The Construct of Orientalism in
Third Republic France
*Opera, Politics and Personal Experience in Indochina*

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ABSTRACT

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A thesis presented to the Comparative History Department
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I propose to examine the construction of orientalism in the Third Republic France before
1914 by exploring three of its points of contact: with the reality of French military
members’ experience in Indochina, with its counterpart in fiction (namely operas) and
with official government policy in Indochina. I will do this by looking at the
orientalist/exotic elements in contemporary operas including Bizet’s *Carmen* (1875),
Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila* (1877), d’Indy’s *Fervaal* (1889-1895) and Léo Delibes’s
*Lakmé* (1883). These operas will be analyzed to see any linkages with what soldiers who
served in Indochina related upon their return to France or with what the government felt
about Indochina. In order to determine how particular this construction of orientalism
was, there will be a comparison with Russian orientalism through Rimsky-Korsakov’s
*The Golden Cockerel* (1907) and Russia’s experience in the Russo-Japanese War.
Images from the musical score are included in JPEG format while musical excerpts are
available as audio files.
Notes:

As part of this first year paper, a CD of Listening Excerpts is included with the text. While listening to the excerpts is not necessary to understand the discussion of the music, it does enhance and better illustrate the ideas discussed in a way that text cannot. If the point being discussed is not demonstrated from the beginning of the excerpt, the part of the song to focus on is duly noted.

In the interests of both space and the flow of this paper, each opera discussed is not provided with a summary and explanation of each character in the body of the paper. For a synopsis and brief list of characters from each piece, see Appendix 1.

A brief set of definitions of musical terms used in the paper is included as Appendix 2.
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Enclosed: CD of Listening Examples.
Part One: Orientalism and Three Points of Contact: Opera, the French Third Republic and Indochina

Self-identity is established in part by defining who or what is not included, or the “Other.” Orientalism is one manner of clearly identifying the “Other”; it is the West viewing the East by focusing on all its non-Western characteristics. These non-Western characteristics are portrayed through the arts -- literature, music and the visual arts -- but utilize the artist’s vision of the Orient over the actuality of the non-Western. Consequently, there is a gap between the Western view of the non-Western world and the reality of Western encounters with it. Thus these works of orientalism can be studied not for their accuracy in the portrayal of the non-Western, but as a lens to view the Western society creating this portrayal. This paper seeks to examine the construction of orientalism in Third Republic France before 1914 by exploring three of its points of contact: with the reality of French military members’ experience in Indochina, its counterpart in fiction in the form of operas and with official government policy regarding Indochina.

There is no direct source or causal relationship for the French construction of orientalism; this would oversimplify what is a complex concept. Orientalism is not an invention of the Third Republic; it has a long history in France and other Western nations. The close study of this period and context is based upon a convergence of factors affecting the discourse on orientalism. France experiences significant changes in the Third Republic, particularly in the areas of imperialist expansion and its own identity as France.
The Third Republic rises out of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) and the Paris Commune (1871), to events calling the French identity and way of life into question. The reaction of the French people to these events is portrayed in works of art and literature as well as personal accounts and the press: humiliation from the defeat when the country had such a proud military traditions before and after the Revolution of 1789, and the chaos of yet another riot in the streets of Paris with Parisians’ attempts to form what they saw as the right government for the people. But the concept of French identity did not vanish by any means. There were several ideas of how to re-establish France, for itself and for the world stage and to reinvigorate French identity and culture. For some, this revival would stem from concentrating on France’s domestic matters, usually including revanche against Germany and retaking Alsace and Lorraine. The defeat in the Franco-Prussian War had identity-crisis reverberations and the loss of these provinces furthered them. Contemporaries often compared this loss of Alsace and Lorraine to amputation; part of what is France is brutally cut off both physically and psychologically. While proponents of revanche asserted that regaining Alsace and Lorraine and working on domestic problems would satisfy this need to fill what was now missing from France’s identity, others looked beyond French borders for a solution.

Indochina is a worthy demonstration of orientalism as it is a construct in and of itself. “Indochina” is a label France gives to a conglomeration of previously segregated territories between India and China. This label is not based on the reality of the situation. France is expanding and consolidating in Indochina in particular in this period (along with Tunisia), making it a new subject for the society of France.
Opera, another point of contact used in this paper, is a medium for orientalism that combines music, literature and the visual arts. Though again a causal relationship for orientalism cannot be traced, there is a striking increase in the number of orientalist musical pieces produced in this period of huge imperialist expansion. This increase in oriental music combined with expansion in Indochina will be used to analyze French discourse on the non-Western.

Though France has a commercial and missionary presence in Indochina before the Third Republic, it is in this period that it expands much further in the area and the territory of Indochina is put together and fully established. What is striking is that Indochina is not a pleasant place to live, nor does expanding and creating a larger territory appear particularly advantageous. The living conditions, sanitation, weather and medical care were all far from ideal, perhaps making the government’s lack of interest in French development there understandable. Access to Chinese ports certainly was a worthy advantage but this is possible with France’s pre-Third Republic presence. Furthermore, though economic benefits and creating new markets were later used by Jules Ferry and others to justify expansion in Southeast Asia, these benefits (at least early on) were not always immediately evident. For example, the exportation of rice from Indochina is suggested as a possible benefit, but the government realized it was cheaper to get rice from Italy.¹ Why, then, was Indochina still seen as a place of opportunity and a mode of inspiration for composers who wrote operas depicting an exotic orient? Who would have viewed Indochina in a positive light?

In recent scholarship, orientalism is primarily discussed in reaction to Edward H. Said’s book *Orientalism* published in 1978. Most works on the subject published after 1978 feel the need to address his ideas in some form. Though opinions on the subject and its applicability to historical and present-day relationship between East and West vary, a crucial part of the discourse is the question of how politics influenced orientalism in the arts. Here the two sides of the question will be considered briefly to explain the context and approach of this paper.

Said points to a very definite role of politics in orientalism and redefines the concept of orientalism in this perspective. Said feels that the political influence on the arts is usually neglected or ignored by historians and critics because it would impede the purity of expression associated with art. Orientalism is used by the West as a way to come to terms with the East, especially as the West pursued imperialist aims in the East. Orientalism became a kind of institution for dealing with the East by authorizing specific views of it (e.g., cruelty, inferiority) and by educating it as well as dominating it. This is a power relationship – orientalism is used to aid the West’s domination of the East, and it is “a dimension of modern political-intellectual culture.”

Thus orientalist ideas can and do have political uses.

Said does acknowledge that because orientalist works are created by individual artists or composers or authors, this specific political motivation for them may appear unlikely. However, he claims that orientalism is a “dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires –

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British, French, America…” He does not feel that orientalist art could have had another purpose beyond aiding Western domination of the East through defining the East in orientalist terms. Said emphasizes orientalism as a construct that can tell us more about the Western world and its concerns and perception than about the reality of the East.

A different view of politics’ influence on orientalism is presented by John M. Mackenzie in his *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (1995). Mackenzie does not believe that politics and political domination of the East are the reason behind orientalist art. Rather, orientalism and imperialism did not always reflect each other or progress along the same line. Orientalism was the nineteenth-century artist’s way of expressing compassion and respect for the East, and this expression does not always fit in with our modern-day perception of it. For Mackenzie, “the arts and dominant political ideologies tend to operate in counterpoint rather than conformity.” In orientalist art, the artists were not following a political program but were critiquing the Western conventions of the day, particularly industrialism. The non-industrial East was seen as more natural and purer and thus highlighting it in art was a way of showing support for it in contrast to the industrial West.

The East and orientalism were sources of inspiration for artists, not a way of dominating the East. Mackenzie claims that for France, this popularity of orientalism came from French experiences in North Africa and Indochina. This inspiration from the East led to musical innovation, such as the musical colors Delibes uses in the “Bell Song” in *Lakmé*. Mackenzie agrees that orientalism was a construct and an “appropriate” East

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was created to function in the arts. But the characteristics of orientalism were created to “encourage invigorating contamination,”⁵ not to aid domination. For example, Mackenzie points to how Saint-Saëns’s work was seen as resisting Wagnerism, especially in light of the Franco-Prussian War. Saint-Saëns and other were trying to maintain French tradition rather than give in to the Wagner following, and the East provided the inspiration they needed for musical innovation in the native tradition.

This paper will be similar to other works on orientalism in that it will focus on its expression in the arts and more particularly the high arts. Similarly to other authors on orientalism, it asserts orientalism as a construct and as a lens to view the Western society (rather than the Eastern society it depicts). The paper acknowledges a political influence on the orientalism in operas (as Said suggests) but also points out that it did not dominate the construct, which certainly involved other factors. This paper will differ from previous scholarship in that it will be sharply focused; rather than providing an overview of orientalism in the arts in general, it is country- and opera-specific. Moreover, it will compare the orientalist creations (the operas) with an actual source of information on the non-Western (France in Indochina). Previous scholarship usually limits itself to just the construct of orientalism and does not compare it in this manner, particularly not with Indochina. Finally, this paper depicts a different case of orientalism from the types presented by either the Said or the Mackenzie camps – in the Russian case study concluding this paper, opera is politically influenced but not in support of the Western government or of dominating the orient (in this instance, Japan). This will demonstrate that orientalism was not peculiar to France (or to Western European imperialist powers) and that the larger motivations behind it varied.

⁵ Mackenzie, p. 211.
Part Two: Orientalist Operas in the French Third Republic:  
A Reaction to Wagner and the Question of French Musical Identity

Just as France’s national identity and role in the world were under attack at the beginning of the Third Republic because of Germany’s military victory, so were specifically France’s musical identity and the place of French music, mostly because of Richard Wagner. The music, especially the operas, of Wagner caused both extremely positive and negative reactions in France. Wagner was attempting to create a new medium through his music dramas that went against the traditional opera forms used by most composers. Because of the controversy Wagner aroused, composers had to respond to him in some way. Unsurprisingly, their were disparate responses. They included disregarding Wagner’s methods and trying to write purely French operas, using Wagner’s ideas as part of French opera, or some compromise between the two. Particularly after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, this debate became more heated and anti-Wagner retorts and propaganda became more pervasive. Each of the composers discussed here had to deal with the music of Richard Wagner and potential use of “Wagnerism” in their own music.

The outcome of the Franco-Prussian War caused disjointedness and confusion in the French cultural world. Gustave Bertrand, writing his Les Nationalités musicales (1872), mourned: “How many literary studies and works of art [were] so brutally interrupted by the sudden thunderbolts of the national disaster, without respite and
without mercy.”⁶ However, this sudden suspension in French arts and music composition was by no means fatal. It could be, and was, in fact viewed as an opportunity to reinvent French musical identity. One way in which the creation of this identity is exemplified is in the use of orientalism by composers. Though this period in music history was by no means the first to utilize orientalism, it is argued here that orientalism was much more prevalent at this time and that it was being used more strongly as a way to create French identity.

