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		Emir Abdelkader in Western European Historical Writings: Between Realism and Controversy — A Critical Reappraisal of Colonial and Post-Colonial Historiography	
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Abstract This study explores the multifaceted representation of Emir Abdelkader in Western European historiography, focusing particularly on French and British narratives between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The paper revisits how European historians, biographers, and travelers constructed the image of the Algerian resistance leader—oscillating between admiration for his chivalric ethics and distortion through colonial ideology. Through comparative historical and textual analysis, the study reveals the interplay of realism, bias, and ideological framing in the portrayal of Emir Abdelkader’s personal virtues, political strategies, and intellectual legacy. Primary attention is devoted to authors such as Henry Churchill, Alexandre Bellemare, Léon Roches, Bruno Étienne, and Denzin, whose works constitute the foundational corpus of Western interpretations of the Emir’s life and resistance. The analysis highlights how the Emir’s image evolved from a rebellious “enemy” into a “noble ally” following his exile to France, thus reflecting the shifting political needs of colonial discourse. The study concludes that Western historical writings, while preserving valuable documentary material, often reflect a dual narrative—one recognizing Abdelkader’s universal humanitarianism, and another constrained by the limits of imperial ideology.			
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Introduction:

Emir Abdelkader is one of the prominent historical figures of Algeria who has received considerable attention from researchers and historians. Many French historians and writers have written extensively about his personality and his struggle, given that the Emir is regarded as a global figure. His resistance resonated not only in Europe but

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also in the Arab world, and his character and achievements added to his international stature. Western writings addressed various aspects of his life, personality, resistance, and even the state he established in Algeria—a state that France itself recognized and which was respected by Western nations.

From this perspective, the following problem arises: How did French and Western writings portray Emir Abdelkader in terms of his personality and his resistance against French colonialism? To what extent were these writings objective in their treatment of his personality and his struggle?

In conducting this study, we adopted the historical method, which traces historical events, in addition to the descriptive-analytical approach, applied in the scientific examination of selected events and incidents relevant to the subject. We also employed a comparative approach, as it provides further clarification and enriches the analysis.

1- Western Historical Studies on the Personality of Emir Abdelkader

Much has been written about the personality of the Emir, among them Henry Churchill, who mentioned that Emir Abdelkader was born on Friday, the 23rd of Rajab 1222 AH / 1807 AD (Henry, 1991, p. 39).

Both the French writers Alexandre Bellemare and Léon Roches agreed that the birth of Abdelkader ibn Muhieddine was on Tuesday, the 15th of Rajab 1223 AH, corresponding to September 6, 1808 (Léon Roches, 1884: 140). Meanwhile, Bruno Étienne stated that the Emir was born in 1807 or 1808 in the plain of Mascara, in the Oran region (Etienne, 1997, p. 15).

Regarding his upbringing, Henry Churchill noted that Emir Abdelkader grew up under the care of his father, who devoted to him unusual attention as a child whose future was destined to be surrounded by glory and tied to the destiny of his country. His intellectual abilities revealed an exceptional brilliance, as he was able to read and write at the age of five, and by the age of twelve he had mastered the Qur'an, Hadith, and the principles of Sharia, after which he became a student (Churchill, 1974, p. 39).

The Emir was his father's favorite and closest son, as he practiced religious rituals with him—a fact mentioned by Alexandre Bellemare (Bellemare, 1863, p. 12). Étienne also noted that the Emir spent most of his time with horses (Etienne, 1997, p. 44).

Churchill further reported that at the age of seventeen, the Emir became renowned among his peers for his remarkable strength and evident vitality. He also began giving lessons in the family mosque, explaining and interpreting the most complex and profound verses and texts. His greatest ambition in youth was to become a marabout, like his father whom he deeply admired (Churchill, 1974, pp. 39-40).

Churchill also stated that no one could equal him in horsemanship; he was not only an imposing rider but also demonstrated astonishing superiority in all the skills required of horsemanship—keen eyesight, steady hand, and true manliness—earning the admiration of all who knew him. He took pleasure in all forms of entertainment demanding skill and courage, and took pride in mastering falconry, as well as hunting gazelles, ostriches, and wild boars (Churchill, 1974, pp. 40-41).

