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Examples of French Officers in the Mission to Occupy the Land of the Ouled Naïl during the Nineteenth Century

نماذج من الضباط الفرنسيون في مهمة احتلال بلاد أولاد نايل خلال القرن التاسع عشر

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Abstract:

This study examines a pivotal aspect of contemporary Algerian history, focusing on the Ouled Naïl region, which experienced significant French military expansion. The strategic, military, economic, geographical, and demographic importance of the region made it a central focus of French colonial planning. Its vast territory linked northern occupied areas with the Greater Sahara and connected the eastern and western parts of Algeria, while its dense population rendered control essential for consolidating colonial power and exploiting local resources.

The research highlights the main French military generals responsible for operations in the region and documents the atrocities committed against the local population, including forced displacement, killings, impoverishment, and property confiscation. By doing so, it emphasizes the human cost of colonial expansion and the resilience of the Algerian people during the nineteenth century.

Methodologically, the study employs a historical-analytical approach, examining selected examples of French generals whose missions shaped the occupation of the Ouled Naïl. It also investigates colonial policies and practices aimed at subjugating the population and facilitating territorial expansion into southern Algeria.

This work contributes to a deeper understanding of the region's central role in the French colonial strategy and seeks to broaden scholarly attention to the history of Algerian resistance. By analyzing both military operations and the suffering endured by local communities, the study underscores the sacrifices, resilience, and enduring struggle of the Algerian people against colonial domination.

Keywords:

Ouled Naïl, Generals, Algerian Popular Resistance, Military Campaigns.

الملخص

يتناول هذا المقال دور الضباط العسكريين الفرنسيين في الاحتلال الاستعماري لمنطقة أولاد نايل خلال القرن التاسع عشر، مع وضع هذه العملية في سياق الديناميكيات الأوسع للتوسع الفرنسي في الجزائر وخاصة في المناطق الداخلية والصحراء شرقا ووسطا وغربا. إذ يهدف البحث بشكل أساسي إلى تحليل الأهمية الاستراتيجية لمنطقة أولاد نايل في التخطيط العسكري الفرنسي، ودراسة وظائف وممارسات ومسارات الضباط المنتشرين فيها. تكمن مشكلة البحث في فهم كيفية مساهمة المعرفة العسكرية والقيادة والممارسات القسرية في ترسيخ الهيمنة الاستعمارية في هذه المنطقة الداخلية المحورية.

يعتمد البحث على منهجية تاريخية تحليلية تقوم على دراسة نقدية للمصادر الأرشيفية الاستعمارية، بما في ذلك التقارير العسكرية والمراسلات الإدارية والمسوح الطبوغرافية والاجتماعية التي أعدتها المؤسسات الفرنسية. تُحلل هذه المواد إلى جانب الدراسات التأريخية ذات الصلة لتأطير الاحتلال العسكري ضمن الاستراتيجيات الاستعمارية الأوسع. ويتألف البحث أساسًا من المصادر الأرشيفية الفرنسية المتعلقة بالعمليات العسكرية في الجزائر خلال القرن التاسع عشر، مع دعمها بمصادر ثانوية تتناول الحكم الاستعماري والمقاومة المحلية.

تشير النتائج إلى أن منطقة أولاد نايل احتلت موقعًا مركزيًا هاما في الاستراتيجية الاستعمارية الفرنسية لسببين رئيسيين. أولاً، جعلتها مساحتها الجغرافية الواسعة وتنوع بيئتها نقطة وصل رئيسية بين شمال الجزائر الذي كان بالفعل تحت السيطرة الاستعمارية ومناطق الصحراء، بالإضافة إلى ربطها بين الشرق والغرب من البلاد. ثانيًا، ساهمت الكثافة السكانية الكبيرة في المنطقة في جعل إخضاعها أمرًا ضروريًا لتسهيل التوغل العسكري نحو الجنوب وتأمين الوصول إلى الموارد الاقتصادية والطبيعية. تفسر هذه العوامل تركيز الضباط العسكريين ذوي الخبرة في المنطقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية :الاحتلال الفرنسي؛ أولاد نايل؛ الضباط العسكريون؛ القرن التاسع عشر

- **Introduction**

The French expansion aimed at occupying the remaining regions of Algeria progressed rapidly and according to a carefully designed military strategy. France employed not only military forces but also teams of sociologists and topographers to facilitate this expansion.

For France, the importance of the Ouled Naïl region was based on two main factors. The first factor was the vastness and diversity of the region, as well as its geographical position linking the northern territories under colonial occupation with the Greater Sahara, while also connecting the eastern and western regions of the country. The second factor was that controlling these densely populated areas would facilitate the occupation of the southern regions and enable the exploitation of their various resources.

These reasons prompted the French government to deploy its most competent officers and military leaders in order to achieve its objectives in these territories and to advance deeper into them and establish control. The land of the Ouled Naïl thus became a direct target; however, it posed significant difficulties for the colonial forces, as they faced strong resistance from the local population. Therefore, it became necessary to provide an overview of these officers and their role in the Ouled Naïl region, arranging them chronologically according to the events and their development in the area.

Documenting these individuals and the crimes they committed against the Algerian people such as massacres, killings, forced displacement, and impoverishment is essential for future generations so that they may recognize those figures who received promotions and decorations at the expense of the blood of the proud Algerian people.

If some of these officers are not mentioned due to the difficulty of accessing archival materials, future research may reveal additional facts. Historical research is, by its very nature, a continuously evolving process based on documentary evidence. The Ouled Naïl region represents only one example of the crimes and acts of oppression committed across the country.

This approach aims to avoid limiting our history solely to the period of the Algerian Revolution, as the nineteenth century itself witnessed tragic events endured by the Algerian people as a result of this brutal colonial occupation that claimed to represent civilization and humanity.

Accordingly, the following research question is raised:

Why did France mobilize its most competent generals to control the land of the Ouled Naïl?

To address this question, the research paper is divided into three main sections:

1. **Defining the term Land of the Ouled Naïl**
2. **The strategic and economic importance of the Ouled Naïl region**
3. **The military leaders deployed by France in the Ouled Naïl region**

1. Definition of the Term “Land of the Ouled Naïl”

1.1 Origin of the Term

To properly address the emergence of the term *Ouled Nail*, it is first necessary to delineate the geographical scope to which it historically referred. The designation denotes a territorial zone situated to the south of the Beylik of Titteri, extending from the military stronghold of Bordj Souwari, which later became associated with the Ouled Nail. Available historical indicators

ranging from archaeological vestiges to descriptions of local environmental and settlement patterns suggest that this territory included the desert regions of Sidi Aïssa, Zaghar, El-Mahaqin, along with their adjacent areas. Additional confirmation of this spatial identification is provided by the presence of toponyms bearing the name, notably Marah Sidi Nail, traditionally regarded as the location of a burial site near Wadi El-Ham. Such evidence reinforces the historical linkage between the term and a clearly defined territorial context (Al-Dissi, *Tuhfat*, pp. 72–73)[1].

The Ouled Nail trace their lineage to the ascetic and spiritual figure Sidi Nail (Muhammad ibn ʿAbd Allah) al-Kharshoufi, who occupies a central place in the collective memory and genealogical traditions of the group. Available hagiographical and historical accounts suggest that he was born between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (c. 1484–1504) in the region of Faqiq in the Maghreb. He is consistently identified as one of the most distinguished disciples of Shaykh Abu al-ʿAbbas Ahmad ibn Yusuf al-Milyani, under whose guidance he spent several years and gained a reputation as an exemplary student. Traditions further emphasize his prayers for his master and the latter's descendants, a spiritual bond believed to have been transmitted to his own progeny.

Following a period spent in northern Algeria, Sidi Ahmad ibn Yusuf reportedly directed Sidi Nail to migrate southward toward the Leddami mountain ranges and the territories known as Naʿam and Ghazal. This movement culminated in his settlement near ʿAin Rish, a location that later acquired symbolic importance in the formation of the Ouled Sidi Nail. Over time, this lineage organized as an *ʿarsh* came to be regarded as one of the largest and most influential tribal confederations in Algeria and, more broadly, in the Arab world. Medieval and early modern sources, including *Athmad al-Absar*, portray Sidi Nail as a figure of exceptional piety and spiritual distinction, credited with visionary experiences of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and an ascetic devotion that persisted even in isolation and hardship. On this basis, he is widely acknowledged as the founding ancestor of the noble lineages associated with the Ouled Nail (Qara Mabrouk, *Usul*, p. 77)[2].

The Banu Nail are identified in medieval genealogical literature as a branch of the Arab Banu Hilal, themselves traced to Hawzan al-Qaysi within the broader Adnanite lineage. Ibn Khaldun situates the Banu Nail among the subdivisions of the Hamis grouping, noting their settlement in the vicinity of Jabal Rashid also known as Jabal al-Amour where they established alliances with the Ouled Mohya of the Amour. These latter groups are documented as having arrived in the region during the initial wave of the Hilalian migrations in the eleventh century.

A crucial distinction must, however, be drawn between these early Hilalian Banu Nail and the group known in later periods as the Ouled Nail. While the former, of confirmed Hilalian origin, are reported to have migrated eastward and settled within the Eyalet of Tripoli (corresponding to present-day western Libya), the latter derive their genealogical identity primarily from Sidi Nail and his descendants. This differentiation underscores the process by which spiritual lineage and saintly ancestry came to redefine collective identity, gradually superseding earlier tribal affiliations (Ibn Idris, *Rihlat*, p. 460)[3].

