

## Between Algeria and France: A new Reading of Colonial Sahara Archive

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### Abstract:

This research examines archival records of Algeria's Sahar from the colonial period, emphasizing their role in understanding southern Algerian's social and political dynamics and the long-term impacts of colonization. It aims to map the archives' locations in the National Archives Center of Algeria and French national archival centers while identifying key themes to assist researchers in broadening their studies. the study underscores the importance of both paper and digital research tools in facilitating historical researchers and deepening knowledge of the region, offering scholars to investigate previously underexplored topics.

**Keywords:** Southern Territory; Algerian Archives Center; National Overseas Archives Center; Colonial Archives; Archives of the Southern Territory.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Archives play a fundamental role in historical studies as they provide reliable primary sources upon which researchers can depend to reconstruct events and understand various historical contexts (Cook, 1997, p.20). These sources enable historians to access detailed and comprehensive information about the colonial period, aiding in analyzing the impact of colonialism on local communities and the transformations that the region underwent (Ageron, 1991, pp 50-52). (I relied on two quotes from scholars: one in archival studies and the other in history, to provide a starting point for my study.)

Given its significant historical and geographical importance, the Algerian Sahara was a prominent focus during the colonial period. This era, spanning from 1830 to 1962, marked a crucial phase in Algeria's history, characterized by numerous transformations across all spheres, including the Sahara region (Ruedy, 2005, P. 112). French colonial policies in the Algerian Sahara were part of broader strategies implemented in Algeria, covering economic, military, cultural, religious, social, and nuclear aspects. These policies aimed to maintain control over the entire country, exploit its resources, and reinforce its strategic position in North Africa.

The economic exploitation of the region involved utilizing its abundant natural resources, such as oil, gas, and phosphates, with exploration intensifying during World War II (Ruedy, 2005, PP. 145-147). Militarily, France maintained a strong presence in the Sahara to suppress local resistance and safeguard its



economic interests (Kassir, 2006 , P. 410). Culturally, French authorities sought to impose the French language and culture while diminishing the influence of traditional Islamic institutions to erode religious and cultural identity.

## 2. Historical Context of Sahara Integration:

The name "Sahara" is of French origin, a term introduced by the French as part of their expansionist policies to describe an area estimated at approximately 2.5 million square kilometers, as explained by representatives of the Algerian Assembly for the Southern Region of Algeria (algérienne, 1953, P. 7). However, accurately defining the vast boundaries of the Sahara proved challenging for geographers, botanists, geologists, and ethnographers attempting to "Frenchify" it. The possibility of infinite boundaries for the French African Sahara region remained, with constant efforts directed at figuring out how to unify the Sahara under French control. In this context, we aim to highlight the formation and evolution of the Sahara's borders.

### 2.1 Borders with neighboring countries:

- **Between Algeria and Morocco:** According to the treaty issued on March 18, 1849, between Algeria and Morocco, the boundaries of the Sahara were defined starting from the sea and extending to Teniet Sassi in the Berguent Highlands. However, south of this area, the treaty did not specify the exact boundaries separating the two regions. On March 21, 1912, a decree by the French governor established provisional boundaries between Algeria and Morocco, referred to as the "Warnier Border," named after Governor Warnier, the senior officer of the Oujda region. Conversely, the territory was defined based on altitude lines ranging between 28° and 31°. Another Decision Issued in 1934 by the President of the Council and the Minister of



War, which clarified that the Tindouf Oasis was located within Algerian territory and that the Moroccan border ended at the Drâa region.

**- Between Algeria and Tunisia :** On the opposite side, between Algeria and Tunisia, the Treaty of Bardo in 1881 established the borders up to the Chott Gharssa area, south of Tebessa. From this point to Bir Romane, a border marker was established in 1901 by the French governor, officially delineating the boundary between the two countries along an agreed line. South of Bir Romane, however, no defined borders existed until approximately 15 kilometers south of Ghadamès.

