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EXPOSITION COLONIALE
MARSEILLE 1922
JOURNAL OFFICIEL



COMMISSARIAT GÉNÉRAL



55, Rue Paradis

1^{re} Année - N° 54 - Juin 1922

Prix : 1 fr. 50

Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of race and French colonial policy at the 1922 National Colonial Exposition of Marseille, which occurred in the midst of Europe's "exposition fever," during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I posit that the Exposition introduced the paradox of formal, constructed colonial exhibits that were posed against the backdrop of a thriving French city reaping the economic benefits of its colonial exploitation. I also address the question of whether or not native colonial workers, artists, and artisans could be considered truly "modern" if they were continually provincialized and racialized by French colonialists during the event. In my conclusion I argue that further study of this unique colonial narrative can shed light on questions of modernity and representation in the microcosm of the Exposition.

Introduction

"History will one day tell the story, that the colonies brought the motherland resources of all kinds and that we owe to the natives such that we have never considered, that we never consider them as inferior races but as partners with whom we are happy and proud to collaborate."¹ So stated French President Alexandre Millerand during his visit to the 1922 National Colonial Exposition of Marseille. The President's arrival to Marseille on May 7, which had been preceded by his journey through France's North African colonies, was hailed as the national inauguration of the Exposition. Millerand's visit sparked coverage from French and international newspapers and exposed political controversy surrounding the President. *Le Petit Journal* eagerly followed Millerand's tour of the Exposition, while the communist Parisian newspaper *L'Humanité*, on the other hand, also reported the event in a disparaging article called "Le petit Alexandre chez les Marseillais," explaining that "the municipality of Marseille, which lacks money, notably for medical inspections in its schools, has not hesitated to spend hundreds of thousands of francs to royally receive le petit Alexandre, despot republican who made the voyage with the pomp of Louis XIV."² Despite harsh political criticism, President Millerand's visit to the 1922 Exposition not only displayed strong support for the partnership between France

¹ Robert Poulain. "Le President Visite L'Exposition Coloniale." *Le Petit Journal* [Paris] 8 May 1922, Paris ed.: 1-2. Print.

² "Le Petit Alexandre Chez Les Marseillais." *L'Humanite* [Paris] 9 May 1922: 1, Print.

and her colonies, but also symbolically validated the event and the city of Marseille on the international stage. Indeed, Millerand's arrival was emblematic of the phrase "any press is good press," as media outlets across Europe and the Americas devoured stories of political controversy, learning about Marseille's role as host of the Exposition and "port of the Orient" in the process.

Inaugurated on April 16, 1922 by Albert Sarraut, France's Minister of the Colonies, and Lucien Dior, Minister of Commerce and Industry, the 1922 National Colonial Exposition would grow to attract roughly three million visitors over the course of eight months from Europe and the world. Its stated mission was to offer "a picturesque and instructive painting of French colonial activity."³ The 1922 Exposition was held in the midst of the West's fervor for colonial exhibits and world's fairs, and at the height of France's colonial dominance.⁴ Each event celebrated France's achievements and conquests alongside each colony's natural resources, often including the colonized peoples themselves as exhibits. Though the Exposition was intended to project a unified vision of French colonial policy and the benevolence of France's colonial rule, the event also exposed political conflict, misconstrued understandings of "authentic" indigenous culture, and a projection of a hierarchical world order that was wholly incongruous with the city life of Marseille's streets.

The Marseille Exposition of 1922 presented the unique situation wherein a host city's diversity rivaled that of the Exposition, challenging the way viewers confronted racial differences. The Exposition proposed an official, sanitized version of commerce and colonial power that diverted sharply from the bustling trade occurring along Rue Canebière and the Old

³ "L'Exposition Coloniale De Marseille." *L'Illustration* 159.4129 (1922): 365-67. Print.

⁴ While I am aware of the debate that exists over the problematic meanings of the "West" in history, in this paper I will use this term to denote the colonial empires of Europe and America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Port, where immigrants from all over the world engaged in daily social and economic relations. In this paper, I will use documents related to the 1922 Exposition of Marseille as a lens through which we can achieve a better understanding of modernity and race during France's Third Republic. Working with newspapers, albums, photographs, illustrations, advertisements, and a variety of other documents, I will examine how colonial representations of race and modernization were apparent in Exposition materials, as well as in the event's architectural structures.

My research is an indictment of France's modernization efforts. I am curious as to how the Empire imposed its understanding of world order onto the Exposition, casting France as the benevolent, industrial matriarch and her colonies as innocent yet uncivilized children. Indeed, the history of Marseille offered a different historical narrative in which immigrants from French colonies entered Marseille as workers and soldiers, and through their own agency attempted to secure a future for themselves. The story of colonization, which the 1922 Marseille Exposition portrayed as a tale of adventure, conquest, and mutual benefit, could instead be read through the story of Marseille's powerful trade relationships, which established the metropole as the clear benefactor, yet left some opportunity for workers to seek success in a modern, rapidly changing city.

The 1922 Exposition in Marseille used specific tropes and stereotypes to classify the Occident and the Orient through constructions of pavilions that would capture the savagery of the colonies.⁵ Alongside these pavilions stood other exhibits detailing France's industrialization efforts and the Empire's devotion to civilizing colonial peoples. The Exposition's organizers

⁵ I will use the term "Occident" interchangeably for the "West" to denote the region of European (and, later, American) empires. The term "Orient," is a historical term that was used by colonialists to describe the colonial world outside of Western regions. In using these terms, I seek to maintain historical accuracy while also recognizing these terms' limitations in describing the colonies I am studying.

might have intended for each pavilion to represent either the backwardness of the Other or the modernization of France. However, despite these intentions, the 1922 Exposition used a mélange of Western and colonial styles that thoroughly confused the primitive and the modern⁶ – resulting in an event that attributed a neat modernity to France’s civilizing mission rather than acknowledging the exposition’s range of influences and styles.⁷

Examining the rhetoric of modernity, civilization, and indigenous savagery, I will adapt two terms, *authenticity* and *hybridity*, from Pat Morton’s *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris*. Authenticity and “authentic,” terms frequently used by the French to describe the Exposition, imply that colonialists intended to create exact representations of their colonies to project truth and accuracy, rather than their own interpretations of indigenous life. Hybridity or “hybrid” refer to the term created by Morton that is “descriptive of cultural and racial mixing generated by colonialism.” The hybrid is “the cross-breeding between the metropolitan and the colonial...the horror of colonialist fantasies.”⁸ These terms I hope will elucidate the conflict evident between city life on Marseille’s streets and colonialism in the 1922 Exposition.

Scholars of exhibitions studies and architectural history also have used the 1922 Marseille Exposition as a point of comparison to other expositions constructed by competing Western empires. Alexander Geppert, Zeynep Çelik, and Paul Greenhalgh considered how

⁶ In this paper I interpret modernity using Morton’s thesis in *Hybrid Modernities*, in which she cites Walter Benjamin’s idea of “pre-history” – those things “neglected, forgotten, and repudiated” – as integral to our understanding of modernity at the expositions. Morton claims, “the neglected history of colonialism, often omitted from histories of the Euro-American world, is an integral element of modernism. The 1931 Colonial Exposition... represents one of those moments in the prehistory of the present... through which we can gain insight into modernity” (8).

⁷ Zeynep Çelik’s *Displaying the Orient* addresses modernity in the context of cultural struggles of self-definition in Islamic cultures, stating, “expositions displayed the entire nineteenth-century world according to a stratified power relationship” (3). According to these expositions, industrialization is at odds with indigenous culture, and modernity is portrayed as a Western, “First-World” concept thoroughly owned by France. Çelik’s thesis revises this claim and opens the possibilities for a more dialectic history between Islamic cultures and the West.