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[1] Mohammed bin Mohammed bin Abderrahman Al-Dissi, *Tuhfat al-Afadil fi Tarjama Sidi Nail*, ed. and studied by Mohammed Bisker (Algiers: Dar Kerdada for Publishing and Distribution, 2016), pp. 72–73.

[2] Qara Mabrouk bin Saleh, *Usul al-Ashraf wa al-Qaba'il* (Algiers: n.p., 1st ed., 2016), 77.

[3] Abd al-Rahman ibn Idris ibn Omar ibn Abd al-Qadir al-Tinilani, *Rihlat al-Sheikh Abd al-Rahman ibn Idris ibn Omar ibn Abd al-Qadir al-Tinilani: Algerian Journeys to the Coast of Algiers, 1231 H / 1816*, ed. and studied by Khair Eddine Shatra (Algiers: Dar Kerdada for Publishing and Distribution, 2015), p. 460.

1.2 Geographical Boundaries of the Ouled Nail Territory

The scholar Abd al-Rahman al-Tinilani, a native of the Touat region, described the geographical boundaries of the Ouled Nail territory in his manuscript *Rihlat al-Tinilani* (the Hijazi Journey) of 1816. According to al-Tinilani, the Ouled Nail were among the most prominent Arab tribes in terms of men, livestock, and horses. Their settlements extended between the city of Qasamtin and Algiers, including areas such as Bessad, Oued el-Jir, Amzab, Wergel, and Laqrar. He emphasized that they were notable representatives of the Arab population in the region.

The Ouled Nail territory encompasses numerous tribes distributed across a vast area, extending from south of Qasr al-Boukhari in the north to the borders of El Oued and Touggourt in the south, and from the Ziban region in the east to the limits of Jebel Amour in the west. The largest tribe in terms of population is the Ouled Nail, followed by the Sahari, Abbaziz, Rahman, Mouaidat, Zenakra, Ouled Mokhtar, Ouled Ben Aliya, Ouled Zaid, Bouazid, Houamed, Ouled Sidi Younes, Ouled Madi, and the Ahl al-Qosour. This complex tribal composition reflects both the demographic density and sociopolitical diversity of the region (Chouli et al., Al-Hajj : 33)[1]. **(Appendix No. 01: The Geographical Location of the Ouled Nail Region**)

2. Strategic and Economic Importance of the Ouled Nail Territory

2.1 Strategic Importance of the Region

The Ouled Nail territory was located in central Algeria, at a relatively equal distance from the country's eastern and western borders. This central position conferred significant geo-strategic importance on the region, making it a key node for commercial circulation and communication networks across the Algerian space. Situated within the steppe zone and to the north of the Tell Atlas range, the territory functioned as a crossroads linking the northern, southern, eastern, and western regions, both during periods of peace and in the context of military operations.

From a geographical perspective, the Ouled Nail territory constituted a transitional space between the coastal Tell regions and the Sahara Desert. This intermediary position enabled it to play a pivotal role in commercial exchanges while simultaneously reinforcing its strategic value in defensive and military planning. Demographically, the Ouled Nail represented a substantial population group. Estimates provided by Agha Ouled Chaib to General Marie Monge in the spring of 1841 suggest that their numbers ranged between 80,000 and 100,000 individuals, living in more than 20,000 tents. These figures, however, excluded the inhabitants of urban centers and fortified settlements such as M'saad, Zanine, Zekar, Nthila, Amoura, and Boussaâda. Administrative reports used in the training of local governors further indicate the extensive territorial scope of the Ouled Nail federation, which stretched from Boussaâda to Biskra and encompassed regions such as Jebel Amour, El Oued, Oued Djedi, Touggourt, Djelfa, and M'saad, which served as principal centers of settlement (Naibi, 2013: 36)[2].

2.2 Economic Importance of the Region

- **Vegetation Resources**

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[1] Belkhedher Chouli et al., *Al-Hajj Moussa ibn al-Hassan al-Madani al-Derqawi, 1831–1849* (Algiers: Dar Djelfa Info for Publishing and Distribution, 2017), p. 33.

[2] Naibi Sanoussi, *Contributions of the Ouled Nail Tribes to Popular Resistance, 1836–1890*, Master's thesis in Modern and Contemporary History, Department of History, University of Algiers 2, 2013/2014 (unpublished),p. 36.

The Ouled Nail territory possessed notable strategic and economic value, largely derived from its geographical setting, which supported a variety of plant and animal resources. In terms of vegetation cover, the region was predominantly characterized by steppe flora, notably including alfa grass (Stipa tenacissima), wormwood (Artemisia), and retama shrubs.

Particular attention was given by the colonial administration to alfa grass, owing to its multiple industrial uses. It was exploited in the manufacture of paper and for the extraction of vegetal fibers employed as insulating materials in heating and cooling systems, as well as in the production of mattresses. The harvesting of this resource extended throughout the year. Alfa grass was especially abundant in the southwestern areas of the Ouled Nail territory and played an important ecological role by protecting soil surfaces and facilitating the regeneration of smaller plant species following rainfall.

In addition to alfa grass, the region supplied wood and other vegetal resources essential to local economic activities. More broadly, steppe vegetation constituted a significant economic asset, as the climatic conditions favored drought-resistant species capable of adapting to calcareous soils with low nutrient content (Boudraa, 2017–2018: 312)[1].

Wormwood (Artemisia), a perennial plant distinguished by its narrow, needle-like leaves, is highly adapted to arid conditions. It typically develops in low-lying areas with calcareous soils, where it often replaces alfa grass. Widely distributed across the Ouled Nail territory, wormwood constituted an essential pastoral resource, serving as a primary grazing plant for sheep. Local populations, particularly pastoralists, depended on it as a natural and sustainable source of fodder.

Alongside pastoral activities, the Ouled Nail tribes participated in regional trade networks. They engaged in the exchange of surplus dates imported from the southern oases, while procuring cereal products especially wheat and barley from the Tell regions, where such crops were more abundant. After meeting local consumption needs, the remaining quantities were transported and sold in the markets of the Saharan frontier towns. This combination of livestock husbandry and commercial exchange demonstrates that trade operated as a complementary economic activity, subordinate to pastoralism, within the economic system of the Ouled Nail tribes (Souissi, 2014: 12–27)[2].

- **Livestock Wealth**

The Ouled Nail territory was distinguished by its significant livestock wealth, which formed the foundation of the local economy. The tribes placed particular emphasis on animal husbandry, raising cattle, sheep, camels, and horses. The horses of the region were especially prized, with Emir Abdelkader reportedly considering them among the finest in Algeria.

The extent of this livestock wealth is further evidenced by the contributions made by the Ouled Nail tribes in 1841 to support Emir Abdelkader against a common adversary. Records of these levies indicate substantial resources: 11,000 sheep, 286 camels, 10 horses, 27 bundles of woolen textiles, 49 bundles of oil, 35 firearms, 3,300 Boujou (local currency), and the service of two attendants, equivalent to 400 Boujou (Naibi, 2013: 39). These figures highlight the economic

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[1] Bouderaa Iman, *The Impact of the French Railway on the Colonization of the Interior Regions: The Bone–Tebessa Line as a Case Study (1857–1914)*, PhD thesis in Contemporary Algerian History, University of Larbi Tebessi, Tebessa, 2017–2018, p. 312.

[2] Souissi Mohamed El-Saghir, *Evaluation of Major Projects of the High Commission for Steppe Conservation (1994–2010)*, Master's thesis, Bab Ezzouar University, Institute of Earth Sciences (Geography), 2014, pp. 12–27.

capacity of the Ouled Nail, underscoring the central role of livestock in both subsistence and political-military obligations[1].

The highlands of the Ouled Nail territory served as natural fortifications for the local population and their livestock, providing extensive pastures and grazing areas. These elevated landscapes not only offered protection but also facilitated pastoral activities by supporting sustainable livestock management. In addition, the region played a pivotal role as a commercial intermediary, linking products from the northern Tell regions with those of the southern Saharan areas. Internal markets within the Ouled Nail territory enabled the circulation of goods, fostering economic exchanges between the two regions.

In 1845, Officer Daumas, under the encouragement of Marshal Bugeaud, authored *Sahara algérien*, a study that combined statistical, geographical, and historical analysis of the southern Constantine region, providing valuable insights into the economic and strategic significance of territories such as that of the Ouled Nail (Amiraoui et al., 2009: 32)[2]. Officer Daumas emphasized the strategic and economic importance of the Ouled Nail territory, noting that its central position between the Tell and the Sahara had transformed it into a commercial hub. He observed that the tribes could muster numerous horsemen and benefit from a location favorable for trade with neighboring regions, including Boussaâda, Biskra, M'zab, and Touggourt, generating substantial financial profits. Their wealth encompassed cattle, camels, and rams, with rams valued between 5 and 6 Boujou and camels between 150 and 160 Boujou.

This combination of economic vitality and strategic significance helps to explain why France deployed some of its most capable military officers to secure control over the Ouled Nail territory (Naibi, 2013: 41)[3].