**- Between Algeria and Libya:** The borders between Algeria and Libya were initially defined under an agreement between France and England on June 14, 1898. These borders were later amended through an agreement between France and Italy on September 12, 1919. ("Quoted from the Algerian Assembly.")

**- Between the Algerian Sahara and West Africa:** The borders between the Algerian Sahara and West Africa were delineated under a treaty signed in Niamey in 1909, which was ratified by the government on August 16, 1911. This treaty served as a continuation of the foundational agreement established on June 7, 1905. "Quoted from the Algerian Assembly."

## **2.2 Administrative Organization of the Southern Region:**

The administration of the southern region of Algeria was placed under the authority of the Governor-General of Algeria, encompassing military personnel, specialized officers, and administrators responsible for civilian affairs (Assemblée algérienne, 1953, P. 15). The region was divided into four military districts : Touggourt, the Oases, Ghardaïa, and Ain Sefra. Each district was led by a senior officer who

performed key administrative roles, akin to those of a sous-préfet (deputy governor) in the northern provinces of North Africa (SMITH, 1987, P. 42). Within these districts, the southern region was further subdivided into mixed municipalities (*communes mixtes*) and native municipalities (*communes indigènes*). The mixed municipalities, located in the northern areas of the southern region, were part of the three northern departments before being redefined as part of the southern region in 1902. These municipalities were managed by administrative officials. Meanwhile, the native municipalities, situated further south and representing the Sahara itself, were overseen by officers specializing in Saharan affairs (DELAROCHE, 1962, PP. 87-88). Legislative texts applicable in the northern departments of North Africa were also enforced in the southern region, though there were distinctions in tax policies. For instance, the *chariba al-lazma*, a tax on palm trees, and the *zakat*, a religious tax on livestock, were unique to the southern region (Assemblée algérienne, 1953, P. 17). Unlike the northern departments, the southern region lacked a General Council. Instead, it was represented in French assemblies and the Algerian Assembly, reflecting its integration into the broader colonial administrative structure (SMITH, 1987, P. 45).

### **2.3 Organization of the Southern Region after 1957** ((Service de Statistique Générale de l'Algérie, 1959) :

Following the decree of August 7, 1957, all southern regions of Algeria came to be collectively referred to as "the Sahara." This reorganization included six mixed municipalities: Biskra, Djelfa, Ouled Djellal, Ain Sefra, El Bayadh (Geryville), and Mécheria.

Under the same decree, two departments (*wilayas*) were established:

- Department of the Oases, with its capital in Laghouat, comprising Laghouat, Ouargla, and Touggourt.



-Department of Saoura, with its capital in B  char, comprising Adrar and B  char (Colomb-B  char).

For internal administration, cantons (military-administrative camps) were established under the decree of January 7, 1959.

Additionally, the decree of September 20, 1958, and subsequent decisions (December 20, 1958, for the Department of the Oases and December 12, 1958, for the Department of Saoura) introduced the following changes:

- Creation of new municipalities.
- Abolition of mixed and native municipalities.
- Establishment of administrative annexes (annexes administratives).

**Table 1. :** General Regional Organization of the Southern Regions (1959)

| Department     | Province  | Administrative Annexes | Cantons | Municipalities | Agglomerations |
|----------------|-----------|------------------------|---------|----------------|----------------|
| Oasis          | Laghouat  | 3                      | 9       | 16             | 35             |
|                | Ouargla   | 4                      | 5       | 13             | 57             |
|                | Touggourt | 2                      | 11      | 24             | 77             |
| Total (Oasis)  |           | 9                      | 25      | 53             | 169            |
| Saoura         | Adrar     | 2                      | 9       | 20             | 233            |
|                | B  char   | 5                      | 13      | 20             | 61             |
| Total (Saoura) |           | 7                      | 22      | 40             | 294            |

**Source:** (Service de Statistique G  n  rale de l'Alg  rie. Official Geographic Code of Sahara Municipalities, Established as of July 1, 1959).

