

Edited by Daniel E. Coslett

Neocolonialism and Built Heritage

Echoes of Empire
in Africa, Asia, and Europe



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5

Erasing the Ketchaoua Mosque

Catholicism, assimilation, and civic identity in France and Algeria

Ralph Ghoche

“Touche pas à mon église” (“Don’t touch my church”) reads the cover of the July 2015 issue of *Valeurs actuelles*, a French conservative news magazine. The slogan, and the movement that it sparked, were devised in response to comments made by Dalil Boubakeur, the rector of the Paris Grand Mosque, in a televised interview a month earlier. Asked whether disused churches in France could be transformed into mosques, Boubakeur had paused momentarily and answered: “Why not? It is the same God. The rites are similar, fraternal. I think that Muslims and Christians can coexist.”¹ The reply generated controversy, as it seemed to feed conspiracist suspicions, fueled by the growing power of identitarian movements, that a grander cultural displacement of the white, Christian population by Arab Muslims was underway.² So fierce was the backlash that Boubakeur published a retraction soon after the interview.³

The author of the *Valeurs actuelles* article, Denis Tillinac — though himself a conservative Catholic — performed some masterly sleights of hand as he shifted the ground of debate from religion to cultural values, from Christianity to such French Republican convictions as secularism and freedom of speech. He spoke of churches less as objects of Christian worship than as sites for the preservation of national identity, rooted in cultural landscapes and historical memory. The slogan “Don’t touch my church” too was deceptive and calculated as it co-opted the famous anti-racist slogan “Touche pas à mon pote” (“Don’t touch my buddy”) that issued from marches in the mid-1980s condemning a wave of race-based violence against adolescents of North African descent residing in France. Tillinac included a petition with the article, and while it garnered 25,000 signatures within a day, its first signatory attracted the most attention: the center-right former president Nicolas Sarkozy.⁴ Indeed, the issue gained popular support and cut across political lines in France; polling revealed that sixty-seven percent of the public were supportive of measures that restrict the conversion of churches into mosques.⁵

What is the neocolonial present? The debate over the conversion of churches into mosques in France, not to say the veritable restrictions over the construction of minarets and new mosques in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, point to a

renewed backlash against more inclusive models of European citizenship advanced in prior decades. Indeed, in recent years, the heads of state of France (Sarkozy), UK (David Cameron), Germany (Angela Merkel), and Spain (José Maria Aznar) have all proclaimed the failure of multiculturalism. While politicians may declare the end of multicultural policies — policies that most governments in Europe have never instituted nor endorsed — the multicultural reality of life in Europe's urban centers is more difficult to deny.⁶ In France, where multiculturalism has been treated with significant antipathy across the political spectrum, the visibility of ethnic and racial minorities on the "street" is not reflected in the nation's laws and constitution. Indeed, French legislators have tended to set citizenship against personal identity, and have asserted republican values over and against the recognition of minority groups.⁷ For example, Article 1 of the French constitution has pitted the "equality of all citizens before the law" against any "distinction of origin, race or religion" since 1946, thus rendering these minority distinctions juridically invisible.⁸ As Achille Mbembe has explained, "the perverse effect of this indifference to difference is thus the relative indifference to discrimination."⁹

In the wake of the professed failure of multiculturalism, prominent politicians and scholars have urged that we return to an idea with a long and fraught history: assimilation.¹⁰ Those, like Sarkozy, who have sought to rehabilitate the term, stress the responsibility of immigrants and their descendants to demonstrate their public attachment to French values while suppressing their cultural and religious heritage or relegating them to the private sphere. Attempts to rebrand the concept of assimilation run parallel to recent governmental efforts at curtailing discussion of France's colonial legacy.¹¹ Indeed, issues of minority visibility and cultural integration always seem to come back to the question of colonialism. Once the byword for colonial policies of cultural violence, mechanisms of assimilation in the nineteenth century aimed to erase the socio-religious identities of colonial subjects and absorb them into French singularity. But if these policies were previously directed at colonial subjects located on territory *d'outre-mer*, that is to say, beyond Continental Europe, discussions of assimilation today have centered on citizens and permanent residents of mainland France.

This chapter looks back to the French colony of Algeria in the opening decades of the modern colonial era, in the period between 1830, the year of France's conquest of Algiers, to 1870, just before the consolidation and mass colonization of Algeria under the government of the Third Republic.¹² It was during these years that the modern concept of colonialist assimilation was forged. If the question of assimilation today has run parallel to debates on visible markers of Islam in the public sphere, in nineteenth-century Algiers assimilationist policies also helped forge the architectural identity of the city. As with today's debates over the consensual conversion of disused churches, forcible conversion emerged as a key tactic by French administrators to reshape urban life in colonial Algeria. Indeed, between 1830 and 1862, buildings serving Muslim religious needs in occupied Algeria were reduced from 172 to 47.¹³ In Algiers alone, at least three of its five Catholic churches, including the Cathedral of Algiers

(formerly the Ketchaoua Mosque), were housed in mosques that had been expropriated.¹⁴

What is clear is that architecture has always been an important instrument in the process of framing citizenship and identity. This is something that the “*Touche pas à mon église*” movement knows all too well. Indeed, a close reading of Tillinac’s polemic shows that it centers, above all else, on the fear that the re-signification of churches into mosques would have a disruptive effect on national culture. In other words, at the very center of these debates is the concern that architecture might come to represent a differentiated form of citizenship rather than reproduce majoritarian norms, practices, and traditions, some long since eroded of meaning.

ARCHITECTURE AND ASSIMILATION

If Tillinac’s movement today has insisted on the relative historical purity of France’s architectural heritage as a way of enforcing cultural integration, an altogether different tactic was introduced in nineteenth-century Algeria in order to ensure the “pacification” and submission of the Algerian population: architectural hybridity and eclecticism. Even the famous neo-Gothic architect, Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, who waged a long campaign to uphold a purified account of the rise of the Gothic that was free of foreign influences, transformed his architectural vocabulary in a radical way in Algeria, where he infused his design for a commemorative monument with stylistic idioms drawn from Islamic and North African architectures.¹⁵ In fact, Viollet-le-Duc went further in his bid to see colonial Algeria populated by architectural hybrids. As *architecte des Édifices diocésains*, he appointed students from the most radically eclectic *atelier* in Paris, the atelier of Simon-Claude Constant-Dufeux, to head major church building projects in Algiers.

In the hands of the Catholic Church, architectural eclecticism emerged in mid-nineteenth-century Algiers as a style of forcible assimilation, one geared towards France’s new expansionist footing.¹⁶ Style in the nineteenth century was an intensely political and ideological phenomenon. In France, Romantic architects erected buildings with hybrid conjunctions of styles as a way to convey their sense of history’s past and future trajectory. Buildings such as Henri Labrouste’s Sainte-Geneviève Library, for example, portrayed France as the rightful heir of the westward migration of knowledge from Asia Minor, to Greece and Rome.¹⁷ Visitors moved through the pre-classical entrance hall, up the Renaissance staircase and into the modern, iron-supported reading room; in other words, as they moved through physical and geographical space, they also proceeded through historical time.

