

The Image of Algeria in British Writings 1930-1830



Ali Tablit - University of Algiers 2

خلاصة

تتناول هذه الورقة صورة الجزائر في الكتابات البريطانية بعد الاحتلال الفرنسي للجزائر لمدة قرن من الزمن من الكتاب والمؤرخين والفنانين والجالية البريطانية المقيمة في العاصمة والتي كانت تعيش في أعالي مصطفى باشا بنظامها الغذائي والصحفي والبنكي، وكذا السواح والمرضى القادمين للعلاج في الجنوب الجزائري بالرمال.

Keywords :

Algiers, British, Mediterranean, Maghreb, Dey, Regency, colony, consul and hotel.

Since independence the Maghreb countries have been occupied almost exclusively with the establishment of a new society. An important part of this activity has been directed towards a solution to the problem of symbols and values: the construction of an image of themselves for their own contemplation and for export to the world outside. One aspect of this general problem of acculturation is concerned with interpretations of history and the evaluation of one's own place in historical evolution. Starting from the premise that Mahgreb history has largely been a monopoly

of French scholarship since 1830, contemporary historical writers in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco have found it essential, before entering upon problems of historical interpretation, to rewrite their own history. Discovery of this first requisite has generated a spirit shared by all those writers preoccupied with this problem, however much they might disagree on solutions to it, which is best expressed by the phrase

“décolonizer l’histoire”. The subject is vast, and I should like here only to indicate several of the problems, with their proposed solutions, so far by writers dealing with the history of Algeria.

The Mediterranean region holds a unique place in world history. It served as a cradle for civilization and nursed it in its infancy. Then as nations developed, it became the center of competition and rivalry. Persia, Greece, Carthage, Rome, and Venice, each in turn, attained great heights of achievement. To most of the early powers the Mediterranean area was the limit of the known world; but gradually the more venturesome extended their activities beyond the limits of

that great inland sea to the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. Mediterranean cities no longer held a monopoly on world trade. They were gradually superseded by the great entrepôts on the Atlantic. Civilization passed from an inland sea stage to an oceanic one. Sailors turned their ships towards the Americas and the Far East.⁽¹⁾

The successful rounding of the Cape of Good Hope and the circumnavigation of the earth eventually broke the prestige of Venice, the last of the early Mediterranean powers. That, along with the discovery of the vast territorial expanse of the western hemisphere, shifted the commercial routes to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Venice, realizing the inevitable loss of her prestige, contemplated as early as the sixteenth century the construction of a canal connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea in order to maintain her commercial supremacy.⁽²⁾ The canal was not started, but the fact that it was even discussed at this early date indicated that its possibilities were realized. The futile dream of Venice was destined to become a reality in a later period.⁽³⁾

The Mediterranean, besides being a convenient route for commerce of the East, was beginning to develop centers for trade. British merchants, for example, found ready markets for their commodities in the newly established Greek state.

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This was another cause, and a very effective one, for the increased interest of the British in a region that had been so long neglected. Diplomacy, often a vehicle for commercial interests, followed the British trader in the Mediterranean and attempted to promote his interests by insisting on a territorial status quo. France was one of the powers which Great Britain feared might disturb the established order.

Anglo-Saxon authors have devoted precious few original studies to the Maghreb. All contributions to the history of this area, which includes the whole of Africa north of the Sahara from the Atlantic Ocean to the western borders of Egypt, tend to be too dependent on earlier French interpretations. With respect to Algeria during the nineteenth century, of course, most documents are in French. English and American writers,

however, have a different way of looking at things, a particular approach that is quite apart from that of French scholars. In this difference lies the possibility of new contributions by English writers. But the best English studies of the Maghreb do not offer much that is new.

English studies of Algerian history are rarer than studies of the Maghreb in general. Indeed, only one period in the history of Algeria has really interested British and American authors: the revolutionary era which extended from 1954 to 1962. Books on this recent introductory chapters that tell the story of the nineteenth century. But these accounts are practically always based on the interpretations of the two or three leading French historians of Algeria and include, to everyone's credit, the studies of Ch. A. Julien, and Ch. R. Ageron.