3. French Military Leaders Deployed in the Ouled Nail Territory

Due to the Ouled Nail region's strategic and economic importance, as well as its substantial population, France decided to occupy the area and dispatched its most capable generals to carry out multiple campaigns aimed at subjugating the local tribes. Among the key military officers sent to the Ouled Nail territory, the following figures are particularly noteworthy:

3.1 General Mary Monge– Guillaume-Stanislas Mary-Monge (1796–1863)(See Appendix No. 02)

General Guillaume-Stanislas Mary-Monge was born in Nuits (Côte-d'Or) on 17 February 1796 and died in Pommard (Côte-d'Or) on 13 July 1863. He was the grandson of Gaspard Monge, who authorized him by decree in December 1840 to inherit the family title. Mary-Monge entered the School of Applied Arts in 1814 and graduated in 1824 with the rank of First Lieutenant in the artillery, later advancing to assistant commander in 1826.

He gained recognition through twelve memoranda he published, which drew the attention of the army committee and led to his appointment to the French exploratory mission in Algeria. Mary-

[1] Naibi Sanoussi, *ibid*, p. 39.
[2] Amiraoui, Ahmida et al., *French Policy in the Algerian Sahara, 1844–1916* (Algiers: Dar Al-Huda, 2009), p. 32.
[3] Naibi Sanoussi, *Contributions of the Ouled Nail Tribes to Popular Resistance, 1836–1890*, Master's thesis in Modern and Contemporary History, Department of History, University of Algiers 2, 2013/2014 (unpublished), p. 41.

Monge played a prominent role in military operations in the Ouled Nail region, valued for its strategic and economic significance.

Appointed as an officer in the French artillery in 1830, he participated in the Algerian campaign, joining the cavalry and organizing the first corps of spahis in Algeria. Early in his career, he became a squadron commander of African fighters, distinguishing himself in Sidi-Ferruch, Blida, and Boufarik. By 1834, he had been promoted to *chef d'escadron* (major) and earned the title of Agha, commanding local indigenous forces. In 1835, he was wounded at the Battle of El-Maqta. He became a colonel in 1837 and returned to France in 1839 to command French cavalry forces.

Mary-Monge subsequently returned to Algeria, leading 300 fighters, and was promoted to Marshal in 1843. In February 1844, he led the first exploratory campaign toward the High Plateaus and the Saharan outskirts, producing a topographical study of the route connecting Médéa to El Oued. The maps from this survey were later used by military forces to subjugate the central highlands and Saharan periphery. He was promoted to General in 1848 and served as Deputy Governor-General of Algeria from 20 July to 4 November of that year.

After returning to France, he commanded the Fifth Division of the Alpine Army in Dijon, the Thirteenth Division in Clermont-Ferrand, and the Third Division in Metz. In 1857, he participated in the Kabylie campaign and was subsequently appointed Inspector General of the Cavalry. Placed in the reserve of the General Staff in 1861, he was appointed Senator on 7 May 1863, passing away shortly thereafter.

Mary-Monge received the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour on 9 August 1851. He published several works, including *Notes on the Regency of Algeria* (1834), *Memoirs on Melee Weapons* (1841), translations of poems by Emir Abdelkader, and treatises on military regulations (Robert & Cougny, n.d.)[1].

- **His Role in the Ouled Nail Territory:**
- ***Mary Monge's Campaigns (March–April and May–June 1844)***

Mary Monge's campaigns marked the first exploratory military operations targeting the Ouled Nail region. Several factors accelerated these expeditions. French forces leveraged the submission of certain Ouled Nail tribes to secure northern grain markets under colonial control, while the defeat of the Zmala of Emir Abdelkader in 1843, located northwest of the Ouled Nail territory, facilitated the organization of initial campaigns in the area.

In March 1844, Mary Monge, commander of the Médéa military division, led a column of 1,500 soldiers to the Djelfa region, crossing the Saharin Mountains and reaching the fortress of Zakhar without encountering significant resistance. Sheikh Ahmed bin Salem of El Oued, seizing the opportunity presented by Monge's presence at the fortress of Wakar, sent two horses along with his brother as a token of submission and loyalty. He requested official recognition from the French authorities as their representative in El Oued, overseeing its five main forts El Afassiya, Qasr Al-Hayran, Al-Huwayta, Tajmout, and Ain Madi as well as the surrounding districts of Harazliyya and Beni Mizab.

Ahmed bin Salem justified his actions by asserting that "all the Muslim rulers I trusted have betrayed me; perhaps I may find peace and stability under French rule," highlighting that his

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[1] Robert & Cougny, *Extrait du Dictionnaire des Parlementaires français*, biography of Guillaume-Stanislas Marey-Monge, Senator of the Second Empire, available online via the French Senate archive: *marey_monge* entry.

primary concern was personal authority rather than allegiance to his people. Recognizing the strategic importance of this submission, General Mary Monge promptly informed his superiors, sending Yahia bin Maamer (brother of Yahia bin Salem) to the capital with a report to Governor-General Marshal Bugeaud, who welcomed the proposal. Monge emphasized in a letter to Marshal Soult, Minister of War in Paris, the significance of controlling these territories, arguing that asserting French authority over the areas formerly influenced by Emir Abdelkader would secure political and commercial advantages and prevent Abdelkader from accessing regional resources.

Following Bugeaud's approval of Ahmed bin Salem's request on 12 April 1844, Monge organized a second campaign, which set out from Médéa on 1 May with a force of 2,800 men and 1,700 pack animals carrying 21 days of supplies, plus six additional days' rations in the baggage trains. The expedition was equipped with 72,000 cartridges, allocating 60 cartridges per firearm. Advancing toward El Oued, the campaign reached approximately 45 km beyond the southernmost settlements. According to Mary Monge, the expedition effectively intimidated the southern regions and compelled their submission to French authority (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 73–74)[1].

General Mary Monge entered Qasr El-Sharif, and as he approached the fortress, its inhabitants fled to the surrounding forested mountains. To compel the population to descend, he ordered the demolition of the fortress. Eventually, the inhabitants returned, and the general imposed the *Lazma* tax in the presence of Ahmed bin Salem. The *Lazma* was a levy applied to every household within the forts. According to the records of the Bureau of Arabs for 1844, the population of Qasr El-Sharif numbered approximately 200 inhabitants (Chouli et al., *Al-Hajj*: 334)[2].

Mary Monge's expeditions provided the French authorities with a deeper understanding of the Ouled Nail region and its population, producing essential knowledge that facilitated subsequent military campaigns and supplying detailed maps of local routes and climatic conditions.

*** Third Campaign of Mary Monge – May 1845:** At the beginning of 1845, the Ouled Nail territory remained unstable, resisting submission to the local leaders appointed by the French administration. One local chieftain, Telli bin Lakhal, attacked the convoy of Ahmed bin Salem, the Khalifa of El-Agouat, which was traveling to Médéa carrying livestock collected through the *Zakat* tax. The convoy suffered significant losses of livestock, goods, and tents, and its members were dispersed. Nevertheless, Ahmed bin Salem managed to reach the city with the assistance of some of his followers.

In response, General Mary Monge launched a punitive expedition to avenge the attack on one of France's allies, reassert French authority, and discipline the dissident Ouled Nail. On 8 May 1845, he entered the heart of the region and compelled the inhabitants to pay a fine of between 40,000 and 50,000 French francs, after which he returned to Médéa (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 74–75)[3].

*** General Mary Monge's Fourth Campaign (1845):**

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[1] Maâmara, Hafiza, *La région de Djelfa: étude monographique, 1830–1954*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Department of History, University of Algiers 2, 2019/2020, pp. 73–74.

[2] Chouli, Belkheir, et al., *Al-Hajj Moussa bin Al-Hassan Al-Madani Al-Darqawi 1831–1849*, Dar El Djelfa Info Publishing, Algeria, 2017, p. 334.

[3] Maâmara, ibid, pp. 74–75.

In 1845, the colonial press began reporting in detail on the situation in the Ouled Nail region and its rebellious tribes. The newspaper *La Frisque* noted that the Tidri region had largely been pacified, with most Arab communities submitting to the French-appointed leaders, except for the Ouled Nail, who continued to resist and remained liable for a substantial portion of a previously imposed fine. Similarly, *Le Moniteur* reported on 15 April 1845 that Telli bin Lakhal had attacked the convoy of Ahmed bin Salem, the Agha of Laghouat, which was traveling to Médéa carrying livestock, goods, and tents. Although the convoy was scattered, Ahmed bin Salem succeeded in reaching Médéa with part of his escort. In response to this attack, General Mary Monge launched a campaign against the Ouled Nail to restore the authority of France's representative and to discipline the dissident tribes (Chouli et al., *Al-Hajj*: 211–212)[1].

The campaign under General Mary Monge departed from Médéa on 24 November 1845 at 7:00 a.m., comprising the 3rd Zouave Regiment, the 1st and 2nd Infantry Regiments, two Algerian rifle companies, the 4th and 5th African sharpshooter detachments, an artillery unit, and a medical detachment. The general staff operated under Mary Monge's direct command, with General Bideau serving as deputy commander for the operational columns at Bordj Hamza. The column reached Ben Chikaou at 11:30 a.m. and arrived at Qasr El-Boukhari by the evening of 25 November.