Each composer discussed here was situating himself with regard to Wagner and with regard to French musical identity through these oriental operas. Saint-Saëns’s composition of *Samson et Dalila* was literally interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War.⁷ It premiered in Weimar in 1877 and then had a magnificent reception at its Paris premiere at the Opéra in 1892. It was so popular that it had its five hundredth performance at the Opéra within thirty years of the original premiere.⁸ Saint-Saëns’s work, including *Samson*, specifically resisted Wagnerism and attempted to maintain French tradition in light of the defeat to Germany. As inspiration for Saint-Saëns’s French music in *Samson*, he used the East.⁹ Though he visited Algeria and Egypt, he never actually visited Palestine where *Samson et Dalila* takes place. Accordingly, he was creating Palestinian music based on what he thought it might sound like and what he thought the audience would believe such foreign music to sound like. Indeed, Saint-Saëns used oriental

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elements in his music before this opera, as in his *Mélodies Persanes* (1870) including
ostinato rhythms and using the fifth pedal – the kind of oriental music in *Samson* is not
even unique to that piece.\(^{10}\) His oriental subject in Saint-Saëns was Dalîla and the
Philistines. The audience would have seen the Philistines as oriental because they
believed that Palestine had remained mostly the same from the biblical era. Thus their
view of current-day Palestine could be projected back and used for the subject of
*Samson*.\(^{11}\) The audience would furthermore have related to the Hebrews and seen the
Hebrews as Western because the Philistines are idol worshipers. Samson himself appears
as “a prefiguration of Christ and thus of Western civilization.”\(^{12}\) The audience would
have identified and understood the Hebrews as a part of Western civilization of progress
and the Philistines as an Eastern, stagnant one.

Georges Bizet’s oriental subject may seem less clearly such at first. Spain, after
all, is France’s neighbor and the ability to travel there (as opposed to some of the other
exotic settings of these operas) was comparably easier and quite possible. However,
Bizet never does visit Spain and does consider Spain an oriental location that his
audience would view in the same fashion. This is due to the impression of Spain as being
non-Western. Spain was known for having Jewish and Muslim populations throughout
history. Through the French military presence in Spain in the early nineteenth century,
the French discovered Spanish art. This art showed non-Western influences. The French

\(^{10}\) Jean-Pierre Bartoli, “L’orientalisme dans la musique française du XIXe siècle: la ponctuation, la seconde
augmentée et l’apparition de la modalité dans les procédures exotiques,” *Revue belge de musicology*, vol. 51

\(^{11}\) Ralph P. Locke, “Constructing the oriental ‘Other’: Saint-Saëns’s ‘Samson et Dalîla’, *Cambridge Opera

\(^{12}\) Locke, p. 274.
took Spanish art back with them to France and established a Musée Espagnol in 1838.\textsuperscript{13} Bizet’s relationship to Wagnerism was not always clear-cut. His music throughout his career was often accused of Wagnerism, but it should be noted that any unconventional music might be accused of being Wagner-like. Bizet did study the great German composers at the Conservatoire where he trained, and his teacher Gounod certainly was influenced by German music, but this does not point to this influence directly continuing with Wagner.\textsuperscript{14} Bizet seems, through his correspondence and writings, to have sometimes admired and other times disdained Wagner. However, he definitively stated that if he thought he was simply imitating Wagner in his own music, he would stop writing.\textsuperscript{15} Correspondingly, in \textit{Carmen}, Bizet is attempting to play with opéra comique’s conventions. Rather than use Wagner’s theories of music dramas, Bizet responded by trying to remake opera within the traditional French format. For example, the idea of Carmen dying on stage and of choruses having to move and perform while singing were unusual and created controversy both in rehearsal and in response to the performance of the piece. It is perhaps not too surprising, then, that \textit{Carmen}’s initial premiere at the Opéra-Comique on March 3, 1875, in Paris was a failure.\textsuperscript{16} However, after the opera went on tour it returned to Paris in 1883 and became a huge success (though sadly Bizet died before this): by 1904, the Opéra-Comique had performed it one thousand times.\textsuperscript{17}

Léo Delibes was overwhelmed by the influence of Wagner. In a conversation with fellow composer Edouard Lalo, he exclaimed:

\textsuperscript{15}McClary, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{16}McClary, pp. 23-26.
\textsuperscript{17}Ellen H. Bleiler in the introduction to George Bizet, \textit{Carmen}, Dover Publications, Inc. (New York, 1910).
Wagnerism is invading us; swamping us. In my composition class at the Conservatoire, my pupils are constantly thinking about this, talking about it among themselves, and talking about it to me. What should we do, we musicians of another generation? Remain indifferent, dead to this universal movement? Or rather evolve with the times, change our ideas, our style – our art?18

Delibes sought inspiration from orientalism as well in combating the wave of Wagnerism.

*Lakmé* (1882) takes place in India and the main character, the soprano Lakmé, has a very demanding role because the music composed for this “unearthly” woman is in such a high range and so complex. *Lakmé* premiered on April 14, 1882 at the Opéra Comique and was also widely acclaimed.

Vincent d’Indy reacted very differently to Richard Wagner and his music. D’Indy was a great admirer of Wagner and not only adopted some of Wagner’s musical techniques, but also some of his theories of music. Accordingly, d’Indy chose a mythological subject for *Fervaal*, as Wagner advised French composers to do.19 The opera relates France’s pre-history in the form of the Gauls versus the Saracens, with Fervaal as the savior and prefiguration of the Gauls and later French people. This is still an oriental subject because of the Muslim Saracens and the almost unrecognizable exotic places in the opera. *Fervaal* had its French premiere in Paris in 1898.20 Though it was well received, it was accused by some of being too Wagnerian. It also has not had the kind of longevity that the other operas discussed have had, though this may be due in part to d’Indy’s Wagnerite influence and his own anti-Semitism. It should be noted that d’Indy’s opera is different from Wagner’s operas (specifically *Parsifal*, with which it is

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20 Its world premiere was in Brussels two years earlier.
often compared). There are marked similarities but *Fervaal* is definitely a French opera and an attempt by d’Indy to recreate French musical culture and identity. At the end of the opera, a new order is established and the future French civilization is begun, unlike at the end of *Parsifal* in which the status quo returns with the return of the Grail.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, the end of *Fervaal* (in which the main theme based on plainchant comes in full force and is played out in variations) could be considered a model for d’Indy’s idea of what French music should be\textsuperscript{22}. D’Indy was French nationalist and a supporter of French music in general but his relationship with Wagner’s music was much closer and entailed much more of a struggle than with the other composers.

**Orientalism Portrayed in Opera**

Orientalism in these operas is expressed through recurring elements that can usually be found in all of them. These orientalist elements are expressed literally through the libretto and/or in combination with musical devices. Demonstrating these elements and their almost programmatic use throughout the operas will illustrate that orientalism is a construct (not a tangible) and that it is used in conceptualizing the West’s (and France’s) identity through its opposition to the East (or Oriental).\textsuperscript{23}

All these operas are framed around a major dichotomy of West versus East in the form of male versus female. There is the male character who is a warrior or soldier and represents the West and progressive civilization while the female character is a seductress and enchantress who represents the East and a static society. The female character does

\textsuperscript{21} Suschitzky, p. 246.
\textsuperscript{22} Suschitzky, p. 255.
\textsuperscript{23} Due to time and space constraint, a precise example from each opera for every element discussed will not always be employed. Unless otherwise noted, the elements being discussed are nonetheless present in every one of the operas.
not follow a conventional role for a Western woman. The non-Western society that she lives in allows her to act quite differently from her Western counterpart. This woman has a kind of exotic beauty that matches the locale. Hers is very different from the traditional Western and Christian concept of beauty; she is extremely sensual and even a danger to men. In each opera, the composer expresses how awestruck the male character is by the woman. When he first sees her, he is immediately changed somehow because of how different she is from what is for him the norm.

Upon seeing Carmen, Don José is immediately struck not only by her beauty, but by her shamelessness in the way she looks at him and others. Indeed he claims that “If sorceresses do exist, she is certainly one.” Carmen does nothing to change this first impression. Throughout the opera she claims she is a free woman and frequently compares herself to a bird or to the air; unattainable and unpredictable. Carmen’s foreignness is represented by her dialogue and her appearance (often putting her body on display) but also through music. She has her own motif that is presented at the end of the Prelude and is used throughout. The prelude begins in a military march style; it is precise, symmetrical and has a strong brass sound. However toward the end of the Prelude, this changes drastically. The key suddenly changes to D minor and the overall mood of the song becomes much more mysterious and exotic. Rather than the melody always seeming to move forward as earlier, the underlying tremolo and the strings give out a sense of stasis. The cellos introduce Carmen’s motif, which is both sensuous and chromatic. Very unlike the music featured earlier in the prelude, Carmen’s motif is much

25 See listening Examples 1 and 2. Example 1 covers the first march-style part of the Prelude and the first 1 minute 20 seconds of Example 2 are the end of the Prelude in which Carmen’s motif begins.
more ominous, and along with the occasional booms from the tympani, lets the listeners know that some tragedy is to come; one that will be caused by Carmen. In this manner, Carmen’s character immediately captures the listener’s attention.26

Lakmé is described as inhuman in her exotic beauty and grace.27 Her singing style is correspondingly unearthly. The audience first meets Lakmé as she sings in the wings.28 She is not seen but only heard as she sings her prayer to the gods while all the others on stage prostrate themselves. Her prayer is sung in a high range and is accompanied by an undulating harp beneath her. As she continues in her prayer, the other Hindu members of the household join in chanting. Lakmé continues to sing higher and higher and the words of the prayer become less clear and even replaced by a melismatic melody. Lakmé’s unusual song matches her unnatural beauty and the almost god-like reverence her people fold for her. It is important as well that she is a sorceress. When Gerald is stabbed, she nurses him and explains that she is healing him with the concoctions from flowers she has learned as all Indian women of her caste learn.29 Once again, Lakmé is not your stereotypical female but something strange and fascinating.

From the very moment Dalila is introduced on stage, she commands attention.30 Her entering phrases are ascending leaps and arpeggios that cannot be ignored by any of the Hebrews, including Samson.31 She is moreover accompanied by the melismatic phrases in the winds – Dalila is a fluid character who is deftly able to get and keep Samson’s attention. She relentlessly and captivatingly sings on as Samson futilely prays.

26 McClary, p. 65.
28 See Listening Example 3.
30 See Listening Example 4.
31 Locke, p. 277.
to God to help him resist temptation and the Old Hebrew warns him to withstand her. Dalila continues her seduction by dancing with the other maidens from the temple. The score indicates that “Samson anxiously tries, but in vain, to avoid Dalila’s glances. His eyes, in spite of him, follow all the enchantress’s movements…”  

Guilhen is presented immediately as an unusual woman. The peasants who are arguing over Fervaal’s body notice armed men on horses approaching and then are shocked to discover that one of these riders is a woman. Once she gets closer, they recognize that she is Guilhen the enchantress and, without an argument of any sort, hand Fervaal over to her. She is recognized as a powerful and an extraordinary woman. Indeed, she is riding a horse with a falcon on her fist and wearing rich Oriental fabrics. Guilhen later explains to Fervaal how “I grew up, free and disdainful, amidst men…” Guilhen is a mysterious, magical figure whose gaze traps the unwary.