One paradox exists with respect to the scarcity of studies of Algerian history in English: the only complete and specifically Algerian bibliography is that of R. Playfair, an Englishman and long-time resident of Algiers. This reference is to A Bibliography of Algeria from

the expedition of Charles V, in 1541, to 1871 (London, the Royal Geographical Society, n. d (1889), and its complement by the same author, supplement to the Bibliography of Algeria from the earliest Times to 1895 (1898).⁵ .

The most interesting archives outside France are those of the Public Record Office in London. A few documents deposited there are concerned with Algerian problems and were written by British consuls in Algiers. Many more reports originating from the consulates of Great Britain in Tangier and in Tunis deal indirectly with Algerian questions. The London Missionary Society to Jews, which had a representative in Algeria as early as 1857, has its own archives. Another group, the North African Mission, has left a magazine the file of which may be consulted at Yale University.

The course of British relations with Algiers throughout first phase, when it was the main object of England to restrain privateer and captivity-an early example of non-tariff barrier to trade, was punctuated by a series of treaties of amity, alternating

with naval expeditions and engagements on the British side and renewed bouts of piracy and prize taking on the part of Algiers .The first such Treaty of Peace and Commerce was negotiated at Constantinople in 1623 by Sir Thomas Roe, three years after Admiral Maunsell had failed with threats of naval bombardment of Algiers to secure an agreement on behalf of King James I on the mutual termination of privateer. It looks as if the Algerian record of observation of this treaty's provisions may have been more scrupulous than the English. Provoked by the activities of the English sea captains, Algiers denounced this agreement in 1629. In the next few years there was a succession of naval skirmishes, and some Algerian corsairs raided as far as the southern coasts of England and Ireland, our boldest exploit being the capture of the inhabitants of the village of Baltimore, near Cork, 1631.As the Irish poet , Thomas Osborne Davis, subsequently put it,
The yell of Allah breaks above
the prayer and shriek and roar
Oh blessed God, the Algerine is
Lord of Baltimore.

This spell of hostility was brought to a close by King Charles I with the dispatch of two Parliamentary missions to Algiers in 1643 and 1646. The second of these, led by Edmund Casson, negotiated a fresh treaty with the Dey, under which 244 English captives were to be freed and assurances of future safe passage were obtained. But, in those turbulent times of the English Civil War, Parliament failed to come up with the ransom money, and the unfortunate Casson died at Algiers eight years later, still awaiting funds.

Oliver Cromwell's characteristic reaction on taking over power was to send a naval expedition under Admiral Blake to subdue both Tunis and Algiers. Blake attacked Tunis, and at Algiers was able to renew Casson's treaty, as part of a policy of securing Algerian support against Spain. But there were subsequent breaches by both sides, until Admiral Lawson managed to re-establish relations for King Charles II at the Restoration. Disputes and prize taking resumed, however, and in 1671 Sir Thomas Allen freed some 250 captives by force and burnt a part of the Algerian

fleet at Bedjaia. Following fresh hostilities in the 1670s in which Samuel Pepys, as Secretary of the Navy, had a hand in the design of agreed Admiralty passes for free navigation, Admiral Herbert succeeded in 1682 in agreeing a fresh treaty with the Dey Baba Hassan, which was to remain in force right up to the French invasion and deposition of the Dey in 1830. It was renewed on behalf of each successive British monarch up to that time.

Good relation with Algiers became of particular importance for Britain during the 18th century, when Algiers's supplies and goodwill helped sustain Britain's military campaigns against France.⁽⁶⁾

"The places whence provisions are usually drawn, in time of war, are the Black Sea, the Archipelago, Egypt, and the Barbary States. The first three resources failed us more than once in the course of the late long and arduous struggle, and must always be liable to interruption from war on the plague; but the States of Barbary failed us only when they were themselves suffering under the calamity of famine. Rarely has any of them shewn an unwillingness to