⁸ Pat Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2000), 13.

expositions were microcosms of the larger colonial order, and the “early testing grounds for a rapidly globalizing society.”⁹ European empires and the United States, each with their own goals of expansion and conquest, viewed expositions as unique, nationalistic opportunities to celebrate their own cultural dominance.¹⁰ Others such as Sylvaine Leprun, Pat Morton, Catherine Hodeir, and Dana Hale only examined French expositions, especially the Paris Exposition of 1931, which attracted millions more visitors and drew international and global fanfare.¹¹ Leprun in particular claimed how expositions straddled the divide between science and spectacle, presenting colonial exhibits that used pseudo-scientific studies to support the awkward dance of French colonial domination.¹² French expositions served as “indicators of political and cultural values,” presenting complex ideas about race, culture, and the West through the art and architecture of the “exotic.”¹³ Marseille and Paris, both centers of commerce and economic power, represented fruitful locations for the French national government to re-imagine its past and construct a colonial narrative.

There are very few works of scholarship specifically dedicated to an analysis of the 1922 Exposition. While many historians have only considered the event as a footnote in a larger history, others have portrayed it within the context of a city with global influences. Éliane Richard, a scholar of Provençal and Marseillais history at the University of Provence, offered that the “myth” of Marseille’s colonial power was manifest in its role as one of the most active

⁹ Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting cities: imperial expositions in fin-de-siècle Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 5.

¹⁰ Robert Rydell posited in *All the World’s a Fair* that American international exposition supported specific national projects and foreign policy goals. Alexander Geppert’s *Fleeting Cities* compared different European expositions and their support for colonialist measures.

¹¹ Morton, 72.

¹² Sylvaine Leprun, *Le théâtre des colonies: scénographie, acteurs et discours de l’imaginaire dans les expositions, 1855-1937* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1986), 17.

¹³ Dana S. Hale, *Races on display: French representations of colonized peoples 1886-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008), 2.

port cities on the Mediterranean and in the world.¹⁴ The development of Marseille's port occurred largely in the nineteenth century; even one American compared Marseille to a modern "Babel" during this period.¹⁵ During the Exposition, Marseille presented a contrast to the event, with formal, constructed colonial exhibits set against the backdrop of vibrant city life reaping the economic benefits of its colonial exploitation.¹⁶ In this swirling mix of ethnicities and cultures, Marseille was a city where immigrants from Italy, Africa, Asia and other areas of the globe struggled to achieve economic stability while indigenous Moroccan weavers, Cambodian dancers, and West African villagers were imported from their respective homes to occupy exhibits in the 1922 Exposition.¹⁷

This work is divided into several sections. First, I will discuss policies of French colonialism and will explore the political and ideological origins of the 1922 Marseille Exposition. Then, delving into the geography and symbolism of the Exposition, I will discuss how the event was presented for visitors, as well as how visitors and journalists perceived the Exposition and interpreted its pavilions, architecture, and performers. Finally, I will examine two pavilions representing the territories of West Africa and French Indochina, symbolic of the Occident and the Orient, and will discuss the ways in which French colonial policy, identity, and differing attitudes towards race were reflected in the construction of the pavilions, ultimately reshaping attitudes about the colonized peoples who inhabited and worked at these exhibits. Despite the Exposition's best efforts to limit modernity only to a civilized, industrialized France, the event revealed the inevitable hybridization of cultures and impossibility of reserving

¹⁴ *Désirs d'ailleurs: les expositions coloniales de Marseille 1906 et 1922* (Marseille: Archives Municipales de la Ville de Marseille, 2006), 33.

¹⁵ *Désirs d'ailleurs: les expositions coloniales de Marseille 1906 et 1922*, 37.

¹⁶ Yael Simpson Fletcher, "Capital of the Colonies: Real and Imagined Boundaries between Metropole and Empire in 1920s Marseilles." *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 136-54.

¹⁷ Interestingly, some French scholarship calls Italy "la colonie itallienne" (the Italian colony), including *Migrance: Histoire des Migrations à Marseille* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1990), 34.

modernity for the West in a city where diverse groups of peoples converged. By revisiting Exposition publications and promotional materials, I hope to reach a better understanding of the difference between how the French empire perceived itself and the reality of racial difference in Marseille. Unlike Paris, the capital of France and the center of culture and government in the Empire, Marseille was a city fighting for its own importance on the colonial stage at the peak of France's imperial power. The 1922 Colonial Exposition presents a lens through which we can achieve a more accurate glimpse into the history of how Marseille functioned within the French empire, where racial identities were continually shaped and broken down despite efforts to contain them in distinct colonial spaces.

Colonial Origins of the Exposition

While colonial expositions dated to the late nineteenth century, they reached their height during the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s, peaking with Wembley's British Empire Exposition in 1924 and 1925 and the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1931. French expositions in particular were state-controlled reflections of colonial policy that sought to unite country and city, metropole and colony under the French banner of *fraternité* (brotherhood). In Marseille, the 1922 exposition occurred sixteen years after the first Colonial exposition in the port city, an enormously popular event that introduced sprawling pavilions filled with "native" art, architecture, and peoples to French audiences. Building off the 1906 exposition, the 1922 show would cover thirty-six hectares of parkland in the Parc du Prado outside the city center and included a budget of six million francs (in 1906, the exposition budget was a mere 1.5 million francs for an exposition that covered 23 hectares of parkland).¹⁸ Marseille, with its strong port economy and connection to France's colonies via shipping trade routes, seemed the likely choice

¹⁸ "L'exposition nationale coloniale de Marseille décrite par ses auteurs ..." (Commissariat General de l'Exposition: 1922), 32. And "L'Exposition Coloniale De Marseille." *L'Illustration* 159.4129 (1922): 365-67. Web.

as host of two different French expositions, despite claims that it would never attain the economic or cultural renown of cosmopolitan Paris.

As France began its colonial expansion in earnest at the end of the nineteenth century, official French colonial policy and the development of colonial studies contributed to a growing awareness of French identity, both within the country and in the empire. As expansion became official policy, imperialist organizations such as the *École Coloniale* and the International Colonial Congress, both established in 1889, helped promote the doctrine of assimilation in the country.¹⁹ Assimilation, required that “the colony was to become an integral, if noncontiguous, part of the mother country, with its society and populations made over...in her image.”²⁰

According to Herman Lebovics, the policy of assimilation was appealing in its yielding of a “single, immutable national identity” that would pervade French governing institutions with a “national character.”²¹ Lebovics termed this identity “True France,” a notion that combined conflicting elements of French culture: Catholic religious tradition, *les Beaux-Arts*, a rigid governmental hierarchy, and romanticized notions of French peasantry.²² Reeling from the memory of the First World War, French colonialists sought to solidify their victory and their legacy both within the Empire and within the country.²³ Moreover, during the 1920s France and Marseille were in the throes of economic troubles, and it was the colonial empire that was seen as a vehicle by which domestic conflicts could be put aside for the greater good.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, other theories and official French policies began to emerge, often generating more ambiguity instead of a unified direction for France’s imperialist

¹⁹ Raymond F Betts, *Assimilation and association in French colonial theory, 1890-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 5.

²⁰ Betts, 8.

²¹ Herman Lebovics, *True France: the wars over cultural identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), 9.

²² Lebovics, 10.

²³ Vast, 118.

expansion. French officials began discussing the policy of association, which gave indigenous leaders influential positions and allowed colonies to send representatives to France's colonial assemblies.²⁴ An ambiguous doctrine that was difficult to implement in practice, association policies were interpreted in different ways, from one French colonialist claiming that "the wise and realistic policy of association reserves with unwavering firmness all the rights of colonial domination" to some groups believing that association contained the possibility for the complete emancipation of colonized peoples from French rule.²⁵ Association was also closely linked with France's *mission civilisatrice*, the misguided and racist understanding that colonial peoples could become civilized thanks to the benevolence of French rule. By 1930, the concept of *la plus grande France*, in which all those living under French rule were global citizens united with the French empire, had installed itself among other policies of assimilation and association.²⁶ Henri Vast, who coined the term in 1909, described *la plus grande France* as the "new France" that "maternally cares for her new children."²⁷ Even the term *la France d'outre-mer* (France overseas) implied that the empire's most distant colonies still retained an inherent French identity that united them with the metropole.²⁸ During the 1920s, colonialists and their dissidents were buzzing in France's urban centers, especially Paris, where the discussion of French colonial policy quickly became a conversation about national identity. It is here, 1920s Marseille – a historical moment in which official French colonial policy, urban and industrial development, and French nationalism intermingled – that the colonial exposition was constructed, connecting itself to a context in which to understand the event and its implications.

