# The Multiple Experiences of Civil War in the Guera region of Chad, 1965-1990

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## I. Introduction

The political history of Chad has received considerable attention from historians and political scientists. Debate in this literature has mostly concerned national politics and the consequences of political and military events for the distribution of power at the national level. However, with the exception of Pairault (1994), hardly any attention has been paid to the consequences of political conflicts, violence and the protracted war at the regional and local levels and the local perspectives on the war. Recent analyses of conflict situations in, for example, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Mozambique have shown that wars are complex social phenomena rather than straightforward struggles in support of political ideologies (Van Walraven & Abbink 2003: 15).[2] Resistance movements frequently have an ambiguous relationship with the peasant population they are supposed to be fighting for. Often extensive coercion is needed to win popular support (Kriger 1992, Clapham 1998), and in this process, the local population suffers. This influences political relations well after resistance movements manage to ultimately gain power. Attention for such complexities recently entered the debate on the civil war in Chad itself (Saleh Yacoub & Ngothé Gatta 2005, Garondé Djarma 2003). Trends and coalitions at the national level may be relevant for understanding events at the regional level, though in many cases local political dynamics of an entirely different nature play a prominent role in the conflict at the regional and local levels.

In this article we present an analysis of the civil war of Chad as it manifested itself in the Guéra that has always been mentioned as one of the core regions of the civil war. Events in three villages and the pro-

[1] A first draft of this paper was presented at the NVAS (Netherlands Association of Africanists) conference, 25–26 September 2003, in the panel entitled 'Conflict, violence and "reconciliation" in Africa: Local level views and efforts'.

[2] An impressive number of sources can be mentioned here. See Van Walraven & Abbink (2003) for a recent overview.

vincial capital are discussed as different case studies of the local dynamics of the civil war. Next to the search for local war stories this article also investigates the linkages between the local and national stories of the civil war. This was not a simple task, because of the lack of historical data: archival sources were hardly available. The local archives were in complete disarray, parts had been destroyed during the troubles. Problems were also encountered when interviewing people about their experiences during this period because of the erratic character of human memory. Another dilemma is the comparison of data that are available for the national level and on local level. The differences in sources make comparison difficult. It is therefore that we rather see this article as a first and tentative attempt to show that an elaboration of this local perspective on the civil war may form the nucleus of an alternative and new interpretation of the Chadian civil war.

After introducing the research area, the next section of the article is devoted to a brief description of the major events that form the context at the national level based on our re-reading of the historical accounts available. Hereafter, attention will be given to how the Guéra figured in relation to this national picture (as reported in the literature). Subsequently, a detailed account will be given of events in the Guéra at the level of three villages, Korlongo, Baro and Bourzan, situated in the northeast of the Guéra in the *préfecture* of Mongo, and the regional capital itself.

## II. The Guéra

The Guéra played a significant role in the war. The first peasant rebellion against oppressive policies imposed by the post-independence governmént of Ngarta Tombalbaye and his *Parti Progressiste Tchadien* occurred in this region in the district of Mangalmé. Many regard this uprising as a key event that triggered off more general resistance against the Tombalbaye regime. After this, political turmoil acquired its own dynamics. The Guéra was soon infiltrated by armed units of the FROLINAT (*Front pour la Libération National du Tchad*), a national resistance movement that was founded in 1966 and soon managed to become a thorn in the side of the regular Chadian army. During the period from 1965 to 1990, the region was the scene of protracted war, with shifting balances of power between different component parts of resistance groups against the regime in power, and with local rivalries.

The landscape of the Guéra is dominated by mountain massives separated by plains of alluvial origin. The region is in the centre of Chad about 400 km from the capital (see map in introduction). The area is in



the middle of the Sahelian zone with approximately 500–600 mm rainfall per annum. The region, with a surface area of 58,950 km$^2$, is ruled by a governor based in Mongo and subdivided into four *préfectures:* Mongo, Bitkine, Mangalmé and Melfi. These have recently been subdivided into *sous-préfectures* after an administrative reorganization. The number of inhabitants in 1993 was 306,253 and now is probably around 400,000. The population, collectively called Hadjerai (mountain people in colloquial Arabic), consists of a number of distinct ethnic groups that each speak a different language. Each group inhabits roughly one of the mountain blocks that dominate the landscape. Until recently the Hadjerai were mainly adherents of an animist cult called the Margay but now the majority have converted to Islam, with a minority being Christians and Animists. A minority group of Arab agropastoralists can be found on the plains, and in the northern part of the region. During the dry season they are joined by Arab pastoralists who spend the dry season in the area.

The Hadjerai population mainly subsists on millet and sorghum farming. The women cultivate peanuts, and sesame both for subsistence and as a cash crop. The area has been suffering from recurrent droughts over the past decades, which cause wild oscillations in crop production. Soil fertility is generally low, making permanent cultivation without inputs difficult. Cropping systems differ widely, ranging from shifting cultivation systems to more permanent cropping, depending on the possibilities for fertilizing. The minority of Arab agropastoralists subsists on a combination of livestock keeping and cereal cultivation. Some of these groups have very ancient ties to the region whereas others have moved into the area following the droughts and the fighting in the 1970s and 1980s. Nomadic Arab herding cattle and camels exploit the bush pastures mainly during the dry season.

Apart from cultivation, people survive on handicrafts and an increasing number of men are migrating to the capital N'Djaména, Sudan and beyond to the Central African Republic, Cameroon and Nigeria to look for work to supplement their family incomes. The region is poor by all standards and has very little infrastructure (de Bruijn et al., 2004).

The history of the area is marked by violence. Before the colonial era the Hadjerai fiercely resisted slave-raiding by the empires of Ouaddai and Baguirmi located to the east and west of the Guéra. The Margay priests were the main source of political authority, with little political centralization above the level of local communities. With colonialism, a new form of administration was introduced. Headmen (*chefs de canton*) were appointed by the French, a structure modelled on neighbouring pre-colonial empires. This organization remained in force after independence. Only after 2000, attempts were made to decentralize terri-

torial administration by creating *sous-préfectures* at the level of former colonial cantons. This process of administrative decentralization is still in progress.

### III. The Chadian 'Civil War': 1965–1990

During the 1960s and 1970s, the FROLINAT-led revolt attracted attention, not only because of the media coverage of the affaire Claustre[3], but also because of the heavy foreign involvement in the conflict, initially by France and later on by Libya and the United States. The Chadian conflict was among the first and lengthiest of the so-called liberation wars in Africa (cf. Clapham 1998, Konings et al. 2000). In the general context of the Cold War, Libya's involvement in Chad was a constant worry for Western interests. Chad was considered to be of strategic interest because of its position between North and Central Africa, and East and West Africa, and as a place where various religions (Muslim, Christian and Animist), and cultures (Arabo-Berber and African) meet.