Transplanted to Algerian soil, the worldview that animated Romantic architects — and produced some of Paris’ most celebrated landmarks — would serve as a mandate for the appropriation and destruction of the cultural heritage of a people. Romantic architects looked at the territory as a zone of experimentation to test their architectural formulations for a healthy social order, even as these dominated or excluded the existing populations. The buildings they erected

recombined architectural elements in such a way as to validate France's expansion into North Africa, a conquest that was based on the premise of bringing civilization back to its original cradle in the "Orient."¹⁸ Here was an architecture of assimilation, in so far as it aimed to absorb and integrate the architectural heritage of Algeria — as foreign and alien as it might have been — into the consummate body of French identity.

Scholars have seen the practice of incorporating local and Arabic building forms into French colonial architecture as a phenomenon that emerged in the late nineteenth century and culminated in the rise of the so-called "Style Jonnart." The style was named after the governor general of Algeria, Charles Jonnart, who mandated the use of *néo-mauresque* elements in the design of public buildings in the first decade of the twentieth century. At first glance, the *néo-mauresque* buildings in Algeria appear to operate as reconciliatory images, elaborate and alluring displays suggesting the co-existence of two cultures: French and Algerian. This is the way they have tended to be interpreted. In *Arabisances*, an exhaustive study of *néo-mauresque* architecture in North Africa, François Béguin located the origins of such stylistic hybrids in the 1865 Arab kingdom policy of Napoleon III (r.1852–70) and in the new conservationist ethos of the Second Empire. The process of "arabization" of colonial architecture, therefore, reflected an interest in presenting France's "protecting" and "paternal" influence in the colonies, which led to new attempts to safeguard "ancestral forms of habitat and urban customs" and marked a shift from "armies and wars" to "political and psychological action."¹⁹

Some fifty years before Jonnart's policies were put into effect, however, the Catholic Church, working in conjunction with Romantic architects, spearheaded the deployment of such architectural hybrids in Algiers. Buildings such as Saint-Philippe Cathedral, the Bishop's palace, the Great Seminary at Kouba, and the Basilica of Notre-Dame d'Afrique were among the first colonial edifices in Algeria to integrate elements drawn from building traditions in the Middle East, North Africa, and Islamic Iberia [Figure 5.1]. Arguably the spate of religious buildings erected in Algiers in the mid-nineteenth century complicates the view that the introduction of arabizing elements into French colonial architecture served as conciliatory gestures. Looked at through the lens of the assimilationist theories of the age, particularly those propagated by church figures in Algeria, the reading proves as deceptive as it is dangerous.

Assimilation, as a set of practices and policies in French colonial history, has complex history. Most scholars chart the prevalence of assimilationist policies in French colonies as running parallel to the extent to which governmental administrations adhered to republican values. Modern assimilationist ideas emerged with the rise of Enlightenment ideals and were first applied as state policy by the National Convention a few years after the Revolution of 1789.²⁰ These policies were curtailed significantly during Napoleonic rule and the Bourbon Restoration although the "spirit of assimilation" remained among certain segments of the government leading to the introduction of modest assimilationist



Figure 5.1
The Church of Notre
Dame d'Afrique (Our
Lady of Africa), Algiers
(Jean-Eugène Fromageau,
1872). Photograph c.1880.
Source: Jean Geiser,
"Notre Dame d'Afrique,"
in *Souvenir d'Algérie*
(c.1880) [Getty Institute].

policies during the liberal constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe (r.1830–48).²¹ With the Republican revolution of 1848, assimilationist policies resurfaced in a much more overt way, most notably with the Constitution of November 4, 1848 which stated that the colonies were an integral part of French territory. The constitution led to the division of Algeria into three departments (Alger, Oran and Constantine) with representatives elected to the French parliament.²² Policy shifted again during the last decade of the Second Empire, in this case toward a new colonial ideal, albeit a contradictory one, which purported to respect the institutions of native Algerians while supporting the gradual acculturation of Algerians to French social norms.²³ "France has not come to destroy the nationality of a people," Napoleon III exclaimed on his tour of Algiers in 1865. Addressing Algerians directly, he continued: "I want to increase your well-being, include you more and more in the ruling of your country as well as the benefits of civilization."²⁴

In comparison to the fluctuating levels of governmental interest in instituting assimilationist policies in Algeria during the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church wavered little in its resolve to assimilate the Algerian population. In private channels, Church leaders employed the established term for such practices: religious conversion. In more public forums, however, terms like "assimilation" and "education" were used to convey the same message in a veiled way. The duplicity was the result of a prohibition on proselytizing to non-Christians by the Minister of War in Paris, which administered religious affairs in Algeria until 1848. The parts of Algeria that were "pacified" in the first dozen years of French rule were relatively small and largely urban, and French administrators sought to quell tensions with inhabitants. Moreover, anti-clericalism still pervaded military ranks during the July Monarchy.²⁵ The first bishop of Algiers, Antoine-Louis-Adolphe Dupuch,

was forced to resign in 1845 as a result of his missionary zeal, which had put him somewhat at odds with the Minister of War, and especially with Thomas Bugeaud, the governor general of Algeria.

The Algerian Church was still in its infancy when Dupuch was obliged to leave the bishopric. While priests and chaplains were on board the first ships to dock in Algiers during the invasion of 1830, the Catholic Church was only officially installed in the territory in 1838, with the signing of a papal bull establishing a diocese in Algiers. The Church's arrival in Algeria was celebrated as a reconquest of territory that had been Roman and Christian before the spread of Islam across North Africa. Dupuch played a central role in propagating the impression of French colonialism in Algeria as a historic revival of the spirit of Augustinian Christendom. In 1847, two years after his resignation, he published *Essai sur l'Algérie chrétienne, romaine et française* which incorporated long translated excerpts from *Africa Christiana* (1816–17) by the Italian Jesuit scholar and epigraphist Stefano Antonio Morcelli. The book summed up Dupuch's vision of Algeria. The first half was dedicated to Morcelli's account of the ecclesiological geography of Algeria before the spread of Islam, while the second half returned to these same sites in the present day, incorporating detailed descriptions of each Christian parish and its relevance to the ancient Christian history of North Africa.