### 3. The Importance of the Algerian Sahara Archives During the Colonial Period:

During the colonial period (1830–1962), the Algerian Sahara emerged as one of the most significant regions of interest, attracting substantial attention from the French administration. Archival documents from this era cover a diverse range of topics, including political, economic, social, agricultural, cultural, administrative, military, and religious aspects (Benachour, 1998, P. 112).

Recognizing the strategic importance of the Sahara, the French administration conducted extensive documentation of various facets of life in the region. This effort included detailed records on geography, natural resources, local tribes, and clans. Furthermore, research centers and institutions were established to explore the Saharan environment and study its inhabitants (Deschamps, 2001, PP. 45-46).

The archives from this period provide valuable insights into the social, economic, political, and administrative dynamics of the Algerian Sahara. They consist of administrative reports, geographical maps, statistical records, correspondence between colonial authorities, and ethnographic and anthropological studies of the local population (SMITH, 1987, PP. 78-79).

These archives can be categorized into several key themes, such as administrative, military, political, diplomatic, economic, social, and cultural records. Collectively, they offer a comprehensive understanding of the historical and strategic importance of the Algerian Sahara during the colonial era (Benachour, 1998, P. 115).

### **3.1 Content of Archival Collections Related to the Algerian Sahara:**

Based on our experience at the National Archives Center and utilizing the available research tools that provide insight into the archival holdings of the Southern Region and other collections containing documents related to the Algerian Sahara during the colonial period, the documents can be categorized as follows:



- **Administrative Archival Documents:** These documents were issued by the French colonial authorities and include administrative decisions, reports, meeting minutes, and population and economic statistics. They were primarily aimed at organizing and managing life in the Sahara and ensuring French control over the region. Administrative reports provide detailed descriptions of colonial administration activities, including the economic and social policies implemented in the Sahara. (Relying on our experience as library and archive curators at the National Archives Center, along with extensive readings on the French administration in Algeria as the subject of our master's research and the PRFU research teams.)

- **Military Archives:** Military records play a crucial role in understanding the nature of colonial control over the Algerian Sahara. They include military reports, operation maps, documentation of military campaigns, and agreements with local tribes. These documents shed light on how the French dealt with local resistance and maintained security in the region. Additionally, they include detailed maps that highlight natural resources and trade routes, which served as a foundation for planning and development. (Relying on our experience as library and archive curators at the National Archives Center, along with extensive readings on the French administration in Algeria as the subject of our master's research and the PRFU research teams.)

- **Diplomatic Archives:** Diplomatic archives consist of documents related to the relationships between the French colonial authorities and other nations, as well as correspondence with local leaders in the Sahara. These records offer insights into France's foreign policy in the region and its strategies for dealing with local and regional powers. (Relying on our experience as library and archive curators at the National Archives Center, along with extensive readings on the French administration in Algeria as the subject of our master's research and the PRFU research teams.)

- **Social Archives:** These archives encompass various ethnographic studies conducted by French researchers, documenting the customs, traditions, and social practices of the local population. They reflect the French interest in understanding the social structures of the Sahara, highlighting the cultural and anthropological aspects of the region. (Relying on our experience as library and archive curators at the National Archives Center, along with extensive readings on the French administration in Algeria as the subject of our master's research and the PRFU research teams.)

Understanding archival documents requires a dual perspective. First, recognizing the evolution of administrative governance in the Sahara region is essential for contextualizing the nature and origin of these documents. The administrative structure, including its diverse departments and the division of roles and responsibilities, offers valuable insights into the activities that shaped the region. Analyzing the origins of these documents and their producers provides a deeper understanding of how governance and regional activities were managed. Second, the role of archivists in processing and describing these collections is critical. By employing international standards for archival description, archivists highlight key information fields, creating essential tools for researchers. These tools must be systematic, coherent, and comprehensive, enabling users to navigate seamlessly from general collections to specific archival units. Combining a contextual understanding of administrative evolution with meticulous archival description ensures that the wealth of information preserved in the archives is accessible and effectively utilized, maximizing its value for a broad audience.

