraid the white man was a cannibal, because of rumors he had heard during his captivity. But then

\textsuperscript{282} AG MAfr, Van Den Bash, 37-39

\textsuperscript{283} William G. Clarence-Smith, “The Redemption of Child Slaves by Christian Missionaries in Central Africa, 1878-1914,” in \textit{Child Slaves in the Modern World}, 172-190. Clarence-Smith shows that another reason for which the rachat strategy of missionaries ultimately failed, and which does not apply to the White Fathers, is that Catholic missionaries often used the forced labor of the \textit{rachetés} to built and feed their African missions. This antagonized redeemed children, who tended to be recalcitrant to become missionaries and serve the interests of people who had not treated them differently from their former masters. Clarence-Smith’s short chapter in the edited volume outlines the problems connected to \textit{rachat} in the Portuguese colonies, but further research on the practice could deepen our understanding of children’s experiences in the period of emancipation. On the forced labor of children in missions, see Catherine Koonar, “Using Child Labor to Save Souls: The Basel Mission in Colonial Ghana, 1855-1900,” \textit{Atlantic Studies} 11, no. 4 (2014): 536-544.
the Father took me to Biskra in Algeria, where I entered a house so beautiful that I had never seen anything like it before. The Father made me sit down and patted by head. I was still afraid of being eaten by him, but [seeing that he was kind] I told him that I was hungry and that with my former masters I received more blows than bread. The good Father had dates brought to me. When I was full, I was happy to see that the white man, the Missionary, is the friend and the savior, rather than the executioner (bourreau) of my race […]. Then Father Richard told me: ‘from now on, you are free and will no longer be a slave.’ From that moment on, I learnt to love God. Every day I thank Him for freeing me from slavery and making me His child.\textsuperscript{284}

The text dismissed Emmanuel’s initial fears as being the product of ignorance. As soon as the missionary fed him, and as he was learning the principles of the Catholic religion (which again points to the centrality of faith in the missionary narrative), he immediately felt safe in his new surroundings. Only one of the sources examined here mention how a child who was traumatized by a kidnapping, the brutal separation from his family, and continuous physical mistreatment for five long years, coped with the deep emotional and mental wounds of slavery: “Among the young negroes rescued by us from this hell […], there are some who wake up every night, for a long time, letting out horrible cries. They picture, in bloody nightmares, the abominable scenes that they witnessed.”\textsuperscript{285} The redemption narrative presented faith as the ultimate objective of liberation and did not account for the psychological trauma former slaves had to deal with during the emancipation process.

After his final purchase, Farraghit learnt to read and write with the White Fathers. For reasons that the sources did not clarify, Lavigerie sent him to study medicine in Lille (in northern France)

\textsuperscript{284} AG MAfr, Van Den Bash, 34-36.
instead of Malta, and he does not appear in the Institut’s records.\(^{286}\) The following section of the chapter looks at the lives of the children, who, like Farraghit, were kidnapped in their home towns, taken north across the Sahara, bought by the White Fathers, and grew up under the care of the missionaries before crossing the sea to Malta. During the first years of their education, they learnt how to read and write either in Maison-Carrée, Lavigerie’s Résidence ten kilometers east of Algiers, or at the Collège Saint-Louis in Tunisia.

These early years are rather obscure, because the documents did not often mention the boys between their \textit{rachat} and their arrival to Malta. Only Michel Atiman’s diary included information about the importance of baptism in their lives. They had to attend catechism classes and pass a test before gaining the right to become Catholic. Atiman failed the test the first time he took it, and Lavigerie gave him a beating as a punishment.\(^{287}\)

When in 1881, the first group of students took a boat from Tunisia to Malta, the letters they sent to their former teachers upon their arrival shed light on the cultural transformation they underwent during these years. Many of them were fluent in French and had become able to write letters with only occasional grammatical or spelling mistakes, which became less frequent in the correspondence they exchanged as adults. The letters also showed that though Lavigerie wished to maintain them isolated from European cultural influence, they blended in the cosmopolitan world of the southern Mediterranean basin.

Julia Clancy-Smith described nineteenth-century Tunis as a city where the intersection of Mediterranean cultures and languages created categories of identity that transcended and


\(^{287}\) AG MAfr, Atiman’s Diary, 5.
complicated traditional notions of “European” and “Arab”, or “Westerner” and “Oriental.” Generations of immigrants from Malta, Italy and Spain, as well as the lasting demographic impact of the influx of Barbary slaves in the early modern era created sections of the population that were “creolized.” Their loyalties combined affiliations to their churches, linguistic affinities with Italy or Sicily, and economic and political interests that connected them to the reigning bey, the Vatican, or the newly unified Italian state in Rome.\textsuperscript{288} A few years after crossing the Sahara, some of the boys were able to communicate fluently in both Italian and French: Michel Golio wrote a letter in Italian in 1881, and another one in French in 1882.\textsuperscript{289} Another boy, Joseph Gatchi, narrated an encounter with the Bishop of Sardinia on the boat during the crossing to Malta. The prelate could not speak French, so the boys conversed with him in his language.\textsuperscript{290}

Once they arrived at the Institut in Malta, they embarked on a course of study that led them from a secondary school education to medical school. The youngest boys studied with the Fathers at the Institut, and the older ones walked every day to the university in La Valette, where they sat in classes and auditoriums to learn about anatomy, obstetrics and other fundamental elements of medical practice. The agreement Lavigerie had with the medical school was not that the boys would earn official medical degrees. He wanted them to acquire the basics of medicine to be able to establish themselves as doctors in their future missionary posts. This was not uncommon: many missionaries in the colonies who provided medical service to the local populations did not have a physician’s degree.

\textsuperscript{288} Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 48.
\textsuperscript{289} AG Mafr D11 231, Letter from Michel Golio to a White Father (Malta, 1881) and Letter from Michel Golio to a White Father (Malta, January 16, 1882).
\textsuperscript{290} AG Mafr D11 208-213, Letter from Joseph Gatchi to a White Father (Malta, 1881).
Between 1881, when the first group of students arrived, and 1894, when the Institut closed, the boys’ experiences in Malta shed light on the meaning of emancipation in the quotidian lives of freed children. The following section of the chapter will look at the ways in which the disciplinary system the missionaries put in place at the school allowed many elements of slavery to permeate the process of emancipation.

C. Emancipation and Social Death

In his famous book, *Slavery and Social Death*, Orlando Patterson claimed that the defining characteristic of slavery was the social death it inflicted on its victims: Masters, in order to establish and maintain their power, ensured they cut slaves off from their kin and communities, destroyed their ancestral ties, changed their names, controlled the languages they spoke, constantly threatened their physical and psychological integrity, and could kill them on a whim. Historians heatedly debated this interpretation of slavery. Since his work is based on the comparison of over sixty societies, Patterson’s focus was more the symbolic relations of power than the practices themselves.²⁹¹

Nevertheless, as historian Vincent Brown argued, Patterson’s work, while perhaps lapsing into theoretical abstractions, presented the “neat cultural logic” of slavery.²⁹² This “cultural logic” is useful for the purposes of this chapter because that Patterson’s analysis is problematic when applied to the experiences of the enslaved, but holds true for the experiences of the enslavers. Slaves were not socially dead: they had families, communities, they maintained a

²⁹² Brown, 1233-1234
strong sense of self, and in many instances demonstrated an unwavering political will.\textsuperscript{293} That was precisely why owners had to constantly reenact the social death of their slaves in order to ascertain and legitimize their power over their human property. When slavery was abolished, this reenactment of social death became even more crucial for Europeans in order for them to remain at the top of the power hierarchy in their colonies. With my case study, I will show how the White Fathers, acting here as emissaries of a powerful European nation, imagined black people’s freedom as a perpetuation of social death, which they tried to inflict on the boys through a strict discursive and disciplinary system that framed daily life at the Institut.

In the book of regulations he wrote for the school in 1881, Cardinal Lavigerie justified his missionary endeavor by describing a sub-Saharan world of horror and death from which he had allegedly saved his pupils:

Had they not been bought and saved through God’s generosity and the zeal of the missionaries He’s sent them, they would have forever remained in the darkness and horror of barbarianism. In their countries, people do not know what charity is: violence alone reigns there and sacrifices the weak for the benefit of the poor. People hunt, injure and sell each other; they kill and eat each other. This is how the children of the Institut would have been, had God’s mercy not protected them…\textsuperscript{294}

The justifications for the legitimacy of the White Fathers’ abolitionist work, which this paragraph captures, were remarkably similar to the ways in which slave systems justified their existence. As Orlando Patterson explained, slave owners justified the servitude of the powerless by claiming they had saved them from certain death. That was the case, for instance, with slavery

\textsuperscript{294} AG MAfr D11 1, Lavigerie, \textit{Règlement de l’Institut Apostolique des Jeunes Nègres} (January 4, 1881), 70-71.
as a replacement of the death penalty, or the bondage of prisoners of war, whose servitude was a “substitute” for their execution. It was also the case for the enslavement of people who would otherwise have succumbed to natural disasters or hunger. From that perspective, slaves should feel gratitude because their masters had allowed them to live.\footnote{Orlando Patterson, \textit{Slavery and Social Death} (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 5 and 72.}

By the same token, Lavigerie’s boys should feel gratitude because their liberators had allowed them to remain alive. And the act by which they had allowed them to live—purchase at a market—was exactly the same one which secured the binding tie between most masters and slaves. In an account published in the early 1870s, the missionaries emphasized the transactional nature of their relationship with the boys. The text, recounting the purchase and liberation of the first student, Messaoud, described the profound gratitude and emotional attachment he felt towards Father Charmettant, who had bought him from his master and brought him to the seminary in Saint Eugène, and Lavigerie. In response to Messaoud who referred to him as his father, Lavigerie objected that Charmettant was in reality his father: “But no, said the archbishop, Father Charmettant paid for you. You belong to him.” The fact that slavery had been abolished by both the French and the Tunisian governments, and that by law, Messaoud did not belong to anyone, seemed to have little bearing on how the missionaries understood his status. According to the same text, little Messaoud humbly accepted his position: “Father Charmettant pay, but you give money to pay. You my father.”\footnote{AG MAfr, “Les prémices de la mission de Sainte Monique dans l’intérieur de l’Afrique,” in Œuvre de Saint Augustin et de Sainte Monique, Patronne des Mères Chrétiennes. \textit{Missions d’Afrique (d’Alger): Bulletins Périodiques} 1 (November 1871-April 1875): 147-148.}
Orlando Patterson added that “the condition of slavery did not absolve or erase the prospect of death. Slavery was not a pardon; it was, peculiarly, a conditional commutation. The execution was suspended only as long as the slave acquiesced in his powerlessness.” In a similar vein, the White Fathers considered that the freedom they had bestowed upon their protégés was contingent on the latter’s submissiveness. The African boys who refused to comply with Lavigerie’s plans immediately became outcasts and were expelled from the School. For instance, one of the students who wanted to become a teacher instead of a doctor was not allowed to stay at the Institut. His subsequent fate is unknown to us, because in addition to his departure from the Institut, the Fathers ostracized him from the historical record. He was no longer mentioned, as if he had never existed.

Another striking similarity between the boys’ status in Malta and their previous condition as slaves was the symbolic power the White Fathers held over them. Orlando Patterson argued that systems of slavery relied as heavily on symbols of authority as on physical violence. In order to establish and maintain their domination, slave masters created “symbolic instruments, which effectively persuaded both slaves and others that the master was the only mediator between the living community to which he belonged and the living death that his slave experienced.”

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297 Patterson, 5.
299 Patterson, 8.
These symbols included masters stripping the slaves of their names and giving them new ones, thereby redefining their identities and further detaching them from their ancestry. For instance, Boro and Coro, two of the students at the Institut, received their respective names from Cardinal Lavigerie, who did not want the children he sheltered to have Muslim names. The sources do neither preserve their original names, nor the names the slave traders gave them. The adoption of new names was, in the context of slavery, a way for masters to destroy all connections between the former slaves and their place of origin and families, in a process Orlando Patterson called “natal alienation”. The boys in Malta underwent a similar process at least twice: when they were captured in West Africa, and when the White Fathers bought them out of slavery in Algeria.

In addition to their names, the White Fathers exercised power over the language the boys spoke. Since they had been captured and stolen from their countries of birth at a very early age, the boys often could no longer speak their native tongue. They were sometimes able to remember a few words, but the memories were vague, uncertain and fragmented. It was one of the reasons why children were useful to the missionaries: their youth made them more malleable and unlike adults, they rarely had clear memories of their lives and culture prior to enslavement.

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300 Equiano’s narrative captured the violence embedded in the name changes: “When I was on board this ship my captain and master named me Gustavus Vasa. I at that time began to understand him a little, and refused to be called so, and told him as well as I could that I would be called Jacob; but he said I should not, and still called me Gustavus: and when I refused to answer to my new name, which at first I did, it gained me many a cuff; so at length I submitted, and by which name I have been known ever since.” See Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano (Cambridge: ProQuest LLC, 2008), 62. Changing the names of Native American students was also a practice in some of the boarding schools in the United States. See Clifford, Kekker and Sisquoc, 15.

301 AG M Af r B1 ATM 7, Letter from Adrien Atiman to Father Prost (Karema, date unknown).
302 AG M Afr C6-27, Letter from Father Labartin to his superior (Biskra, month is illegible 20, 1875).
They were also less attached to their culture of birth, including the religion of their parents. A White Father wrote to Lavigerie from the Sahara that he was looking to free children instead of adults from the slave trade, because the latter “are of no use to our work, because they are all more or less fanatical.” For example, Atiman only remembered a few words of his native tongue: boro (man), koro (hyena), hari (water), biri (bone). And even when they could remember elements of their native tongue, the Fathers strictly controlled the languages they were allowed to speak at the school. For instance, until they mastered Italian (the language of instruction at the Medical School), the children were not allowed to converse in French or “Sudanese,” which was the generic term the French used to designate the many languages people spoke in West Africa.

Food was another form of symbolic domination. Lavigerie’s project of christianizing Africa through the Africans could only be successful if the future black missionaries maintained what he considered to be their African selves. Though they had to learn the colonizers’ language, and take Christian names, he wrote that an “essential principle” was that the Institut’s staff should ban all things European from the boys’ daily lives, in order not to inadvertently create “black-skinned Europeans.” These rules extended to their diet. They should neither consume bread nor drink coffee and tea. “African” cooks should work in the kitchens to prepare dishes “à la mode nègre”, similar to the ones the future missionaries would supposedly eat in their postings. These would include meat, sorghum, rice or beans. The Fathers had strict orders not to give the children

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303 AG MAfr C5 56-122, Letter from Father Desoignies to Lavigerie (Ghardaia, February 4, 1891).
304 AG MAfr B1 ATM7, Letter from Father Prost to Father Smulders (Gao, July 18, 1956).
bread, though the latter “ardently” wanted it. It was important to avoid training “men who would face the same difficulties as ours to live in Africa, and who do not enjoy the same prestige as the whites in the eyes of the blacks.”

In addition to controlling private and daily life to alienate the boys from their place of origin, the Fathers also perceived them as dishonored people. Orlando Patterson’s argument concerning the “dishonor” of slaves equally applies to the boys of Malta: “The slave [...] could have no honor because he had no power and no independent social existence, hence no public worth. He had no name of his own to defend. He could only defend his master’s worth and his master’s name.” The boys in Malta had lost their claims to personal ancestry and their cultural connections to their country of origin. The existence of the children who could not be of use to the Fathers was worthless. One of the Fathers presented the untimely death of a little boy who had succumbed to gastroenteritis at the school as a “grace” from God since “that child would never have been able to do any real service to the mission, because he appeared to be impaired in two ways. In the seven years I knew him, I did not observe in him any physical or intellectual development.”

Paradoxically, these dishonored individuals brought honor to the White Fathers who protected them. By establishing themselves as protectors of allegedly helpless Africans, the White Fathers portrayed themselves as heroes of Christianity and civilization. Again, this parallels the

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306 AG MAfr D11 4-6, Carte de visite du Père Bridoux (1884).
6. AG MAfr D11 210 Dossier Lettres Joseph Gatchi, Letter from Joseph Gatchi to a White Father (Kibanga, January 21, 1891). Gatchi’s comments on the food he ate in the Congo show that the experiment failed: the cuisine there was completely foreign to him.
308 Patterson, 10-11.
309 AG MAfr D11-88, Letter from Father Chupin to Lavigerie (Malta, April 3, 1884).
relationship between slaves and their owners, because slave ownership increased the economic status and social prestige of the masters.\textsuperscript{310}

The fact that the White Fathers modeled their relationship with the boys on existing patterns of slave-master relationships is indicative of a larger trend. Historians of slavery demonstrated that the lived experiences of emancipation tell a different story from the one pushed forward by triumphant abolitionism. Scholars showed that during the second half of the nineteenth century, more people were captured and enslaved in Africa than freed. Moreover, as Fred Cooper and others argued, even the most fervent abolitionists did not envision a world where African slaves would become an “independent peasantry.”\textsuperscript{311} This was particularly true for children, who, even when charitable abolitionists officially freed them, were still under the control of adults on whom they depended for food, shelter and protection. In that sense, the emerging historiographical field of children and slavery can shed light on the complexity and ambiguity of the idea of freedom in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{312}

In many ways, the type of hierarchical relationship Lavigerie had in mind, justified in the published sources, and based on clear models of subservience that we can trace back to the times of slavery, gives weight to Jean-Paul Sartre’s powerful and eloquent critique of European colonial educational systems in his 1961 preface to the \textit{Wretched of the Earth}:

\begin{quote}
In the colonies the truth displayed its nakedness, but the metropolises preferred it clothed: they had to get the natives to love them. Like mothers of sorts. The European élite decided to fabricate a native élite. They selected adolescents; they branded the principles of Western culture on their foreheads with a red-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{310} Patterson, 11.
hot iron, they gagged their mouths with sounds, pompous awkward words that twisted their tongues. After a short stay in the metropolis they were sent home, doctored. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers. From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we yelled ‘Parthenon! Brotherhood!’ and somewhere in Africa or Asia mouths echoed ... thenon! ... therhood!’ It was the golden age.\textsuperscript{313}

However, the archives tell a more nuanced story, in which the boys played a role that, while invisible in the public transcript, constituted a powerful and constant challenge to the prescriptive social hierarchy that structured and defined the White Fathers’ project of liberation. The correspondence the Fathers exchanged during their years at the Institut provides us with indirect but valuable information about the experiences of these boys. Though that evidence was filtered through many layers, it is useful because it is grounds for the analysis of the power dynamics that structured emancipation.