2- Western Writings and Historical Studies on the Resistance of Emir Abdelkader

Many writings have addressed the resistance of Emir Abdelkader, from 1832 until his surrender in 1847. Denzin noted that the French occupation of the city of Oran was, for the Arabs, an invitation to free themselves from Turkish rule in the entire province. The city of Mascara, located inland, rose up against the Turks who believed their presence there was sustainable. Some of them were killed, others expelled, and the city turned into a republic. During these circumstances, the Emir's father was an elderly sheikh who, in 1832, was elected leader of the Arab tribes inhabiting the Mascara region. However, due to his old age, the sheikh declined this position and entrusted it to his son Abdelkader (Denzin, 2003, p. 22).

As for the first pledge of allegiance, known as the "private pledge," Paul Azan mentioned that Emir Abdelkader was no more than twenty-four years old at the time (Azan, 2003, p. 15). Léon Roches noted that Abdelkader's first

appearance was in May 1832 under the walls of Oran, where he displayed great courage by infiltrating the French army and assisting the wounded. From this incident, he earned a special status among them, and they regarded him as Emir, Sultan of the Arabs, and their commander in the field (Roches, 1884, p. 35). Bruno Étienne, however, stated that Abdelkader entered the plain of Macta and dictated to his scribe the text of the pledge, which was later read before all tribes and in the squares of towns and villages (Etienne, 1997, p. 152).

As for the second pledge of allegiance, known as the "public pledge," Churchill noted that the Emir realized that love of country and zeal for religion were the only tools with which he could unify all tribes. He therefore called for a general assembly in the city of Mascara in the spring of 1833, a call that was welcomed by a large number of major tribes from both the Tell and the Sahara (Churchill, 1974, p. 62).

The public pledge marked the beginning of the legitimate rule of Emir Abdelkader, who confronted colonialism in numerous battles. He also concluded two treaties: the Treaty of Tafna and the Treaty of Desmichels. The latter, signed between General Desmichels and Emir Abdelkader, drew significant attention from Western writers. Churchill noted that General Desmichels signed this treaty after realizing from bitter experience that he could not occupy the Oran region with the limited forces his government had placed at his disposal (Churchill, 1974, p. 84).

The Emir wrote:

"If you wish to maintain the prominent position that circumstances have placed you in, I see no better course than to accept my invitation, so that the tribes may devote themselves to cultivating the land and enjoy the fruits and blessings of peace under a treaty that binds us firmly together."

The letter was carried by the Jew Mordechai, who acted as intermediary between Emir Abdelkader and General Desmichels. He was the bearer of peace messages and was among those present at the signing of the treaty between the two parties. He is credited with playing a major role in securing for the Emir the significant privileges obtained through the treaty (Al-Jazairi, 1903, p. 114)

Johann Carl Bernet noted that the Emir understood the importance of concluding a treaty with the French, as it would consolidate his authority domestically on a firm foundation and enhance his strength to resist an enemy such as the French. This realization drove him to conclude the treaty (Bernet, 2009, p. 75)

According to Emir Abdelkader's own letter, the meeting between his representatives and the representative of French authority (see note 1) took place outside Oran with Mordechai Amar. He wrote: "I am sending to you two envoys, namely the Minister of Foreign Affairs, al-Mawlud ibn 'Arash, and Agha Khalifa ibn Mahmoud, who will meet outside Oran with Mordechai Amar. They will inform him of all the proposals. If you accept them, you may then send word to me, and we shall draft a treaty that will put an end to the hatred and hostility now dividing us, and replace them with friendship. You may rely on me, for I have never gone back on my word." (Churchill, 1974, pp. 76-77).

Among the conditions of the treaty, as recorded by Alexandre Bellemare, were the following:

The conditions of General Desmichels:

- The release of French prisoners.
- Any Christian traveling within the country must be provided with a passport stamped with both the seal of Emir Abdelkader's consul and that of General Desmichels.

The conditions of Emir Abdelkader:

- Arabs are free to buy and sell gunpowder, weapons, sulfur, and all items necessary for war.
- Trade in the port of Arzew shall be under the authority of the Commander of the Faithful, while Mostaganem and Oran shall only receive the commercial goods necessary to meet the needs of their inhabitants. This objective shall not be opposed, and those wishing to ship goods must go through the port of Arzew (Bellemare, 1863, p. 74).

- The general shall return all fugitives to us and pledge not to grant asylum to criminals. Moreover, the commander-in-chief in the city of Algiers shall exercise no authority over Arabs who may come to him with the consent of their chiefs.
- No Muslim shall be prevented from returning to his home whenever he (Bellemare, 1863, p. 73).