### **3.2 Archives Related to the Algerian Sahara Preserved at the National Archives Center of Algeria:**



#### **Where to Find Sahara-Related Archives within Collections?**

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Various collections related to the Algerian Sahara are preserved at the National Archives Center, spanning different historical periods, including the Ottoman era, the French colonial period, the Provisional Government of Algeria (GPRA), and the Algerian Republic. Among these, particular attention is given to the "Directorate of the Southern Region" collection, inherited from the French administration responsible for managing the region comprehensively. Additionally, documents related to French colonial policies can be found in other collections, such as those of the GPRA and CNRA, which oversaw the political administration of the region during the transition to independence. Administrative, military, and regional development of the area is also documented through official publications of the General Government and the Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (O CRS).

The archives also trace the administrative and regional organization of the Sahara, divided into the Saoura Department (headquartered in Béchar) and the Oases Department (headquartered in Ouargla). These materials include records created by local administrative offices and are preserved at their respective department headquarters.

This collection addresses numerous topics that are invaluable to researchers and historians for analyzing the content. While most of the documents are accessible, a small percentage remains restricted due to the inclusion of sensitive personal information. The subjects covered in this collection can be summarized as follows:

**Table 4.** Summary of Archival Collections Related to the Algerian

| Name of Archive               | Numbers of Files | Topics Covered                                                                                                                                | Numbers of Boxes | Dates     |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| GPRA (Provisional Government) | 76               | Development of the Sahara, oil refining, hydrocarbons, military situation, Sahara in the Evian Agreements, gas, oil statistics, border issues | 33               | 1952–1961 |
| GPRA (Microfiches)            | 10               | Reports on the military situation                                                                                                             | 10               | 1959      |
| CNRA (National Council)       | 3                | Relations with Tunisia and Libya                                                                                                              | 14               | 1961–1962 |
| Southern Region Archives      | Over 1,000       | General administration, military affairs, native affairs, agricultural and economic matters, transport, elections, regional organization      | 1,424            | 1870–1962 |

**Source:** Numerical Inventory of the Directorate of the Southern Territory: 1872–1962. National Archives Center. Parts 1–2

The table provides a detailed overview of key archival collections related to the Algerian Sahara, highlighting their scope, contents, and time periods. These archives offer invaluable resources for researchers seeking to understand the region's historical, administrative, and geopolitical developments.

**GPRA (Provisional Government):** With 76 files housed in 33 boxes, this archive focuses on critical topics such as Sahara development, hydrocarbons, military situations, and border issues, particularly in the context of the Evian Agreements (1952–1961). This collection provides insight into the political and economic strategies of the Provisional Government during the independence era.

**GPRA (Microfiches):** This smaller collection consists of 10 files, exclusively documenting military reports from 1959. These microfiches are a crucial resource for studying the military dynamics of the period.

**CNRA (National Council):** Focused on Algeria's relations with neighboring Tunisia and Libya, this collection includes three files

housed in 14 boxes, covering the critical period leading up to Algeria's independence.(1962–1961)

Southern Region Archives: Representing the most extensive collection, with over 1,000 files spanning 1,424 boxes, this archive covers a broad range of topics from 1870 to 1962. Subjects include general administration, military affairs, native policies, economic development, and regional organization. It serves as a comprehensive resource for understanding the region's colonial and transitional history.

Overall, the table underscores the diversity and depth of archival materials available, catering to various aspects of the Sahara's historical narrative, from colonial administration to the independence struggle and beyond. These resources are essential for historians, policymakers, and researchers analyzing the region's legacy.