²⁴ Charles Robert Ageron, *France coloniale ou parti colonial?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), 225.

²⁵ Ageron, 226.

²⁶ Raoul Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France: de 1871 à 1962* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2005), 125.

²⁷ Henri Vast, *La plus grande France: bilan de la France coloniale* (Paris: Garnier, 1909), 5, 7.

²⁸ Vast, 7.

Cultural Geography: Mapping the Marseille Exposition

Muscling into contention with Paris as one of France's largest urban centers, Marseille during the interwar period had doubled its population since 1870, attracting immigrants from Italy, Spain, Armenia, and North Africa, causing haphazard urban expansion and overcrowding in the city center.²⁹ Marseille also benefitted economically from its role as an industrialized French port city, and its commercial trade routes served all the major cities in the French empire, as well as foreign cities such as New York, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires (see fig. 1).

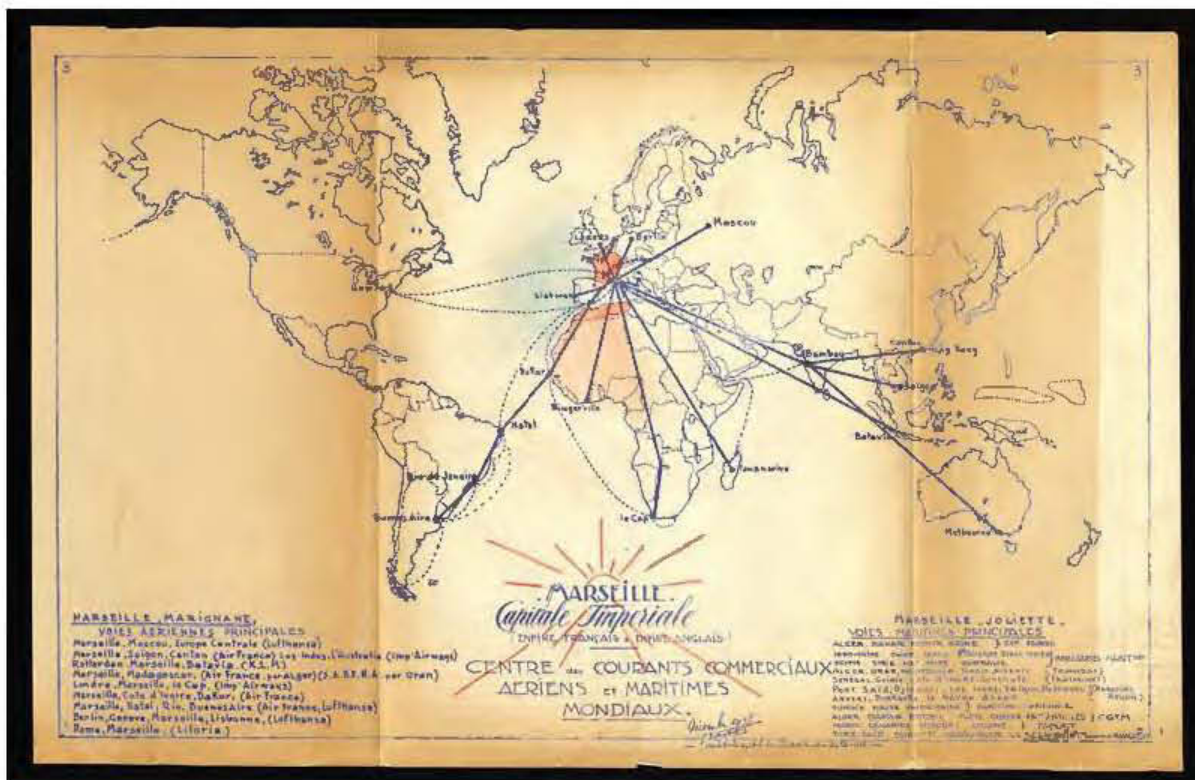


Figure 1: A twentieth century map depicting “Marseille Capital Imperiale” and the city’s primary trade routes. From the Wolfsonian Florida International Museum, Miami, Florida.

As Marseille increased its trade with the colonies, the city began to reinforce its economic power in the French empire through the Chamber of Commerce, a key political power and one of the

²⁹ Edouard Baratier, *Histoire de Marseille* (Toulouse: Privat, 1973), 387, 389.

primary organizers of the 1906 and 1922 expositions in the city. Thanks to its international trade and its policies regarding immigration, Marseille was home to a diverse population, with over 150,000 immigrants in the city by the 1920s, comprising as much as one quarter of the city's population.³⁰ Immigrants from Italy and Spain were the most numerous in the early twentieth century, taking jobs often as dock workers at Marseille's ports, while later waves of overwhelmingly male Armenian, Algerian, and a few West African immigrants constituted the dock-working population by the 1930s.³¹ While the presence of a significant immigrant population that naturalized or intermarried with French citizens often provoked xenophobic sentiments, the Marseille municipal government attempted to assuage its political factions through various public demonstrations of unity, the most prominent being the colonial expositions.³² Marseille's character and unique political landscape primed the city to host its two expositions in 1906 and 1922. With a diverse immigrant population and lucrative economy, Marseille could claim the right to be the logical host of a national exposition at the dawn of the twentieth century.

However, the city of Marseille would first have to face competition with Paris over which city could host the next exposition. This conflict reached its boiling point after the 1906 Exposition when the port city, as the "colonial capital of France," claimed the right to host the 1916 Exposition.³³ After a heated debate, organizers of the exposition made a compromise: Marseille would host the national exposition, and Paris would be home to the international exposition later in 1931.³⁴ The National Colonial Exposition of 1922 thus emerged in the midst

³⁰ Baratier, 386.

³¹ Baratier, 387.

³² Consult Baratier's *Histoire de Marseille* for more information on the dockworkers' strikes of the 1920s, conservative xenophobia, and the government's attempts to appeal to its immigrant population on p. 387-388.

³³ Morton, 72. These dates later changed as a result of World War I.

³⁴ Geppert provides an explanation of the heated competition between Marseille and Paris on p. 181 of *Fleeting Cities*, as does Fletcher in "Capital of the Colonies" on p. 139.

of a conflict that called into question the “true” metropole of France, as Marseille’s booming economy and its connection to lucrative markets stood as a main source of power in the burgeoning French empire. The tension between Marseille in Paris during this historical moment revealed the port city’s ability to object to the capital of the empire, the main source of France’s world power, and exposed the city’s intentions to become a focal point in the French empire.

In light of this conflict, event organizers worked to create a map of the Exposition that would reflect the greatness of the French empire, with Marseille as its jewel. Organizers chose the Parc du Prado, located to the southeast of the *centre ville*, and its surrounding land as the site of the exposition and employed architects and other planners to determine its layout. The Exposition’s organization followed a pattern similar to other shows in Europe; pavilions representing each of France’s colonial possessions were laid side by side, separated by “native” plants and landscapes or by tourists’ kiosks and sprawling esplanades. From the traffic circle at the intersection of Boulevard Rabatau and Boulevard Michelet, visitors proceeded up the Grande Allée, passing the Tunisian and Algerian pavilions before arriving at the Grand Palais, a massive testament to ornate French architecture and an event space for celebrations throughout the course of the Exposition. On the esplanade in front of the Grand Palais, one could view the colossal West African tower and an imposing Moroccan palace before exploring the Angkor Wat temple in the Indochinese pavilion or viewing traditional Provencal art and innovative industrial machinery at the Palais des Machines (see fig. 2). The mapping of French colonial order in a space meant for instructional and entertainment purposes was intentionally deliberate and methodical, reflecting the French desire for rigid, hierarchical order and the assimilation of France’s colonies into the empire. As exposition planners mapped out the exposition, they also thought of their audience: the ostensibly French spectator with little knowledge of the Empire’s

colonial interests. Especially in Marseille, French citizens would not be well acquainted with the colonial imagery and rhetoric used by a small circle of colonialists until the expositions of 1906

