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# Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa

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THE OVERSEAS SECTION OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL ARCHIVES at Aix-en-Provence is packed with American doctoral students, and other scholars specializing in French history, who are busily elbowing aside genealogists and students of the “old colonies” to get at files on Algeria, Vietnam, and Congo. As a historian of francophone West Africa, I welcome all this activity, as well as the chance to engage in a deeper dialogue with my Europeanist colleagues. At the same time, I query the degree to which French colonial history remains the history of France outside the Hexagon (or “continental France”), and how the boundaries of inquiry, or at least of the academy, might limit historians to nibbling on the edges of potentially rich local histories.<sup>1</sup> Aix’s Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer (CAOM) is not the only place in the south of France where one finds traces of the colonial past. Focusing on the unique history of the town of Fréjus (Var) and on war memorials built there and in the French Soudan (today’s Mali) between the 1920s and the 1990s, this essay asserts the importance of locality in colonial history and attempts to illustrate

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<sup>1</sup> For an essay on the revival of colonial studies with particular reference to France and Africa, see Frederick Cooper, “Decolonizing Situations: The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Colonial Studies, 1951–2001,” *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 20, no. 2 (2002): 47–76. A recent historiographic survey with an emphasis on Indochina is Robert Aldrich, “Imperial *Mise en valeur* and *Mise en scène*: Recent Works on French Colonialism,” *Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): 917–36. See also “Writing French Colonial Histories,” Alice Conklin and Julia Clancey-Smith, eds., special issue, *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 3 (2004); Gary Wilder, “Unthinking French History: Colonial Studies beyond National Identity,” in Antoinette Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, (Durham, N.C., 2003); Daniel J. Sherman, “The Arts and Sciences of Colonialism,” *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 4 (2000): 707–29. Wilder and Conklin and Clancey-Smith suggest that historians of France have handled the curves in the “imperial turn” rather differently than have historians of other European nations, Great Britain in particular. See the essays in Burton, *After the Imperial Turn*. The terms “colonialism” and “imperialism” are frequently used interchangeably. In this paper, I prefer colonialism, following a distinction laid out by Henri Brunschwig some years ago. For Brunschwig, colonialism, like imperialism, rested “on the assumption [of] political domination and economic supervision over the territories which had been conquered. But it excluded a third assumption, which was vital to imperialism: *the possession of a clear conscience*.” Brunschwig, *French Colonialism, 1871–1914: Myths and Realities*, William Glanville Brown, trans. (London, 1966), 180–81, emphasis added.

past and present connections between metropolitan and colonial sites.<sup>2</sup> It also poses a pair of related questions about methodology, history, and location<sup>3</sup>: What units of analysis will illuminate broad questions yet allow the richness of individual stories to unfold in particular sites? What might districts, towns, or camps have to tell us that colonies and empires might not?

In a recent article on imperial India, Mrinalini Sinha asks whether or not new directions in the study of British imperialism and domesticity “reduce [the empire] to a site from which to interrogate the metropole.” She suggests that the challenge facing historians is “to recognize simultaneously the specificities of [the metropole and the colony’s] separate imperial locations.”<sup>4</sup> Here I want not so much to take up her challenge—which diverges slightly from Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper’s call to “treat metropole and colony in a single analytic field”<sup>5</sup>—but to rephrase it and to push it a little further. I would like to register a plea that the specificities of particular *places* be brought to the fore, not only to ground research empirically but also to disaggregate and cast new light upon colonial and postcolonial circumstances. Colonial histories need a sense of place—an appreciation of the contrasts between, say, Guadeloupe and Paris or Niger—and the ability to evoke the difference.<sup>6</sup> But they need more than that: they deserve the kind of local analysis that has the potential to illuminate the emergence of singular social forms or particular politics, the accidents of history by which, for example, a seaside town in southern France becomes the temporary home of thousands of West Africans,

<sup>2</sup> In my usage, locality, the identity of a place, is the product of histories that create particular social forms, types of community, and vectors of memory while generating possibilities for the future. Localities enable meaning. They are in this sense akin to Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*; Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” in Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Arthur Goldhammer, trans., 3 vols. (New York, 1996–1998), see esp. 1: 15. Note that my use of “locality” differs from that of Arjun Appadurai, who uses the term to refer to a phenomenological quality. My definition more closely resembles the meaning he lends to “neighborhood,” in that the latter characterizes a social form; Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, 1996), 178–99. See also Mamadou Diouf, “The Senegalese Murid Trade Diaspora and the Making of a Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 679–702.

<sup>3</sup> By “location,” I mean something quite different than do most scholars of postcolonial studies. I use the term to refer to place and not to subject position; see Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani, “Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, ‘Postcoloniality,’ and the Politics of Location,” *Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 292–310. Avowedly postcolonial scholarship veers from the quite specifically *localized*—for example, “Under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817,” Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994)—to place as mere metaphor; see the caution expressed in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, 1999), esp. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India,” *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 489–521, see 491.

<sup>5</sup> Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in Cooper and Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Two excellent recent books do just that, in different places; Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain’s National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940–1944* (Stanford, Calif., 2001); Catherine T. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002). A sense of place is not new in French history, only rare in its colonial versions. For an overview of the significance in French historiography of the local and the regional, see Stéphane Gerson, “Une France locale: The Local Past in Recent French Scholarship,” *French Historical Studies* 26, no. 3 (2003): 539–59; Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth-century France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003); and Michel Denis, “L’Approche régionale,” in François Bédarida, ed., *L’Histoire et le métier d’historien en France, 1945–1995* (Paris, 1995). See also Odile Georg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France,’” in Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur, eds., *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France* (New York, 2002).

Southeast Asians, and Malagasy. Engaging in local analysis is hard work, but for some scholars, it is their bread and butter. Recently, anthropologists have sought to reconcile an interest in mobility, displacements, and border crossings with a commitment to being grounded in particular research sites, all the while preserving a place for capital and state power in the analytical apparatus.<sup>7</sup> Historians might not find a model in this body of work, some of which is profoundly ahistorical,<sup>8</sup> but it helps to recognize that in the “colonial situation” certain places may be “out of the way,” yet none are remote from the workings of empire.<sup>9</sup>

Speaking to the literature I know best, the dynamism of the French-African colonial world is best illustrated by studies well grounded in particular sites, almost always in Africa,<sup>10</sup> while history explored through an imperial framework (for example, all of French West Africa) has trouble venturing outside the archive.<sup>11</sup> Dakar, the former capital of the federation of French West Africa (AOF) and home to its archive, remains a significant attraction in the writing of francophone West African colonial history. Working primarily from the archive there, Alice Conklin and Frederick Cooper have individually made significant strides in understanding the processes by which public and private colonial actors engaged in an uneven dialogue with each other and with African dissidents, leaders, and workers over civic membership, labor standards, and, in the case of Conklin, republican ideology.<sup>12</sup> While in their different ways Cooper and Conklin tie together metro-

<sup>7</sup> Janet MacGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris: Transnational Traders on the Margins of the Law* (Bloomington, Ind., 2000); Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place* (Princeton, N.J., 1993); Charles Piot, *Remotely Global: Village Modernity in West Africa* (Chicago, 1999); Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago, 1995). A particularly intriguing essay with a focus on memory is Mary des Chene, “Locating the Past,” in Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds., *Anthropological Locations* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997). A recent look at mobility that leaves little room for coercion, capital, or the state is James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997). Previously historians of colonialism have looked to the work of anthropologists and literary critics in grappling with the problem of culture; see, for example, Nicholas Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1992), Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

<sup>9</sup> In a celebrated 1951 article on the “colonial situation,” Balandier argued that the “situation” was created and recreated in particular times and places, and could not be adequately understood without reference to the dynamism of local contexts. Georges Balandier, “La situation coloniale, approche théorique,” *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 11 (1951): 44–79. See the special issue of *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 20, no. 2 (2002), edited by Emmanuelle Saada.

<sup>10</sup> See Francois Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848–1960* (Athens, Ohio, 1997), or, on the Belgian Congo, Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham, N.C., 1999). Rooted in place, these works emphasize mobility. See also David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920* (Athens, Ohio, 2000); Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800–1904)* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994). Like most contemporary African histories, these are neither “nationalist” nor “national” histories; see Alice Conklin, “Boundaries Unbound: Teaching French History as Colonial History and Colonial History as French History,” *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 2 (2000): 215–36, see 219.

<sup>11</sup> See Owen White, *Children of the French Empire: Miscegenation and Colonial Society in French West Africa, 1895–1960* (New York, 1999); and James E. Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914–1956* (New York, 2004). The federation of French West Africa (AOF) included the colonies of Mauritania, Senegal, Soudan (Mali), Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey (Benin), and Niger. The mandated territory of Togo was appended after World War I. It is worth noting that none of these were settler colonies. The European population of each was quite small, a point to which I return below.

<sup>12</sup> Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa*,

pole and colony, they do so at the level of policy and ideology. In other words, the problem of operating on a "single analytical field" has been addressed, but the field in question is discursive. The linked questions of scale and locality are unresolved. Yet to be fully realized is the potential of studies of locality to illuminate and disrupt the colonial discourse that contrasted the "universal" quality of French civilization with the "particular" and "ethnographic" elements of colonized societies.<sup>13</sup> Among other things, that lack of resolution draws researchers to Aix, which becomes a site for the research of an empire the city hardly knew. There, archives can comfortably be read in the abstract, far from the sites and contexts of their production.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most famous "sites" in French history are those Pierre Nora dubbed *les lieux de mémoire*. While studies of ceremonies, holidays, monuments, and other focal points of collective memory have made important contributions to our understandings of French history, the project as a whole has been criticized for its strongly national disposition.<sup>15</sup> The multiple volumes of *Les lieux de mémoire* famously exclude the colonies, and from the standpoint of current academic trends, this omission is nothing short of fantastic.<sup>16</sup> Although more recent work has criticized and to some extent corrected this flaw,<sup>17</sup> in this article I approach a new

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1895–1930 (Stanford, Calif., 1997); and Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (New York, 1996). These are very different books, each with its own contribution to make. Cooper in particular is interested in the comparative dimensions of empire.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, two studies that take on multiple and distinct colonies (as opposed to a colonial federation) are Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics*; and Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago, 1991). An excellent recent metropolitan example of incorporating what I term scale and locality is Mary Dewhurst Lewis, "The Strangeness of Foreigners: Policing Migration and Nation in Interwar Marseille," *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 20, no. 3 (2002): 65–96. See also Clifford Rosenberg, "The Colonial Politics of Healthcare Provision in Interwar Paris," *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 3 (2004): 637–68.