### **3.3. Archives Algerian Sahara Archives Preserved in France:**

Traces of French policies in the Algerian Sahara can be found in archives preserved in France, particularly in the Archives of the Land Forces at Vincennes. In 1992, the Historical Service of the Land Forces issued a publication outlining the classification of archival materials housed at the Vincennes Palace that pertain to the Algerian Sahara. The archival series includes the following:

#### **- Archival Series and Topics:**

1H1271–1422 : Military organization in the Sahara (Office 1).

Covers general military administration and organizational aspects of the French presence in the Sahara.

1H1806–2119 : Military organization and operations in the Sahara (Office 3).

Includes records of specific military operations and strategies implemented in the region.

1H2120–2396 : Organization of land forces in the Sahara (Office 4).

Focuses on the structure and deployment of ground forces in the Sahara.

1H2596–2661 : Army leadership and service directorates.

Highlights the leadership structure and the administrative and operational services of the army in the region.

1H3233–3390 : General command of the French Army in the Sahara.

Documents pertaining to the overall military governance and command strategies.

1H4511–4532 : Command of bases and military installations in the Sahara.

Contains records of the establishment and management of military bases and infrastructure.

1H4745–4881 : Affairs of the Sahara (Saharan Affairs Services).

Provides insights into the socio-political and administrative management of the region.

This collection provides a comprehensive view of French military, administrative, and socio-political involvement in the Algerian Sahara. It highlights the organizational and operational strategies of the French military, their interactions with local populations, and their efforts to maintain control over this strategically significant region. These records are crucial for understanding the depth of France's influence and activities in the Sahara during the colonial period.

**- Archives of the National Overseas Center (IREL) : Online Research Tool:**

The National Overseas Archives houses several collections that include documents related to the Algerian Sahara. One of the most



significant collections is that of the Common Organization for the Sahara Region (OCSR). The following table provides an overview of the key materials preserved:

**Table 5.** French Overseas Archives Related to the Algerian Sahara

| Name of Archive                                     | Physical Description                                | Reference  | Dates     | Key Topics                                                                                                                                                                                            | Notes                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OCSR: Common Organization for Sahara Regions</b> | 52 linear meters (equivalent to 520 boxes of 10 cm) | 86 F1-615  | 1940–1964 | Directorate, general administration, its organization and tasks                                                                                                                                       | Accessible and available online; pending digitization and inclusion of full-text documents; includes a paper-based finding aid. |
| <b>Ministry of the Sahara</b>                       | 32 linear meters (equivalent to 320 boxes of 10 cm) | 85 F1-320  | 1958–1963 | Covers various topics related to security in the Sahara region, including traffic monitoring in the southern region, population monitoring, and organization of security services and their functions | Accessible and available online; pending digitization and inclusion of full-text documents; includes a paper-based finding aid. |
| <b>State Ministry for Algerian Affairs</b>          | 204 linear meters                                   | 81 F1-2415 | 1873–1964 | Covers the southern region, municipal and departmental reorganization projects, legislative and regulatory preparation, geographical maps, correspondence,                                            | Accessible and available online; pending digitization and inclusion of full-text documents; includes a paper-based finding aid. |

| Name of Archive                                                  | Physical Description | Reference                | Dates         | Key Topics                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Notes                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                  |                      |                          |               | economic documents, oil, future development prospects, military organization in the Sahara, trade relations with foreign countries, travel organization to Algeria and the Sahara, and the condition of the Sahara |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Maps and Plans</b>                                            | -                    | CP<br>OCSR,<br>CP 2PL    | 1958–<br>1961 | Digital catalog of maps and plans                                                                                                                                                                                  | Includes isolated maps and plans from the <i>Série PL</i> .                                                                                                         |
| <b>Civil Rooms of General Governors</b>                          | 2002.2 linear meters | GGA<br>CAB               | 1912–<br>1962 | Tasks of general governors in the Sahara                                                                                                                                                                           | Accessible under disclosure regulations.                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Military Affairs: Military Rooms</b>                          | 48 linear meters     | GGA 3R<br>1-617          | 1917–<br>1962 | Military rooms ( <i>Lacoste, Delouvrier, Salan, Morin</i> )                                                                                                                                                        | Available online.                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Films by the General Government of Algeria (OCSR-related)</b> | -                    | GGA<br>11AVOM<br>181-186 | 1946–<br>1962 | Films related to the Sahara regions                                                                                                                                                                                | Film catalog of the General Government's Cinematographic Broadcasting Service; digital copies of the films are available for viewing in the center's registry room. |
| <b>PROHUZA</b>                                                   | 8 linear             | 36 APOM                  | 1960–         | Documents                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Private archive;                                                                                                                                                    |