At the time, the Emir had launched a raid on neighboring tribes of Bougar, including the Znakhra, who fled toward Wadi Al-Hakam to seek French protection. On 26 November, the French troops succeeded in seizing a significant number of livestock and cattle. While a detachment of African marksmen and 400 Zouaves moved west toward Wadi Majlin, Monge and Bideau advanced south to track movements reported by their scouts. These observations confirmed that a substantial cavalry force, numbering up to 3,000, had attacked the Titteri tribes loyal to France. The new Agha and the Ouled Chaïb tribe successfully resisted the Emir's forces as they traversed the region.

The column then advanced south toward Wadi Majlin, where a mobile detachment consisting of 400 Zouaves, an artillery unit, a company of sharpshooters, and several local Maimouna troops loyal to France separated from the main force. This detachment was personally led by General Mary Monge, assisted by General Bideau, after traces of the Emir's passage were discovered in the area overnight.

In parallel, Mary Monge recruited a local cavalry force of 400 men from tribes loyal to France, including the Abid, Zenakhar, and Bouaach, alongside another contingent composed of the Ouled Mokhtar and Ouled Chaïb tribes stationed at Ain Oweissa. With these combined forces, Monge aimed to pursue the Emir's troops, drive them westward into the highlands, and prevent them from spending the winter or accessing supplies in the hills. Acting on intelligence that the Emir's men had established positions near El-Qajila after arriving via Hassi Fedoul and Rchaïka, Monge advanced his forces accordingly. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, the French forces were ultimately unable to capture the Emir or compel his retreat (Ben Youssef Tlemsani, 2015: 29)[2].

On 20 December 1845, General Mary Monge departed from Boughar at the head of his forces on a reconnaissance campaign toward the Chahbounia region. Intelligence indicated that the Ouled Nail, still loyal to the Emir, had conducted a raid on the Rahman tribes, prompting the latter to seek

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[1] Choulli, Belkheir, et al., ibid, pp. 211–212.

[2] Ben Youssef Tlemsani, *The French Penetration into the Central Steppes and the Outskirts of the Sahara – An Archival Study*, Proceedings of the First National Symposium – Djelfa: Struggle 1830-1962, Dar Al-Naaman for Publishing and Distribution, Algiers, 2015, p. 29.

assistance from the Bouaach cavalry while taking advantage of the military cover provided by Monge's southward movement.

Under these circumstances, the Rahman tribe launched a counter-raid against the Ouled Nail, resulting in fierce fighting in the Qalta al-Satl region. The Ouled Nail suffered twenty fatalities and numerous injuries, while twelve men from the Rahman tribe were killed. This episode illustrates the French colonial strategy of exploiting divisions between tribes or even factions within a single tribe to subdue the local population and undermine their capacity for organized resistance on a broader scale (Ben Youssef Tlemsani, 2015: 31)[1].

*** Mary Monge and Herbillon Campaign, 1847:**

The primary objective of this campaign was to pursue the resistant leader Al-Sharif Boumaza, who had been expelled from the Jebel Amour region and sought refuge in the Ouled Nail territory, where he received support from certain sub-branches. A secondary objective was to suppress a planned uprising led by Moussa bin Al-Hussein, who had escaped capture in M'saad and fled to Metlili.

In response, the colonial authorities organized multiple military columns to track Boumaza's movements. General Bido dispatched one column from Setif and another from Biskra, while simultaneously requesting reinforcements from Governor-General Marshal Bugeaud. Additional columns were formed and instructed to converge at Boughar on 25 January 1847, where they were placed under the command of General Mary Monge.

The campaign advanced from Boughar toward Qal'at al-Satl via Ain Wesara, aiming to pursue Sharif Boumaza and punish the Ouled Nail sub-branches that had aided him. These sub-branches were forced to flee south toward Jebel al-Qawasim, enduring harsh weather conditions, including heavy snowfall that damaged their tents and livestock. The campaign was further facilitated by other Ouled Nail sub-branches who had aligned with the colonial authorities, cooperating with General Mary Monge against their kin.

Meanwhile, Sharif Boumaza, pursued by the Biskra column, withdrew toward Touggourt and took refuge among the Ouled Sassi and Ouled Harakat after Ouled Jalal abandoned him and declared allegiance to General Herbillon. In the aftermath, Mary Monge imposed a fine of 100,000 francs on the Ouled Nail sub-branches, while Boumaza fled southeast to continue inciting resistance (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 87)[2].

On 13 February 1847, French forces under General Herbillon departed from Médéa to pursue the Ouled Issa tribe. The troops passed through Qatlah al-Satl and reached Zaghar, arriving in Djelfa on 15 February, where they engaged in fierce clashes with Ouled Issa horsemen. During these confrontations, the French forces killed approximately fifty men and seized 500 sheep, 250 cattle, and 50 camels, while suffering three fatalities, eight wounded soldiers, and significant losses among their horses.

Following the restoration of order, General Mary Monge commanded the Ouled Nail branches to relocate to Djebel El-Mokassem, threatening punitive measures in case of refusal. Most branches complied, except for a few, including Kerd El-Wad, a branch of Ouled Saad bin Salem. In response,

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[1] Ben Youssef Tlemsani, ibid, p. 31.
[2] Maâmara, ibid, p. 87

Monge organized a campaign consisting of 900 infantrymen, 250 cavalry, two artillery pieces, and 800 mounted troops to raid six villages. The expedition reached Rjim El-Sharqi, seized substantial livestock from the Ouled Saad bin Salem, and inflicted significant casualties on their men (Naibi, 2013: 70)[1].

According to the *Official Gazette of the French Colonizers* issued on 30 June 1847, a massive herd of livestock was transported from Djebel Boukheil to over one hundred locations in the city of Algiers. This herd had been confiscated from the Ouled Issa as a tax imposed by General Mary Monge and was escorted to Médéa under light protection by six cavalrymen (*Moniteur algérien*, 1847: 1)[2]."

On 22 February 1847, General Mary Monge ordered the branches of the Ouled Nail to relocate to the northern slopes of Jebel al-Muqassim, warning that any delay would result in a military raid. Most tribal branches complied, but a few refused to submit and declared allegiance to the Emir. This intelligence was obtained through a network of spies appointed by Monge to monitor the movements of non-compliant tribes, including the leader of the Kerd El Oued group, a branch of the Ouled Saïd Ben Salem clan.

In response, the General assembled a light column consisting of 900 infantry, 250 cavalry, two artillery pieces, and 800 local horsemen to raid six villages. The column advanced to Rjim al-Sharqi, where it seized 100 camels, 10,000 sheep, and 100 cattle from the Ouled Saïd Ben Salem during the initial operation. The lightly armed tribes were unable to defend their livestock, and several tribal men were killed. Sheikh Telli Ben Lakhel, leader of a branch of the Ouled Nail, joined Monge at Rjim al-Sharqi that evening, and approximately 200,000 francs were collected as fines from the region's tribes (Ben Youssef Tlemsani, 2015: 37)[3].

On Tuesday, 23 February 1847, General Mary Monge launched a surprise attack on the village of El-Majbara, situated at the foot of Mount Boukheil, where Sharif Boumaaza had taken refuge and been received by the local inhabitants while en route to El-Ziban. The journal *Le Constitutionnel* reported on two related campaigns: one near Mount Boukheil and the second on 23 February near Qasr El-Majbara, conducted by France's ally, the Khalifa of El-Aghwat, Ahmed bin Salem. Each operation involved 200 cavalrymen from the local quarters, who seized 100 heads of cattle and camels, in addition to between 3,000 and 4,000 sheep. The campaign resulted in the complete destruction of Qasr El-Majbara, which was not reconstructed until 1854 (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 90)[4].

General Mary Monge took care to appoint local leaders and sheikhs loyal to him over the regional population. Sheep were allocated to these appointed leaders, while cattle were placed under the administration's control, and camels were sold at public auction for the benefit of the colonial authorities.

Organization of the region: The General convened the sheikhs of the Ouled Naïl and assigned the following roles:

- Tali Ben Lekhel: appointed as Agha (commander).
- Miloud: appointed as deputy.

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[1] Naibi Senoussi, ibid, p. 70.
[2] Moniteur algérien, Official Journal of the Colony, June 30, 1847, No. 835, 16th Year, Algiers, p. 1.
[3]Telmessani, ibid, p. 37.
[4] Maâmara, ibid, p. 90.

- Bourouba: appointed commander over the Ouled Naïl.
- Al-Qattaf: retained independent leadership.

Results of the campaign, according to French reports:

- Calm and submission were established in the Biskra region.
- General Herbillon returned to Biskra at the head of his column.

Nevertheless, some rebel groups continued to act in the southeast, attacking General Herbillon and attempting to impede his advance toward Médéa. This prompted him to request assistance from General Mary Monge, who subsequently moved to confront the insurgents (Naibi, 2013: 71–72)[1].

- **Mary Monge's Campaign of 1848**

One of the principal factors prompting Mary Monge's 1848 campaign was the situation in the Ouled Naïl region, which had raised suspicions among French military authorities. In a letter dated 30 December 1847 and addressed to Governor-General Marshal Bugeaud, Mary Monge provided an assessment of conditions in southern Algeria, devoting the final part of his report to the Ouled Naïl. He emphasized that, although much of the southern territory was calm, lingering resistance and the presence of certain influential figures continued to justify military intervention.