<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the centralizing tendencies of the French empire and its bureaucracy threaten to become normalized in research strategies, as the colonial bureaucracy becomes the frame of the analysis of which it is partly the object. Moreover, the CAOM represents the top rung of an archival ladder that ascends from local administrators, whose reports were often synthesized and sanitized before being passed upward to the Ministry of Colonies. Put simply, the view is different from the top. Documents that reached Paris, or even Dakar, are often notably silent on violence, corruption, and everyday abuse. Regarding Aix itself, it should be noted that a school for the training of teachers did attract a small number of students from the colonies.

<sup>15</sup> Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1984–1992); translated as *Realms of Memory* (New York, 1996–1998). For two seminal essays from Nora's project, see Antoine Prost, *Republican Identities in War and Peace*, Jay Winter and Helen McPhail, trans. (New York, 2002), chaps. 1 and 2. Jay Winter has been among the most extreme in his rejection of Nora's national framework, which he reframes as European; see Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York, 1995). Local and regional processes are highlighted in Daniel J. Sherman's *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago, 1999). See also Hue-Tam Ho Tai, "Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory," *AHR* 106, no. 3 (2001): 906–23.

<sup>16</sup> The sole exception is Charles-Robert Ageron, "L'Exposition Coloniale de 1931: Mythe républicain ou mythe impérial?" in Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1984). This omission has been commented on in Sherman, "Arts and Sciences," 708; and in Eric Jennings, "Remembering 'Other' Losses: The *Temple du Souvenir Indochinois* of Nogent-sur-Marne," *History and Memory* 15, no. 1 (2003): 5–48, see 7.

<sup>17</sup> See Tai, "Remembered Realms"; Eric Jennings, "Monuments to Frenchness? The Memory of the Great War and the Politics of Guadeloupe's Identity, 1914–1945," *French Historical Studies* 21, no. 4 (1998): 561–92; and Zeynep Çelik, "Colonial/Postcolonial Intersections: *Lieux de mémoire* in Algiers," *Historical Reflections. Réflexions historiques* 28, no. 2 (2002): 143–62. Other Africanist works

colonial history through what may be both the most local and the most “national” of historical symbols, war memorials.<sup>18</sup> The memorials analyzed below were erected over the course of seven decades, beginning in the 1920s. Those in Bamako (Mali) and Reims (France) were identical, and in the 1990s a postcolonial sibling to those statues went up in Fréjus. At almost the same time, that seaside town welcomed another, very different memorial complex for “French” remains repatriated from Vietnam. In examining these memorials, my purpose is not to export a method and a subject of inquiry to the former colonies. Instead, my engagement with the memorials is explicitly instrumental; I use them as a device, analyzing what their presence says about place. The monuments and their stories illustrate connections between colonial and postcolonial worlds, and they demonstrate that the colonial situation generated communities of memory anchored in particular sites.<sup>19</sup> It also engendered locality, making otherwise distant sites central to the experiences and possibilities of the people inhabiting the sociopolitical categories—not only “*indigène*” (native) but also “*africain*” or “*français*”—that colonial rule invested with such great importance.<sup>20</sup> That quality of locality manifests itself in a web of memory and meaning elaborated over decades. My analysis and my narrative move along that web as far as Mali, but the web itself stretches to other places, particularly Southeast Asia. Traveling to Bamako and Kati (Mali), while stopping briefly in Reims, both analysis and narrative return frequently to Fréjus, one of the web’s oldest and most important nodes. There, elements of the recent, shared past of France, West Africa, and Southeast Asia take concrete form, as a pair of memorials dedicated in the 1990s partly revives tattered ideas of political community and provokes questions they leave unanswered.

IN THE EYES OF FRENCH MILITARY PLANNERS, the conquest of large portions of Africa and parts of Asia in the late nineteenth century paid immense dividends a generation later when the empire provided hundreds of thousands of men to the

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that build on Nora include Marc Michel, “Mémoire Officielle: Discours et pratique coloniale le 14 Juillet et le 11 Novembre au Sénégal entre les deux guerres,” *Revue Française d’Histoire d’Outre-Mer* 77, no. 287 (1990): 145–58; Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Jean-Louis Triaud, eds., *Histoire d’Afrique: Les enjeux de mémoire* (Paris, 1999); and Pier M. Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770–1822* (Portsmouth, N.H., 2000).

<sup>18</sup> On the tensions between the local and the national in the building of memorials, as well as the meaning of “local” in the administrative context, see Sherman, *Construction*, chap. 5, esp. 218–19.

<sup>19</sup> Eric Jennings has studied one metropolitan site that was designed to commemorate the French presence in Southeast Asia, and, just as significantly, its inverse; see Jennings, “Remembering ‘Other’ Losses.”

<sup>20</sup> Much recent work on French colonialism is devoted to the explication of these and other categories. See Emmanuelle Saada, “The Empire of Law: Dignity, Prestige, and the ‘Colonial Situation,’” *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 20, no. 2 (2002): 98–120; Saada, “La République des indigènes,” in Vincent Duclert and Christophe Prochasson, eds., *Dictionnaire Critique de la République* (Paris, 2002), 364–70. Some of the best of this scholarship recognizes that even categories emerge from places with their own histories. See Laure Blevis, “La citoyenneté française au miroir de la colonisation: Étude des demandes de naturalisation des ‘sujets français’ en Algérie coloniale,” *Genèses* 53 (2003): 25–47; and the seminal work of Ann Laura Stoler, collected in *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, Calif., 2002).

metropole during World War I.<sup>21</sup> While Southeast Asia and North Africa sent both workers and soldiers, the sub-Saharan Africans who are the focus of this essay were almost exclusively soldiers assigned to combat units.<sup>22</sup> The colonial federations of French West and Equatorial Africa provided just over 200,000 soldiers, known collectively as *tirailleurs Sénégalais*.<sup>23</sup> They were deployed in Europe, Africa, and Anatolia, and many passed through Fréjus. They served as front-line infantry, and 30,000 to 31,000 of them died of combat or illness. A disproportionate number of the *tirailleurs* came from Soudan Français (today's Mali), which at the time included much of the country now known as Burkina Faso. The forced recruitment and provisioning of so many thousands of men caused an enormous amount of damage to African societies, and in some places it sparked intense resistance to colonial rule. Using African troops under European command, the colonial military suppressed these revolts with great brutality, and many historians consider World War I the last chapter in the colonial conquest of Africa.<sup>24</sup> Given the intensity of recruitment, rebellion, and repression, as well as the extraction of resources like rubber and peanut oil, the war deeply scarred West African communities.

The war also left its mark on Fréjus, linking it to towns across the empire as a prominent point in a new colonial constellation. At first blush, Fréjus might seem to be an unlikely site for a colonial encounter. Located on the Mediterranean coast between Nice and Toulon, the town is best known as a vacation destination. Yet the history of colonialism extends from one individual place to another, and it is not always necessary to pass through Paris. Residues of empire linger in particular spaces within France and French national culture, representing both the recent colonial past and a deeper imperial history that allows former colonial military officers who retired to the south of France to point proudly to the debris of the Roman empire.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> On colonial workers, see Tyler Stovall, "The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War" *AHR* 103, no. 3 (1998): 737–69; on soldiers from across the empire, see Claude Carlier and Guy Pedroncini, eds., *Les Troupes Coloniales dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris, 1997); and Richard Fogarty, "Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002). On soldiers from North and sub-Saharan Africa, see Anthony Clayton, *France, Soldiers, and Africa* (London, 1988). On North Africa specifically, see Gilbert Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée: La guerre de 1914–1918 et le premier quart du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva, 1981); and Driss Maghraoui, "The Moroccan Colonial Soldiers: Between Selective Memory and Collective Memory," in Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, ed., *Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib: History, Culture, and Politics* (New York, 2000). Note that North Africans were not part of *la Coloniale*; they composed *l'Armée d'Afrique*.

<sup>22</sup> On the French West African war effort, the key work is Marc Michel, *L'Appel à l'Afrique: Contributions et Réactions à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F., 1914–1919* (Paris, 1982), recently republished in a modestly revised version as *Les Africains et la grande guerre: L'appel à l'Afrique, 1914–1918* (Paris, 2003). See also Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960* (Portsmouth, N.H., 1991), 25–46 and below; Joe Harris Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, N.H., 1999); and Bakari Kamian, *Des tranchées de Verdun à l'église Saint-Bernard: 80,000 combattants maliens au secours de la France (1914–1918 et 1939–1945)* (Paris, 2001), chaps. 3 and 4. Figures are drawn from Michel, *Appel*, 404–408. See also Conklin, *Mission*, chap. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Michel, *Appel*, 404. Not all of these men would serve in Europe. Note that Michel's figures are cited incorrectly in Echenberg *Colonial Conscripts*, 46.

<sup>24</sup> This argument has most recently been made by Mahir Saul and Patrick Royer, *West African Challenge to Empire: Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anti-Colonial War* (Athens, Ohio, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Interview with the author, Commandant L. Baron, Aix-en-Provence, October 9, 1998. Two recent studies of the place of the colonies in the popular imagination in France are Chafer and Sackur,

Of more immediate relevance is the military culture itself, which pervades Fréjus, long a base for the colonial army (*la Coloniale*) and its current incarnation (*les troupes de la Marine*). Any visitor consulting a map will be struck by the town's military and colonial nomenclature: Joseph Gallieni, Hubert Lyautey, and the famed Second Armored Division can each claim their own roads, plazas, or parks, and there is even, without a hint of irony, a traffic circle dedicated to the memory of Algerian soldiers who fought for France during the Algerian war (*rond point des harkis*). Conqueror of much of the African empire, governor of Indochina, Madagascar, and Soudan (and, during World War I, Paris), Gallieni married into a family from Fréjus. His former villa still bears his name, and he is buried in the neighboring town of Saint-Raphaël. Nearly 10,000 soldiers from all over the empire are also buried in the area, which was long home to colonial military hospitals.<sup>26</sup> In fact, during World War I there were many more Africans in and around Fréjus than there were Frenchmen in the huge territory of French West Africa in 1921.<sup>27</sup> The historical irony runs deep: a region that had only recently become a prominent winter destination for European royalty was the temporary home of tens of thousands of colonial troops.