| Name of Archive                                      | Physical Description | Reference   | Dates     | Key Topics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Notes                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Collection                                           | meters               | 1-47        | 1961      | related to scientific missions in biology, physiology, anthropology, and psychology of Saharan populations. Includes studies on oases, dietary consumption, living standards, professions, family surveys (Adrar), and investigation reports. | access is subject to disclosure conditions.                  |
| General's Private Archive: Frédéric François Meynier | 4 linear meters      | 23 APC 1-24 | 1912–1961 | Includes correspondence, reports, photographs, maps related to his travels in the Sahara, as well as his schedule of activities concerning the southern region.                                                                               | Private archive; access is subject to disclosure conditions. |

Source: Online Research Tool (IREL) (ANOM)

The table provides a comprehensive overview of key archival collections related to the Algerian Sahara, preserved in France. It highlights the diversity of materials available, ranging from administrative and military records to scientific studies and personal archives. Here are some key observations:

OCRS (Common Organization for Sahara Regions): This collection, spanning 52 meters, focuses on the administrative and

organizational aspects of the OCSR. It is particularly valuable for studying the governance structure and regional management during the mid-20th century. The collection is accessible online, with digitization efforts ongoing.

**Ministry of the Sahara:** Covering topics such as regional security, population monitoring, and administrative organization, this archive provides insights into the operational challenges and policies implemented during the colonial and early independence periods.

**State Ministry for Algerian Affairs:** At 204 meters, this is the most extensive archive in the table. It includes legislation, maps, economic documents, and correspondence, offering a broad view of the administrative, economic, and military strategies related to the Sahara.

**Maps and Plans:** A dedicated digital catalog of maps and plans provides visual insights into the geographical and developmental aspects of the Sahara. This collection is crucial for cartographic studies.

**Military Affairs and Civil Governance:** The military rooms and civil records of general governors illustrate the dual military and civil administration of the Sahara. These archives document the strategies used to maintain control and manage the region.

**Specialized Collections (PROHUZA and Meynier Archives):** These collections add depth to the understanding of the Sahara through scientific studies and personal records. The PROHUZA archive focuses on anthropological and sociological studies, while General Meynier's private archive provides unique perspectives from a key figure.

**Cinematographic Records:** The film archives offer a unique medium for studying the Sahara, capturing its development and public information campaigns. These films are digitized and available for viewing, making them accessible to researchers and the public.

### Significance

The table demonstrates the richness and breadth of archival material available for understanding the Algerian Sahara's history, governance, and socio-cultural evolution. These archives are



indispensable for researchers exploring the region's colonial legacy, administrative strategies, and scientific studies. The ongoing digitization efforts enhance accessibility and ensure that this critical historical documentation is preserved for future generations.