In this letter, Monge stated that the regions of Laghouat were entirely pacified, while in Ouled Naïl a small number of leaders had yet to submit. He referred in particular to a minor group led by Ben Abdessalam, numbering no more than twenty horsemen, which he regarded as militarily insignificant. He then identified three individuals whose presence he considered potentially problematic: Moulay El-Arabi, leader of the Darqawa faction, whom Monge described as intelligent and prudent and more a refugee than an active enemy; El-Hadj Moussa, who had previously raided Médéa in 1834 but was defeated by Emir Abdelkader and later pursued by French forces in the Demd region without posing a serious threat; and Sidi Kheladi, an influential marabout captured the previous year by General Herbillon near Sidi Khaled, whom Monge deemed no longer dangerous.

Although Monge acknowledged that these figures exercised limited influence and did not constitute an immediate threat, he nonetheless warned that they could become dangerous in the event of a broader uprising. He concluded by announcing his intention to lead a winter campaign toward the south in order to punish the Ouled Naïl for sheltering, without French authorization, individuals regarded by the colonial authorities as enemies (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 91)[2].

3.2. Prince Henri (Duke of Aumale) (16 January 1822 – 7 May 1897)

Born on 16 January 1822 in Paris, he was the son of King Louis-Philippe of France. He pursued a career as a French military officer and politician. On 25 November 1844, he married Princess Maria Carolina Augusta of the Bourbon family from Naples, who bore him four children.

In his military career, he served as Governor-General of Algeria, a position he assumed following the suppression of Emir Abdelkader's resistance in December 1847. He was also recognized as an

[1] Naibi Senoussi, op. cit , p. 71-72.
[2] Maâmara, ibid, p. 91.

early collector of books and classical art, reflecting the cultural interests of his era (Chisholm, 1911)[1].

- **Military Career**

He was appointed Second Lieutenant on 1 January 1837, promoted to Lieutenant on 1 January 1838, Captain on 1 January 1839, and Commander of a battalion on 21 August 1839. He reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on 21 June 1840 and, on 16 February 1841, was assigned to Line 24. He departed for Algeria in 1840 and participated in the Battle of El Afroun on 27 April, before returning to France for health reasons, where he was promoted to Lieutenant on 27 May 1841.

He returned to Algeria on 7 September 1842 with the rank of Marshal (Brigadier General) and distinguished himself by capturing the mobile capital of Emir Abdelkader at Taguerin on 16 May 1843. King Louis-Philippe commissioned the painter Horace Vernet to commemorate this achievement with a painting.

Following this campaign, he was promoted to First Lieutenant on 3 July 1843 and appointed Commander of the Constantine Province. He played a leading role in pacifying the Aurès region under Colonel Mac Mahon's divisions. Additionally, he led the Biskra mission, and on 23 May 1844 issued a general order regarded as a new administrative framework for the south. Under this order, he was appointed by decree as Supreme Commander of the Biskra District, supervising four Algerian officials within a defined administrative structure (Miassi, 2012: 54)[2].

Duke of Aumale was appointed Inspector General of the Infantry on 25 May 1844 and subsequently placed in charge of specialized military schools for weapons training on 2 February 1845. He was delegated to Africa on 6 March 1846. In October 1847, he was granted the title of Governor-General of Algeria. During this period, he corresponded with the Queen of Belgium, reflecting his awareness of both the challenges and the honor associated with serving a free people—an honor he ultimately realized.

At the end of December 1847, Emir Abdelkader appeared in the small garden of the commander at a location known as Nemour, near the Algerian-Moroccan border, in the presence of Generals Lamoricière and Cavinac. About a month later, the Duke of Aumale wrote to Cuvillier-Fleury on 10 January 1848, noting:

"The Moroccan affair has ended, and Emir Abdelkader has left Africa, heading eastward to live under the protection of France. This outcome was a dream that has now come true..."

Oumal died on 7 May 1897 in Italy (Vallery-Radot, 1922: 77)[3].

- **The Role of Prince Henri in the Oulad Nail Region:**

The French expansion into the Ouled Nail region coincided with, and complemented, the military occupation and penetration of eastern, central, and western Algeria. Between February and June 1844, the Duke of Aumale, commander of the Constantine district, led a campaign that reached Biskra, subjugating the Zab region and the Sheikh of Touggourt, Beni Djellab.

His first campaign in the region, as highlighted by the *Bulletin of the French African Committee*, achieved two main objectives: it weakened the influence of the Ouled Nail and consolidated French

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[1] Chisholm, Hugh, ed. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Cambridge University Press, 1911. Online reference via *Military History Fandom*: https://military-history.fandom.com/

[2] Ibrahim Miassi, *The French Occupation of the Algerian Sahara 1837–1934*, Dar Houma, Algiers, 2012, p. 54.

[3] René Vallery-Radot, *The Duke of Aumale According to His Correspondence with Cuvillier-Fleury, 1840–1871*, Plon Publishing House, 1922, p. 77.

control over the Constantine region. Later, in 1847, the Duke was appointed Governor-General of Algeria and oversaw the final operations of General Lamoricière against Emir Abdelkader.

Thus, the strategic and political significance of the Ouled Nail region is evident, as it presented challenges to multiple French leaders: Prince Henri, Governor-General Marshal Bugeaud (Duke of Isly), General Youcef during two campaigns, and General Mary Monge in five campaigns against the Ouled Nail and other tribes.

Prince Henri notably supported General Youcef's campaign in May 1846 against the Ouled Nail and the Djebel Amour from 7 to 14 May. On 14 May, the Ouled Nail were subdued, and to honor Prince Henri, the compliant local tribes were forced to march in a parade over one kilometer long, including men, women, children, as well as sheep and camels a spectacle reminiscent of a tribal migration (Chouli et al., *Al-Hajj*, 217)[1].

In order to capture the Zmalah, the mobile capital of Emir Abdelkader, orders were issued to General Lamoricière, commander of the French forces in the Oran district, to advance from the camp toward the Sersou region. Simultaneously, the Duke of Aumale dispatched a second column from Médéa toward Bougar. The column was organized as follows: three infantry regiments totaling approximately 1,300 soldiers under Major Chaddison, seven cavalry squadrons comprising 600 horsemen led by Colonel Youcef, and local auxiliary forces from the Ouled Ayad and Bouaïch tribes residing south of Bougar.

The second column departed on 10 May 1843, heading southwest from Bougar toward Sersou in pursuit of the Emir's Zmalah. Along the route, the Duke of Aumale learned that General Lamoricière would be unable to participate directly because the Emir, at the head of his cavalry, had relocated a significant number of Banu Hashim al-Ghurabah to join the Zmalah. Consequently, Lamoricière, then at Tiaret, was ordered to intercept the Hashim al-Ghurabah and block the Emir's movements. This unforeseen development compelled the Duke of Aumale to adjust his plan, necessitating reliance solely on his own forces in the event of engagement.

For this mission, the Duke relied on local spies from the Ouled Bouaïch and Ouled Ayad tribes, led by Agha Lahmar Ben Farah, who successfully tracked the Zmalah and guided the French forces to its location at Taqin. After three days, the column encamped in the village of Rchaïqa, where abundant water and trees were available along the Wadi Belbouda. During the night, the column advanced to Al-Qajila, and at dawn on 14 May 1843, villagers including a representative of Emir Abdelkader were interrogated. The Duke learned that the Zmalah had moved that day from Ain Qaltin to Taqin, intending subsequently to proceed toward Jebel Lamor to evade General Lamoricière, who was advancing from Sersou to pursue the Emir and the Hashim al-Ghurabah, who had fled from the Ghris plain to join the Zmalah.

Emir Abdelkader did not accompany the Zmalah directly but remained with his forces to monitor Lamoricière's approach, allowing the Zmalah to move south while Muhammad bin Allal commanded a contingent of regular troops to resist in the Wanshreis. Unaware of the Duke of Aumale's movements toward the Zmalah, Abdelkader focused on Lamoricière's column, issuing

[1] Choli, ibid., p. 217.

orders for the Zmalah to advance south along water sources, which dictated the search areas for the French forces.

From scout reports, the Duke learned that Lamoricière's column was advancing southeast of Tiaret according to the original plan. Encouraged by this, he divided his column into two: the first, consisting of cavalry, Zouaves, and artillery, was highly mobile, while the second, comprising two infantry regiments and fifty cavalrymen assigned to protect the supply convoy under Major Chaddison, was ordered to rendezvous with the first column at Ain Taqin (Ben Youssef Tlemsani, 2015: 26–27)[1].

The Zmalah was estimated to comprise approximately 20,000 people, including 500 armed men, when the Duke of Aumale's forces approached Ain Taqin. The Emir's troops were immediately alerted and prepared to resist, but the Duke capitalized on the element of surprise, leaving them little opportunity to organize effectively. Colonel Yusuf, alongside the Sbaïhia and local auxiliaries, attacked from the western flank, while the Duke himself led the African riflemen against the central encampment, specifically targeting the Emir's family.

Following a fierce and bloody confrontation, the Duke's forces succeeded in seizing control of the Zmalah. Many members of the mobile capital were captured, and the resistance was decisively broken (Ben Abdelkader, Tuhfat: 145)[2] Many members of the Zmalah were able to escape southward, as the Emir's soldiers provided sufficient cover to allow them to flee, abandoning their supplies, tents, and provisions. After an hour and a half of combat, the Duke of Aumale's forces captured the remaining elements of the Zmalah, securing full control over the mobile capital (Ben Youssef Tlemsani, 2015: 28)[3].