Compared to other former French colonies, Chad was more disadvantaged when embarking upon independence. This landlocked country had little economic importance. There was no infrastructure, communication networks were not in place and there were very few educated people, with those that were educated being mainly from the south of the country. It was not possible to ensure even the most rudimentary form of administration in large parts of the country. The northern region known as BET (Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti), a virtually unpopulated desert area, remained under French administration until 1965. Southern civil servants lacked credibility in the eyes of the northern populations because they belonged to groups they used to enslave. Moreover, these southern civil servants thought the time had come for them to oppress the northern populations after centuries of slave raiding (Buijtenhuijs 1978, Nolutshungu 1996).

Political problems began soon after independence, when the regime of François (who later took the name Ngarta) Tombalbaye derailed in its attempts to hang on to power. Soon after independence, Tombalbaye established a one-party regime. One by one his political adversaries were accused of plotting against him, arrested, exiled or killed. In this process the north became increasingly marginalized politically and southerners came to occupy all the positions of power.

[3] Françoise Claustre, a French archaeologist, was abducted by the FROLINAT forces (the army led by Hissein Habré), and held hostage in the Tibesti region for almost three years (21 April 1974 until 1 February 1977) (see Claustre 1990).



In response to oppression and excessive taxation, the first peasant rebellions broke out in central and eastern Chad in September 1965, beginning in Bitchotchi in the district of Mangalmé. Moubi peasants killed members of a government delegation who came to demand unpaid taxes, after which severe repressive measures were taken by the Chadian army (Abbo Netcho 1997 Buijtenhuijs 1978, Azevedo 1998). The first incidents in the Tibesti took place in the same month (Lemoine 1997).

Since independence, opposition to the Chadian government was growing among Chadian migrants and refugees in Sudan and Egypt. This Chadian movement in exile was the precursor of the FROLINAT that was founded in Nyala (Sudan) on June 22, 1966 under the leadership of Ibrahima Abatcha. In the same year FROLINAT started attacks in the central and eastern parts of Chad, joining the existing peasant rebellions (Buijtenhuijs 1978, Lemoine 1997). By the end of 1968, the Chadian government had also to confront opposition in the northern provinces, the BET.[4]

With the participation of northern population groups (Toubous or alternatively Goranes) in the rebellion, FROLINAT began to diversify. Within the original FROLINAT, internal strife began after the death of Ibrahima Abatcha in battle on February 11, 1968 with the question of who was to succeed him. A further complicating factor was the problem of how to coordinate military action and yet maintain contact in such a vast territory and with the very limited means available. The various FROLINAT units in the field, the 1st Army in the centre and the east and later on the 2nd Army in the BET, had to act mostly using their own intelligence, and were effectively autonomous.

During the period from 1968 to 1973, the struggle against the government was characterized by low-level warfare with few resources (Azevedo 1998). With the firm backing of France, the Tombalbaye regime was in no danger despite the ineffectiveness of the regular Chadian army. However, FROLINAT forces increasingly took hold of the countryside in the north and east of the country.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the French forces that had intervened in Chad suffered serious losses in skirmishes with rebel groups that were better equipped than anticipated. French efforts were stepped up, and FROLINAT was put on the defensive. In the meantime divisions in the FROLINAT front became visible. Serious tensions arose between

[4] Buijtenhuijs (1978) denoted the armed opposition with the French word *Maquis* which was the name of the French underground resistance against the Nazi regime during the Second World War. It is interesting to note that in Europe the underground movement was seen in a positive light.

the 1st and the 2nd armies. The 1st Army, originating in the east of the country and supported by the Libyan government led by Gadaffi, reclaimed the leadership of FROLINAT without consulting the leadership (Goukouni Oueddeï) of the 2nd Army, the FAP, (*Forces Armées Populaires*) that came from the north. This led to fighting between the two groups. Hissein Habré organized resistance against Libyan influence in Chad and created the CCFAN (*Conseil de Commandement des Forces Armées du Nord*) in 1976 or FAN (*Forces Armées du Nord*) as it came to be called later on, a third power bloc within FROLINAT that would become Habré's personal vehicle to power (Buijtenhuijs 1987, Azevedo 1998).

From 1973 onwards, the political and military situation deteriorated rapidly. The president of Chad adopted a collision course with large parts of the population, his French allies and his own army with his movement towards African authenticity inspired by the examples of Mobuto in Zaïre and Caribbean advisors. He ceded control over the Aouzou strip in the extreme north of the country to Gadaffi, which was deeply resented by the opposition and his own entourage. Senior army officers were arrested and imprisoned. The troops fighting in the north were underprovisioned and ineffective. The military coup d'état against Tombalbaye during the night of April 13, 1975 surprised nobody.[5]

When Felix Malloum as chair of the CSM (*Conseil Supérieur Militaire*) came to power in 1975, the FROLINAT rebellion could still be controlled. Most opposition leaders realizing this were inclined to start negotiations with the military government in N'Djaména. However, the harsh and paternalistic tones from the capital, supported by France, led to a hardening of positions. Libya gave military support to the opposition. By 1978 the whole of the north was under the control of the opposition. For the moment the regime of Felix Malloum was saved by FROLINAT's inability to form a united front. The anti-Libya party, headed by Hissein Habré and his FAN, negotiated a new structure for the governance of Chad in 1978 under the heading of the *Charte Fondamentale,* which envisaged a better partitioning of political power between the north and the south of the country, and reform of the administrative and military apparatus of Chad. Following this agreement, Felix Malloum remained president and Hissein Habré became prime minister.

The pact soon crumbled because of fundamental disagreement between Malloum and Habré over the distribution of competences, which paralysed the whole administration (Dadi 1987, Buijtenhuijs 1987).

[5] It was more surprising that he succeeded in clinging on to power despite his increasing isolation, madness and heavy drinking (Noltshungu 1996).



Moreover Habré began to beat the drum of militant Islam in the north and confront Christians and animists (Noltshungu 1996, Azevedo 1998). Armed clashes began on February 12, 1979 between the FAN and the armed forces within the Chadian army loyal to General Malloum. The 1st Army and some smaller factions belonging to FROLINAT poured into N'Djaména to support Habré, and the Chadian army retreated southwards. The southern inhabitants of N'Djaména fled the city and mass killings took place both of southerners in the north and of northerners in the south. With these events, the fission between north and south acquired a distinct character. The south was now ruled by the *Comité Permanent,* headed by Colonel Kamougué, while the north was split among a number of factions originating from the totally fragmented FROLINAT, each of which formed a provisional government in its own area. The population was obliged to pay for the continuing civil war (Dadi 1987: 156 – 7).

During 1979 a number of initiatives were taken to repair the damage and to arrive at some form of government. After a brief interlude with Lol Mahamat Choua as president, Goukouni Oueddeï became president of the GUNT (*Gouvernement d'Union Nationale de Transition*). During the following years, the role of the Libyans was crucial: they increasingly infiltrated Chad and selectively supported a number of different factions.

Until 1982 the situation was very unclear. The GUNT was soon torn apart by internal discord. Some factions had the support of Libya and wanted French troops to leave the country and allow greater Libyan influence. The FAN, led by Hissein Habré who was the Minister of Defence in the GUNT, was squarely opposed to any Libyan influence in Chad and wanted Libyan troops to leave the country. Goukouni Oueddeï, who was acting as president, kept to the middle of the road. Insecurity reigned throughout the country. In the east, armed clashes started in 1980 between the FAN and the pro-Libyan factions. Initially the FAN was defeated and retreated to Sudan but with support from France, the United States and Sudan, it regained control of the centre of the country and took N'Djaména in the middle of 1982 (Lemoine 1997).