\textbf{D. The Private and Public Transcripts of Emancipation at the Institut}

The public and private transcripts the boys and the missionaries used illustrate these dynamics. James Scott argued that in power relationships, both the powerful and the subaltern used both a “public” and a “private transcript.” The public transcript is the “open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate them.” The private transcript is the one that operates “offstage”, among the members of the same groups, and which at times can contradict the public discourse. Both of these transcripts are necessary for both groups to promote their interests and legitimize their very existence.\textsuperscript{314} Despite the White Fathers’ official abolitionist

\textsuperscript{313} Jean-Paul Sartre, “Preface,” in Frantz Fanon, \textit{The Wretched of the Earth} (New York: Grove Press, 1963), xlxiii.
rhetoric, many missionaries did not believe that black children were worthy recipients of an academic education. The Institut’s discipline relied on moral and physical coercion, which the boys rejected or accepted, depending on their needs and ambitions. This disciplinary system partly aimed at protecting the mission from fears of sexual disorder. The young men who emerged from the Institut to work in sub-Saharan Africa had internalized the French colonizer’s sense of cultural and political superiority.

When Lavigerie decided to open the Institut in Malta, many of his priests were reluctant to accept their assignment on a European island. They had joined the congregation to Christianize African heathens, not to live on the Mediterranean’s shore. Moreover, though they profoundly believed in the proselytizing aspect of missionary work, many of them adamantly resisted the idea that Africans could be gifted students and receive a medical training. This resistance was based on racialized perceptions of the limited intellectual capacities of non-Europeans.

For example, in 1890, Father Bridoux, one of the inspectors Lavigerie sent to the Institut, wrote: “the children noticed several times that the Fathers used in their conversations about them uncharitable terms, which even smelled of contempt, and their natural pride was ruffled.” In class, the teachers were in the habit of expressing doubt about their students’ willingness and aptitude to learn. The disparaging remarks discouraged the boys from their studies. 315 Bridoux added that their “nature” did not allow them to produce brilliant results, and the Fathers should not expect too much from them. Far from refuting the veracity of the insulting comments, Bridoux urged the teachers to voice them away from the children’s ears, because the latter were now on the lookout.

315 AG MAfr D10-D11, Carte de visite du Père Bridoux (1890).
The importance of Bridoux’s message was his emphasis on the value of the public transcript for the missionaries’ work. As James Scott argued, in situations of power inequality, both the dominating and the dominated groups rely on an external set of interactions and discourses that define and legitimize the hierarchy. In the case of the Institut, the public transcript was the belief in the regeneration of Africans through the paternalistic and benevolent education the White Fathers dispensed. The missionaries needed the public transcript to legitimize their actions and very existence in the colonies, especially in the tense anti-clerical climate of the Third Republic. Bridoux’ injunction to the teachers aimed to protect the public transcript, not the children.316

Nevertheless, the boys also at times found their interest in this public spectacle of charity. After they had left the Institut, many of them remained in contact with their former teachers and Lavigerie. They kept the Fathers informed of their lives south of the Equator and often requested material assistance. They prefaced all requests for money or goods such as clothes or medical equipment in a profession of gratitude and humility towards the missionary congregation. In January 1897, Sokoro wrote a letter from his post in Timbuktu to a former teacher to ask for new clothes. He presented his application in an expression of gratitude for the Fathers’ work with black children.317 Bodoi, who asked for pants and shoes in 1899 from his post in Segou, also expressed his appreciation to the Fathers who had “raised [him] in the Christian faith.”318

317 AG MAfr GEN 70, Letter from Sokoro to a White Father (Timbuktu, January 1897).
318 AG MAfr GEN 70, Letter from Bodoi to his Reverend Father (Segou, March 25, 1899).
These examples should not lead us to believe that the boys were passive recipients of charity. In an education system which often relied on physical punishment, they stood for themselves when they thought their rights had been violated. As in most French schools in the nineteenth century, beatings were part of the disciplinary system. The White Fathers, including Lavigerie himself, used them on a regular basis to chastise the children who had misbehaved or failed to meet the required academic or religious standards. For example, Atiman recalled how Lavigerie hit him when he failed the catechism test preceding his baptism.\(^{319}\) According to comments in the inspection reports, the Fathers tended to be overzealous in the administration of physical punishment: in 1890 and again in 1891, the inspector instructed the Fathers to show restraint, and to only chastise the children whose guilt was beyond any doubt, because he had noticed that the teachers punished too often and too severely.\(^{320}\) Other letters from 1882 also indicated that the students were subjected to beatings and to various punishments, such as eating their meals kneeling on the floor.

While the letters did not offer any example of a child resisting physical punishment, the boys at times actively disobeyed. An important source of contention was their choice of a career. Lavigerie created the school with the exclusive purpose of training future doctor missionaries. The White Fathers did not accept any alternative ambition on the part of the boys. Those who rejected the plan were expelled from the school: “we do not accept rebellious children.”\(^{321}\) In the 1870s, Lavigerie had attempted to train Arab children as doctor missionaries and the experiment

\(^{319}\) AG MAfr D11-52, Letter from Father Chupin to Lavigerie (Malta, March 8, 1882).
\(^{320}\) AG MAfr D11-11, Carte de visite du Père Bridoux (1890).
\(^{321}\) AG MAfr D11 1, Lavigerie, \textit{Règlement de l’Institut Apostolique des Jeunes Nègres} (January 4, 1881), 75.
had failed because the many graduates refused to abide by his plan and chose different careers. He was hoping that black pupils would be more malleable. Experience proved him wrong: Malta’s alumni did not all opt to obey him. Paul Sokoro became an interpreter. Unsurprisingly, his teachers accused him of having a “difficult personality.” Bodoi became a French teacher in Segou, Charles Maudou worked in a clinic in Carthage and Michel Ange Paul Boro became a cook.322

Other examples of disobedience reached us because one of the priests who directed the Institut in the 1880s, Father Chupin, was incompetent, lacked real authority and charisma, and blamed his colleagues and the students for his shortcomings. Whereas, in their correspondence, most of the teachers tended to carefully measure their assessment of the children and presented a picture of the Institut that was compatible with Lavigerie’s vision, Chupin’s messages to the Cardinal include several angry tirades against the boys’ unruliness. For example, Charles Faraghit haughtily answered a teacher who had asked him to clean up after the cat had soiled a classroom: “Monsieur, I am not your servant.”323 When Father Chupin punished one of the black students for an undisclosed offense, the boy angrily replied: “Had I been Maltese, you would not have punished me!” Joseph Gatchi, whom Chupin wanted to expel from the refectory, thumbed his nose at the Father Superior. 324 François Gogé was another student whose attitude displeased Chupin. He resisted the idea of becoming a doctor- he wanted to train as a teacher. When Chupin punished him by preventing him from joining the others at the refectory and scolding him, the boy drafted a letter to a former teacher who was a favorite among the students,

322 AG MAfr Atiman’s Diary, 6.
323 AG MAfr D11-52, Letter from Chupin to Lavigerie (March 8, 1882).
324 AG MAfr D11-54, Letter from Chupin to Lavigerie (March 28 1882).
in which he exposed his grievances. He planned to give it to a poor man who received weekly
alms at the Institut and ask him to mail it. Chupin found the letter before it was sent.
Unfortunately, I could not locate it in the archives, but the fact that Gogé wrote it and had a plan
to smuggle it out of the school shows how determined he was to defend his interests. Beyond the
anecdotal character of the evidence, these incidents indicate that the children used the tools at
their disposal to resist.325

Another important aspect of the disciplinary apparatus at the Institut was the fear of sexual
disorder. First, the Fathers were adamant to isolate the boys from any contact with women. Two
females lived in a neighboring house, and the missionaries erected a wall to shield the boys (and
maybe themselves) from temptation. This strict gender segregation complicated the academic life
of medical students, especially when they had to study anatomy and obstetrics. Since they had
little contact with people outside of the school, these subjects were particularly difficult for them.
A particularly prudish missionary even objected to the students’ attending dissection classes and
stuck to theoretical studies, but the impracticality of his views overruled them.326

A more insidious fear was the lurking danger of homo-erotic behavior. The Instructions
forbade the boys to wrestle on the playground because games could lead to more serious
temptations. Two boys could under no circumstances be alone in a room.327 Despite these
precautions, one case of homoerotic behavior appeared in the sources. In 1896, Father

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325 On the difficulty for historians to study the resistance of enslaved children, see Cecily Jones,
“Youthful Rebels: Young People, Agency, and Resistance against Colonial Slavery in the British
326 AG MAfr, Atiman’s Diary, 8.
327 AG MAfr D11/1, Lavigerie, Règlement de l’Institut Apostolique des Jeunes Nègres (January 4, 1881),
98. Rachel Fuchs noted that in late nineteenth-century France, school authorities began supervising the
games children played in order to extend the discipline from the class room to the playground. See Fuchs,
Thomaselli added the following post scriptum to his missive to Monseigneur Livighnac (Lavigerie’s successor):

I received the attached letter written by one of the children who have gone [to sub-Saharan Africa] to one of those who stayed [in Malta]. Not only have I decided it was not appropriate to give it to its recipient, but I think it is my duty to show it to you. This letter was maybe written without malice, but it is important because J-B Muvidjume, who has written it, had confessed to me before his departure that he had engaged in a very reprehensible carnal relationship with his friend Bodoi, to whom he is writing. Since he had decided to confess, I [decided] not only not to punish him, but also not to tell anyone, as long as he wouldn’t keep secrets from me in the future, and put an end to his reprehensible relationship. He promised and seemed to have kept his word. This letter however absolves me from my promise and I even think I need to tell you everything.\textsuperscript{328}

Unfortunately for the historian, the scandalous letter was not preserved in the archives, and this paragraph is the only surviving piece of information on the relationship between J-B Muvidjume and Pierre Joseph Bodoi. A close reading allows us to understand the power relations and the gender dynamics of the Institut, though many key elements of the story fell into oblivion. First, it appears that at least two boys were willing to challenge the Church by disobeying Catholic moral teachings. But one of them appeared to have internalized these teachings and felt guilty enough to confess to Father Thomaselli. In turn, the priest used his moral authority to ensure the “maintenance and reproduction of the social order by disciplining individuals who have stepped outside or challenged the boundaries of their gender roles.”\textsuperscript{329}

Most importantly, it shows us that despite the regulations of the school, the children were able to find spaces where they could make choices about their lives.

\textsuperscript{328} AG M Afr Fond Livinhac, GEN 69 Bis 69326- 69392, Letter from Father Santo Tomaselli to Livinhac (June 15, 1896).
\textsuperscript{329} Robert Nye, \textit{Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4-5
Moreover, in a context in which the Fathers were the only source of authority over the children, their superiors dreaded abuse and ensuing scandal. To preclude the possibility of any sort of intimacy, house rules forbade the adults from being alone with the students at any time, whether in the public spaces of the building complex (the classes, the kitchen, or the garden) or in the dormitories. Though the boys were their adopted children, they had to maintain a certain distance with them because familiarity paved the way to dangerous promiscuity: “… they must not become too familiar with the students, and most importantly, they must not give them special marks of affection. These are often the source of the greatest dangers, and sometimes of the lowest disgrace… ” Teachers who felt any attraction towards the children had to request a transfer immediately. Those who noticed dangerous inclinations in their colleagues had to alert their superiors.330

The White Fathers designed these precautionary measures to protect the honor and reputation of the Church and the mission. Nowhere do the texts present the well-being and security of the children as a concern, though they were perhaps not absent from Lavigerie’s mind. This was particularly significant at a time when the legitimacy of Catholic education faced serious institutional and moral challenges. The changes in press censorship rules in metropolitan France allowed anticlerical advocates to openly voice irreverent critiques of and attacks against the Church.

Unsurprisingly, these critiques and attacks took the form of sexual satire. Cartoons and literary representations of salacious relationships between nuns and monks in convents,

monasteries and the confessional abounded. Moreover, anticlerical members of the medical profession published studies arguing that chastity vows caused serious cases of satyriasis (the male equivalent of nymphomania) among priests, which created an irrepressible urge to engage in sexual relations with women or children, by force if seduction proved unsuccessful. Though the factual basis and scientific merits of these theories were fragile at best, they enjoyed widespread popularity due to the eminence of their proponents, which included famous physicians. Many doctors put their science at the service of their anticlerical beliefs, and decidedly sided with the State against the Church. During the long battle over education, republican doctors used their scientific authority to weigh in with Jules Ferry and Emile Combes against Catholic educational congregations. They argued that the risk of satyriasis caused too great a danger to the safety of children and to public morality for the government to allow priests to teach. Several notorious scandals involving abuse of minors by the clergy shook metropolitan France, and were possibly on Lavigerie’s mind when he drafted the regulations.331

In addition to the charged political atmosphere, a thick layer of racial assumptions contributed to explaining the Institut’s set of rules. According to the Cardinal and the teachers, the children themselves were inclined to “evil”. The sources derided them as lascivious tempters, subject to carnal passions, which could target the White Fathers and threaten their physical and spiritual integrity. The priests blamed this predisposition on the children’s “sensual nature” and on the immorality of the societies in which they had lived before they joined the mission. “These poor children have been removed by the missionaries from a profound state of corruption. In addition

to the knowledge and sometimes the experience of evil at an early age, they often keep, despite God’s grace, a remnant of the corruption that characterizes their race.”

The “experience of evil” at a very young age could have taken place when they were in the hands of their masters, either during their journey or when they had arrived to their North African destination. While the historiography of the MENA briefly addressed the rape of female slaves in the nineteenth century, scholars have not studied the sexual abuse that targeted boys, either on the trade routes or in their masters’ homes.

Atiman, Michel Abdou, Goro, Sokoro and their peers were little boys when they were captured. They might have been separated from their adult kin, and were at the mercy of the jellaba (slave traders) in the Sahara. “The early experience of evil they’ve had since a very young age”, in the Cardinal’s words, might refer to the abuses that were committed in the desert. The Fathers could have heard about them in the secret of the confessional, or during other conversations with their adopted children.

According to the priests, the children’s very nature was to blame. They believed that Africans were natural seducers, slaves to their carnal desires, which could infect the men they came in contact with. The lasciviousness missionaries assigned to Africans was not limited to childhood. Even when they became men, Africans maintained, according to European observers, the unbridled sexual appetites that characterized children. Missionaries, explorers, soldiers, diplomats, and novelists tended to portray African childhood as less a life stage than an innate element of African people’s nature, regardless of their age. This representation of black people as being immoral and promiscuous originated with the first days of Atlantic slavery in the 17th century.

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332 AG MAfr D11-5, Carte de visite du Père Bridoux (1886).
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century and travelled back and forth across the ocean. Some of the first proponents of these ideas were Catholic missionaries to the Americas, who through their contact with black slaves in the Americas, established themselves as specialists of Africa and Africans, even though many had never been to the continent. As Ann Stoler argued, racist prejudice tended to gain in intensity in situations where Europeans were in close contact with non-white people. Closer proximity also raised the need to further clarify and reinforce boundaries.

The children were not only blamed because of perceptions of race. Nineteenth century thinkers involved in social reform in metropolitan France thought that working class children were similarly inclined to sexual immorality. The responsibility for sexual violence often laid with the victims. In other words, this form of unquestioned assignment of guilt, with its veneer of pity, has characterized approaches to subaltern’s sexuality in contexts that include but were not limited to colonial North Africa.

In France, when a perpetrator of sexual violence faced trial, a police investigation targeted the victim: the court needed to establish whether their morality was flawless. More often than not, the investigation concluded that the victim was predisposed to vice, which lightened the guilt of his or her attacker, whom she/he had presumably seduced. The transcripts of the trials of accused rapists show that the courts also judged the victims. The lawyers and the judges asked specific questions about the sexual history of the person who had been attacked and the morality

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and reputation of their families. In the eyes of the courts, a member (including little children) from an immoral family was probably complacent, even complicit in their victimization. Families the court deemed immoral were usually poor. The study of the victim’s morality was more important than the analysis of the trauma inflicted on them.  

The judiciary openly treated sexual assaults more as scandalous crimes against public morality than as a violent, traumatizing attack against an individual.