Opposing (but also fatally attracted to) this woman is the Western male and soldier. In Lakmé and Carmen, Gerald and Don José are symbols of bourgeois ideals, duty and military honor. Indeed, Bizet even cleans up Don José’s act for Carmen. In the original novella by Prosper Mérimée, Don José is introduced as a bandit and murderer, while in Bizet’s version of the story he is presented as an innocent soldier (and victim of Carmen’s seduction) with a vague reference to some rowdiness in his past. He is represented by military march music full of upright rhythms and forward motion, once more a striking contrast to Carmen’s own music. In Fervaal and Samson et Dalila,

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34 D’Indy p. 87.
35 McClary, p. 20.
Fervaal and Samson represent Western Christian ideals as messianic characters who unmistakably are precursors and creators of Western civilization.

The contrasts of the dichotomy are not left merely to the two central characters. This additional element of contrast (beyond the main male character) becomes increasingly important as the Western man is seduced by the oriental woman; this other distinct character or element serves to remind the audience of how different the oriental woman is from civilization and what exactly the man is leaving behind.

Micaëla is a clear alternative to Carmen for Don José. She is introduced as a possible bride for him chosen by his mother (whom he loves and respects). Micaëla is humble and modest – a sharp dissimilarity to Carmen’s own personality. When Micaëla first enters the opera, there is still the chromaticism associated with Carmen and the other factory women. The soldiers on guard eye her and wonder if she is promiscuous like these other women (and she is even referred to by one of the soldiers as a bird, just as Carmen will later describe herself as a bird). However, once Micaëla begins to sing, any confusion with Carmen or the other women is gone because the chromaticism is not there.

In Act I of Lakmé, Miss Ellen and Miss Rose (the daughter and niece of the British viceroy in India) are fascinated by Lakmé’s garden and its exotic plants. Miss Ellen is struck by a particular flower, but Frederic (Gerald’s military colleague) warns her: “Do not touch them, Miss Ellen! They are datura flowers…inoffensive in England, but, under the indigenous beautiful sky here … they become full of poison”.

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36 See Listening Example 2 once more at 3 minutes 30 seconds. Micaëla enters at 4 minutes 8 seconds.
38 McClary, pp. 69-70.
39 Delibes, Léo, Lakmé Libretto, p. 10.
explains that the East is dangerous compared to the West and this idea is continued with the contrast between Gerald’s British fiancée Ms. Ellen and Lakmé. Frederic explains that women in India are passionate and live but to charm men, while Ellen explains that women like herself are “more modest” and “we know how to love”. Ellen maintains that Western women are simpler and less showy; they do not need great acts of love to be won over.\(^{40}\) She is the stereotypical English woman, complete with a bumbling, worried governess. The music that accompanies her and her cousin reflects this. It is more playful, not chromatic and without the melismatic leaping phrases of Lakmé. Ellen directly condemns Lakmé’s way of life: \(^{41}\)

\[\text{\begin{music}\begin{align*}
\text{ELLEN.} & \quad \text{Allegretto vivo.} ( \text{E}=\text{I}) \\
& \quad \text{Quand une femme est si jolie, elle a bien tort de se cacher.}
\end{align*}\end{music}\] 

The other English characters proceed to join her in a quintet.\(^{42}\) The quintet is bouncy; all the parts either fit together in easily delineated phrases or are sung in unison. This again is very different from Lakmé’s airy, often almost rhythmless prayer to the gods.

\(^{41}\) Delibes, Lakmé, Orchestra score, p. 37. Text in English: When a woman is so pretty, she is very wrong to hide herself.
\(^{42}\) See Listening Example 5.
The singing style created by Saint-Saëns for Samson and Hebrews establishes the disparity between East and West from the very beginning of the opera. The Hebrews open with a prayer to God to end the oppression of the Philistines that sounds like Western sacred music. It is solemn and mournful. The humble, noble Hebrews are currently dominated by the Philistines, but this situation will be put to rights by Samson at the end of the opera. This sacred-like music even becomes a fugue:

43 Locke, p. 274, Saint-Saëns, pp. 21-23.
Saint-Saëns makes it explicit that the Hebrew in *Samson* are to be viewed as compatible with Western society. This sacred singing style is continued in the “Hymne de joie, Hymne de délivrance.”44 The Hebrews are now more hopeful, and the introduction as well as much of the chorus’s phrases are ascending lines; the Hebrews are looking heavenward and are more positive in general. The song itself is very much like plainchant and unlike the decadent Philistines, the Hebrews are singing like a medieval church choir.45

This use of sacred music to contrast with the oriental recurs in *Fervaal*, but here it becomes the underlying theme of the entire piece. D’Indy uses the “Pange Lingua” hymn throughout the opera as representing the Western society that Fervaal begins.

The “Pange Lingua” is referenced throughout the opera in fragments, but only at the end, when Guilhen is dead, is it played in its entirety. Now that it no longer has something to compete with, the “Pange Lingua” comes in full force and the new civilization can commence.47

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44 Listening Example 6.  
45 Locke, p. 275.  
46 Suschitzky, p. 239.  
47 Suschitzky, p. 242.
This contrast of East and West can be represented through visibility. Bizet puts Carmen on display in contrast to the modest Micaëla. Carmen is very forward and drinks in the soldiers’ stares while Micaëla is always bashful and shy. Similarly, Dalila moves and looks voluptuous in contrast to the humble and even prostrate Jews. Lakmé presents a slightly different case. She is always in seclusion and this, as the British characters discuss, must be why Eastern women love so intensely and are so exotic. Being shut away from the world, as Lakmé is, is unhealthy and makes her distinct from her British counterparts. Finally Guilhen instills awe with her unconventional appearance (her enchantress traits, the way she leads men and does not defer to them). In fact she is the only woman character (though there is the goddess Kaito); so it is difficult not to notice the contrast.

As part of the tension between East and West, resolution is reached through the death of the woman, or East, at the end. In identifying and depicting the Other, there is also a “need to tame it, to control it, and ultimately to neutralize and destroy it.” Carmen is a free spirit who lives for pleasure and makes decisions based on rash emotions. She is a threat to Western ideals and the social order and the only way to get rid of this threat is to kill her. Musically, Carmen becomes increasingly chromatic until she is silenced by her death and the chromaticism is resolved. At the end of Lakmé, after Lakmé has poisoned herself, Gerald simply states: “She dies for me.” – there is no discrepancy whatsoever over why she dies.

48 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 12.
49 Colmeiro, p. 128.
50 Colmeiro, p. 140.
51 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 46.
Samson is able to resolve matters by ending the Jewish oppression and Dalila’s power over him by destroying the Palestinian temple. There is even a sense in this opera of national liberation from the East through this destruction. The Philistines were an obstacle to Hebrew progress, but now that they are defeated the onward march of Western civilization can continue.\(^{52}\) In Fervaal, it is only with Guilhen’s death that the Pange Lingua is played in its entirety and French civilization can begin. Even if, as John Mackenzie asserts in Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts, orientalism is a way to depict admiration for the East, it is revealing that even as these men “go native” temporarily in their passion for an oriental woman, in the end the West gains dominance over the oriental woman.

East versus West is reinforced again with the religion or morality of the characters. The woman is always the follower of a pagan religion or immoral way of life, while the man is upstanding and Christian. As mentioned above, in Samson and Fervaal this religious disparity is represented quite clearly by giving the Christian characters plainchant or sacred music styles. The audience would be able to clearly delineate between which characters represent East versus West. The non-Christian characters are furthermore given music that is asymmetrical, chromatic and often repetitious (as will be discussed below) to represent their religion and stagnant civilizations. Abimelech, a pagan priest in Samson et Dalila, is even mocked by the high winds and trumpets when he sings.\(^{53}\) His phrases are simple and his sentences choppy – this is not a man to admire. And when Samson kills him, Saint-Saëns has musically set Abimelech up to be a

\(^{52}\) Locke, p. 263.
\(^{53}\) See Listening Example 7 at 1 minute 35 seconds.
character the audience does not like and does not pity when he is killed; the audience is still cheering for Samson and the Hebrews. 54

In Carmen this becomes more a question of a moral versus an immoral lifestyle. Carmen clearly represents a Bohemian way of living with loose morals and loose women; she and her friends live for pleasure alone and have no kind of moral compass. Don José (again as noted above) is an honorable soldier who is dragged down by Carmen and her sinful lifestyle. In the “Seguidilla and Duet”, with each repeat of the refrain, Don José becomes more and more enticed. 55 Carmen sings a dance rhythm as if she is dancing teasingly around Don José until he gives in. Don José begins the song leading Carmen as a prisoner but ends it completely within her power.

Eastern religion (Hinduism) is represented in Lakmé in the set of the first scene. The score indicates that there should be a garden with exotic flowers and idol statues. 56 Lakmé herself is presented as a mysterious religious figure. She is closeted inside her father’s estate and no one is allowed to see her face. When Gerald does see her in the garden, she explains to him that he must forget what he as seen because “I am a daughter of the gods.” 57 Lakmé’s father, Nilakantha, is described as a “Brahmin fanatic” 58 who becomes obsessed with whoever has seen Lakmé’s face. At the conclusion of the opera, this fanaticism comes full force as Lakmé dies. Gerald mourns her death, as any Western person would, but Nilakantha becomes ecstatic. He is thrilled because, with her premature death, Lakmé can go to be in the heaven with the gods. 59 This is not presented

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54 Locke, p. 283.
55 See Listening Example 8.
56 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 4.
57 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 20.
58 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 10.
59 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 46.
as parallel or similar to the Christian concept of the afterlife; it is something bizarre and foreign.

Guilhen in *Fervaal* is recognized as a sorceress and non-Christian from her first appearance. She too, like Lakmé, knows how to use plants and magic and utilizes this knowledge to heal Fervaal. She also invokes the sun in order to heal him: “In the name of the sun, king of the world, whose rays fall on him [Fervaal]…let me return light to his closed eye, let me reanimate the force in his white arms, let me recall this hero to life!”60 Guilhen is also used to highlight the Muslim Saracens who fight Fervaal and his people. She incites them to attack Fervaal’s land, which is richer than their own where they are currently suffering. While the Gauls have been blessed, the Saracens have not and they seek to take away what the Gauls have.

Indeed, the love that the male character holds for the female character is not a proper Christian love and will not end in marriage and a family. It is a dangerous enchantment which the man cannot resist. Conveniently, in the “Habanera” Carmen describes this love directly61: “Love is a rebellious bird that no one can tame…love is the child of Bohemia who has never known the law…”62. This love is irrational and does not follow the social order. Carmen describes this love as dangerous: “If I love you, look after yourself!”63 This intense love lasts in Carmen only briefly (she goes through men quite quickly), but the man does not always recover as quickly.