From 1982 to 1987 the Chadian conflict was dominated by the Libyan invasion and occupation of the north and the involvement of both France and the United States in the Cold War struggle between Libya with the Soviet Union in the background and a hesitant France with the US in the background. This is not to downplay the role of the Chadian parties, but opposition to Hissein Habré disunited the GUNT and under the much-contested leadership of Goukouni Oueddeï it became increasingly a client of Moammar Gadaffi.

Military activities predominantly took place in the north, which was occupied by the Libyans who were behaving like conquerors, and soon lost support among the Gorane/Toubou section of the population. Around 1986, Goukouni Oueddeï decided to side with the FAN[6] of Hissein Habré. He was subsequently arrested and shot in the stomach by the Libyans (Lemoine 1997: 273–4). The CDR (*Conseil Démocratique Révolutionaire* – the Arab party) was the most loyal ally of Gadaffi and was entirely dependent upon Libya for its military supplies. Government forces under Habré received enormous support from the French and the Americans. The opposition and Libyan forces were annihilated and driven back far into Libya in the course of 1987. FROLINAT, as a relevant political and military entity, ceased to exist because of internal discord.

In the south a rebellion by the Codos, a loosely knit movement of southern rebels with no articulated political programme, attracted the most attention and incited severe repression by the FANT in the southern districts. Due to insecurity here too, the situation was very bad for the local population.

Hissein Habré used two methods to remain in power. One was the brutal repression of all forces opposing his regime. A conservative estimate is that 40,000 people were killed and many more were imprisoned and tortured by the DDS (*Direction de la Documentation et de la Sécurité*), his secret service. A second strategy he followed was the co-optation of former opponents into his government and the army. However, this led to discontent amongst his closest aids because he created powerful losers within his own following (Atlas & Licklider 1999: 44, Foltz 1995: 29). With the opposition outside his movement being powerless, any challenge would only come from inside. A dissident movement led by the Hadjerai, the MOSANAT (*Mouvement pour le Salut National du Tchad*), was brutally repressed (Buijtenhuijs 1987, Nolutshungu 1996). When two of his closest aids, Idriss Déby and Hassan Djamous, defected in April 1989 and escaped to Sudan, they started the MPS (*Mouvement Patriotique du Salut*), with an important Hadjerai component composed of the remains of the MOSANAT and Hadjerai refugees in Sudan. From April to December 1990 the MPS defeated the forces of the Chadian government and took over N'Djaména on December 2, 1990.

Despite numerous armed uprisings and punitive expeditions, the Déby government has remained in power ever since. Essentially Déby has followed the same strategy as Hissein Habré by co-opting former enemies into his government. Unlike in the Habré era, this did not result in his downfall, probably because he has allowed multi-party democracy and the expression of dissent. Discontent and political struggle have thus been channelled through state institutions instead of the use of violence, despite alleged fraudulent elections, authoritarian periods and political manipulation at all levels (Atlas & Licklider 1999: 46, Buijtenhuijs 1998). The current situation of near chaos with the Darfur crisis and violent resistance by a coalition of discontented former Déby allies shows how fragile these coalitions are in the Chadian context (de Bruijn & Van Dijk 2006, ICG 2006).

[6] Rebaptized FANT (*Forces Armées Nationales Tchadiennes*) because of the inclusion of southern troops in the FAN, though FAN elements remained entirely dominant.



## IV. The Guéra and the Hadjerai in the 'Civil War'

In the early phase of its existence FROLINAT claimed to be in charge of a popular revolt against imperialism based on the support of the majority of the Chadian population. As this FROLINAT text dated 1969 stated:

> *Grâce à la confiance et au soutien de nos masses populaires le Frolinat a réussi à se renforcer militairement et politiquement à l'intérieur du pays en libérant des régions entières du territoire national...* (cited in Buijtenhuijs 1978: 197–80)

However, in 1978 Buijtenhuijs was already raising doubts as to whether forces associated with FROLINAT did indeed control these areas. To what extent were they in command of the situation in the countryside? What was the character of their relations with the population? Where were the regions that they claimed to control? Did they establish an administrative structure and service delivery? Reading Buijtenhuijs (1978), one cannot but conclude that the differences between the regions and between ethnic groups were significant. In some areas FROLINAT did not lead the opposition at all as the population did not accept their authority (Buijtenhuijs 1978: 173–4). In the south they had very little presence. Later on, FROLINAT fell apart into a number of factions, which was not conducive to having control over the countryside. So the situation in the Guéra described below is certainly not representative of the whole of Chad.

Though most of the literature and research on the history of revolts and the civil war in Chad focus on the national level and very little is known about the course of events at a regional level, the Guéra features regularly in the main sources on the civil war (Buijtenhuijs 1978, 1987, Nolutshungu 1996, Lemoine 1997, Azevedo 1998, Garondé 2003, Saleh Yacoub & Ngothé Gatta 2005). Throughout the whole period cov-

ered by this article (1965–1990), the Guéra was at centre stage in two ways. Firstly, the Guéra was part of the battleground. Armed groups were soon present in the bush, and tried to gain a hold over the population and the countryside. Therefore, especially at the beginning of the conflict, the Guéra was an important area over which the government needed to try to impose order, as a citation Buijtenhuijs found in a military document from the late 1960s shows.

> "Passons au Guéra, où d'énormes efforts ont été faits par les forces armées, mais où malheureusement les résultats n'ont pas été concluants. La situation est stagnante, et la population nous échappe. C'est d'ailleurs l'endroit où il y a le moins de milices villageoises susceptibles d'être constituées... Au Guéra donc, un gros effort est à accomplir sur la population ..." (Buijtenhuijs 1978: 174)

The second way in which the Guéra was drawn into the conflict was the participation of the Hadjerai in the armed forces both on the side of the government and the rebels. According to current wisdom, the regular Chadian army was mainly composed of southerners, and the rebel forces were primarily Arabs and Goranes from the north. However, the number of Hadjerai[7] from the Guéra on both sides in the conflict was considerable and some rose to high-level positions and at times opposed those in power, which led to severe repression in the Guéra itself.

### *The First Years of Rebellion (1965–1975)*

Soon after the revolts against the Tombalbaye regime started in Mangalmé in 1966, the first skirmishes occurred between rebel groups hiding in the bush and the regular Chadian army. These bands were mainly on the plains because of insufficient water in the higher parts of the mountains. According to testimonies recorded by Buijtenhuijs (1978: 133–4), rebels presented themselves in the villages to explain their activities and objectives and asked permission to recruit youths from the villages. An anonymous observer adds that in the Guéra these recruits were mainly youth who were required to leave school because of their 'advanced' age or their bad behaviour, which is contradicted

[7] In pre-colonial times, the Hadjerai ferociously defended their area against the armies of the surrounding slave-raiding empires. Under colonial rule many Hadjerai joined the French army, which still has an office in Mongo to pay out army pensions. After independence, the Chadian army also took them on as military personnel. Many Hadjerai men migrated to Sudan to work and escape oppression by the Tombalbaye regime, and joined FROLINAT factions as well. However, only rough estimates are available about the ethnic and regional composition of the various FROLINAT armies (Buijtenhuijs 1978, 1987, Lemoine 1997).



by Buijtenhuijs's observation that most of them had a background in Koranic education (1978: 135–6).