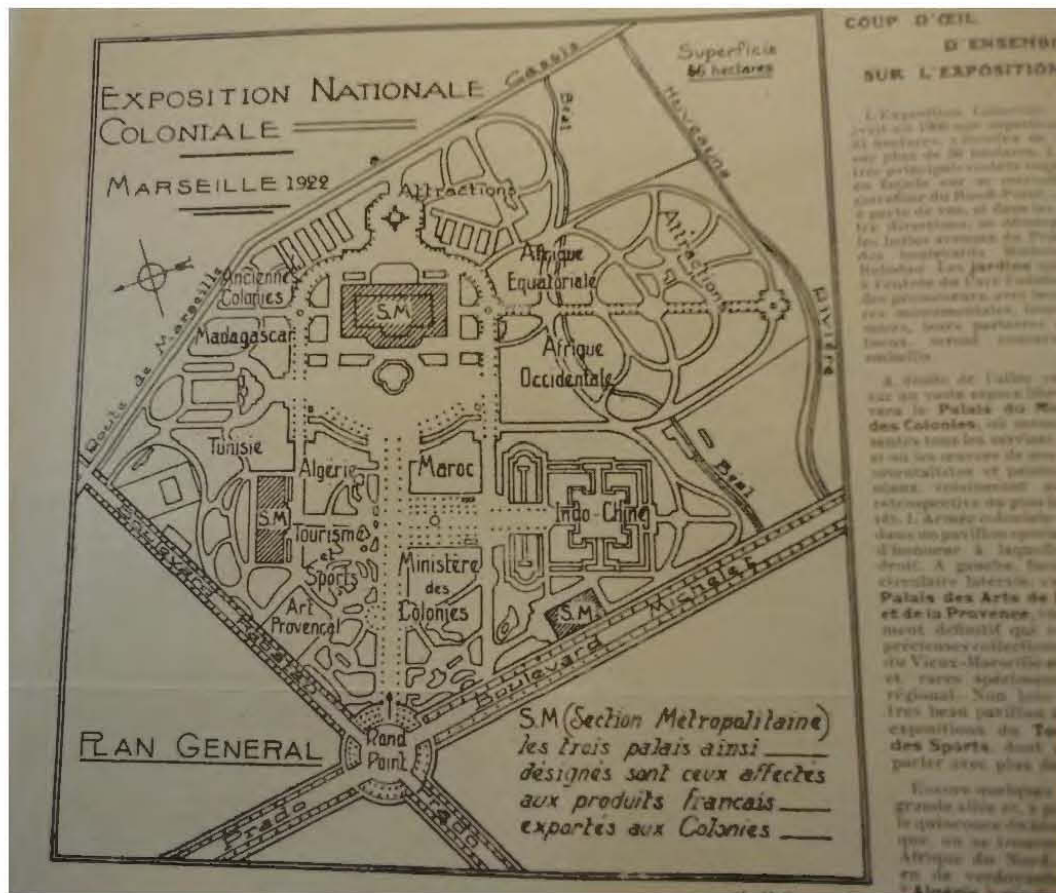


Figure 2: A preliminary map of the 1922 Colonial Exposition. Courtesy of the Archives Municipales de la ville de Marseille.

and 1922.³⁵ Whereas the growth of Marseille's city center was organic and chaotic, the planning of the exposition was a conscious effort to portray French colonial possessions and "represent elements characteristic of the local architecture" of the colonies.³⁶ The exposition's careful, simple geography, a distortion of its vast, disparate colonial possessions, not only would appeal to spectators, but also would reflect French colonial attitudes and understandings of the world's "natural" order.

³⁵ Jean-Jacques Jordi in *Désirs d'ailleurs: les expositions coloniales de Marseille 1906 et 1922* (Paris: Imprimeries Réunies, 1921), 21.

³⁶ *Désirs d'ailleurs: les expositions coloniales de Marseille 1906 et 1922*, 110.

Furthermore, the creation of strict, defined colonial spaces was in conflict with the geography of the city of Marseille, where immigrant ghettos and class-based *arrondissements*, despite their socioeconomic segregation, were much more intermixed and diverse than the French colonialists' clear understanding of social order. While the 1922 Exposition organizers capitalized on the nearby city center to attract spectators, the Exposition itself still seemed incongruous in a city where immigration and diversity were becoming an even more important part of the cultural landscape. Even so, literature about Marseille attempted to romantically capture city life, often resulting in a romanticized historical tradition and language about Marseille's destiny as an imperial city. Charles Régismanset, a colonialist writer who published a preview of the Exposition in 1921, encouraged readers to take time to visit the city of Marseille and its "natural resources," as if to suggest that one could see the real French empire at work, a "perpetual performance in one hundred diverse acts."³⁷ Régismanset, whose text was used as publicity to generate excitement for the Exposition, romantically depicted Marseille without the struggles and harshness of average life, describing that "Here [Marseille], the man works without bitterness and amuses himself without remorse... here, one struggles for life in beauty and in gaiety; there is no spectacle more comforting for the soul as for the heart."³⁸ Not only did the language generated around the exposition romantically depict the greatness of the French colonies, but also language used to depict the city of Marseille itself was tinged with the rosiness of its destiny as France's colonial city.

Imagining the Colonial World: Presentation and Reception of the Exposition

Despite initial apprehension of the 1922 Marseille Exposition, the event's overwhelming attendance, financial profits, and various print iterations marked its entrance into French popular

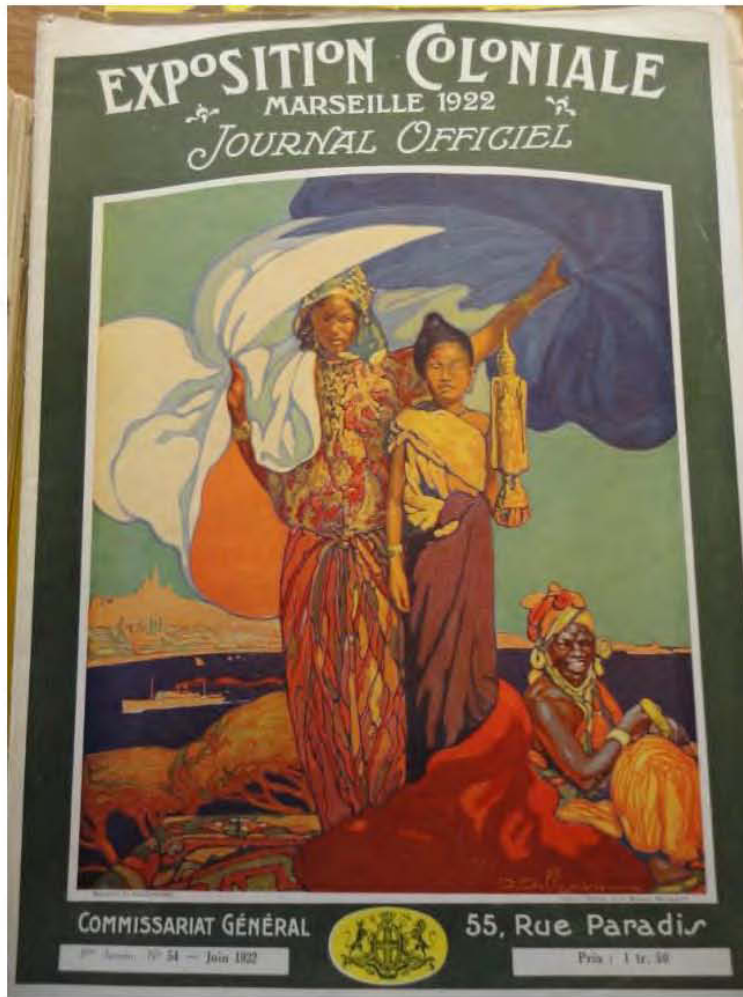
³⁷ Charles Régismanset, *L'Exposition nationale coloniale de Marseille, 1922*, 71.

³⁸ Régismanset, 71.

culture and vernacular. Officials' goals were to present visitors with an event that would capture their imagination and present the success of the newly constructed empire. In an April 17 article of *Le Figaro*, Albert Saurraut, Minister of the Colonies, blessed the project, declaring that "Marseille, faithful to its ancient history, each day affirms its vitality to its advantage. This *porte de l'Orient*, Mediterranean capital, did well to offer a hospitality worthy of itself to its distant colonies, extending beyond the seas."³⁹ In order to boost profits and attract visitors, officials created visual and textual materials to present France's colonial power in a celebratory light. Expositions were hailed as entertaining and educational, while the event's organizers themselves published numerous periodicals, illustrations, speeches, and a commemorative album to document the event. Highly persuasive, Exposition materials were created to present a compelling view of colonial order and complement a visitor's experience at the event itself.