Frederic and Rose represent traditional love in *Lakmé*. Their love makes sense both socially and emotionally while Gerald’s love is frenzied and irrational. Gerald

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60 D’Indy, pp. 30-32.
61 See Listening Example 9.
62 Bizet, p. 44-46.
63 Bizet, p. 46.
describes how “it is a dream, a madness/ I see nothing but her beauty.” This love is inescapable and illogical. Samson’s own sentiments toward Dalila are similar. “Her beauty disconcerts my senses and my soul! And from her eyes, the flame that ravishes my liberty!” Even though the old Hebrew warns him that Dalila is a poison that will consume him, Samson cannot resist this enchantment. Similarly, Fervaal is entranced by Guilhen in a way he has never experienced before. He sees her for the first time when he is briefly conscious (while wounded) and is no doubt in an especially feverish and impressionable state. The Pange Lingua in Fervaal represents “saintly love” according to d’Indy. He creates this “saintly love” motif by using the “desire” motive and taking away the chromaticism in it. The love Fervaal feels for Guilhen is a distortion of pure love and will have no place in the coming French civilization to come.

The oriental woman attempts to lure the man away from his Western institutions and life. She asks him to join her religion or way of life. Though he may agree to join her for a time, in the end, the man is reminded of civilization. In Act Two, Lakmé wants to bring Gerald to her god; she claims that her hesitancy in loving him is in part because they have different gods. By Act Three, once she is nursing Gerald back to health and has treated him using her concoctions, she tries to convince him to join her religion. She explains that she will teach him the history of her gods and together they will sing to the gods which will “Enflame your heart with the happiness of being filled…and on the

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64 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 38.
65 Saint-Saëns, p. 85.
66 Suschitzky, p. 249.
67 Delibes, Lakmé, Libretto, p. 34.
charmed earth that Brahma protects.”\textsuperscript{68} However, Frederic then returns to remind Gerald of his duty to the army and to his fiancée, Miss Ellen.

Carmen and her band of smugglers tell Don José he must join them now in their “errant life and liberty”\textsuperscript{69} because he has seen too much and did not rejoin his regiment. Though he will eventually join them, Don José first declares: “Leave my flag…desert, that’s the worst, that’s infamy!”\textsuperscript{70} His association with Carmen has put him in such a position that he must temporarily join the smugglers. Samson clearly states what being seduced by Dalila entails. “When for you, I dare to forget God, his glory, my people and my vow!”\textsuperscript{71} The Old Hebrew also warned him against her but Samson cannot resist and pays heavily for it.

While recovering from his wounds at Guilhen’s home, Fervaal does not see any reason to leave until Arfagard reminds him of his people and his duty. Fervaal is still not completely decided upon leaving and when Guilhen asks him to stay, he “only weakly resists.”\textsuperscript{72} Guilhen describes to him the kind of life he would have with her: “In my country, where the sun was born, where love flowers to the mystic perfumes…we will go together, into the magic intoxications of eternal voluptuousness!.”\textsuperscript{73} She wants him to join her in her exotic lifestyle (and praise of the sun). Fervaal is enticed, but is soon able to leave Guilhen and her exotic home.

\textsuperscript{68} Delibes, \textit{Lakmé, Libretto}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{69} Bizet, p. 229.
\textsuperscript{71} Saint-Saëns, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{72} D’Indy, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{73} D’Indy, pp. 115-116.
Musically, the orient is portrayed using particular devices that the audience would recognize. These devices are not from any actual music of the opera’s setting but instead are what French society thought non-Western music would sound like.

Chromaticism is one tool composers used to portray the oriental in music. It is meant to sound strange and irrational and therefore would be associated with the non-Western “Other”. Carmen herself is perhaps the best example of this. She sings chromatically throughout the opera and grows increasingly chromatic as the plot advances (the aforementioned “Habanera” is a good example of this). By the end of the opera, Don José has been infected by Carmen’s irrationality and becomes chromatic too, particularly in a duet with Escamillo at the end of the third Act. This increasing, dangerous chromaticism must be brought to an end, and this requires the death of Carmen. Thus the opera ends with a resolution of dissonance and returns to diatonicism and to the military musical style of the prelude. Once Carmen has died, logic returns. Similarly, Samson normally sings in strong, confident phrases but once Dalila enters, he sings in descending chromatic phrases and begins to sound like Dalila herself.

Samson before Dalila appears:

Samson (emerging from the throne at the right) (sortant de la finie à droite)

Our trust in God Almighty Shall never be shaken!
Et béni seize le nom Du Dieu saint de nos pères!

Weak you are, and mistaken! Arée, ô mes frères!

Our trust in God Almighty Shall never be shaken!
Et béni seize le nom Du Dieu saint de nos pères!

Un peu plus lent

74 See Listening Example 9 once more.
75 See Listening Example 10 at 2 minutes 28 seconds. McClary, p. 42.
77 Locke, p. 277.
78 Saint-Saëns, p. 29.
Samson after Dalila appears:⁷⁹

Guilhen sings chromatically as well in the example below.⁸⁰ Here she is demanding the Saracens to attack Fervaal’s homeland. She tells them she commands them. Everyone fears her, everyone reveres her.

⁷⁹ Saint-Saens, pp 83-84.
⁸⁰ D’Indy, p. 87.
Exotic and colorful timbres are another way in which orientalism is established in these operas. The “Bacchannale” demonstrates this quite well. It opens with the oboe playing what sounds like an improvised line (though it is not). The piece goes on to use castanets, timpani, tiring, flute and low strings with ornate melodies and asymmetrical rhythms. The music is intended to sound exotic by using these timbral effects.

Carmen kindly lists the kinds of instruments that gypsies (the Other in this case) use in her “Gypsy Song” of Act Two. “This strange music” she describes has tambourines and guitars that inspire passion. It is the kind of music in which gypsies lose themselves.

In the Entr’Acte between Acts Three and Four, Bizet uses piccolo, tympani, triangle and tambourine to produce a very oriental sound. The oboe is used here as well as a rhapsodic kind of instrument to underline this. The Prelude to Fervaal is punctuated with orientalism. Though at first it may sound mysterious but not necessarily oriental, d’Indy inserts the oboe and falling string line with an underlying base clarinet to remind the listener that the opera is both mythological and exotic.

Repetition is used by the composers to show how the oriental characters are part of a stagnant Eastern society, rather than a progressive Western society. Lakmé’s “Bell Song” is repetitive and does not advance the narrative thus illustrating a static view of Indian culture. Similarly, Carmen does not always use words in singing and frequently sings “Tra la la” or “Lalala”. Even when she is being asked a direct question, she often

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81 See Listening Example 11.
82 See Listening Example 12.
83 Bizet, p. 115.
84 See Listening Example 13.
85 See Listening Example 14. The oriental punctuations occur at 2 minutes 10 seconds, 4 minutes, 52 seconds and 5 minutes 35 seconds.
86 See Listening Example 15.
refuses to answer in words but merely sings to herself. She is preventing progress in this manner – especially when she is questioned after the fight in the factory breaks out.  


The Third Republic is cited as an era of neocolonialism in France. However, at least in the first years of the Republic, which this paper focuses on, French expansion in Indochina during this period was by no means a straightforward, clearly defined enterprise. Though the Third Republic did add to France’s territory in the area, finally forming Indochina in October 1887, this was not part of a grand imperialist design to form a French colony in South Eastern Asia. The creation of Indochina is better characterized as a sporadic haphazard process with cycles of interest and apathy on the

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87 Bizet, p. 153.
part of the French public and the members of government who were actually involved in making these colonial decisions. Though this was a fragile republic established in the wake of both the Franco-Prussian War and Paris Commune, it somehow expanded its overseas empire and did so in an often manifold, confusing and contradictory manner.88

Upon its creation, the Third Republic was heir to an empire of approximately one million square miles created by the previous French regimes, yet for at least the first decade or so of this regime, little attention was paid to that heritage by those actually in power.89 This was not a break with the actions of previous regimes but rather a continuation in policy (or lack thereof). The territory France had acquired in Asia, Africa and the Pacific in leading up to the Third Republic was obtained in an unsystematic manner as well.90 Indeed, at the end of the Second Empire (under Napoleon III), Gustave Flaubert said of colonies that “they pain us when we speak of them.”91

France had a presence in Vietnam in the eighteenth century in the form of missionaries and merchants. This presence broadened in the late 18th century, thanks in particular to the lobbying of the missionary Bishop Pigneau de Hehaine. Pigneau became very much involved in local politics and asked France to support Nguyen Anh as a claimant to the Vietnamese throne. France did so with troops and in return received concessions from the Anh – namely control over the harbor at Tourane and the island of Poulu Condore. With the Revolution, the French were less involved in Indochina. Only the missionaries became more engaged there when, in 1839, the pope gave France a more considerable missionary role in Asia. This increased presence of French

89 Power, p. 1.
missionaries and converted Catholics allowed Napoleon III to send in an expeditionary force on November 25, 1857, with the excuse of wanting to protect the Catholics and get them better treatment. On this occasion, he also took more of Tourane. Admiral Genouilly took this initiative one step further when he went on to take Saigon. However, with supply and tropical disease issues, negotiations ended with the French withdrawing from Tourane (though they were still able to stay in Saigon). In 1864, the conquered territory in this area was put together to form the colony of Cochinchina. In 1885, France added Tonkin and Annam, which together with Cochinchina and Cambodia (a protectorate since 1863), created Indochina in 1887. Laos was in 1893.

With the particular circumstances under which the Third Republic began, it is not surprising that the regime questioned what precisely its idea of the nation should be and how to legitimize it in order to prevent such events from happening again. This created at least two different ideas of nationalism: a nationalism contingent upon world expansion and a nationalism dependent upon a continental retraction of France and the idea of what made up the nation.

The inward-looking concept of nationalism saw expansion as a distraction or even obstacle toward resolving France’s real concerns. The typical French citizen did not, and did not expect to, travel far beyond his local area in his lifetime so that it was hard to find reasons for conquering more territory beyond France’s European borders could be difficult. Besides, there were plenty of problems within the nation proper that needed attention and for which more territory was not considered a good solution.

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94 Quinn, p. 109.
The loss of Alsace and Lorraine was a huge blow to France and had reverberations throughout the population. Accordingly, proponents of inward nationalism put the aim of re-conquest and revenge together as a major goal of Third Republic nationalism. Only in this way could France regain its prestige and the energy to go forward under this new regime whose citizens had lived through shocking events. Beyond revanche, there was the fact that the French population was now below that of Germany or Britain, two of its rivals.95 This nationalism furthermore included building up the army at home, ending the war debt and building more schools and other domestic public works.96 How viable or advantageous would Indochina appear to the French? It was much more densely populated than the African colonies and so did not have as great a need for French immigrants.97 Economically its benefits were not immediately apparent either. Though rice could certainly be imported to France, it was cheaper to ship rice from Italy instead.98 Though colonial expansion was one perspective put forth by politicians for how to remake French national identity, it should be noted that once France had conquered a town or a territory (either on government orders or on the individual initiative of military officers), even the less than enthusiastic members of the government were not about to hand the land back to the local government, at least not without some beneficial concessions.

