**Researching Algeria at the Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence**

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Introduction: How the Algeria collections came to the *Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer* (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence

Following the independence of Algeria in 1962, a substantial, although incomplete, archive from the French Administration throughout the colonial period was repatriated to France. Just a few short years later, in 1966, the French government made the decision to open a specific centre in Aix-en-Provence to house the archives from all of the former French colonies. The *Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer* (ANOM) is not, therefore, solely for Algeria. Rather, it houses documents relating to the entirety of France’s colonial presence. The Algeria collection at ANOM was later supplemented by further documents formerly kept at the *Archives Nationales* in Paris.

The contents of the Algeria Collections at the Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (ANOM)

The principal records in the Algeria collection at the *Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer* (ANOM) are those kept by the successive ministries in Paris responsible for Algeria, as well as those from the Office of the General Governor, the Prefectures and Sub-Prefectures in Algeria, the police services and the archives of “mixtes communes”. The archives of ordinary communes are not held at ANOM. Archival evidence relating to the French army in Algeria is held at the *Service Historique de la Défence* in Paris (Vincennes).

Collection and cataloguing of this archive is still on going. As such, there are many new and exciting opportunities for researchers wishing to study Algeria at the *Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer* which are being uncovered in line with this process. One example of this potentially innovative research can be found in the archives of the Tizi-Ouzou Sub-Prefecture (up until 1956) which later became the Grande Kabylie Prefecture (1956-1962), the cataloguing of which has only recently completed. Kabilye was a poor area and figs were one of its rare riches. As a result, during the late 1930s, the French colonial administration introduced a unique project to create workshops for drying figs and to teach local people the skills necessary to improve the productivity and quality of this agricultural product. Although this endeavour largely failed to meet its aims, leaving civil servants discouraged, it is an interesting and neglected aspect of French policy during the inter-war years and could be used as a case study to improve our understanding about the colonial administration in Algeria. Historians of religious policy in Algeria might also be interested in extensive archive relating to pilgrimages to Mecca from 1938 onwards, which includes photographs of pilgrims.

Another potentially illuminating aspect of the archives of the Tizi-Ouzou Sub-Prefecture is the files relating to crime in the region. These documents have the potential to shed light on early nationalism in the region, not least because Krim Belkacem, a member of the Algerian Popular Party, was perceived as a central bandit in the region and, as a result, was watched and searched by the colonial police from as early as 1947.

There are numerous other collections house at the ANOM, such as those of the *Banque d’Algérie et de Tunisie*, the military registers of French people born in Algeria, an extensive photograph archive and private records, such as those of the Reformed Church of Algeria. This collection, left to ANOM, includes records of synods, decisions of consistories & parishes and negotiations with the Algerian state after 1962.

In addition to the archival collections at ANOM, the library contains an extensive collection of books on Algeria, many of which are very old.

Practical aspects of researching Algeria at the ANOM

The 80 inventories for the Algeria archives can be found in the reading room at the ANOM in Aix-en-Provence. In addition, 43 out of these 80 inventories relating to Algeria are available in digital form on the IREL website (<http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/>). This online search tool allows the researcher to conduct a detailed search of the collection in advance of their visit to Aix. It is also possible to examine some digitalised documents from this website.

A large proportion of the archive at Aix is freely accessible to the public under the 15 July 2008 French law on archives.

This paper will now explore in detail two examples of archival groups relating to Algeria at the ANOM in Aix, offering information of the contents of these collections and opening up the possibilities for future research on Algeria.

Case study one - Série H: Office of the Governor General

The first example which will be discussed in this paper is the archives of the Central Directorate for Arab Affairs, created by General Governor Bugeaud, and later known as the Directorate of Indigenous Affairs. This record group, Série H, is very rich in information on military affairs (1848 - 1919), explorations (1849 - 1943) and the penetration of Sahara (1842 - 1938), notably Captain Laperrine's reconnaissance missions and the 1907 caravan route of Captain Touchard. Série H also contains information on tribes, nomads and Touaregs, aswell as accounts of missions for waterholes and razzias. Astronomical observations are also featured in this archive group.

**Explorations**  
The Sahara was first explored by the geographer, Henri Duveyrier, in the period between 1860 and 1888. Série H contains a wide range of documentary evidence pertaining to this exploratory phase including a report written in 1860 which advocates the occupation of Ouargla as a means of restarting the trade caravans between Central Africa and Algeria and an 1862 map showing routes leading to Timbuktu and Agades, which was later followed by Duveyrier, Berbrugger and other explorers.[[1]](#footnote-1) The political offensive and ambitions of the French state are also evidenced in this archive group, seen in an 1864 note stating 'we are in possession of the head of the only route going into the heart of the Sudan'. The first phase of exploration was followed by a setback: the slaughter by the Touregs of Paul Flatters, Lieutenant Colonel and Head of the Study Mission for the Trans-Saharan Railway, whilst on an expedition with 93 men. Flatter's death is recorded in Série H.[[2]](#footnote-2)  
  