From 1914, Fréjus and its environs became one of the centers of the colonial soldier's existence in France and a welcome counterpoint to the trenches.<sup>28</sup> In a practice known as *hivernage*, West African *tirailleurs* were removed from the front and garrisoned in the south during the long winter months, when they were thought to suffer greatly from the cold.<sup>29</sup> In the southern camps, they would undergo training in military technique and in a rudimentary soldier's French known as the *parler tirailleur*. Many soldiers suffered from bronchial afflictions, and they convalesced, or died, in specially segregated military hospitals with all-male nursing staffs in Fréjus and Menton. Those who were seriously wounded in combat were also evacuated to these hospitals, the best known of which were tourist hotels converted by a former colonial officer named Dr. Maclaud. A far cry from any doctrine of assimilation, under Maclaud's leadership these hospitals were expressly dedicated to a project of *resénégalisation*, which would ensure that the soldiers recuperating there did not forget their status as subalterns or lose what he took to be their cultural moorings as Africans. As a step toward the latter goal, hospital corridors were painted with scenes intended to evoke African village life, and the nursing staff was encouraged to learn and use Bambara when delivering instructions and

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eds., *Promoting the Colonial Idea*; and Elizabeth Ezra, *The Colonial Unconscious: Race and Culture in Interwar France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000). See also Jean de La Guérivière, *Les Fous d'Afrique: Histoire d'une passion française* (Paris, 2001); and William H. Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870–1900* (Westport, Conn., 1982).

<sup>26</sup> René Massip, "Le Musée des Troupes de Marine," *Revue Historique des Armées* 151 (1983): 116–19, see 116.

<sup>27</sup> There were 7,742 people identified as "French" in the AOF in 1921; Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, 2 vols. (New York, 1928), 1: 925.

<sup>28</sup> Michel, *Appel*, chaps. 17, 18. As the number of *tirailleurs* in France increased in 1917 and 1918, camps opened to accommodate them in towns other than Fréjus; Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 104–106.

<sup>29</sup> In contemporary African French, the term *hivernage* refers to the rainy season, which in the Sahel extends from June to September.

prescriptions.<sup>30</sup> Whether or not Maclaud's efforts might have made West Africans feel at home is debatable; Lucie Cousturier, a French artist and writer who had befriended some African soldiers, caustically described *resénégalisation* as "recat-echization in fear."<sup>31</sup>

Although the inhabitants of Fréjus and its environs were initially shocked to find that their quiet town would play host to the colonial contingents, some of them would gradually develop familiar relations with the young men, exchanging French lessons, fresh produce, bread, and conversation with them. Cousturier became particularly close to some of the West African soldiers she found almost literally on her doorstep. She taught French to many of them, and hosted a dinner at which her brother-in-law Paul, former lieutenant governor of Guinea and builder of its capital, Conakry, sat down with one of his erstwhile subjects.<sup>32</sup> Local merchants, by contrast, found them an easy mark.<sup>33</sup> Not all of Fréjus's citizens interacted with the colonial troops, but the culture of the town would be changed irrevocably.

Unfortunately, West Africans were not brought to France to rest in the pine hills outside Fréjus, but to fight in the trenches. Considered to be ideal "shock troops," they served as the spearhead of assaults on fixed positions and suffered predictably high casualty rates.<sup>34</sup> As Bakary Kamian notes, "there was hardly a major offensive in which Africans did not play an important role."<sup>35</sup> However, one of their key engagements, in Reims, was defensive. Under intense German attack in the spring and summer of 1918, they held the town and eventually counterattacked. Many *tirailleurs* died in the fighting, and one battalion was virtually destroyed.<sup>36</sup> The determination of the African defense of the town seized the imagination of many, and in 1924 the erection of a twin set of war memorials would symbolically strengthen the new ties between Reims and the distant city of Bamako, capital of Soudan Français.<sup>37</sup> (See Figure 1.) Although the bond between the two cities would prove fleeting—and in 1940 the German army would destroy the monument in Reims—the statue's form was enduring and a variation on it appeared in Fréjus in 1994. Built on land donated by the Marquis de Polignac, the original 1924 monument in Reims both recognized the town's special relationship with the African troops and asserted the virtues of their presence in France as a symbolic counterargument to vociferous European and American objections to the use of

<sup>30</sup> Alphonse Siché, *Les Noirs: D'après des documents officielles* (Paris, 1919), 236–47.

<sup>31</sup> Lucie Cousturier, *Des inconnus chez moi* (Paris, 1920), 215. All translations are those of the author.

<sup>32</sup> Cousturier, *Des inconnus chez moi*, 143–44; see also Cousturier, *Mes inconnus chez eux*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1925), 1: 66.

<sup>33</sup> Reports, Contrôleur des troupes Sénégalaises Logeay, sur les Bataillons Sénégalais stationnés dans les Camps de Saint-Raphaël, Fréjus, et Formations sanitaires, March and September 1918; see also Report of February 14, 1918. All in sub-series 4D, dossier 8g (hereafter, 4D89), Archives Nationales du Sénégal (hereafter, ANS).

<sup>34</sup> Joe Lunn, "'Les races guerrières': Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (1999): 517–36.

<sup>35</sup> Kamian, *Des tranchées de Verdun*, 122.

<sup>36</sup> Michel, *Appel*, 326–30.

<sup>37</sup> Georges Labouré, "Un monument aux troupes noires," *La Revue indigène* 17, nos. 165–66 (1922): 249–54. This was the most significant monument to African troops in interwar France. See Serge Barcellini, "Les Monuments en hommage aux combattants de la 'Grande France' (Armée d'Afrique et Armée Coloniale)," in Carlier and Pedroncini, *Les Troupes Coloniales*.





FIGURE 1: *Aux Héros de l'Armée Noire*, Bamako. Author's photograph, 2002.

African and other non-European troops in the occupation of the Rhineland. In his speech inaugurating the monument, General Louis Archinard, one of the primary architects of the conquest of the Western Sudan, underscored this point when he proclaimed the *tirailleurs* to be “*des Français noirs*.” The depth of the relationship was then highlighted by a spectacular “historical parade [representing] all the Native troops” from the time of the Bourbon Restoration to the *tirailleurs*

*Sénégalais* and *Indochinois*.<sup>38</sup> Reims was exceptional in its embrace of African troops, and the Rhineland controversy charged the political atmosphere.

While monuments to the war dead mushroomed in interwar France, drawing local and national (republican) memories into what was intended to be a sublime combination, they were also springing up in the colonies. Eric Jennings has demonstrated that those erected in Guadeloupe represented a claim to cultural, and therefore political, assimilation on the part of the island's veterans and others. They were simultaneously "local" and "national," as they "were designed by the island's elite as assimilationist bridges between Guadeloupean and metropolitan allegiances."<sup>39</sup> War monuments erected in Africa were more properly "colonial." The form that appeared in Reims and Bamako emphasized the inequality between the white officer holding the flag, distinguished by his posture and his uniform, and the *tirailleurs* clustered behind him. Moreover, statues in the African colonies were not directly funded by veterans or other Africans, but were almost entirely paid for by the administration and its supporters in France and among the very small European colonial population.

Bamako was a logical if not a consensual candidate for a monument to the *Armée noire*, since Soudan had provided so many soldiers for the war.<sup>40</sup> The city's intense traffic still swirls around the war memorial and its garden, but documents of the period convey the sense that the monument was built primarily to assuage the memory of French administrators and colonists and to assure them of the "loyalty" of a colony that had experienced significant revolts before the successful recruitment drive of 1918.<sup>41</sup> At one point, in the early 1920s, three separate committees dedicated to erecting a memorial to African veterans competed for public and private funds. While Senegalese parliamentarian Blaise Diagne sought to create a monument in Dakar, Archinard chaired a rival committee, which foresaw a memorial in Bamako. Meanwhile, Governor Guy, West African commissioner to the exposition in Marseille, wanted to have built in France a monument that could service both the exposition and its successor to be held in Paris. Governor-General Merlin preferred that Dakar, its sister city Saint-Louis, and Bamako each have its own monument; in the end, this is what happened.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, in Bamako as elsewhere, former military officers were among those active in raising funds for the

<sup>38</sup> "A la mémoire des tirailleurs noirs," *Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique Française*, August 1924, and "Pour les héros de l'armée noire," *Annales Coloniales*, July 15, 1924, Agence de la France d'outre-mer (hereafter AgeFOM), carton 389, dossier 13 bis (hereafter 389/13b), CAOM.

<sup>39</sup> Jennings, "Monuments to Frenchness?," 588.

<sup>40</sup> Note, "Souscriptions diverses en vue d'ériger des monuments aux morts de la Guerre en AOF" (n.d., 1921?), 1affpol 543, CAOM.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Labouré, "Un monument aux troupes noires." On the revolts, see Saul and Royer, *West African Challenge*; and on recruitment, see Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, chaps. 3 and 4; Michel, *Appel*, chaps. 3, 4, and 6; Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, chap. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Note, "Souscriptions diverses," CAOM. At the time, Dakar was capital of AOF, while Saint-Louis was the capital of the colonies of Senegal and Mauritania. Two monuments were installed in Dakar, one in 1924 and another, sponsored by Diagne, in 1929; Michel *Africains et la grande guerre*, 241–42. The memorial in Saint-Louis was not inaugurated until 1939. *Armée généralités*, no. 303, "Sénégal, la fête du 14 juillet à St-Louis," July 27, 1939, AgeFOM 389/13b, CAOM. Such monuments would gradually become common sights in colonial capitals and in some African towns.

statue and in overseeing its design by Paul Moreau-Vauthier, a well-known French sculptor.<sup>43</sup>

Several dignitaries attended the unveiling in Bamako in January 1924, including Governor-General Jules Carde, General Henri-Edouard Claudel, commander of French forces in West Africa, and a representative of Minister of Colonies Albert Sarraut. Yet perhaps the most notable of the invited guests was unable to attend. Poor health prevented General Archinard from making the voyage to Bamako. Nevertheless, his speech was read to the assembled crowd, and it remains a remarkable document. In his address, Archinard underscored the depth of the past shared by the French nation and the people of Western Sudanic Africa. He brought this relationship to life as he wrote that he composed his speech, "thinking of my former comrades of thirty years ago, some of whom, such as my old and courageous interpreter Mamadou Coumba, are perhaps among those who listen to my speech today."<sup>44</sup> Interim governor Terrasson de Fougères used the occasion to anticipate the promising future of the colonial relationship. He claimed that, "When peace came, our *tirailleurs* returned to their homes [where] they saw that France had kept her promises. They see their country evolving rapidly towards a better future." The hallmarks of this bright future would include new schools and dispensaries, maternity clinics, roads, and irrigation systems. In a fit of hyperbole, the governor proclaimed that French irrigation projects would make the valley of the Niger "one of the richest countries in the world." The modernizing potential of French power in the Soudan was underscored when a group of low-flying airplanes saluted the crowd, while troops from the nearby garrison of Kati paraded in the streets.<sup>45</sup>

While Archinard and Terrasson saw the monument as a sign of French benevolence and indeed of cautiously expressed gratitude, the prolific colonial critic Michel Larchain regarded such monuments as a poor use of resources. Comparing acts of commemoration in France to those in the African colonies, he noted that French railway workers were building a sanitarium as a living memorial to their dead. Meanwhile, a fund-raising event held in the Tuileries would help to pay for four war memorials in towns across French Africa. Newly erected memorials "right in the heart of the old warring Soudan" struck Larchain as a poor substitute for hospitals and other institutions that could better demonstrate French recognition of the West African contribution to the war.<sup>46</sup> Larchain did not point out the irony that Bamako's monument commemorating the soldiers was located in the middle of the city, while the administration had sought to force demobilized *tirailleurs* and their families out of the capital and back to the countryside.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> On some of Paul Moreau-Vauthier's metropolitan activities, see Sherman, *Construction*, 185.