According to sources cited in Buijtenhuijs (1978: 174–8), large parts of the centre and the east of the country were controlled by 'bandits', who were not only causing insecurity and attacks on military targets but were also able to paralyse the economy. They demolished schools and clinics in the countryside (they needed money and medicine) (Buijtenhuijs 1978: 141). The provisioning of fuel and basic food and clothing was disrupted, and the shops were empty. '*Pour la seule préfecture du Guéra, dont les besoins ont été chiffrés par le Préfet à 2100 tonnes seulement 80 tonnes ont été acheminées à ce jour.*'[8] According to intelligence reports, FROLINAT rebels surrounded a number of rural towns and were in 'a position to ensure the fall of Mongo... within a few weeks' (Mitchell 1972 cited in Buijtenhuijs 1978: 208). Because of this situation, Tombalbaye asked the French army for support and, with assistance from helicopters, the French army wiped out the majority of the 200–300 armed bands in the course of 1970.

However, Libya started to support FROLINAT and despite several setbacks in battle, rebel forces regained control of the countryside in the Guéra by the end of 1972. As a result, almost half of the schools were closed, livestock keeping was no longer possible because of theft, and clinics had been pillaged and no longer functioned properly. There was no public transport and trade possible because of the insecurity, and cereal stocks and standing crops were pillaged by rebels, which numbered approximately 2,000 men (Buijtenhuijs 1978: 260).

All these military results were attained despite the fact that the 1st Army, which was active in the region, was suffering from internal discord and fighting with Arab factions. The final result was that only administrative centers were occupied by the regular army while the countryside was abandoned to the rebels where they could do what they wanted. Local chiefs – the *chefs de canton* – retreated to the capitals of the districts of Mongo, Melfi and Bitkine.

There was hardly any control by the FROLINAT leadership of the bands active in the field and as a result of the lack of educated people in these bands, there was no trace of any form of regular administration. The rebels had to live off the population and levied taxes on money and food. The *zakat* (Islamic income tax) was also levied. According to documents from FROLINAT itself, village committees were set up to take care of political education but it is doubtful whether these committees really had any importance in the Guéra.

[8] Official document cited in Buijtenhuijs (1978).

In the literature very little is said about the economic and food security situation during this period, although in other Sahelian countries famine was ravaging the countryside. In the absence of trade, transport and security, it is doubtful whether aid agencies were able to distribute food in the Guéra. It is not known whether rainfall was deficient or not, as production figures for crops and rainfall figures were not collected.

*Years of Turbulence (1975–1982)*

Whereas during the last years of the Tombalbaye regime there seems to have been a lull in the fighting because the Chadian army gave up its efforts to control the countryside in the Guéra, this began to change after the CSM (*Conseil Supérieure Militaire*) took power. When it became clear that peace could not be achieved at the negotiating table, the 1st Army and its offshoot – the Vulcan Army – started to be increasingly dependent on outside aid from Libya and that coming indirectly from socialist countries. Following a conflict over the leadership of the 1st Army, a new Arab-dominated group, the *Conseil Démocratique Révolutionaire*, was established in the Guéra in 1979. Another development is what could be labeled the gradual 'professionalization' of warfare, with more sophisticated weaponry and better-trained combatants on both sides as a result of the influence of Libya and France.

When the north and the south of Chad were divided after the events in February 1979 and the ascent to power of the GUNT, the Guéra was dominated by the 1st Army and the CDR, both supported by Libya (Dadi 1987: 157, Buijtenhuijs 1984: 22). However, from the sources available it is not clear who was in power in which place in the Guéra. As tension increased between the FAN and the GUNT in the capital, fighting broke out between the 1st Army and the FAN of Hissein Habré in March 1980. A few days later, the FAN attacked Mongo, which was also held by the 1st Army, and took over the city (Lemoine 1997: 182). Other FROLINAT factions supporting the GUNT (FAC and FAP) started fighting the FAN in N'Djaména. As these factions were backed by Libya, FAN had to retreat eastwards and when, backed by France, it opened an offensive in Chad, the centre of the country was one of its targets because of its strategic location on the route to N'Djaména. In 1981 fighting also broke out between the CDR and the 1st Army in Mongo. The FAN conquered Oum Hadjer in December 1981 and by the middle of 1982 the centre of Chad was under the control of the FAN. Fighting between the FAN and remnants of the CDR continued in the Guéra and the north until December 1982 (Lemoine 1997: 233, 238).



*Habré in Power (1982–1990)*

After Hissein Habré took power, the fighting moved to the north of Chad, and relative calm reigned in the Guéra until 1986. Habré ruled the country with an iron fist in the Guéra as well as elsewhere. The Hadjerai played an important role in the FAN, which could be explained by the animosity between the Hadjerai and the 1st Army and the CDR, which had been dominating the military situation in the Guéra for a long time and did not enjoy good relations with the Hadjerai (see below). Moreover the 1st Army and the CDR were controlled by Arabs, the traditional adversaries of the Hadjerai and supported for a long time by Libya.[9] Secondly, the second-in-command in the FAN Idriss Miskine, who was also Minister of Foreign Affairs when Habré became president, was a Hadjerai and was very popular, even among Habré's opponents.

Relations between the Hadjerai and the FAN were marked by tension, though. By 1983, Hadjerai had defected from the newly formed Chadian army (FANT: *Forces Armées Nationales Tchadiennes*) when fighting forces of the GUNT in the north of Chad. Relations became even more strained after the death of Idriss Miskine in 1984 from malaria[10] because the Anakaza, the ethnic group of Hissein Habré, dominated politics. In October 1986 the *Mouvement pour le Salut National du Tchad* (MOSANAT) was founded under Hadjerai leadership. In 1987 the last two Hadjerai ministers were removed from the government, which made conflict between the Hadjerai and Habré inevitable. The MOSANAT allied itself in 1987 with a FROLINAT faction (*FROLINAT-Originel*) and the 1st Army and this coalition started a rebellion from Sudan in 1987. The Guéra paid a heavy price as dozens of villages were destroyed during the government campaign to wipe out the opposition and numerous educated Hadjerai were executed in N'Djaména and in the Guéra itself (Foltz 1995: 28–9).

Later on, in 1989 when Idriss Déby was organizing his rebellion, the MOSANAT joined the MPS (*Mouvement Patriotique du Salut*) of Idriss Déby. Again, the Hadjerai played an important role in a rebellion against the Habré regime and they were among the troops that defeated the FANT in the course of 1990.