Even those politicians who supported colonialism did not always have the power to act on their ideas, nor were these ideas always clearly defined. There was certainly a

95 Quinn, p. 110.
96 Quinn, p. 115.
colonial idea behind this kind of nationalism: that in order to compensate for France’s humiliating defeat and amputation of territory, France needed to maintain (or regain) its dignity by expanding its empire. Only in this way would the nation’s vitality be sustained. 99 Even this colonial lobby within the government did not hold a majority by any means nor was it capable of realizing its ideas. The most votes it could usually receive in the 1870’s in support of colonialism was ninety-one out of the potential five hundred seventy-six. 100

Correspondingly in terms of real actions, the overall government was often indifferent. When a French naval officer, Francis Garnier, died in 1873 while attempting to take Tonkin, the government did not use his death as an excuse to send in more troops or try to gain more territory; it preferred to negotiate with the local government. 101 In 1881, acting upon reports of Chinese activity, the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, Admiral Cloué, asked the government for funds so more troops and supplies could be sent to support the French presence in the area. The bill for 2,400,000 francs passed on July 21, 1881, with a vote of 309 to 82 but there was no follow-through. Because there were French forces in Tunisia at that moment, the government did not act on what it had decided. 102 This kind of treatment of Indochina was continued in 1882 when Admiral Jauréguiberry, the Minister of Navy and Colonies, asked for troops to take all of Tonkin and thus establish a stronger protectorate therein. Again any action is stopped, this time by negotiations with China, and the government did not take further steps. 103

99 Girardet, L’idée, p. 84.
100 Quinn, p. 114.
101 Gantès, p. 16.
102 Power, p. 59.
103 Power, p. 160.
“colonial party” is not really applicable at this time to the supporters of colonization; they were neither so clearly defined nor unified.\textsuperscript{104}

Jules Ferry was undoubtedly one figure in power who aided French expansion. Ferry served as Prime Minister in 1880-1881 and again from 1883-1885. From 1880 to 1885, the empire spreads from one to three million square miles.\textsuperscript{105} Though much of the expansion in Indochina did take place under Ferry, it was not always of his direct doing and was often done on the initiative of individual officers in the colony. Indeed, there is little evidence of a cohesive plan on Ferry’s part for colonial expansion and, prior to his service as Prime Minister, no evidence of any kind of colonial doctrine in his politics. Instead, he focused more on domestic issues and even criticized Napoleon III’s activities abroad that did not seem to focus on France’s true issues (such as the foray into Mexico).\textsuperscript{106}

One decisive action Ferry took in Indochina occurred when King Tu-Duc of Annam was killed by a faction at his court. Ferry sent 5,000 French troops without asking Parliament, with the result that Tu-Duc’s successor was forced into a treaty making Annam a French protectorate and giving the French control over Tonkin. Both the Chinese and Ferry’s enemies at home criticized his actions, and tensions increased. The Chinese refused to pull their own men out of Tonkin and on July 6\textsuperscript{th}, Ferry sent the Chinese an ultimatum for their withdrawal and an indemnity of 200 million francs.\textsuperscript{107} This only prolonged the fighting with the Chinese and led to a retreat on the part of the French from Lang Son on March 28, 1885. This humiliation allowed Ferry’s rivals to

\textsuperscript{104} Girardet, \textit{L’idée}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{105} Power, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{106} Power, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{107} Power, pp. 166-173.
force him out of office. His argument for colonial expansion was only articulated after he was out of power, as justification for what had occurred during his administration. In his *Le Tonkin et la Mère-Patrie* (1890) written after his second premiership, Ferry explained why French expansion was advantageous. New colonies, such as Indochina, would help the French economy by providing raw materials and new markets for products, they would add to the nation’s status and should be viewed in the context of France’s civilizing mission for the good of the colonial peoples.

There were those outside of power and apart from the missionaries who espoused colonialism. For example, the Universal Expositions did aid in colonialism becoming part of French society. By stereotyping and comparing colonial cultures with European ones, it supported the idea of French superiority and right to colonize. In 1874 Paul Leroy-Beaulieu published his *De la colonisation chez les peoples modernes*, which was widely read and supported colonization along lines similar to Ferry’s later justification for it. He spoke of a “need” for colonial expansion to help France’s prestige and economy and trade, a task not to be sidestepped or done half-heartedly.

The membership and number of geographical societies surged in this period, demonstrating an unmistakable public interest in other places and cultures beyond France and Europe. The Société de Géographie was established in 1821, but it was during the Third Republic that it grew in numbers – it had 780 members in 1873 but grew to 2,000

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108 Gantès, p. 20.
by 1880. Eleven more geographical societies were established from 1871 to 1881, and this trend was mirrored in journals with the creation of *La Revue géographie* (1877), *La Revue des deux mondes* (1873), and more.113

In sum, though there were prominent supporters of colonialism in France in the early Third Republic, very often they did not have the power or ability to make their ideas a reality. Being a member of the government in the Third Republic got you only so far; a parliamentary majority was difficult to attain, so that following any colonial program (had someone with enough authority, like Jules Ferry, actually had one) would prove quite challenging. Those outside the government could certainly influence society’s perceptions of other countries and of colonialism, but again, any follow-through on these ideas was not easily achieved. The military will be examined next as one possible group that aided the creation of Indochina in a way these other proponents of colonialism could not.

**Part Four: The French Experience in Indochina: Military Enthusiasm in Unlikely Circumstances**

The military is one group that both believed in the colonial enterprise and actually had the opportunity to further it. The military was much affected by the Franco-Prussian War, in the course of which 150,000 French troops were killed and 80,000 troops

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113 Brunschwig, pp. 24-26.
surrendered to Germany in September 1870.\textsuperscript{114} A response to the experience in the Franco-Prussian War was a “new intense military exaltation shared unanimously” in France.\textsuperscript{115} The military became a symbol of national unity, the Arch Saint of France and a focus of patriotic aspirations.\textsuperscript{116}

Despite the call by some for \textit{revanche} rather than overseas empire and the often awful conditions of Indochina, the soldiers expressed genuine enthusiasm for the conquest of territory in the area and establishing a more permanent French presence there. Indeed, to volunteer to serve in Indochina in the 1860’s and 1870’s “implied a veritable colonial vocation, like that of missionaries.”\textsuperscript{117} This enthusiasm on the part of the military contrasted sharply with the government’s and some of society’s sentiments on Indochina. The naval officer Francis Garnier described how when he returned to France after a few years abroad,

One finds oneself more or less directly thrown into all the battles …. Of the Interests of the country, [but] one remains singularly impressioned by the profound indifference of opinion of everyone with attaching the side of the national grandeur. It seems they have no apparent connection between overseas interests and the defense of this powerful metropolis, who is full of herself, [and] doesn’t appear to care to look outside …\textsuperscript{118}

Garnier describes his return to France as entering a different world. The French at home did not seem to understand the importance of colonialism and are too self-absorbed.

Garnier found it frustrating that the French, though they did discuss other issues quite a bit, were harming themselves by not thinking of their overseas empire.

Garnier and other members of the military who served in Indochina realized that they would not receive full-fledged support from France or its government in further expansion into Southeast Asia. Consequently, individual officers chose to take initiatives several times in the early years of the Third Republic. In 1873, Conchinchina’s governor-general Admiral Marie Jules Dupré and Francis Garnier asked the French government permission to go into Hanoi. The government replied not to do anything that might have “dangerous complications.” Garnier, as noted above, went anyway and captured territory but died in the process. This land was then lost in negotiations by the French government, which chose not to protect the acquisitions with military support but instead to settle with the local government. Even though the money and troops voted for Indochina were stalled because of forces being used in Tunisia instead, Commander Henri Rivière took Hanoi on April 26, 1882. Commander Rivière had been told only to rid the Red River of pirates, but Rivière took his order a step further. Later he would claim that his actions were necessary because the local people were stirred up and threatening.

Beyond just the desire to conquer territory in Indochina (often based on their own actions and decisions), officers wanted a permanent presence for France and felt they had a stake in it. Their confidence in the future and opportunities of the territory was not shared by many others. Many of the 1200 non-military French men living in Saigon in

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119 Quinn p. 142.
120 Power, p. 59.
1873 were ex-military members who chose to live there after their retirement.\textsuperscript{121} Numerous soldiers wanted to be discharged in Indochina so as to live there and went on to become civil servants, foremen of public projects and more.\textsuperscript{122} This trend of soldiers migrating to Indochina is a further demonstration of their interest and fervor for the colony.

\textit{Military Zeal in Published Personal Accounts of Indochina}

Those soldiers who returned to France after serving in Indochina became a “living advertisement” for the colony.\textsuperscript{123} Additionally, soldiers wrote letters, articles and books describing their experiences positively advocating further action in the area. The infamous Francis Garnier published his \textit{Voyage d’exploration en Indochine} in 1873.\textsuperscript{124} Garnier assigned a “mission civilisatrice” to France as well as relating his discovery of a previously unknown culture with strange customs and traditions. Readers avidly followed as Garnier penetrated the exotic geography and culture of this foreign place.\textsuperscript{125}

In these numerous published accounts, the soldiers described their experiences and asserted their support of Indochina. There are several themes that aid the understanding of the soldiers’ enthusiasm. The men discussed here felt that expansion in Indochina was a necessity for France and they were the ones who acted upon this idea. Though all positive, their accounts varied in content; some including detailed information on the economy, religion and animals in the area while others remained purely military in nature.

\textsuperscript{121} Gantès, p. 16.  
\textsuperscript{122} Gantès, p. 21.  
\textsuperscript{123} Gantès, p.  
\textsuperscript{124} Girardet, \textit{L'idée} p. 34.  
\textsuperscript{125} Gaston, p. 214.
The fervor for Indochina that the soldiers expressed in these books did not mean that they did not experience the bad aspects of the colony. Captain Bouinais noted the putrid smells of the area from decomposition and linked this to the easy spread of microscopic parasites leading to disease.\textsuperscript{126} Soldiers were readily able to list diseases that they could potentially get -- leprosy, cholera, dysentery -- and denounce a lack of hygiene in Indochina contributing to the spread of these diseases. Both Captain Malglaive and General Gallieni realize the problem of supplies – often there were too few provisions or they did not arrive in good time.\textsuperscript{127} Gallieni described how on one of his expeditions, his men were living day-to-day on the supplies provided. However, Gallieni blamed the administration for this rather than his surroundings.\textsuperscript{128} Though the military accounts did point to problems in Indochina and its conditions, they did not feel these problems should prevent continued and greater French presence.

These soldiers did acknowledge that there were problems in Indochina, such as the pirates and rampant disease. However, they did not see these problems as deterrents, but rather as justification for a bigger French presence. Indochina needed the French to solve these problems and improve the itself overall. Several of the accounts describe the locals in Indochina as sedentary, even though they could be industrious.\textsuperscript{129} There was abandoned land overgrown with bamboo that could be productive land with the Frenchmen’s help.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{129} Malglaive, p. 252.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid p. 247.
One of the main problems described in Indochina was the pirates or bandits. Sergeant Bernardin notes that Indochina’s industry is small, but this was due in part to pirates with peace and a little help, Indochina could develop.\textsuperscript{131} Gallieni decries how the pirates pillage convoys, villages and merchants and then sell women, children and animals in China for weapons and opium. Before he takes command of the situation, construction in these pirate-infested areas is at a standstill. People have fled the villages for the mountains to avoid further destruction only to die of famine.\textsuperscript{132} Furthermore, the Chinese, a more advanced civilization, exploit the locals and Chinese officials are corrupt (they are complicit in the illegal trading mentioned above). The Chinese are in some sense offering solutions to Indochina’s problems and stagnation, but the French soldiers feel the French could and would provide better solutions and better models for development.\textsuperscript{133}

The French are more capable of helping Indochina flourish. Bouinais uses measures taken by the French with regard to cholera as an example of France’s good guidance. In 1881, with a cholera epidemic in nearby territories, the French in Cochinina used quarantine and hygienic measures to try to prevent an epidemic. For instance, someone with cholera would not be admitted to the Marine hospital and would be isolated because it would almost certainly lead to an epidemic otherwise. While its neighbors experienced a sweeping epidemic, Cochinina itself did not. Because of the administration’s efforts, Saigon and its surroundings only had a few inhabitants fall ill even though the territory was surrounded by infection.\textsuperscript{134} The horrible conditions of

\textsuperscript{131} J.-B. Bernardin, \textit{un Voyage au Tonkin}, François Seguin (Avignon, 1898), p. 43.
\textsuperscript{132} Gallieni, pp. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{133} Malglave, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{134} Bouinais pp. 75-77.
Indochina were seen by French officers as an opportunity for improving it rather than a reason to go home.

