

# Rhetoric of American Identities

## Retoryka amerykańskich tożsamości

7 (2) 2020 EDITORS: ANNA BENDRAT, ELŻBIETA PAWLAK-HEJNO

### VARIA

KARL AGERUP

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0643-0549>

[karl.agerup@gu.se](mailto:karl.agerup@gu.se)

### Effective Ambiguity: Algerian negotiator Hamdan Khodja building anticolonial critique on identity expression and admiration for the colonizer

#### Efektywna dwuznaczność: Jak algierski negocjator Hamdan Hodża budował antykolonialną krytykę na podstawie wyrażenia tożsamości i podziwu dla kolonizatorów

### Abstract

This article identifies and analyzes a rhetorical pattern in the Algerian negotiator Hamdan Khodja's responses to the French occupation of Algeria in 1830. In his book *The Mirror*, published by a Parisian editor in 1833, Khodja sophisticatedly and obliquely builds anticolonial critique on expressions of sympathy and identification with France, a manoeuver that makes him appear relevant. Speaking from an ethical vantage point that is shared by the French reader, Khodja's criticism becomes credible and influential. In other words, Khodja's appreciative judgments permit him to attack the opponent from within enemy lines: his argument is grounded in his opponent's ethical pretensions. By the same token, Khodja displays that the inhabitants of Algiers that he represents are morally and culturally mature; they are not the uncivilized masses that colonial discourse will often have them look like. By carefully decontextualizing Khodja's anticolonial tract, and reading it not just as a historical document but also as an articulation of personal themes and desires, as well as sympathy for the colonizer, the study contributes to our understanding of early anticolonial expression as more intricate and heterogeneous than it would appear when studied from a purely politico-historical or rhetorical perspective.

Niniejszy artykuł identyfikuje i analizuje wzorec retoryczny zastosowany w reakcji algierskiego negocjatora Hamdana Hodży na francuską okupację Algierii w 1830 roku. W książce *The Mirror* opublikowanej w 1833 r. w Paryżu, Hodża buduje antykolonialną krytykę w sposób złożony i dwuznaczny, ponieważ stosuje elementy sympatii i identyfikacji z reżimem francuskim. Jest to manewr, który pozwala mu na zaistnienie w sferze publicznej. Przyjmując etyczny punkt widzenia, który byłby typowy dla francuskiego odbiorcy, Hodża staje się wiarygodny w swojej krytyce. Pozytywny ogląd Francji pozwala mu na uderzenie od środka, gdyż argumentacja przeciwko okupacji oparta jest przesłance o francuskich pretensjach do wyższości moralnej. Wykazuje on, że Algierczycy, których reprezentuje jako negocjator, są kulturowo i moralnie dojrzały, w przeciwieństwie do obrazu nieucywilizowanych mas, który przeważa w dyskursie kolonialnym. Niniejsze studium wyłącza argumentację Hodży z kontekstu typowego dla antykolonialnych traktatów, aby spojrzeć nie tylko na jej historyczny i dokumentalny wymiar, ale także na osobisty i psychologiczny aspekt wywodu związany z autentyczną sympatią autora dla Francji. Studium pozwala zrozumieć zróżnicowanie i głębię kształtowania się dyskursów antykolonialnych we wczesnej fazie okupacji, co nie byłoby możliwe przy przyjęciu jedynie politycznej albo jedynie retorycznej perspektywy badawczej.

### Key words

France, Algeria, colonialism, critique, admiration, identity, human touch  
Francja, Algieria, kolonializm, krytyka, podziw, tożsamość, humanizm

### License

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international (CC BY 4.0). The content of the license is available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

**KARL AGERUP**

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0643-0549>

[karl.agerup@gu.se](mailto:karl.agerup@gu.se)

## **Effective Ambiguity: Algerian negotiator Hamdan Khodja building anticolonial critique on identity expression and admiration for the colonizer**

### **Introduction**

When France invaded and occupied Algiers in July of 1830 Algeria was not an independent nation. In broad terms, the Mediterranean part of the North African territory we call Algeria today was controlled by the Ottomans while nomads inhabited the southern parts. The population consisted of Arabs, Berbers, Turks, Jews, and different mixes of those ethnicities. It has been argued that the population nevertheless had a certain sense of unity, or “territorial conscience.” There were mentions of a *watan al-jazâ’ir*, an Algerian country, as early as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Merouche 2012, 90). That said, the notion of a contained zone within the Ottoman Empire did not refer to the territory we call Algeria today. Algerians, in the 1830s, meant inhabitants of the city of Algiers and its surroundings. For practical reasons I will nevertheless use the adjective “Algerian” for people and artifacts originating from the territory we know as Algeria today. Analogically, I will use the word “Algeria” for this territory, although this term was rarely used in the early 1830s.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first Algerians to openly criticize the French occupation was Hamdan Khodja, a 58-year-old Khouloughli. The Khouloughlis were a mixed ethnicity that typically had a Turkish father and a Berber mother. Hamdan Khodja was educated and well traveled; before the French invasion he was a wealthy businessman and senior official of the Turkish administration of Algiers (Gheziel 2016, 65). Abdelkader Djeghloul, who wrote the introduction to the 1985 edition of Khodja’s book *The Mirror (Le miroir)*, even calls him an oligarch (Djeghloul 1985, 15)<sup>2</sup>.