Among the event's most widely circulated images was the Exposition's official poster, designed by David Dellipiane (see fig. 3). The poster depicted a North African woman, standing next to a girl, presumably from French Indochina, holding a billowing French flag over the figures, as if to protect them from harm. Seated to the right of the standing figures was an African woman with cartoonish, overemphasized lips and facial features that French, European, and American artists frequently used to depict Africans during this period. Beyond the three figures, a barge entered one of Marseille's ports, representing Marseille's importance in the economic exploitation of the colonies, in front of a silhouetted *Notre Dame de la Garde*, the iconic French basilica that rested at the highest point in the city. Commissioned by the Exposition organizers, Dellipiane's poster was symbolic of France's role as the benevolent protector of the colonies and used colonized, exotic native women depicted with bright, swirling colors to underscore the event's excitement and anticipation. Representing French colonies as

³⁹ "L'Oeuvre Coloniale De La France: L'Exposition De Marseille." *Le Figaro* [Paris] 17 Apr. 1922: 3. Print.



“The 1922 National Colonial Exposition described by its Authors,” depicted colonial life by linking France’s colonies to the empire’s success. Adrien Artaud, the Commissaire General of the Exposition as well as the president of Marseille’s Chamber of Commerce, wrote in the album’s introduction that the Exposition “gives the public an idea as precise as possible of our colonies, their inhabitants, their customs, their production, and their art in 1922.”⁴⁰ Artaud described the Exposition as capturing a specific, unique moment in the history of the French empire – a moment that would be reshaped over time but would nevertheless retain its historical authenticity years later. “Each colonial Exposition,” Artaud wrote, “is a photographic snapshot of our colonial domain, and it is equally interesting to follow, from period to period, the developments of our possessions, just as it is advantageous that the spectacle offered by our colonies is fixed at a given time in their existence.”⁴¹ Artaud’s introduction to the album continued to list the event’s prized exhibits, from the Moroccan pavilion, a new edition that reflected France’s recent colonization of Morocco, to the new Provençal art exhibit that displayed traditional work from the region. Not only did this short text help introduce the wealth of material in the three hundred page work, but it also revealed the language with which the Exposition’s organizers described and conceived the event. Rather than compare the event to a broad sweeping tableau, Artaud described the Exposition as a “snapshot,” a fleeting, ephemeral image that captured the details of French colonial culture using modern photographic techniques popularized at the turn of the century.

The event that Artaud described using this “snapshot” metaphor materialized, guaranteeing visitors a realistic jaunt around the world without leaving metropolitan Marseille,

⁴⁰ Adrien Artaud in “L’Exposition Nationale Coloniale de Marseille de 1922 et Son Album,” 9.

⁴¹ Artaud, 10.

or the comforts of restaurants, elegant women's bathrooms, and wide promenades.⁴² But for the vast amount of French citizens who had just experienced a world war, a recession in the financial, commercial, and trading industries, and political turmoil, an extravagant Colonial Exposition might have represented the excesses of the local and national government, instead of the glory of the French empire.⁴³ Herman Lebovics explained the organizers' approach as "self-validation for the pro-imperialists and of initiation to *La Plus Grande France* for French visitors rather than as an act of merchandising."⁴⁴ It was thus crucial for the Exposition's publicity to project a positive view of the French colonial empire, convincing viewers that the pursuit of colonial territories was a worthwhile venture.

These goals dovetailed with the role of the Exposition's numerous architectural forms, which conjured imagined realities of the colonies. The organizers employed different architects to construct each pavilion; often these architects had experience as former French colonial officials who worked in the colonies they later sought to represent at the Exposition. Many pavilions contained exhaustive exhibits of colonial goods and raw materials such as rubber or peanuts, while charts alongside the exhibit explained the profitability of each venture. According to Xavier Loisy, a former Inspector of the Colonies, organizers created pavilions filled with colonial goods and visual graphs and charts to "show skeptical French citizens and surprised foreigners what the genius colonizer of inferior races has done."⁴⁵ The Exposition organizers' task was to sway public opinion with an "authentic" glimpse into France's colonial possessions,

⁴² Artaud, 17.

⁴³ Loisy, 22.

⁴⁴ Lebovics, 93.

⁴⁵ Xavier Loisy in "Les Enseignements de l'Exposition de Marseille: Vouloir?...ou Mourir?" in *L'Exposition Nationale Coloniale de Marseille de 1922 et Son Album*, 24.

as well as the Empire's economic investments in each region that would allow "a wounded France to be healed and saved by her colonies."⁴⁶

National and regional newspapers also covered the pomp and reception of the Exposition, usually reflecting colonialist platforms and supporting the Exposition with a congratulatory tone. One newspaper, *Le Petit Marseillais*, advocated in 1911 that a colonial exposition should be held in Marseille every ten years. Later, the newspaper would become the official publication for the Exposition of 1922, producing exclusive materials and limited editions of the paper while occupying its own pavilion at the Parc du Prado.⁴⁷ Other newspapers focused purely on the spectacle of the Exposition, describing its sights and sounds to capture the impression of visiting the grandiose spectacle. In *Le Petit Journal*, Auguste Breal described how "any walk in this wonderful Marseille Exposition provides pleasure at any moment in a way that was both real and imaginary, concrete and abstract."⁴⁸ Georges Valois, writing for *L'Action Française*, a Parisian newspaper, recounted his own visit to the Exposition and described how Marseille functioned as the site of the event. "At Marseille, colonial life is not just a curiosity; it remains a part of the city's tradition and is interlinked to the city's interests," Valois wrote, "Marseille is the only place where a colonial exposition is truly national."⁴⁹ The exposition was even covered internationally, with *The Times* of London proclaiming that "the Exhibition is not only a national effort to display to the world the colonizing genius of France, but it is a striking proof of the great work done by the Mother Country for her possessions." Journalists situated the 1922 event in the context of empire, using a nationalist tone in their writings to promote the many benefits of colonialism that were displayed at the Exposition.

⁴⁶ Loisy, 24.

⁴⁷ Richefort in *Desirs d'Ailleurs*, 107.

⁴⁸ Auguste Breal. "L'Etonnante Marseille." *Le Petit Journal* [Paris] 25 May 1922: 4. Print.

⁴⁹ Georges Valois. "L'Economie Nouvelle Marseille: Porte De L'Orient, Cite Des Merveilles, Mere Des Etablissements Au Dela Des Mers." *L'Action Francaise* [Paris] 23 Oct. 1922: 4. Print.

Event attendees and writers used similar language to describe their own experiences visiting the Exposition, usually remarking on the authenticity or reality created by an exhibit. One woman wrote of being captivated by the “authentic” scenes of Algerian and Tunisian streets, remarking on “all these colours, music, smells, dust, movement, all these others.”⁵⁰ Charles Régismanset, who wrote a preview of the 1922 Exposition, also published *8 Days at the Colonial Exposition*, a series of letters that the author wrote to a friend about his tours of the event’s exhibits and pavilions. Though commissioned by Artaud and Loisy, to which Régismanset dedicated the collection, the printed edition of these letters recounted the author’s experience of the Exposition, rather than merely borrowing the language of the event’s organizers. Depicting each pavilion with awe and captivation, Régismanset described each of his observations in the style of anthropologic study, using detailed descriptions to promise viewers the excitement of viewing “the richness of detail: foundations, columns, porticos, pediments decorated with moldings, cornices, friezes, headbands, profiles, foliage.”⁵¹ Individual experiences of the pavilions emphasized the authenticity of the colonial structures and its inhabitants; Régismanset, in particular, frequently attested to the event’s superiority to the 1906 Exposition in every category imaginable, especially in its attention to detail and crowd pleasing spectacles.

Though these voices captured the excitement generated for the Exposition, they could not fully represent the millions of viewers who came to see the Exposition and left with presumably varying opinions. It is impossible to determine the identity of the average *Marseillais* in this telling of history, nor is it possible to glean their thoughts and motivations without documentation; it can only be assumed that the event’s success over seven months kept new

⁵⁰ Quoted in Yael Simpson Fletcher’s “Capital of the Colonies,” 142.