The Franco-Prussian War and further crises of France in this period are undertones in the published accounts. There is an emphasis on the military actions taken in contrast to the bumbling administration and politicians who do not provide supplies or orders quickly enough. General Joseph-Simon Gallieni is an exemplar of individual military initiative in Indochina. He became impatient with the government and would act alone to attack insurgents in the area. Gallieni combined military with social strategy; notwithstanding the insurgent problem he had to deal with, he wanted to ensure France’s longevity in Indochina. Accordingly, he had maps made, built roads, bridges and schools. He also fortified villages and recruited the villagers to fight against insurgents.\textsuperscript{135}

Gallieni describes his military expeditions in great detail, often planning down to the minute, as well as how the French are able to rout the pirates on various occasions. Gallieni touts the military’s adaptability: for each environment, a different fighting technique is necessary. Even in Tonkin, several different techniques are needed depending upon where you are (for example, in mountains versus forests).\textsuperscript{136} Gallieni shows how versatile the French military can be and how, with careful deliberation and planning, straightforward military victories boosting France’s military self-esteem are quite possible.

The officers are additionally very conscious of France’s need to compete with other European powers. Commandant Famin says that “today more than ever, colonies

\textsuperscript{135} Quinn, p. 144.
\textsuperscript{136} Gallieni, p. 1.
seem to be the indispensable satellites of the grand European nations.”

Famin realizes that there is a race for empire going on and that France needs Indochina to stay in the game. Captain Septans points the finger directly at Britain and Russia, which, he claims, make it more difficult for France in Asia because of their own holdings there. Competing with the other European imperial powers is imperative in order to maintain and build up France’s world reputation and role.

There is admiration for Indochina in the soldiers’ words. The beauty of Indochina and the unusual cultures there fascinate these men, even as they proclaim their own practical superiority and ability to improve conditions. Bernardin includes his first view of Indochina: “The horizon, to port and to starboard, elongates, flat and monotone. An immense plain that becomes metallic under the burning rays of the tropical sun, above all the rice fields without end…” Lieutenant Garcin too sees the “immense plains covered in rice fields and fields of sugar cane…” Though many people at home in France thought Indochina was barren, the land is often described by these soldiers as fertile, red earthy clay. There is an abundance of vegetation and of different fruits including bananas, oranges, mangoes, guava and pineapples. The area is furthermore rich with minerals, marble and bamboo. Parts of it are also repeatedly described as inaccessible. With bamboo, rocky areas, forests and mountains, there are several places where one cannot even ride a horse to traverse the area. There is therefore a potential for

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139 Bernardin, p. 6.
142 Bernardin, p. 2.
man to dominate nature, in production and in attaining what was perceived as unattainable.

Even though Captain Bouinais noted the harshness of Indochina’s seasons (the dry season form October to April and the rainy season from April to October), he still saw something beautiful in it. During the dry season, everything is dying and “the heat is unbearable”. However, once the rainy season comes, “nature seems reborn”, and “the earth covers herself in luxurious vegetation.” Bouinais found something to admire in Indochina’s climate; something that was worth staying for.

The animals and customs in Indochina provided further fascination. The tiger in particular is one of the exotic animals that the officers obsessed over. Garcin covetously explained how difficult it was to obtain a tiger skin, especially one in good condition. Aside from his own admiration for the tiger, he noted how “one cannot imagine the superstitious terror a tiger inspires” in the natives; there is a kind of cult of the tiger complete with amulets and incantations adding to the tiger’s allure.

The native males openly practiced polygamy, often with the first marriage considered the most important and the other wives as concubines. Military Doctor Billet found it interesting that the first wife was given special liberties and is consulted by her husband or even made decisions in important matters, such as the household budget. However, wives also performed the hard work like raising animals. Marine Doctor Rey found Muong women’s clothing intriguing. He described in detail the rich and elegant clothing. “They weave cotton and silk; they know the art of dying, and their

143 Bouinais p. 63.
144 Garcin, pp. 112-113.
145 Garcin, p. 113.
146 Albert Billet, Deux Ans dan le Haut-Tonkin (Région de Cao-Bong), L. Danel (Lille, 1896-98), p. 86.
147 People of southwestern mountains.
fabrics, by indigenous color schemes and by the care they take in forming geometric
designs, recall Persian rugs” and they even wear what look like Turkish turbans. The
colors and clothing of Indochina are unlike anything European and can only be compared
with other non-Western places.

The ceremonies are another source of exotic, colorful endeavors. As part of the
funeral ceremony, three grains of rice are placed in the body’s mouth and the face is
veiled with red fabric. In the “Festival of Youth”, the local youths get dressed up in
their best clothes and jewelry and have a feast with strange games and displays.

This fascination is mirrored in the officers’ affection for Indochina. Bouinais and
his co-author declared that “Indochina is a country that we love” Commandant Famin
asserted that Tonkin “is, to the contrary, a magnificent colony” and it is “the
incontestable premiere of our overseas possession.” Again, despite all the difficulties
of Indochina, these officers declared their love unabashedly and without equivocation.

This admiration for Indochina, while quite possibly genuine, still carried with it
certain undertones. The soldiers never forgot their perception of French superiority. The
religious and superstitious beliefs are particularly used in highlighting French superiority
versus native inferiority. The natives are labeled as Hindus, Buddhists, polytheists and
fetishists by different authors. Whether through religion or superstitions, they are
invariably described as praying to or revering trees, the sun and other aspects of nature
and animals. The locals believed in magic and trust officers trust sorcerers more than

149 Bernardin, p. 47.
150 Billet, p. 88.
151 Bouinais, p. xii.
152 Famin, pp. 3-4.
153 Garcin, p. 114.
the French. Smallpox was believed to be caused by bad spirits and amulets or incantations were used to right it. Bouinais described how because natives foolishly would rather follow the advice of their sorcerers rather than receive vaccinations, the French administration was forced to make vaccinations mandatory as a result. 154

The infantilism is continued in the locals’ living conditions. They were considered savages and Malglaive described how the differences within the Thai population in the area were not important because they are so inferior. 155 They lived in miserable houses and are dirty, and will eat vermin off their heads. 156 As Gallieni described it, “they live in a state next to misery” 157 Bernardin was struck by how averse to innovation the locals were; the very idea of progress makes them stubborn and rebellious. Instead, each generation endeavored to imitate the previous one as closely as possible. 158 This prevented the hope of surpassing the previous generation and the Western concept of progress. Malglaive decried how simple they are. He claimed they are just like children and are easily shocked and captivated by simple things they do not understand. 159

Finally, the Asian population was viewed as cruel and uncivilized. Garcin related the story of a powerful family in which a schism took place. One member of the family took the son of his rival family member, cut him up into pieces and then returned his remains. 160 This kind of action was viewed as typical of a lesser culture.

154 Bouinais, pp. 72-73.
155 Malglaive, p. 254.
156 Bernardin, p. 45.
157 Gallieni, p. 158.
158 Bernardin, p. 46.
159 Malglaive, p. 282.
160 Garcin, p. 49.
Indochina was viewed as a place of opportunity. The soldiers acknowledged or glossed over the current and potential problems of the area because they saw benefits that outweighed anything else. They themselves experienced these problems firsthand and yet were still ardent. They insisted that Indochina in particular was a good colonial investment, even the best. Cupet insisted that “French Indochina is, among all our possessions, the ideal colony.” Captain Septans wanted an Indochinese empire and felt that all of France’s efforts should be directed to Indochina. Those in France who did not want to send colonizing forces abroad were not recognizing the possibilities Indochina offered such as resources and commerce.

Commandant Famin compared Indochina to young children who, during their early years, need a lot of care but will become something much more. Gallieni and others agreed that with a continued and enlarged French presence, Indochina would “cultivate itself.” This plan for Indochina would still utilize the military; Gallieni explained how once relative peace was achieved, the role of the soldier would turn into one of administering the colony and commerce. Gallieni and the soldiers saw Indochina as an opportunity for France and a place for the military in the short and long-term. They, unlike other supportive or indifferent groups back in France, acted to this end and spread word of their fascination with and sense of justified conquest.

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162 Septans, pp. 208-209.
163 Famin, p. 1.
164 Gallieni, p. 157.
165 Gallieni, p. 157.
Part Five: Rimsky-Korsakov’s The Golden Cockerel: A Case for the Diversity of Orientalism

The orientalism in *Lakmé*, *Carmen*, *Fervaal* and *Samson et Dalila* followed a veritable program of themes and musical elements. However, this similarity across the operas was not caused by a governmentally-driven colonial or oriental program. Nor was this orientalism a reaction to the government’s actions (or lack thereof) but was inspired at least in part by the soldiers’ enthusiasm for and accounts of non-Western countries. This orientalism is not unique to France. Here Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera *The Golden Cockerel* (1906-07) will be used to demonstrate this. At the time Rimsky-Korsakov was writing the opera, Russia experienced similar debates and events as France did at the beginning of the Third Republic.

The Russians endured a parallel humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). Just prior to the war, in 1904, Russia’s empire was larger than ever before and had aspirations to increase it further.\(^\text{166}\) With the news of the surprise attack, there was a strong anti-Japanese and jingoist reaction. There were demonstrations by the people, sometimes with portraits of Czar Nicholas II, and people insisted on the national anthem being played at theaters.\(^\text{167}\) However, Russia was not prepared to face how much Japan had developed or its own administrative inefficiencies.