<sup>44</sup> *Inauguration du Monument élevé à Dakar À la gloire des Troupes noires . . . Monument élevé à Bamako Aux Héros de l'Armée noire . . .*, Pamphlet, (Dakar, n.d., 1924?).

<sup>45</sup> *Inauguration du Monument*. The governor's comments support Sherman's point that such ceremonies function as "idealizing representations of the communities *they seek to shape*." Sherman, *Construction*, 264, emphasis added.

<sup>46</sup> Michel Larchain, "L'Hommage aux Morts: Deux manières de le rendre, une bonne et une mauvaise," *La dépêche coloniale et maritime*, July 16, 1921; and "Statuomanie africaine," *La dépêche coloniale et maritime*, January 26, 1921.

<sup>47</sup> The colonial administration consistently opposed recently demobilized *tirailleurs* who sought to remain in the capital cities rather than return to their villages of origin. However, whether or not the former *tirailleurs* should be expelled from urban areas by force was a matter of some dispute, beginning in 1917; see the exchange between Governor-General François-Joseph Clozel and Lieutenant

Neither Larchain nor Archinard would have anticipated that the war memorial *Aux héros de l'armée noire* would come to be known locally as *Samorikélékédénw* (Samory's warriors), in reference to Samori Touré (d. 1900), who built a powerful West African empire in the 1880s and 1890s and fought a long-running war with the French.<sup>48</sup> No date can be assigned to this interpretation, but if it is impossible to know what Bamako's inhabitants made of the war memorial when it was built, the events of a sweltering Sunday morning ten years after its dedication may offer a glimpse of the meanings generated around it.<sup>49</sup> On May 13, 1934, the trains from Bamako to the important nearby garrison at Kati were packed with Africans and Europeans eager to attend the dedication of another memorial to the *tirailleurs*.<sup>50</sup> Thousands of Bamakois who could not find places on the trains crowded onto trucks or hiked several miles across the hills to Kati. Much of the European population of Bamako also made the trek. At Kati's Camp Gallieni, they joined representatives of *tirailleurs* regiments who had come from Senegal in the middle of the hot season to present their flags at the unveiling of a memorial to the fallen soldiers of the Second Regiment de tirailleurs Sénégalais (R.T.S.). (See Figure 2.) The event they were eager to see was a true spectacle, complete with parades, a military band, maneuvers performed by juvenile cadets, "folkloric dances," games, and—for the Europeans—an evening jazz band performance under electric light at which they could "drink copiously to the health of the regiment."<sup>51</sup>

Along with the ceremonies surrounding its inauguration, the monument was the brainchild of the commander of the Second R.T.S., Colonel Edouard de Martonne. De Martonne was an exceptional officer who stands out both for his publications on the *tirailleurs* and for his skills in Bambara (Bamanankan), the corps' African lingua franca. He believed strongly in the importance of ceremony and sought to cultivate actively a set of rituals and traditions particular to the Second R.T.S. The previous year, he had launched what was to be an annual "*fête du 2<sup>e</sup> R.T.S.*" with which he intended to celebrate his soldiers, to affirm the "cordiality and good will" between the military and the civilian administration, and to honor the regiment's history. A highlight of these celebrations was a mock assault staged by the *tirailleurs* on the parade ground. After cavalry and infantrymen with fixed bayonets had charged to

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Governor of Haut Sénégal-Niger Raphael Antonetti in sub-series 3n, dossier 243 (hereafter, 3N243), Fonds Ancien, (hereafter, FA), Archives Nationales du Mali, Bamako (hereafter, ANM). Into the 1920s, veterans and soldiers' wives or widows were sometimes given money to leave Bamako for their communities of origin, which in most cases were rural villages; see files of the *Comité d'Assistance aux Troupes Noires* in 2N85FA, ANM. As former slaves, many were reluctant to return to their masters and wound up in towns instead. On *tirailleurs* as former slaves, see Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, chap. 2; Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (New York, 1998), 80–83, chap. 13.

<sup>48</sup> In 1898, the French captured Samori and exiled him to Gabon, where he died. On Samori, see Yves Person, *Samori: Une révolution Dyula*, 3 vols. (Nîmes, 1968–1975); D. T. Niane, "The Origins of Samori's State," *Mande Studies* 3 (2001): 7–14; Lanisiné Kaba, "Almami Samouri Touré within the West African Imperial Tradition," *Mande Studies* 3 (2001): 15–34.

<sup>49</sup> A recent wave of monument building in Bamako may offer some additional insight. In the 1990s, Bamakois sometimes referred to the new statues as the then-president's *boliv*, or ritual power objects, implying with more than a hint of sarcasm that they were intended to secure his rule through occult practices. The term *Samorikélékédénw* is in current usage in Bamako.

<sup>50</sup> My description of the dedication of the memorial is drawn from Edouard de Martonne, "*Le Mémorial du tirailleur Sénégalais, Kati, le 13 Mai 1934* (Dakar, 1934).

<sup>51</sup> De Martonne, *Mémorial*, 8.

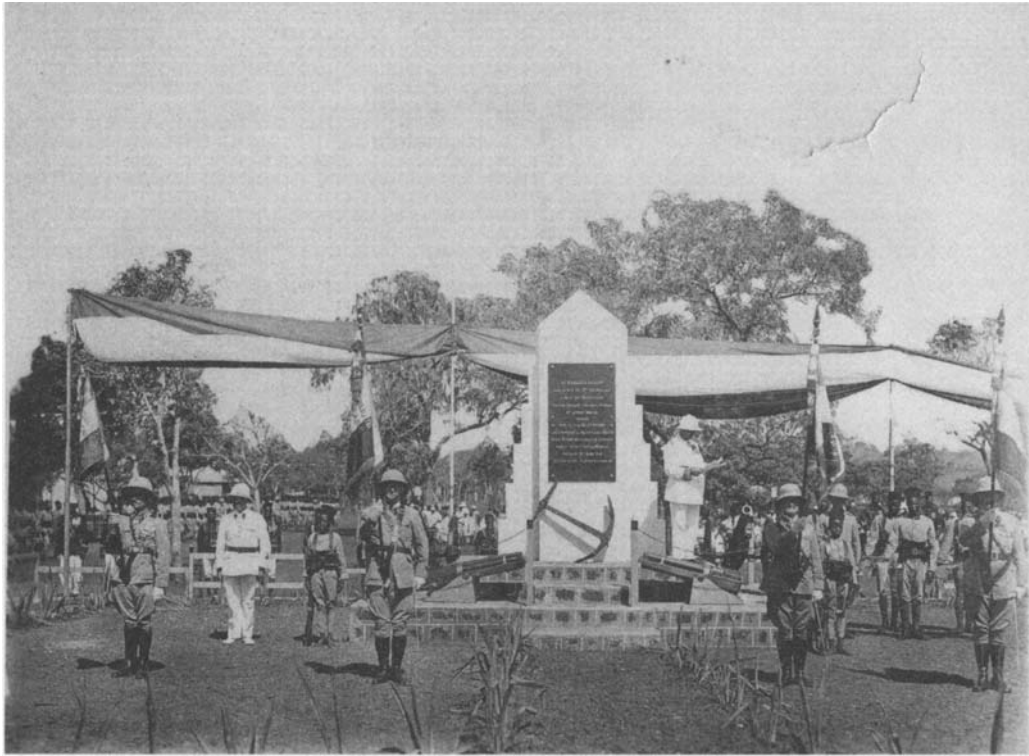


FIGURE 2: Colonel de Martonne inaugurates the monument to the Second R.T.S. at Kati, May 13, 1934. Photography reproduced with kind permission of the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, France.

within twenty meters of the tribune on which the European spectators sat, four flag-bearers came together at the foot of the tribune to strike the pose held in the Bamako memorial.<sup>52</sup>

Although as a representational work, the old memorial was easily imitated, the new one was dramatically different, and it evoked a singular response. No African-generated testimony to the 1934 inauguration of the monument at Kati survives, but in his text describing the event, de Martonne offers tantalizing evidence of the excitement that it generated, as well as a record of some of the resources from which meaning may have been constructed. After de Martonne's own bilingual speech, a child cadet recited a historical example of the *tirailleurs*' "devotion" to their European officers. Young Adama Cissoko declared that he and his peers would often visit the site, where they would "ask our predecessors to bring their bravery and virtue into our hearts." De Martonne had carefully choreographed the ceremony of inauguration, but, according to his own record of the event, at that moment he seems to have lost control, as "the entire Native part of the crowd—the civilians, of course—surged forward with curiosity, and the barricades could hardly hold them back."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Edouard de Martonne, *La fête du 2me[sic] Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais, Kati, le 7 mai 1933* (Dakar, 1933), 15.

<sup>53</sup> De Martonne, *Mémorial*, 5–6.