---

1. In this era, the term “regency” (*La Régence d’Alger*) was commonly used for the northern part while the south, i.e. the Sahara desert, had no official administration or government—although the French would later learn it was claimed and defended by armed nomad populations (see Duveyrier 1864). All translations from French are mine except when otherwise stated.

2. Thus, Khodja’s text cannot be analyzed using traditional postcolonial methodology (Saïd, Bhabha, Spivak, etc.) Given his Ottoman background, he was just as much a colonizer himself as he was a part of the colonized population. For a more detailed socio-economic account of Algiers before the occupation, see Bennison 1998, 99–102.

Khodja argued for a French withdrawal from Algiers in several Paris journals, *Le National* and *Le Courrier Français* in particular. Unlike more aggressive resistance men, Khodja moderately proposed the instauration of “impartial commissions” that could protect Algerians from looting and guarantee that French activities in Algeria were conducted in a just manner (Djeghloul 1985, 23). What particularly separates Khodja from other Algerian opinion makers is his resonance among Western readers. Despite radical demands of a French withdrawal from Algeria and claims of substantial modifications of French colonial policymaking and activity in Algeria, Khodja was listened to and responded to in Europe.

There are many signs of Khodja’s importance to the debate on early French Algeria. First, Khodja was one of only two Algerians to testify to the African Commission that was instigated by the French king to retrieve information on colonial matters in Africa. Furthermore, as Jennifer Pitts has stressed, Khodja “made a considerable impression on the French government” (2009, 311). His book *The Mirror*, which will be the focal point of this article,<sup>3</sup> instigated a 59-page rebuttal in the Parisian periodical *L’observateur des tribunaux*. The book’s influence is also apparent in Michel Habart’s modern account of the French invasion, *Histoire d’un parjure*, to which *The Mirror* served as a major source. Moreover, Djeghloul (1985, 29) has argued that Khodja’s book had “considerable impact.” To add one last example, in his book chapter “Just War and Jihad in the French Conquest of Algeria,” Benjamin Claude Brower (2012, 232) claimed that Khodja was one of two outstanding voices that weighed in on the debate on the French colonization of Algeria. Thus, unlike most other Algerian voices, Khodja’s rhetoric resonated with the French readership and I will suggest in this article that his success partly depends on his uncensored personality expression and unusual way of combining esteem with reprobation. As Djeghloul (1985, 20) has stressed, Khodja’s “resistance-dialogue” with the French authorities has often been misunderstood or labeled inconsistent and indecisive. However, Khodja’s organic and double-edged rhetoric can also be read as an intricate and pathos-filled expression built on the special combination of identification and differentiation that has often distinguished literary responses to political change. As Amrit Sen has emphasized, texts that are produced and published in colonial ‘contact zones’ release complex energies (2008, 68). In this article, Hamdan Khodja’s critique is for the first time

3. To make my presentation easier to follow and my citations easier to control I am quoting the more widespread 1985 edition and not the original text from 1833. The new editor asserts that the 1833 text has been reprinted in its complete form, with the exception of a few orthographic corrections and the omission of redundant attachments (Khodja 1985, 33–34). My browsing of the 1833 edition gave no reason to question this assertion. The title page, however, differs. On the cover of the older edition, the long title (“Historical and Statistical Overview of the Algiers Regency”) is laid out as main title, followed by the phrasing “entitled *The Mirror* in Arabic”. For practical reasons, and in analogy with the reasoning above, I have used the title of the newer edition and considered “*The Mirror*” as main title and the longer phrase as subtitle.

viewed as a sophisticated and personal way of dealing with these energies and of giving them authentic, authoritative, and ethically convincing form. In studying Hamdan Khodja's work from an individual perspective I here put proto-Algerian expression under a new lens and show that some North-African resistance men were much less subversive than conventional postcolonial critique will have them look like.