3.3. Colonel Charles du Bray (François Charles du Barail) (1820–1902) (See Appendix 02) Count François Charles du Barail (Français Charles Barail) was born in Versailles on 25 May 1820 and died in Neuilly-sur-Seine (Hauts-de-Seine) on 30 January 1902. He was a French army general who notably served as Minister of War under President Marshal Mac Mahon (BNF data)[4].

François Charles du Barail came from a military family; his father, Charles du Barail, served as a squadron commander. He spent his childhood in the prestigious city associated with Louis XIV and dreamed of joining the personal guards of the Neuilly district, hoping one day to return as a regimental commander there and eventually rise to the position of Minister of War, as he recounts in his memoirs (DE BARAIL, 1897: 20–21)[5].

At the age of nineteen, François Charles du Barail enlisted in the Spahis in Oran, where he quickly distinguished himself for his bravery. In February 1840, he was transferred to Mostaganem by army order, and in 1842 he was appointed second lieutenant. That same year, he was decorated for his role in the capture of Emir Abdelkader's smala. Following the Battle of Isly in 1844, during which he was wounded, he was promoted to lieutenant. After subsequent operations near Laghouat, he rose to the rank of squadron leader in the 5th Regiment of Chasseurs.

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[1] Telmessani, ibid, p. 26-27.

[2] **The Zmalah:** These are the tribes spread across the plains of Oran, divided into two sections: the Eastern and Western Zmalah. The Eastern section includes the Makahlia, the Ouled Sidi Arab, and the Ouled Abbas. The Western section comprises the Nja'al-Dawayer, the Ghuraba Zmalah, and the Burjiya. These tribes enjoyed certain privileges under Ottoman rule. Ben Abdelkader, *Tuhfat al-Za'ir*, edited by Mamdouh Haqi, Dar al-Yaqza al-Arabiya, Algiers, 1966, p. 145.

[3] Telmessani, ibid, p. 28.

[4] https://data.bnf.fr/fr/temp-work/c174e3decb28e137cb578e8f4c2fdc6c/

[5] Général de Barail, *My Recollections*, vol. 1: 1820–1851, 13th ed. (Paris, 1897), 20–21.

Earlier, in 1839, he had commanded a Spahi detachment in Oran and then served as a brigadier and non-commissioned officer in Mostaganem and Mazagran in 1840. He became second lieutenant in 1842, participated in the 1843 capture of Emir Abdelkader's smala, and fought at the Battle of Isly in 1844, after which he was promoted to lieutenant. He attained the rank of captain in 1848.

In 1853, he took part in the capture of the oasis and was appointed supreme commander of Laghouat. That same year, he became a squadron commander and was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1854. He was appointed first commander of the Chasseurs d'Afrique and became colonel in 1857 in the Chasseurs de la Garde. He returned to Algeria in 1860 at the head of the 3rd Regiment of Chasseurs d'Afrique.

In 1862, he was sent to Mexico, where he commanded a Mexican cavalry brigade and was promoted to brigadier general. Returning to France in 1864, he led a light cavalry brigade of the Imperial Guard. During the 1870 war against Germany, Du Barail commanded a division of African cavalry composed of four regiments, fighting at Mars-la-Tour and Saint-Privat, before being captured at Metz. After returning to France, he commanded the Third Corps of the Army of Versailles and later served as Minister of War in 1873. He died on 30 January 1902, leaving behind memoirs of his military career (French Military Archives, 2026)[1].

- **His Role in the Territory of the Ouled Naïl**
- **Participation of General de Braÿ in the campaign against Ksar al-Charaf**

General Charles de Braÿ participated in General Youssouf's punitive expedition against the inhabitants of Ksar al-Charaf in the spring of 1846. This operation has been documented as one of the most severe crimes against humanity of the period, reported by Colonel Tromelin, General de Braÿ himself, the military interpreter Arnaud, historian William Serman, the French press, and other contemporary sources.

The incident began when General Youssouf discovered that one of his men, tasked with carrying correspondence, had been intercepted and mistreated along the road. The messenger had been brutally beaten, stripped of his clothes, and tied to a tree. He eventually managed to escape and return to General Youssouf's camp. According to de Braÿ, the attack on the envoy was carried out by Abdelaziz, who regarded him as a servant of the Christians and an enemy of fellow mujahideen.

Tromelin's account indicates that the following day, General Youssouf's forces arrived at Ksar al-Charaf, where they established camp and summoned the ksar's commander. The inhabitants had recently surrendered, but it was deemed necessary to impose a punitive action as an example. General Youssouf then questioned the shaykh of the ksar regarding the intercepted message carried by his envoy… (CHOULI et al., *Al-Hajj,* 336)[2].

General Youssouf then ordered that the intercepted letter be produced and presented to all those assembled. At that moment, the shaykh covered his forehead with part of his burnous and murmured, "It is written…". General Youssouf subsequently commanded the soldier Hamida ben

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[1] French military archives for French soldiers in Algeria, online at *Military-Photos.com*, "Heroic Algerian Campaigns," accessed February 5, 2026, http://www.military-photos.com/herosalger.htm.

[2] Chouli, *ibid.*, p. 336.

al-Taher to behead the shaykh of the ksar. Ben al-Taher, a chaouch attached to de Braÿ's battalion from El Harrach, was experienced in carrying out such tasks, including the severing of heads and ears.

De Braÿ reports that Youssouf's method for ensuring the execution of his orders was to require that the ears of the executed individuals be brought before him. On some occasions, executioners would secretly spare the condemned and instead cut off only their ears. De Braÿ further notes that the ears of the inhabitants of Ksar al-Charaf, along with many others, were preserved in the city of Bordeaux by the Carayon-Latour family, kept in salt as souvenirs of the Charaf campaign. He compares their appearance to seashells.

All military operations directed against the tribes and ksour of the Ouled Naïl region were carried out under what was known as the "Lamoricère system," named after the French general who devised it. De Braÿ explains that this system consisted of launching successive expeditions into the interior, sustaining warfare through continuous military action, and requiring the expeditions to be largely self-sufficient that is, authorizing looting, confiscation, and the widespread imposition of war levies while relentlessly targeting Arab interests until the local populations sought protection under French authority (CHOULI et al., *Al-Hajj*: 337–342)[1].

- **General de Braÿ's Campaign against the Ouled Oum al-Akhwa**

  Following the 1845 attack on the Ouled Oum al-Akhwa tribe, members of the tribe retreated toward Mount Boukahil with the intention of joining the southern Saharan resistance under Mohammed ben Abdallah. French authorities, however, were informed of these movements. To prevent their integration with the southern resistance, General de Braÿ, then supreme military commander of Laghouat, led a detachment comprising 340 infantrymen, 35 Spahis, 15 mounted makhzanis, and 100 horsemen from the Arba'a tribe. Concurrently, local auxiliaries were dispatched toward Guerrara, while Théodore Pan, the supreme military commander of Bou Saada, advanced a separate column toward the same region.

  The two French columns converged near Hassi Ziane on 17 October 1854 and conducted surveillance of the Ouled Oum al-Akhwa's movements, relying on the expertise of Fliber, head of the Arab Bureau in Bou Saada, who was recognized for his skills in tracking tribal movements. On 26 October 1854, the tribe prepared to resist near Hassi Lafteh, where they were engaged by French forces attacking from four directions, employing artillery in the process. The Ouled Oum al-Akhwa were compelled to retreat into the surrounding mountains. The French subsequently collected abandoned property, including livestock and clothing belonging to Marshal Gilbert de Boissieu. Contemporary reports indicate that the tribe suffered substantial losses during this operation (Salet, 2021, p. 84)[2].

3.4 General Youssouf (Joseph Valentini), 1808–1866: (See Appendix No 02)

Claimed to be the illegitimate son of Napoleon Bonaparte. During a journey to Livorno, he was captured by the Tunisian navy and subsequently entered the service of the Bey of Tunis, where he received training in weapons handling, horsemanship, and the study of the Qur'an.

Following the French occupation of Algeria, Valentini traveled there aboard a French ship, arriving at Sidi Ferruch in June 1830. General de Bourmont assigned him, then a mamluk, to serve

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 337-342.

[2] Mohamed Tayeb Salet, *Asyad wa Amjad : Madinat al-Djelfa min al-Ta'sis al-Idari ila al-Istiqlal al-Watani, 1861–1962* (Algiers : Wamda, 2021),p. 84.

as an interpreter. He held several positions within the French colonial administration: appointed civilian captain in December 1830, commander of a Spahi unit in Oran in 1838, and restored to French nationality in 1839. In April 1842, General Bugeaud promoted him to colonel.

Valentini participated in the army of the Duke of Aumale during the capture of Emir Abdelkader's smala on 16 May 1843 and later took part in the Battle of Isly against Moroccan forces. During his time in France, he married and formally converted from Islam to Christianity. In July 1845, he was promoted to the rank of marshal.

He suffered a setback against Emir Abdelkader at the Battle of Sidi Ibrahim in September 1845 but subsequently defeated him at the Battle of Wadi Tamda. In 1846, Valentini conducted a major campaign pursuing the Emir in the Ouled Naïl region. After the conclusion of Abdelkader's resistance, he returned to France.