According to de Martonne, the Europeans were also moved by this speech, and indeed by the ceremony as a whole. We can assume that they assimilated this stone structure to that erected in Bamako ten years earlier and to countless others in France. Although Bamako's monument was a representative sculpture and Kati's an obelisk, most French-speakers would have understood by the term *mémorial* and by the inscriptions on its face, that the function of the monument was to perform a particular kind of memory work and to reassert the alleged virtues of the colonial relationship, particularly the *tirailleurs*' supposed loyalty. However, it takes much more imagination to understand why the crowd surged forward at the moment that it did, at the end of the cadet's speech, or what it understood by the terms used to refer to the monument itself. In de Martonne's speech, delivered first in French and then in Bambara, the monument was referred to in different terms in different languages. In French the marble and concrete obelisk was a *mémorial*, and in Bambara it was a *farasso* (alternately, *fara so*), literally a "stone house." The rhetorical conventions marking the French speech were well established, announcing the monument as being dedicated to the soldiers of the Second R.T.S., to an unknown soldier, and to those who had died both in the conquest of the Soudan and in the world war. A plaque had been inscribed in part, "à tous les Bandiougou, Samba-Taraoré, Mamadou-Fofana, et autres braves . . . hommage de leurs fils, de leurs neveux, de leurs successeurs."<sup>54</sup>

In Bambara, the conventions were much less clear, and de Martonne did not heed the most relevant of them. Rather than having his words translated, de Martonne apparently delivered the speech himself, without an interpreter, and without a *jeli* or *griot*, a professional orator to project his words for him. Of greater consequence for the present argument, the word *farasso*, the term he used to refer to the new monument, has no apparent implications for memory work. De Martonne gave it that meaning—that is, associated memory with the object—by erecting the obelisk as a site of greeting and of reflection on the ancestors. Very few of the African soldiers and civilians would have understood de Martonne's French speech, in which he proclaimed that the monument was for a particular regiment, one whose history and culture de Martonne had worked hard to accentuate.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the camp housed many recent recruits who would not have seen the Bamako memorial either; what de Martonne and the cadet Cissoko said became all the more important. In Bambara, the monument was for the fathers, uncles, and grandfathers of the soldiers and cadets. When passing before it, one was literally to greet the dead ("*I ni cé Bandiougou!* / Greetings Bandiougou!"). In both speeches, the practice of naming was an aspect of the work of memory, but the names in question were not significant as the names of particular individuals, as Archinard had called upon in his Bamako speech or as were commonly displayed on

<sup>54</sup> The text in full reads: "To the unknown *tirailleur*, to the dead of the Second R.T.S., to every Bandiougou, ever Samba-Taraoré [*sic*], every Mamadou-Fofana [*sic*], and [to all the] other brave men fallen for the conquest of the Soudan, as well as during the great war of 1914–1918 and in the theaters of foreign operations in Morocco, the Levant, and Madagascar, etc . . . [*sic*] homage from their sons, their nephews, their successors." The opposite side bears the date of dedication, noting that it is the thirty-fourth anniversary of the creation of the regiment.

<sup>55</sup> The previous year, de Martonne had, for example, described the unit's flag as the "fetish of the regiment," suggesting that it bore particular power; de Martonne, *Fête*, 4.

metropolitan memorials. No one proposed naming *all* of the *tirailleurs* from the colony of Soudan or the administrative district of Bamako who had died in the war, as was often the case for metropolitan memorials.<sup>56</sup> Rather, the speeches and the inscription at Kati were meant to represent both certain illustrious predecessors (in Bambara, grandfathers or ancestors) and a broader tradition of loyalty and fidelity thought to be characteristic of the *tirailleurs*.<sup>57</sup> In other words, the monument was not naming names so much as it was naming types.

General Archinard's inaugural speech in Bamako in 1924, in which he invoked the name of his interpreter Mamadou Coumba, worked to define the monument as a physical manifestation of the highly prized quality of reciprocal loyalty. The speeches made at Kati ten years later did much the same thing; they commemorated, thereby defining, a past relationship between officers and men, and they projected it into the future. In the 1940s and 1950s, groups composed of both African and European veterans built on the attention paid to the virtue of loyalty in order to claim that the French state did not live up to its own obligations in the form of pensions and other benefits for former soldiers. The Bamako monument became a favored site for veterans protesting low pension rates or welcoming visiting ministers.<sup>58</sup> The fact that some of these protests were staged in solidarity with metropolitan veterans' groups suggests that although enlisted men and officers, civilians and soldiers, French-speakers and Bambara-speakers (or those who spoke both) may originally have understood the stone monuments at Bamako and Kati very differently, by the postwar period they shared an understanding of their symbolic and rhetorical potential.

While these African monuments represented a particular past, they neither anchored it permanently nor revived it in the wake of independence. The Second R.T.S., to which the monument at Kati was dedicated, became the Third Détache-

<sup>56</sup> On the importance of naming in metropolitan France, see Daniel J. Sherman, "Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France," *AHR* 103, no. 2 (1998): 443–66. In the African context, the colonial administration could not have named with any accuracy those who had been lost, nor would its agents have wanted to present a public accounting of the losses. Naming the African soldiers and auxiliaries killed in the Volta-Bani war, an anticolonial revolt sparked by conscription, would have been a more feasible undertaking, but colonial administrators advocating the erection of such a memorial in the town of San apparently never considered the option. Nevertheless, the names of European officers figured on their tombs; *President, Oeuvre des Tombes* (Soudan Français) to *Commandant de Cercle* (CdC), San, November 1927; response of CdC, San, December 23, 1927, B352–3FR, ANM. On the Volta-Bani war, see Saul and Royer, *West African Challenge*. By way of contrast with the anonymity of colonial memory, Malian historian Bakari Kamian's recent book names 2,588 "Native soldiers from Haut-Sénégal Niger who died for France and whose remains are not yet identified." Kamian intends to underscore the "blood debt" owed by France; Kamian, *Des Tranchées de Verdun*, 377–434. As Kamian acknowledges, many of those names are likely to be pseudonyms or aliases; see also Gregory Mann, "What's in an Alias? Family Names, Individual Histories, and Historical Method in the Western Sudan," *History in Africa* 29 (2002): 309–20.

<sup>57</sup> For instance, the original Mamadou Fofana was a legendary *tirailleur* from the time of the colonial conquest, but the name Mamadou (or Mahmoudou) Fofana came to stand for a type of *tirailleur*; in 1928, the well-known French art critic Raymond Escholier published a novel bearing that name. The novel contains a brief discussion of a brothel in Fréjus, where the *tirailleurs* had encounters with European women; Raymond Escholier, *Mahmadou Fofana* 12th edn. (Paris, 1928), 235–38.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Haut-Commissaire/ Gouverneur Général AOF (GGAOF) to Gov. Soudan (Cabinet), October 16, 1953, Fonds Numérique NI sub-series 1D dossier, 1484, ANM. In a similar vein, contemporary activists have staged demonstrations in defense of African immigrants at memorials to colonial troops in France; Gregory Mann, "Immigrants and Arguments in France and West Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003): 362–85, see 365.

ment Motorisé Autonome (D.M.A.) after World War II;<sup>59</sup> the unit was dissolved when Mali became independent. While the monument still stands, the military unit it was meant to honor no longer exists. In the wake of independence and the Malian expulsion of the French military in 1961, the general staff of Mali's new army set out to transform the base at Kati into a military school rivaling that at Fréjus, where many of its officers had trained.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the Bamako monument still stands in the center of town, in the middle of a traffic circle. Although it was never taken down, it did not emerge from the nationalist period entirely unscathed. According to an Icelandic travel writer who visited Bamako with her family in the mid-1960s, "The statues of the charging African soldiers on the monument were still intact, as were the engraved names of battles they had engaged in that meant nothing to me as an Icelander . . . But what struck us at once was the fact that the words of the commendation [*sic*] and dedication had all been carefully chiselled [*sic*] off and painted over with white paint!" Although she took this modification of the memorial as evidence that the Malians "despise[d]" the French,<sup>61</sup> it could equally be understood as evidence of the respect, perhaps grudging, that the country's political leadership had for the veterans, who were a potent if conservative constituency. A monument to General Gustave Borgnis-Desbordes, who established the first French post at Bamako, had been torn down shortly after independence.<sup>62</sup> While both the Bamako and the Kati monuments survived the nationalist politics of the period relatively unharmed, the statue in Reims, twin to that in Bamako, had fallen prey to a more poisonous nationalist rancor during the German invasion of 1940.<sup>63</sup> As part of a wave of post-independence (and post-Algerian War) commemoration of African participation in the world wars, the minister of armies dedicated a "monolithic stele" on the site in 1963, and after 1996, a plaque recalled the destruction of the original monument.<sup>64</sup> The twin pair in Bamako and Reims had endured a tumultuous history when a sibling statue was erected in Fréjus in 1994 to commemorate the role of African troops in the liberation of the region fifty years earlier.

<sup>59</sup> Colonel Peltier, "Historique du Drapeau, D.M.A. No. 3," Kati, March 21, 1957, sub-series 16H, dossier 327, Centre d'histoire et d'études des troupes d'outre-mer, Fréjus (hereafter, CHETOM).

<sup>60</sup> Interview by Radio Mali with Chief of Staff Abdoulaye Soumaré, printed in *L'Essor (Hebdo.)*, October 22, 1962. See also Vincent Joly, "La fin de la présence militaire française au Mali," *Revue Historique des Armées* 218 (2000): 39–54.

<sup>61</sup> Halla Linker, *Three Tickets to Timbuktu* (New York, 1966), 258–59.

<sup>62</sup> Bulletin de renseignements du conseiller militaire près de l'ambassade de France au Mali, November 5, 1961, no. 2053/SC, sub-series 10T, dossier 701, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, France (hereafter, SHAT).

<sup>63</sup> Barcellini, "Monuments," 132–33 and 151–52; M. Rives and R. Dietrich, *Héros méconnus (1914–1918, 1939–1945): Mémorial des combattants d'Afrique Noire et de Madagascar* (Paris, 1990), 115. Dakar's 1923 monument, known as "Demba and Dupont" for its two figures, one African and one French, has been removed to a less prominent place and is now in the cemetery where President Léopold Sédar Senghor was buried in 2001; Annie Thomas, "Senghor reposera au côté des tirailleurs sénégalais," *Agence France Presse*, December 24, 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Although later in the war the German army destroyed other memorials for scrap metal, the 1996 plaque states that "the occupier destroyed the 'Monument to the Blacks' out of racial hatred"; Barcellini, "Monuments," 132 and 151–52. In the immediate wake of independence, other monuments to colonial troops were dedicated in Amiens, Châteauneuf-sur-Loire, and elsewhere in France; see Barcellini, "Monuments" and 1K354, SHAT.





FIGURE 3: *À l'Armée Noire*, Fréjus. Dedicated September 1, 1994. Author's photograph, 2004.