Though the war with Japan came as a surprise to many, there were pre-existing tensions.\textsuperscript{168} In 1900, when putting down the Boxer Rebellion, the Russians chose to occupy Manchuria, creating Japanese concern. In response to this more aggressive Russia, Japan formed an alliance with Britain in 1902 in hopes of discouraging any further Russian expansion.\textsuperscript{169} Japan’s fears were not unfounded. There is discourse on Russian expansion and empire leading up to and during the Russo-Japanese War. For instance, the Imperial Geographical Society sponsored the explorer Nikolai Przhevalskii to go into Mongolia and Tibet. His subsequent writings were full of encouragement of expansion. Przhevalskii asserted Russian superiority over the other peoples in the surrounding areas. He claimed that Russia could be a father to these lesser people, helping them develop while Russia reaped the benefits. Prince Esper Ukhtomskii, the prince’s tutor, was another proponent of expansion. According to him, Russia had a right to Asia.\textsuperscript{170} As the most developed power in the area, expansion made perfect sense. These calls for expansion were often underlined with fears of the “yellow peril.” An alliance between Japan and China would be daunting even to a Western nation. Consequently, action to prevent this was widely asked for. Kaiser Wilhelm, a cousin to the czar, bade Nicholas II to defend Europe against the “yellow race.”\textsuperscript{171}

In spite of both the “yellow peril” and the tensions and subsequent war between Russia and Japan, there was simultaneously a widespread Russian enthrallment with Japan. This is best demonstrated in the arts, where Japanese art forms and images were heavily used and publicized in Russia. For example, a Japanese drama troupe performed

\textsuperscript{168} Bartlett, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{169} Rimer, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{170} Bartlett, pp. 12-13.
\textsuperscript{171} Bartlett, p. 14.
in St. Petersburg in 1901, and Japanese woodcut prints were exhibited in St. Petersburg in 1905, during the war itself. 172 Indeed, this absorption with Japan reached its climax during and right after the Russo-Japanese War. 173 The years right before the war built up to it. In 1902, the arts journal Mir iskusstva featured a thirty-page spread of Japanese illustrations. In this segment, one of the articles praised Japanese art as not infantile but complex and related how it inspired such great Western artists as Monet and Whistler. Books and articles about anything culturally Japanese became very popular. Japanese images began to appear on calendars, candy boxes, posters, food wrappers and advertisements. 174

This was by no means always a positive or accurate portrayal. The Japanese are often depicted as monkeys, animals and as the “yellow race”. 175 In prints illustrating battle scenes, the perceived racial disparities are emphasized and the Japanese are depicted as “devious, unfair and savage fighters…”176 It becomes a battle of Russian culture versus Japanese savagery and exoticism. There was still always a clear assumption of Russian superiority alongside of the “oriental ineptitude.”177

This fascination with Japan and the East was part of Nicholas II’s own education. At age 22, before becoming czar, he went on the traditional “Grand Tour” that wealthy Western young adults took as part of their education. However, the destinations of this Grand Tour were different from the usual itinerary. Nicholas visited Egypt, India, Siam,

172 Bartlett, p. 9.
173 Rimer p. 173.
174 Bartlett, pp 20-22.
176 Norris, p. 112.
177 Norris, p. 108.
Indochina, China and ended his trip with Japan. With this interesting trip in his formative years, there is a question of how his perspective of the East changed or was reinforced with his personal experiences. Though Nicholas did not leave much of a paper trail expressing his views, his letters home during the trip do show a fascination with the oriental and exotic (such as the animals, settings and the colors of the non-Western) along with a jingoistic patriotism touting Russian superiority over other peoples.

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov was very much affected by the events in Russia. He himself was born into an aristocratic clan with a strong military and naval tradition. Consequently, he himself graduated from the College of Naval Cadets in St. Petersburg in 1862 as a midshipman. He spent two and half years on a subsequent military cruise and became a commissioned officer. Because of his naval education, Rimsky-Korsakov did not receive conventional musical training. Though he had music tutors, he did not attend the Conservatoire or any formal training. However, he was considered very talented musically and joined the music scene in St. Petersburg, becoming part of The Five, a group of prominent musical figures in the city that included Mily Balakirev, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky and Alexander Borodin. Music did not lose its appeal for Rimsky-Korsakov and the ensuing sinecure he obtained as an aristocrat allowed him time to compose. His music received due recognition in the musical community and he eventually was invited to be a professor at the Conservatoire.

The Russo-Japanese War confirmed Rimsky-Korsakov’s concern with the current regime and its inefficiencies. He felt that going to war with Japan was foolish and that

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178 David Schimmelpennick van der oye, Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan, Northern Illinois University Press (DeKalb, IL, 2001), p. 15.
179 Schimmelpennick, p. 22.
the subsequent deaths and defeats could be blamed on Nicholas II and his bungling administration. When the revolutionary murmurings being among students, including students at the Conservatoire, after the defeat in 1905, Rimsky-Korsakov supported them. The school administration, on the other hand, felt much differently and took repressive action; it kicked out student leaders with revolutionary ideas, brought in police and even shut down the school itself. Rimsky-Korsakov still openly supported the students and called for the Director’s resignation. These events led to the dismissal of both Rimsky-Korsakov and the director. Rimsky-Korsakov became a hero for similarly-thinking intellectuals. His music was forbidden for two months in St. Petersburg and other cities.181

Rimsky-Korsakov composed *The Golden Cockerel* at the very end of his career. He in fact thought he had composed his last opera with *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezn and the Maiden Fevronia* (1905), but after the events of the Russo-Japanese War and subsequent revolutionary reverberations, he felt that writing this additional opera was necessary.182 Indeed, this was a very conscious decision on his part; Rimsky-Korsakov claimed that “I’m of the opinion that everyone, especially an artist or public figure, ought to leave the scene when his time is come.”183 He had decided that he had contributed all that he could to Russian musical culture, but contemporary events changed his mind: he realized there was still a role for him.

Rimsky-Korsakov knew that the audience would immediately recognize the satire of *The Golden Cockerel*. It is based on Pushkin’s original poem of the same name, which

182 Taruskin, p. 176.
was well known throughout Russia. What is striking is that when Pushkin originally wrote the poem, the current czar (Nicholas I) was certainly autocratic but not idle and foolish as King Dodon in the poem is. The poem was received as a satire but not as directly criticizing the current czar harshly. Rimsky-Korsakov’s choice of this source material connected it more straightforwardly to the contemporary regime and czar. The parallels between Rimsky-Korsakov’s Dodon and Nicholas II are unmistakable.184

*The Golden Cockerel* demonstrates the same programmatic orientalism as the French operas from the Third Republic. The central dichotomy of East (female) versus West (male) is present in the characters of the Queen of Shemakha and King Dodon. The original Pushkin poem gave the Queen a smaller role, without any dialogue, but for the opera, her role is expanded far beyond the original character.185 The Queen is oriental first of all in appearance. Dodon dreams of her black hair and eyes and her “amorous regard”.186 The opera’s score is very specific that she wear a red dress that is richly embroidered with gold and a white turban with a plume. She is frequently followed around by slaves, sometimes holding oriental instruments.187 The Queen also proclaims her freedom and has an enigmatic smile; she does not fulfill a traditional female role.

Though the Queen is portrayed as being devious and clever, she is also mocked. In her song to King Dodon, Rimsky-Korsakov uses the woodwinds to make her appear comical.188 Rimsky-Korsakov critiqued his government in *The Golden Cockerel* but still used orientalist trappings and asserted the inferiority of the oriental Other.

185 Abraham, *Essays*, p. 89.
186 Rimsky-Korsakov, p. 73.
188 See Listening Example 16 at 2 minutes 40 seconds. Yastrebtsev, p. 101.
The Queen is sensual and in her seduction of Dodon she both hints and patronizes. She flaunts her body by describing how she will undress:

When my robes fall whose cloth concealed the splendor of my attractions, when my silver body appears in the middle of this tent, I see my self resplendent. I undo my long hair, from a tumultuous stream, like a black torrent, pouring out on the marble of my hips.189

Yet she also mocks Dodon. She forces him to sing a love song (badly) and then laughs at him harshly. She is certainly a dangerous woman whom Dodon does not have the wits to contend with.

Though the Queen disappears at the end of the opera, it is not quite the same triumph of West over East with the death of the oriental woman as the conclusion. The Queen is gone but the King is dead and the golden cockerel (which was supposed to guide the kingdom) is gone as well. This may prove confusing, particularly with the Prologue in which the Astrologer claims that all of the story was an illusion and only he and the Queen were human. This ending may have been an attempt to pacify those who might have found the opera too openly critical. Though Rimsky-Korsakov employed orientalist elements throughout the opera, his ending does not make it absolutely clear if there was a victory over the oriental Other or not. Rather his ending focuses more on specifically having King Dodon die.

In the opera, the Queen is assigned an Eastern, pagan religion. Indeed in her opening lines, her arms are lifted toward the sky as if in prayer and she subsequently prays to the sun.190 She is introduced by the clarinet with rhapsodic phrases, and she

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189 Rimsky-Korsakov, pp. 117-188.
adds her own rhapsodic flourishes to the ends of phrases, sometimes with oboes. She is labeled as the follower of a strange religion through the use of woodwinds and her own rhapsodic, chromatic phrases.

Rimsky-Korsakov seemed to revel in taking risks both with the themes of *The Golden Cockerel* and with the music, particularly the harmonies. His friend Yastrebtsev recalls how they often discussed the audacious nature of the opera and individual example of it, such as “the daring harmonies in the third act…” The oriental music elements are similar to those in the previously discussed French operas. Chromaticism is used by the Queen throughout the opera. Even when she laughs at Dodon, Rimsky-Korsakov makes it chromatic:

Timbres for the Queen and her slaves versus the other characters are important as well. As already mentioned, she is frequently accompanied by woodwinds in an improvisatory style (though not actual improvisation). When she dances for Dodon and he clumsily tries to dance too, the woodwinds are employed again along with tambourines, triangle and cymbals. The Queen’s graceful movements are represented by the airy sinuous phrases while the King’s clumsier movements are the more plodding drums and low winds and strings.

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191 See Listening Example 17. The clarinet is at the very beginning and her own rhapsodic phrases begin at 1 minute 26 seconds and recur throughout.
192 Yastrebtsev, p. 414.
193 Rimsky-Korsakov, p. 126.
194 See Listening Example 18 at 1 minute 20 seconds.
While the oriental elements are clearly presented and identifiable in *The Golden Cockerel*, the way in which orientalism is used and to what end are not. Rimsky-Korsakov is using orientalism to critique the government in reaction to the mistakes he saw it as making. In order to accomplish this, the parallels between the mythical kingdom in *The Golden Cockerel* and the current Russian regime under Nicholas II are made very noticeable in the opera. For example, in the opera General Polkan tells the King they have enough supplies for three years, mocking how Port Arthur was reported to have supplies to last for three years but only lasted about seven months against the Japanese. Also, near the end of the operas, Dodon says how it is “bad to have blood at a wedding”, a reference to the almost 1,000 people crushed to death at Nicholas II’s coronation.195

Rimsky-Korsakov is quite critical of colonialism and the idea of Western superiority in *The Golden Cockerel*. Dodon explains at the beginning of the opera how “we have lost our heads.”196 Unfortunately his solution to conquer nearby Shemakha is not the cure-all he hoped for. Rimsky-Korsakov portrays colonial expansion as tenuous and unreasonable; Dodon’s counselor Gvidon’s justification is “Our neighbors …are too close to us.”197 Dodon readily agrees to the idea of conquest and is convinced his country will not suffer any major losses or repercussions. Later he is shocked by their losses (just as Russia was of its losses to Japan), and he cannot believe that the enemy is advancing, declaring “What dementia…is in my palace?”198 This foolishness is not limited to the king and his main counselor but also the other members of the

196 Rimsky-Korsakov, p. 16.
197 Rimsky-Korsakov, p. 18.
198 Rimsky-Korsakov, p. 61.
administration show no wisdom either. The seigneurs tend to sing in and respond to Dodon’s declarations in a spineless way; usually repeating whatever he is saying or praising him shamelessly.