Children in particular were under suspicion. The emerging scientific and pedagogical literature portrayed children as concurrently pure and evil creatures who needed to be controlled. Control was increasingly possible through institutions such as the hospital, the prison and the school. Félix Dupanloup, a high-ranking clergyman, a famous pedagogue and one of Lavigerie’s mentors during his Parisian studies wrote: “[Childhood] is also, I say it with no hesitation, this age during which we can find, next to the best of inclinations, the most depraved of instincts: obstinacy, anger, jealousy, deceit, and I would even say ingratitude… Childhood is … presumptuous, violent and stubborn: it is the age of dissipation, of anger and of pleasure.” According to Lavigerie’s teacher, the role of education was to correct these negative tendencies.

Moreover, members of the judiciary as well as experts from the scientific community agreed that immoral behaviors and sexual impropriety tended to take place among the poorer classes.

The small dwellings, where people, men and women, adults and children, had to share rooms and

beds encouraged illicit acts and violence. Another group of people who were targeted by the same accusatory rhetoric were vagrants, whose economic destitution and resistance to a sedentary life style was allegedly due to their laziness and innate immorality, and, the argument goes, created a tendency to rape.

When they were at the Institut, the children were the missionaries’ subordinates and despite racial differences, shared the characteristics of the poor and the vagrants in the metropole. However, when in 1889, they began joining the White Fathers in their posts in sub-Saharan Africa, they did so as members of a group of French people, who benefitted from many of the advantages of the colonizers.

The tone used by Malta’s alumni in their correspondence reflects a sense of colonial entitlement. The doctors-missionaries brought with them a feeling of superiority over the populations they encountered in their posts. For example, Sokoro wrote: “…might Jesus bless the Mission for all the good it does to the poor black slaves.”339 This shows the extent to which the boys had appropriated French cultural norms. Their attitudes reflect a deep involvement in the mission civilisatrice: they were former savages who had been civilized, and gained the right to impose their acquired superiority over Africa’s heathens. They expressed their pre-eminence through their vocabulary (Atiman called potential converts “savages”)340 and their evaluation of local cultures. Gatchi complained about Africans having “witchcraft so rooted in their blood [sic]

339 AG MAfr Y2, Letter from Sokoro to a Father (Timbuktu, December 31, 1898).
340 AG Mafr D11 192-237 Dossier Anciens élèves, Periode Atiman, Letter from Atiman to a White Father (Karema, August 10, 1892).
that even baptized and confirmed older children have not put it out of their mind. Whenever the occasion presents itself, we try to show them the absurdity of their beliefs.”

Nevertheless, Malta’s alumni did not always escape the prejudice of White Fathers posted with them. In a letter to Lavigerie, Gatchi bitterly complained about the lack of respect of which he was often a victim among the missionary society in Kibanga. In a case where the missionaries refuted his medical opinion when a patient was dying, he wrote to the prelate that “certainly, Venerable Father, if it was a doctor with degrees from Europe who had said the same thing, he would have been listened to since the first word, but I, since I am only a black racheté, not having the rank of a doctor, nobody listens to me.”

Despite the racial hierarchy that the French implemented in the colonies, even with their former students, Malta’s alumni enacted their sense of cultural superiority over the local population through their relationships with the women they married. Lavigerie believed that Africans lacked the will power necessary to abide by a chastity vow, and decided that the doctor missionaries should marry once they reached their posts. Joseph Gatchi’s wife was thirteen or fourteen: “her savage name is Makaboué and her Christian name is Emma”. Charles Faraghit’s wife was fifteen. As for Atiman, he wedded the niece of a local chief with whom the missionaries sought an alliance for political purposes. He later confided that she “did not understand anything to the Catholic ceremony of the wedding.” This is hardly surprising, since

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she was a child of ten or eleven when she had to become his wife.\textsuperscript{343} She did not seem to like Atiman very much, nor willing to have him as a husband. During the early stages of her married life, she ran away twice, and twice he brought her back by force. He wrote to a White Father: “she is being tamed (\textit{s’apprivoise}), little by little.”\textsuperscript{344} He was nevertheless very proud of her social standing. He wrote to one of his former teachers that he had married a “princess.”\textsuperscript{345} According to a missionary who knew them, “very young and beautiful, she was fickle and would have become a heartthrob (\textit{la coqueluche de tout le monde}), had her husband not supervised her and kept her on a tight leash.” He added that following her second escape attempt, she submitted to her husband, converted to Catholicism, and enjoyed the high social status of a respected doctor’s wife.\textsuperscript{346}

The sources tell us little about how she experienced these years. Her extreme youth at the time of her marriage might have limited the options available to her. Did she stay because her family wanted to benefit from their alliance with the French missionaries and refused to harbor her? Did her family or Atiman use threats and physical punishment to “tame” her? Over the years, did she decide that it was in her best interest to stay with him and to benefit from the social status of a notable’s wife? The sources are silent on these issues, as they are on the experiences of the other brides of Malta’s alumni.

\textsuperscript{343} AG MAfr D11 208-213 Dossier Lettres Gatchi, Letter from Gatchi to a White Father (Kibanga, January 1, 1891).
\textsuperscript{344} AG MAfr D11 192-237 Dossier Anciens élèves, Periode Atiman, Letter from Atiman to a White Father (Karema, October 4, 1889).
\textsuperscript{345} AG MAfr D11 192-237 Dossier Anciens élèves, Periode Atiman, Letter from Atiman to a White Father (Karema, January 16, 1890).
\textsuperscript{346} AG MAfr BIATM7, Atiman’s biographical notice (unknown author, no date).
This case of a former slave depriving a child of her freedom in the context of an abolitionist enterprise is loaded with cruel irony. Nevertheless, her fate fits within the implacable logic of a colonial power built on perceived racial hierarchies. These hierarchies allowed the missionaries to push for the marriage between a young man and a little girl. In Europe, the Catholic Church had since the medieval period battled to force the State to impose age limits on child marriage. Though the White Fathers might be abiding by local marriage legislation, the marriage took place at the instigation of a prince of the Church and shows that Robin Bernstein’s argument on the “exclusion of black youth from the category of childhood” in the United States applies to race relations in French Africa.  

According to Bernstein, representations of black children in the American South were based on the idea that they were grotesque, unruly, and unable to feel physical pain. Since fragility and the need for protection defined childhood, these characteristics deprived Atiman’s ten-year old bride from the protection and compassion the Church might show a white child.

Atiman and his peers thought of themselves as an integral part of the French colonial enterprise, and, arguably, thought they could benefit from the same advantages as Frenchmen. As historian Owen White noted, “conquerors would scarcely have taken no for an answer.”

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348 Bernstein, 33-37.
French bureaucrats and officers in Africa, deprived of the company of their female compatriots, often engaged in sexual relationships with indigenous women. Though some women perhaps freely chose to enter these relationships, they were often forced into them either because of their economic destitution, or because the men physically coerced them. During the conquest, well after the abolition of slavery, French soldiers and their indigenous auxiliaries (the *tirailleurs*, who were often either black Africans or Arab) received female African women and girls as spoils of war. Moreover, unmarried women, especially former slaves, appeared as a danger to the moral and social order of the French colonies. When they filed for divorce, the French administration often refused to grant it.350

The life trajectories from boyhood to adulthood of the freed slaves who received a missionary education, as well as their interactions with colonized Africans, shed light on the complex  

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350 This form of social control was not restricted to the French colonies. An important aspect of the British abolitionist movement was its gendered perceptions of the role of slaves and former slaves. According to British abolitionists, one of the most perverse and horrendous aspects of slavery was the violation of female slaves’ honor, as well as the impossibility for slaves to have a stable family life, which led them to debauchery and stood in the way of their moral rehabilitation. After emancipation, the British often tried to impose European bourgeois models of the family and gender relations. For women, this meant marriage and motherhood. They did not all necessarily want that type of social restriction, but were often forced into it by the State. Brazil adopted similar policies towards freed women, who fell victim to the disciplinary apparatus of the state when they did not adapt to the model of bourgeois respectability (Scully and Paton, 17-19). See also Amy Dru Stanley. “Conjugal Bonds and Wage Labor: Rights of Contract in the Age of Emancipation,” *Journal of American History* 75, no.2 (September 1988): 471-500 and Liat Kozma, “Black, Kinless and Hungry: Manumitted Female Slaves in Khedival Egypt: in *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, ed. Terrence Walz and Kenneth Cuno (Cairo and New York: The American University of Cairo Press, 2010). On the history of the tirailleurs and their connection to slavery, see Julien Fargettas, *Les Tirailleurs sénégalais : Les soldats noirs entre légendes et réalités 1939-1945* (Paris: Tallandier, 2012) and Eric Deroo and Antoine Champeaux, *La Force Noire : Gloire et infortunes d’une légende coloniale* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006). Martin Klein also briefly mentioned the connections between the army and slavery. In 1882, the governor of Sénégal, Henri Philibert Canard, hoped to draft freed children in the French army to “transform them into good workers and good French subjects.” (Henri Philibert Canard, quoted by Klein, “Children and Slavery in the Western Sudan,” 128-129). The project ultimately failed, but it shows how French authorities considered that a strong disciplinary system was necessary to deal with freed children.
realities of the emancipation process as children experienced it. Lavigerie’s project, though it ultimately failed because of lack of funds and the limited impact the doctor missionaries had on potential converts, succeeded in that it offered the children avenues for professional development that very few other abolitionist projects proposed. Though the Fathers wanted to maintain the boys in a subservient status, Malta’s students used the education they received to further their interest and benefit from the advantages they believed they deserved. Moreover, though only a few dozen students attended the Institut, their case study emphasizes the roles and experiences of central actors of the history of slavery and liberation in the late nineteenth century.

E. CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the inner workings of the emancipation process to study what a free legal status actually meant in the lives of black people in North Africa in the later part of the nineteenth century. The chapter emphasized the idea, proposed by Frederick Cooper and others, that enslavers and abolitionists were products of the same social universe, and their moral principles, though profoundly divergent in their outcomes, belonged to the same conceptual framework, based on racial science, religious myths and popular culture. This is not to dismiss abolitionist work as a colonialist duplicitous lie—saying that slavery was wrong and outlawing it was a formidable act of bravery and a revolutionary accomplishment. At the same time, abolitionism was a product of its epoch, and the long nineteenth century was the epoch of scientific racism, phrenology, social Darwinism and human zoos. When Lavigerie opened his

Institut for freed slaves, his compatriots could during their Sunday strolls throw peanuts to African children on display behind fences at the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris. In that cultural context, as the historiography of the Atlantic world demonstrated, “the moral supremacy of abolition eclipses the lived experiences marking the expansion of slavery in continental Africa and new forms of labor coercion globally.”

The following chapter will reveal another facet of the perpetuation of slavery in post-abolition societies that the White Fathers’ work concealed. In his correspondence with French diplomats, in his publications, in his lecture tours and communications with his subordinates, Lavigerie treated slavery in Africa as a Saharan and sub-Saharan phenomenon, which only reached the margins of the French North African possessions through the slave trade to the oases. In an effort to maintain peaceful relations with the French administration, he played down the existence of slavery in the cities of Tunisia and Algeria. In a May 26, 1890 letter he sent from Carthage to a newspaper, he declared that in French North Africa, the horrors of slavery were a distant phenomenon. In the past, he said, unscrupulous merchants sold black people on Algerian and Tunisian markets:

Muslim public opinion used to be completely favorable to slavery. But, with the expansion of French and Christian ideas, slavery started to have more difficulty finding favor, not only with the laws of Tunisia and Algeria which soon prohibited it, but also in practice. In Algeria, it has almost completely disappeared, except in the oases of the extreme south and soon it will have disappeared even there. In Tunisia, where we have been exercising our

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353 Lawrance, 5.
influence for a much shorter time, we can probably find a few isolated examples, especially in old families that have kept their slaves out of tradition, but their number diminishes every day, and soon it will disappear completely.\(^{354}\)

Lavigerie did not mention in his declaration the scandals that shook the French administration in Tunis in 1889-1890. Freed black women had set in motion events which led to the unmasking of masters who held women and children captive in the capital of the Protectorate, and of the colonial administrators who shielded these masters from the law. “The few isolated examples” Lavigerie mentioned in passing were in reality cases of extreme brutality against slaves, and which shed light on the perpetuation of domestic slavery in French Tunisia’s capital long after official abolition.

CHAPTER IV: EMANCIPATION ON TRIAL

A. INTRODUCTION

On March 16, 1891, *Le National*, a Leftist Parisian newspaper opposed to the government, published an article accusing the French Résidence in Tunis of allowing the enslavement of black women to go unpunished in the capital of the North African Protectorate. The article detailed the trial of Khelil Bournaz, a city notable and property owner, who faced charges of enslavement and mistreatment of a sixteen-year old girl called Fathma. He unrepentantly recognized in front of a French judge that he had purchased her six years earlier and that he had regularly beaten her while she was living under his roof. After a judicial investigation and a trial, the French court of Tunis ruled that he was guilty of physical mistreatment but did not charge him with the crime of slavery. The judge sentenced him to pay a fine of one hundred francs and two hundred francs of damages to Fathma.

Slavery had been illegal in both Tunisia and the French empire for almost half a century. How was it possible for a man to publicly and unapologetically declare in a court of law that he had purchased and physically abused a child for six years, and only face as a consequence for his actions an insignificant financial penalty? The chapter will show that answers to this question are embedded in pervasive images of domestic slavery as a mild institution in the Islamic world, which in principle allowed enslaved people to become an integral part of their owners’ families. Answers also lie deep in the political realities of a newly established Protectorate, in the complex juxtaposition of French and Tunisian law, as well as in a persistent culture of racism and class hierarchy that had survived the abolition of slavery and shaped the process of emancipation.

355 *Le National* spearheaded several attacks against Massicault in the 1880s. See Arnoulet, 36.
Ehud Toledano argued that until relatively recently, the prevalence of domestic slavery has led historians to adopt the “good-treatment-thesis” when studying servitude in the Islamic world. Replicating Orientalist judgments without questioning them, they perpetuated the idea that despite the initial violence of the slave trade and occasional abuse at the hands of exceptionally cruel masters, slaves in the Middle East and North Africa enjoyed a mild form of servitude. It was in many ways superior to the fate of poor free wage laborers in Europe, since Muslim masters treated them as family members. This interpretation relied on countless reports by European observers.\footnote{Ehud Toledano, “Bringing the Slaves Back in”, in Slavery, Islam and Diaspora, ed. Behnaz A. Mirai et al. (Trenton: Africa World Press), 12-14.}

Charles Amat, a French doctor and anthropologist who visited the Mzab (a region in the Algerian Sahara) shortly after its annexation in 1882, related the story of a Muslim man who walked more than two miles every day to bring couscous to his slave, who was in prison under theft charges.\footnote{Charles Amat, “L’Esclavage au M’zab: Etude anthropologique des nègres,” Bulletin de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris 7, no 3. (1884): 690-691.} French sources even interpreted acts of rebellion as a familial struggle. A French jurist recounted a conversation he had with a former slave in the following manner: “In 1865 or 1866, when I was a judge in Oran, I was [trying a local notable for murder]. A young negro came to ask me if he could share his prison cell: ‘I was, he said, raised in this man’s house and used to consider him a like a father to me. One day, he beat me, and I ran away and later got married here. Today, I learn he is in trouble and my duty is to abandon everything for him.’ ”\footnote{Charles Roussel, “La Naturalisation des indigènes en Algérie,” Revue des Deux Mondes 118 (1875).}

French observers also based their assumptions about slavery in North Africa on Islamic law. Islam, in line with the other monotheistic religions, permitted slavery but encouraged lenience, kindness, and to a certain extent, manumission. The Quran and the Hadith framed the relationship
between master and slave in terms of mutual respect. There was no difference between free and unfree individuals in the eyes of God, as far as their souls were concerned. The inequality in their earthly conditions should not lead the owner to abuse the authority conferred upon him (Q 4:36). The master’s kindness should extend to feeding and clothing the slave as a family member, and to avoiding assigning him laborious chores. Punishments should be inflicted with fairness and restraint. In case master and slave could not cohabit in relative harmony, the Quran encouraged the former to sell his bond servant.\footnote{Jay Spaulding, “Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan,” \textit{The International Journal of African Historical Studies} 15, no. 1 (1982): 11-12.} Moreover, manumitting a slave after years of service was a meritorious act in the eyes of God. Female slaves who bore their master’s child benefitted from a legal protection. The child was born free, the mother acquired the privileged status of \textit{Umm Walad} (“mother of a child”), could never be sold, and she gained freedom at her master’s death.\footnote{Encyclopedia of Islam, 1979 ed., s.v. “\textit{abd}”.

Encyclopedia of Islam, 1979 ed., s.v. “\textit{abd}”.

Encyclopedia of Islam, 1979 ed., s.v. “\textit{abd}”.}

Nevertheless, despite the existence of benevolent principles in the sacred texts, the “mildness” of slavery in the Islamic world is an unfounded myth.

Jay Spaulding was one of the first historians to challenge the good-treatment thesis in 1982 in his study of slavery in the Egyptian Sudan: “Prevailing historiography asserts that slavery in the Turkish Sudan was a benign institution… Private documents of the period give little support to this comfortable interpretation. Slaves were legally classified as livestock along with sheep, cattle, horses, and camels, or occasionally as ‘talking animals.’\footnote{Jay Spaulding, “Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan,” \textit{The International Journal of African Historical Studies} 15, no. 1 (1982): 11-12.} But it was not until the early 2000s that Ehud Toledano, Eve Powell and Madeleine Zilfi used court records to systematically demonstrate that in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, physical violence was at the very heart of...
domestic enslavement. Benjamin Brower showed that slavery in Algeria also stood on quotidian brute force.\textsuperscript{362} Since domestic slaves were mainly women and children, it was not until the progress of gender and subaltern studies made their way into MENA scholarship that historians acquired the conceptual tools necessary for a reevaluation of the impact of enslavement on its victims.

