

An Empire of Facts

An Empire of Facts presents a fascinating account of the formation of French conceptions of Islam in France's largest and most important colony. During the period from 1870–1914, travelers, bureaucrats, scholars, and writers formed influential and long-lasting misconceptions about Islam that determined the imperial cultural politics of Algeria and its interactions with republican France. Narratives of Islamic mysticism, rituals, gender relations, and sensational crimes brought unfamiliar cultural forms and practices to popular attention in France, but also constructed Algerian Muslims as objects for colonial intervention. Personal lives and interactions between Algerian and French men and women inflected these texts, determining their style, content, and consequences. Drawing on sources in Arabic and French, this book places such personal moments at the heart of the production of colonial knowledge, emphasizing the indeterminacy of ethnography, and its political context in the unfolding of France's empire and its relations with Muslim North Africa.

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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-51654-9 — An Empire of Facts
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An Empire of Facts

*Colonial Power, Cultural Knowledge,
and Islam in Algeria, 1870–1914*

George R. Trumbull IV

Dartmouth College



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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CAMBRIDGE
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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521516549

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First published 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Trumbull, George R., 1977–

An empire of facts : colonial power, cultural knowledge, and Islam in Algeria, 1870–1914 / George R. Trumbull IV.

p. cm. – (Critical perspectives on empire)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-51654-9 (hbk.) – ISBN 978-0-521-73434-9 (pbk.)

1. Algeria – Foreign public opinion, French. 2. Islam – Public opinion – History. 3. Public opinion – France – History. 4. Ethnology – Political aspects – France – History. 5. Islam – Algeria – Historiography. 6. Algeria – Colonial influence – Historiography. 7. Algeria – Ethnic relations – Historiography. 8. Political culture – Algeria – Historiography. 9. Algeria – Relations – France – Historiography. 10. France – Relations – Algeria – Historiography. I. Title. II. Series.

DT287.5.F8T78 2009

965'.03–dc22 2009028173

ISBN 978-0-521-51654-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-73434-9 Paperback

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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-51654-9 — An Empire of Facts
George R. Trumbull IV
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For my parents,
George R. Trumbull III and Lynda M. Trumbull,
and my sister, Melissa I. Trumbull,
for their love and support.

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Acknowledgments

The years I spent on this book, I passed in a series of places new and old. The streets of New Haven, New Orleans, and New York framed this book, and in these places I incurred many intellectual debts. I wrote most of the dissertation, and much of the book, in Old Saybrook, where the debts I incurred were more personal but no less important. As I write these words, I embark on another new destination, in New Hampshire, and I greatly appreciate the confidence of my new colleagues in my work.

My dissertation committee enthusiastically and supportively oversaw a dissertation whose scope at times seemed daunting, and which forms the basis of this book. I owe a particular debt to John Merriman, who, in advising this dissertation, allowed me the freedom to develop it after my own fashion. His guidance preserved me from errors, both great and small, in interpretation and in methodology, and I learned much from the example of his diligent commitment to archival research. At Yale, I benefited greatly from the intellectual community of historians of the Francophone world that he fostered, and I remain in his debt for my six years under his tutelage.

Abbas Amanat's insistence on both the commonalities and the historical specificities of various parts of the Islamic world ensured that I kept both local and regional perspectives in balance. His interest in religion, politics, and cultural exchange across the Islamic world proved invaluable in the elaboration of my own thoughts throughout my graduate career. I thank him for his support for the project and for my development as a scholar of the Islamic world.

Christopher L. Miller's theoretical and meticulous scholarship provided the intellectual inspiration for this project. His devotion to truly interdisciplinary work in Francophone studies remains the model to which I look for my own work. Equally importantly, without his cogent critiques and kind words of encouragement, my dissertation would have proved a far more arduous task, and probably an impossible one. I am most grateful for his commitment to theory, for his belief in my project,

and for the rigorous and considerate feedback he gave me from its very inception.

Julia Clancy-Smith proved the most present long-distance committee member I could ever have hoped to find. Her challenging queries and enthusiastic comments helped to mold this book. In particular, I thank her for helping me avoid gross errors of bibliographic omission, for her belief in the relevance of this project to Middle Eastern Studies, and for the high standards her scholarship has set for all who work in French colonial studies. She understood my attempts to make this a dissertation as relevant to North Africa as to France, and consistently pointed out ways I could do so more fruitfully.

Jay Winter, Stuart Schwartz, Jon Butler, Glenda Gilmore, Valerie Hansen, Paul Kennedy, Ben Kiernan, Stuart Schwartz, Frank Turner, and Jay Winter all freely shared their time and guidance in New Haven and beyond, and I thank them for their efforts.

