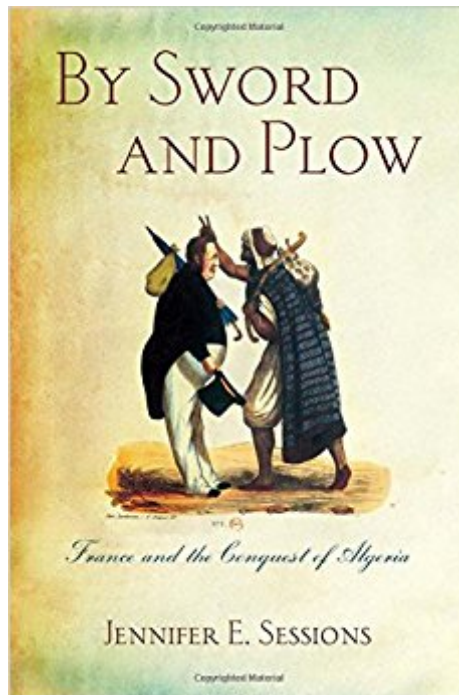


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By Sword And Plow: France And The Conquest Of Algeria



Synopsis

In 1830, with France's colonial empire in ruins, Charles X ordered his army to invade Ottoman Algiers. Victory did not salvage his regime from revolution, but it began the French conquest of Algeria, which was continued and consolidated by the succeeding July Monarchy. In *By Sword and Plow*, Jennifer E. Sessions explains why France chose first to conquer Algeria and then to transform it into its only large-scale settler colony. Deftly reconstructing the political culture of mid-nineteenth-century France, she also sheds light on policies whose long-term consequences remain a source of social, cultural, and political tensions in France and its former colony. In Sessions's view, French expansion in North Africa was rooted in contests over sovereignty and male citizenship in the wake of the Atlantic revolutions of the eighteenth century. The French monarchy embraced warfare as a means to legitimize new forms of rule, incorporating the Algerian army into royal iconography and public festivals. Colorful broadsides, songs, and plays depicted the men of the Armée d'Afrique as citizen soldiers. Social reformers and colonial theorists formulated plans to settle Algeria with European emigrants. The propaganda used to recruit settlers featured imagery celebrating Algeria's agricultural potential, but the male emigrants who responded were primarily poor, urban laborers who saw the colony as a place to exercise what they saw as their right to work. Generously illustrated with examples of this imperialist iconography, Sessions's work connects a wide-ranging culture of empire to specific policies of colonization during a pivotal period in the genesis of modern France.

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Customer Reviews

"Jennifer E. Sessions argues that the contested political culture of the post-revolutionary period was at the origins of French Algeria. The dualism that structures the book's title, *By Sword and Plow*, frames an alternative narrative of nineteenth-century French history. Sessions presents the conquest and settlement of Algeria as one of the nineteenth century's major events, one in which issues of sovereignty, citizenship, and political power were played out. This book will be read with fascination by readers with widely different interests."

•Journal of Modern History "Sessions offers up a fine and illuminating study of the early years of Algérie française and makes an important contribution to the history of nineteenth-century political culture. . . . *By Sword and Plow* is an impressive, highly readable, and meticulously-researched piece of scholarship that deserves the attention of all historians of France overseas and France in the first half of the nineteenth century. . . . It shows French imperialism in a new and (sometimes radically) different light."

•John Strachan, H-France Review "Sessions has written an exemplary cultural history of empire that impresses by her range of sources, subtle analysis, and the unity of the argument from beginning to end."

•Citation from the Mary Alice and Philip Boucher Book Prize Committee (French Colonial Historical Society)"In *By Sword and Plow*, Jennifer Sessions ably shows the place of the Algerian conquest within the political culture of the July Monarchy. Sessions avoids an elitist definition of public culture in the debates about Algeria and includes voices and sources from across the French social spectrum."

•Joshua Cole, University of Michigan, author of *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France*"*By Sword and Plow* contributes to our understanding of the aims and practice of French expansion into Algeria in the first half of the nineteenth century. By marrying the cultural with the political, Jennifer E. Sessions uncovers the policy choices that led successive French regimes to back colonial expansion and elucidates the way contemporary culture shaped French understandings of the conquest of Algeria. Sessions has produced an excellent addition to the growing literature on France and its nineteenth-century empire."

•Patricia Lorcin, University of Minnesota, author of *Imperial Identities*"Combining the best of the different approaches to empire—military, political and cultural alike—Jennifer E. Sessions shows how the French conquest and settlement of Algeria originated in the economic and moral collapse of the slavery-based colonialism of the past. In the process, she expertly reveals the dense tissue of connections between domestic politics and sociocultural life on the one hand and imperial understandings and expectations on the other. This excellent book makes clear not only that Algeria was integral to France's successive nineteenth-century regimes but that they all sought to gain legitimacy by advertising their ability to rule that restive place."

•Edward Berenson, New York University

Jennifer E. Sessions is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Crossing Borders Program at the University of Iowa.

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