In conclusion, there is only very general information available about the Guéra in sources on the civil war and the political history of Chad. The historiography of the war is solely concerned with national effects

9 See Buijtenhuijs (1984: 19–22) for a discussion of CDR relations with Libya.

10 According to rumours, there were major divergences between him and Hissein Habré.

and not with the impact of the war at a regional and local level. In as far as local and regional events are mentioned, they are squarely put within this national framework, and regional and local specificities are absent. The diversity and cultural, linguistic and historical differences among the Hadjerai are neglected or downplayed to show the role they play at the national level. This means that local and regional histories, not only of the Guéra but also of other regions in Chad, are still to be written.

## V. Local Histories of Civil War in the Guéra

In this section the question as to what this period of war meant for the people on the ground is central. Did they experience war and, if so, what kind of war was it? Were all the people involved in the same way? What are their perspectives of the war? Do these people's stories reflect the national dynamics of the war and the involvement of the Hadjerai as they are described above? Are the national and local merged in this sense or are they separate? To understand the experience of war at a local level, one should consider local history but investigating local histories of war and of situations of crisis is not easy. What do people remember of these difficult periods? What do they want to share with an outsider? Wartime experiences are full of tension. People were sometimes forced to do things that they may regret in retrospect, or the whole period is loaded with bad memories which are difficult to relate to a stranger or that are too traumatic to be remembered at all. Memories of past experiences are also moulded to fit present concerns. Some parts are left out, while others are emphasized.

Interviews about people's experiences during the war were held in villages as well as in urban settings, N'Djaména and Mongo the district capital, and among migrants from the Guéra villages.[11] The difficulties we encountered to gather information is illustrated by the following example. In the villages where we did research, nobody except for people with political functions claimed to have taken part in any of the movements. However, many Hadjerai we interviewed claimed that the Hadjerai were the ones who helped Hissein Habré and Idriss Déby to power. These must have been other Hadjerai than those we encountered.[12]

[11] Throughout the article people remain anonymous to protect their security. Despite this, some people will be recognizable because of their role and / or function now or in the past. The criterion used to decide whether or not to report these stories was whether the events in the story were public knowledge or not.

[12] El Hadj Garondé, however, also mentions very few Hadjerai in his eyewitness account (Garondé Djarma 2003).



Either the claim is false, or these were Hadjerai who were already disconnected from rural society, or became disconnected during the war. The final possibility is that they were killed during the various massacres that took place in the Guéra and N'Djaména. Those who were part of the movement may also be disinclined to talk about their role in the civil war. The whole period, with all the atrocities committed and the ethnic and religious cleavages involved is a source of political tension. An open and honest discussion about all these events seems not possible as many of those involved are still in place, and this might stir up old and new conflicts.

An important number of the informants who shared part of their war experiences with us were ordinary villagers during the time of the war. Some occupied political positions in the villages and were linked to the organization of national government in that sense. In the following section we give a sketch of the situation as it was experienced by these people in the small town of Mongo and the three villages of Baro, Bourzan and Korlongo. Mongo is an administrative town of 20,000 inhabitants and is the capital of the Guéra. Baro is the main village of the Migaami canton, now a *sous-préfecture*. It has 5,000 inhabitants and is situated 30 km south of the main road between Mongo and Mangalmé, east of the Abu Telfan massif. Bourzan is a small village of 600 inhabitants along the road from Mongo to Am Timam 40 km south of Mongo, and Korlongo is located 20 km west of Mongo some kilometres north of the road to Bitkine and has approximately 4,000 inhabitants. Below, we summarize the results of the interviews with (former) inhabitants of these four sites in which we concentrated our research efforts.[13] The interviews revealed that despite the common history of the area, there was considerable variation in war experiences and local perspectives from one village to another. In the interviews, themes were discussed that may help to assess the influence of the war on the villages and its population and to gain some insight into the relationship between the local and the national war stories. These themes were 1) violence and repression; 2) the organisation of the rebellion; and 3) the role of religion and ideology; moreover, the differences between the various sites can partly be explained by the variation in the relations between those who are considered rebels and the leading chiefs and administrators in the villages (see below, section 6). Despite the diversity in data and inevitable subjectivity, the case studies offer an interesting view of the way in which their geographical situation, political position in the past, their accessibility, and

[13] These villages were not selected because of their war histories but because of the migrant communities we interviewed in N'Djaména. The history of war is only one part of our research project in Chad.

their degree of integration into the modern world influenced their wartime experiences.

*Mongo: District Capital, Safe Haven?*

As an administrative centre, Mongo was a centre of military activity, though not necessarily the centre of fighting. During the civil war there were very few safe havens for the ordinary people. In the northeastern part of the Guéra, Mongo was probably such a place. During this period the number of inhabitants in Mongo increased and a new quarter (*Secteur* 4) was created (see de Bruijn 2006). In the first period of the war, until 1979, Mongo was a site of refuge for many people as it was more or less under the control of the regular Chadian army. In the poorest quarter on the eastern outskirts of Mongo (*Secteur* 4), we encountered several people who had fled their villages during the war and become internally displaced people. When the CDR took control in Mongo in 1979 they fled back to their villages because they felt more secure there. As an old Arab who left his village told us:

> "... me rappelant les années bandits à Oyo: celui qui a beaucoup de bétail qui ne donne rien lorsque les bandits se présentent, on tranche sa gorge (...) Je témoins 5 à 6 personnes tuées devant moi, que je connais. Si les rebelles se présentent au village, ils imposent à la population de payer 50.000 à 100.000 FCFA, si ce n'est pas fait, ils torturent et tuent la population. S'ils attrapent un chef de village, il faut le sauver en donnant le prix fixé par les rebelles, si non, on lui tranche la gorge. Mais aussi à chaque fois qu'ils se présentent, un taureau ou des chèvres et moutons sont abattus à leur honneur. Ils ont une stratégie qui est la suite: les rebelles, ils descendent à des kilomètres du village et envoient quelques éléments pour ce travail, si les villageois refusent, ils les rackettent."

On the other hand when another movement took over, this often entailed new hardships and a period of insecurity. A tailor now living in Mongo explained:

> "En ce qui concerne le CDR, nous avons fui ce quartier, presque toutes les personnes sauf les rebelles qui l'occupaient. Moi en question, je suis allé me réfugier dans mon village. Je suis sorti de Termel au secours au village en entendant les résonances des armes lourdes, et même derrière moi croyant que les rebelles sont en train de me poursuivre. Arrivé au village, les résonances des fusils s'entendaient. J'ai passé quelque temps là-bas, 5 ans. Ma raison de la fuite etait que j'ai eu peur de la mort. En ce temps, j'ai fui la mort, je n'étais pas là. Se réfugier dans un trou des montagnes, on te poursuit toujours. Pendant mon séjour au village, je suis revenu encore à la famine."

The present appearance of Mongo is today partly a result of the events that happened during the war. When the CDR occupied Mongo town, they established their headquarters in the Protestant mission, a complex with a boarding school, a church and houses for the clerics, next to today's *Secteur* 4. The head of this church left his house during the first attack and was shot dead. The others fled, and the buildings were deserted. The soldiers of the CDR subsequently occupied the buildings and lived off the local population.[14] What many people painfully regret is the destruction of the beautiful gardens around Mongo. The CDR cut down all the fruit trees and destroyed the environment, creating the empty space that is now *Secteur* 4. On the other hand, this quarter attracted many refugees, especially when the Red Cross set up a food distribution centre there on the vacant ground next to the Protestant mission during the 1983–1984 droughts and the area became home to refugees and people hit by the famine.[15] Now this area has been transformed into a residential part of town where extremely poor people can still be found.



