



## Chad 1900-1960

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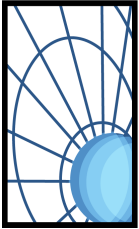
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# Chad 1900-1960

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## 1. THE MILITARY CONQUEST (1900-1917)

Violence has a long history in Chad. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the societies of the south suffered from raids launched by the Muslim empire-states of Kanem-Borno, Baguirmi, Ouaddai and Darfur (today in Sudan) in order to capture slaves (Azevedo, 1978 and 1982). Moreover, wars between slave kingdoms were frequent and endless (Reyna, 1990).

At the end of the nineteenth century, several powers clashed over the territories that make up today's Chad. The Muslim brotherhood of Sanusiyyah, a military theocracy, established itself in 1899 in Goura, a palm grove located on the eastern edge of Tibesti, and set up *zawiya* (centers that were simultaneously warehouses for goods and arms and buildings for worship and religious education) at Ain Galaka (Borku) and Bir Alali (Kanem) (Triaud, 1995). When the French penetrated Chad, the brotherhood organized the resistance and became the conquerors' first opponent. Although allied to the empire of Ouaddai, the Sanusi could not stop the French from establishing themselves after 1900.

For his part, Rabah Fadlallah, an adventurer and slave trader from Sudan, formed some solid, seasoned troops. He succeeded in procuring modern arms thanks to the sale of ivory and slaves. He took control of Bornu in 1893 and planned to conquer the empire of Ouaddai, which had inflicted an initial defeat on him in 1887. His advance was halted in 1900 by the intervention of the French. The colonizer abolished slavery, which nevertheless persisted until the 1920s.

In the 1890s, French explorers signed the first treaties with local chiefs (for example, the Casimir Maistre expedition and the chiefs of Lai and Kelo in 1892); they founded Fort Archambault (today's Sarh) in 1899. However, the year 1900 marks the real beginning of the military conquest of Chad. On 22 April, French columns from Algiers (the Fourneau-Lamy expedition) and Niger (Joalland-Meynier expedition), meeting up with that of Émile Gentil, which had come down the Chari River on the *Léon Blot*, crushed Rabah's army at Kousseri. But the death of Rabah, and the signature of a decree on 5 September 1900 creating the Military Territory of the Country and Protectorates of Chad, did not herald the end of the military conquest, which continued for seventeen years. It was to cause numerous deaths among the conquerors (French officers and numerous colonial infantry and auxiliaries recruited by the French), but above all among the inhabitants of the territories that were to become Chad.

As Jean-Louis Triaud notes, the disruption to economic life brought about by the French conquest caused more deaths than the fighting. The effects of the military campaigns in the north of Chad were disastrous: livestock was largely decimated and cultivation interrupted. From 1902, traditional trade circuits were progressively dislocated. Three consecutive years of drought and the arrival of locusts in 1915 added to the disaster: the populations of Ouaddai and Borku-Ennedi-Tibesti suffered food shortages, famine and epidemics (Triaud, 1995: 778-779). Administrative reports mention 125 deaths from starvation at Abeche (Ouaddai) in April 1914, 76 in May 1914, 109 in July 1914, and 24 in August 1914 (Triaud, 1995: 779). General Hilaire estimated that the population of Ouaddai declined from 700,000 inhabitants in 1912 to 400,000 in 1914. The country was regarded as having been conquered between 1914 (Lanne, 1993: 424) and 1917 (Chapelle, 1980).

**1899;** The column led by Captains Voulet and Chanoine, having set out from the loop of the Niger in January 1899, commits numerous atrocities on its way to the east of Niger: murder, rape, pillaging, burning of villages, and so on. The two captains have already distinguished themselves for their brutality during the conquest of the Mossi Empire (today's Burkina Faso). Colonel Klobb, sent by Paris to take control of the military expedition, is killed by Voulet and Chanoine on 14 July 1899. They are themselves killed by their

own soldiers (colonial troops). Lieutenants Joalland and Meynier take charge of the survivors. In Paris the scandal is soon hushed up: the colonial conquest must continue and the army fears a scandal involving the son of a general known for his violently anti-Dreyfusard opinions.