afford us supplies of cattle and corn, or to furnish our ships of war with fresh provisions, free of all duties, whenever they called at any of their ports; even when at war with Turkey, to which the three states bordering on the Mediterranean are, nominally at least, Pashlicks, they never once attempted to shut their ports against us. In vain did Bonaparte dispatch his emissaries, distribute his bribes, employ his promises and his threats, to induce those states to enter his views, and to withhold those supplies, which, he well knew, would have been the first step towards crippling our fleet, and transferring to France the naval superiority in the Mediterranean. As far, then, as national interests are concerned, it would be an act of madness for Great Britain to join in the holy league which Sir Sidney Smith and his foreign friends have been projecting. It would be worse than madness- it would be nothing short of a direct infringement of justice and good faith. Our treaties with them are of longer standing than with any other power, the date of the first with Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli being that of April 23, 1662⁽⁷⁾, and

with Morocco, 1721; yet these treaties, generally speaking, have been held sacred by them. Among other advantages which Great Britain derives from these treaties, it is stipulated, ' that no subject of His Majesty shall be bought or sold or made a slave; not even if taken on board a vessel at enmity with those states, provided he be a passenger; that all British vessels may freely pass the seas without any search, hindrance, or molestation, on producing a pass from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty; that neither the goods shall be seized, nor the men made slaves, belonging to shipwrecked vessels; and that our ships of war shall receive provisions at the several port, free of duty.'⁽⁸⁾

-if, at any time, any of those stipulations have been violated by the unruly and piratical subjects of those states, immediate reparation has always been made.

Consulship in the Regency

Most of the European naval powers maintained consulates at Algiers. The largest part of their function was to transact business with the Regency, issue

passports for ships and guarantee the payment of tribute due by treaty from their government, look after captives from their own country and negotiate their release.

Until the early 19th century, these consuls were rarely professional diplomats. They came from different backgrounds, although most were traders, layers, soldiers, seamen, travelers, and religion-men.

Under these circumstances, it was accepted practice that consuls should enter into business transactions of their own, which often led to friction and tension with the Dey when the expected payment or goods failed to materialize. The pretext for the sending of an expeditionary force and the occupation of the country by the French troops in 1830 was one such incident in which the Dey, infuriated by the French consul's casualness regarding a long overdue debt for Algerian deliveries of grain, had "struck" him with his fan. The French government decided to make the incident a matter of national honor and three years later sent a punitive expedition against Algiers.(8)

EARLY BRITISH TRA-

VELERS IN THE RE- GENCY

The first English narratives of travel about Algeria began to appear in the 18th century. More reliable than the earlier accounts of the Trinitarian Fathers or the tales of captives, they provide historians with an invaluable source of first-hand information on 18th century Algeria.

Thomas Shaw was probably the most famous of those early Europeans visitors who traveled to the Maghreb. The mass information he provided in his *Travels and Observations...* (1737) was still relevant and usable nearly a century later, as the French commanding staff discovered when they prepared to invade the country.

Shaw was chaplain of the English Consulate from 1720 to 1737. His extensive travels in the Regency during the twelve years he spent here resulted in a most comprehensive treatise in which he provided a wealth of information not only the geography, climate, cultures and fauna of the Regency but also on its government, military forces, revenues, religion, local customs and judicial system.

Forty years later, in the second

half of the 18th century, traveling literally in the footsteps of Shaw, James Bruce (1730-1794), the future explorer of the source of the blue Nile, was the first European to make a voyage of scientific discovery to the region.

In March 1763, he arrived at Algiers where he had been appointed as Consul-General with a commission to study the Roman ruins which had been identified and described by Shaw. Between 1765 and 1766, he made a journey into the interior, which took him to the Aurès Mountains. The drawings which Bruce made with the help of Luigi Balugani, the Italian artist who accompanied him on his mission, were mainly concerned with the remnants of ancient civilizations.

Among the travelers who visited Algeria in the late 1830's and early 1840's, two were to leave important records of their impressions of the country: the poet Thomas Campbell and the traveler Alexander Kinglake. Thomas Campbell was one of the first English travelers to visit Algeria after the French occupation. His intention was "to take a deliberate inspection

of the changes produced by the event." In July 1834 he set out on the 'Grand Tour'.