**Table 6.** Overview of Archival Units Preserved in French and Algerian Archives.

**French Archives:**

| Archive Unit                             | Physical Size                                    | Reference Codes         | Coverage Period                                  | Topics                                                                                         | Access Notes                                                                |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| French National Overseas Archives (ANOM) | 52 meters (OCSR); 32 meters (Ministry of Sahara) | 86 F1-615; 85 F1-320    | 1940–1964 (OCSR), 1958–1963 (Ministry of Sahara) | Administration, security, population control, resource development, and military organization. | Digitization underway; partial online access.                               |
| Military Archives at Vincennes           | Over 100 meters (multiple series)                | 1H series; GGA 3R 1-617 | 1912–1962                                        | Military strategies, Saharan troop movements, security measures, and resource exploration.     | Most records accessible online or in archives under conditional guidelines. |
| Cinematographic Collections              | Multiple reels, approx. 48 meters                | GGA 11AVOM 181-186      | 1946–1962                                        | Films documenting colonial projects, public outreach, and regional campaigns in the Sahara.    | Digitized content available in viewing rooms.                               |
| General Meynier’s Personal Papers        | 4 meters                                         | 23 APC 1-24             | 1912–1961                                        | Correspondence, photographs, personal maps, and mission                                        | Restricted access for sensitive materials;                                  |

| Archive Unit                                | Physical Size | Reference Codes | Coverage Period | Topics                                                                                            | Access Notes                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                             |               |                 |                 | notes from Saharan expeditions.                                                                   | available on request for research purposes.                              |
| PROHUZA<br>(Research Center for Arid Zones) | 8 meters      | 36 APOM 1-47    | 1960–1961       | Anthropological, physiological, and sociological studies on Saharan tribes and oasis populations. | Contains unique data on nutrition, family life, and economic activities. |

Algerian Archives

| Archive Unit                              | Scope                           | Physical Size              | Coverage Period | Topics                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GPRA<br>(Provisional Government)          | Political and economic policies | 33 boxes; 76 files         | 1952–1961       | Evian Agreements, Sahara's economic potential, military status, and resource statistics. |
| CNRA<br>(National Council for Revolution) | Interregional relations         | 14 files                   | 1961–1962       | Tunisian and Libyan ties, diplomatic exchanges.                                          |
| Southern Territory Archives               | Regional governance             | 1,424 boxes; ~142.4 meters | 1870–1962       | Administration, military, economic planning, native affairs, political organization.     |

**Key Insights from the Archives:**

**1 .Comprehensive Temporal Coverage:**

The archives provide a broad timeline, spanning from the colonial era (1870) to the post-independence period.(1964)



They highlight the gradual transition from colonial policies to the establishment of national governance in Algeria.

## **2 .Thematic Diversity:**

The archival collections encompass a wide range of topics, including:  
Governance and Administration: The structuring of the southern region, municipal and departmental reorganization.

Resource Development: Exploitation of oil and gas, infrastructure planning, and trade routes.

Military Affairs: Military campaigns, border security, and the management of local resistance.

Cultural and Social Studies: Ethnographic documentation of local customs and traditions.

Diplomacy: Relations with neighboring countries, such as Tunisia and Libya.

## **3 .Complementarity of Archival Units:**

Algerian archives (e.g., GPRA and CNRA) emphasize the independence struggle and national policies.

French archives (e.g., OCRS and the Ministry of the Sahara) offer detailed insights into colonial administration and resource management.

Together, they create a holistic narrative of governance and socio-economic dynamics in the region.

## **4 .Research Tools:**

The archives are supported by both paper-based and digital finding aids to enhance accessibility.

Digitization efforts, such as maps and films, significantly improve global access to these resources.

## **5 .Importance for Researchers:**

The archives represent an invaluable resource for historians seeking to understand the evolution of governance, economic policies, and social dynamics in the Algerian Sahara.

They provide critical insights into the relationship between local populations and colonial authorities from administrative and cultural perspectives.

## **6 .Challenges and Future Opportunities:**

Some collections remain partially inaccessible and require further digitization for broader availability.

Collaborative efforts between Algerian and French institutions could improve access and foster a more unified understanding of the region's historical development.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The archives of the Algerian Sahara are vital for understanding the region's complex history, spanning the colonial period to early independence. Algerian collections, such as the GPRA and CNRA archives, focus on the political transition during independence, while French archives, including the OCRS and Ministry of the Sahara records, document colonial governance, resource exploitation, and military activities. Together, they provide a comprehensive narrative of the Sahara's transformation and strategic significance.