This impression of experiences during the war in Mongo suggests displacement and refuge that may be typical for the whole zone. The stories we gathered in the three villages show similar patterns.

*Baro: Between Government and Rebel Troops*

Baro is located at the entrance to two valleys that lead into the Abu Telfan Massif, which is a nature reserve where restrictions on the use of natural resources are officially in force. This reserve provides dry-season pasture for pastoralists. A big *wadi* that meanders through Baro contains water during the rainy season and in the dry season shallow wells are dug in its bed to provide water. The *wadi* and its direct surroundings provide good agricultural land. Both the water situation and the reserve make Baro an attractive place to live for cultivators and herders. Over the past decades this area has attracted many Arab livestock keepers from the north searching better pasture areas. Consequently, more and more nomads have settled in the region. The original inhabitants of Baro belong to the Migaame, or Djongor Abu Telfan, as they are called in the older literature (Fuchs 1970, Vincent 1987).

During the 20th century Baro was one of the areas where French schooling and the Catholic mission had a lot of influence. As a result, the Migaame are among the better educated, and many work as civil servants in town. At present Baro is also relatively well provisioned in terms of government services and social care. There are several elementary schools and since 2004 a secondary school that is run by the Catholic mission. The village has a dispensary originally established

14 Interview with the head of the Protestant church in 2003.

15 Interview with various old ladies in *Secteur* 4, see also de Bruijn 2006.

by the Catholic mission, an extension agent of the agricultural service, and several NGOs run programmes in the area. Despite this, poverty is widespread and there are numerous female-headed households that are struggling to survive. Many inhabitants are dependent on remittances from relatives in town. In spite of its long presence in the area, the Catholic church does not have a large following at present: the majority of Baro's inhabitants are Muslim, and the Margay cult, the animistic religion of the Hadjerai related to the mountain spirits, still has some influence.

The information on Baro was collected from migrants in N'Djaména and inhabitants of Baro who lived through the war. Many people fled the village and settled in N'Djaména, Cameroon and even Nigeria. Only a few of them have returned to Baro.[16] Many of these informants had gone to school, including the *chef de canton,* who was directly involved in the rebellion at a certain stage, and we were able to communicate with them in French[17], which enabled us to gain more insight into the dynamics of local politics during the war in Baro than elsewhere.

Baro did not exist before the war. At independence the village that provides today's *chef de canton* of Baro was situated at the foot of Mount Duram, a few kilometres from the current administrative centre of Baro. On the mountain is the altar of the Margay (mountain spirit). By the end of the 1950s, the Catholic church had chosen Duram as one of their entry points into the Guéra. This request led to discord in the village but finally the *chef de village* allowed the missionaries to build their compound on his own fields some 2 km from the village. He saw the advantages of having the missionaries in his village because they would build a dispensary and a school and would educate his people. It was only on these conditions that he allowed them to settle in his village. And the installation of the Catholic mission did indeed bring the village a primary and secondary school, a hospital and a church. The number of Catholics in the village grew with time and at independence the village was relatively integrated into 'modern' life.

The peasant uprising in Mangalmé in 1965 did not leave the villagers near Abu Telfan untouched. They felt the same discontent with the

[16] Initially it was not easy to find people who were willing to tell us about the history of the war in Baro. Finally, we met a lady who had left Baro in 1979 and lived in N'Djaména ever since. She was very interested in her own history and contacted various former rebels for us and talked to other older Baro migrants. She put together in this way her war history of Baro that we discussed with her. This history also included interviews we did ourselves in N'Djaména, Baro and Mongo.

[17] In the Guéra each sub-group of the Hadjerai has its own dialect. Chadian Arabic is the market language.



Tombalbaye government as the people in Mangalmé and they have not seen any improvement in their situation since independence. Soon after the events in Mangalmé, men from Abu Telfan joined the uprising. The Abu Telfan and especially Duram where the Catholic mission was situated became an important target for the rebels. In 1967[18] the Catholic mission was attacked and the school, hospital and other mission buildings were seriously damaged. The missionaries were forced to leave and some were even killed. Medicine was stolen and equipment destroyed.[19] The rebels[20] also attacked the compound of the *chef de canton* and stole the guards' weapons before disappearing into the bush. A second attack was staged in 1970, again to get arms and medicine.

The Chadian government provided the *chef de canton* with weapons and posted government troops to support his fight against the rebels. Alongside the *chef de canton,* the *chef de village* took sides with the Chadian government and resisted other attacks. Because the village of Duram was well protected, the rebels attacked surrounding villages and general insecurity in the area increased. *'Les rebelles commencèrent par piller les villages environnants, des combats sanglants et meurtriers eurent lieu entre les rebelles et les paysans environnants; les plus meurtriers furent celui de Dorga à 28 km de Baro, Boutill et Tabo.'*[21] It was then that the government decided to settle the inhabitants from the surrounding villages and mountains in present-day Baro, just north of a large water course and the Catholic Mission buildings so that government troops could provide protection. Baro increased enormously in size, and the village became a small town.

Despite these measures, the situation became too difficult in the course of the 1970s and the *chef de canton* decided to strike a deal with the rebels. This move changed Baro's position vis-à-vis the government, with the result that the *chef de canton* was arrested and taken to N'Djaména as a political prisoner. When he left Baro, government control of the situation declined and the rebels extended their

[18] In the interviews the date of the first attack varied between 1966, 1967 and 1969. It is important that right from the start of the civil war the region was involved in the violent conflict.

[19] This was confirmed in an interview with Père Serge in N'Djaména on 03–03–2003, who was living in Baro in this period and was one of the priests who were forced to flee. Later in 1980 he was again a victim of such an attack and taken hostage in Am Timam to the southeast.

[20] In the interviews the rebels are often named *sawraa,* which means rebellion or revolt in Chadian dialect of Arabic; *sawri* is rebel.

[21] Information collected from the lady in N'Djaména.

power over the village. *'Le canton fut envahi, le palais du chef fut brûlé et les maisons de certains paysans ne furent pas épargnées.'*[22] The effect was that the people felt abandoned by their own government and many took sides with the rebels *(sawraa)* and some men joined them in the bush.

The imprisoned *chef de canton* was replaced by the present *chef de canton,* his son Ahmat Maharap[23], four months before the Chadian army staged the military coup against Tombalbaye in April 1975 and Malloum became president. The new government ordered the *chefs de canton* in the regions to levy taxes on the rebels and force them into submission. However, when it was clear that the security situation in the area had deteriorated, they withdrew the *chefs de canton* to Mongo and left the population unprotected. Two large groups of rebels were present in Sissi, a village near Baro in the centre of the Abu Telfan Massif. Ahmat negotiated with them in order to keep the situation calm around Baro. Correspondence between Ahmat Maharap and the *sous-préfet* of Mongo, dated 10, 13, 14, 19 and 26 June 1975[24] show that Ahmat asked for help because he was not able to control the rebels. They refused to pay taxes, disrupted the transport of cotton from the fields and generally controlled the rural areas.