Campbell spent nine months in Algeria. Letters from the South were published in 1837. It is a record of his visit, of the incidents of the voyage. He met the American Consul who had been an eye-witness to the taking of Algiers by the French troops and who could tell many interesting stories and detail.⁽⁹⁾

The Letters add little to our information on the social and political condition of Algeria in the early years of the conquest. Campbell was kindly treated by the French army commanders in Algeria. He was the guest of General Voirol, met General Desmichel just before his new appointment as Commandant for Oran; he accompanied General Trézl and his brigade in an excursion in the interior of the country, questioning his various hosts and collecting material related to the recent events in Algeria.⁽¹⁰⁾

Alexander Kinglake is mainly known as the author of *Eothen*, a travel book he wrote after a journey that took him in 1834 from London to the East, first across Europe via Prague and

Vienna to Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon, Palestine and through the Sinai desert to Cairo. Several years later, Kinglake embarked on a journey to Algiers. The diary he kept on that journey must have been intended for future use but unfortunately, it remained in the form of a manuscript.

There is no evidence in his journal that Kinglake ever questioned the legitimacy of the French presence in Algeria. He set off for Algiers in August 1845. Back in Algiers, Kinglake visited the Great Mosque and noted that one of the clocks kept there for determining the hour of the call to prayers, had been presented to the Dey in former times by the English Consul at Algiers. He commented that the policy of confiscation of the Mosques properties and revenues generally adopted by the French, has created political discontent among the moors of the cities and that there was "a noyau of disaffection in every mosque". This rare political observation is confirmed after a visit of the Casbah, the old Moorish quarter of the city.⁽¹¹⁾

Wilfrid Scawen and Lady Anne Blunt

Quite unlike Kinglake, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who was to become famous for his travels in the Middle East and Arabia, was more critical of the French presence in Algeria. In fact, the journey he made to Algeria some thirty years after Kinglake undoubtedly left its mark on him and provided support for the anti-imperialist views for which he was to become notorious. In the early months of 1874, Blunt traveled with Lady Anne to Algeria. The Blunts shared a common interest for Arab horses which brought them to visit the northern fringes of the Algerian desert in search for good specimen of horses for their stud farm in Sussex. He found his sympathies going to the Arab natives whom he considered as victims of an act of open aggression by a Western nation. Images of the desert provided Blunt with the subject matter of one of the rare poem inspired by his journey to Algeria. The Oasis of Sidi Khaled is obviously based on an actual trip he made to Sidi Khaled, an oasis of palm-tree groves watered by the Oued Djedi in the Bou-saada-Biskra basin on the pre-Saharan fringes⁽¹²⁾

The French conquest

The expedition of Algiers was not connected with the colonial policy of the Restoration Bourbon monarchy, but was a make-shift expedient for internal political consumption, carried out by a government in difficulty seeking the prestige of a military victory. Behind it lay a confused history of debts involving France, the Dey and two Jewish merchants, which had dragged on since 1798 and culminated in 1827 with the severing of diplomatic relations when the Dey Hussein "struck" the French consul.

France reacted by imposing a naval blockade which lasted for three years, and the Dey retaliated with the destruction of the French trading-posts at Annaba and la Calle. He sent to Constantinople for Turkish troops, although in reply the Grand Vizier dispatched only a single diplomat, Taher Pasha.⁽¹³⁾

On 14 June an army of more than 37,000 men disembarked in the bay of Sidi Fredj to the west of Algiers. On 19 June they repulsed an attack by the Turks reinforced by natives, and ten days later launched

their own attack on the so-called fort Emperor which protected Algiers. The capture of the fort decided the fate of the city. On 5 July, the Dey affixed his seal to the agreement to surrender Algiers and the casbah. The French commander de Bourmont guaranteed to the inhabitants of all classes respect for their liberty, their religion, their property, their trade and their women shall be respected.

The expedition had been regarded by Europe as an expedition to chastise an insult: it was turned out that it was a conquest. Bourmont proceeded to take all the necessary measures for retaining the regency, as a French settlement.

In the main time, the revolution had taken place at Paris; and general Clausel was sent by the new government to supersede Bourmont, who forthwith proceeded to Britain, without taking France in his way, to render any account of the treasure which had been found in Algiers.

Position of diplomatic agents after 1830

The French conquest of Algiers in 1830, put an end to many of

the privileges enjoyed by the consuls resident in Algiers. They held no other credentials than those to the Dey, but the French refused to recognize their position as “diplomatic agents” R. St. John maintained that the French did all to annoy any irritate him and to debase Britain’s official character in Algiers.