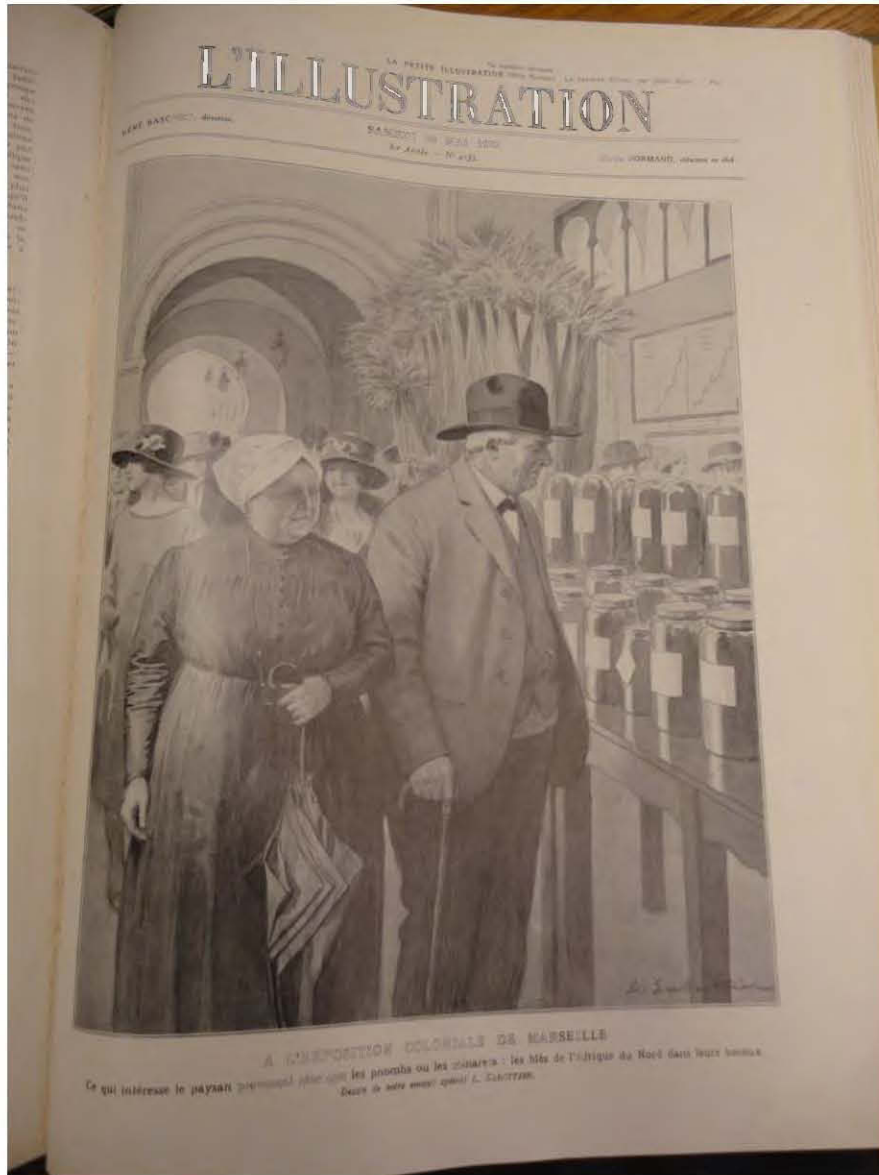
⁵¹ Charles Régismanset and Claude-René Martin, *8 jours à l’Exposition Coloniale de Marseille* (Paris: G. Crès et Cie, 1922), 30.

visitors engaged while encouraging others to return again. Furthermore, dissent and tension were not unheard of at the Colonial Exposition. During President Millerand's visit to the Exposition in May, "an anti-war meeting was timed to coincide with the President's visit.... A communist orator concluded the meeting with 'a tirade against the Colonial Exposition, with [he said] symbolized all the thievery, all the murders, all the plundering, [that took place] in the name of civilization.'"⁵² Newspapers also captured class tension among visitors at the Exposition. An illustration ridiculing Provençal peasants appeared on the cover of the popular magazine, *L'Illustration*, rendering an elderly Provençal couple dressed in conservative garb at one of the colonial exhibits, followed by two young, cosmopolitan women in fashionable dress (see fig. 4). The magazine, which had a subscription of several hundred thousand primarily in Paris, revealed class and cultural tensions that still existed between Paris and other regions of France thought to be culturally backwards.⁵³ This illustration captured the cultural conflict between city and country in France, while also hinting at the desires of Marseille to become the new cosmopolitan, colonial capital of France. While the organized presentation and reception of the Colonial Exposition among visitors and the press could never capture the range of opinions about the Exposition, it is evident that the people of Marseille were actively shaping and reshaping the meaning of their city as the focal point of the French empire. The Exposition not only sought to represent French colonial possessions, but it also sought to represent Marseille, from encouraging visitors to tour the Old Port to including an entire pavilion dedicated to Provençal arts. Though called a "Colonial Exposition," the event in Marseille projected *French* and

⁵² Yael Simpson Fletcher includes this account on page 143 of "Capital of the Colonies," citing Special Commissioner Report No. 1861, Marseille, 8 May 1922.

⁵³ Herman Lebovics provides an informative footnote on this subject in *True France* on page 59.

Handwritten notes at the top of the page, likely describing the historical context or the specific scene depicted in the illustration.



A L'EXPOSITION COLONIALE DE MARSEILLE
Ce qui intéresse le paysan...
Dessiné de notre maître d'école L. CHARTIER.

Handwritten notes at the bottom of the page, continuing the historical or descriptive text related to the illustration.

Primitive Villages, Ancient Temples, and Indigenous Peoples

Once inside the Exposition grounds, visitors became participants in their own discovery narratives, exploring ancient sites, ornate palaces, and interacting with colonized peoples brought in from the French colonies to work at the Exposition. Pavilions were constructed as authentic spaces for visitors who wished to immerse themselves in the colonial experience. Yet the architecture of each pavilion often borrowed from a range of styles and techniques not native to the colonies it sought to represent, though this was unknown to an unassuming visitor.⁵⁵ Newspaper articles remarked on the beauty and detail of each pavilion, noting not only the grace in which they were rendered but also their presentation of empirical evidence that showed strong trade relationships with the metropole. Furthermore, Exposition organizers hired workers indigenous to each of France's colonies to work in an exhibit, whether as "traditional" artisans, dancers, or villagers, who lived in their own recreated habitats, as if contained in a zoological exhibit. Exotified and subjugated, colonized workers were required to live on the Exposition grounds, providing visitors with a real, "authentic" view of "simple" lifestyles, and performing certain tasks deemed traditional and symbolic of their indigenous culture. Architecture and representations of race at the 1922 Exposition complemented each other, intending to create a complete experience of immersion into the colonial order that, while fluid and ephemeral, helped solidify racial difference and supported France's colonial policies. In this section, I will compare two pavilions representing French Indochina and West Africa, exposing how French presentations of a distinct racial hierarchy placed colonized peoples on a scale ranging from backwards native, to civilized *tirailleur* (colonial infantryman), to mysterious Oriental.

⁵⁵ Pat Morton's article, "A Study in Hybridity: Madagascar and Morocco at the 1931 Colonial Exposition" offers a similar argument, with Morton claiming that "this endeavor to segregate France and her colonies failed, at the Colonial Exposition and in the French colonial empire, because it was constantly undermined by the hybrid mixtures that colonization itself produced and by the indigenous peoples' unwillingness to stay 'in their place'" (85).