By looking at court records, consular documents, legal treatises and press articles, they pointed to the limitations of the good-treatment thesis. The Quran’s encouragement towards kindness and manumission did not have force of law. Judges also had enough leeway to interpret religious texts and adapt them to their own understanding of social justice. Moreover, in practice if not in theory, inheritance laws often prevailed over the laws protecting slaves. If the monetary value of a deceased man’s estate was not enough to cover his debts, or to provide for all of his legal heirs, then a court could decide that the heirs were entitled to sell an \textit{Umm Walad} and pocket the purchase price. The same could happen to a slave whose master had promised freedom upon his or her death. The enforcement of the rule regarding the \textit{Umm Walad} depended to a considerable degree on the master’s goodwill. Since black female slaves were rarely secluded, in the case of a pregnancy a man had the option to disclaim paternity.\textsuperscript{363} Finally, as Toledano powerfully argued, the most persuasive argument against the good-treatment thesis was that the sources unambiguously


\textsuperscript{363} Zilfi, 113.
indicate that many slaves, whenever they could, tried to become free, even when their attempts to leave their masters’ houses could get them tortured or killed.364

The good-treatment thesis in the historiography reflects the sources historians have used. Most nineteenth-century French sources converged in a narrative that lauded the private sphere as a haven for slave women, and presented the masters’ family as a guarantor of security and happiness. Despite the omnipresence of violence, this discourse remained important both before and after abolition. The image of slaves as family members served to justify the reluctant attitude of French officials towards the systematic and uncompromising implementation of the abolition decree in their North African possessions.

Women and children in particular suffered from the association of slavery with family and domesticity. Contemporaries argued that the Quran was particularly generous with female slaves and their offspring. Since they were supposed to be members of the family, the argument goes, freedom would in reality be detrimental to their safety and wellbeing. Girls and young women were prized possessions, their monetary value being proportional to their beauty, youth, or talent as dancers and singers. While European commentators presented this as evidence of the privileged position of female slaves in Islam, in reality it exposed them to the constant risk of sexual violence. The fact that some of them learnt to use their positions as concubines to survive or acquire status and money should not lead us to underestimate the profound inequality and violence at the core of domestic slavery. Moreover, female captives were in danger of losing the protection or credit they had with their masters once they lost their looks or reached an advanced age. In the brutal words of Doctor Weisgerber, an anthropologist writing in 1895: “At El Goléa [an oasis town in the

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364Toledano, *As if Silent and Absent*, 22.
Algerian Sahara], a young negress between the ages of 10 and 15 can be worth 500 Francs, a young vigorous negro is only worth 400 Francs. Old women are worth nothing.”

The objective of this chapter is to study the implications of these issues for women and children living in Tunisia in the 1880s. This study is possible because freed women in Tunis moved heaven and earth to help their former companions of captivity or to bring their tormentors to court. Their efforts attracted the attention of diplomats, lawyers and journalists, whose writings constitute the documentary basis of this chapter. In addition to the women, two of the main protagonists of these stories were Frenchmen living in Tunisia. One of them, Gaston Jobard, was a lawyer with the Tunis bar. The second one, Antonin Goguyer, was an interpreter for the French tribunal. Goguyer heard about the horrors of clandestine slavery because his family’s domestic servant, who was a freed slave, told him that she knew women who were still captive and suffering cruel treatment at the hands of their masters. He contacted Gaston Jobard, who believing that slavery and French rule were incompatible, listened to and recorded the testimonies, first of Goguyer’s servant, and then of many other freed women who heard about him through word of mouth.

When he met with them, Jobard had a notary record and authenticate their testimonies. In these documents, the women listed the names of their former companions in servitude, of those who were still captive and those who had died, naming them, and blaming their death on their enslavers. Two of them, Aisha and Djourha, who had been formerly enslaved in the household of Suleyman Pasha, a wealthy local notable, and his wife Mahbouba, a niece of the bey, provided

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testimony that led to a judicial case which became a *cause célèbre* in French newspapers. When they first met Jobard, they declared that their master had bought

> “five other women, in addition to those named above: 1- Saida; 2. Mordjana; 3. Akdouban; 4. Djourha; 5. Salima; and he forced them to work by beating them cruelly and heaped abuse upon them, *so much that they died* […] The two free women Aicha bent Mohammed of Bournou and Djourha bent Mohamad Eddâs declare […] that they knew the seventeen women named above […] and that their situation was as described here, and they have a firsthand knowledge of this because they saw it. They will testify in front of the rightful authority, as soon as they are asked.”

The number of cases Jobard collected convinced him that instances of slavery were not isolated, but constituted a widespread social phenomenon. He thought that as soon as he presented this evidence to his government, its representatives would act swiftly against such a blatant violation of republican principles. When, as this chapter will show, the Résidence officials ignored his repeated pleas, he alerted French newspapers, which published accounts of the cases he attempted to bring to court, and denounced the complicity of the French government in the perpetuation of slavery. In 1890, Jobard published a short booklet dedicated to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandre Ribot, in which he denounced the continued existence of slavery and the slave trade in Tunisia, and urged the government to act. The booklet included an introduction by Jobard, notarized acts of the declarations made to him by freed slave women, as well as reproductions of articles from *La Tunisie*, a French paper published in North Africa. During the same period, other publications denounced slavery in the Protectorate. Honoré Pontois, a former judge at the court of Tunis who had returned to France, published memoirs on

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367 Notarized Act n.2: Declaration by Aissa ben Abdallah ben Mahdi, from Afnou, speaking in the name of free women 1-Mabrouka; 2- Halima; 3- Messaouda; 4- Fatima; 5- Finanza; 6- Khizrana; 7- Hasna; 8- Nour es Sebah; 9- Ehezala; 10- Rebeh; 11- Yamina; 12- Amina, all from Bornu,” quoted by Jobard in *L’Esclavage en Tunisie*, 23.

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his time in the Protectorate. His book, *Les Odeurs de Tunis*, included a chapter on the continued existence of slavery. Pontois’ status as a former judge gave considerable weight to his implacable denunciation of the enslavement of people in French territory and attracted the attention of the French media.\(^{368}\) Based on these documents, and on the diplomatic correspondence between Tunis and Paris, this chapter studies the impact of the French government’s reluctance to abide by the law on the lives of slave and freed women and children in Tunisia.

The first section of the chapter addresses the ways in which the mechanics of French imperial rule and the rivalries between European powers that created the context in which slaves tried to obtain justice. The second section of the chapter details the judicial saga that unfolded when Aisha and Djourha tried to bring their former slavers to court. Their case sheds light on the intense violence of domestic slavery, as well as on limitations that both the local elites and the French government imposed on the process of emancipation. The third section of the chapter focuses on the trial of Khelil Bournaz, the man who had bought and abused Fathma for six years, to analyze the political, social and cultural worlds, in both France and Tunisia, which allowed a French judge to let an enslaver walk free.

**B. Slavery and Colonial Rule in Tunisia**

The preceding chapters argued that the political challenges the White Fathers faced in North Africa, and their abolitionist policies, were in part a product of these imperial rivalries. It was also partially in response to British and Italian competition that the judiciary system that framed

the emancipation process in Tunisia came into existence in the 1880s. This took place in a larger context of intensified tensions between France and Great Britain, which paved the way to the Fashoda incident of 1898.

The Bardo agreement guaranteed that the bey’s government would keep its military, the right to tax its subjects, as well its local judiciary system. Unlike the system of direct rule put in place in Algeria, the French Protectorate in Tunisia allowed, in principle, the bey’s government to maintain its control over the country while benefitting from France’s protection and advice. In practice, French rule took the form of an interventionist colonial regime that controlled the country’s political life and exploited its resources.\(^{369}\)

To reinforce its hold over the country, France had to eliminate the influence its rivals exercised through their own courts, which Great Britain and Italy had established in Tunisia after negotiations with the beylical government. In order to curb European opposition to their rule, the French had originally included in the Bardo treaty a guarantee for the maintenance of the agreements between the beylical government and foreign powers (Article 4).\(^{370}\) These covered trade agreements as well as consular courts. The latter allowed European states to exercise judiciary power over their nationals living in Tunisia, as well as over their Christian protégés among the local population. This system of consular justice, which was widespread in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire under the Capitulations, had constituted in the nineteenth century a channel for Europeans to establish strong political and economic influence over officially independent governments, thereby undermining the latter’s sovereignty.

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369 Lewis, 34-37.
The Treaty of Bardo had therefore not put an end to the rivalries between the three powers with political and economic interests in the country. Though the French were able to impose the Protectorate as the framework of government, the political, social and cultural influence of Italy and Great Britain remained a determining factor in the Regency. In this context, the judiciary system became a bone of contention among the three rivals. In the early days of the Protectorate, the Italians and the British sought to pressure the French into organizing their rule on the same model as Egypt, where European countries exercised joint control over the tribunals in the mixed courts system. The French were reluctant because sharing jurisdiction would de facto deny them monopoly of power over their newly acquired territory. During the negotiations, the Resident General, Cambon, decided to create French courts and appointed French lawyers and judges to staff them.371

The magistrates sailed from Algeria to the port of Tunis, where the Resident welcomed them in great pomp, in the presence of the bey and of European diplomats. Then, he made the bey sign an order which placed all the Europeans living in Tunisia under the authority of the French tribunals instead of their consular courts, which effectively put an end to the judicial power of foreign consuls. They agreed to close their courts after receiving monetary reparation for the property destruction they endured during the French military conquest.372

The same beylical order maintained the native population, as well as African slaves and former slaves, under the authority of the local court, named the Ouzara (cases involving a Tunisian and a French person remained under the jurisdiction of the French court). The Ouzara

371 Lewis, 36-37.
372 Lewis, 36-37. Lewis argued that Cambon, by bringing in the magistrates, also used the ceremony to affirm the power of the civilian administration over the military.
included two subdivisions: the civil affairs sections, which managed the conflicts between individuals, and the penal affairs section, where magistrates judged infractions to penal law. When the tribunal was judging a case, either civil or penal, both sides involved had to present themselves in person to the tribunal, where the judge evaluated their testimony. The officers of the court summarized the case in a written document, to which they added their juridical opinion. They then sent this document to the Director of Judiciary Services, who transmitted it to the Secretary General of the Tunisian Government, who evaluated the judge’s opinion (without having attended the trial). Their office then decided on the sentence, and transmitted their decision to the bey, who formally approved it.\footnote{Mohamed Dabab and Tahar Abid, \textit{La Justice en Tunisie: Histoire de l’organisation judiciaire (essai) de 1856 à l’Indépendance} (Tunis : Ministère de la Justice, Centre d’études juridiques et judiciaires, 1998), 41-43 and 204-205.}

The organization of the indigenous judiciary system had important consequences on the implementation of the anti-slavery legislation. In cases tried by the Ouzara, all decisions had to be approved by the executive power, which in practice meant that the judiciary section of indigenous affairs was under the direct control of the bey (and, indirectly, of the French). In that context, family and personal connections among the Tunisian elites, especially in the capital, put wealthy and powerful families beyond the reach of the law. Slaves held in their households had little chance of obtaining justice.

The same logic applied to cases judged in French tribunals. Unlike in metropolitan France, where a fundamental principle of the legal system was the independence of the judiciary from the executive power, in Tunisia as in other colonies and protectorates, the Résidence appointed
the magistrates, which put the latter under the direct control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.\footnote{Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, \textit{De l'indigénat: Anatomie d'un “monstre” juridique : le droit colonial en Algérie et dans l'Empire français} (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2010), 74-75.} This allowed the government to ensure that the judiciary system did not threaten the stability of the colonies.\footnote{Eric Gobe, \textit{Les avocats en Tunisie de la colonisation à la révolution: 1883-2011: Sociohistoire d'une profession politique} (Paris: Karthala, 2013). 40-41.} The Résidence and the Ministry made decisions based on the necessities of imperial rule rather than on the letter of the law. The following sections of the chapter will analyze the impact it had on slaves or former slaves who sought justice in French tribunals.

Slaves and former slaves were nevertheless able to appeal to outside forces when the French and the beylical government refused to grant them freedom. Despite the elimination of consular courts, the French protectorate had not been able to eliminate all the powers of the British consul. A treaty signed in 1875 between the bey and Great Britain had granted the British consul the right to harbor and offer liberation papers to any slave who sought protection at the consulate. If an enslaved person managed to reach the consulate, he or she had the right to receive liberation papers that made them free persons, without the intervention of a tribunal.\footnote{MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tunis, February 5, 1890); “Slavery in Tunis and Algiers,” \textit{Anti-Slavery Reporter} no.2 (March 1, 1891): 53-54.} As this chapter will show, many slaves, when they were aware of this opportunity, sought English protection. It could be a dangerous quest, because if their masters heard of their aspirations, or caught them before they reached the consulate’s gate, they could face terrible consequences. Moreover, as this chapter will show, even after they had received their papers, they could still fear retaliation from their former masters, who sought to either recapture or kill them, and some of them had to spend the rest of their lives in hiding.
The coexistence of the 1875 treaty with the Ouzara and the French courts provided enslaved people with alternatives when one system failed to uphold their rights. Though both the Ouzara and the French courts’ raison d’être was the protection of local elites and colonial interests, they offered anti-slavery action a stage visible to the world, which forced government representatives at least to hear the grievances of enslaved people, even if more often than not they rejected them. When slaves learnt through their personal networks to navigate these multiple legal systems, they further challenged France’s claims to complete sovereignty over Tunisia.

Their actions give credence to Julia Clancy-Smith and Mary Lewis’ analyses of French rule in Tunisia as part of an international network of politics, social relations and cultures, which developed beyond the metropole-colony binary. The examples provided in the previous chapters showed how the political and social life of Tunisia was built on networks of power that included the Vatican, the Italian government, local European elites, as well as the Muslim Arab population. The cases the following sections of the chapter address will show how the history of emancipation in Tunisia, while it developed within the private spheres of homes and families, was at the intersection of African, Mediterranean and European histories.

**C. Violence in the Home**

On September 26, 1889, Gaston Jobard filed two official judicial complaints against Sidi Mokhtar ben Suleyman Kahia, property owner, and husband to Mahbouba, a niece of the reigning bey. In the first complaint, Jobard accused Suleyman of holding twelve slave women and requested their immediate liberation. In the second complaint, he accused Suleyman of having cut two toes and pierced the eye of Aisha, one of his slaves he punished for improperly

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377 Lewis, 4.
preparing a dish and trying to abscond. Since none of the protagonists involved were European, the Résidence decided that they would try the case in the Ouzara. The tribunal led two judicial investigations, neither of which ended with a condemnation. Suleyman never had to go to court.\footnote{The summary of the proceedings is based on two press articles (published in \textit{La Tunisie} on February 2, 1890 and April 18, 1890) and diplomatic correspondence. Copies of \textit{La Tunisie}’s articles are available in Jobard’s \textit{L’Esclavage en Tunisie}, 10-18. The names of the authors and the articles’ titles are not available. See also: MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890); Nooman Kouri, “Rapport sur l’affaire des négresses qui ont été trouvées dans la maison de Si Moukhtar Ben Slimane Kahia (annexe de la lettre du 5 mars 1890); Letter from Nooman Kouri to Regnault (Tunis, March 28, 1890).}

The tribunal waited for two weeks after Jobard filed the claim to initiate an official investigation. During this time, Suleyman received information, either from officials in the Ouzara or directly from the Résidence, about the accusations targeting him. This was illegal, because the tribunal did not have the right to share details about a case with the accused through informal channels. As soon as he realized that representatives of the court would have to go to his home and speak to the women he held captive, he hid the twelve slaves in another location.

Jobard urged the Ouzara to complete the inquest promptly, but it took the tribunal a full month to summon Aisha and Djourha to a hearing. They testified on October 7. They declared that twelve slaves were imprisoned in Suleyman’s house, and that he subjected most of them to physical abuse. When, a few days later, the tribunal formally notified Suleyman of the investigation, he replied that there were no slaves in his home. Jobard was able to find out where he had hidden the women, and Suleyman ended up having to admit he owned people. But he only recognized the existence of six captives instead of twelve.\footnote{MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890); Nooman Kouri, “Rapport sur l’affaire des négresses qui ont été trouvées dans la maison de Si Moukhtar Ben Slimane Kahia (annexe de la lettre du 5 mars 1890); Letter from Nooman Kouri to Regnault (Tunis, March 28, 1890).}
It took the tribunal yet another month to order Suleyman to present the six women to the court on November 8; it appears that the Ouzara accepted his claim that he owned six slaves instead of twelve. He sent them to the tribunal. The bey, who was related to Suleyman’s wife, commissioned the head eunuch of his own harem to accompany and watch the six slaves during the court hearing. The head eunuch was not an officer of the tribunal. His presence highlights the personal influence the bey intended to exert on the proceedings, and the intense pressure to which he subjected the victims. Moreover, traditionally, the bey’s head eunuch had exercised power over slaves and freed persons in the Regency. The fact that the bey sent him to supervise the women serves a symbolic reminder of the perpetuation of the disciplinary apparatus of slavery after formal abolition.

The judge interrogated the six women together, instead of hearing them separately. Under the watch of the head eunuch, they performed the role of the slave who was a content member of the family, whose masters followed Islamic rules of kindness and benevolence and who remained faithful towards the masters even after abolition. They all declared that their master treated them well, clothed them properly, and did not overwork them (these three elements correspond

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Ben Slimane Kahia (annexe de la lettre du 5 mars 1890); Letter from Nooman Kouri to Regnault (Tunis, March 28, 1890).