### Hamdan Khodja's *The Mirror*: titles and tones

According to Rachel Eva Schley (2015, 77), *The Mirror* was written in Arabic and translated to French by Khodja's friend Hassunah al-Dughaisi (or Hassuna D'Ghies). Possibly, Al-Dughaisi also collaborated on the production of the text, along with French opponents of the occupation of Algeria (Pitts 2009, 296). No original in Arabic has been found (Pitts 2009, 297); the origins and exact production process of the book remain unclear. *The Mirror*, subtitled *Historical and Statistical Overview of the Algiers Regency (Le miroir: Aperçu historique et statistique sur la régence d'Alger)*, was published in 1833 by Goetschy Fils et Compagnie in Paris. The book gives a pedagogical account of Algerian geography, culture, and nature; it also criticizes France's involvement in the region. The book's 24 chapters have titles like "On the Bedouins and their origin," "Berber traditions and customs," and "On the Turkish government, organization, and origin." Most chapter headings do not reveal that the text contains criticism but rather make the chapters look neutral and information packed. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Chapter 4 of the second book (i.e. the volume's 16<sup>th</sup> chapter by chronological order), for instance, is entitled "On the military occupation and the abuses it has committed." Then again, most of Khodja's criticism is blended into his encyclopedic presentation of Algeria and sophisticatedly integrated in his embracing French values and traditions. I will now give a few examples of what kind of formulations and structures that can be thought of as typical of Khodja's double-sided language.

As early as in chapter two, Khodja makes efforts to find common ground with the French. Defining himself as a city dweller, Khodja displays that he is similar to European urbanites (Khodja 1985, 56). In the same chapter, he speaks of France's "greatness." Yet Khodja claims that by occupying Algeria, France does not live up to this prominence and France's actions in Algeria lack dignity (58). Thus, Khodja's admiration for France is from the start integrated in his criticism of the country's involvement in North Africa.

It should be noted that the book's title *The Mirror* reflects Khodja's strategy of turning the French reader's attention to their self-image. Khodja first makes the French aware of their moral standards and democratic values, then he demonstrates

the inconsistency of this self-image with France's military actions. While building ethical argumentation, Khodja holds a mirror before the Frenchman's face and urges him to reconsider his country's endeavors from an identity-oriented point of view.

Furthermore, the title conveys Khodja's own identification with French values and traditions. Khodja repeatedly praises France and uses the country as a projection surface for his own desires and ideals. In other words, Khodja's project is not just a political attack on the French administration as such, but more importantly it is a personal attempt to align the meaning of "France" to his own ideals. The decisions taken by generals and other leaders certainly have effect on the people, beliefs, and artifacts of Algeria, but they also have bearing on France as a symbol. As Kenneth Burke has shown, identification and division are intertwined processes. While rivalry and antipathy are omnipresent in human relations, "we can at the same time always look beyond this order, to the principle of identification" (1969, 20). Along similar lines, Fredric V. Bogel has stressed that a writer whose project consists of attacking something (or someone) needs to be intimately connected to the criticized object, "[f]or there would be no compulsion to attack, excoriate, or distance himself from people or actions or values that he—and the community he speaks for—already had no sympathy for" (Bogel 2001, 31). Thus, Bogel pertinently remarks that "energetic repulsion implies identification" (32). Already Khodja's time-consuming research process reveals a personal identification with the object of his critique, for "intimate knowledge presupposes some kind of identification, however provisional, with the object of knowledge; thus there is not simply disjunction, even though there must also be disjunction" (Bogel 2001, 32). Khodja, in this respect, simultaneously plays with and against the object of his criticism. His book is neither a mere expression of his identification with France, nor is it a wholehearted refutation, but it is the result of a complex process of differentiation and identification that involves both French and Algerian objects.

Moving on from title to subtitle, Jennifer Pitts has stressed that the long subtitle of the book, *Historical and Statistical Overview of the Algiers Regency*, is a near citation of a colonial manual published in 1830 by the French Ministry of War. I concur with Pitts that the reference "seems to indicate the book's usefulness for the French colonizers and may have served to attract a readership" but I am less convinced that the title also reveals an attempt to be ironic, as Pitts tentatively proposes (2009, 300). In other words, Khodja's book, both in formal and ethical terms, is provocatively similar to previous French works on colonial matters in North Africa. Rather than setting up for a satirical text—Khodja's rhetoric is remarkably straight-forward and candid—the allusive subtitle and encyclopedic framework help the writer find common ground and lay forward his claims. Also,

it plays a part in Khodja's enterprise of building ethos by criticizing French colonial policy. Drawing on Aristotelian theory, Michael Halloran has stressed that in order to build ethos one must embody the qualities that are most valued by the targeted audience (Halloran 1982, 60). Thus, Khodja is particularly concerned with French values; he continuously attempts to position the city of Algiers as culturally and ethically similar to France.