While writers and photographers were fascinated with the entirety of Marseille's Colonial Exposition, certain pavilions and exhibits became focal points of coverage and discussion in the regional and national press. Perhaps the most celebrated structure of the Exposition was the Temple of Angkor, the reconstruction of an ancient Cambodian ruin appropriated by French architects to represent the French colonization of Indochina. The reconstruction was designed by architect Monsieur A. Delaval and was first constructed of wood, then refined with detailed carvings, statues, fountains, and eight different staircases that led to the main palace structure, on which an elaborately carved dome sat fifty-four meters from the ground.⁵⁶ One reporter for *L'Illustration*, after listing the Marseille Exposition's main attractions, concluded that "but of course, the most striking spectacle is the Palace of Indochina, an exact reproduction, though smaller, of Angkor Wat, marvel of Khmer art...[with] the grandiose towers, forged in the manner of a goldsmith, crowning this prodigious edifice."⁵⁷ Charles Régismanset described the Angkor War reproduction as "the triumph of sculpture in the architectural sense. Here, there is not a detail that stands out from the whole that does not reinforce the general style."⁵⁸ Captivated by the palace's detail and sheer size, writers, and presumably, average visitors, were in awe of the Indochinese pavilion, especially of the central tower and its imposing presence on the Exposition's skyline.

Visitors' awe and amazement of a wooden reproduction of the centuries-old Hindu temple also carried over into their interaction with colonial workers indigenous to Cambodia, Tonkin, or Annam, among others. Native workers evoked a patronizing curiosity that many writers, photographers, and illustrators spun as a fascination with an ancient, "traditional" culture unaffected by the trappings of modern societies. The Indochinese pavilion housed Tonkin lace

⁵⁶ P. Guesde, Commissaire General de l'Indochine, in *L'Exposition Nationale Coloniale de Marseille*, 81.

⁵⁷ "L'Exposition Coloniale De Marseille." *L'Illustration* 159.4129 (1922): 365-67. Web.

⁵⁸ Régismanset in *8 Jours à l'Exposition Coloniale*, 30.

makers, actors, artisans, soldiers, and a troupe of internationally recognized young female Cambodian dancers, one of the most publicized groups of native people brought to the 1922 Colonial Exposition.⁵⁹ Living in a house in “this little city,” “noisy with laughter and chanting,” the Cambodian dancers were brought to the Exposition to regularly perform in front of the main staircase of the Angkor Wat temple in front of hordes of French and European spectators.⁶⁰ The presence of Cambodian dancers is not unique to the Marseille exposition; in 1906, Auguste Rodin, though famous for his sculpture, travelled to Marseille’s first Colonial Exposition to sketch the “perfect beauty” of a female Cambodian dancer.⁶¹ In 1922, the Cambodian dancers again captured the attention of the French, their image rendered in photographs, illustrations, and paintings that appeared in the press. One illustration, “A Cambodian Night at Marseilles,” appeared in the *Illustrated London News* and depicted a crowd of presumably European spectators watching the dancers perform under a night sky in front of the Angkor Wat palace (see fig. 5). The illustration depicts rows of men and women seated before a stage on which the Cambodian dancers were performing. Behind the dancers is the Palace of Angkor, a dramatically lit backdrop for the performance that enhanced the drama of the scene. The artist’s use of shadow and light also revealed the audience to viewers of this image; Western hats and clothing are easily detectable in the illustration, posing a contrast with the stylized costume of the Cambodian dancers. This document seemed to suggest the possibility for spectators to become part of the colonial spectacle, allowing readers in England to imagine themselves as part of the crowd. The illustration also captured the intertwined presentation of race and architecture evident

⁵⁹ See Guesde’s description of the Indochinese pavilion on p. 95-98.

⁶⁰ Guesde, 96.

⁶¹ Rodin was quoted in the *Figaro* on 1 August 1906, explaining that “There is an extraordinary beauty, a perfect beauty, about these slow, monotonous dances, which follow the pulsating rhythm of the music... [The Cambodians] have taught me movements I had never come across anywhere before...” This citation appears in the text accompanying the Rodin Museum’s description of the artist’s painting “Cambodian Dancer” (1906) on the museum’s website.

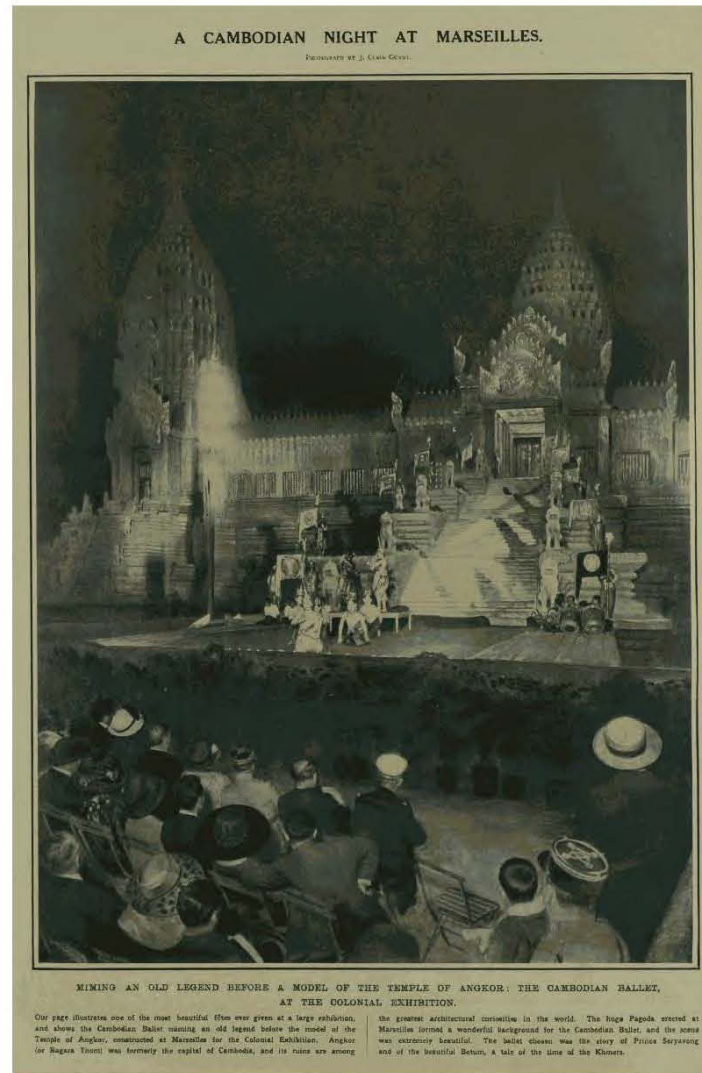


Figure 5: “A Cambodian Night at Marseilles” appeared in the *Illustrated London News* on August 5, 1922. Its caption reads: “Miming an old legend before a model of the temple of Angkor: the Cambodian ballet at the Colonial Exhibition.”

in the Indochinese pavilion, as well as in the other pavilions at the Exposition. The Cambodian performers and other natives in the Indochinese pavilion were venerated for their connection to an ancient, regal culture that, while not modern or Western, had its own unique traditions that were respected. However, in the act of presenting Indochinese races and cultures, the French

colonialists created frozen social forms for the indigenous performers to occupy, barring them from access to modernity and placing them in a racial hierarchy of Western conception.

As visitors to the 1922 Exposition viewed the peoples of West Africa and Indochina often in the same day, they also confronted differing attitudes between Oriental and African peoples. In fact, based on a photograph that appeared in *L'Illustration* (see fig. 6), it was evident that both the Angkor Wat temple and the West African tower could be seen at the same time, forcing viewers to consider two quite different architectural styles and cultures simultaneously. Placed side-by-side with the Indochinese pavilion, the West African exhibit featured a tall central tower, modeled from a smaller tower in Timbuktu. While the Angkor Wat temple symbolized a mysterious Oriental culture with ancient traditions unknown to Westerners, the French believed that they “had been right in thinking that up until now [Africans] were incapable of having an idea of the beauty of form and linear proportion.”⁶² The construction of the West African pavilion mapped French stereotypes about the uncivilized African primitive onto the architecture of this space. Nowhere was this more evident than in the construction of the West African village, “not interpreted, but copied from certain Sudanese models,” located in the main square in front of the pavilion’s central tower.⁶³ Here, visitors could wander literally through the lives of everyday Africans selling their wares, farming, or engaging in other activities, “the truth, reproduced in even its most minor details.”⁶⁴ Indeed, the presence of African villagers, as well as their reenactments of dances and “authentic” tribal ritual, was crucial for introducing visitors to France’s most exotic, “uncivilized” colony. Camille Guy, the Commissaire General of French West Africa, insisted that “we have created this project to present many Frenchmen still ignorant

⁶² Camille Guy, Commissaire General de l’Afrique Occidentale, in *L’Exposition Nationale Coloniale de Marseille*, 100.