I have benefited from an intellectual community of mutually supportive and brilliant scholars. I owe the greatest debt to Charles P. Keith, who read the majority of the words here (often from many time zones away), and discussed virtually all of these ideas with me over the past several years. His intellectual commitment to a sustained, critical scholarship of French colonialism and his never-flagging good cheer have inspired me at difficult moments. I thank him for his intellectual camaraderie, and I look forward to reading his own book in the near future. Kate Cambor provided companionship in New Haven, France, and New York, sharing her keen sense of humor and offering the shining example of her brilliance. Without her, graduate school and life after would have seemed far darker and far more difficult. I read more widely, wrote more fluently, and spoke more knowledgeably because of her example and her constant encouragement. My writing group, Katherine Mellen Charron, Claire Nee Nelson, and Adriane D. Lentz-Smith, provided me with critical ears, supportive words, and more intellectual companionship than any scholar has a right to expect in his entire career, let alone over a few years in graduate school.

I have found outstanding colleagues at many places in my academic career, among them Jennifer Boittin, Geraldo Cadava, Janet Chen, Rachel Chrastil, Catherine Dunlop, the Faillard family, Elizabeth Foster, Gretchen Heefner, Tammy Ingram, Caroline Kelly, Leah Mancina Khaghani, James Lundberg, Kenneth Loiselle, Julia Ott, John Warne Monroe, Jocelyn Olcott, Rebecca Rix, Katherine Scharf, Rebecca L. Slitt, and Helen Veit in New Haven and beyond; Rosanne Adderley, Victoria Allison, George Bernstein, Donna Denneen, Kenneth Harl,

xii Acknowledgments

Dick Latner, Tom Luongo, Colin MacLachlan, Jennifer Neighbors, Alisa Plant, Larry Powell, Sam Ramer, Susan Schroeder, Rich Watts, Eric Wedig, and especially Jim Boyden and Neeti Nair (to whom I remain most grateful for her friendship and good cheer), in New Orleans. At New York University, Edward Berenson, Jane Burbank, Herrick Chapman, Frederick Cooper, Michael Dash, Stéphane Gerson, Michael Gilse- nan, Zachary Lockman, Judith Miller, and Frédéric Viguier gave freely of their time and advice. As an undergraduate at Princeton, I reaped the benefits of the greatest collegiate education in the world, with the best colleagues imaginable, at the hands of many of the greatest scholars and teachers, among them David Bellos, Robert Darnton, Raymond Fogelson, Norman Itzkowitz, Jonathan Lamb, Margaret Larkin, Rena Lederman, and Suzanne Marchand. My formative intellectual experiences occurred under their tutelage and by their example. I am also grateful to new colleagues at Dartmouth College, in whose congenial and stimulating company I completed this book.

The greater community of French colonial and North African historians have provided welcoming, challenging, and immensely helpful comments. Deborah Neil and I have discussed and debated the history of empire on two continents, always with great utility and joy. Patricia Lorcin offered much valuable advice, in Aix-en-Provence, subsequently, and, along with Paula Sanders, for a special issue of *French Historical Studies*. I also thank Alice L. Conklin, Matthew Connelly, Eric Jennings, and, in particular, Edmund “Terry” Burke III for sharing their experiences and invaluable perspective on many occasions. At Cambridge University Press, I am most grateful to Michael Watson and Helen Waterhouse for their hard work and faith in this project. Two readers’ reports and series editors Catherine Hall, Mrinalini Sinha, and Kathleen Wilson provided many useful suggestions.