\*\**(Mathieu, 1996)*

**1899; July 17:** Lieutenant Bretonnet's detachment and its allies from the empire of the Baguirmi are wiped out by the troops of Rabah at the rocks of Niellim. According to Lieutenant Georges Joubert, anyone who did not flee was massacred. Rabah's troops also suffer heavy losses.

\**(Joubert, 1937: 21)*

**1899; 29 October:** Fighting between the troops of Emile Gentil and Rabah on the bank of the River Chari level with Kouno. Each army loses half its forces.

\**(Chapelle, 1980: 218)*

**1900; April 22:** Battle of Kousseri (today a town in north Cameroon bordering on Chad). Rabah is decapitated. His sons are killed, while his troops rally to the French. There are 19 dead on the French side and 1,000 among Rabah's soldiers (Largeau, 2001). Colonel Lamy, who will give his name to Fort Lamy, also loses his life during the clashes.

**Beginning of the 1900s:** Some inhabitants of the village of Kon (near Fort Archambault) who refuse to submit to the French are killed by colonial troops.

\**(Azevedo, 1998: 83)*

**1901; November 9:** The French launch an initial attack on the Sanusi zawiya of Bir Alali. The French troops, 200 *tirailleurs* (colonial infantrymen) and 50 *spahi* (colonial cavalry), are repelled and the commander of the detachment, Captain Millot, is killed. Two military sources give different casualty statistics: in one case, 15 killed or wounded (including 12 African infantrymen) on the French side, and 90 killed or wounded on the Sanusi side; in the other, 6 killed and 34 wounded on the French side and 165 dead on the Sanusi side. The losses on the Sanusi side, particularly of Touareg fighters from Niger who have entered into the service of the zawiya, are very heavy. We can regard the second set of statistics as more reliable in this respect, but the actual French losses have never been disclosed.

\*\**(Triaud, 1987: 26, and 1995: 612-616)*

**1902; January 20:** Second French attack on the zawiya of Bir Alali. French troops seize it after extremely violent clashes. The casualty figures have given rise to some variations. Losses on the French side were underestimated by the commanders. The official record gives one French lieutenant killed and 12 killed and 15 wounded among the African auxiliaries and infantrymen. The true figure is, however, much higher (Triaud, 1987: 27). As regards losses on the Sanusi side, among several figures mentioned, we can mention that of more than 200 dead (Triaud, 1987: 27, and 1995: 620). For the most part, all the belligerents were foreign to the region: Awlad Sulayman and Zuaya Arabs and Touareg on the Sanusi side, Senegalese infantrymen, Banda (former supporters of Rabah) and Yakoma of Oubangui-Chari on the French side

\*\**(Triaud, 1995: 620)*

**1902; August 11:** Fighting at Korofu, in Kanema (between Mao and Bir Alali). Allied with Awlad

Sulayman groups, the French and their troops composed of Senegalese infantrymen draw the enemy Touareg forces into a trap. Touareg losses are estimated at a thousand, or half of the Touareg forces engaged in the area. The French record the death of three auxiliaries.

\*(Triaud, 1995: 623)

**1902; December 2-4:** fighting in the vicinity of Bir Alali. Sanusi forces try to re-conquer the zawiya. The casualty figures, which are reliable in this instance, are as follows: 230 Sanusi dead, 17 killed and 38 wounded on the French side (Triaud, 1995: 629-632). During the night of 4-5 December, the Sanusi leader, Abu Aqila dies with more than 80 of his men: they had bound themselves together so as not to retreat during the attack.

**1903; May 16:** After having launched a raid on the village of Peni, Fulbe slave drivers attack Koumra with more than 4,000 men and 200 cavalry. The Sara resist and kill 200 of them (Azevedo, 1982: 205). While few slave raids are documented, there is no doubt that the capturing and trading of slaves did not end with the French penetration (Brown, 1983: 56-57). Other events of this type probably occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century.

