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HAVING WRITTEN ABOUT EMPIRES and states, and the history of sociology, I decided more recently to combine these themes. This led me back to some of the places where I was first initiated into archival research while writing my master's thesis on social movements of unemployed workers in Paris during the 1860s and 1870s, and to some of the historians whose work I first read at that time. Among other things, this led me back to Pierre Bourdieu, who had sent me a copy of his book *Algeria 1960* and a kind note in response to my sending him a paper based on my master's thesis. I abandoned French history (though not Bourdieu) for a long time, before returning to it in this book.

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