To cite one of Ahmat's letters to the *sous-préfet* (*compatriote sous-préfet*) on 26 June 1975:

> "J'ai l'honneur de vous avertir que les rebelles ont refusé aux gens des villages de payer l'impôt. Ils ont dit, si nous continuons avec la collection des impôts, ils vont nous attaquer d'ici en quelques jours."

Another letter from the same Ahmat *chef de canton* of Baro to the *préfet* of the Guéra dated 10 June 1975 reads as follows:

> "Nous étions en tournée à Sissi. Reçu comme renseignement par leur représentant du nom Bakari, on lui a dit de me dire qu'ils ne vont pas se rallier, mais ils interdisent le mouvement du coton comme impôt et qu'il y aurait dans six mois beaucoup de sang coulé par dessus. On a dit que la république sera divisée en deux côtés: les musulmans seront commandés par eux. Les kirdis[25] seront commandés par les Saras. Le nombre est de 130 têtes armées de fal [illegible]..."

22 Idem.

23 We interviewed him on several occasions. A video-taped interview in which he told his life history was made in April 2003. His appointment tilted power relations in the *canton.* Ahmat Maharap is the son of a former slave, or servant of the *chef de village* who gave land to the Catholic mission. When the French asked this village chief to become *chef de canton* he refused and put his 'slave' in this position, expecting that he, as *chef de village,* would be in charge in case of important decisions. This power balance was definitively turned upside down by the period of troubles in the region.

24 By chance, we found these letters in the archives of the *sous-préfecture* of Mongo, which were in total disarray.



In the region around Baro there were two commanders: Jamal Faya and Idriss Mahadjir, as mentioned by Ahmat in these letters and during the interview. We heard several stories about Jamal Faya. Jamal Faya means 'camel of Faya'. His name indicates that he originated from Faya, the capital of the BET. He was a very tall man and people still speak of him in admiration; indications of the number of men that lived with him in the bush varied from sixty to 130.[26] He fed them by exploiting the villagers. Idriss Mahadjir must have had a similar group. Ahmat went to their camps to negotiate a deal, but they took his militia's weapons. Back in Baro he asked the advice of his councillors who told him to leave Baro and join the rebels because he risked being arrested by the government. Ahmat went back to the bush and joined the rebels.[27] He became a leader of the *sawraa,* fighting against villages in the east with his own team of 50 men. During one attack on a village on the Sudanese border he was wounded and the *sawraa* finally let him return to Baro. Because he did not want to fight again he left for N'Djaména where he lived with other *chefs de canton* from the Guéra in Klemat, in that time a Hadjerai quarter.

The rebels lived in the bush in camps. The story of a former rebel from Baro[28], who lives in N'Djaména and is an agent of the forest service, gives some insight into this life as a rebel. In 1970 when he was 12–13 years old he was shocked by the maltreatment of his uncle by the Tombalbaye administrators and this made him decide to go into the bush where he encountered a rebel group and decided to join their ranks. To do so, he had to swear on the Koran: *'Au debut, j'ai juré le Coran, et donc je ne peux rien dire, les succès et les grands tueries sont*

25 *Kirdis* is the word used by Muslims from the north to denote pagans. The term is pejorative and expresses the superiority of Muslims over them.

26 60 is the number the people in the village gave us. In a letter from the *chef de canton* to the district head in Mongo he mentioned that there were 130 people. As the local authorities seemed well informed, this indicates a stalemate. The authorities knew exactly where the rebels were located but they were incapable of attacking their sites and controlling the countryside because of a lack of fighting capacity.

27 In another story related by migrants in N'Djaména, it was said that just before or during the attack in 1979 the rebels took the *chef de canton* hostage when he had a meeting in a village nearby. The rebels burned down the *chef de canton's* quarters and plundered the government's weapons depot in Baro. Fearing government reprisals, or simply because he sympathized with the rebels, the *chef de canton* decided to join the rebels.

28 We interviewed him in N'Djaména, but not in his own home. He was very nervous during the interview in March 2003.

*des secrets, je me sacrifie, c'est tout, c'est le chef seulement qui peut dire, mais il est mort, donc l'histoire est finie, mais le Coran est toujours là.'* As a young rebel, he was mainly given tasks in the camp, where he did the cooking, etc. His story reveals how difficult life in these camps was, living under trees in different ethnic groups. He mentioned Moubi, Bidiyo and Migaame. *'Quelqu'un qui est sous un arbre, est-ce qu'il peut dire qu'il est content? Il ne peut pas!'* He also mentioned the difficult periods during the drought when there was nothing to eat and some people starved to death. The older rebels attacked villages.[29] Apparently Ahmat became the head of one such 'battalion'.

The rebels (1st Army) finally took control of Baro in 1979 and they shut down the Catholic mission and Catholicism was outlawed. The Catholics all either fled or were forced to convert to Islam. All the items from the mission were declared forbidden and people who possessed such objects were fined 50.000–100.000 F'CFA. They had to bury their ploughs, tables, chairs and all other 'western' equipment, and they had to feed the *sawraa*. A migrant woman in N'Djaména remembered how her mother coped with this situation. She had to cook for the rebels at that time, which she did with a smile. She preferred to please the rebels so that they would be kind to her. They rewarded her with small gifts of money. Other women living today in Baro told us that women were forced to marry the rebels. The rebels simply asked for the most beautiful women and took them away. Most of these women did not return to Baro and their present whereabouts are not known.

When the FAN took power in Chad in 1982, the situation did not improve much in Baro. The *chefs de canton* from the Guéra who were in N'Djaména offered their help to the FAN through Idriss Miskine, a Hadjerai and the second-in-command of the FAN, to fight the remnants of the 1st Army and the CDR. Their offer was declined. Later, when the FAN had taken over Baro, too, the *chef de canton* returned and took up his former post. During 1984 and 1985, famine raged through the country. When food aid arrived, FAN troops tried to take it for themselves. Due to intervention by the *chef de canton*, the food was finally distributed among the population, the soldiers were withdrawn from Baro and the administration was put in the hands of the *chef de canton*. People's stories about the hardships they faced during this period are confirmed in a film documentary made in the area by

[29] Interview in N'Djaména, April 2003; the film *Daresalam* (*Let there be peace*) made by Issa Serge Coelo, a Chadian film maker, is a Chadian account on this period. The film is based on personal experiences and illustrates how young men were recruited by the rebellion and the role of internal conflict in the rebellion.



Brandpunt[30] who followed the Red Cross, which was the only emergency aid organization in Chad at the time.

The FAN also had a death list of people they considered hostile to their cause. Only one of the men from Baro on the list survived. He was a prominent member of the Catholic Church and remains so today. When the FAN entered the area, he fled Mongo where he was living at the time having fled Baro when it came under the command of the rebels after the attack of 1979. He went to Lagos where he hid for almost three years. When he finally returned to Baro in the mid-1980s he found that his brother, who was his caretaker, had destroyed the house to prevent FAN troops from taking it.[31] When one of the priests[32] returned to Baro in 1982 his first conclusion was that the Muslims had taken over as the church was almost empty.