**1905:** Death of *Mbang* (traditional chief) Mode, killed outside combat; end of the Sara resistance.

\*(Chapelle, 1980: 220)

**1907; April:** Captain Bordeaux (with 84 regular soldiers and 154 Goran or Arab auxiliaries) successively occupies Oueita (8 April), the Sanusi zawiya of Faya (17 April) and the zawiya of Ain Galakka (21 April), which he then evacuates. Two Sanusi leaders perish in the fighting, but total losses are not known. French casualties stand at 5 dead and 1 wounded.

\*(Triaud, 1995: 676-677)

**1908; March or May 29 and June 16:** On March 29 (Hugot, 1965: 48) or May 29 (Chapelle, 1980: 222), a violent battle opposes the armies of Ouaddai and Captain Jerusalem's colonial infantrymen allied with Acyl's auxiliaries at Dokotachi (Ouaddai). There are 400 dead and 600 wounded (Hugot, 1965: 48). On June 16 a new battle breaks out at Djoua (near Ati): the Ouaddaiens lose 2,000 men. The defeat of the Ouaddaien armies allows the French to enter the town of Abeche on June 2, 1909. Acyl is enthroned as sultan by the French on August 13, 1909 and deposed in 1911 when the French suspect him of supporting a rebellion in the Ouaddai.

**1909-1911:** After the defeat and retreat of Sultan Doudmourrah and the enthronement of Acyl, regarded as the colonists' Trojan horse, the military chiefs who remain faithful to Doudmourrah and the population rise up. The repression is violent: there are 22 battles, several dozen villages are burned down, and officially more than 1,320 people killed. But the figures are doubtless higher 1,500 or 2,000 dead (Doutoum, 1997: 2). The uprising ends on August 12, 1911. Sultan Doudmourrah surrenders on October 27. The occupation of Ouaddai is effective in 1911.

**1910; January 4:** Three French officers, two non-commissioned officers, and more than 100 Ouaddaien infantry and 80 Ouaddaien auxiliaries of the French forces die in an ambush laid by the army of the Sultan of Massalit (east of Ouaddai).

\*(Ferrandi, 1930: 26; Triaud, 1995: 686)

**1910; November 8 and 9:** Fighting at Dorote (east of Ouaddai) between the column led by Lieutenant-Colonel Moll, head of the Territory of Chad, and the Sultan of Massalit's forces. The French take Drijele, the capital of Massalit, on 8 November (G.B., 1910: 438). The following day, Moll, 5 non-commissioned officers, and 28 colonial troops are killed in a surprise attack. The Sultan of Massalit, Taj al-Din, also dies in the fighting, with 600 of his followers.

\*(Ferrandi, 1930: 27; Triaud, 1995: 686)

**1912:** In reprisal for an attack on a column of colonial troops by Days (or Dai) in the region of Mandoul (Moyen-Chari) in 1908, a ferocious and pitiless repression is unleashed on the region (Dingammadji, 2005: 54). The number of deaths during these events, known as the first war of Mandoul or the Mandoul revolt, is not known.

**1913; May:** Siege of the village of Morgue in the Guera. Fifty young people (boys and girls) leap to their deaths at the moment of the assault of the French forces on their village, which is situated on the steep slope of a mountain.

\*(Chapelle, 1980: 223)

**1913; May 23:** 370 men (Sanusi and local allies) attack the Meharist platoon of Lieutenant Dufour at Oum El Adam, in Ennedi (east of Chad). The attack is repelled: there are 71 dead on the Sanusi side, including several important figures from the brotherhood, and 1 dead and 4 wounded on the French side. This fighting marks the resumption of hostilities between the French and the Sanusi.

\*(Triaud, 1995: 745)

**1913; November 27:** Violent battles involving French troops against Sanusi forces who have taken refuge in the zawiya of Ain Galaka, a stronghold of the brotherhood in the Chadian countryside. A French column of 766 men (33 Europeans, 407 colonial troops, and 326 diverse auxiliaries) attacks the fortified zawiya. The soldiers force entry through one of the breaches made by the artillery. The conquest of the town, house by house, is slow and murderous (Ferrandi, 1930: 76, and Triaud, 1995: 760). Losses among the French column are light: 16 dead, including three French, and 25 wounded, including 4 French. On the Sanusi side, the casualties are difficult to put a figure on. Jean-Louis Traiaud estimates that only one-third of around 200 fighters survived. Total losses are estimated at around 160 (Triaud, 1995: 761). Colonel Largeau, who led the French troops, writes: We had thirty-seven men out of action, including six Europeans. The enemy left ninety corpses on the ground (Largeau, 2001 (1914): 265). The bodies of the Sanusi were thrown into a communal grave, together with horses and livestock (Azevedo, 1998: 71; Chapelle, 1980: 223; Ferrandi, 1930: 67-94; Joubert, 1937: 43). In December 1913, the Sanusi zawiya of Faya, Gouro, and then of Ounianga Kabir and Ounianga Saghir, are conquered by the French.