As for the Treaty of Tafna, Churchill noted that General Bugeaud arrived in Oran from France with specific instructions: either to make peace with Emir Abdelkader or to defeat him. He sent the Emir proposals based on mutual understanding, which included:

- Recognition of French sovereignty.
- Limitation of Abdelkader's influence to the Chlef River.
- Payment of tribute to France.
- Delivery of hostages as a pledge for the implementation of any future treaty that might be agreed upon (Churchill, 1974, pp. 86-110).

These were conditions rejected by the Emir, who instead proposed the following:

- The Emir would recognize the sovereignty of France.
- France would retain, in the province of Oran, a strip extending ten to twelve leagues in width, beginning at Rio Salado and ending at the Chlef River. In the province of Algiers, it would retain the city of Algiers and the entire territory bearing that name, while leaving to the Emir the province of Titteri and the province of Oran, except for the mentioned strip.
- The Emir would pay an annual tribute in the form of wheat and livestock.
- Complete freedom of trade.
- All entitlements already obtained by the French, or that they may obtain in the country, would be guaranteed to them (Churchill, 1974, pp. 111-112).

The Emir's conditions, however, were rejected by Bugeaud, who occupied Tafna in order to force the Emir to accept an agreement. The treaty was concluded only after the Emir made concessions:

- Abandonment of Blida.
- Renunciation of any claim to authority over Muslims residing in the French-controlled zone.
- Some extension of French (Churchill, 1974, p. 117).

Thus, the treaty known as the "Treaty of Tafna" was drafted and signed by both parties on May 20, 1837.

Emir Abdelkader fought many battles, which were recorded in French writings, such as the Battle of the Macta (1835). Alexandre Bellemare wrote that this battle was among the most important victories of Emir Abdelkader over the French army led by General Trézel on June 18, 1835. France admitted its defeat, having lost more than 280 dead, 500 wounded, and 17 prisoners (Bellemare Alexandre, 1863: 113). Paul Azan noted that French public opinion was shaken by the outcome of the battle and demanded a campaign against Mascara and its leader Abdelkader. General Trézel was replaced by General Clauzel (Azan, 2003, p. 16). Churchill, for his part, recounted the reaction of M. Thiers during the 1835 session of the French Parliament, when he commented on the system then applied in Algeria, saying: "It is neither peace, nor war, but a badly managed war." (Charles Henry Churchill, 1974) (Churchill, 1974).

As for **state-building and administrative organization** in Algeria, numerous writings have addressed this subject. Alexandre Bellemare reported that Emir Abdelkader divided his state into eight provinces, each under the command of a khalifa (deputy) appointed by him:

- The province of Tlemcen, under the leadership of Khalifa al-Bouhamidi.
- The province of Mascara, under the leadership of his son-in-law, al-Mustafa ibn al-Tuhami.

- The province of Miliana, under the leadership of Khalifa Sidi Mohammed al-Saghir, and after his death, Mohammed ibn Allal, son of Sidi Mubarak.
- The province of Titteri, under the leadership of Khalifa Mohammed al-Barkati.
- The province of Bordj Hamza, under the leadership of Ahmed ibn Salem.
- The province of Mjāta, under the leadership of Sidi Toubal Abdel-Salam.
- The province of Ziban, under the leadership of Sidi al-Hajj al-Saghir.
- The province of Western Sahara, under the leadership of Khalifa Qaddour ibn Abdel-Baqi.

Each khalifa's province was subdivided into several sections headed by an agha, and each agha oversaw several tribes, themselves under the command of a qa'id (commander) acting under the authority of the tribal sheikh (Bellemare, 1863, p. 220).

Charles Henry Churchill also mentioned that Emir Abdelkader divided the province of Oran into two large regions, each placed under the authority of a khalifa. The eastern region was further divided into seven districts, each led by an agha, with his son-in-law, Mustafa ibn al-Tuhanni, serving as his khalifa there. Mascara was the seat of government in this region. The western region, with Tlemcen as its capital, was under the authority of Khalifa al-Bouhamidi (Churchill, 1974, p. 140).

Regarding military organization, Churchill noted that Abdelkader's irregular forces during the early period of his struggle amounted to about 6,000 soldiers. This count included all the units provided by the tribes in times of emergency, although it was rare for even a third of this number to gather at once for a campaign. As for the irregular cavalry, who were the most effective, their numbers were limited (Churchill, 1974, p. 140).