380 MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890); Nooman Kouri, “Rapport sur l’affaire des négresses qui ont été trouvées dans la maison de Si Moukhtar Ben Slimane Kahia (annexe de la lettre du 5 mars 1890); Letter from Nooman Kouri to Regnault (Tunis, March 28, 1890). On the role of the head eunuch, see MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tunis, February 5, 1890). According to Regnault, the head eunuch would appoint representatives (the caids des nègres) all over the Regency. They were usually black and their role was to administer the relations between slaves and their masters, for example by punishing absconding slaves. They were also in charge of marrying slaves. In 1884, the chief eunuch and the caids des nègres officially (but perhaps not in practice) lost their power over slaves in the Protectorate.

381 In the United States as well, the image of the “loyal slave” was an essential element of anti-abolition ideology. See Rothman, Loc 65.
to the Quranic injunctions on the proper care of slaves) and wished to go back to him. The six women, in a violent verbal joust against Aisha, accused her of lying when she accused their master of abuse. They also said that they had never heard her complaining when she lived with them. They showed the judge their manumission papers, all dated a few days after the first complaint had been filed. They said that they were free and that going back there was what they wanted.

The slave owners had followed the letter of the law by granting their bond workers a manumission document, which officially bestowed upon them the status of a free person. Paradoxically, slave owners used these letters to protect themselves from the law: when an inquiry targeted them, they produced the documents as proof of their good faith. Their servants were free to go, they argued, but had chosen to work for them as salaried servants. Though the good faith of the owners was questionable in light of the complaints the courts received, they were useful exculpatory evidence that the courts often opted to take at face value.

The six women’s performance served a double purpose. It gave credence to the “good-treatment thesis” that justified French lukewarm attitudes towards the implementation of the abolition decree. The display of their manumission papers also showed that the law prevailed in the French protectorate. Since information about the trial was appearing in the press, the

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382 MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890); Nooman Kouri, “Rapport sur l’affaire des nègres qui ont été trouvées dans la maison de Si Moukhtar Ben Slimane Kahia (annexe de la lettre du 5 mars 1890); Letter from Nooman Kouri to Regnault (Tunis, March 28, 1890). La Tunisie did not report the confrontation between Aisha and the other women but stated that Aisha did not attend the interview. A report of the confrontation only appears in Regnault’s letter to Ribot dated March 5, 1890. Another contradiction between the letter and the article is that Massicault states that seven women were heard, whereas the article puts the number at six.

383 Ibid.
government had to satisfy the European audience, for which slavery had become unacceptable in a modern empire. It also satisfied the local elites by showing them that the colonial government did not challenge their values and power over their slaves. The judge ruled that since the six women were legally free and wished to return to Suleyman’s house, Aisha’s and Djourha’s accusations were baseless. He dismissed the case.  

On February 24, determined to challenge the judge’s decision, Jobard requested a personal meeting with Regnault, the Secretary General of the Résidence. The Secretary General was the French administrator who supervised the Tunisian Prime Minister, and was in charge of the promulgation of legislative texts. He told Regnault that he did not believe the court brought justice to his clients and asked him to intervene. Regnault stalled by replying that he needed time to study the case before making a decision. Jobard interpreted this answer as a rejection and decided to present the case in another arena, visible to the public, and which the government could not control: the press. He contacted La Tunisie, a French paper in the Protectorate, and on February 28, 1890, it published an article detailing the case based on information he provided and denouncing the corruption of the court, as well as the perpetuation of slavery under French protection: “In the presence of such a scandalous denial of justice, we, who are concerned with showing respect for our laws in a country under our protection, will not hesitate to accomplish our duty; we will communicate to the anti-slavery Congress of Brussels our friend’s [Jobard] files, as well as all his correspondence with the Tunisian government; we will then address these to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, after asking several members of the two houses of Parliament

384 Ibid.
385 Gobe, 38.
386 MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890).
as well as the main representatives of the Parisian press, whether by protecting Tunisia, the French government also intends to protect slavery.\footnote{387}

This was a threat the government took seriously. In 1890 and 1891, several other publications, informed by Jobard’s epistolary campaign and Pontois’ book, virulently denounced the perpetuation of slavery in the Protectorate. In a context of intense imperial rivalry with Great Britain, Germany, Italy and Belgium, the French government had to maintain the humanitarian façade of its presence in Africa, especially when London and Rome both challenged its claims over Tunisia. Moreover, during the Brussels conference, European powers were defending their imperial legitimacy by presenting colonialism in Africa as an anti-slavery endeavor. The correspondence between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his plenipotentiaries in Brussels reflect the French government’s concern for the protection of the country’s political and commercial interests during the negotiations and a scandal in Tunis would have threatened their credibility.\footnote{388} In a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Massicault was alarmed by the fact that French and Italian papers had reproduced the article.\footnote{389}

In that context, the publication of La Tunisie’s article forced the Résidence to act to defend its image. Massicault had no choice but to invite Jobard to present himself again with Aisha and Djourha to the Ouzara, where a new inquest would take place beginning on March 15, 1890. This time, for reasons the diplomatic correspondence did not clarify, they were heard in the penal section of the Tribunal. The judge interrogated them during three days. While the accusations

\footnote{387} Article from La Tunisie of February 28, 1890 reproduced in Jobard, L’Esclavage en Tunisie, 12-13.\footnote{388} MAE Paris, 1MD 114-115, Dossier de la Conférence de Bruxelles, Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to his representatives in Brussels (Paris, December 9, 1889).\footnote{389} MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890).
Jobard filed targeted Suleyman, the second inquest revealed that in the background stood another figure, who shrouded herself in an aura of mystery and respectability that her gender and social status bestowed on her:

they told, providing all the names and the smallest details, with complete accuracy, about all the tortures that had been inflicted on them and that they had seen inflicted on their companions in slavery; they talked about those who had died after being beaten with sticks, and about the place where they were buried, they talked about the cruelty of their former master and above all of their former mistress, who, to occupy the long hours of the perpetual reclusion to which Arab women are submitted, invented day after day new tortures (supplices) for the slightest neglect in house work.390

Princess Mahbouba, Suleyman’s wife and niece of the bey, was as much as her husband responsible for the physical trauma the slaves endured under their roof. Nevertheless, her status-as a woman and a member of the royal family- protected her from a public trial, and ultimately, from any accountability for the crimes she had committed.391

First, the authorities used bureaucratic complications to bury the case. The judge informed Jobard that the penal section of the Ouzara could only manage the accusation of physical abuse and that only the State section of the tribunal could address the allegations of slavery. As a result, it could not respond to Jobard’s request to free the enslaved women. The lawyer wrote to the Résidence Générale to complain, but he did not receive an answer. He then learnt that copies of Aisha’s and Djourha’s declarations had been taken from the judge’s office, and transmitted to Suleyman, even though it was illegal for an accused person to see these documents before the

390 Article of La Tunisie of February 28, 1890 reproduced in Jobard, L’Esclavage en Tunisie, 14.
391 MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890); Nooman Kouri, “Rapport sur l’affaire des négresses qui ont été trouvées dans la maison de Si Moukhtar Ben Slimane Kahia (annexe de la lettre du 5 mars 1890); Letter from Nooman Kouri to Regnault (Tunis, March 28, 1890).
inquest was completed. A month after Aisha and Djourha had spoken in court, Jobard finally received a letter summoning his clients to a confrontation with Mahbouba.  

Since she belonged to the beylical family, the Résidence Générale and the bey (who also held the ultimate authority over the Ouzara) decided to hold her interrogation in the royal palace. Mahbouba was to remain concealed behind a curtain while her victims and their lawyer would stand on the other side. The bey himself, acting as the head of the family, would channel the questions and answers, so that his noble niece would not have to communicate directly with a foreigner and a member of the opposite sex who was not related to her.  

Jobard categorically refused to attend the proposed meeting. He explained his decision by saying that he rejected the legitimacy of a trial that did not take into consideration the accusations of slavery, and added that his clients would not be able to express themselves freely in the palace. The article of La Tunisie on which this account is based told the story from Jobard’s point of view, and doesn’t reveal what Aisha’s and Djourha’s wishes were. Sources sympathetic to the anti-slavery cause tended to emphasize the binary of the benevolent white savior versus the silent black victim. They might have been afraid of testifying in the palace, or have lost faith in the court’s ability to bring them justice and free their former companions. They could also have disagreed with Jobard’s decision and wanted to confront their tormentor, even if she was protected by her uncle and surrounded by the regalia of beylical power in the palace. As soon as the judicial proceedings ended, Aisha, Djourha, and their former companions disappear from the historical record.

392 Ibid.  
393 Ibid.
Princess Mahbouba’s royal status attracted the attention of journalists to her actions, which is probably why her name and story reached us. This exceptional judicial case shed light on an aspect of slavery that seldom makes its way to history books, though it was part of the quotidian reality experienced by many domestic slaves: female masters, just like the men, could be viciously violent. As Madeleine Zilfi noted, “most female slaves spent most of their time with other women.” Yet physical abuse women committed rarely appear in the sources, and as a result historians tend to neglect them. This dearth in the documentation is not limited to MENA studies. Until the publication of the pioneering *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* by Thavolia Glymph in 2008, even the rich corpus of studies on US and Atlantic slavery had treated violence by female masters as a marginal occurrence. Nor is this absence limited to slavery studies: the extensive and conceptually rich historiography on gender in the Middle East and North Africa has not addressed the issue of women as perpetrators of violence. When violence by women appears in primary or secondary sources, it remains limited to the realm of the anecdote, a side to the central acts of brutality men committed.

This absence is based on assumptions that a closer and informed examination of the sources dispels. The first problematic assumption, as Glymph argued, is that the household belongs to the private sphere only. But when we reframe the social relations of the home within the context of domestic slavery, the household becomes a place of work, where power relations are determined by economic and political forces. In other words, instead of looking at female slaves and female owners as women sharing the vulnerability of their gender in a patriarchal household, we can

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394 Zilfi, 155.0.
reframe their relationship within the binaries of employer and worker, rich and poor, white and black. In that framework, female masters share the power of the men, and exercise it against subaltern women and children in their households: “White women wielded the power of slave ownership. They owned slaves and managed households in which they held the power of life and death.”395

A second incorrect assumption is that women are always the helpless victims of patriarchy. Deniz Kandiyoti argued that in the Muslim Middle East, married women who were submitted to their fathers-in-law and their husbands, gained, as they got older and when they had sons, authority over their daughters-in-law. They accepted the subservient status as wives in a “bargain with patriarchy” that ultimately provided them with power over younger women in their household.396 Further research could shed light on the importance of the control they held of raising their children, and the children of women-daughters-in-law, but also servants and slaves.

The author of La Tunisie’s article blamed the violence committed by Mahbouba on the alleged forced idleness Islamic societies imposed on women in North Africa. While his interpretation fit the Orientalist model of innate Arab cruelty, it also fit within French perceptions of crimes committed by French women. In France, female crime (except for prostitution) rarely found its way to newspapers, tabloids and magazines. Mystery novels, which

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395 Glymph, 4. David Brion Davis briefly noted that women could also be perpetrators of sexual violence against male slaves. This subject is difficult to study because it tends to be absent from the sources. See David Brion Davis, “Slavery, Sex and Dehumanization,” in Sex, Power and Slavery, ed. Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), 44-46. In the Ottoman Empire, women’s power over slaves was not restricted to the household. Women could be slave dealers licensed by the State, intermediaries between markets and harems, as well as inspectors in slave markets. There, their jobs would include ensuring that traders were not hiding any flaws from the customers, such as health issues. See Zilfi, 201.
were becoming increasingly popular, almost never featured a female culprit. Abortion (illegal in France until 1975) and infanticides committed by mothers seldom became news material. In the rare cases where the papers mentioned female criminals, they claimed their actions stemmed from women’s alleged passions, such as love or jealousy, within their traditional roles of motherhood and wives. In that sense, the crime, though it was in itself a monstrosity, took place within women’s socially acceptable roles, which the journalists could understand even if they reproved them.\(^{397}\) The case of the women committing murder, torture and forced abortion against their slaves fell within the categories because they were acting to protect their interests as wives, or their children’s inheritance rights by eliminating potential rival heirs.

Though the press directly accused her of mistreating her slaves, Mahbouba’s social rank, as well as the Résidence’s determination not to alienate the local elites, protected her. The Résidence was determined to ensure that the victims maintained their silence. When the head of the State Section of the Ouzara expressed his desire to sue \textit{La Tunisie} for defamation, Regnault, the Secretary General of the Résidence, hesitated. He thought that one of the “dangers” of a defamation trial would be that it would require Suleyman, Mahbouba, and the six slaves to testify. In a letter to Ribot, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he asked: “wouldn’t these women, pressed by insidious questions, recognize having been the victims of corporal punishment? Corporal punishment is the only way to repress misdeeds committed by negroes, an inferior race in which moral ideas are little developed, and often, these punishments are not cruel.”\(^{398}\) This was nothing less than a recognition that Aisha and Djourha had told the truth, and that the other

\(^{397}\) Dominique Kalifa, \textit{L’encré et le sang: Récits de crimes et société à la Belle Epoque} (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 141-142.

\(^{398}\) MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890).
slaves had not revealed to the court the abuse they had endured at the hands of Suleyman and Mahbouba. Regnault also feared a trial would provide Jobard with a new opportunity to accuse the Résidence of protecting slavers. Nevertheless, he believed that if a trial took place, he could be “assured of [the French magistrates’] desire to punish the libelers.”\(^{399}\) This points to the connivance between the judiciary and executive powers in the Protectorate, in violation of the principle of the independence of the courts, a central tenet of French law which was not applied in France’s overseas territories. In the end, the Résidence decided not to instigate a defamation lawsuit, in order to avoid further scandal.\(^{400}\)

Mahbouba was not the only member of the royal family involved in the brutal mistreatment of slaves. Back in 1888, an article from *L’Avenir Algérien* had already shed light on another example of the central role of female masters in the violence against slave women and children. Aicha-Baya, another relative of the bey, and her son, Mohamad Raouf, who was the grandson of the former bey, lived in an opulent household of the capital, and owned six female slaves. In circumstances that the article did not detail, Aisha-Bey or her son manumitted one of their bond servants called Dadi. As soon as she was free, Dadi appealed to the highest authorities of the Résidence, and to the British consul in Tunis to urge them to free her former companions in servitude she had left behind. The French administrators in all probability refused to help her, since it was the British consul who intervened. After long delays, he freed three of the captives by virtue of the 1875 treaty between Great-Britain and the Regency. The other two prisoners

\(^{399}\) MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Regnault to Ribot (Tunis, March 5, 1890).
Ironically enough, Massicault, who had been a journalist before embarking on his political career, had guaranteed a large degree of freedom to the press in 1887, and had encouraged the proliferation of newspapers in the Regency. See Arnoulet, 32-33.

\(^{400}\) MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Letter from Massicault to Ribot (Tunis, April 14, 1890).
were so afraid of their masters that they stayed in the house for fear of retaliation. Such an action targeting high-ranking members of the elite deeply wounded their sense of pride. Aicha-Baya was so angry that she fell sick. The mother and son threatened to kill Dadi and the other freed women, who all went into hiding in the city.\(^{401}\)

The author of the press article was able to find them through a Jewish informant who knew the neighborhood where they were hiding. He followed his guide along streets that he did not identify in the article in order to protect the women. He only specified that the neighborhood was poor and the streets tortuous. The house where the women lived “looked like it was built with mud.”\(^{402}\) His description fit the model of Orientalist representations of Arab cities and would also satisfy his French readership’s fascination with “fashionable slumming.”  \(^{403}\) The journalist and his guide knocked on the door of the mud house, and an old black man answered. After the visitors promised him a monetary reward, he allowed them to speak to the three freed slaves. Their life stories illustrate the violence slaves experienced after abolition, as well as the constant...

\(^{401}\) The article by *L'Avenir Algérien*, dated January 23, 1888, was reprinted in two publications: *L'esclavage en Afrique par un ancien diplomate* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, Editeurs, 1890) and Pontois’ book. The name of the journalist is unknown. This chapter uses Pontois’ version of the article.

\(^{402}\) *L’Avenir Algérien*, quoted by Pontois, 155-159.


“Fashionable slumming” consisted of visits by members of the middle or upper classes in the most impoverished sections of Paris and London, where they explored the places the poor lived. These leisurely explorations also involved dining, drinking, and sometimes visiting prostitutes. Kalifa argued that in both France and Great Britain, reporters, missionaries, novelists and tourists explored poor urban neighborhoods because they were attracted by what they considered to be an exotic element of the urban landscape, or because they wanted to civilize the poor that they often assimilated to the savages of the colonies. People from regions they considered to be backwards, such as Brittany, were also in need of civilization. The parallel between the “savages” of the metropole and colonized people, which Kalifa briefly discusses in his book, deserves a larger place in the historiography of imperialism. On representations of European savages, see for example Marie-Pierre le Hir, ”Balzac’s Bretons: Racism and National Identity in Les Chouans,” in Timothy Raser, ed., *Peripheries of Nineteenth-Century French Studies* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 197-216.
threat that freed people could face from their former masters when they achieved liberation through European intervention instead of traditional Islamic manumission.