Valentini returned to Algeria in 1856, leading several campaigns against local tribes and participating in French penetration of the Sahara in 1864. In 1866, he fell ill and returned to France, where he died in March of that year (Trumelet, 1890, p. 20)[1].

- **The Role of General Yousouf in the Ouled Naïl Region**

In 1846, General Yousouf, in coordination with Bidault and under the orders of General Bugeaud, launched military operations in the Ouled Naïl region. This year marked a critical phase in the history of the Ouled Naïl, as the French campaigns inflicted significant losses in terms of lives, wealth, and social stability. Following Emir Abdelkader's refuge in the Ouled Naïl territory, the region became the focus of extensive pursuit operations by General Yousouf, who traversed much of its terrain. His forces were repeatedly reinforced from Médéa, Bougar, the capital, Sétif, Constantine, and El Ghouat under the command of officers including Colonel Camou, Lademirol, the Duke of Aumale, and Colonel Blagny.

- **Campaign in Zagher and the Saharan Mountains**

On 7 March 1846, French units pursuing Emir Abdelkader reached Brirek (Benhar), where a confrontation resulted in the loss of approximately 150 of Abdelkader's men, including Agha Mohamed and the officer Ben Klichah. The French captured 25,000 head of livestock, 1,000 camels, and liberated women from villages loyal to France who had previously been seized during the Emir's raids. Abdelkader escaped through Jebel Khidher into the rugged terrain of Zagher. French columns pursued him from El Hammam to Jebel Zenghas and from Qal'at al-Satl under General Yousouf.

As a defensive tactic, Abdelkader ordered the tribes of the sandy Zagher regions to retreat to the mountainous areas. The Emir established his camp at Qaiqaa in Jebel Sahari and reportedly executed French officer Lacoste, the officer of the Béro Arabs of Tiaret, and the translator Lévy. French forces halted at the boundaries of Zagher, allowing Yousouf to enter the Saharan Mountains unopposed and set up camp in the Milihiya area. On 13 March 1846, the Emir moved to Ain al-Kahla with his cavalry.

General Yousouf intercepted the rear of Abdelkader's forces, capturing 800 mules, associated equipment, and the Emir's tent, causing the Emir's troops to scatter. Abdelkader managed to

[1] Trumelet, Corneille. *Le Général Yusuf*. Vol. 1. Paris : Paul Ollendorff, 1890, p. 20.

retreat with Agha Ouled Chaïb and Ben Ouda from Ouled Mokhtar to Fayd al-Batma, north of Jebel Boukheil. Subsequently, a contingent of the Ouled Naïl joined him, reinforcing his army.

Due to the exhaustion of his troops, General Yousouf temporarily suspended pursuit, providing Abdelkader an opportunity to reorganize his forces. During this period, Si Sherif Belharsh, who had participated in the Djerjerah campaign, joined the Emir, offering crucial support with his knowledge of the local terrain and communities. As noted in contemporary accounts, "the Ouled Naïl, instead of abandoning the defeated, continued to support and assist the Emir, providing substantial supplies and increasing the size of his cavalry" (Naibi, 2013, pp. 57–58)[1].

- **General Yousouf's Campaign on the Zenina, Sidi Bouzid, and Ksar Cherif Palaces**

In March 1846, General Yousouf became aware of the significant weakening of Emir Abdelkader's forces due to the French scorched-earth policy and the so-called "Lamorcière system." On 19 March, French intelligence reported that Abdelkader was present at Ksar Zenina. French cavalry and infantry units were immediately dispatched, but the inhabitants of the palace resisted, opening fire to prevent the French from reaching the Emir, who had just departed. A battle ensued within the palace, resulting in the deaths of approximately thirty of Abdelkader's men.

According to some oral accounts, General Yousouf's forces subsequently set the palace on fire, demonstrating the severity of the French punitive measures. In his daily report dated 24 March 1846, Yousouf noted: "…and we have sent our emissaries to all the surrounding locations villages or tribes that harbor Abdelkader during his flight; they will receive the same punishment inflicted on Zenina and Sidi Bouzid…"

The report indicates that both Zenina and Sidi Bouzid were depopulated and their houses burned as warnings to other communities loyal to Emir Abdelkader. Contemporary reports in *Le Moniteur* (30 May 1856) noted that a decade after the punitive campaign, Zenina remained largely abandoned and in ruins. Over time, residents returned, reconstructed their homes, cultivated gardens, and gradually restored local prosperity. By 1856, agricultural production had doubled, reflecting the resilience of the community. However, the primary remaining challenge for the population was the reunification of families that had been dispersed among other tribes (Ben Al Massoud, 2021)[2].

During the campaign against Emir Abdelkader and the tribes that had provided him support, the military translator Saint-Arnou recorded that on a single day, General Yousouf launched three separate operations against the Ouled Saad ben Salem in Massad. In a letter dated 5 April 1846 to Major Dumoné, commander of the Zekar garrison, Yousouf reported:

"Dear Commander,

I left Ksar Zekar on the fifth. During the night, I passed by Abdelkader, who had crossed with a contingent of the Ouled Naïl some 500 to 600 meters from my army. Unfortunately, I did not see him again until the following day. After an exhausting fourteen-hour march, I caught up with a large number of Ouled Naïl men, killed many of them, and captured abundant spoils. This strike has spread terror among them and will have a significant impact on our campaign."

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[1] Naibi Senoussi, ibid, p. 57-58.

[2] Salem Ben Al-Massoud, "*Bilad Ouled Nail wa al-Amir Abdelkader … Malhamat Zenina fi Mars 1846 Namudhajan*," *Djazairess*, June 19, 2021, https://www.djazairess.com/djelfa/12874.

Following this operation, Yousouf coordinated further military actions against the Khezra, the homeland of the Ouled Sidi Ahmed. These operations involved three columns led respectively by General Yousouf, the Duke of Aumale, and Colonel Camou, culminating in the capture of Ksar Aflou on 11 May 1846 (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 82)[1].

Hadj Moussa and his companions were relentlessly pursued by the French forces under the command of General Yousouf, which compelled them to retreat to the Kabylie region. They remained there for approximately three years before relocating to Metlili Chaabna in 1848. In 1849, Hadj Moussa, accompanied by eighty fighters from the Ouled Issa, joined Sheikh Ahmed Bouziane's resistance in the Zaatcha Oasis. This group was ultimately annihilated in a massacre; among the victims was their leader, Moussa al-Darqawi. The heads of the fallen resistance leaders, including Sheikh Ahmed Bouziane and Moussa al-Darqawi, were reportedly displayed at the entrance of the city of Constantine for a week as a warning to others (Ben Al Massoud, 2021: 95)[2].

Emir Abdelkader sought refuge in Ksar Massad and received support from its inhabitants, who provided him with essential provisions. Upon learning of General Yousouf's pursuit and imminent arrival, the residents fled to the surrounding mountains. When General Yousouf reached Ksar Massad, he found the settlement deserted and issued orders for strict measures. Subsequently, as the inhabitants became aware of his presence, they descended from the mountains and surrendered. General Yousouf granted them pardon.

In addition, three local leaders Ibrahim ben Salem, El Harsh ben Bafa, and Latrash Bouabdallah were removed from their positions and replaced. This action was taken due to their provision of shelter to the dervish Moussa, as well as perceived deficiencies in their loyalty and administrative performance (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 82)[3].

- **General Yousouf's Campaign on Khezra, Homeland of the Ouled Si Ahmed**

In parallel with previous operations, General Yousouf launched a campaign against the Ouled Si Ahmed on 22 April 1846. This operation is documented in a report sent by the commander of Médéa to General Marie Mongé in a letter dated 26 April 1846 (Chouli et al., *Al-Hajj*: 340)[4].

François Dufilaré reported that on 19 April 1846, General Yousouf's column received intelligence regarding Emir Abdelkader's movement toward Khezra, the homeland of the Ouled Si Ahmed. The general dispatched a pursuing force, which reached Khezra on 22 April; nevertheless, the Emir managed to escape southward. During the pursuit, Yousouf's troops engaged the Ouled Si Ahmed for approximately two hours, resulting in the death of twenty tribesmen, including several local leaders, and the seizure of livestock and other possessions. In Zaghra, one of the Emir's envoys was captured while carrying 83 letters detailing future plans, according to a report from the commander of Médéa, General Marie Mongé, dated 26 April 1846.

Following this campaign, beginning on 26 April, the Ouled Naïl tribes began surrendering in parallel with General Yousouf's presence at the Karrirch center. They were joined by the aghas Jedid (of the Ouled Chaïb) and Ben Oudah (of the Ouled Mokhtar), who sought protection, as well

[1] Maâmara, ibid., p. 82.
[2] Ben Al-Massoud, ibid., p. 95.
[3] Maâmara, ibid., p. 82.
[4] Chouli, *ibid* ; p. 340.

as the Ouled Arbaâ tribe. Yousouf's campaign was reinforced by multiple columns, and the French forces converged at the Karrirch center on the morning of 1 May. The forces were organized into three columns: that of General Yousouf, that of the Duke of Aumale, and that of Colonel Camou (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 84)[1].