Relations between the Church and colonial administrators improved significantly with the removal of Dupuch and the installation of Louis-Antoine-Augustin Pavy, who presided over the diocese from 1846 to 1866.²⁶ Pavy was more delicate than his predecessor in his dealings with officials in the government. His efforts were rewarded as funding for Church building projects measurably increased during his tenure.²⁷ But little advancement was made on the issue of the conversion of Algerians as governmental officials in Algeria and Paris remained firmly opposed. As one of his biographer explained, on this issue Pavy's "hands were tied."²⁸

Despite government prohibitions, Pavy was no less committed to evangelization than was Dupuch, though he employed tactics that were less conspicuous. In public, Pavy presented Christianity in much the same way as the government had, as a tolerant religion that promoted universal values. But in private channels, he maintained that the ultimate goal of the Church remained the conversion of Algerians.²⁹ These aims were laid out in the statutes governing the new diocese that were distributed to the clergy in Algeria. In the chapter titled "Relations with the Infidels" in the 1849 edition of the statutes, Pavy reminded priests to "never lose sight of our mission towards the Indigenous and neglect nothing that hastens the desired moment of their conversion."³⁰ Given the government ban on religious conversion, Pavy recommended that clergymen spend time "learning Arabic, the Koran and the habits and culture of the Indigenous in order to insinuate themselves more easily into the inner being ("esprit") of Algerians and even to show them, on occasion, the wrongheaded and immoral nature of their beliefs."³¹ Children, Pavy continued, should be particular targets of evangelization; he recommended luring them into churches and schools where they could be more effectively re-educated.

While Pavy's recommendations may have been discreet enough to go unnoticed among the general population, some of the tactics employed by other clergymen in Algeria awakened the attention of governmental officials. Such was the case with Joseph Girard, appointed by Pavy as Superior General of the Great Seminary in Kouba on the outskirts of Algiers. Girard had rounded up a dozen impoverished children from the streets of Algiers, bringing them to the seminary where he saw to it that they be "gradually initiated ... into this true civilization that scripture has brought the world."³² Details of these bold efforts at religious conversion were published in *l'Atlas*, a newspaper out of Oran, leading to an order from Paris to dismiss Girard.³³

Pavy's recommendations also emboldened Abbé Loyer, a priest in the Saharan town of Laghouat, who published *De l'assimilation des arabes* in 1866. The book was written as a rebuttal of Napoleon III's project for an "Arab Kingdom" inaugurated during the emperor's second visit to Algeria the year earlier. If the so-called Arab Kingdom policy urged respect for Algerian society and sought coexistence — albeit an unequal one — between French settlers and Algerians, Loyer advocated for the elimination of Algerian cultural institutions. What was needed to solve the "Arab question," he argued, was a two-pronged strategy: first the destruction of "Arab nationality," to be followed by its reconstitution into French identity. The final goal, Loyer explained, was for "the Arab to no longer be what he has been and for him to become what he is not yet, that is, French."³⁴

Loyer recommended a number of tactics, each more devious than the last. Brute force, he claimed, had not achieved assimilation, neither had soft-power approaches like the creation of the Bureaux Arabes (institutions formed as links between the Algerians and the French) and the introduction of the Spahis (French military regiments composed of Algerians). Moreover, Loyer criticized the first bishop of Algiers for his overt methods of converting Algerians to Catholicism. What were needed were "clandestine" means.³⁵ He laid out two such tactics. First, he called for members of the clergy to remake themselves into *marabouts* (the Maghrebi term for a Muslim religious leader) in order to penetrate Algerian society and gain the trust of tribal members. Second, he proposed that French juvenile delinquents and orphans — boys and girls — be embedded, primarily through marriage, into Algerian tribal families.

The tactics recommended by Loyer, as those by Pavy before him, all involved some form of hybridization, whether through inter-marriage or through the deliberate adoption of local language, custom, and dress. The ultimate aim, both men made clear, should not be misinterpreted: assimilation was an instrument of counter-insurgency and of conquest ("to render insurrections nearly impossible," Loyer writes) and it entailed the destruction of Algerian culture and not the creation of a new, syncretic society.³⁶ For Loyer, the "Arab" needed to be "absorbed into us," "melted," "melded," made "submissive," and "pacified." The most pressing threat to France's colonial mission, Loyer claimed, was "the arabization of the Frenchman;" assimilation was clearly conceived to act in one direction only.³⁷

TRANSFORMING THE KETCHAOUA MOSQUE

If mechanisms of assimilation entailed the destruction of Algerian cultural institutions, at an urban scale they involved the demolition, conversion, and re-signification of buildings, landscapes, and monuments. Saint-Philippe Cathedral was the most glaring example of such aims put into practice. At its origin, the church was the product of the forcible Christianization of one of the most revered Ottoman-era buildings in Algiers, the Ketchaoua Mosque [Figure 5.2]. The conversion of the building was carried out in a particularly brutal way: at noon on December 18, 1832, two years following France's military conquest of the city,