Meanwhile, Alexandre Bellemare reported Emir Abdelkader's own description of his army:

"In addition to the forces sent by the tribes under my authority and the troops of my khalifas, which form a massive auxiliary force, I could not retain soldiers far from their tribes for long. I had, however, a regular army consisting of 8,000 infantrymen, 2,000 cavalymen, 240 artillerymen, and I possessed 20 field cannons, in addition to a large number of iron and bronze cannons, most of them out of service, left behind by the Turks" (Bellemare, 1863, pp. 225-226).

3- Western writings on the life of the Emir after the end of the resistance (1847-1883):

Western sources did not overlook the historical phases of Emir Abdelkader's life between 1847 and his death in 1883, following the end of his resistance. They referred to his imprisonment in France for five years between Toulon and Amboise, his later move to the Mashriq, and his prominent role in quelling the Damascus disturbances of 1860. They also described the final years of his life, during which he suffered from numerous illnesses that weakened him and eventually led to his death in Damascus in 1883.

3.1 The End of Emir Abdelkader's Resistance:

Western writings, particularly French ones, did not overlook the news of Emir Abdelkader's surrender. It was a matter that even the French newspapers reported on, as the news of his capitulation spread throughout France with great enthusiasm. *Le Moniteur* in its issue of January 3, 1848, highlighted this good news, stating: "The submission of Abdelkader is an event of great importance for France. It confirms the security of our occupation, and it allows us to reduce the number of men and funds we had been sending to Africa for so many years" (Churchill, 1974, p. 250).

3.2 The Emir in Prison:

The Emir was deported to France to serve his imprisonment instead of being transferred to the East as he had agreed with Lamoricière (see Comment No. 2). He disembarked at the naval port of Toulon on January 8, 1848, instead of arriving in Damascus. Bruno Étienne noted that Emir Abdelkader could not understand why the king's son had broken his promise. He wished to travel to Alexandria, but the monarchy was faltering, and parties and

factions were divided over his fate. Abdelkader was left bewildered and surprised by the proposals conveyed to him by General Dumas, who rushed from Paris, sent by François Guizot—himself a man influenced by colonialist circles—telling the Emir that he must forget the promises previously made to him (Etienne, 1997, p. 250).

The Emir wrote many letters and signed numerous documents guaranteeing that he would neither return to Algeria nor resume resistance against colonial rule. Charles Churchill reported that Abdelkader believed these documents, formally requested of him, would soon prove to be a prelude to his release. Every dawn he awaited as if it were the herald of freedom. At last, the long-expected reply arrived. He opened it eagerly, only to find it declared: “The Republic does not consider itself bound by any commitment to Abdelkader and regards him, as the previous government did, as a prisoner.” This biting mockery struck the Emir to the core, and he sank into the depths of despair and despondency (Churchill, 1974, p. 250).

Boualem Bessaih noted that the government’s choice of Fort Lamalgue in Toulon as Emir Abdelkader’s place of detention was neither sudden nor coincidental. Rather, it was a military port that offered the necessary foreign guarantees, given the military units stationed there, as well as its strategic location near the sea, which made it difficult for the Emir to escape and return to Algeria (Bessaih, 1997, p. 194).

Meanwhile, Fabvier mentioned that France’s interests and its honor converged in the ratification of the promise, which had become necessary, since the interests of France could not be separated from its honor (Guizot, n.d, pp. 525-530).

3.3 The Emir in Exile:

After his release, Emir Abdelkader traveled to Alexandria, and from there to Istanbul, the capital of the Islamic Caliphate. He arrived on 22 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1269 AH / January 7, 1853 CE. From there, he moved to Bursa, where he stayed for three years before leaving in 1272/1273 AH (1856 CE), and then headed to Beirut, followed by Damascus, where he remained until his death.

Henry Churchill wrote that Emir Abdelkader was the center of attention for scholars and intellectuals, as he was a sharif descending from the Prophet ﷺ, a learned scholar, and a leader of jihad. They felt connected to him not only by sentiments of national solidarity but also by religious duty (Churchill, 1974, p. 278). Bruno Étienne also mentioned that the Emir was a member of the Damascus city council, where he mingled with the region’s intellectual elite who visited him. He was also connected with prominent families such as the Al-Azm family, and together with these families, he contributed both to the technological development of the region—for example, by financing the Damascus-Beirut road—and to the major debates that shook the Ottoman Empire on its path to decline, beginning with the Hatt-ı Hümayun decree of 1856 up until the Arab Revolt (Etienne, 1997, p. 15).