In the course of pursuing Emir Abdelkader, who had moved westward, General Yousouf's column, accompanied by Prince Henri, advanced through Wadi Qadid to confront Khalifa Ahmed ben Salem, a French ally. On 11 May 1846, Yousouf's forces captured Ksar Aflou and imposed substantial fines on the local tribes, seizing three thousand head of cattle and seven thousand sheep. The sheep were subsequently sold to Khalifa Ahmed ben Salem for 28,000 francs, while the cattle were transported to Blida. To consolidate control over the region, Agha Jelloul was appointed to oversee the inhabitants of Jebel Amoura, replacing Agha Massoud, who had been accused of supporting the Emir.

Operations extended beyond Ksar Aflou. Raids were conducted on Ksar Zenina and Jebel Sahari, while Colonel Lademirol led an expedition against a branch of the Ouled Naïl, capturing forty men and confiscating 500 camels, 300 cattle, and 800 sheep, valued at approximately 160,000 francs. This strategy deprived the local population of horses, limiting their capacity to support Emir Abdelkader's forces, while the livestock could be utilized by the French troops and their local allies, including Khalifa Ahmed ben Salem, Agha Jedid ben Yousouf, Agha Ben Oudah, and the Agha of the Ouled Arbaâ.

General Yousouf established a camp at Ksar El Beida, north of El Oued, awaiting reinforcements and supplies from Bougar to prevent the Emir's western escape. A southern detachment of the Ouled Naïl was stationed at Ksar Zekar under Major Dumoné, while Colonel Camou secured the eastern sector at Jebel Sahari. These deployments followed a surprise attack on the Emir at Jebel Qaiqaa, resulting in significant losses, particularly as his supply train included 800 mules (Chouli et al., Al-Hajj: 339–340)[2].

In parallel with General Youssef's main campaign, his battalions conducted operations across the territories of the Ouled Naïl, targeting both the inhabitants of the kasbahs and the nomadic tribes. Colonel Blanjini led a campaign in the northern sector of the region. Youssef's operations were reinforced by two additional expeditions, commanded independently by Colonels Ladmiral and Blanjini, each operating in the lands of the Ouled Naïl. These parallel campaigns functioned in coordination with, but independently from, Youssef's pursuit of Emir Abdelkader and were reported to employ similarly harsh measures.

According to the newspaper *Le Moniteur* (30 April 1846), Colonel Blanjini conducted a campaign on Mount Sahari on 19 April 1846 against tribes loyal to Emir Abdelkader, resulting in a significant number of casualties and the confiscation of property, including 5,000 sheep, 250 horses, and 350 cattle (Chouli et al., *Al-Hajj*: 217)[3].

Although the French believed that the cessation of Emir Abdelkader's resistance would bring an end to opposition among the Ouled Naïl tribes, the opposite occurred. The region entered a period of instability, reflecting continued resistance to French occupation. The local population refused to recognize the authority of French-appointed sheikhs responsible for tax collection and

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[1] Maâmara, ibid., p. 84.
[2] Chouli, *ibid.*, p. 339-340.
[3] Chouli, *ibid.*, p. 217.

staged several uprisings, while also facilitating the recruitment of men into the broader national resistance.

French administrative records indicate that authorities were concerned about ongoing anti-French activity and the dissemination of propaganda by tribal sheikhs and religious warriors (*murabitun*). Followers of Moussa al-Darqawi continued to collect *zakat* and levy contributions from the Ouled Naïl and Ouled Mokhtar tribes, undermining the authority of French-aligned sheikhs.

This persistent opposition in the Djelfa region prompted the French forces to conduct additional punitive campaigns aimed at disciplining the rebellious tribes and reasserting control. In addition, the authorities established a military post at Boudia in Djelfa to strengthen their presence and monitor local activity (Maâmara, 2019–2020: 86)[1].

- ## Conclusion

France deployed its most capable generals to control the land of the Ouled Naïl, suppress resistance, and consolidate colonial occupation, because of the geographical and economic importance of the region, in addition to the human reservoir that inhabited the territory of the Ouled Naïl. This constituted a threat to the strategic objectives of colonial policy, as well as a source of fear regarding the transfer and spread of popular uprisings into the Saharan region. Consequently, these generals employed every possible method and means to subjugate the tribes of the region. This study has therefore attempted to shed light on a group of military officers and their role in the land of the Ouled Naïl.

This research requires considerable effort due to its close reliance on archival material, the difficulty of accessing such material, the similarity of officers' names, the abundance of events, and the long duration of the resistance as a process of action and reaction. We have mentioned in this study what we were able to reach; however, there remain certain officers who also played a role in the subjugation of the tribes of the region, and they are still under investigation, while scientific material on their biographies and careers in Algeria continues to be collected.

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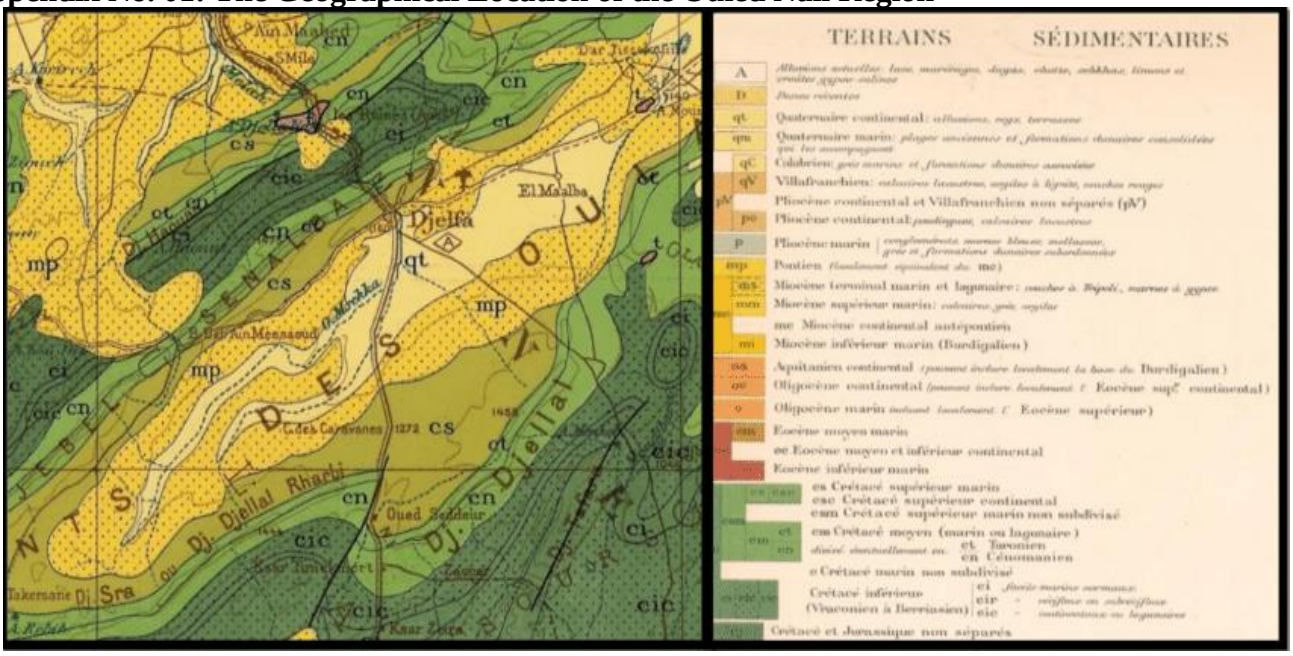
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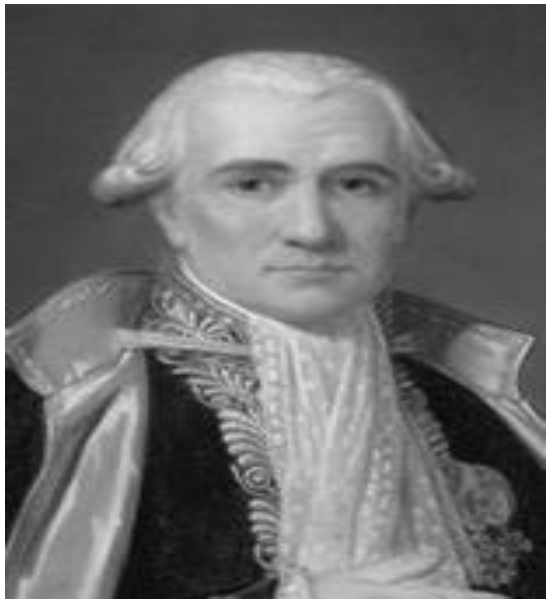
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8-Appendices

Appendix No. 01: The Geographical Location of the Ouled Nail Region



[1]Appendix 02: General Mary Monge– Guillaume-Stanislas Mary-Monge (1796–1863)[2]



Appendix 03 : Prince Henri (Duke of Aumale) (16 January 1822 – 7 May 1897)[3]



Appendix 04 : Colonel Charles du Bray (François Charles du Barail) (1820–1902)[4]

[1] **https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Representation-des-unites-geologiques-des-monts-des-Ouled-Nails-partie-centrale-de_fig2_353496278**

[2] https://www.senat.fr/senateur-2nd-empire/marey_monge_guillaume_stanislas0160e2.html

[3] René Vallery-Radot, *Le duc d'Aumale d'après sa correspondance*, p. 20.

[4] https://www.ebay.fr/itm/Portrait-General-Francois-Charles-Barail-Versailles-Ministre-de-Guerre-/



Appendix 05 : General Youssouf (Joseph Valentini), (1808–1866)[1]



[1] http://www.military-photos.com/yusuf.htm