There are more signs of Khodja trying to make Algeria look familiar and conceivable to the European reader. When describing the farming nomads of the Algerian countryside, for instance, Khodja goes to great lengths to make the scenery look recognizable: he zooms in on domestic animals like dogs and horses that are familiar to European readers (62). Similarly, when speaking of dangerous animals Khodja focuses on lions and snakes instead of species with which European readers are less accustomed. First, the pattern reflects a pedagogical and receiver-oriented leaning in Khodja's character; second, it conveys his desire to approach France by making Mediterranean Algeria look more European. Furthermore, Khodja manifests his ambition to please the French reader as he assures that he did his best to convince the Ottoman leaders that the French government had good intentions when they invaded Algeria (69). Finally, it is interesting to see how Khodja describes the El Ouffia massacre of April 1832—a battle in which French troops exterminated a whole tribe and then left the village with the victims' heads on the top of their lances (Christian 1846, 143). In Khodja's words, rather than a massacre, this was a “tragic event” and a “circumstance that formed a bloody page in the region's history” (Khodja 1985, 69). Thus, on several occasions Khodja takes a more lenient and servile stand in relation to France than would be expected from a resistance man. However, after giving a tolerant description of the El Ouffia massacre, Khodja goes on to say that few would have expected a similar event to occur in this era of liberty and European civilization (69). The author stresses that although the French diplomat Louis-André Pichon had already accounted for the event in his book *Alger sous la domination française, son état présent et son avenir* (1833), the world is still waiting for the French government to condemn the massacre. The event, according to Khodja, is “unworthy of France's greatness and dignity” (70). In other words, the author separates the massacre from the glorified image of France that he aspires to uphold. Interestingly, Khodja speaks less of the pains suffered by Algerians than of the damage done to France as a symbol. As the quoted examples show, Khodja's critique is more ethical than political. From his perspective, what is at stake is not so much the Algerian territory as it is France's ethos and its interoperability with Khodja's own morality. In the guise of a resistance tract, *The Mirror* appears a comparison of identities aiming to unite the speaker with a desired object that has thus far been separated from him by history,

i.e. by colonial acts of war and the unacceptable ideology that supports them. The book, in this respect, illustrates Kenneth Burke's aphoristic statement that war can be looked upon as a *special case of peace* (Burke 1969, 20). In other words, more than an indictment dossier, the text is a meeting area, a continued negotiation of values and ideals that transcend the dichotomy of war and peace. It serves to remember that the well-educated Hamdan Khodja had visited and developed a relationship with France long before the occupation. Thus, France is much more than an invading power to him; it is a long-lasting space of identification.

Interestingly, when Khodja refers to acts of violence committed by other perpetrators than the French army, he uses the severer word "massacre"—rather than "event" or "circumstance." As he relates an episode of mountain people attacking the farmers of Blida, for instance, Khodja asserts that the farmers of Blida were "looted" and "massacred" (71). The French army was not the executioner of this bloodbath, although it failed to protect the people of Blida as promised. Khodja therefore urges the French to take these shortcomings seriously, as the news can easily spread from one village to the next, upsetting many Algerians and giving them a reason to rebel. Rather than counting bodies, Khodja's rhetoric is held on a principal and ethical level: it was "unworthy" of the French army to let the people of Blida suffer. No matter how many people died, the French should be ashamed for not living up to their own high standards—standards that match Khodja's own morality and therefore become important for him to discuss. Khodja stresses that one immoral action can easily lead to many others. He uses the chain metaphor to make his point: if one ring of the moral chain is broken, France's reputation is undermined and its army risks losing control of many more villages. Interestingly, Khodja emphasizes that even good morals spread (71), as if to inspire the French to show goodwill in Algeria, to build positive sentiment, and to possibly make place for Khodja's own character and thinking.

This hypothesis entails a continued discussion on Khodja's pedagogical exposé of Algerian nature and culture. What is the point of integrating detailed and extensive geographic and socio-economic facts in a book that deals with traditions, values, and principles? Firstly, the encyclopedic parts can be understood as a means to give the reader a breather in between more demanding parts. Secondly, the informative sections allow Khodja to adjust the public's conception of Algeria according to his own interests. Thirdly, the sections are sufficiently detailed and pedagogical to convey the image of a benevolent and well-informed author. With a few exceptions, Khodja presents his compatriots as civilized, friendly, and similar to Europeans. In these didactical chapters, Khodja comes across as an expert on Algeria. Finally, Khodja's instructive exposé makes him look similar to the European explorers with which many of his readers have become accustomed—only

he is better informed. The encyclopedic sections thus play an essential part in Khodja's approaching the French and aspiring to become accepted as their equal.

On a few occasions, Khodja speaks unfavorably of rural Algeria and its population. For instance, he corrects those who had claimed there are aqueducts in the Mitidja plain. Instead he asserts there are only "drains" in that region. As for the people living there, Khodja describes them as lazy, traitorous, intriguing, and hateful (74–75). Moreover, the habitants of Miliana are "stubborn" in Khodja's mind (84). At first sight, Khodja's unflattering account of the Miliana and Mitidja populations can appear contradictory to his democratic ideals and to the purpose of convincing the French that Algerians are a respectable people. However, Khodja's condescending attitude towards certain minorities also makes him look like a more neutral and credible observer.