One of the freed slaves was a teenager (“dans la force de l’adolescence”). The article does not mention her name. She had worked for Aicha-Baya and her son for nine years, which indicates that she entered their household as a little child. She suffered from shoulder pains and nervous twitches, because of a severe beating she had received. Dadi, after her manumission, had stayed in touch with her, and had told her that by law, she had the right to demand her freedom. The girl expressed her desire to leave the house, and when Raouf heard about it, he hit her repeatedly with a stick, and then commissioned three men who worked for him to continue the beating. Her story shows that official abolition, while it could provide slaves with a path to their liberation, also endangered them when it did not provide effective protection from abuse when they expected their masters to abide by the law.

The second woman L’Avenir Algérien interviewed, Zina Hawsawiya, told a story that shed light on the tragic experiences of mothers and children caught between slavery and liberation. Before Aicha-Baya bought her, she was the slave of a government employee. She bore her master’s child, and since she was an Umm Walad, she was freed upon his death, and married to a soldier. Her son, who was born free, stayed with his father’s family. Whether it was her choice or whether the family (or her husband) had refused to let her take him, her liberation separated her from her child. The soldier she married tricked her into entering Aicha-Baya’s house by telling her she was visiting his parents. In reality, he had sold her (in violation of Islamic, French and Tunisian laws), and she remained a slave in that house for seven years. For a while, she was Raouf’s concubine and appears to have enjoyed a higher status than the other slaves. She bore
Raouf’s child who was born but did not survive for long. Then, Raouf tired of her, and relegated her to the kitchen. One day, an itinerant musician visited the house and was allowed to sleep in the servant’s quarters. The two had an affair (the sources do not tell us whether it was consensual or imposed on her by the musician), and after he had left, she discovered that she was pregnant.

Aicha-Baya was furious: her slave’s pregnancy cast a shadow on the morality of her family:

From that moment on, she (Zina’s mistress, Aicha-Baya) didn’t spend a day without inventing a new torture. And, surprisingly enough, the pregnancy followed its normal course. The poor soul was tied, laid on the back, and a matron vigorously whipped her belly; or she was forced to run and to jump up and down. The day when the pain of childbirth [began], the mistress demanded that her son had her beaten with a stick, and he obeyed. She wanted the punishment to continue until death followed, but the executioners got weary (se lassèrent). She heard her victim, left as dead, moaning in an obscure corner, and she asked that the gardener took her to the garden to bury her. Less cruel than her, Raouf refused… A poor little girl was born… Aicha sent someone to town to fetch a box of pins, and during several hours, she enjoyed (s’amusa) planting the white pins in the little black head of the newborn. When the child had spent in tears all the wretched life she had received from her mother, the princess threw her on the ground, seized her leg, put a foot on her neck and tore her head, then the pieces were thrown in the sewer.404

What this woman did to the little baby and her mother shows that the Islamic, French and Tunisian legal systems, which in principle all included mechanisms for slave protection, failed to safeguard the life and physical integrity of people imprisoned in elite households. The physical and psychological torture that Aisha-Baya inflicted on her two victims confirms Thavolia Glymph’s findings.

First, women just like men could own slaves and hold absolute power over them. Islamic law allowed women to own people as well as things. The Quran did not establish a distinction

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404 L’Avenir Algérien, quoted by Pontois, 159-163.
between male and female owners in regards to their power over their slaves. Patriarchal power structures in the home did not make violent acts by women less formidable and dangerous to slaves than the ones men committed. Moreover, in the household, female masters, who were in charge of domestic work, and therefore of domestic employees, spent more time than men with the female slaves. Since the place of work was also the place where they slept and ate, the slaves’ work as well as their private lives were under the direct supervision of their masters and mistresses, and they could incur punishment for either a perceived failure to accomplish their professional duties as well as violations of moral codes of behavior.

In some cases, the men tried to limit the violence, as when Raouf refused to bury Zina alive. Moreover, the degree of violence was not proportionate to the victim’s age. Female masters abused children as much, and sometimes more than they abused adults.\textsuperscript{405} The torture and murder of Zina’s baby shows that infants were not only in danger during the slave trade, but also in the homes of their owners.

While US historians have access to a much larger body of primary sources which allows them to tap on quantitative evidence MENA slavery scholars lack, the cases I study here suggest that we can also use available evidence to shed light on an important element of the history of gender and the family. This is particularly significant in a social context when slave ownership was very common among large sections of the population (not just the elite), in North Africa, but also in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. The cases studied here are limited to upper-class households, but this does not mean that less prominent families did not own slaves, and that women who were less privileged than Aicha-Baya were not involved in the disciplinary system.

\textsuperscript{405} Glymph, 36-39.
of slavery. Elites appear in the sources because they were able to appeal to the highest authorities to protect their slave-owning rights, and because their social visibility attracted the attention of diplomats and journalists, and, consequently, of historians. \[406\] Further research, such as the study of the Ouzara court records located in the Tunisian national archives, could provide a more comprehensive sketch of slavery and emancipation. Whereas the family connections between Aisha-Baya and the bey put her slaves in a particularly precarious situation and prevented them from obtaining justice, it is possible that judicial proceedings involving less prominent masters offered better chances of success to the plaintiffs.

Zina Hawsawiya survived her terrible ordeal, and through the intervention of the British consul, became free. But she feared for her life because Aicha-Baya and Raouf were looking for her. She knew that other slaves the consul had freed had been recaptured by their masters, and she was afraid the same thing would happen to her. Aicha-Baya and Raouf were not exceptional in their determination to catch slaves who had gained their freedom legally. As Liza Kozmat argued in her study of the emancipation period in Egypt, freed women in Cairo also lived under the threat of recapture, either by their former masters or by traders looking for human commodity. Women who, unlike Zina Hawsawiya, did not benefit from the protection of a network of freed people, were even more at risk. \[407\] Kidnapping by former masters or others was a constant threat for slaves in the United States during and after the Civil War as well. The law could guarantee the principle of freedom, but provide little, often unreliable, measures of


protection to captives when former owners decided not to abide by it. For slaves in North Africa as in the United States, memories and the enduring trauma of kidnapping in sub-Saharan Africa must also have had a deep resonance for people who had either been captured in their hometowns, or were the sons or daughters of kidnapping victims. Moreover, slaves who challenged their former masters were often victims of violence and attempts at intimidation, such as threats against themselves or their children. In that sense, the history of liberation is incomplete without detailed studies of the quotidian, concrete ways in which abolition decrees impacted people’s lives.408

Zina Hawsawiya appealed to the British consul again, this time hoping he would help her find her first-born child, whom she had left when she married the soldier after her manumission. According to the journalist, she wrote the consul a letter. It is unclear whether she was herself literate, and in which language, or whether she asked someone to write it for her. She said that her son was now twenty-two years old. If the consul found him, she would be able to go live with him, hopefully beyond the reach of her former masters. He could pay for her trip, or she would work to earn the money she needed to join him. 409

The separation of children from their parents was a frequent consequence of slavery. Slavery systems on both sides of the Atlantic permitted, in practice if not in principle, the sale of children away from their parents. Islamic law in theory did not allow children under the age of seven to be sold away from their mothers, but traders and owners frequently ignored the law. 410

408 Rothman, Loc 153, 1875 and 2245.
409 L’Avenir Algérien, quoted by Pontois, 159-160.
410 Zilfi, 254. Laws aiming to prevent owners from selling little children away from their mothers were passed in Louisiana (1829) and Alabama (1852). In practice, these legislative measures did nothing to protect enslaved families: the sellers could easily lie and say that the children they wanted to sell were
Moreover, as Zayna Hawsawiya’s case shows, separation from their children could be the price to pay for liberation. The documents do not tell how Zayna felt when her child was left behind, and research up to this point has not uncovered detailed cases of parents reclaiming their children in the Middle East and North Africa. But the historiography of American slavery, which relies on numerous memoirs, letters and oral history, highlighted the importance of family for the parents who were determined to reclaim their sons and daughters enslavers had stolen from them.\footnote{Rothman, Loc 1676.}

The article does not tell us whether Zayna Hawsawiyya’s quest was successful. Did she find her son? Was he still alive? Did he remember her? Did he accept to help and protect her? Did Raouf and Aicha-Baya catch her? All of the narratives included in this chapter come to an abrupt end when the media’s interest dies down. While the cases presented in this first section were not tried in a court of law, the case I examine in the following section of the chapter reached a tribunal. It shed light on the ways in which French administrators chose to understand abolition, and the impact it had on the lives of slaves and former slaves in Tunisia.

Jobard argued that as long as theProtectorate classified slaves from sub-Saharan Africa as Tunisians, they would have to bring their case to the Ouzara, where they had little chance of obtaining justice. If the Résidence Générale agreed to treat them as members of protected groups (such as Tunisian Christians), they would then be dependent on French courts instead of the Ouzara. The press echoed Jobard’s argument, based on the deeply grounded belief that French judges would be more sympathetic to the abolitionist cause than their Arab counterparts.\footnote{Jobard, L’Esclavage en Tunisie, 7 and Edouard Marbeau, “Monsieur Ribot et l’esclavage en Tunisie,” Revue française de l’étranger et des colonies 13 no. 117 (May 1, 1891): 514.}
case the next section addresses shows that French and Tunisian courts both had a vested interest in limiting the impact of abolitionist laws, thereby demonstrating that resistance to abolition in the MENA region was part of a larger phenomenon that transcended national, religious and cultural barriers.

D. Fathma

In 1884, Fathma, a little girl of ten, was waiting with other children in a discreet house somewhere in Tunis, carefully hidden away from the gaze of passers-by. After Ahmed Bey had outlawed slavery in the Regency in 1846, the official slave market had closed, but slave traders did not put an end to their business. They quietly relocated it, from a public venue to private quarters distributed all over the city, where men, women and children slave hunters had kidnapped in different regions of sub-Saharan Africa, continued to be sold for decades.

One of the clandestine clients of this market was Khelil Bournaz. He bought little Fathma and took her to his house, in the neighborhood of Sidi Abdelkader, where she stayed for six years, until Jobard heard of her case and got her out. The full name the court used for her was Fathma al-Bournouia. Slave names carried important cultural and social meanings that offer historians a framework to interpret the meager biographical information the sources reveal about Fathma. According to a journalist who based his account on information provided by her lawyer, she was born in the Lake Chad region of the Bornu Empire, a state that covered large stretches of modern-day Niger, Chad and Cameroon and was located on one of the most popular and
lucrative caravan routes linking the Sahara to North Africa. The fact that she was called al-Bournouia, a term which in Arabic designates a person from the Bornu, supports this account.\footnote{Marbeau, 513-523. “Al-Bournouia” is the feminine of “Al-Bournoi”, which designates a male from the Bornu.}

The sources do not tell us whether Fathma was the name her family or community had chosen for her upon her birth, or whether her captors had imposed it. The name was a popular one all through the Islamic world. Fatima was the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad and his first wife Khadija. She is to this day revered by both Sunnis and Shias, and many parents chose to call their children after her. In North Africa, popular belief associates good luck to her name—“hand of Fatima” or “Fatima’s eye” amulets often adorn people’s homes to keep the evil eye away.\footnote{Encyclopedia of Islam, 1979 ed., s.v. “Bornu.”}

The fact that she had a traditional Islamic name can indicate two things. She could have converted, or been forced to convert to Islam either by the traders or by her masters. Many people converted after their capture even though conversion did not force masters to free their slaves. They became Muslims because their owners forced them, or perhaps because they hoped to gain a better treatment (and possibly manumission in the future) if they became their masters’ coreligionists.

The second possibility was that she could have been born a Muslim and kidnapped by slave hunters regardless of the strict Qur'anic prohibition against the capture of fellow believers. There is a significant probability of this being the case: the rulers of the Bornu had been Muslim since at least the fifteenth century, and large segments of the empire’s populations had converted to
Islam beginning in the eighteenth century. Then, her enslavement would have been a violation of Islamic law.

The question was irrelevant in a French tribunal in 1890, because cases there were judged based on secular laws, but it was not irrelevant to the sense of self of enslaved people living in Tunisia. The reporter of *L’Avenir Algérien*, previously mentioned in this chapter described his encounter with a freed slave living with the other manumitted women in the old mud house in Tunis:

> Her manumission letter [delivered by the bey’s government, at the instigation of the British consul], based on what she says (because I could not have it checked by someone I trust who can read Arabic), includes an erroneous element, against which she protests energetically. This document calls her Khayra, daughter of Abdallah. This qualification is given […] to people whose father is unknown (Abdallah means servant of God). ‘But, she says, I was born free, to parents who were free and Muslim, and it is in violation of Islamic law that I was enslaved […]. My father’s name was Amor and was of Moroccan origin […]. My mother was called Fatma and her father was called Boubaker; he was from the Fezzan.’

This statement is powerful because her memory of who her parents and their parents were negates the “natal alienation” that both her enslavement and her emancipation by the bey had sought to impose. In addition to the manumission paper she received from the bey’s government, the British consul had granted her a similar document. He seems to have been more receptive to her own definition of her identity, because the papers were in the name of “Khayra, daughter of Amor”. She proudly showed the document to the journalist.

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415 Ibid.
416 *L’Avenir Algérien*, quoted by Pontois, 155-159.
417 *L’Avenir Algérien*, quoted by Pontois, 155-159.
Perhaps more than a denunciation of the general injustice of slavery, her words reflect the pride of her origins, as well as a strong sense of her perceived rightful place in the world, which should have protected her from both the humiliation and sufferings of enslavement. According to the testimonies of slaves Jobard collected in his notarized documents, the unlawful capture of Muslims by Muslims was a frequent occurrence, and enslaved women appealed to the bey’s government by using this religious argument.\textsuperscript{418} It is possible that some of them lied when they claimed to be born Muslim, and we do not have documents that would allow us to verify their claims. Moreover, the sources do not tell us whether Jobard succeeded in convincing the bey’s government to act in their favor.

As for young Fathma, regardless of her origins, she was too young to contest Bournaz’s claims of ownership over her, and she had to live in his house for six years. The Bournaz household was large. He was married (the sources do not tell us to how many women) and had several children. At least one of his sons, Moustapha, and one his grandsons lived under his roof. A freed slave, whose name has not reached us, was married to Moustapha. His wife’s mother had been enslaved in the same house until she died. By 1890, Fathma and two other women or girls

\textsuperscript{418} See Notarized acts n. 12 and 15, quoted by Jobard in \textit{L’Esclavage en Tunisie}, 28-31. The sources available to us do not allow us to verify whether Jobard’s clients’ claims regarding their religious identity were founded, but other sources indicate that a large number of Muslims were unlawfully captured and sold in Islamic lands. When Ahmad Bey outlawed slavery in 1846, he justified his decision partly by arguing that slave traders routinely captured Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa to sell them in Tunisia, in flagrant violation of Islamic law. See Montana, 102 and Ahmed bey, “Décret prescrivant l’affranchissement des esclaves et ordonnant des mesures pour ce faire.” As Joseph C Miller argued, to understand slaves as complex beings who were more than just their masters’ victims, we need to look at the ways in which they could “manipulate” others to obtain what they wanted. See Joseph C. Miller. “A Historical Appreciation of the Biographical Turn,” in \textit{The Early Modern Americas: Biographies and the Black Atlantic}, eds. Lisa Lindsay and John Wood Sweet (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 21.
(we do not know their age), called Hasna and Mabrouka, were captive in that house. Mabrouka was Moustapha’s concubine and had given birth to a child sometime not long before the end of October 1890.\(^{419}\) The relationships between the members of this household shed light on the intense physical and psychological violence of slavery, as well as on the personal networks that slaves were able to use to protect themselves from abuse and call for help.

Bournaz mistreated all the slaves on a regular basis. Fathma testified at the trial that he “beat her every day, without any reason, sometimes by kicking her, sometimes by hitting her with a stick. Other times he suspended her head down by her heels, and while she was in this position, he hit her on the sole of her feet with an olive branch.”\(^{420}\) She declared that Hasna and Mabrouka suffered from a similar treatment. While they survived their ordeal, others did not. At least one slave died at the hands of Bournaz. Her name was Khadija and was the mother of Moustapha’s wife. Jobard told the court that a year before the trial, Bournaz strangled her and made her body disappear. Bournaz protested that she had died of illness, and the judge chose to believe him and did not even mention the murder charge in the final verdict.\(^{421}\) All these acts of violence took place behind closed doors, in the personal space of a man’s family household where the State was reluctant to intervene.