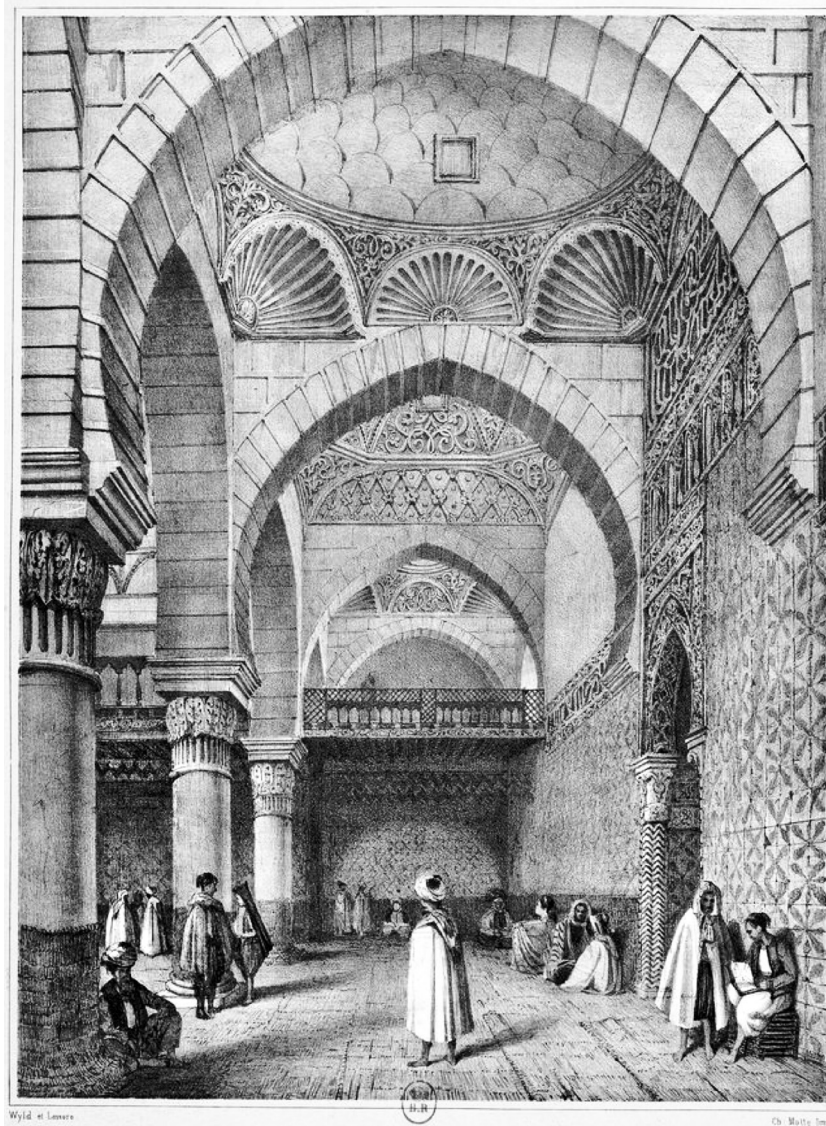


Figure 5.2
The interior of the Ketchaoua Mosque, Algiers. Lithograph 1833. Source: Lessore et Wylid, *Voyage pittoresque dans la régence d'Alger, pendant l'année 1833* (Paris: Ch. Motte, 1835) [Bibliothèque Nationale de France].

French troops stormed the mosque which had been barricaded by 4,000 worshippers amassed inside in order to stop its conversion.³⁸ At the time the Ketchaoua Mosque was among the most prestigious of Algiers' religious buildings and stood at the center of the city adjacent the former palace of the Ottoman Dey, which was now home to the French governor of Algiers. The order to forcibly convert the mosque was given by the governor who understood the symbolic importance of appropriating the seats of governmental and religious power and acted in contravention to a clause in the instrument of Algiers' surrender that guaranteed that Muslims would retain their places of worship. The brazen violation caused consternation even among some French officials.³⁹ The Christian cross and the

Figure 5.3
Plan of the restoration of the Cathedral of Saint-Philippe, with the domed interior of the former mosque integrated into the scheme, Algiers (Pierre-Auguste Guiauchain). Drawing 1843. Source: Archives Nationales (France), CP/F19 7593.