THE NEW STATUE STANDS ON THE PROMENADE, its back to the sea. Erected by an association of former military officers, aided by the national and municipal governments, the monument plays on the statue in Bamako. In this new sculpture, the heroic pose of the 1920s has given way to a loose cluster of individual figures whose faces express confusion, pain, suffering, and camaraderie. (See Figure 3.) The sole European depicted, the central figure in the 1920s version, now stands isolated, and his support of the flag is only one among many narrative elements. One *tirailleur* walks upright, looking at the flag with an open, perhaps querying expression; another, his knees bent, gestures away from it into the open air. In the foreground, two companions stagger or huddle, and one leans on his rifle for support while his comrade seems to encourage him.<sup>65</sup>

Fréjus's claim to such a monument extended beyond its role as the site for the African soldiers' *hivernage* during World War I. First sent to the town to benefit from its mild climate and facilities intended for tourists, the *tirailleurs* maintained a presence in its hinterland for decades. Hospitals intended solely for West African troops remained in operation at least into the 1920s. Shortly after the war, a school for the training of indigenous noncommissioned officers (*sous-officiers*, NCOs)

<sup>65</sup> My reading of this statue's visual cues differs substantially from that of William Kidd in "Representation or Recuperation? The French Colonies and 1914–1918 War Memorials," in Chafer and Sackur, *Promoting the Colonial Idea*, see 192–93.

opened its doors to soldiers from Madagascar and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>66</sup> By 1926, nearly 45,000 “native” troops were serving outside their territories of origin, and a good number of them were in France. Even if only a modest fraction of the almost 27,000 *tirailleurs Sénégalais* outside AOF were in the metropole, they would have vastly outnumbered the several hundred West African civilians then in France, most of whom were sailors.<sup>67</sup> De Martonne’s suggestion that the towns near which they were garrisoned reacted to colonial soldiers “without too much dread” suggests that relations were not always warm.<sup>68</sup> However, when floods struck the southwest in 1930, African and Asian *tirailleurs* stationed at Castelsarrasin renewed their welcome when they came to the rescue of civilians trapped by the waters.<sup>69</sup> Across the south of France, and into the Alps, colonial troops also fought wildfires and built and maintained forest trails.<sup>70</sup>

During the war, a visitor had characterized the camps at Fréjus and Saint-Raphaël as “a sad and morose land of exile,”<sup>71</sup> but by 1931, a journalist reported that Fréjus was “almost like an ongoing Colonial Exposition.”<sup>72</sup> This was not simply hyperbole, since soldiers representing almost every colony were either stationed in or passing through Fréjus. Friction among them was always a possibility. In the 1920s, an officer on inspection claimed that having soldiers from all over the empire in camps together did not give rise to any problems. At the same time, however, he noted that the Southeast Asian NCOs were demanding a kitchen apart from the *Sénégalais* and the Malagasy, since the “cuisine of the Black cooks did not satisfy them at all.”<sup>73</sup>

Fréjus and the Colonial Exposition had other things in common as well; both the town and the exposition had mosques that mimicked the neo-Sudanic architectural style epitomized by the famous Great Mosque of Djenné. The difference was that the one in Paris was an enormous simulacrum, while the tiny structure in Fréjus was apparently originally intended to be used for prayer (albeit by a small percentage of

<sup>66</sup> Chef du service de contrôle et d’assistance aux indigènes à M. le GG de l’Indochine, Hanoi (Tonkin), December 26, 1923, Minute, *Service de liaison avec les originaires des territoires français d’outre-mer* (hereafter, SLOTFOM) carton 11, folio 1 (hereafter, 11/1), CAOM. See also René Massip, “Le Rôle de l’E.F.O.R.T.D.M. dans la formation des cadres africains,” *Revue Historique des Armées* 151 (1983): 96–101, see 98.

<sup>67</sup> Ministère des Colonies, Direction des Services militaires, “Renseignements sur les effectifs militaires indigènes en service en AOF, en France ou en dehors de leur pays d’origine, en 1913 et 1926,” January 8, 1928, AgeFOM 389/13b, CAOM. West African civilians, as well as those from other colonies, were the subjects of surveillance by the Ministry of Colonies’ SLOTFOM from 1916 to 1954; SLOTFOM recognized that its own figures were unreliable, but they can be found in “Indigènes de l’AOF en résidence en France au 8 Avril 1924.” “Note pour le Secrétariat Général du Conseil Supérieur des Colonies,” November 29, 1926; and “Nombre approximatif des indigènes travaillant en France et classement par colonie d’origine,” June 6, 1932, all in SLOTFOM 6/9, CAOM.

<sup>68</sup> Edouard de Martonne, “La Verité sur les tirailleurs Sénégalais,” *Outre-Mer* 7, no. 1 (March 1935): 27–45, see 28.

<sup>69</sup> “Les tirailleurs coloniaux aux inondations,” *Revue des troupes coloniales* (1930): 90–92 (reprinted from *La Petite Gironde*, March 20, 1930). See also de Martonne, “Verité,” 39, and Colonel Jean Charbonneau, *Balimatoua et Compagnie: Zigzags à travers le vaste Empire Français* (Paris, 1934), 247.

<sup>70</sup> De Martonne, “Verité,” 39.

<sup>71</sup> Séché, *Noirs*, 79.

<sup>72</sup> Paul Catrice, “L’emploi des troupes indigènes et leur séjour en France,” *Etudes: Revue Catholique d’Intérêt Général* 20 (1931): 387–409, see 402.

<sup>73</sup> Rapport d’Inspection de M. Dupuy au Resident Supérieur, Chef du Service de Contrôle et d’Assistance en France des Indigènes des Colonies, “Centres militaires de Grasse et de Fréjus,” 1924; SLOTFOM 1/10, CAOM.

the camp's Muslims).<sup>74</sup> African soldiers in what was considered to be "the most important native colonial milieu in the entire metropole" had lacked their own religious site until 1928. While the Indochinese had a pagoda and the Malagasy a church for their own use, the Governor-General of French West Africa bemoaned the Africans' status as poor cousins to their imperial colleagues. A mosque was soon built with funding from the colonies of French West Africa, as well as the charitable Comité d'Assistance aux Troupes Noires and the municipality of Fréjus.<sup>75</sup> This addition to the landscape made it clear that Fréjus was a colonial site par excellence.

As such, the town attracted African migrants from elsewhere in France. Among the most notable of these was the Senegalese radical Lamine Senghor, who traveled to the Var in 1926 to "give a moving speech at the tombs of his former comrades in arms (*Sénégalais, Malgaches, et Annamites*)."<sup>76</sup> Senghor was himself an *ancien tirailleur* and a veteran of World War I whose disability was indexed at 100 percent.<sup>77</sup> His visit to the military cemetery at Camp Gallieni was part of a larger campaign to foster anticolonial sentiments and, eventually, activism among West African troops (such actions had already met with some success among their Asian counterparts). Although terribly ill in 1926, Senghor made several trips back and forth between Paris and the Var, and the agents of the minister of colonies followed his movements closely.<sup>78</sup> They were particularly concerned that as the largest group of colonial subjects in the metropole, soldiers be shielded from anticolonial and communist influence. Senghor seems to have found some fertile ground in the Var, as "the soldiers complained that they were badly fed and that they only had water and a little coffee to drink; they are also mistreated and sometimes beaten by French NCOs."<sup>79</sup> The following year provided unwelcome evidence that the efforts of Senghor and his comrades had met with some success when an African officer serving at Kati reported that the radical journal *La Race Nègre* was circulating among African soldiers in France, and possibly at Kati as well.<sup>80</sup> Senghor's efforts cost him his health and eventually his life. In Marseille, a West African man tried to kill him with a stone; upon being apprehended, he claimed to be working for "a white," who was an agent of the Ministry of Colonies. If the allegation was true, the ministry might have economized its efforts. Two months later, in November 1926,

<sup>74</sup> It is not clear that the mosque was used for prayer, but such was the governor-general's intention. GGAOF, Direction du Cabinet Militaire to Lieutenant Governor's, May 11, 1928, no. 269 CM, 2N53FR, ANM.

<sup>75</sup> GGAOF, Direction du Cabinet Militaire to Lieutenant Governors, May 11, 1928, no. 269 CM, 2N53FR, ANM. See also Catrice, "L'emploi."

<sup>76</sup> "Manifestation au cimetière du camp Gallieni, à Fréjus," *La Voix des Nègres* 1 (January 1927). On the activities of Senghor and his fellow African radicals, see Philippe Dewitte, *Les mouvements nègres en France, 1919–1939* (Paris, 1985); J. S. Spiegler, "Aspects of Nationalist Thought among French-Speaking West Africans" (PhD dissertation, Nuffield College, Oxford University, 1968). The Dahomeyan radical Louis Hunkanrin had also worried his commanders when he was stationed in the Fréjus-St. Raphaël area immediately after the war; Guy-Landry Hazoume, Jean Suret-Canale, et al., *La Vie et l'Oeuvre de Louis Hunkanrin: Suivi de deux écrits de Louis Hunkanrin* (Cotonou, 1977), 154.

<sup>77</sup> Agent Désiré, report of March 30, 1926, SLOTFOM 2/4, CAOM.

<sup>78</sup> See reports of agent Désiré in SLOTFOM 2/4, CAOM and Désiré, report of March 26, 1926, SLOTFOM 3/112, CAOM.

<sup>79</sup> Désiré, report of November 2, 1926, SLOTFOM 2/4, CAOM.

<sup>80</sup> GGAOF Carde to Ministre des Colonies, Direction des Affaires Politiques, First Bureau, October 27, 1927, no. 367apa, SLOTFOM 3/134, CAOM.

Lucie Cousturier's son wrote to Senghor's comrades in Paris to inform them that Senghor's health had failed, and that he was unlikely to be able to return to Paris.<sup>81</sup> Within a year, Senghor was dead.<sup>82</sup>

Fréjus did not attract only soldiers and radicals, and not all of its newcomers were itinerant. A number of less notable African religious figures, peddlers, and scam artists passed through the town, and some retired African soldiers settled there with their French wives, leading the local government to complain that they lived solely on public aid.<sup>83</sup> A Senegalese photographer established himself in Fréjus in the mid-1930s; in the chaotic months following the Liberation in 1944, when impatient *tirailleurs* continued to be stationed outside the town, he drew attention to himself by urging soldiers to desert rather than disembark for West Africa without being paid.<sup>84</sup> In the same period, one deserter passed himself off as a well-connected officer charged with Muslim affairs, appropriating the titles of lieutenant and *el-hajj*. Attempts to repatriate him were frustrated by his circulation between Paris and Fréjus, and in the meantime officers feared the effect of his presence on soldiers' morale.<sup>85</sup>

The town itself became something of an open site for colonial troops, who roamed freely. An African officer reported that, "bakers and butchers can only serve their clientele in hiding . . . as a constant stream of *tirailleurs* parades in front of these establishments, demanding to be served . . . the meager weekly rations intended for civilians." Not surprisingly, a black market in clothing, food, and alcohol flourished in the camps, "where everything [could] be had."<sup>86</sup> Pushed from the ranks in order to incorporate resistance fighters, resentful combat veterans mixed with former prisoners-of-war who had been captured in 1940. Both sets of men were impatient to be sent home, but a lack of shipping and other resources forced them to spend a cold and hungry winter in camps across southern France. Soldiers stationed around Fréjus, Nîmes, and Marseille sent a collective letter to "*Monsieur le Chef du Gouvernement Français*" asking if it was because of their skin color that they lacked adequate food, shelter, and clothing. Some of their comrades were swapping whatever they could for American uniforms, and all sorely missed "the celebrated American 'beans'" as they were reduced to eating boiled chestnuts.<sup>87</sup> The gravity of such complaints was made clear by outbreaks of violence in

<sup>81</sup> Désiré, report of November 13, 1926, SLOTFOM 2/4, CAOM. Lucie Cousturier died in 1925.