In addition to the beatings, the women were subjected to recurring sexual violence. Because of the stigma attached to rape victims and the immense difficulties they face if they tried to

\(^{419}\) MAE Paris 205 CPCOM 634, Dossier Goguyer, “Demande de mise en liberté de trois esclaves” (Paris, October 6, 1890).
\(^{420}\) “Chronique de l’esclavage,” in *L’Afrique explorée et civilisée* 11-12 (1890): 140-141.
\(^{421}\) MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage Tunisie, Letter by A. Fabry, Prosecutor at the French tribunal of Tunis, to the Minister of Justice (Tunis, March 18, 1891); Roy, “Note au Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement Tunisien” (no date). See also Marbeau, 514.
denounce their tormentors, it is possible the court would never have heard about Fathma’s sexual abuse had she not been four months pregnant at the time of the trial. We do not know how old she was when the abuse began. She told the court that both Khelil Bournaz and his son assaulted her repeatedly, and she did not know which of them was the father.⁴²²

Though she did not denounce her tormentor in court, Mabrouka was also in all probability a victim of sexual violence. A French source described her as Moustapha’s “concubine.”⁴²³ Given the fact that she was beaten on a regular basis and that she was captive in the house, her relationship with him was based on a considerable degree of coercion, regardless of the advantages she might have been able to derive from her master’s interest in her.⁴²⁴ When she gave birth, Mustapha refused to recognize the paternity and wanted to kill the baby. His wife, who was a freed slave and the daughter of the woman Bournaz had strangled, tried to save the child. She called for help, and it appears that her actions precipitated the events that led to the trial.⁴²⁵

She contacted her sister, Zayna Hasna, who used to be enslaved in the same house and had left. According to French diplomatic notes, she now worked as a prostitute in the city. It is not clear whether she had absconded or obtained liberation papers through British intervention. As Moustapha’s sister-in-law, she was one of the very few outsiders who had access to the enslaved

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⁴²²  Marbeau, 513-514.
⁴²³  MAE Paris, 205 CPCOM 634 Dossier Goguyer, “Demande de mise en liberté de trois esclaves” (Paris, October 6, 1890).
⁴²⁴  Zilfi, 183-188; 198-199 and 205. Women and girls were not the only victims of sexual exploitation. Zilfi argued that in the Ottoman Empire, sexual violence against male slaves, including young boys, was not uncommon, even though it was against the law.
⁴²⁵  MAE Paris, 205 CPCOM 634 Dossier Goguyer, “Demande de mise en liberté de trois esclaves” (Paris, October 6, 1890).
women living in that house. One of her friends used to be a domestic worker at the service of Goguyer’s family. Zayna Hasna asked her friend to contact the court interpreter so that he could use his status as a French civil servant to alert the outside world to the crimes committed in that house and free the captive women.426

On October 20, just as he was about to embark on a trip to Paris, Goguyer heard the horrifying story from Zayna Hasna’s friend. He immediately contacted Gaston Jobard and upon his arrival to France, wrote a long report to the Résidence Générale, narrating in vivid details the torments Bournaz and his son inflicted on Fathma, Mabrouka and Hasna. On October 21, 1890, Jobard sent a letter to the secretary general of the Résidence to file an official complaint against Khelil Bournaz, accusing him of physically mistreating the three women and holding them in slavery, in violation of both French and Tunisian laws. In 1887 and again in 1890, in the wake of the scandal Jobard had initiated by requesting the punishment of Aisha’s and Djourha’s enslavers, the bey had issued anti-slavery legislation, which was presented as a reinforcement of Ahmed Bey’s abolition decree of 1846. But rather than providing a real recourse for enslaved people, these texts merely strengthened the humanitarian façade of colonial rule and, as Fathma’s case shows, failed to protect slaves from abuse. In Jobard’s words: “This decree which, really, changes absolutely nothing to the state of things, is a major mistake; it implicitly recognizes the existence of slavery in a country under our protectorate, because if it didn’t exist, why would this decree have been promulgated?”427

426 MAE Paris, 205 CPCOM 634 Dossier Goguyer, “Demande de mise en liberté de trois esclaves” (Paris, October 6, 1890).
427 Jobard, L’Esclavage en Tunisie, 7.
The secretary general of the Résidence narrated the events that followed in an administrative note. Upon receiving the letter, he sent three officials from the Ouzara to Bournaz’ house: a judge of the tribunal’s civil section, a clerk (chaouch), and a cavalry soldier. It is unclear whether Jobard was also present. Bournaz let them speak to two of the women (we do not know which ones). He said the third was away on one of his properties. The officials asked the women if they wanted to go to the tribunal immediately, but they refused, declaring they preferred to stay with their master. The note leaves many aspects of the visit in the dark. How did the three officials address the women? Did they speak to them respectfully? Did they specifically offer protection from retaliation? Was Bournaz present in the same room during the interrogation? Where was Mabrouka’s baby during the interview? Did the slaves believe that state officials had the power and the desire to protect them? Given that the conversation took place under Bournaz’s roof, and given the regime of terror he imposed in his house, it is unlikely they would have dared to express their real wishes while he was listening to them. Since he was a member of the municipal council of Tunis, he could have been personally acquainted with the officers of the law who came to his door, and the women could have been aware of that fact. Moreover, leaving with three strange men might have appeared to be a terrifying prospect. Nevertheless, Bournaz agreed to bring them to the Ouzara on the following day.  

He kept his word, and the Tunisian judge interrogated the three slaves during a court audience. The diplomatic notes do not specify whether Bournaz was present, but his victims were left alone with him for an entire night before the audition. He might have threatened to

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harm them if they denounced him. They also had no way of knowing whether the tribunal would force them to go back with him, or offer to let them free. Another possibility was that Mabrouka’s baby had been retained as a hostage and was used to blackmail her. Bournaz might also have threatened to hurt Moustapha’s wife if they spoke against him. The networks of family and friendship they had formed during their captivity empowered them to a certain extent, but could also make them vulnerable to intense psychological pressure.

At the court, Mabrouka and Hasna reiterated that they wanted to return to his house. Fathma said the same thing, but she began crying while making her statement. The judge pressed her with questions until she admitted that Bournaz mistreated her. This reinforces the possibility that Bournaz had pressured the slaves to lie to the court. The magistrate decided that she would not go back to her master’s house until the investigation had been completed. The sources say nothing more about Mabrouka and Hasna. In all probability, since the judge only retained Fathma, they went back to their life of captivity. In the meantime, the tribunal had established that Bournaz was originally from Algeria, which made him a French subject. As a result, the case was no longer under the jurisdiction of the Ouzara and was transferred to the French tribunal of Tunis.\(^ {429}\) From that moment, all the proceedings of the court fell under the direct control of Massicault and Ribot. Rather than basing his decisions on the existing anti-slavery legislation, the leading magistrate of the French court, Judge Geoffroy, followed the ministers’ instructions and allowed political interests as well as social and racial prejudice to prevail over the law.

\(^ {429}\) MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage Tunisie, Roy, “Note au secrétaire général du gouvernement tunisien” (date unknown).
From the beginning of the trial, Ribot and Massicault were intent on stopping Jobard’s efforts. They denigrated his ethics and the morality of his informants. To justify their reluctance to give Jobard any credit, they accused Zayna Hasna and her friend who alerted Goguyer of working as prostitutes (filles publiques) in Tunis: “It has been proven that he had drafted this denunciation given to him by a prostitute […] who worked as a domestic in a zaouia. She acted at the instigation of another prostitute named [Zayna] …”

Massicault used this argument to further damage the reputation of Jobard and his informants. He wrote to Ribot that the lawyer relied on information from “Sudanese prostitutes, who debauch [font métier de débaucher] their compatriots by luring them away from the houses where they work as domestics.”

Neither Jobard nor Goguyer mention that fact. Their silence could either mean that they did not want to shed doubt on their case because of the perceived immorality of their informants or that Ribot’s and Massicault’s accusations were unfounded.

Based on the details available in the diplomatic sources and in the press, it is impossible to tell with any certainty whether Zayna Hasna or her friend were indeed prostitutes. What we can do is explore the world in which freed female black slaves like them lived in Tunis, the types of activities they undertook to make a living, and the difficulties they faced. We can also reconstruct the mentality of the judge and the French administrators to understand how they

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430 MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage Tunisie, Letter from A. Fabry, prosecutor of the tribunal of Tunis, to the French Minister of Justice (Tunis, March 18, 1891).
432 Beginning in 1889, prostitutes working in Tunis had to register with the police, either as independent workers (filles en carte) or as employees of a brothel. Though registration was in principle obligatory, many women refused to abide by the law. It is possible that Massicault knew that Zayna Hasna was a prostitute because she was registered, but the sources do not provide any evidence to that effect. On the system of surveillance and control the French government sought to impose on prostitution in Tunis, see Christelle Taraud, *La prostitution coloniale: Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc* (Paris: Payot, 2003), 57-69.

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evaluated the testimonies from Zayna Hasna, Fathma, and the other women whose fate depended on them.

The greatest difficulty scholars encounter when studying the history of subaltern groups is the paucity of information in published and archival sources. The hundreds of documents I examined for this project only reveal snippets of information about the occupations of freed women in North Africa. Some authors refer to black women baking and selling little breads in the street. They also appear to have been launderers or masseuses in public baths.433 Moreover, a significant number might have tried to keep their former positions as domestics, since it was a job for which they had experience. Recent scholarship on the American South showed how, following the Civil War (1861-1865), former female domestic slaves had become salaried servants and laundresses, using their expertise to negotiate wages and work conditions they considered appropriate. No such research has yet been conducted for the Middle East and North Africa. We know that potential employers, both French and North African, tried to maintain or replicate the work conditions of slavery, for example by refusing to pay black workers the same wages as Arab or European maids. Glymph found evidence that after the Civil War in the United States, freed black women wanted to become salaried domestic servants on their own terms. Though they used the skills they acquired during their enslavement, they did not want their post-liberation lives to replicate the mechanics of domination white mistresses had sought to impose under slavery. An important concern was for them to be able to take care of their children while they held a job. Future research could perhaps shed light on the strategies freed women in North Africa used to ensure that their work as free

people did not reflect the conditions of their past enslavement. It would also be important to study their children’s contribution to the economic life of the emancipated family.  

In addition to domestic work, freed black women had recourse to prostitution to support themselves. We do not have statistics for the 1880s and 1890s, but Dalenda and Abdelhamid Larguèche studied police records from Tunis from the 1860s and estimated that 8% of the capital’s prostitutes were former slaves, a number that Christelle Taraud corroborated in her study of prostitution in the colonial Maghreb. Prostitutes worked in several neighborhoods of the city, including at the borders of the medina (the old Arab town). They often tended to work in or around religious centers called the zaouias.

A zaouia was originally the house where a saint resided. In the nineteenth century, zaouias had become religious centers that offered a space for theology students to live and study. Zaouias had provided, at least since the early nineteenth century, refuge for runaway slaves. The Tunisian police complained that they also harbored criminals and prostitutes, because they customarily offered a right of asylum (droit d'asile) that protected outlaws from the police. If Zayna Hasna lived in a zaouia, it is plausible that she was a prostitute, though the French civil servant’s accusation might be based more on zaouias’ reputation than on facts. That she was a domestic in a zaouia (a fact confirmed by Goguyer) might also have reinforced the French civil servant’s assumptions. Alain Corbin noted the connections between domestic work and

434 Glymph, 168-170 and 173.  
435 Larguèche and Larguèche, Marginales, 82. The Larguèches’ estimate is based on a sample of 200 prostitutes they studied. In addition to the former slaves, they found that 22.5% of the women were from the countryside, 21% from Tunis, and 5% were Jewish (17.5% were unidentified).  
436 Montana, 97.  
437 Larguèche and Larguèche, Marginales, 67-70.
prostitution. To make ends meet, maids working for rich bourgeois families in metropolitan France frequently had recourse to prostitution, or submitted to the often unwanted advances of their male employers. As a result, there developed in the literature and scientific studies of the period an image of the domestic worker leading a double life as an immoral prostitute. Moreover, this accusation expressed a deeply ingrained social fear, which would have exacerbated hostility towards a person considered to be a prostitute. In the late 1880s and 1890s the dread of venereal disease intensified in France and led to an increased demonization of prostitutes, whom physicians accused of spreading syphilis. The illness caused anxieties related to fears of perceived biological and social degeneration, in connection to declining birth rates. In metropolitan France, while in reality clients were also responsible for spreading the disease to the women they patronized, as well as to their own wives and children, physicians, lawmakers, bureaucrats and the police tended to exclusively assign the blame to prostitutes. Since no effective treatment for the illness was available, the authorities focused on prophylaxis to avoid contagion. To control the spread of syphilis, as well as to safeguard public morality, they put in place a system of control and repression, staffed by doctors, policemen, judges and prison wardens. Prostitutes had to register with the authorities and pass weekly medical examinations.

438 Corbin, Women for Hire, 206-207. Emile Zola, in his famous novel entitled Pot-Bouille, denounced the sexual exploitation of female domestic servants by their employers in nineteenth-century Paris, as well as the abandonment or killing of the children born of these unequal relations. See Emile Zola, Pot-Bouille (Paris: G. Charpentier et Cie, 1882).

439 Nineteenth-century scholars published studies comparing the anthropometric characteristics of prostitutes and “honest” women, concluding that the women who chose a life of “debauchery” shared physical characteristics that other women did not possess. See for example Pauline Tarnowski, Etude anthropométrique sur les prostituées et les voleuses, avec huit tableaux anthropométriques et vingt dessins (Paris: E. Lecrosnier et Babé, 1889).
in order to gain and maintain the right to work legally. When doctors diagnosed them with a venereal disease, they had to accept treatment in penitentiary hospitals.\textsuperscript{440}

This disciplinary system was based on a series of regulations promulgated by the executive power rather than by the legislative assemblies, and as a result were not part of the Penal Code. Women who were either arrested for prostitution or forcibly sent to the dispensary because they suffered from a venereal disease did not benefit from the legal protections the law in principle afforded all citizens in a republic. Moreover, the police regularly organized raids in known prostitution locales without the sanction of a court of law. Upon their arrest, the prostitutes did not even see a judge in a court of law: prostitution cases were managed by the police and the doctors, outside of the framework of the law. Local authorities were in charge of applying these rules, at the departmental and municipal level. Massicault, as a former prefect, would have been part of the repressive system that targeted prostitutes in metropolitan France.\textsuperscript{441} Moreover, Ribot, who was part of social reformist circles in France, was a member of the Société Générale des Prisons, which, influenced by the Catholic Church, sought to both control and moralize marginal members of society.\textsuperscript{442} For both Massicault and Ribot, Zayna Hasna would represent the type of


\textsuperscript{441} Jill Harsin, \textit{Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century}, 3-7, 20-25, 80-90. Even the French movement against the trafficking of women, which gained prominence in the early twentieth century and was influenced by the Catholic Church, aimed more at the moralization of society than the protection of the women themselves. See Limoncelli, 112-132

\textsuperscript{442} Kaluszynski, 164-165.
woman they feared: a member of a marginalized group who had rejected the legislative and moral constraints they strove to establish, and who defied them in public.

As soon as they began the military conquest of Algeria in 1830, the French sought to regulate prostitution by imposing a disciplinary system similar to the metropole’s. The government’s priority was to protect soldiers from venereal diseases, which could contaminate the military through prostitutes who had either emigrated from Europe or were part of the native population, including slaves and former slaves. The regulation of colonial prostitution was a common practice in European empires, where the States wanted to guarantee their soldiers access to women while protecting their health.443

Christelle Taraud argued that the French exported both the metropolitan regulatory apparatus and the negative images of prostitutes when they took Algeria and Tunisia. Until the nineteenth century, prostitutes in North Africa were skilled entertainers, who, in addition to providing sexual services, were trained musicians, singers and dancers, and participated in the social and artistic life of their communities. They animated parties during weddings, or took part in public feasts and carnivals. An Ottoman administrative official, the mezouar, supervised and taxed their work, which, according to Taraud, was not shameful in pre-colonial societies.444 All of these factors could have informed Massicault and Ribot’s assumptions about Zayna Hasna and would resonate with his French interlocutors.

443 Taraud, 56-66. The Quran categorically forbade masters from prostituting their slaves (the master was the only man who had the right to benefit from a slave’s sexual services. When several men shared a woman’s ownership, none of them was entitled to her sexual services). But masters frequently violated the Quran’s anti-prostitution law. For a comparative study of regulation in European empires, see Limoncelli, 11-15.
444 Taraud, 46-49.
Regardless of the professions the freed women adopted, the documents clearly indicate that liberation, either through traditional Islamic manumission or through the modern anti-slavery legislation, did not necessarily break the links between women who had been enslaved together, even though all the odds appeared to be against them. Their enslavement would have already separated most of them from their kin. During the voyage from their homeland to their final destination, even if they had been abducted with neighbors or family members, they often lost sight of them because many died en route, or were sold separately. As for the social and family ties they established while they were enslaved, they could be very precarious, since the masters were at liberty to separate family members by selling them. By law, a master’s right over his or her slave weighed more than the slave’s status as a mother (only children under a certain age, could not, by law, be sold away from their mothers) or as a wife.445

The experiences of enslaved or freed slaves who had been separated from their husbands illustrate the strength of solidarity networks between women. According to a report by Regnault, enslaved women married to another slave, or to a free servant, often brought divorce cases in front of the local judge (cadi). Though Regnault explained high divorce rates among slave women as a consequence of immorality among inferior classes, he also wrote that marriages could break because of physical abuse by the husband, or because servants could be fired from the house. If a male servant was fired, and his wife was a slave with the same employer, she did not have the right to leave without the master’s authorization. Freed black women responded to the personal distress and socio-economic hardship of marital separation by creating houses for divorced women all over the Regency. Under the leadership of a wealthy woman named Charifa, these places offered...
temporary shelter and food. Charifa also strove to find the women jobs to support themselves.\textsuperscript{446} Regnault’s report was the only mention I found of these houses, and further research could shed more light on this important aspect of women’s history in Tunis: how many women found refuge there? How old were they? Were they able to take their children with them? How long could they stay? Until we discover new sources, the story of the women who had been enslaved by Bournaz shows that despite these obstacles, their captivity within a household created strong links that provided a counterbalance to the power of the enslaver.

We left Fathma in the French court, after her two former companions of captivity, Hasna and Mabrouka, had returned to the house with Khelil Bournaz. In Tunis, there were no refuge houses for women in Fathma’s situation, who had lost their shelter because their enslaver had to face a trial. The French authorities decided that during the trial, she would stay in prison. They incarcerated her in Dar El Adl (the house of justice, in Arabic), a penitentiary institution for women located on Kasbah Street in Tunis.\textsuperscript{447} The sources do not tell us whether such a punitive measure against victims was common during slavery trials.