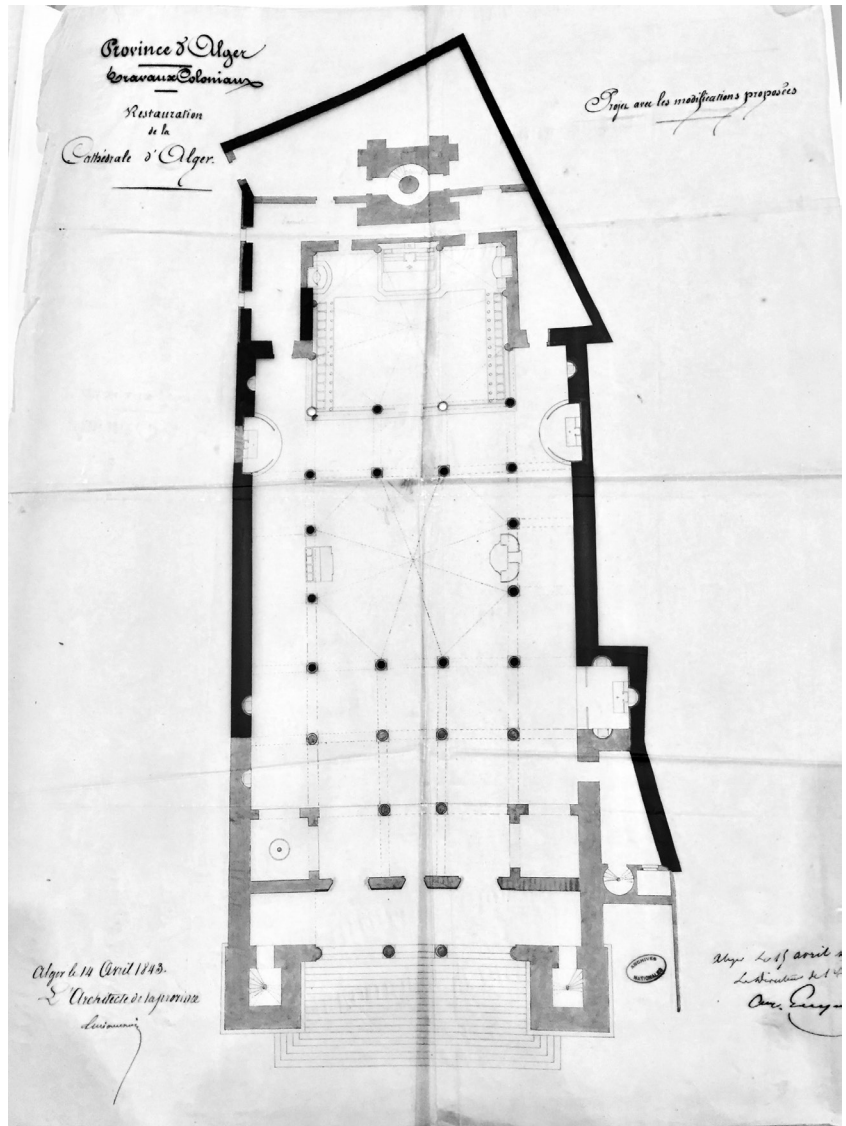


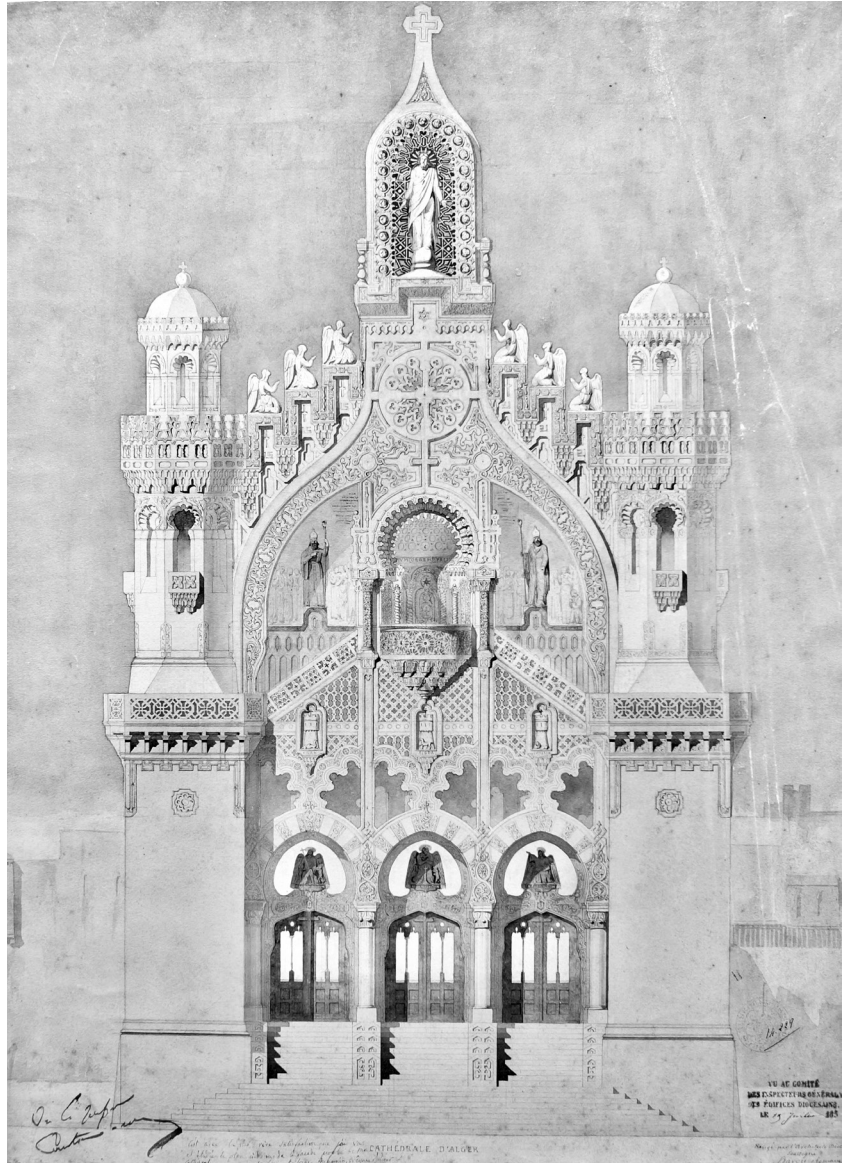


Figure 5.4
The Cathedral of
Saint-Philippe before
its completion in 1886,
Algiers. Photograph before
1886. Source: © InVisu
(CNRS-INHA).

French flag were immediately hoisted up on the building and canons fired from a nearby naval flotilla in celebration. The first mass held in the building was celebrated on Christmas Eve, just a week later, after modest transformations were undertaken adding a Christian altar and incorporating a statue of the Virgin Mary into the mihrab niche. The church was officially upgraded to cathedral status with the creation of the Diocese of Algiers in 1838 and was dedicated to the French king, Louis Philippe.

The year following the creation of the diocese, French military administrators, in conjunction with religious authorities, embarked on a decades-long process

Figure 5.5
Unbuilt scheme for the
façade of the Cathedral
of Saint-Philippe, Algiers
(Romain Harou-Romain).
Drawing 1856. Source:
© Ministère de la Culture
(France), Médiathèque
de l'architecture et du
patrimoine, diffusion
RMN-GP, 80-123-2003.



of transforming the cathedral in order to accommodate the growing number of officials, merchants, and colonists settling in Algiers (there were 117,366 Europeans in Algeria in 1848). By the end, no visible part of the original mosque building remained. Pierre-Auguste Guichain, the first of many architects to work on the project, presented plans for the reconstruction of the building in 1842, 1843, and 1848. As drawings of the retrofit show, initial work on the building encapsulated (or quite literally swallowed up) the old mosque within a new shell. The architect's intention to salvage the interior of the mosque was clearly rendered in the first drawings of the project, as was his aim to provide a new façade that reflected the

Islamic character of the original mosque and its setting [Figure 5.3]. Construction began on the façade, a choir, and the base of a new tower soon after Guiauchain's final design was prepared in 1848 [Figure 5.4].

Following Pavy's appointment as Bishop of Algiers in 1846, relations with the architects, which had been strained under Dupuch, improved significantly as Pavy began to play a more prominent role in the process of planning the renovation.⁴⁰ This, along with important changes in governance in the late 1840s, assured the Catholic Church greater control over the design of the cathedral.⁴¹ Indeed, a report on the state of the cathedral in 1853 by the Parisian architect Léon Vaudoyer made specific mention of the close collaboration between diocesan architects working on the cathedral and Pavy. Vaudoyer singled out a design by Romain Harou-Romain, Guiauchain's successor, as having been produced "under the inspiration of the bishop" [Figure 5.5].⁴² The drawing bears the marks of the bishop's admiration. "It is with the rarest satisfaction that I have seen and studied the drawing of the façade planned for my cathedral" is scrawled next to the signature of Pavy.⁴³

The design reworked Guiauchain's façade, with its subdued incorporation of local forms, into a frenzied mergence of elements drawn from Islamic and Christian architectural traditions. Stone surfaces were rendered into intricate geometric latticework that evoked Byzantine and Moorish patterns, corbels were remodeled into muqarnas, and multifoil arches recalling archways in the Córdoba Mosque (a fitting image given the building's conversion during the Iberian *reconquista*) were introduced above the entrance portico. A bishop's balcony was added at the center of the composition, flanked by representations of Saint Augustine, the fourth century Christian theologian and bishop of Hippo Regius (Bône until 1962, now Annaba), and Cyprian, a third century Berber convert and Bishop of Carthage.

If the composite nature of the scheme might seem to gesture towards the reconciliation of the two central religions in colonial Algeria, it is more likely that it reflected Pavy's assimilationist ideals that proposed employing the outward expressions of Algerian culture as a clandestine measure to destroy Algerian religious identity. Indeed, while the scheme was never realized — and Guiauchain's façade remained unchanged until 1886 — the architects who replaced Harou-Romain continued the strategy of intermixing Christian and Islamic elements, albeit in a less ostentatious way. Under Jean-Baptiste-Pierre-Honoré Féraud, starting in 1852, the last traces of the mosque were demolished, including the impressive octagonal dome and the surrounding marble columns and cupolas, and replaced with a barrel vault. Under Jean-Eugène Fromageau some years later, a dome was erected over the new choir and a crypt installed beneath [Figure 5.6]. The destruction of the Ketchaoua Mosque was followed by the building's reconstitution in a hybridized form. The dissonant effect produced by the juxtaposition of Islamic architectural elements topped with Christian religious symbols was not accidental, for it aimed to break the cultural association between the form of the building and its spiritual function in Islamic and Algerian society; in other words it aimed