The second stage of exploration saw Foureau and Lamy establish a link with the Sudan, Lake Tchad and the Congo (1898), followed by the taking of In Salah (1899), the victory over the Touregs and the creation of the Southern territories (1902). Laperrine's attempt to create a link to Timbuktu marked the end of this exploratory stage. Série H contains letters written by Crampel, the explorer tasked with travelling from the French Congo to Algeria, via Lake Chad.[[3]](#footnote-3) Crampel's letters to the Governor General and the Under-Secretary of State, written prior to his departure, detail his itinerary and his aims. Whilst the concern to fill in 'the last important blank' on the map of the African continent was important to Crampel, of greater significance was his political aim to obtain treaties and establish France's rights over Chad. Crampel was assassinated on 9 April 1891 before he could complete his mission.  
Alongside records of these early expeditions, Série H also contains information relating to the early 20th century including reports made by a General on experiments with French automobiles, Citroen and Renault,  in the Sahara in 1924.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Political and Religious Events**

Alongside archives relating to exploration, Série H also contains information about political supervision of the natives (1877-1952), such as papers from the Board of Inquiry into the events in Constantine in 1934. Islam also features highly in this record collection with papers relating to the brotherhoods (zaouias), the Muslim notables and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Plans to spread the Christian faith amongst Muslims are recorded in Série H. An 1850 report written by a General warns of the potential dangers of disseminating Catholicism within native tribes, as proposed by a bishop, namely the risk of starting a Holy War.[[5]](#footnote-5) The work of the White Fathers, following their establishment in Timbuktu in 1894, is also recorded in this archival collection, such as a letter from the Head of Indigenous Affairs to the Office of the Governor General which gave a favourable response to a request from Father Charles de Foucauld to take up residence in Beni Abbès in 1901.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Another personal tale which can be found in Série H is that of Monsignor Lavigerie, Cardinal and Archbishop of Algiers (1867-1892) and founder of the *Société des missionnaires d’Afrique* in 1872. Féraud, the French Consul General in Turkish-ruled Tripoli, reported on the activities of the Société in Ghadames to the Ministry, noting the appreciation felt by the population whom they cared for. More sinister reports included details of the slaughter of three missionaries in December 1881, thirty miles from Ghadames, an event which Féraud linked closely to Flatters’ murder, the French invasion of Tunisia and the activities of merchants in the surrounding area. The deaths prompted Lavigerie to close the missionary post in Ghadames.[[7]](#footnote-7) This negative sentiment about the potential of proselytising missions is echoed by the General Secretary in a letter to the Governor General in March 1882 which notes that ‘the opinion of our Consul that it is now impossible for the missionaries to remain in these regions, and it would be foolish of them to think of returning. The plots (*‘intrigues’*) and the possibility of Holy War have completely changed the attitudes of the people of Ghadames, at first so welcoming and so grateful for the good the Algerian Fathers had done for them.’

Events in the extreme south of Algeria are summarised in a handwritten note to the Governor General sent in 1903.[[8]](#footnote-8) This note firstly accounts the 1899 Flamand-Pein mission to In Salah, the successful occupation of which permitted the army to capture Tidikelt, Timimoun and finally, the best access route, La Saoura. Later events, notably the establishment of a garrison at Adrar in 1901 which gave control of the Tuat region to the French, and the creation of a *Compagnies des Oasis Sahariennes* in 1902 are also recorded in this note. In light of this, the note recommends ‘linking all the French colonies in the north and west of Africa, to make one single colony within the limits agreed in the convention with the British government on 5 August 1890’. As such, this is note is an early example of plans to create the Southern Territories.

More trivial matters are also recorded in Série H, such as a small vocabulary of Timbuktu idioms, published in Algiers in 1895 for the use of soldiers of the expeditionary column. From this, Algeria’s colonial rulers learn ready-made sentences such as ‘How much is this carpet? It’s expensive!’; ‘I want a sturdy camel’; ‘Where does this route go?’; ‘Are there robbers in the country?’.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Along with the above discussed examples, Série H contains papers concerning the tribes, the 1871 insurrection, the search for water and railway projects, not to mention the monthly reports about the economic and political situation and numerous files on Morocco. Série H is, therefore, a record group which leads us directly to the reality and gives an accurate view of the political challenges of establishing French rule in Algeria. It also probes the political role of scientific and religious missions.

Case study two – The Cabinet of the Prefect of Alger

The ANOM also contains a wealth of material relating to the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962).