Furthermore, cataloguing the negative sides of his homeland has the advantage of making Khodja's enumeration of French missteps more reliable, missteps that need to be corrected in order for Khodja's and France's identities to match. The author meticulously counts the bazars, mosques, and silk factories that had been destroyed or confiscated by general Clauzel who led the French operations in Algeria from 1830 to 1831 (Khodja 1985, 238–239). As Habart has stressed, Khodja's criticism of the French commander in chief is mostly accurate: "In truth, not only did Clauzel's predecessors and successors confirm Khodja's account but they also underlined that his critique was moderate" (Habart 1960, 62). It needs to be added that Clauzel was not the only general who behaved callously in North Africa. In fact, most French generals followed Napoleon's example and regarded the local populations as "oppressed peasantry ready for enlightened French rule" (Bennison 1998, 105).

### **Using pronoun and apostrophe to seek unity**

In many respects, Khodja's book is an attempt to elevate the author over this imagined peasantry and make a place for him among the ranks of the enlightened. Indeed, Khodja's rhetoric often sounds remarkably modern and opportunistic. The following paragraph, for instance, could have appeared in a liberal editorial of our own times—it suffices to change the number 19 to 21: "In the 19th century one would have thought we had left the narrow ideas of fanaticism behind us, that the time of emancipation had arrived, and that all men who inhabit the earth belonged to the same family" (Khodja 1985, 155). The formulation is apparently destined to encourage the reader to agree not only with the fact that we live in an era of liberalism and democracy, but also with the suggestion that something needs to be done as these values are threatened. In line with his earlier efforts to build a shared vantage



point, Khodja writes in the first person plural (*nous*). This choice of grammar reflects the underlying project of seeking ethical unity. It also helps him emphasize annoying French policies and actions.

Approaching the end of his book, Khodja continues to seek unity by using first or third rather than second person grammar, such as the pronoun *on*. While grammatically *on* makes verbs conjugate according to the third person singular, semantically it takes on both first person plural and third person singular meanings: *on* can mean “we” or “one”. In the translated passage below I have opted for the first alternative. It should be added, however, that my argument would work even if the alternative translation “one” were used. In any case Khodja here avoids writing in the second person plural despite its widespread use in argumentative speech. Another remarkable detail is Khodja’s using rhetorical questions to strengthen his argument and find common ground with the French reader:

Should we make treaties that privilege the powerful to the detriment of the weak? What will become, then, of the moral principles upon which we rest? Why, in Europe, and why, in France, do we profess public law? Why do we establish schools of civilization and free thought? Above all, the present [colonization of Algeria] is incompatible with the Christian principles in which Europeans believe. What will become of Jesus Christ’s morals, and of those of our prophet? (246)

Again, by appealing to French morals and praising Christian values Khodja displays his positive image of France, an attitude that helps him put forward his critique without intimidating the reader. That said, complementary explanations of his flattering account of French values should also be considered. For instance, Khodja may have feared being censored. Would Khodja’s book have been published in Paris had it been a more unreserved attack on French politics in Algeria? The author suggests that he could have said more if he had not risked being arrested and imprisoned:

If I had been able to speak freely without being persecuted, I would have said much more! [... However] I would risk meeting the same destiny as some of my compatriots: I could be imprisoned for the rest of my life or expelled from my country and family. I could be accused of conspiring with the Kabylisians. Would they even tell me what I was suspected of? Would I be able to defend myself? (246)

Censored or not, Khodja continues to seek unity with the French throughout his work. His knowledge of France, his extended travels to Europe, and his general thinking reveal a deeply rooted attachment. In the concluding pages of *The Mirror*, Khodja urges his readers, “who belong to such a grand, generous, and impartial country,” to advise general Clauzel not to respond to the book, since the publicity of such a response would harm him more than *The Mirror* itself (259).

If France withdrew from Algeria, Khodja argues, not only would this generous act be applauded by the whole world, it would also put pressure on Russia to halt its actions in Poland and stop the tsardom from publicly accusing France of excessive violence in North Africa (262). Moreover, although this argument is only implicit, it would make way for Khodja himself as a trustworthy Algerian leader who would defend French values in North Africa.