Among the notable events Emir Abdelkader experienced in Damascus was the conflict between the Druze and the Christians. Henry Charles recounts: “In July 1860, the fame of Emir Abdelkader and his humanity spread throughout the world, as he worked to stop the fighting between the Druze and the Christians in Damascus. At the same time, the Emir helped Algerians living in Syria, moving between Christian quarters to halt the strife, during which nearly 15,000 Christians were saved from death” (Henry, 1991, pp. 303-316).

He also mentioned how letters, gifts, and decorations poured upon the Emir from all sides: France sent him the Grand Cordon of the Légion d’honneur; Prussia awarded him the Grand Cross of the Black Eagle; Greece offered him the Grand Cross of the Saviour; Turkey bestowed upon him the First Class of the Order of the Medjidie; while England presented him with a beautifully gold-embellished double-barreled rifle, and the United States sent him two rifles also inlaid with gold. All of these decorations and gifts were accompanied by letters of gratitude (Henry, 1991, pp. 287-288).

4. The Death of Emir Abdelkader in French Western Writings

Among those who wrote about the death of Emir Abdelkader was Paul Azan, who in his book *Great Military Leaders* stated that the Emir died on May 26, 1883 (Azan, 2003, p. 53).

The French regarded Emir Abdelkader as a popular hero, whose portraits appeared in the collections of Énaux commemorating the heroes whom France was proud of. They admired him for his nobility, especially after they had defeated him militarily and unsuccessfully tried to push him into imperial projects, which he refused without ever breaking the oath of loyalty he had sworn to them (Etienne, 1997, p. 15).

Among the Emir's works that were translated into French was his book *Kitab al-Mawaqif* (The Book of Spiritual Standings), translated by Michel Chodkiewicz. In his study, Chodkiewicz viewed Emir Abdelkader as the legitimate heir of the great Sufi master Ibn 'Arabi, and believed that the Emir's revival of his teachings was of great importance (Etienne, 1997, p. 16).

Some French Western writings, however, sought to distort the events of Emir Abdelkader's captivity in France, interpreting them in a way that turned this period into a dark page in his life, portraying him as an ally of France and a supporter of its policies. Part of this narrative included the claim about his participation, along with fourteen of his companions, in the French elections of November 21, 1852. This was reported by Paul Azan, Bruno Étienne, and Zoumoroff. French sources narrated that on November 20, Emir Abdelkader wrote a letter to the governor of the département of Loir-et-Cher requesting to take part in the elections. Indeed, on November 21, he and fourteen of his companions voted in favor of Napoleon Bonaparte, as an expression of the good relationship between him and Napoleon Bonaparte (Zoumoroff et al, 1994, p. 434).

Other sources, however, presented the matter differently, stating that the Emir merely wished Napoleon Bonaparte success in the elections and thanked him for his treatment of him. This wish was interpreted by some as a symbolic vote.

The facts reveal that the French sought to exploit the image of Emir Abdelkader to their own advantage, using it as a reference point to legitimize their colonial project and to tarnish his reputation and standing—particularly during the period of his imprisonment in France. In doing so, France relied on its historians to propagate baseless accusations and falsehoods about Emir Abdelkader in an effort to convince future generations, without any evidence.

As for the decorations and honors that Emir Abdelkader received after the Damascus massacre and his achievements in preventing bloodshed there, they were later used against him, being portrayed as attempts to win him over. France sought to exploit Emir Abdelkader in order to advance and expand its colonial project in the Levant. Reports from French consuls support this view, such as the statement of the French consul in Damascus, "Boulad," in one of his reports: "Perhaps the day will come when it will be very advantageous for France to have a man like Abdelkader in the heart of Syria, who, whether as an instrument or as an ally, could exert his weight in the balance of Ottoman authority" (Etienne, 1997, pp. 311-312).

Charles Robert Ageron further commented in this regard: "Abdelkader is the ruler of an Arab kingdom in the East—he is the ruler of Syria. This was a political idea that circulated as early as 1860, and he was nominated by most politicians and journalists as a figure symbolizing Arab nationalism. It was Napoleon Bonaparte's idea, allowing for the first time an Arab leader the possibility of ruling a kingdom" (Ageron, 1970, pp. 15-30).