Dodon himself is portrayed as autocratic, foolish and lazy. When his general hesitates over the invasion plan, Dodon throws whatever he can get his hands on at the general; the king is shown as childish and unreasonable. Moreover when the Astrologer wants Dodon’s promised reward in writing, Dodon declares: “My caprices, my desirers are the law that you must serve.”199 Dodon furthermore does not act in the interest of the people. As the enemy is advancing and Dodon’s army suffering, he tells the people to rush and join the army but first pay money toward his cause.200

The reception of *The Golden Cockerel* was somewhat complicated. Censorship proved a problem for the opera and Rimsky-Korsakov’s politics no doubt contributed to the difficulties. The censor at first said the libretto was fine, but the next day after this statement, he asked for the libretto again and marked it up with cuts that would have to be made in order for the performance to go forward. Rimsky-Korsakov was extremely annoyed. He pointed out that the censor, while crossing out portions of the libretto that were direct lines from Pushkin’s poem, left in controversial parts. “What fools! I’m certain they really don’t know Pushkin’s tale at all.”201 Because of the delays, the opera was produced in Russia in its entirety only after Rimsky-Korsakov’s death.202

During his lifetime, parts of the opera were performed publicly and the reception was positive. V. Karatygin’s review of the February 1908 performance of the opera’s

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199 Rimsky-Korsakov p. 46.
200 Rimsky-Korsakov, p. 63.
201 Yastrebtev, p. 443.
202 Abraham, *Essays*, p. 84.
Introduction and Wedding March admired Rimsky-Korsakov’s inventiveness in the opera. Karatygin cited in particular the complicated chromaticism (usually used to represent the oriental aspects) and the daring of the composer in his music.\footnote{203 V. Karatygin in no. 242 of Stolichnaia pochta, February 20, 1908, as qtd. In Yastrebtsev, p. 101.} However, in Paris, as Le Coq d’Or (1914), the opera was very successful. This greater international acceptance was perhaps Rimsky-Korsakov’s original intention as the opera was very quickly translated into French. It attained so much success that The Golden Cockerel became a “repertory item in the West.”\footnote{204 Taruskin, p. 177.} The opera left a lasting impression and achieves longevity; indeed, beyond his orchestra showpieces such as Scheherazade, The Golden Cockerel is the piece he is best well known for and is undoubtedly his most famous opera.

In this paper it has been demonstrated that orientalism is a strong construct of Third Republic France. In light of the events the nation had recently endured, orientalism was a source of inspiration for many. It was particularly strong among musical composers and among military personnel serving in Indochina. For the composers, orientalism was a means to respond to Richard Wagner and German music by creating or recreating French musical culture. Using almost programmatic musical and literary elements, these composers portrayed the non-Western in a way they felt audiences would recognize. In so doing, they also juxtaposed the East with the West. In the end, after the Western man temporarily fell for the Eastern woman, the West returned to domination with the woman’s death and there is a comeback of civilization. The soldiers in Indochina found the East to be a similar sort of inspiration. They viewed Indochina as a place of opportunity and the colony itself as a necessity for France to regain international
prestige. For them, Indochina was a vital part of their lives and should be a vital part of France’s life as well. Unfortunately, the French government was not so decisive about Indochina and was frequently indifferent to the topic. Individual initiative on the part of military officers became a major part of French expansion in Asia during the early years of the Third Republic rather than a widely viewed or expressed imperial doctrine.

Rimsky-Korsakov’s *The Golden Cockerel* is evidence of orientalism outside of Third Republic France. It asserts a diversity for orientalism; it can exist in other countries, even one so close to being what is considered a non-Western country. However, Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera also proves (just as the French operas do) that orientalism is not a product of government propaganda. Just as the French government was fairly ambivalent toward Indochina while the number orientalist operas in France increased, so too did Rimsky-Korsakov show that he was certainly not following government propaganda by composing an opera criticizing Nicholas II. Government and politics, while they definitely can influence orientalism in the arts, is not its sole source. In this paper it has been shown that orientalism is very often derived from a need to identify oneself or one’s own nation by contrast.
Appendix 1: Opera Plot Summaries

_Carmen_ by Georges Bizet:

Main Characters:
Carmen – a gypsy and factory worker
Don José – army officer
Escamillo – bull fighter
Micaëla – local maiden

Act 1: The soldiers on guard encounter Micaëla looking for Don José but he is not yet on duty so she leaves. The workers from the factory leave and Carmen appears and sings the Habanera about love with the soldiers all around her. She sees Don José and throws flowers to him before re-entering the factory. Don José is unappreciative.

Micaëla comes back and gives Don José a letter from his mother. He reminisces about home before saying he will marry Micaëla, who then leaves.

A fight breaks out in the factory and Carmen and another woman are questioned about it. Don José is then given Carmen as a prisoner but she seduces him with a song and escapes, promising to meet him later at Lillas Pastia’s.

Act 2: At Lillas Pastia’s, Carmen dances with other women and it is learned that Don José was put in jail after Carmen’s escape but has recently been released. Carmen meets Escamillo the bull fighter but does not respond well to his advances. Carmen’s smuggler friends tell her they need her help in their latest deal but Carmen says she cannot because she is in love.

Carmen is then convinced to try to get Don José, who is approaching, to join them. Carmen dances for him but is annoyed when José wants to leave to rejoin the army. He tries to leave but ends up having to go with Carmen and the smugglers after his superior officer shows up.

Act 3: Carmen is now tired of Don José and he is left alone for a while. Micaëla appears looking for him but hides when José fires a gun at Escamillo. Escamillo avoids the bullet but tells Don José he is in love with Carmen. In a jealous rage, José attacks Escamillo and the fight goes on until Carmen arrives to break it up. Micaëla is found hiding and tells Don José his mother wants to see him because she is dying and he sets off to see his mother.

Act 4: A bullfight is taking place and it is learned that Carmen is now in love with Escamillo. Carmen’s friends warn her against Don José, but she claims she does not fear
him. José shows up and confronts her, but she says she does not love him anymore. José continues to plead with her and then stabs her to death.

Lakmé by Léo Delibes:

Main Characters:
Nilakantha – a Brahmin priest
Lakmé – an Indian woman and daughter of Nilakantha
Gerald – British officer
Frederic – British officer
Miss Ellen – daughter of the British viceroy
Miss Rose – niece of the British viceroy
Mistress Bentson – governess to the two British girls

Act 1: The Hindus pray at a temple with Nilakantha and Lakmé joins in. She and her servant then go to the river. While they are away, the British characters enter the garden and are fascinated by what they see. Ellen likes Lakmé’s jewelry (left behind when she went down to the river) and Gerald decides to stay behind to sketch it so Ellen can have her own jewelry made British girls and their governess. Gerald then sees Lakmé when she returns and declares his love for her. After he leaves, Nilakantha finds out that a British officer saw Lakmé and wants revenge.

Act 2: Nilakantha has Lakmé sing so that he can find the officer in the garden and Gerald comes to her. Lakmé then faints and Nilakantha proceeds to stab Gérald. Lakmé brings Gerald to the forest and heals him with her herbs and flowers.

Act 3: Lakmé asks Gerald to drink sacred water and while she goes to get some, Frederic shows up and reminds him of his military duty and of his fiancée, Miss Ellen. Lakmé returns and realizes that Gerald is lost to her. She then poisons herself.

Samson et Dalila by Saint-Saëns

Main Characters:
Samson
Old Hebrew
Dalila
Abimelech – Philistine governor.
High Priest of Dagon

Act 1: Hebrews pray to God to relieve them from their suffering and the Philistines’ domination. Samson tells the Hebrews to be stronger, but Abimelech then taunts them with the superiority of his religion. Samson tries to encourage the Hebrews once more
and, when Abimelech attacks him, defends himself and kills Abimelech. The High Priest of Dagon plots to use Dalila in Samson’s downfall.

Dalila and other maidens appear and sing and dance seductively. The Old Hebrew warns Samson against her but Samson cannot resist.

**Act 2:** Dalila realizes she has control over Samson. The High Priest of Dagon talks her into betraying Samson. Dalila then seduces Samson and she is able to learn his secret and he is captured.

**Act 3:** At the Temple of Dagon, there is celebration and dancing. Samson is now a prisoner and blind. He prays to God and is able to destroy the Temple of Dagon.

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**Fervaal** by Vincent d’Indy

Main Characters:
- Fervaal
- Guilhen – a Saracen sorceress
- Arfagard – Fervaal’s companion

**Prologue:** Fervaal and Arfagard are wounded and Guilhen appears. She saves them and falls in love with Fervaal, whom she brings to her home.

**Act 1:** We learn that Fervaal is the son of the king of Cravann and has a great destiny but must renounce love. Arfagard wants Fervaal to return to Cravann and though Fervaal is momentarily stalled by Guilhen’s charms, he does finally leave. Guilhen promises her revenge and incites the Muslims to invade Cravann.

**Act 2:** Arfagard and Fervaal meet with Kaito, a goddess, and she tells them that because of a broken oath, a death will occur. Fervaal assumes this is his own death for loving Guilhen.

**Act 3:** The war is not going well for the Cravann and Fervaal asks Arfagard to kill him. Suddenly Guilhen approaches and Fervaal no longer wishes to die. Arfagard still tries to kill him but Fervaal ends up killing Arfagard instead. However, Guilhen then dies from her journey and Fervaal hears a chorus as he ascends the mountain and realizes something new is beginning.

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**Le Coq d’Or** by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Main Characters:
- King Dodon
- Gvidon
- General Polkan
- Queen of Shemakha
Astrologer

Act 1: The Astrologer appears and tells them the following is fictitious but has a good lesson.

King Dodon becomes convinced that he needs to invade his neighbor Shemakha. The Astrologer gives him the golden cockerel to guide him. King Dodon decides to attack Shemakha and sends his army and two sons to do so.

Act 2: The war is not going well and both Dodon’s sons are killed. Dodon goes to lead the army but then falls in love with the Queen of Shemakha. She realizes this and convinces him to propose to her.

Act 3: There is a procession for the marriage. Suddenly the Astrologer appears and asks for his favor in return for the cockerel, the Queen. Dodon is angered and hits the Astrologer with his mace. The golden cockerel then cuts Dodon’s jugular and the Queen and the golden cockerel disappear.

Epilogue: The Astrologer explains that this was all just an illusion and only the Queen and himself were human characters.
Appendix 2: Musical Terms

Diatonic: A scale of five tones and two semitones.

Fugue: Contrapuntal repetition of a theme or themes.

Melismatic: Multiple tones sung for a single syllable of text.

Ostinato: repetition of a rhythm or pattern.

Opéra comique: an opera with both singing and spoken text, usually with lighter subjects than tragédies lyriques.

Pedal: A sustained tone below the harmony and melody.

Tremolo: Quick alternation between two notes sustained as indicated by the score.
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