### Critics and followers

Despite Khodja's warnings, however, an anonymous French person wrote a 59-page-long rebuttal defending General Clauzel and the French involvement in Algeria ("Réfutation" 1985). It has been suggested that Clauzel himself may have written it (Djeghloul 1985, 33); nevertheless, the author of this extended *contradictio* remains unknown. Whoever wrote and published the text in *L'observateur des Tribunaux* in June of 1834, they dismiss many of Khodja's claims and use *ad hominem* argumentation to undermine his authority. In the rebuttal, Khodja is associated to Barbary pirates and lazy Algerians who would do anything for money ("Réfutation" 1985, 266). Interestingly, the author of the rebuttal responds to Khodja's positive attitude towards France and tries to downplay it. Instead of showing sympathy with French values and ideas, *The Mirror* reveals according to Khodja's critic an author who "hates France and the French," a writer whose recriminations are "on every page". The critic goes on to say that Khodja's allegations are "the essence of his book" (279). By this maneuver, Khodja's antagonist confirms the importance of his approaching France: if Khodja's admiration were not disturbing there would be no reason to emphasize and contest it. Thus, in his meticulous reprobation of Khodja's admiration for France, the anonymous critic demonstrates the rhetorical force of this pattern. As Pitts has remarked, already the production and publication of the rebuttal, whether it was written by Clauzel or by someone loyal to him, is a clear sign of Khodja's remarkable influence at this particularly dynamic moment in time (Pitts 2009, 312).

Expressing esteem for French values is not just a way of keeping the French readers' attention; it is also a way of inviting them to reconsider North-African cultures with similar attention. Along these lines, Pitts has argued that Khodja, in presenting an "idealized portrait of France," performs "the sort of act of interpretive generosity that he demands of his French readers vis-à-vis Islam" (Pitts 2009, 306). I would like to add that Islam is barely mentioned in *The Mirror*; Khodja focuses on morals and honor rather than religion. From a historical perspective, Catholicism and Islam were—and still are—the dominating religions of France and Algeria, but Khodja silences this circumstance and focuses the ethical

homogeneity between the two religions. Thus, his friendly account of Catholicism can be seen as an integrated part of his approximation rhetoric.

Notably, other Algerian voices later copied Khodja's model and similarly integrated esteem in their critique of French actions in North Africa. Assessor El Mekki Ben Badis, for instance, started his book *Statement On Repressive Laws Against Brigands In Algeria (Exposé des lois répressives pouvant s'appliquer aux voleurs de la campagne en Algérie)* with a page of admiration for France and its involvement in Algeria: "Based on our everyday experience we know for a fact that the French government has no other desire than to see Algeria prosper and become wealthier" (Ben Badis 1875, 1). Ben Badis goes on to assert that it is indisputable that the French involvement will be of great value for Algeria. However, on page two Ben Badis begins to criticize the French jurisdiction, propagating the idea of returning to a more severe and Sharia based system in order to reduce crime rates involving highwaymen. Ben Badis' book is shorter than Khodja's; it is a straightforward call for tougher legislation and lacks encyclopedic descriptions of Khodja's type. Nevertheless it is interesting to see the combination of esteem and reprobation reappear as a rhetorical device in a book on French Algeria written by an Algerian native for a partly francophone readership.<sup>4</sup>

It should be added that similar rhetoric has appeared in other colonial contexts too. As Amrit Sen has stressed, the Indian traveler Abu Taleb's writings—published in the early colonial era just like Khodja's book—"reveal a curious tension in his selfhood with a simultaneous admiration and critique of English customs" (Sen 2008, 61). Like Khodja, Abu Taleb "uses the generic and linguistic strategies of the coloniser's language to seek identification with the 'other' culture, yet critiques it by underlining its difference" (61). Similarly to Khodja, Abu Taleb praises the colonizing power's liberal education and sense of honor before devoting whole chapters to criticizing this power and its systems (62). While Khodja copied the form of an "Area Studies" handbook to discuss French actions in North Africa, Abu Taleb uses "travel writing as a strategy [to challenge] the European's rhetoric of superiority" (Sen 2008, 64).

Sen's reading of Abu Taleb thus illustrates the idea that Khodja's expressed admiration for France, rather than just strategic flattery, is the manifestation of an inner conflict between his resistance towards, and identification with, the colonizer. As Habart (1960, 60) has stressed, Khodja reveals—both in *The Mirror* and elsewhere—that he is a sincere friend of France. This is not to say that Khodja's differentiation-identification process is purely private, or that it could have taken place in any historical situation. Books like *The Mirror* are multifaceted works.

4. French and Arabic translations of Ben Badis' text were published jointly with both titles appearing on the cover. The French text was followed by the Arabic version.