The colonial office had left him without specific instructions, although Goderich had warned the consul of the necessity of conducting himself in his relations with the French Authorities “which that courtesy and respect which should mark the intercourse between the agents of friendly governments”. St. John had been warned also to abstain from making application to the French for diplomatic privileges. It was obvious that before long the problem of the consul’s position must come under the notice of the foreign secretary.

Palmerston was not the man to acquiesce in a position in which any British agent in the Mediterranean was exempt from his control. From May 1832, his advice conditioned the instructions sent to Algiers from

the colonial Office.

St. John was advice to send copies in his reports to the British ambassador at Paris, and to send them by, safe channels only. The foreign secretary was kept informed of events in Algiers by way of Paris, and through inter-department correspondence from the colonial office.

The Administration of Algeria

When the French army took possession of Algeria in 1830 France was as much surprised as the rest of the world. No provision even for the occupation of Algiers had been made, no project of organization had been devised; all was uncertainty and disorder, and no one could foresee what the next step would be. The conquest, however, proceeded from day , and in 1834 a Royal Ordinance established regulations for the conduct of the public service. A Governor –general was appointed under the Minister of War, and the new colony was placed under what has been named the *Régime des Ordonnances*. Quartermaster Civil, under the authority of the

Governor –General, centralized the various services, with the exception of Finance and Justice, which were placed under a special functionary; a *Direction des Affaires Arabes* was also created, at one time confided to native chief, and at another to a French officer. Thus commenced the system of dual government which for many years was productive of the most deplorable results.

The colony was now for the first time officially designated Algeria, and it was divided into three provinces, each of which was subdivided into three distinct parts, differently governed-civil, mixed, as far as Europeans were concerned; each arrondissement was under a Sous-Director de l'Intérieur, assisted by a Commission Consultative, which held two annual sittings when the Governor-General thought fit, and gave its opinion regarding various matters strictly limited by the central authority.

The arrondissement was again subdivided into circles by a Commissaire Civil, and again into centers or communes, at the head of each being a Maire and adjoint, nominated by the

Administration. Thus the colony was condemned to the most inflexible, and often tyrannical, tutelage, without a shadow of self-government or municipal liberty.

In mixed territories quite an exceptional system was devised; administrative and judicial functions were confided to military officers, under whom were placed both the native and the European residents.

Lastly, there were Arab territories, also administrated by the military, but in which no European had the right to establish himself without the express permission of the Governor-General.

Thus the entire government of the country was under the immediate control of the Governor-General, but as colonization increased it became necessary to make a division of work, and so a functionary was created, called Directeur des Affaires Civiles, under whose charge all civil and financial affairs, and every administrative department and connected with the army, were placed.

The Governor–General was further aided by a Conseil d'Administration, having

the most complex duties to a perform , as it united the various powers of an ordinary Council ,a Court of Appeal, and a tribunal for deciding all administrative matters.

With regard to the population of these provinces, no well-founded estimate can be given. The town and suburbs of Algiers contained, in February 1838, 28,962 inhabitants, of whom 7,575 were Christians,15,322 Algerians, 6,065 Jews, to whom the census had not extended. The total European population of Algeria in 1837,exclusive of the military, was 16,770, of whom 9,824 resided in Algiers, 3,805 in Oran,2,622 on Annaba, 415 in Bedjaia, and 104 in Mostaganem. Of the total numbers, 6,592 were French, 2,193 English, 5,189 Spaniards, 1, 983 Italians, and 782 Germans. The number of Spaniards has increased much more rapidly since 1830 than that of the French.⁽¹⁴⁾

The failure of the French policy of assimilation in Algeria

The French claim they have not been able to change this system of land tenure because that would be interfering in

something which is a religious institution, and the French say they never do that Yet they have taken over the administration of all properties belonging to religious institutions. They appoint the muftis and the muezzins and even sweepers of the mosques and they have turned these Muslim religious dignitaries into salaried French civil servants.