On September 22, 1860, the Minister of War instructed the French general to offer Abdelkader the rule of Syria and to inform him of his influence over the representatives in Beirut and their desire for such a plan, claiming that this was solely for the benefit of Syria (Ageron, 1970, p. 58). All of this, however, aimed to portray Emir Abdelkader as France's ally in the Levant, reducing every action he undertook to a service to France.

Conclusion:

From this study, we conclude that the figure of Emir Abdelkader drew the attention of European historians. References to him can even be found in the memoirs of military leaders, commanders, and politicians who had direct contact or encounters with him. These writings addressed many aspects of his life—from his birth to his death. Some treated his life objectively, while others leaned toward interpretations distant from reality, built upon suppositions, distortions, and misrepresentations. These particularly sought to mislead during the period of Abdelkader's captivity in France, where the French government attempted to depict him as France's ally and

friend—ready to accept its colonization of Algeria—rather than the resolute adversary who had fought to expel it. All this fell within deliberate political strategies from which Abdelkader himself distanced and shielded himself. Yet despite this, such portrayals continue to appear today in some Western writings that deal with the figure of Emir Abdelkader, his jihad against French colonialism, and even his life in exile.

Comments:

1. The representatives of the Emir were the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Al-Mawloud bin Arrach, and Agha Khalifa bin Mahmoud.
2. Christophe Léon Louis Juchault de Lamoricière: Known for acts of extermination and war crimes against the populations of the Maghreb, he was appointed Minister of War in 1848.

Emir Abdelkader (1808–1883) remains one of Algeria’s most emblematic figures of resistance against French colonialism and a symbol of Islamic humanism recognized worldwide. His struggle transcended military resistance, embodying political organization, moral leadership, and philosophical reflection. Western historiography, particularly French and British, has long been divided between admiration and ideological distortion in its portrayal of the Emir. This study critically analyzes how European writers depicted his life—from his birth and education to his resistance (1832–1847), captivity, and post-exile humanitarian activities.

The central questions guiding this research are:

1. How did French and Western historical writings construct the image of Emir Abdelkader’s personality and resistance?
2. To what extent did these writings reflect objective historiographical principles or reproduce colonial narratives?

Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative historical-comparative method based on:

- Documentary Analysis: Review of primary Western sources (Churchill, Bellemare, Roches, Étienne, Denzin) and selected Algerian and Arab historical accounts.
- Descriptive-Analytical Approach: Systematic examination of textual representations of the Emir’s life, resistance, and exile.
- Comparative Historiography: Evaluation of differences in perspective between French colonial historians and later post-colonial Western scholars.

The temporal framework covers the period from 1830 to 1930, encompassing the height of colonial expansion and the maturation of Orientalist scholarship.

Findings and Discussion

1. Multiplicity of Western Interpretations:

European writers diverged in their accounts of the Emir’s birth and upbringing. Churchill (1974) and Bellemare (1863) emphasized his early intellectual brilliance and religious devotion, while Étienne (1997) framed his youth within a modern sociological context of leadership formation.

2. Portrayal of Resistance:

Denzin (2003) and earlier French sources present the Emir’s leadership as both heroic and inevitable within the socio-political turmoil of the Ottoman decline. However, French colonial writings often reframed his jihad as a civilizing encounter rather than anti-colonial resistance.

3. Transformation in Image:

After his surrender and exile, French historiography re-narrated Abdelkader’s role from “enemy” to “friend of France,” serving colonial diplomacy. His humanitarian actions in Damascus later enabled his transformation into a universal figure admired by both Muslims and Europeans.

4. Realism versus Controversy:

While some Western accounts (notably Churchill and Étienne) maintained relative historical realism, others were shaped by imperial ideology, leading to contradictions and mythologized depictions.

Novelty and Scholarly Contribution

This paper contributes to post-colonial historiography by reassessing Western writings not merely as biased sources but as reflective texts revealing Europe's intellectual engagement with Algerian resistance. It identifies the transformation of Emir Abdelkader's symbolic capital—from a localized resistance leader to a trans-cultural moral icon—and argues that this evolution parallels Europe's shifting moral narrative about colonization.

Ethical Considerations

All sources utilized are publicly available historical documents and published scholarly works. The study maintains academic neutrality and respects cultural sensitivity in interpreting both Western and Algerian perspectives. No human or animal subjects were involved in this research.

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The author declares no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article.

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