The identity-oriented perspective I am putting forward is not meant to replace historical explanation models that have thus far dominated postcolonial criticism. Rather, it supplements them. When underlying personal energies are addressed, we understand rhetorical patterns differently. The effects of rhetorical devices built on pathos or human touch, for instance, are impossible to comprehend without addressing the personal desires expressed by the speaking subject. Khodja's politico-historical situation is relevant but does not suffice to explain the *The Mirror's* remarkable resonance among readers. Instead, it is Khodja's pathos-filled negotiation of identities that makes the text appear exceptionally relevant. His embarrassment with the Miliana and Mitidja regions, for instance, makes him look human and imperfect, something that makes it easier to relate to in his narrative rather than a stringent and perfectly crafted argumentation. As W. Keith Duffy (2001, 3) has emphasized, "being imperfect is a natural condition of being human, and by acknowledging our imperfection as commonplace, we can more fully participate with each other because this establishes a shared ground."

Similarly, Khodja's pathos-filled imperfection shines through as he criticizes French generals. Not only does he portray the generals in an amusingly pejorative light, he also abstains from hiding his repulsion. His reprobation of general Clauzel is particularly emotional and uncompromising. It is interesting to note, for instance, Khodja's use of exclamation marks as he addresses Clauzel's replacing general Bourmont as head of the French army in Algeria. Bourmont too is described in pejorative terms, but as Clauzel enters the plot Khodja starts using not only single exclamation marks but also double and triple ones. In part Khodja's resentment towards Clauzel depends on the latter's decision to replace the Muslim court (*hanafi*) with a Jewish one. While the Miliana and Mitidja populations were described as stubborn and lazy, the Jews are described as irresponsible, malicious, and snide (Khodja 1985, 206–207). Thus, Khodja is visibly disturbed by phenomena—whether Algerian or French—that do not match his personal ideals. His project is not only about adjusting French policies and actions to his idealized image of France, it is also about purifying Algeria from phenomena he cannot identify with. Clauzel becomes his primary target, primarily because the general pushes the army too recklessly, secondly because he promotes Jewish interests in Algeria. In this respect, *The Mirror* is not only directed towards a French audience. As Chaïm Perelman has revealed, the writer's visualization and conceptualization of an auditorium is a complex matter; anticipated reactions are inscribed in the text. Thus, the auditorium that the argumentation appears to address surpasses the actual readers of the book (Perelman 2002, 27–40). In Khodja's case it is clear that he partly writes *to himself*; his discussion of French policies, actions, and underlying motives is not only directed outwards, it is also a means of self-confirmation.

## **Conclusion: The Mirror's weight depends on human touch and ethical grounding**

Hamdan Khodja had both personal and political reasons to write and publish *The Mirror*. However, Khodja's political positioning is somewhat ambiguous. It remains unclear exactly where his loyalties are. He speaks of Algeria as both rich and poor, and the French army is sometimes treated leniently while on other occasions he gives it a sound bashing. In contrast, Khodja's ideological argumentation is extensive and predominantly coherent. I concur with Pitts that "[a]ppeals to liberal values structure and frame Hamdan Khodja's argument" (Pitts 2009, 303). He repeatedly evokes democratic humanism and condemns acts of war that hurt civilians. His possible anti-Semitic leaning runs counter to this humanist worldview. The expression of this kind of character flaws gives further support to the interpretation of *The Mirror* as a project that surpasses political agendas. Rather than a simple act of resistance, Khodja's engagement with the French occupation of Algeria is a manifestation of his affinity with France's ethos. Let me reiterate that the author had traveled through France and was a known friend of the country (Habart 1960, 60). His comfortable background and knowledge of European culture and tradition are likely to have helped him build a position from which he could address the French reader almost as an equal. In other words, *The Mirror*, with its paraphrased army manual subtitle, rather than simply seeking to overthrow the colonial enterprise, articulates its own colonialism. Like the French army manuals his subtitle alludes to, the businessman Hamdan Khodja patronizes, objectifies, and catalogues Algerian villages and ethnicities. His project is revisionary more than revolutionary. Khodja identifies with both Algeria and France; he wants both of them to prosper, as long as they develop in harmony with his interests.

In part, Khodja's book is destined to show the French that he knows the Algiers region and that he can be trusted to administer it in accordance with French values. In *The Mirror* Khodja comes across as an Algerian leader who is a friend of France, an offer that likely appeared tempting in this early and confused phase of French colonialism in North Africa. By all accounts the French leaders were unsure of how to proceed after the invasion of Algiers in 1830, a precipitated action that would later be thought of as the beginning of France's second colonial empire (Blais 2012, 54). As can be seen above, Khodja gives several examples of French mistakes in his book. Also, the French king Louis Philippe instigated the *African Commission* in 1833 destined to collect information on the southern continent. In other words, France was in need of expertise and partnership in Algeria.

Furthermore, it is argued in this article that Khodja's success depends on his sense of moderation. Already Plato took an interest in discussing exactly how much

and what kind of appreciation would increase the speaker's authority (Yunis 1996, 129). The well-educated Khodja was probably familiar with the classical masters of rhetoric and employed their teachings in his practice as a negotiator, administrator, and writer. Both his reprobation and admiration are relatively restrained. That said, the interjections directed at general Clauzel and parts of the Algerian population are equally important parts of Khodja's rhetoric; these outbursts add valuable pathos and convey a certain "spirituality of imperfection" (Duffy 2001, 3).