For a long time, these French –trained Algerians were the only articulate spokesmen of the natives. and all they asked of France was to be accepted as French citizens .Of course it had to be done by stages. “Assimilation” had to be earned. The liberal forces in France worked towards assimilation, and the settlers with their allies worked against it because the Algerians, if granted French citizenship, could outvote the settlers eight to one. All orders from Paris tending to apply the “assimilation” policy were twisted or disobeyed locally in Algeria.

Only one “assimilation” measure ever worked .Algerian Jews were made fully fledged French citizens in 1870. The settlers fought this measure on

the grounds that it was unfair discrimination against the Arabs! But the settlers had to give way. The French Government needed a loan to pay its war debt to the Germans, and the Rothschilds were providing the loans: part of the deal was this granting of French citizenship to the Algerian Jews.

The settlers never really accepted this measure introducing what they regarded as an "alien" element into their Algerian electorate. They bided their time; and they had the 1870 decision reversed by Pétain in 1940- on the grounds that it would please the Muslims. In fact, the Pétain measure finally disillusioned the Muslims.

This activity of the settlers has been well rewarded. They control the economy of the country. They run the import-export trade, the shipping, the road transports, the banks, most of whatever industry there is, and they own the best land (between one-third and two-fifths of the arable surface). Seventy large landowners alone own a total of 500,000 acres... But the fact is that even if they were willing to educate themselves, most Algerians could not get

an education. While there are enough schools for the children of the settlers, there are no schools for five out of every six native children-this after 123 years of French rule.⁽¹⁵⁾

British reaction to the French conquest

The English consul at Algiers, knowing the general attitude of the government he represented, vainly offered his services as mediator. The blockaded continued. This manifest opposition came before anyone in England knew of the proposed occupation. On January 11, 1830, Laval, French Ambassador at London, was instructed to break the news to Wellington. In doing so he portrayed the Algerian mariners as a menace and a disgrace to christianity and emphasized the unbearable humiliations which the French had suffered. He assured Wellington that the Laval heaped insult upon injury by suggesting that as Tripoli, Tunis and Algeria were all practically independent of the Sultan, no infringement on the general political status would be made. A French expedition against Algiers alone was enough

to antagonize the English but to have Egypt, Tripoli and Tunis involved was, to them, beyond endurance. This would endanger practically the whole of Northern Africa and place France in a dominant strategic position for the control of the Mediterranean. Wellington, protested in behalf of the integrity of the Turkish Empire. He had Aberdeen, the foreign secretary, write to Gordon, the English minister to Constantinople, (to represent to the Turkish Government the necessity of using possible endeavor to induce the Dey of Algiers to make ample and prompt reparation to the King of France to prevent the expedition).

Diplomatic correspondence between the Cabinets of St. James and des Tuileries, relative to the French expedition against Algiers. Presented to the British Parliament.

Lord Staunt de Rothesay to the Earl of Aberdeen.

Paris, 8th March, 1830.

My Lord,

"I have been honored with your Lordship's Letter of the 5th instant, and have lost no time in communicating with the Prince de Polignac upon the subject to

which it relates.

His Excellency informs me, that a Communication from the Duc de Laval upon the same subject had reached him a few hours before; that he had not yet sought the King's orders, but that he should do so without loss of time, and hopes they will enable him to address a Communication to that Minister, containing a satisfactory answer to the questions put forward by my Government, respecting the objects of the Expedition, and the future destiny of the Regency of Algiers in case of success.

He said, that, in the main time, he could enable me to convey to your Lordship the assurance of His Most Christian Majesty's readiness to deliberate with His Majesty and with his other allies respecting the arrangement by which the Government of those Countries may be hereafter settled, in a manner conducive to the maintenance of the tranquility of the Mediterranean and of all Europe".

Stuart de Rothesay.

The Earl of Aberdeen to Lord Stuart de Rothesay.

Foreign Office, 23d March, 1830.

"The Duc de Laval has

communicated to me, by order of his Court, the Copy of a Dispatch which his Excellency has received in answer to the enquiry which you were instructed to make into the real views and intentions of the French Government, in undertaking the Expedition now preparing in the ports of France against the Regency of Algiers...Your Excellency may recall to the recollection of the French Government the conduct observed by his Majesty upon an occasion not dissimilar from the present. When His Majesty found it necessary, for the vindication of his own dignity and the reparation of his wrongs, to prepare an Armament against Algiers, the instructions addressed to the commander of his Majesty's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean were communicated to his Allies without any reserve; and the whole plan, objects, and extent of the Expedition, were laid open.” (16).