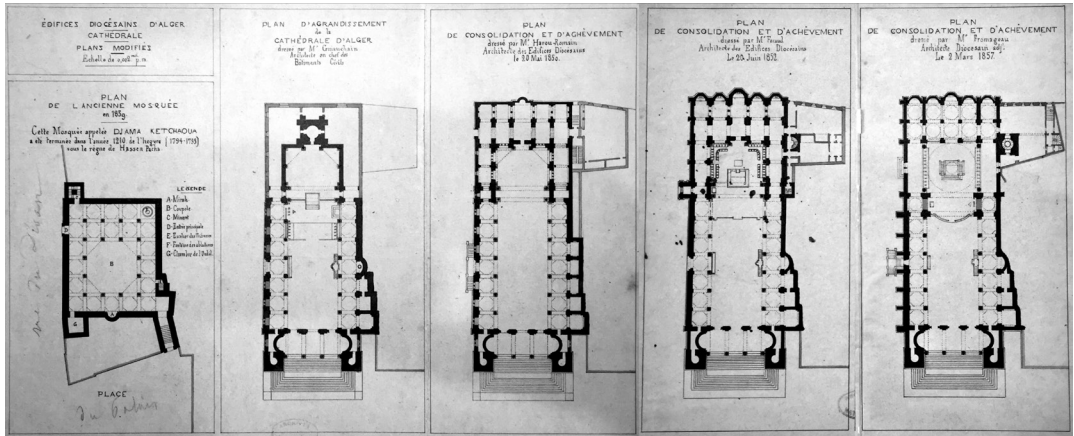


Figure 5.6
Planned alterations to the Cathedral of Saint-Philippe from 1838 to 1857, Algiers (Jean-Eugène Fromageau). Drawings 1860. Source: Archives Nationales (France), CP/ F19 7596.

to make clear to onlookers that the French held ultimate mastery and control over the culture of the colonized.

The particular way in which the two architectural vocabularies were conjoined likewise expressed French supremacy over its Muslim colonial subjects. The architects of the cathedral reconfigured the prevailing narratives that saw the Romanesque and the Gothic as emerging from Islamic building traditions in such a way as to make the Romanesque appear as the progenitor of Islamic architecture. This is most clear in the way that the Romanesque buttresses that line the lateral wall of the church quite literally support the Islamic cupolas [Figure 5.7]. The subtle misconstrual reinforced conventional European ideas regarding Arab architecture that characterized it as excelling in decoration, but as indifferent to structural expression. These orientalist assumptions reflected more widespread prejudices that saw the West as masculine and rational and the “Orient” as feminine and passive.

Situated between the Casbah and the port, in an area subjected to major building and demolitions, the cathedral presented a dramatic contrast to the austere neoclassicist buildings rising up in parallel formation around it. Indeed, in the first decades of the colonial occupation, there were no imposing Christian buildings and the few places of Christian worship that did exist in Algiers were housed in repurposed buildings without notable exterior expression. The absence of visible markers of Christianity in the city concerned Church leaders who believed that, if native Algerians lacked respect for their colonizers, it was because they perceived them to be insufficiently religious. They cited, for example, the criticisms of Emir Abd-el-Kader, the Algerian religious and military leader who led a rebellion against the French occupation. “Your religion? But you do not have a religion,” Abd-el-Kader reportedly exclaimed during the signing of the Tafna Treaty in 1837, adding that “if you were Christians as you pretend to be, you would have priests, churches, and we would be the best of friends.”⁴⁴ The renovation of Saint-Philippe Cathedral was thus envisioned as a monumental expression of Catholicism’s importance in the life of the colonizers and as a definitive statement

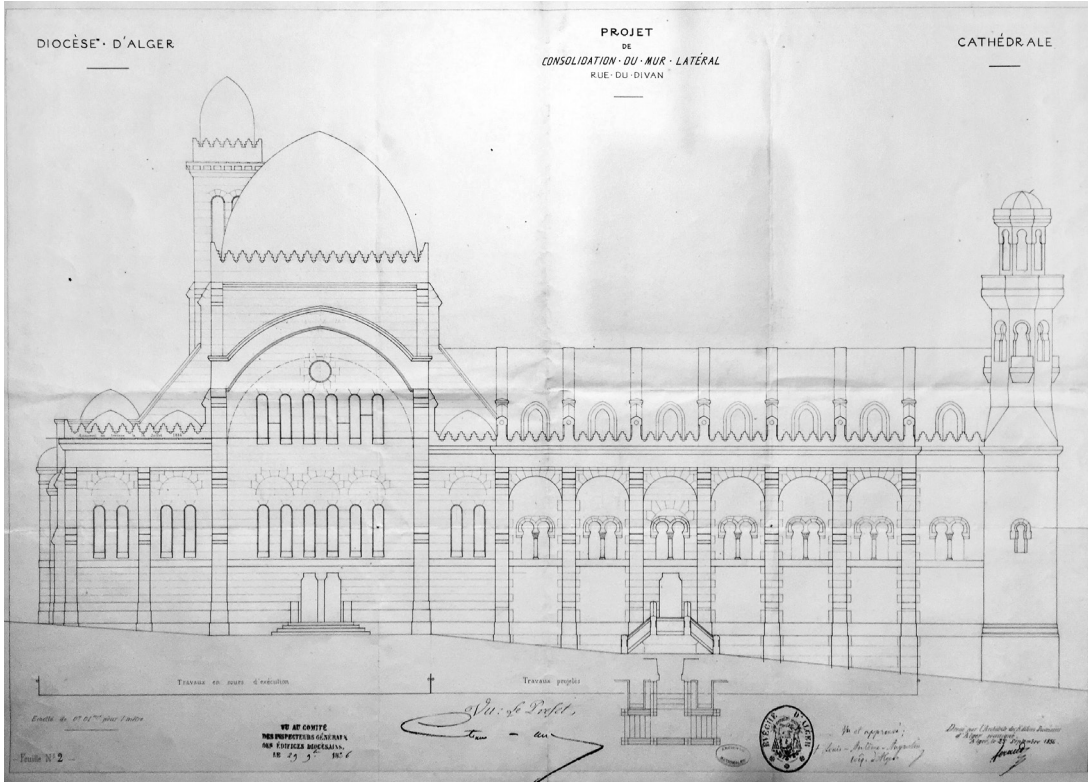


Figure 5.7
The lateral façade of the Cathedral of Saint-Philippe, Algiers (Jean-Eugène Fromageau). Drawing 1860. Source: Archives Nationales (France), CP/F19 7595.

of the Church's renewed presence in North Africa. It operated as a piece of architectural seduction, aggrandizing the Church's presence in Algiers in order to gain the respect of Algerians, while "indigenizing" Christianity within foreign soil.

POSTCOLONIAL REAPPROPRIATION OF THE KETCHAOUA MOSQUE

The cathedral remained much the same way as it was in the nineteenth century when on July 5, 1962, the day of Algerian independence from France, a group of 800 men and women rushed inside and reclaimed it as the central mosque of the city. The Ketchaoua Mosque officially reopened on the anniversary of the outbreak of the Algerian Revolution a few months later.⁴⁵ While the building was entirely transformed since it last served Algerian worshippers, the towers, horse-shoe arches, geometric tile work and countless other details from Islamic building traditions made for a natural fit for revived Muslim prayer.