Finally, Khodja's critique becomes increasingly persuasive as his admiration for France is grounded in a desire to belong, to be accepted, and considered as equal. Manifesting his concern with French ethics through personal and flawed language, the author comes across as an honest devotee rather than a strategic flatterer. By the same token, his criticism appears organic and credible; Khodja builds the image of a civilized human being who seeks unity and trust. The abovementioned outbursts and excessive use of exclamation marks also rebut the hypothesis of a consecutive ironic approach, although occasional sarcasms can be identified. Thus, I argue that Khodja's honest admiration for France and his uncensored identity expression are major factors behind his rhetorical success in the earliest phase of France's second colonial empire.

## References

- Ben Badis, El Mekki.** 1875. *Exposé des lois répressives pouvant s'appliquer aux voleurs de la campagne en Algérie*. Constantine: L. Marle.
- Bennison, Amira K.** 1998. "Opposition and Accommodation to French Colonialism in Early 19th century Algeria." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 11 (2): 99–116.
- Blais, Hélène.** 2012. "Pourquoi la France a-t-elle conquis l'Algérie." In *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale (1830–1962)*, eds. Abderrahmane Bouchène, Jean-Pierre Peyroulou, Ouanassa Siari Tengour, and Sylvie Thénault, 52–58. Paris/Alger: Éditions La Découverte/Éditions Barzakh.
- Bogel, Fredric V.** 2001. *The Difference Satire Makes*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Burke, Kenneth.** 1969. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Brower, Benjamin Claude.** 2012. "Just War and Jihad in the French Conquest of Algeria." In *Just Wars, Holy Wars, and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchanges*, ed. Sohail H. Hashimi, 221–245. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Christian, Pierre.** 1846. *L'Afrique française, l'Empire de Maroc et les déserts de Sahara*. Paris: A. Barbier.
- Djegloul, Abdelkader.** 1985. "Introduction." In Hamdan Khodja, *Le miroir: aperçu historique et statistique sur la Régence d'Alger*, 15–17. Paris: Sindbad.
- Duffy, Keith W.** 2001. "Imperfection: The Will-to-Control and the Struggle of Letting Go." *JAEPL* 7: 1–9.
- Duveyrer, Henri.** 1864. *Les Touareg du nord: Exploration du Sahara*. Paris: Challamel.
- Gheziel, Abba.** 2016 [2014]. "CTrois réactions 'algériennes' sur l'avenir de l'Algérie 1830-1834", *Insaniyat* 65–66, accessed April 13, 2019, <http://journals.openedition.org/insaniyat/14862>.
- Habart, Michel.** 1960. *Histoire d'un parjure*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

- Halloran, S. Michael.** 1982. "Aristotle's Concept of Ethos, or if not His, Someone Else's." *Rhetoric Review* 1 (1): 58–63.
- Khodja, Hamdan.** 1985. *Le miroir: aperçu historique et statistique sur la Régence d'Alger*. Paris : Sindbad.
- Merouche, Lemnouar.** 2012. "L'Algérie de 1830." In *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale (1830–1962)*, eds. Abderrahmane Bouchène, Jean-Pierre Peyroulou, Ouanassa Siari Tengour, and Sylvie Thénault, 89–94. Paris/Alger: Éditions La Découverte/Éditions Barzakh.
- Perelman, Chaïm.** 2002 [1977]. *L'empire rhétorique. Rhétorique et argumentation*. Paris: Vrin.
- Pichon, Louis André.** 1833. *Alger sous la domination française, son état présent et son avenir*, Paris: Théophile Barrois et Benjamin Duprat.
- Pitts, Jennifer.** 2009. "Liberalism and Empire in a Nineteenth-century Algerian Mirror", *Modern Intellectual History* 6 (2): 287–313.
- "Réfutation de l'ouvrage"**. 1985. In Hamdan Khodja, *Le miroir: aperçu historique et statistique sur la Régence d'Alger*, 265–304. Paris: Sindbad.
- Schley, Rachel Eva.** 2015. *The Tyranny of Tolerance: France, Religion, and the Conquest of Algeria, 1830–1870*, UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/52v9w979>.
- Sen, Amrit.** 2008. "'The Persian Prince in London': Autoethnography and Positionality in Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan." *Asiatic* 2 (1): 58–68. <https://journals.iium.edu.my/asiatic/index.php/AJELL/article/view/35>.
- Yunis, Harvey.** 1996. *Taming Democracy: Models of Political Rhetoric in Classical Athens*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.