Efforts to digitize and integrate these archives aim to enhance accessibility for researchers, supported by tools like finding aids and digitized maps. However, challenges persist, including restricted access to sensitive materials and the physical dispersion of records. The division of archives between Algeria and France further complicates access, reflecting tensions over sovereignty and territoriality.

Despite these obstacles, the archives remain a bridge between historical governance and modern studies, offering researchers nuanced perspectives on the Sahara's role in Algeria's identity and its broader geopolitical importance.

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<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k97878865/f7.image/f1n758.pdf?download=1>

Appendices

| BULLETIN DU COMITÉ DE L'AFRIQUE FRANÇAISE                                                                    |                         |                                                                                              |                                                       |                                                                                            |                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Organisation du commandement des populations indigènes<br>des territoires du Sud et des régions limitrophes. |                         |                                                                                              |                                                       |                                                                                            |                                     |
| Territoire                                                                                                   | Cercle et annexe        | Groupements principaux                                                                       | Population totale<br>indigène. Recen-<br>sement 1911. | Ressources en<br>chevaux. Che-<br>vaux de 4 ans<br>et au-dessus.<br>Recensement<br>de 1920 | Observations                        |
| Aïn-Sefra.....                                                                                               | Annexe d'Aïn-Sefra      | Amour et ksour                                                                               | 8,596                                                 | 79                                                                                         |                                     |
| —                                                                                                            | Annexe de Geryville     | Trafis Oulad Sidi-Cheikh<br>Laghout el-Ksel Alh-<br>Ouakel. Tribus et ksour<br>indépendants  | 42,785                                                | 1,191                                                                                      |                                     |
| —                                                                                                            | Annexe de Mecheria      | Hamyan-Chafaa. Hamyan-<br>Djemba-Rezaina                                                     | 24,558                                                | 809                                                                                        |                                     |
| —                                                                                                            | Cercle de Colomb        | Douï-Menia. Oulad Djerir.<br>Ksour des Beni-Goumi                                            | 8,843                                                 | 466                                                                                        |                                     |
| —                                                                                                            | Annexe Beni-Abbes (a)   | Tribus diverses et vil-<br>lages                                                             | 7,019                                                 | 35                                                                                         | (a) Relève du cer-<br>cle de Colomb |
| —                                                                                                            | Poste de Beni-Ounif (a) | Tribus et ksours divers                                                                      | 1,580                                                 | "                                                                                          | (a) Relève du cer-<br>cle de Colomb |
| —                                                                                                            | Poste du Touat (a)      | Ksour                                                                                        | 18,072                                                | "                                                                                          | (a) Relève du cer-<br>cle de Colomb |
| —                                                                                                            | Annexe du Gourara       | Ksour                                                                                        | 28,863                                                | "                                                                                          |                                     |
| Total.....                                                                                                   |                         |                                                                                              | 140,286                                               | 2,280                                                                                      |                                     |
| Ghardaia.....                                                                                                | Annexe de Laghouat      | Ksour de l'Oued-M'Zi.<br>Mekhalif-Lazreg. Me-<br>khalif-Djorf. Confédé-<br>ration des Larbaa | 25,142                                                | 410                                                                                        |                                     |
| —                                                                                                            | Annexe de Djelfa        | Oulad-Si-M'Hammed et<br>Sahary. Oulad-Nayl.<br>Ksour divers                                  | 75,151                                                | 4,011                                                                                      |                                     |
| —                                                                                                            | Annexe de Ghardaia      | Mozabites. Arabes agré-<br>gés Chamba-Berezga                                                | 38,609                                                | 28                                                                                         |                                     |
| Total.....                                                                                                   |                         |                                                                                              | 138,902                                               | 1,449                                                                                      |                                     |