**1916:** While René-Joseph Bret recounts in detail the defeat of Sultan Bakhit, in a biography devoted to him (Bret, 1987: 179-226), the conquest of Dar Sila remains neglected. According to Bernard Lanne, the fall of Sultan Bakhit is a military walkover for Colonel Hilaire's men, the machine-gunners having very rapidly halted the charge of the Dadjo cavalry (Lanne, 1993: 425). The story takes a more dramatic turn in Jean Chapelle and Mario Azevedo: according to them, in 1917 the family of the Sultan (17 people) is liquidated after his men have attempted to ambush the French contingent (Azevedo, 1998: 72; Chapelle, 1980: 225). The Sultan, who fled after the defeat, is arrested and deported to Lai (October), where he dies two months later (Bret, 1987; Malval, 1974: 99-100).

\***1917; November 15:** «cut-cut massacre»: On October 23, 1917, Sergeant Guyader is killed by being

stabbed with a knife at Abeche (Ouaddai). Following this event, the head of the district, Commandant Gérard, suspects the dignitaries of Ouaddai of hatching a plot against the French something contradicted by the historical sources (Lanne, 1993: 426-429). On the morning of 15 November, he orders colonial troops to assassinate the *aguid* (military chief) of Dokom and his men 56 people are killed (Doutoum, 1997: 5) and more than 20 *faki* (Koranic masters). Their heads are carried off and laid out in two rows, at the eastern entry of the district, at the current emplacement of the monument to the dead of Abeche (Doutoum, 1997: 5). The Sheikh of the Mahimid is also arrested and killed at Biltine, together with 40 of his kin and allies. All the huts of the Chig-el-Fakara quarter are ransacked, and 20 influential political and religious figures are deported to other countries in French Equatorial Africa (Doutoum, 1997: 6). The events of the cut-cut, which result in 100 deaths according to Bernard Lanne (Lanne, 1993: 427) and around 150 according to Mahamat Adoum Doutoum (Doutoum, 1997: 6), prompt the intellectuals of Ouaddai to leave for Sudan or Egypt. Villages empty in favor of Sudan. The teaching of Arabic is severely affected: hostility towards the colonists is strengthened by the maintenance of a repressive policy. For this violence, Commandant Gérard is merely obliged to take early retirement. We may note that 100 Muslim men of letters and scholars suffer the same fate at Agadez in 1917.

\*\* (Triaud, 1978: 263-271)

## **2. «THE CHAD OF THE COMMANDERS»(1918-1945)**

The decree of March 17, 1920 made Chad a colony directly attached to the General Government of French Equatorial Africa (FEA). Regarded as a zone that was difficult to exploit and unprofitable, the colony was left in the hands of the military and colonial administrators who were often novices and adventurers. Being sent to this poor country, with a harsh climate, was often synonymous with demotion or punishment (Decalo, 1987: 8). Military administration was maintained until the 1930s in most of the country the administration of the regions of the extreme north, Borkou, Ennedi and Tibesti (BET) only returned to civilian administrators in 1964, four years after independence. At the outset, the colony's only resources were its own budget derived from taxes and duties. Schooling remained marginal, above all in the Muslim regions where the population massively refused to send its children to the colonist's schools (Arditi, 2003: 7-22; Khayar, 1976).

French policy provoked rebellions and resistance movements, which were violently repressed. However, the colonizer did not implement the same policy in the different regions of the country. The north is an arid region, difficult to exploit; French interest in the zone remain limited and the impact of colonization there was much less significant than in the regions situated further south. After having tried to destroy or discredit traditional chiefs, the French opted for a policy of indirect government. Christian proselytizing was proscribed in this heavily Islamized region.