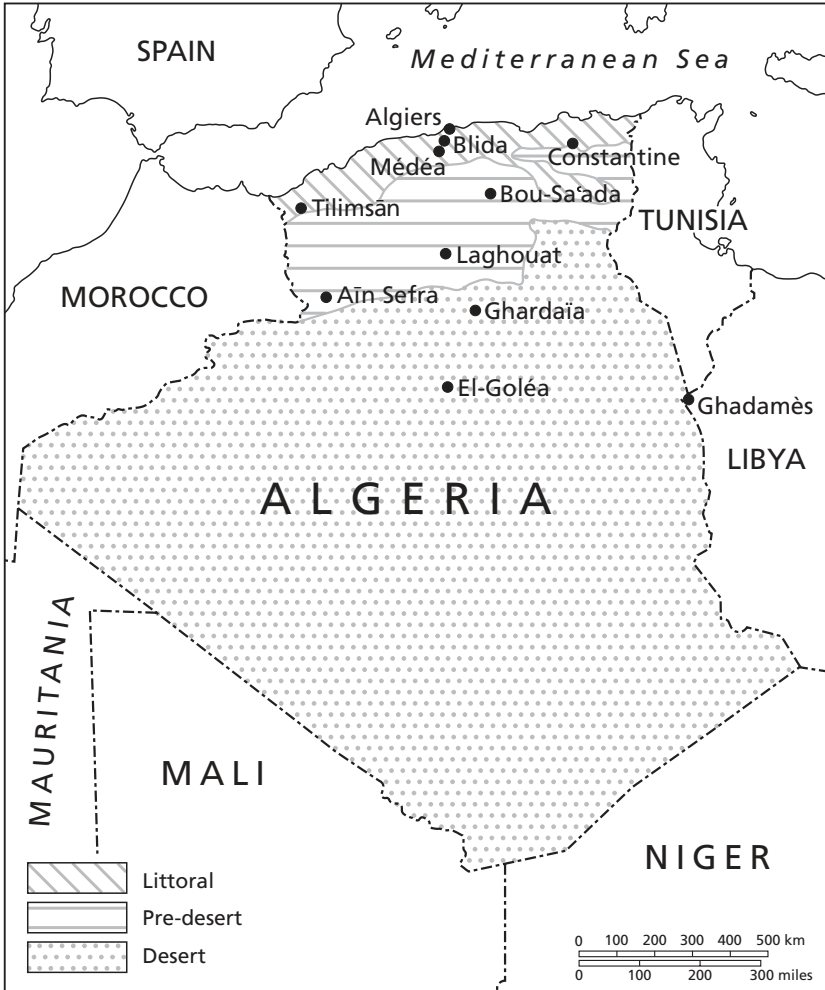
The generous support of many institutions and fellowships enabled the research and completion of this project, including the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, the Yale Center for International and Area Studies and International Security Studies, the Smith Richardson Foundation, the Bourse Chateaubriand, a Fulbright–Hays dissertation research grant, and the Social Science Research Council’s International Dissertation Field Research Fellowship. The last three grants allowed me to conduct research in Aix-en-Provence, Paris, Rabat, and Tunis, and without them this project would not have been possible. Madame Françoise Aujogue, archivist at the Archives nationales de France, generously shared her time and the breadth of her knowledge of Henri Duveyrier. Every effort has been made to secure necessary permissions to reproduce copyright material in this work, though in some cases it has proved impossible to

trace copyright holders. If any omissions are brought to my notice, I will be happy to include appropriate acknowledgments on reprinting.

I thank multiple friends outside the academy for their forbearance when I returned calls with much delay, begged off on social occasions, or spoke too readily or at too much length about the book, especially Brian Bergstein, Alexis Newbrand Cooke, Krista C. Dobi, E. Bruce McEvoy IV, Thomas B. Nath, Sonia W. Nath, Rebecca Stewart, and Elizabeth C. Trumbull. Bill, Betty, and Mary Conner provided welcome refuge in Houston and support during my evacuation from New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

My greatest debt and most fervent thanks I owe to my family. My parents, George and Lyn Trumbull, and my sister, Melissa, offered never-failing support, good cheer, a boundless belief in my abilities, and ceaseless encouragement during the most difficult period. I cannot begin to express my gratitude.

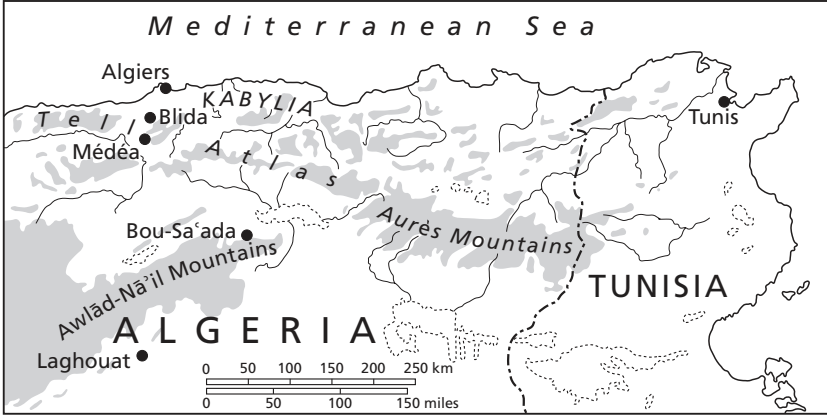
I wrote the acknowledgments to the dissertation upon which I based this book in the aftermath of the greatest natural disaster in American history. I feel especially keenly the weight of my debt to the people listed in these pages. Any errors in the work, or omissions in these pages, reflect not a lack of gratitude, but rather the enormity of the task of properly acknowledging all those who have aided me in this process.



Ecological regions of Algeria



Settlement patterns in late nineteenth-century Algeria



Kabylia, the Aurès and the mountains of the Awlād-Nā'il