The British colony in Algiers.

The last third of the 19th century saw the British colony solidly established at Mustapha-

Superieur which had become a residential and predominantly British enclave in the city.

Soon after his arrival at Algiers as the new British Consul-General, Robert Lambert Playfair started a public subscription to build a church for the wintering visitors and the English community which now numbered about 200 permanent residents. The church of the Holy Trinity was erected on ground presented by the French Government and at a cost of £ 2,500 sterling. It was consecrated in 1871 by the Bishop of Gibraltar, together with the English cemetery, in Mustapha – Supérieur.

The church was pulled down in 1905 to make way for the “Grande Poste’ Algiers’ central Post Office, whose construction started in 1910 and which was inaugurated in 1913.

The British colony was also very much involved in charity and community work. In January 1897, Miss L. Coats opened a small hospital which was later transferred to the ‘Villa Regina’. In 1895 edition of Murry’s Handbook Of Algeria and Tunisia lists three English doctors, dentist, architect and chemist in street of Bab-Azoun.

Several English family had bought properties to which they returned year after year.

Finally, the presence of an important English community was attested by an office of Thomas Cook in the center of the city with a branch office near the Hotel St. George.

The British colony lived its own life separately from that of the city .In their great majority, the British did not take a real interest in the French colony. As in India and East Africa, they kept apart from the native population .Like Consul Playfair, who had served as Lieutenant-colonel in the army of India, they generally approved of the French colonializing mission in Algiers.

Arab society remained a separate, alien world to the majority of them.

The British introduced their own social rituals and recreations. Several English families had bought properties to which they returned year after year. The semi-tropical Algiers winter was ideal for gardening activities. Mrs. E.W.Arthur at her residence of Djenan-el-Mufti, the Bells at their estate of Mustapha Rais at El-Biar, Sir Peter Coats at Campagne Paisley'

on the chemin des Aqueducs, A.Mackleay at Dejnán Ali-Rais, now the residence of the ambassador of Japan.

After the departure of Sir Robert Playfair, it was Mrs. Arthur, the grand-daughter of Sir Peter Coats, who became the central pillar of the British colony in Algiers. In her villa of Djenan – el-mufti, she played hostess to the English sovereigns on their official visit to Algiers in April 1905, to princess de Battenberg in 1909, to Kipling when he stopped at Algiers and to many other celebrities.

By the mid -1920s, the reputation of Algiers as a wintering resort superseded by that of Biskra .⁽¹⁷⁾

The British Consuls in Algeria:1580-1962

John Tipton	1580
John Audellay	1600
Richard Alline	1619
Richard Ford	1620
James Frizell	1622
Hemphrey Oneby	1645
Edmond Casson	1646
Robert Browne	1655
Capt. Nicholas Parker	1664
John Ward	1667
Samuel Martin	1672
Capt.John Neville	1682

Philip Rycant	1683	A.F.G.,Sarell	1957
John Erlisman	1684	T.V.Evans	1961
Thomas Baker	1691	The first British Ambassador	
Robert Cole	1694	T.E.,Evans	1962
Samuel Thomson	1713	Algerian chargé d’Affair in U.K.	
Thomas Thomson	1716	Chérif Guellal	
Charles Hudson	1720	USA. Ambassador in Algiers	
Charles Black	1729	William J.Porter (18)	
Edward Holden	1739		
Ambrose Stanyford	1741		
Stanhope Aspinwall	1754		
John Ford	1761		
James Bruce	1763		
Robert Kirke	1765		
James Sampson	1766		
Hon.A.Campbell Fraser	1767		
Edward Bayntun	1776		
Nathaniel Davison	1780		
Charles Logie	1785		
Charles Mace	1792		
Richard Masters	1796		
John Falcon	1800		
Richard Cartwright	1804		
Henry Stanyford	1806	Blanckley	
Hugh Mc.Donell	1812		
William Danford	1824		
Morris Thomas	1825		
Robert William St. John	1827		
John Bell	1851		
Henry Adrian Cherchill	1863		
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