The mosque has suffered damage from earthquakes and neglect in recent years, forcing its closure in 2006. The building reopened in April 2018, upon the conclusion of a four-year restoration project funded by the government of Turkey [Figure 5.8]. If the cathedral functioned as something of a monument to independence following its reconversion in 1962, that status has been complicated given the Turkish imprimatur on the recently renovated building. Indeed, French



Figure 5.8
The Ketchaoua Mosque
during the 2014–18
restoration funded by
the Turkish government,
Algiers. Photograph 2017.
Source: Daniel E. Coslett.

settler colonialism replaced Ottoman rule over Algiers in 1830 and, before its demolition and reconstruction by French architects, the Ketchaoua Mosque was an architectural relic of the Ottoman period. Beyond the altruistic motivations that may inform Turkey's largesse, the gesture seeks to summon the city's distant past as the Ottoman Regency of Algiers while ensuring the maintenance of Turkish national and religious power across the Muslim world.⁴⁶

Most recently, the Ketchaoua Mosque has re-entered public consciousness in the wake of the debates regarding Islamic spaces of worship in France. Critics of the “*Touche pas à mon église*” movement have seen the building, and its double conversion from a mosque to a church and back into a mosque, as presenting an instructive parallel to the recent polemic.⁴⁷ If today the suggestion to convert certain disused churches into mosques in a consensual manner has ignited public opinion, the indignation is at best disingenuous given the forcible conversions that haunt French colonial history. Indeed, the conversion of religious buildings was a key instrument of colonial domination during the initial decades of the French conquest of Algeria. Assimilation, as a tactic employed by the Catholic Church in Algeria in the nineteenth century, entailed nothing less than the destruction of Muslim cultural and religious institutions and the re-signification of its urban fabric and identity. While the return to notions of assimilation in recent years may bear

little in common with the violence endured by Algerians before independence, for Muslim minorities in France, the current hostility toward the consensual conversion of certain empty churches into mosques is part of the continued struggle for visibility. From the standpoint of multiculturalism, it is unjustified to see recent mosque building and suggestions of church conversions as evidence of Muslim rejection of French identity, and at worst, as a ploy to subvert the founding principles of Western civilization. Rather, the gradual increases in places of Muslim worship should be seen as a positive endeavor and as a manifestation of the desire of once colonized and displaced populations to establish themselves in France and express themselves more openly in the civic sphere.

NOTES

- 1 The interview appeared on Europe 1 the day that it appeared on television. See “Dalil Boubakeur: des églises pour servir au culte musulman? ‘Pourquoi pas’,” Europe 1, June 15, 2015, <http://www.europe1.fr/societe/dalil-boubakeur-le-ramadan-devrait-demarrer-jeudi-1355686>. All translations into English are my own unless stated otherwise.
- 2 Thomas Chatterton Williams provides a good overview of the rise of “the grand replacement” idea in France and its recent impact on American white nationalist movements. Thomas Chatterton Williams, “The French Origins of ‘You Will Not Replace Us’,” *The New Yorker* 93, no. 39 (December 4, 2017): 24–30.
- 3 It should be noted that very few churches have been transformed into spaces for Islamic prayer in France. An article on the “Touche pas à mon église” controversy in the newspaper *L’Obs* cites four conversions across France and highlights their relative rarity. Sarah Diffalah, “Transformer les églises abandonnées en mosquées, pourquoi pas?,” *L’Obs*, June 18, 2015, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20150617.OBS0987/transformer-les-eglises-abandonnees-en-mosquees-pourquoi-pas.html>.
- 4 Denis Tillinac, “Je signe l’appel de Denis Tillinac pour sauver nos églises,” *Valeurs actuelles*, July 15, 2015, <https://www.valeursactuelles.com/node/16673>.
- 5 Polling was conducted by the Institut Français d’Opinion Publique and covered by multiple media outlets. A detailed breakdown of the poll numbers was provided in *L’Express*. See “‘Ne touchez pas à nos églises!’: Sarkozy cosigne un appel dans Valeurs Actuelles,” *L’Express*, August 7, 2015, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/ne-touchez-pas-a-nos-eglises-sarkozy-cosigne-un-appel-dans-valeurs-actuelles_1697271.html.
- 6 Queen’s University (Canada) has produced a helpful online Multiculturalism Policy Index that compares multicultural policies across the Western democracies: “Multicultural Policies in Contemporary Democracies,” Queen’s University, <https://www.queensu.ca/mcp/immigrant-minorities/evidence>, accessed July 15, 2018.
- 7 As Charles Taylor has argued, “nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of living.” See Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1994), 25.
- 8 “Constitution of 4 October 1958,” Constitutional Council of the French Republic, http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/root/bank_mm/anglais/constitution_anglais.pdf, accessed July 15, 2018. The recognition of racial and ethnic

- minorities has been further eroded recently: on July 12, 2018, the French National Assembly voted unanimously to eliminate the term “race” from article 1 as part of a larger set of constitutional revisions. Members of visible minorities are thus caught in a contradictory state of affairs in France: they are rarely considered fully French by the population at large, and yet their background and cultural differences are left unrecognized by the state. See Jean Beaman, *Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France* (Oakland, CA: University of California, 2017).
- 9 Achille Mbembe, “Provincializing France?” *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011): 93.
 - 10 Charles Jaigu, “Sarkozy fait à nouveau l’éloge de l’assimilation,” *Le Figaro*, September 16, 2015, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2015/09/16/01002-20150916ART-FIG00395-sarkozy-fait-a-nouveau-l-eloge-de-l-assimilation.php>.
 - 11 One such measure was the Law on Recognition by the Nation and National Contribution in Favour of the French Repatriates of 2005 which contained an article (Article 4) that stipulated that school programs should “introduce all young French to the positive role France played overseas.” While the article was eliminated the following year, attempts at curtailing criticism of France’s colonial legacy have persisted. See Jan Jansen, “The Politics of Remembrance, Colonialism and the Algerian War of Independence in France,” in *A European Memory?: Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 286–88.
 - 12 The literature on colonial Algeria in the nineteenth century is vast. Recent book-length studies in English include Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2011); William Gallois, *A History of Violence in the Early Algerian Colony* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
 - 13 Darcie Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity: Religion and the End of Empire in France and Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2016), 38.
 - 14 “Bâtiments affectés aux cultes, 1850,” Archives Nationales d’Outre Mer, GGA 2N/43. The document also records that a total of eleven mosques were converted into Catholic churches throughout Algeria before 1850. The total number of expropriated mosques is much higher than what is documented in these files as many mosques were simply closed or converted to other functions.
 - 15 For a discussion of Viollet-le-Duc’s designs for the monument in Algiers, see Zeynep Çelik, “Commemorating the Empire: from Algiers to Damascus,” in *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture*, ed. Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 20–37; Martin Bressani, *Architecture and the Historical Imagination: Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, 1814–1879* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 413–15.
 - 16 The architecture of the Catholic Church in North Africa has been largely neglected by scholars. One notable exception is an essay by the editor of this volume. See Daniel E. Coslett, “(Re)creating a Christian Image Abroad: The Catholic Cathedrals of Protectorate-era Tunis,” in *Sacred Precincts: The Religious Architecture of Non-Muslim Communities across the Islamic World*, ed. Mohammad Gharipour (Boston, MA: Brill, 2015), 353–75.
 - 17 Henri Labrousse’s decision to have Raphael’s fresco, *The School of Athens*, repainted on the staircase wall of the library exemplifies this desire. In essence, Labrousse repurposed Renaissance Rome’s own appropriation of ancient Greek wisdom in such a way as to suggest a direct lineage and continuity between classical Greece, Renaissance Rome, and modern France.
 - 18 On the French conquest of Algeria as a return to a Roman and Christian past, see Nabila Oulebsir, “Rome ou l’Orient? Exploration, appropriation, recomposition