<sup>82</sup> Senghor died on November 25, 1927; *La Race Nègre* 1, no. 5 (May 1928).

<sup>83</sup> According to Nancy Lawler, this complaint eventually made its way to the minister of war; Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune: Ivoirien Tirailleurs of World War II* (Athens, Ohio, 1992), 90, n. 24.

<sup>84</sup> Rapport du Lt. Sekou Koné . . . au Gén. Commandant le GOC [*sic*] à Montpellier, May 20, 1946; Rapport Confidentiel, no author (Lt. Aho?), September 10, 1945, SLOTFOM 14/2, CAOM. On the photographer, see also Note of Renseignements Généraux, Draguinan, March 7, 1955, *Centre des Archives Contemporaines* (CAC, Fontainebleau) 0019850087, article 9.

<sup>85</sup> Rapport du Lt. Sekou Koné, May 24, 1946, no number, SLOTFOM 14/2, CAOM.

<sup>86</sup> Rapport confidentiel, no author (Lt. Aho?), September 10, 1945; also, Rapport du Lt. Koné, May 20, 1946, SLOTFOM 14/2, CAOM.

<sup>87</sup> "Copie de la lettre adressée le 21-9-45 par les Sénégalais de quelques centres de rapatriement à Monsieur le Chef du Gouvernement Français," appendix to Fernand Poujoulat, "Evolution de la mentalité des tirailleurs Sénégalais au cours de la guerre 1939-1945," *Mémoire, Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer* (ENFOM), 1945-1946, CAOM.

several garrison towns, including Fréjus, where a *tirailleur*, a gendarme, and a civilian were killed in a brawl that degenerated into a full-fledged riot.<sup>88</sup>

In such circumstances, it is possible that West African soldiers would have seen some truth in French poet Jacques Prévert's description of them as "the black slaves of Fréjus."<sup>89</sup> However, just a few years later, in an era of always-incomplete political assimilation, it is not likely that they would have agreed. During the Fourth Republic (1946–1958), Fréjus was the "veritable capitol of *la Coloniale*"<sup>90</sup> and the subject of a marching song, sung in Bambara, with the refrain "*awn bé ta Fréjus, awn bé ta Fréjus*" (we are going to Fréjus).<sup>91</sup> Throughout the 1950s, the colonial army became an increasingly prestigious institution for some African men, and most of the officer corps—and therefore several of the future presidents—of the independent francophone African states trained in Fréjus. In West African towns and cities, the French army screened recruitment films featuring footage of the camps outside Fréjus, which many veterans would have remembered clearly.<sup>92</sup>

Those memories came to the fore in the months immediately before independence, when a dam at Malpasset collapsed and sent a wall of water toward Fréjus, killing hundreds. Soldiers stationed outside the town assisted in the relief effort, while veterans in Bamako and elsewhere collected charitable contributions for the flood's surviving victims. While the actions of colonial troops during the floods of 1930 were taken as evidence of their "devotion" and "loyalty," the disaster of 1959 punctuated a much more complex political moment, as the viability of the French Community was very much in question. A Soudanese veterans' newspaper, representing an association advocating a negotiated independence with strong links to France, reported that some 12,000 francs had been raised for flood victims, and it proudly printed a letter of thanks from the mayor of Fréjus.<sup>93</sup> The warmth of the veterans' response, and the correspondence it generated, contrasted sharply with the tepid nature of veterans' nationalism.

The independence of France's sub-Saharan colonies came more quickly than had been expected and took effect while African soldiers were still in the field in Algeria. Mali quickly demanded the withdrawal of its nationals from Algeria, sought their repatriation, and, in 1961, expelled the French army from the national territory. Other newly independent nations (with the exception of Guinea) were much less aggressive, and the French military maintained a presence in most of the former colonies. However, the presence in the French ranks of soldiers who had become foreign nationals became a tricky political issue, and after the defeat in

<sup>88</sup> Poujoulat, "Evolution." See also Georges Pujol, "Nos soldats noirs d'aujourd'hui," *Mémoire*, ENFOM, 1945–1946; and Echenberg *Colonial Conscripts*, 99–104.

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Prévert, "Etranges Etrangers," in *La Pluie et le beau temps* (1955; Paris, 1981), 30.

<sup>90</sup> Pierre Carles, *Des Millions de soldats inconnus: La vie de tous les jours dans les Armées de la IV<sup>ème</sup> République* (Paris, 1982), 157.

<sup>91</sup> See Massip, "Rôle," 100. I have altered Massip's transcription. A soldier who trained there in the 1950s recalled that he and his comrades were free to go into town on the weekends but were prevented from doing so by the amount of homework their officers deliberately assigned on Fridays, due the following Monday morning; interview with the author, el-hajj Nianson Coulibaly, Koutiala (Mali), February 11, 1998.

<sup>92</sup> "Catalogue des Films du SCA (Service Cinématographique des Armées)," 17G520v143, ANS.

<sup>93</sup> *L'Ancien Combattant Soudanais*, issues of December 1959, January and February 1960. Such charitable giving by colonial subjects for metropolitan causes was not new; see Jennings, "Monuments to Frenchness?"

Algeria, France no longer needed the extra manpower. In 1964, the minister of armies ordered that all African and Malagasy soldiers be transferred to an "African battalion" in Fréjus. Aside from a small number of Guineans who had chosen the French army over Sékou Touré's Guinea and were unable to return home, all African soldiers would soon be discharged and repatriated. Excluded from this process of repatriation were a handful of African noncommissioned officers training for service in their respective national armies at the Ecole de Formation des Officiers du Régime Transitoire des Territoires d'Outre-mer (EFORTOM) outside Fréjus.<sup>94</sup> Thus the town's connections with West African soldiers continued after the formal dissolution of the empire they had represented and served, and schools like EFORTOM came to be seen as a vital means of maintaining "the moral links of the ex-Community."<sup>95</sup> Currently *les Troupes de la Marine* (successor to *la Coloniale*) maintain bases outside of town where they host periodic training exercises with members of other European and African armies. In addition, many former officers of the colonial military have retired to the Var, sharing the region with civilians and vacationers. An Association des amis du musée des troupes de marine supports a museum for the colonial troops, which opened in 1981 a few kilometers outside of town.<sup>96</sup>

As the scene (if not the product) of so much shared history, in the 1990s Fréjus was a logical site for the dedication of a monument that sought to "re-cast" a French-African relationship then in a period of transition.<sup>97</sup> Fifty years had passed since African troops helped liberate the town, but that memory intersected with more immediate political circumstances. In the early 1990s, Fréjus was the mayoral fief of the moderate François Léotard, who at the time of the monument's inauguration was minister of defense; however, Jean-Marie Le Pen's xenophobic *Front National* was then contesting the larger region of which Fréjus is a part. In such a political environment, the unanticipated ambivalence of the sculpture begs the question of what exactly it is meant to commemorate. (See Figure 3.) Are the soldiers whose figures are depicted foreigners or locals? What role do they have in the immediate community of Fréjus, or the larger national community? What do the weekenders, the tourists, and the West Africans selling belts and sunglasses on the promenade make of this statue? After all, in a poem on the statue's base, Léopold Sédar Senghor, former French soldier and Senegalese president, explicitly calls out to a "passer-by," addressing the stranger with the familiar "*tu*": "Passer-by, they fell, fraternally united, so that you could remain French." Senghor's poem implicitly poses the question of who is and who is not "French," and it reminds the attentive reader that men like those depicted died in defense of a nation-state of which they were not fully a part.

Whatever interpretations are produced, more than forty years after indepen-

<sup>94</sup> Other exceptions included a small number of beneficiaries of individual ministerial decisions who had maintained French citizenship, and a scattering of trainees at other military schools. Le Ministre des Armées to G.G. Militaire de Paris, Metz, Lyon, Gén. Commandant les 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 Région Militaire, etc., August 11, 1964, no. 10.443/EMAT/1.ES, 14H127, SHAT.

<sup>95</sup> Général-adjoint OM au chef d'état-major général des armées, Note à M. le Ministre des Armées (CM), December 5, 1960, no. 5478/BOM/3/SC, 14H216, SHAT.

<sup>96</sup> Massié, "Musée."

<sup>97</sup> On the evolution of that relationship since 1994, see Tony Chafer, "Franco-African Relations: No Longer so Exceptional?" *African Affairs* 101 (2002): 343–63.

dence the memory of the *tirailleurs Sénégalais* remains an awkward one for certain communities within the French nation. It occasionally makes unlikely allies of those who claim the nation's core values yet understand them differently, such as *Coloniale* veterans and the republican left. In another example, West African immigrants often appeal to memories of African participation in the world wars to assert their rights to remain in France; in doing so, they win the support of certain retired officers, even if others reject such logic outright.<sup>98</sup> It is true that military culture is highly particular, boasting dense webs of obligation and duty, an intense sense of history, and its own gendered and racial order. However, such networks are not limited to the *troupes de la marine*. In the colonial period, African dockworkers and other laborers maintained their own chains of contacts in France, making not only Marseille, but also Le Havre and Dunkirk "privileged sites of colonial history."<sup>99</sup> The burial of a controversial West African Sufi *shaykh* on French soil during World War II generated a new pilgrimage itinerary for some of his followers. More broadly, since the 1960s, well-connected businessmen, ex-colonial functionaries seconded to the Ministry of Culture, and former colonial surveillance officers attached to immigration services have represented other networks.<sup>100</sup> Emerging from the old *Ecole Coloniale*, colonial business circuits, intellectual circles, networks of migrants, and the remnants of a Gaullist cabal devoted to "African affairs" is not a single postcolonial world, but several of them, some of which overlap in Fréjus.<sup>101</sup>

IN FRÉJUS, THE STORY DOES NOT END on the promenade. Here intersections abound, and diverse histories fold into one another. The town's former role as a meeting point for West Africans, Europeans, and Southeast Asians makes possible new sites of memory based on the re-composition of past social and political forms. The point is best illustrated through yet another memorial, yet again in Fréjus. This is *le mémorial des guerres en Indochine*.<sup>102</sup>

The war in Indochina (1946–1954) was the first in which former subjects fought as citizens of the Fourth Republic. Some 60,000 of them were sub-Saharan Africans, and they represented around 16 percent of the total expeditionary force in 1954. Between 2,500 and 2,800 of them died in Southeast Asia.<sup>103</sup> Like their comrades, African soldiers in Asia were volunteers attracted by high pay, aggressive recruiting tactics, and new opportunities for advancement within the ranks.<sup>104</sup> In

<sup>98</sup> Mann, "Immigrants and Arguments"; interview with the author, Col. Maurice Rives, Paris, April 29, 2004.