By contrast, the French sought to control and exploit the regions situated on the left bank of the River Chari a zone that was to be characterized as useful Chad in the 1950s (Arditi, 2003: 10). Chadians in the south experienced higher direct taxation than the stock breeders of the north (Lemarchand, 1980: 469). The resistance provoked by the imposition of cotton cultivation from the 1930s was all the greater in that numerous local chiefs, veritable auxiliaries of the colonial administration, abused their new powers. In addition, the south was obliged to endure forced labor: compulsory conscription for portage and the construction of the Congo-Brazzaville Railway (better known by the name of Congo-Ocean). This region also constituted a major source of recruits for the colonial army (Azevedo, 1998: 75; Lemarchand, 1980: 454-455). Colonial troops were recruited from 1914 onwards; by 1928, 7,000 Sara had already served in the French Army. Forced conscription intensified with the outbreak of the Second World War: among the 22,844 Africans enrolled between 1939 and 1945 in the Congo, Gabon, Oubangui-Chari and Chad, at least

one-quarter came from the last (Azevedo, 1978).

In the years 1940-1945, Chad in fact supported the war effort and participated in the war on the side of the Free French. In August 1940, the governor of Chad, Félix Eboué, rallied to General de Gaulle. The famous Leclerc Column, which set out from the Sahara to reach Berchtesgaden in Germany, was made up of 3,000 men, of whom only 52 were French (Azevedo, 1998: 76). Many too were the Chadians among the 1,000 colonial troops who died during the Battle of Bir Hakeim in June 1942.

**1918:** Some children are assassinated at Doba (Logone) to punish parents who manufacture and sell the local beer.

\*(Azevedo, 1998: 83)

**1921-34:** Construction of the Congo-Ocean Railroad. Work on the railroad, intended to link the port of Pointe Noire to Brazzaville in order to open up Chad and Oubangui (today's Central African Republic), begins in 1921. Between 1924 and 1934, more than 120,000 people are forcibly recruited in equatorial Africa. Among them, at least 20,000 come from Chad (Azevedo, 1981: 12); 90 per cent of the workers recruited in Chad are Sara. André Gide, who travels in French Equatorial Africa in 1926 and 1927, characterizes the undertaking as a horrifying consumer of human lives (Gide, 2004 (1927): 222-226). The work done in the equatorial forest is extremely hard and the mortality rate is dreadful: 15-30,000 dead among the Africans. According to Mario Azevedo, the number of dead among the Sara is nearly 10,000, or half of those recruited from Moyen-Chari. Forced recruitment provokes resistance: the murder of village chiefs, forced migration by young workers, mass violence. Thus, in 1927, La Rougery, a station chief of Moyen-Chari, noting that only the canton of Bediondo has achieved its quota of recruits for the construction of the Congo-Ocean, uses armed men (Chadians, but not Sara) to speed up enrolment. Some village chiefs and their guards, accomplices of the colonial administration, are killed by those resisting forced recruitment (Azevedo, 1981: 9-10).

**1928-1929:** War of Bouna or War of Mandoul (black water in Sara). While this war is to be understood in the context of resistance to tax-collection (Azevedo, 1981: 81-83), a combination of factors seems to underlie the terrible repression of Bouna, capital of the Day in Moyen-Chari. In 1928, the Day refuses to pay taxes to Chief Moungar, who exploits his role as a tax collector to enrich himself. The representatives of the colonial authorities are received by a population ready for a fight – some of them are possibly killed. A simple domestic incident then serves to bring things to a head: a jealous husband kills his wife. The families of the spouses clash, causing the death of several people (Lanne, 1993: 439). In order to put down the rebellion, a military operation is organized. Some men come from Fort Lamy, as well as from the districts of Fort Archambault, Koumra and Moïssala. The repression is extremely violent. According to official figures, there are 481 Day dead and 21 on the side of the attacking forces. However, the number of dead is probably higher: around 600, according to Arnaud Dingammadji (Dingammadji, 2005: 53-60). The historian Raphaël Nzabakomada-Yakoma estimates that in addition more than 25,000 people were deported (Nzabakomada-Yakoma, 1986: 86-89). According to Mario Azevedo, virtually the whole population of the district perished (perhaps 20,000 people), while the large village of Bouna was reduced to ashes. The colonial troops only spared children, who were deported to Moïssala (Azevedo, 1998: 82). Because of the involvement of Chadian auxiliaries in the massacres, the Mandoul war long remained a taboo subject.