**Administrative reforms and the political context**

The inventory for the archives of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Algiers is available online. Amongst many other things, these archives contain the Prefect’s files about the administrative reforms that took place between 1956 and 1960. In 1956, Algeria was reorganised into twelve departments. The archives of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Algiers include a telegram from Robert Lacoste to the “IGAME” (acronym for the Prefects in the region) Prefect, which detail his plans for in-depth political action, particularly through the establishment of new communes as the leaders of the *Front National d’Liberation* (FLN) were developing a grass-roots political infrastructure across the country.[[10]](#footnote-10) According to Lacoste, the French administration needed to respond to ‘ensure active sympathy from the mass of the population.’ The political role of the Prefects was, therefore, of higher priority than their administrative function. In addition, the Prefects were responsible for maintaining public order and for coordinating the actions of the civil and military authorities.

**Interplay between civil and military powers**

The tension between military and civilian power in Algeria, which culminated in the “Week of the Barricades” in January 1960, is widely acknowledged to have been a crucial aspect of the Algerian War of Independence. The archives of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Algiers contain many documents relating to this topic up until 1960, including two texts on the scope of 20February 1960 decree which redistributed powers between civil and military authorities.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The first of these is a directive from De Gaulle which states that the military command should concentrate on operation measures and not participate in political discussions or electoral operations. Although this directive was written on 17February 1960, its publication was delayed to allow the directives of the Delegate-General to reach the Prefects first and it was not until 20th February that Paul Delouvrier (Delegate-General) sent the text of the decree. Two days later, on 22 February, Delouvrier sent an urgent telegram to the Prefects and Generals, which is also included in the archives of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Algiers. This message insists that the 20February decree gave back full normal functions to the Prefects and Sub-Prefects, with the exception of the maintenance of order which would continue to be exercised by military authority. In spite of this, the relationship between military and civilian power remained a contentious one throughout the concluding years of the conflict.

**Further areas of research in archives of the Cabinet of Prefect of Algiers**

The archives of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Algiers also contain at least three types of documents concerning more general developments in the period between 1958 and 1961. The first of these are records of Cabinet meetings which demonstrate how civil and military authorities worked together.[[12]](#footnote-12) Under the chairmanship of the Delegate-General in Algeria (Salan, 1958; Delouvrier, 1958-1960; and Morin, 1960-1962), these meetings brought together the regional Prefects and the Generals. The file concerning the preparation for meetings contains an enormous amount of detail, including notes on political questions, elections, measures for Presidential pardon and the Special Administrative Sections. There is even a complete, typed record of least one meeting in January 1959 which appears to record, verbatim, everything said at the meeting.

The second interesting groups of files in the archives of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Algiers are the reports from the Regional Prefect for Algiers to the Delegate General.[[13]](#footnote-13) These monthly reports were drafted by the Prefect and based on a significant amount of material, including detailed reports of events from the Legion of Gendarmerie, the Commander of the Gendarmerie, the army corps in Algiers, the *Renseignements Généraux* (the Central Directorate of General Intelligence), the *Sûreté Nationale* (the Civil Police) and the Prefects of each *Département* (for example, Médéa, Orléansville and Grande-Kabylie). It is possible, therefore, to chart the numerous influences informing the Regional Prefect. The last report is dated December 1961. In addition, every week from September 1958 until December 1961, the Prefect of Algier’s cabinet sent a report on his view of the state of public opinion in the department of Algiers.[[14]](#footnote-14) This material used as the basis for these drafts is also kept in the archives and includes telegrams from the *Renseignements Généraux*, Sub-Prefects and colonels exercising civil powers in the arrondissements.

Finally, the archives of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Algiers also contain the papers of General Olié, a nominated civil and military commander for Grande-Kabylie in 1956.[[15]](#footnote-15) Amongst these papers are numerous, often hand-written, notes to Regional Prefect Collaveri. These documents provide a very personal account of the military and political situation and even go as far as to suggest that decolonisation of Algeria would be inevitable without a concerted French effort. Given that Olié was a member of the military, this record is remarkably frank and illuminating.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are numerous new avenues for research to explore at the ANOM. Cross-checking sources in archival research can be particularly fruitful. For example, compare the archives of Prefects with ones of the Governor General, or the archives of the Public Prosecutor in Algiers and Constantine with the papers of Charles De Gaulle housed at the *Archives Nationales*, an inventory of which has been compiled by Nicole Even and is due to be published in 2012. Through these numerous different approaches, it is possible to uncover new and exciting research about Algeria.

1. Report from the Commander of the Laghouat Circle (1860), 22H26.

   Map (1862) & following report, 22H26. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Flatters, 4H11 & 22H26. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Crampel, 4H15. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4H35. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 16H114. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 16H114. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 16H114. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 22H48. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 22H32. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 91/1K/949/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 1K/1047. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 1/K/1063-1064. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 1/K/1072; 1/K/1069 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. I/K/1073-1074. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 1/K/579; 1/K/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)