<sup>99</sup> These networks were in turn distinct from those of Paris-based radical or communist African intellectuals of the interwar period. Ousmane Sembène, interview with Samba Gadjigo, *Contributions in Black Studies* 11 (1992–1993): 75–94, see 76.

<sup>100</sup> Catherine Hodeir, *Stratégies d'Empire: Le grand patronat colonial face à la décolonisation* (Paris, 2003); Chafer, "Franco-African Relations"; Alexis Spire, *Sociologie historique des pratiques administratives à l'égard des étrangers en France (1945–1975)* (doctoral thesis, Université de Nantes: 2003).

<sup>101</sup> Jennings analyzes a similar circumstance around Nogent-sur-Marne in "Remembering 'Other' Losses."

<sup>102</sup> The memorial commemorates both World War II and the anticolonial war of 1946–1954.

<sup>103</sup> Michel Bodin, *Les Africains dans la guerre d'Indochine, 1947–1954* (Paris, 2000), 6, 18, and 172.

<sup>104</sup> *Revue trimestrielle* (hereafter, RT), 3' trim. 1951, GSF to HCGG, November 20, 1951, no.

West Africa and abroad, their service became increasingly controversial, as left-leaning politicians and radicals called for their return, or even branded them traitors.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, the Viet Minh sought to persuade Africans to abandon the fight by pointing out their common predicament of colonial occupation. Their success, however modest, did convince the French military of the need to pay close attention to African morale.<sup>106</sup>

The memorial in Fréjus implicitly dismisses any doubts about African loyalty by incorporating African combat deaths into a larger, if intentionally vague, statement of unity. A somewhat confusing combination of techniques of commemoration, the site confronts the visitor with several modes of engagement. It contains a museum and an ossuary, as well as an ecumenical site for reflection intended for Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The military cemetery lies within a circle, over one hundred meters in diameter, which is formed by an elevated promenade that takes advantage of the site's gradual slope toward the Bay of Saint-Raphaël in the distance.<sup>107</sup> Within the circumference of the circle, tall, thick stone sepulchers are laid out in rows on two levels. On the lower level, in addition to the ossuary itself, are commemorative plaques of various veterans' associations. A long wall bears the name of all those "*morts pour la France*" in Indochina whose remains are not part of the memorial; they are listed by name and by year of death. The remains of civilians lie in a distinct space nearby.<sup>108</sup> At the entrance, a representative sculpture depicts two soldiers, one European and one Southeast Asian, who hoist an image of the Indochinese peninsula with the figure of a dragon curled around it.

Erected by a local veterans' association, the statue predates the rest of the memorial, which was built after France and Vietnam reached an agreement on the repatriation of the "French" dead in 1986.<sup>109</sup> Being "anchored in colonial history," Fréjus quickly offered to host a memorial to the wars in Indochina, and a necropolis was built to house the remains of some 24,000 soldiers and civilians.<sup>110</sup> But the

642/APAS; RT, 4' trim., 1951, GSF to HC, February 4, 1952, no. 61/APAS; and RT, draft (n.d.), IE3FR, ANM. See also Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, (1991), chap. 5.

<sup>105</sup> *Message du Conseiller d'Arboussier aux Prisonniers de Guerre Africains aux Vietnam. Bulletin des écoutes Radio Viet Minch [sic]*, October 15, 1952, no. 1749, 1affpol 2111/11, CAOM; and Renseignement, February 12, 1948, no. 167/C SU. Soudan no. 503, 2N44FR, ANM.

<sup>106</sup> See, among other documents, Note: Chef de Bataillon, chef de poste, SSDNFA/G/AOF/Togo, July 25, 1955, no. 3190, secret; 17G594v152/1, ANS.

<sup>107</sup> B. H., "Le Mémoire encerclée: Nécropole nationale, Fréjus," *Téchnique et Architecture*, 405 (December 1992): 110–11. See also "La Nécropole de Fréjus," *Le Moniteur-Architecture-AMC*, 42–43 (June–July 1993): 24–5; Gilles Davoine, "Lieu de culte oecuménique," *Le Moniteur-Architecture-AMC*, 77 (February 1996): 46–7; and B. H., "D'Or et de Silence," *Téchnique et Architecture*, 428 (November 1996): 60–1.

<sup>108</sup> The remains of civilians have been included "on an exceptional basis" (*à titre exceptionnel*). Ministère des Anciens combattants et victimes de guerre, *Le mémorial des guerres en Indochine*, pamphlet (Paris, n.d., 1998?). The civilians do not bear the administrative status, "died for France" (*morts pour la France*), and their cemetery was funded by the Ministry of the Interior; "La Nécropole de Fréjus." See also David L. Schalk, "Of Memories and Monuments: Paris and Algeria, Fréjus and Indochina," *Historical Reflections. Réflexions historiques* 28, no. 2 (2002): 241–53, 251–53, discuss the memorial.

<sup>109</sup> The memorial would be inaugurated on February 16, 1993. Philippe Rochette, "Fréjus, capitale de 'l'Indo,'" *Libération*, February 16, 1993, 6. See also, "Fréjus: La mémoire des soldats d'Indochine," *Le Provençal*, February 16, 1993, 24.

<sup>110</sup> Ministère des Anciens combattants, *Mémorial des guerres en Indochine*. The pamphlet puns, as the anchor is the symbol of *la Coloniale*.



protocol on repatriation raised an interesting problem: what would be done with the remains of soldiers from the former colonies, who did after all die as citizens of the Fourth Republic? The solution is clear; Alpha Camara, Benaissa ben Mohammed, and their sub-Saharan African and Maghrebi colleagues are named on the memorial itself, while their remains are interred inside its walls.

The necropolis has very little to do with Fréjus's monument for the *tirailleurs Sénégalais*. Although Serge Barcellini has aptly described Indochina (in the abstract) as the "memorial engine" of the French colonial possessions since the interwar years, the fact that the two memorials were dedicated within months of each other seems to be mere coincidence.<sup>111</sup> The Indochina memorial opened several years after Vietnam expressed its unwillingness to continue to allow French cemeteries to remain undisturbed,<sup>112</sup> and the monument to the *tirailleurs* was tied to the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Allied landing in the region (North and West African troops played a major role in the assault). Neither is entirely the product of an emerging *francophonie*, although both must be understood partly within that context.<sup>113</sup>

Questions of timing aside, the disassociation of the two memorials illustrates my point: Fréjus's unique history generates commemorative possibilities and creates new combinations of old forms of community. The Indochina memorial is precisely *not* what Panivong Norindr has described as a "new political allegor[y]" placed "in an unlikely site . . . the city of Fréjus."<sup>114</sup> Rather, the memorial reworks an old allegory and resuscitates an idea of political community, redefining it as a community of memory. And what site could be more likely? Fréjus has a distinct past, one not shared by the country as a whole. If the presence of the memorial, along with Norindr's other examples, is meant to suggest that Indochina has "come to occupy an 'important' place in French 'collective memory,'" then it is indeed overburdened, as Daniel Sherman has pointed out.<sup>115</sup> Indochina cannot become a synecdoche for "the empire,"<sup>116</sup> and for Fréjus we cannot read "France." Either move would be a reduction of local complexities and a dismissal of locality. "Memories . . . of Indochina take up rather limited space in the contemporary French imaginary," as Sherman points out.<sup>117</sup> Yet the necropolis brings the memory of a particular French Indochina—and the peculiar empire of the Fourth Republic—into a corner of the Hexagon that must be understood on its own terms. Indeed, if Fréjus is anchored in colonial history, the inverse is also true. The town and places like it offer immense potential for understanding the cultivation and evolution of historically grounded social and political formations, as well as the emergence of new ones.

<sup>111</sup> Barcellini, "Les Monuments," 121.

<sup>112</sup> Jean-Claude Pomonti, "Les restes de vingt-cinq mille soldats français morts en Indochine vont être rapatriés," *Le Monde*, September 27, 1986, 5.

<sup>113</sup> In 1986, the position of "secrétariat d'état à la francophonie" was created and a "francophone summit" was held. Since 1987, such summits have met biennially.

<sup>114</sup> Panivong Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina: French Colonial Ideology in Architecture, Film, and Literature* (Durham, N.C., 1996), 151–52.

<sup>115</sup> Sherman, "Arts and Sciences," 726. The internal quotes contain Norindr's words.

<sup>116</sup> Despite the claims of Nicola Cooper in *France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters* (New York, 2001).

<sup>117</sup> Sherman, "Arts and Sciences," 726.

By 1918, FRÉJUS WAS BOTH AN AFRICAN SITE and a truly “colonial” one, in several senses of the word. That phenomenon bears exploring, as do others like it. Studying the town’s military and memorial links with West Africa breaks down the distinction between colony and metropole and opens up new lines of inquiry; another trail leads to Southeast Asia. An analysis of the memorials themselves represents nothing more than a device that allows the identification of significant nodes on a shifting web of memory and meaning. The evolving designs of the monuments to the *tirailleurs*, as well as the ceremonies surrounding them, reflected emerging political and social forms. However, both the crowd’s stampede at Kati and contemporary references to the Bamako memorial as “Samori’s soldiers” underscore the dissonance and the ambiguity such memorials and ceremonies may engender. The ambivalence of the contemporary statue in Fréjus is a further case in point.

Some colonial sites were not so different from contemporary African cities and border trading posts, or for that matter from the African-populated Parisian neighborhoods and suburbs where new social forms and strategies are produced and reproduced.<sup>118</sup> However, comparison between places, or even between past and present social locations, may prove less rewarding than the integration of disparate sites and discursive maneuvers into a larger, more encompassing analytical framework that is at once localized and supra-local. The garrisons and memorials of *la Coloniale* suggest that a sense of place can provide, quite literally, a point of entry.

Yet why not study colonialism in the world that it claimed? One of the signal lessons of the “imperial turn” historiography has been that colonialism shaped both the imperial metropolises and their colonies, as well as the nations that emerged from them.<sup>119</sup> But can garrisons, ports, and other stopping places tell us something that empires, federations, and colonies do not? I argue that they can. Indeed without them, the new colonial history risks ending where it begins, in a national history of a different nation—one that takes the imperial archive into account but does not go beyond it—rather than in a post-national history that might better help historians understand the world in which they and others live.

<sup>118</sup> See Florence Bernault, “The Political Shaping of Sacred Locality in Brazzaville, 1959–1997,” in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa’s Urban Past* (Portsmouth, N.H., 2000); Janet Roitman, “The Garrison-Entrepôt,” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 150–152 (1998): 297–329; AbdouMalik Simone, “On the Worliding of African Cities,” *African Studies Review* 44, no. 2 (2001): 15–42; Diouf, “Murid Trade Diaspora”; and MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris*.

<sup>119</sup> Stoler and Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony”; Burton, *After the Imperial Turn*; Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York, 2000).

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