### **3. THE REFORM OF THE COLONIAL SYSTEM (1946-1959)**

The post-war period was one of reform of the colonial system. Following the Brazzaville Conference (1944), and the creation of the French Union (1946), the colony became an overseas territory integrated



into the Federation of the FEA. Forced labor was officially abolished in 1946, but was still practiced for several years in the south of Chad (Azevedo, 1998: 78); the native code was done away with. Chadians voted for the first time in 1945; political parties were authorized in 1946. The draft law of 1956 established a single college (the double college over-represented the French), strengthened the powers of the territorial Assembly, and created a Council of government that ruled the territorial administrations and was accountable to the Assembly.

The Parti Progressiste Tchadien (PPT), dominated by Gabriel Lisette – an administrator of overseas France born in Guadeloupe, who became a fierce opponent of the administration from which he derived – established itself in the cotton zone (the south). A section of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), the PPT-RDA soon became a source of trade-union opposition in the factories of Cotonfran (the cotton company) and of resistance to the administration and traditional chiefs. As for the other major party, the Union Démocratique Tchadienne (UDT), it emerged as the party of the administration. In addition, we should note the creation of the Mouvement Socialiste Africain (MSA) by Ahmed Koulamallah in 1952 (Lanne, 1998). While Chad's political life was enlivened by several parties, rivalries between leaders and regional or religious loyalties were strong. The Muslim elites become aware of the influence exercised by people from the south of the country. Those who were the masters in the age of slavery and raids were fearful of an independence that would enable the southern elites to establish their domination.

The 1958 referendum on the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic gave birth to the Republic of Chad. François Tombalbaye, a former teacher from Moyen-Chari, taking advantage of a foreign mission by Lisette, seized power in 1959. He led the country to independence, which was proclaimed on August 11, 1960.

While reform of the colonial system represented a significant advance for Chadians, it did not put an end to policies of violent repression by the colonial authorities. In addition, inter-communal tensions developed against a background of political rivalries. Clashes between supporters of the PPT and the UDT broke out at Fort Lamy in August and at Fort Archambault in October 1947; houses and shops were ransacked and burnt. Other incidents developed into armed clashes (Lemarchand, 1980: 457-458).

**1946:** Several clashes between communities from the north and communities from the south occur at Fort Lamy, the capital. On 30 November, a domestic incident – a jealous husband kills the lover of his wife – degenerates into a pitched battle. Score-settling opposes Sara and Hadjarai. There are 11 deaths according to Bernard Lanne (Lanne, 1998: 94-96), and 13 according to René Lemarchand, who bases himself on secret French reports.

\*(Lemarchand, 1980: 457-458)

**1947:** A violent conflict erupts in Oum Hadjer in Batha between Missirie Arabs and Rattatines from the Hadjer Djombo, which causes more than 180 victims in two days. According to the district chief (French) of the time, the causes of the conflict are access to water taps and problems of customary taxation.

\*\* (Hugot, 1997)

**1952; April 16:** At Bebalem, in the Logone, the results of local elections are challenged by supporters of Gabriel Lisette: the PPT has lost. When the peasants mobilize and demonstrate armed with blades, the colonial authorities decide on the dispatch of two companies of colonial infantrymen. Between 120 and 150 men enter Bebalem on April 16, 1952. They fire on the crowd: there are 24 deaths according to the historian Bernard Lanne (Lanne, 1998: 197-218), 70 according to the circle of the canton chief, and 375 according to survivors met by Elie Ndoubayidi Dionmadji (Ndoubayidi Dionmadji, unpublished: 16). The leaders are

arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

**1958:** Clashes between Arabs and Foulbe in the Chari-Baguirmi. The number of dead is not known.

\*(Azevedo, 1998: 85)

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