While she was in jail, she underwent abortion attempts. The sources do not reveal who was responsible for these attempts, what methods they used, or whether they were successful.\textsuperscript{448} Forced abortions on slaves were not uncommon, because the slave herself was often the only

\textsuperscript{446} MAE Paris, Letter from Regnault to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tunis, February 5, 1890). Historian Matthew Hopper’s study of divorce court records in the Gulf suggested that slave marriages were often unsuccessful and ended in divorce because they were frequently imposed by the masters. See Mathew Hopper, “Slavery, Family Life and the African Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf,” in \textit{Sex, Power and Slavery}, 171.

\textsuperscript{447} MAE Paris, Dossier Esclavage en Tunisie, Article from \textit{Le National} (article’s title and author unkown, March 11, 1891).

\textsuperscript{448} Marbeau, 515.
person who wanted her child to be born. Recent historiography showed how the laws designed to protect the *Umm Walad* were difficult, sometimes impossible to apply in reality. The male owner who fathered the baby could be unwilling to take on the financial or moral responsibility of an additional child, or could not want to publicly recognize his relationship with the mother by granting her the title and the benefits of an *Umm Walad*. The master’s wife (or wives) also had a vested interest in terminating the pregnancy. They could either want to protect the financial interests of their own offspring, or prevent a rival from rising in status. It is also possible that Fathma herself wanted to terminate her pregnancy. The *Umm Walad* status was irrelevant in French law and did not offer her any advantages. It is also possible she did not want to carry her rapists’ child and hoped to put an end to a pregnancy she had not chosen.

In January, after the young victim had spent over three months behind bars in Dar El Adl, the court reached a verdict. Bournaz was sentenced to pay a fine of 100 FF and 200 FF of damages to her as a compensation for the physical mistreatment. The judge did not include the sexual assaults in his verdict. To understand how he could have overlooked the rape accusation, we need to think about the moral framework in which he operated. As Alain Corbin argued, the “threshold” of what people perceived as acceptable sexual behavior changed over time, and to

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449 Zilfi, 163 and 180-181. Moreover, Zilfi argued that the ability of the Umm Walad to enjoy her freedom depended on her master’s generosity: if he had left her money or property, she would be able to be independent in addition to being legally free. But if he had taken no financial measures in her favor, she would remain dependent on his family or on charity.

450 Toledano, *As if Silent and Absent*, 86-87. Toledano documented two cases of forced abortions, one in Damascus and the second in Cairo. In the Cairo case, the owner’s wife hit the pregnant slave to induce an abortion (or possibly tried to use herbs that induced a miscarriage).

study the meaning of violence in a certain context, we have to analyze the events based on what the protagonists considered to be legitimate relationships between family members and husband and wife.\textsuperscript{452} The status of the concubine slave was a grey area between a spouse and a domestic. In France, where the judge was from, marital rape was not a crime punishable by law, and domestics were routinely subjected to their male employers’ sexual advances. In that sense, the dismissal of the sexual abuse charges were compatible with accepted social norms. The sources do not indicate what happened to the child she carried, and Fathma herself soon disappeared from the historical record.

After the trial, Ribot and Massicault were determined to make both Goguyer and Jobard pay a dear price for their open defiance of government policies by ruining their professional careers. In June of 1892, the ministry of foreign affairs sent the Tunis prosecutor an urgent telegram accusing Goguyer of being involved in the National’s media campaign, and asking him for his opinion about the possibility of firing him. The last two words of the telegram, “extremely urgent” highlight the importance that the minister attributed to the matter. On the same day, Massicault received a letter informing him that the tribunal of Tunis “in according with [his] wishes, was willing to displace Mr. Goguyer from his position as judiciary interpreter and to replace him with Mr. Scembri…”\textsuperscript{453} After his dismissal, the government continued to monitor his activities. In September, Massicault informed the minister that Goguyer had declined a job


\textsuperscript{453} MAE Paris, 205 CPCOM 634 Dossier Goguyer, Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Résidence Générale (Paris, June 28, 1890).
offer in Algeria and intended to stay in Tunis as a freelance translator, in order to pursue his “opposition campaign.”

They did not fire Jobard, but kept him under close police surveillance. When he requested a promotion, the Résidence refused to grant it. The diplomatic correspondence clearly indicates that the refusal was a direct consequence of his involvement in anti-slavery activities. Three years after the trial, though both Massicault and Ribot had ended their term in office, the French government maintained a strong stance against him. He represented the interests of Tunisian and European businessmen who were hoping to establish a real estate bank in Greece. While processing the request, the Greek attaché in Paris wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ask for information on Jobard. The Ministry forwarded the request to the Residency. The answer shows that both Jobard and Dazet, who had assisted Jobard in the trial, were still on a black list: the Resident wrote that Jobard had neither money nor a large clientele, and that Mr. Dazet’s “attitude had been severely evaluated by the Tunis Bar, which he had to leave over a year earlier.”

Ribot’s and Massicault’s anger and retaliation against Goguyer, Jobard and Dazet is symptomatic of more than a personal vendetta. The three Frenchmen who had denounced the perpetuation of slavery on French soil had cast a shadow on the legitimacy of empire. This was particularly significant in the context of the Brussels conference, when the world powers were publicly expressing their commitment to the anti-slavery cause. Scandal in the colonies questions

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454 MAE Paris, 205 CPCOM 634 Dossier Goguyer, Letter from Justin Massicault to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Tunis, September 5, 1890).
455 MAE Paris, 205 CPCOM 637, Dossier Jobard, Letter from Charles Rouvier to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tunis, June 14, 1893).
the raison d’être of empire. When the minister, the Résident general, and the officers of the court responded to accusations, they were defending their personal reputations but also their country’s right to rule Tunisia. The publication of Les Odeurs de Tunis and of Le National’s articles, echoed by widely read periodicals such as La Revue des deux mondes or Le Figaro, challenged the morality of French colonialism. The French public viewed colonial violence as the rational and heroic work of their national army against hordes of savages who opposed the civilizing work of Europeans in Asia or Africa. French civil servants and officers of the court cautioning the torture of innocent women and children did not fit within this model. These types of scandals threaten the us versus them binary that was at the heart of colonial legitimacy. If a French judge did not consider that abusing innocent, defenseless women and children was a crime, then how were French people different from their Muslim subjects whose treatment of females the colonizers deemed un-modern and cruel? This question also contributed to defining France’s role in the concert of nations. Since the British consul was regularly freeing slaves and the Résidence was not, it meant that Her Majesty’s Government was gaining preeminence as a colonial power over France in France’s own territory. Marbeau’s article in La Revue des Deux Mondes and Pontois’ passionate anti-slavery plea in his book framed their argument in moral terms, but also in the name of France’s national honor, accusing the Résidence of betraying it. In other words, the scandal that concerned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Résidence Générale was not just about Aisha, Djourha and their companions in captivity or about the personal enmity

between Massicault and Jobard, but it was symptomatic of the irreconcilable contradictions of colonialism.

**E. CONCLUSION**

Ehud Toledano defined the relationship between slaves and their owners as “an instance of patronage, that is, essentially, a bond of reciprocity between unequal participants.” In the late nineteenth century, a number of possibilities were available. The slave could stay with the master, either because he or she could not envision an attainable better alternative. The slave could decide to escape because the owner mistreated them and they wanted to use their escape to negotiate better conditions. Others escaped because they wanted to become free people. In either case, when slavery became illegal, the state began replacing the owner as the slave’s patron, through the actions of its representatives like the police or the judges, who in many ways took over the “wardship” of the freed person. This was the case because the slaves themselves realized that the state had power over the slave owners. The state could force the owners to be accountable when they broke the law, even when the illegal actions took place in the sanctity of the family. Even when the state did not abide by its own laws, the fact that they could at least be heard empowered them immensely. In the judiciary cases I study here, the State failed to fulfill its protective role and slaves in search of liberation or justice had to look elsewhere for protection. They turned to the British consul, who, through the 1875 treaty, was able to force the bey and the French to free over a thousand persons. They also turned to their own community, for protection, shelter, information and employment.

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These judicial affairs shed light on an important contribution of colonial studies by showing that colonial relationships sometimes escape the collaboration-resistance binary. While the indigénat was one of the most powerful and efficient instruments of colonial oppression, the colonized learnt how to use it to protect their own interests. All of the actors involved in the trials, Fathma, Aisha, Bournaz, Princess Aisha, her husband and the other slave owners, had recourse to the system in different ways. The organization of the judiciary system in Tunisia had a deep impact on social life.459

The cases studied in this chapter can enrich the historiography of empire, which emphasizes the plurality of experiences under colonialism and challenges the traditional binaries of resistance versus collaboration, and that of victims versus oppressors. As Mary Lewis argued in Divided Rule, the tensions between Europeans and Tunisians only “told part of the story.”460 Colonized people used the system the French put in place to further their interests, and to perpetuate systems of oppression that predated colonialism. In that sense, the French conquest did install new mechanics of exploitation, notably through the indigénat, but also built on and reinforced existing inequalities. The ways in which the French and local dual court system functioned illustrates this dynamic. Historians of Africa have based their challenges to the binary interpretations of colonialism on the following sets of arguments. First, though colonialism was based on brutal force and a striking technological superiority, Africans were not powerless. They learnt to use the power structures of colonialism to their advantage when it was possible. They chose either collaboration or resistance to further their ends, and sometimes the same person or

459 Lewis, 8.
460 Lewis, 8.
group navigated between resistance and collaboration if a shift of allegiances furthered their interests. Beyond ideological principles and identity politics, resistance and collaboration were “rational calculations.” These, in turn, had a determining impact on European policies in the colonies. Julia Clancy-Smith and Mary Lewis’ detailed studies of Tunisian society under the Protectorate showed how it escapes the binary model by looking at the fluidity of allegiances and at the connections between people’s everyday lives and the institutions of colonialism, such as the judicial system.

CONCLUSION

Charles Dickens wrote about one of the most beloved characters of nineteenth century British literature:

What an excellent example of the power of dress Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society. But now that he was enveloped in the old calico robes which had grown yellow in the same service; he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once - a parish child - the orphan of a workhouse – the humble, half-starved drudge - to be cuffed and buffeted through the world – despised by all, and pitied by none.462

If a French translation of the book had been available at the Institut’s small library, or on the bookshelves of rich slave owning households in Tunis, this passage would have resonated with the freed boys in Malta, and with Fathma, Aisha and Djourha, though they were living half a century and a continent away from Oliver Twist and his companions in misery. The similarities between exploited little European children and African slaves was perceptively noted by a young boy whose father auctioned his labor to the highest bidder at a fair for farm hands in Great

462 Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist (London: E. Chapman Publisher, 1905), 3. Similarly, in France, the Assistance Publique provided abandoned children with clothes which were all of the same cut and fabric, and were often too small, too big, or in such poor condition that they clearly marked them as children of the Assistance and subjected them to mockeries and bullying from other students when they went to school. Teachers could also discriminate against abandoned children and expose them to public humiliation by refusing to give them a desk or the books they needed. See Fuchs, Abandoned Children, 251-252. The plight of abandoned children marked popular culture through the publication of novels by some of France’s most talented writers during the period covered by the dissertation. See Victor Hugo, Les Misérables (Albert Lacroix, Verboeckhove and Cie, 1862), Sophie Rostochine (Countess of Ségur), Un bon petit diable (Paris: Hachette, 1865); Alphonse Daudet, Le Petit Chose (Paris: Hetzel, 1868); Victor Hugo, L’homme qui rit (Bruxelles: Albert Lacroix, 1869); Hector Malot, Sans famille (Paris: Eugène Dentu, 1878), Jules Vallès, L’Enfant (Paris: Georges Charpentier, 1878), Hector Malot, En famille (Paris: Flammarion, 1893), Jules Renard, Poil de Carotte (Paris: Flammarion, 1894).
Britain: “Before I left home I had read Uncle Tom’s Cabin and when I saw us all lined up … I remember thinking it was the same in England as in America, bar the whip.”

In North Africa, these experiences were defined by the strong internal contradictions that characterized the formal abolition of slavery in the French Empire in 1848. While it marked a fundamental juridical rupture with the past, abolition solidified and ensured the continued justification of the concepts that had been at the heart of slavery. The structural and ideological connections between policies towards marginalized people in France and slaves in the colonies reinforced these justifications, and shaped the emancipation process. This reinforcement was possible because both the colonial and the indigenous elites shared an interest in the perpetuation of servitude. Moreover, their actions during the trials give credence to Ira Berlin’s observation on American slavery holds true for slave owners as well as for the administrators who were in principle in charge of implementing the abolition decree: “Slave owners treated their slaves with extreme callousness and cruelty at times because this was the way they treated all subordinates, whether indentured servants, debtors, prisoners of war, pawns, peasants, or simply poor folks.”

Ehud Toledano contended that Muslim slave owners viewed abolitionism as an extension of imperialism, and staunchly resisted it as yet another encroachment on their lives and religion. While this argument partially explains why there was never an indigenous abolitionist movement in any Islamic society in the Middle East and North Africa, it obscures an important aspect of the emancipation process. It emphasizes the dichotomy between Muslim slave owners and Western

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463 Quoted by Jane Humphries, in *Childhood and Child Labor in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 220.
464 Berlin, 8.
465 Toledano, *As if Silent and Absent*, 16.
abolitionists, failing to leave space to explain what happened when slave owners and colonial powers collaborated to circumvent anti-slavery laws. Whereas in principle, slave owners and colonial powers were on opposing sides, in reality, on the ground, they often stood together against pro-abolition activists.

By looking at these complicated allegiances, my dissertation contributes to the remarkably thin field of subaltern studies in the MENA. While social history has been an important feature of the literature since the 1960s, scholars tend to investigate the actions of the State and the elites, and their impact on those whose social or economic standing, or their gender, put in a subaltern position. History from below has remained in the field’s margins. The difficulty of accessing archives, which has been exacerbated since the Arab Spring, partly accounts for this dearth. The social history of the MENA rapidly gave way to cultural history, which, because of its sources and methods, often focuses on the elites. In a parallel development, the social history of women gained prominence in the field in the 1970s, but was soon overshadowed by gender studies, a genre that tends to emphasize cultural over social history, and to neglect the economic dimension of people’s lives. Moreover, by placing emphasis on authoritative texts, such as the rich bodies of Islamic legal literature, scholars have generally embraced a top to bottom vision of history that leaves little space to understand the divergence between the texts and the reality they represent.466

At the same time as these historiographical developments were taking place, the critiques of Orientalism, spearheaded by the publication of Edward Said’s seminal book in 1978, shook MENA studies to the chore. In the past four decades, scholars have shown how colonialism assigned negative characteristics to the region and its inhabitants to justify the political and economic domination of Europeans, and that these myths survived decolonization and still permeate the literature. Historians have strived relentlessly to rectify factually incorrect and ideologically loaded narratives that have portrayed Arabs, Turks, Iranians, and others as irrational, innately violent people who opposed science, despised work, and were incapable of building efficient governments and economies.467

An important element of this reconceptualization of the scholarship was the assignment of agency to the people who lived in the region during the period of European colonization. Ottoman and local rulers designed strategies to enhance agricultural production and develop trade. They built strong bureaucracies and armies to (sometimes successfully) compete with European powers. High school and university graduates in Istanbul, Cairo, Tunis, or Beirut used their access to European (including missionary) education to promote their personal and their communities’ interests in a world dominated by the French, the British, and the Italians. Women could engage in trade, participate in anti-colonial politics, and take their husbands to court when they needed to protect themselves or their children. In other words, historians have argued that colonized people were not powerless and framed their agency in the context of resistance to economic, political, military, social or cultural oppression.468

468 Baron, 551-552.
Without undermining the importance of these historiographical contributions, recent forays by MENA scholars into subaltern studies, through the investigation of the specific ways in which colonized people exercised this agency, shed light on uncomfortable truths. As the innovative research of Stephanie Cronin, Beth Baron, Sarah Ghabrial, and others have pointed out, the agency of the subaltern did not always take the form of resistance against their oppressors: agency could unfold through cooperation and negotiation with the powerful, and, at times, through the oppression of weaker members of society.\[^{469}\] In that sense, Frederick Cooper’s interpretation of African history is valid for the MENA:

with Africa’s independence, historians were strongly moved to find a domain that could be defined as unambiguously African and resistant to imperialism. In the historiography of subaltern studies, the clarity of such categories is questioned, but they keep coming back in the very concept of the subaltern. […] The possibility that the very meanings and subalternity could be undermined should be kept open.\[^{470}\]

At the same time, the violence perpetrated by the colonizers against the colonized finds its root in the politics and economics of imperialism in its multiple geographical and chronological iterations, but also in the internal dynamics of metropolitan society. By creating a narrative that situates the history of children, slavery and emancipation within these trans-regional frameworks, my dissertation suggests that the power struggles between colonized and colonizers do not capture the full complexity of people’s lives.

Without deemphasizing the deeply unsettling and profoundly violent impact of colonialism, this dissertation contributes to the historiography by arguing that even though they became subalterns in the colonial relationship, colonized people did not cease to be oppressors in other categories. In the same way, the colonial power struggles do not capture the full density of the colonizers’ lives. Beyond the colonial encounter, colonizers and colonized people were also adults who abused children, men who exploited women, masters and mistresses who owned and hurt their slaves. The dynamics of slavery and emancipation did not originate solely in the macro-context of European imperialism, but also within the complex evolution of institutions in the Atlantic world, as well as in the smaller, important, and multifaceted world of people’s daily life, north and south of the Mediterranean Sea.
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