⁶³ Guy, 104.

⁶⁴ Guy, 108.

of colonial matters with, not an adaptation more or less achieved of African life, but the truth reproduced in its every detail.”⁶⁵



Figure 6: “Indo-China and West Africa – In France: Exhibition Glories.” *L'Illustration*. The top photograph clearly depicts the Indochinese Pavilion and the West African exhibit as they stood side-by-side.

Similarly, in his visit to the Exposition, Charles Régismanset recalled seeing “a veritable village with more than sixty indigenous Africans... [and] finally, at the foot of the tower, the tents of the Tarzas Moors. Here there are eleven magnificent men and women, the true children of the desert,

barely tamed.”⁶⁶ Régismanset also included in his letter several drawings of the indigenous Africans he encountered, depicting African men in traditional costume performing or in play.⁶⁷ African women were also portrayed as untouched by modernity, as Camille Guy explained that the women in the West African pavilion “had a finesse, an elegance, and a vivacious manner and laugh that evoked the memory of those we have described in certain passages of the Bible or the Koran.”⁶⁸ Unlike the modern, cosmopolitan French women who had attained an education and were schooled in proper French manners, African women were portrayed as remnants of an ancient past, unconnected to modernization and ruled by centuries-old religious texts.

Such ideas concerning African peoples were substantiated by anthropologists and scientists of the period, who believed that different races did not share the same human origins.⁶⁹ African races at the Exposition, placed alongside colonized peoples from Indochina, North Africa, and France’s other colonies, had given “scientific credence to the idea that everything on the face of the earth was measurable and knowable.”⁷⁰ To Exposition planners, colonized Africans became docile and obedient subjects under the colonial empire once they had received the aid of the French empire, making them ideal subjects of study and examples of France’s benevolent *mission civilisatrice*. While Exposition organizers seemed to present Indochinese peoples with veneration and respect for ancient, if anti-modern, traditions, Africans were portrayed as savage, emotional, and even further disconnected from access to modernity than the Indochinese. By positioning the Indochinese and West African pavilions alongside one another, Exposition organizers might have intended to present two monumental tributes to cultures that

⁶⁶ Régismanset, 23.

⁶⁷ Régismanset, 17, 22-23.

⁶⁸ Guy, 106.

⁶⁹ Hale examines theories about race, especially in regards to the black female body in advertisements and trademarks, on page 24 of *Races on Display*.

⁷⁰ Greenhalgh, 87.

were to receive the aid of the industrialized metropole. However, the different treatment of West African and Indochinese cultures also implied the inherent inequality of these cultures in the eyes of the French – and ultimately conveyed a display of race inconsistent with the opportunities for peoples of all cultures in Marseille.

Direct interactions with other races was also an intensely personal experience, as organizers conceived each pavilion with the intent of immersing visitors in their own journey and experience of the French empire. There are few places in the documentation where one can identify the voices of natives from Indochina, West Africa, Morocco, and the other colonies. Furthermore, there is little documentation of the intentions and motives of those who travelled from their homelands to work at the Colonial Exposition. What researchers do have, however, are photographs that elucidate some of the relationships visitors had with those they encountered at the Exposition. Photographs often depicted natives in roles of servitude or performance, in which visitors could take part in the colonial spectacle,



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France



Figures 7 and 8: On the previous page, “Pousse-Pousse,” taken by a photographer with the Agence Meurrice, from Gallica. Above, “Young Indochinese and a Visitor,” by Frédéric Gémy, 1922. Courtesy of the Collection Alain Gemy, Archives Municipales de la Ville de Marseille.

buying leather goods or rugs from a Moroccan artisan or riding in a pousse-pousse, a rickshaw pulled by workers that carried visitors around the Exposition (see fig. 7). Workers were placed in certain exhibits and performed specific, routine tasks multiple times per day for the visitor’s pleasure. And while we cannot know what many of these men and women were thinking, photographs taken of the relationship between visitor and worker displayed the inequalities between each group. Meanwhile, new immigrants were streaming in the Marseille from France’s colonies and taking work at the city’s ports or in the manufacturing and construction industries. Workers at the Exposition might have made the trip to Marseille to engage in a similar quest for prosperity and opportunity that life in France would bring them, something that Marseille’s immigrants would have had greater access to. This juxtaposition begs the question of modernity in Marseille during this period. According to colonialists, indigenous colonial workers, artists, and artisans could never be truly modern if they were continually provincialized or racialized by French colonialists at the Exposition. While it is difficult to determine based on sources the types of opportunities that indigenous workers had access to at the Exposition, clear differences remain

between the immigrant community of Marseille and natives at the Exposition. Frozen by Western interpretations of tradition and cultural authenticity, indigenous workers were cast into specified, frozen social forms that could not allow colonized peoples to move away from fabricated colonial life.

Conclusion

After eight months of performance and spectacle, the Exposition came to a close in November of 1922, its buildings and pavilions quickly deconstructed, leaving few traces of the event on the city's landscape. The end of the Exposition was covered enthusiastically by the press, often in an attempt to prescribe meaning to its artificial constructions. One week before the Exposition's close *Le Figaro* published a front page article entitled "The Lessons of the Colonial Exposition." Its author, Emile Thomas, described how the Exposition, despite initial financial trouble and lesser popularity than that of expositions in other cities, flourished and "speaks to the imagination." He wrote:

Yes, it is indeed the higher moral of the dying Exposition. It gives us the confidence in ourselves, it assures us of the future if we do not forget its lessons. By reciprocity, we are attracted to its exotic soul. This good, welcoming France encourages the yellows and blacks. She is discreetly fair and soothes the jealousy of race; she does not dominate, she collaborates; she does not oppress, she carries out justice. The indigenous people who will return home will affirm better than we all can all that they have seen, felt, and experienced. If they have been our friends during these past seven months, they will become the most eloquent missionaries of French civilization.⁷¹

For journalists like Thomas, the Exposition held meaning greater than the figures and profits that Marseille's Chamber of Commerce might have been concerned with. The Colonial Exposition was an opportunity to project a vision of empire that spoke to the modernity of Thomas's day, replete with scientific discoveries, industrialization, and the missionizing force of "progress" that became the rallying cry for French colonialists and the *mission civilisatrice*. In turn, visitors to

⁷¹ Emile Thomas, "Les Leçons de l'Exposition Marseille" in *Le Figaro*, 19 November 1922, 1.

the Exposition, who had just experienced the First World War and economic duress, learned of France's benevolence towards her colonies, and claimed the Exposition as way to celebrate their empire – though of course the event did have its objectors as well.

Colonial expositions in Europe held a particular fascination for the millions who visited them. In Marseille, with its diverse population, political competition with Paris, and its role as the primary port city of France, the 1922 Exposition was no such exception, as millions of visitors streamed in to view the splendors and spoils of French colonialism. Marseille was also home to one of the most diverse populations of city dwellers that hailed from all over the world. At the same time that the Exposition of 1922 depicted stereotypical understandings of race and difference, conveying this through architecture and the employment of natives, Marseille was experiencing economic and social upheaval in the form of mass immigration and the inequality that accompanied it. The organized, methodical mapping of the Colonial Exposition, with its neat, designated spaces, was incongruent with the chaos of the Canebière or the twisting streets of Marseille's Old Port neighborhood. While writers such as Emile Thomas noted the Exposition's skillful presentations of native peoples, the event itself merely portrayed peoples who were seen as only becoming modern once French intervention took place. Not fully modern, not wholly uncivilized, colonized peoples at the Exposition occupied a strained middle ground, exposing the fault lines of France's colonial vision.

An event often overlooked in modern French and European history, the 1922 Exposition of Marseille offers a unique narrative of colonial struggle that ought to be considered for further study. My research has provided a launching pad for moving forward in the dynamic discussion of the era of French colonialism, and there is dire need for more voices to speak in this history. The story of the Exposition, and its narrative of simplified understandings of race and culture in

a planned space, deserves to be told more fully. It is only by doing so that we can reunite the disparate narratives of colonialism and exposition culture, in all of its conflict and tension.

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