- (1830–1880),” in *Les usages du patrimoine: monuments, musées et politique coloniale en Algérie (1830–1930)* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2004), 25–157.
- 19 François Béguin, *Arabisations: Décor architectural et tracé urbain en Afrique du Nord, 1830–1950* (Paris: Dunod, c.1983), 14–16.
- 20 Raymond Betts points to the Constitution of Year III as a pivotal document enshrining the ideas of assimilation. See Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914* (New York: AMS, 1970), 13.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Napoleon III’s idea of an “Arab Kingdom” emerged in the 1860s and replaced the government’s previous position which encouraged the ruthless assimilation of Algerians and the destruction of their cultural and religious institutions. See Saliha Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire: Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541–1954* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 22.
- 24 Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), 31.
- 25 Marcel Emerit, “Le lutte entre les généraux et les prêtres aux débuts de l’Algérie française,” *Revue africaine* 97 (1953): 68.
- 26 On the tensions between the French military authority in Algeria and the clergy, see Emerit, “Le lutte.”
- 27 The number of official parishes increased from 29 to 187 during Pavy’s tenure. See Kyle Francis, “Catholic Missionaries in Colonial Algeria: Faith, Foreigners, and France’s Other Civilizing Mission, 1848–1883,” *French Historical Studies* 39, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 696.
- 28 Abbé Loyer, *Mgr Pavy, évêque d’Alger. Simple esquisse* (Paris: Callamel aîné, 1867), 34.
- 29 According to Pavy’s biographer, L.-C. Pavy (no apparent relation), the bishop hoped to see the Church and military combine their forces towards the common goal of converting Algerians to Christianity. L.-C. Pavy explained: “Such is, in effect, the dominance of the military on the Arab populations and on the *tolbas* [religious students] and marabouts, that the day that the military will seriously commit to missionary work, we shall see the resistance of the *indigènes* (natives) weaken and we will be able to work reasonably and productively ... on their conversion.” L.-C. Pavy, *Monseigneur Pavy, sa vie et ses oeuvres ou la nouvelle église d’Afrique*, v. 1 (Paris: Lecoffre, Fils et Cie., 1870), 330.
- 30 Louis-Antoine-Augustin Pavy, *Statuts du diocèse d’Alger* (Alger: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1849), 52.
- 31 Pavy, *Statuts*, 34.
- 32 L.C. Pavy, *Monseigneur Pavy*, v. 1, 36.
- 33 The order was rescinded. Upon hearing of Girard’s imminent dismissal, Pavy stormed into the Palace of the Governor General and convinced Aimable Péliissier not to follow through with the orders. Pavy, *Monseigneur Pavy*, v. 1, 492.
- 34 Abbé Loyer, *De l’assimilation des Arabes* (Paris: Challamel aîné, 1866), 2.
- 35 Loyer described the tactics to subdue the Algerian population as “occulte plutôt qu’apparente.” *Ibid.*, 105.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 99.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 140.
- 38 For a contemporaneous account of the incident, see Florian Pharaon, *Episode de La Conquête. Cathédrale et Mosquée* (Paris: A. Lahure, 1880).
- 39 The conversion of the mosque was criticized by government officials and colonial administrators. The civil intendant of Algiers, Baron Pichon, tried to dissuade René

- Savary, Duc de Rovigo, working back channels to secure a less notable mosque for conversion. "You have been given the most poorly located and least venerated mosque in the city. I don't want it! I want the most beautiful [mosque]!" the Duc de Rovigo was reported to have replied. Jean-de-Dieu Soult, the Minister of War, fired off a letter from Paris stating that, while he shared the belief that principles of Christianity "needed to run parallel to military efforts at progressing civilization," he warned that such drastic measures as the expropriation of Algiers' central mosque could "alienate the French from Muslim populations." ANOM F/80/1627.
- 40 The Catholic priest Jules Tournier noted that Dupuch often complained about the architects working on the cathedral. See Jules Tournier, *La conquête religieuse de l'Algérie 1830–1845*. 6th edition (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1930), 111–12.
- 41 The most important change occurred in 1848, after the establishment of the Second Republic. First, the military's hold over religious affairs was significantly lessened as governmental decrees transferred oversight of Christian and Jewish religious affairs from the Minister of War to the Minister of Public Instruction and Religion (Ministère de l'Instruction Publiques et des Cultes). In addition, oversight of the cathedral was transferred from the Service des bâtiments civiles in Paris to the Service des édifices diocésains, which was newly established in the colony.
- 42 Léon Vaudoier, Rapport de l'Inspecteur générale des édifices diocésains en 1853. Archives nationales, F/19/*/1822, F/19/*/1823.
- 43 Romain Harou-Romain, *Élévation de la façade principale*. Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 80/123/2003.
- 44 Quoted in Emerit, "Le lutte," 66–67.
- 45 Darcie Fontaine, "After the Exodus: Catholics and the Formation of Postcolonial Identity in Algeria," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 106.
- 46 There are thinly concealed geopolitical motivations at work in Turkey's involvement with the renovation of the Ketchaoua Mosque. For a detailed analysis Turkish investment in the construction of mosques across the Muslim world, see chapter 1 in Kishwar Rizvi, *The Transnational Mosque: Architecture and Historical Memory in the Contemporary Middle East* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2015).
- 47 See Chems Eddine Chitour, "Les lieux de culte musulman en France: La quadrature du cercle," *Réseau international*, July 26, 2015, <http://reseauinternational.net/les-lieux-de-culte-musulman-en-france-la-quadrature-du-cercle>; Sarah Diffalah, "Transformer les églises abandonnées en mosquées, pourquoi pas?," *l'Obs*, June 18, 2015, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20150617.OBS0987/transformer-les-eglises-abandonnees-en-mosquees-pourquoi-pas.html>.