Other people left because of the famine. The story of the *chef de village*, who is the son of the first *chef de canton* who invited the Catholic mission to establish itself in Duram, coincides with these historical facts. The *chef de village* did not leave Baro after the rebels attacked in 1979 or when they occupied Baro in the 1980s. He decided to stay and support his people but when famine ravaged the country in 1984 he also fled to join his brother who had migrated to N'Djaména in 1962 before the problems started. The *chef* left the village in the hands of his cousin. His wife left after him with the children. She went from village to village where she begged for food and sometimes for work.[33] Finally she joined her husband in N'Djaména. The *chef de village* died of illness in N'Djaména and never went back to Baro where his cousin had taken over his post and never returned it to the son of the former *chef de village*, who according to the old chief's branch of the family is the rightful successor to this office. Even today, members of the family of the *chef de village* claim their rights to this post.

An important aspect of the rebellion in the history of Baro seems to be an anti-modern, anti-Christian and pro-Muslim attitude. Baro was an important point of attack for the rebels because of the Catholic mission that represented the modern world. By destroying their work, they expressed an anti-modern attitude. Many Catholics left Baro and others hid their religion, while some converted to Islam. Now a large

[30] Video-tape 12207, 2–10–1982, KRO, Brandpunt. Documentary about the situation in Chad in 1982, in the archives of the Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid.

[31] Precise information on the attack in 1979 and how Baro was terrorized was explained in a taped interview with this informant in April 2003.

[32] Père Serge, interview 03–03–2003.

[33] We met her on several occasions in Baro and during the course of many short meetings she told us her story.

majority of the people are Muslim. Another effect of the rebellion and the presence of rebels in the bush and later in Baro itself was the progressive impoverishment of the villagers. Probably however, the most important effect is the creation of Baro itself. Though many people have returned to their original villages over the past decades, Baro remains an important centre and is now a *sous-préfecture,* which stresses its central position in the national administration.

*Bourzan: The War in the Margins*

Bourzan is a Bidiyo village and situated in the valley south of Mongo and south of the Abu Telfan Massif. The village used to be hidden in the mountains but the French colonial administration forced the inhabitants to come down onto slopes in order to gain firmer control, i.e. for the levying of taxes, the recruitment of labour, and to maintain the road from Mongo to Am-Timam. Later on, the Chadian government resettled the village along the laterite road from Mongo to Catalog and further on to Abu Deïa and Am-Timam. Other villages are still in or behind the mountain range. Migration from Bourzan has always been important. During the colonial period and just after independence the men migrated temporarily to Sudan for work and migration to N'Djaména became important by the end of the 20th century and is still on the increase.

With about 500 inhabitants, Bourzan is much smaller than Baro. The village has no *chef de canton,* though it is 12 km from Niergui, which is the seat of the *sous-préfet* and of the *chef de canton.* There are no educated people in Bourzan. The village used to have a school but since the villagers refused to pay the teacher – a young man from Bourzan – he left and settled in Niergui. In general, educated people among the Bidiyo are rare, partly because they have always refused external influences like development organizations, schooling and the Catholic mission. Bourzan has a mosque, an Imam and Koranic schools. Islamization of the area is recent: the first Muslim clerics visited Bourzan in the 1950s but they met with resistance. However, over time they have become very influential, especially among the youth.

The village is extremely poor by any standards. Only two families have a small herd of cattle. More than a third of the households are female-headed, and another group are in effect female-headed because the husbands are in town and never return. The provision of water is a severe problem too as the only well in the village runs dry during the dry season, forcing the women to walk 5 km to the next village. There are no healthcare facilities except in Niergui where the *chef de canton* resides, but this is 7 km away.



The geographical situation of Bourzan makes it a special case as it is located on the main road from Mongo to Catalog and Abu Deïa, which was an important transport axis for government troops fighting rebels who were hiding in the Salamat, Chad's south-eastern region, and for transporting the cereals produced in this area to Mongo and N'Djaména.[34] In addition, Bourzan was close to pockets of resistance, and inhabitants were always being suspected of supporting the rebels. Inhabitants' accounts all refer to a deep feeling of insecurity during this time.

War experiences were collected from elder women and men, and a migrant from Bourzan who lived in N'Djaména and happened to be our guard.[35] These people had not had important positions in their village, in the local administration or in any religious context. The information about Bourzan is therefore qualitatively different from that collected in Baro, an administrative and religious centre.

Also in Bourzan, reference was made to Mangalmé as the centre of resistance and it is thought that the Bidiyo joined them. After these events, they remembered a long period of continuous uncertainty until Hissein Habré finally defeated his adversaries in 1987 (Libya and the CDR), without any clear demarcation of periods of time. It could not be established with certainty if and when militia plundered the village. The older people mix the first period of trouble (1967 – 1975) and the second period (1976 – 1987). For them it was a long period of extreme insecurity aggravated by periods of drought and bad harvests.

As in Baro, the inhabitants of Bourzan refer to the rebels in the bush as 'Arabs' and to a rebel leader named Jamal Faya (see above) who controlled the area for a long time. In our informants' accounts, the rebels were defined as outsiders. As our guard, a migrant in Sudan back in the 1950s explained, a large proportion of the rebels were recruited in Sudan among the migrants there. They were encouraged to join the rebellion and were promised they would be paid for doing so. He himself did not join the rebellion but left Sudan and returned to his village. During the droughts of the 1980s he left for N'Djaména and was later joined by his wife and children. Bidiyo men joined the rebellion and probably did not live in the bush around Bourzan but were elsewhere in the region. In interviews we did not hear of direct casualties as a result of the war. Unlike in Baro, the rebels here never tried to estab-

[34] The Salamat is an important area because it produces flood-retreat sorghum (*berbéré*).

[35] He was an important informant because he did not hesitate to tell us his story. We recorded it in various interview sessions in 2002 and 2003 and transcribed it from the Bidiyo language into French.

lish permanent control over Bourzan but the accounts of our informants still refer to constant exploitation. Nevertheless the war influenced livelihoods very profoundly. The rebellion created a situation of deprivation in the village. From the long history told by our guard, it became clear that the people of Bourzan were living under enormous pressure:

> "... Pendant la nuit, les gens quittent leurs cases pour passer la nuit dans la montagne parce qu'ils ont peur des rebelles et, pendant le jour, ils regagnent le village. Les gens construisent leurs cases, c'est pour s'habituer pendant le jour seulement. Dès la couchée du soleil les gens ont déjà fait le repas et quittent le village, ..."

The rebels lived around Bourzan in camps in the bush hidden behind the camps of nomadic Arabs and came to the village regularly to demand food. One story tells how Jamal Faya entered the village and sat under a tree with his men until the village had provided them with food.

During this period of political unrest, a large number of people converted to Islam. From the accounts we collected it appears that the Margay cult was not appreciated by the rebels and that they encouraged people to abandon this practice. We heard stories about people being forced to convert to Islam, and as a result of such violence other people converted of their own 'free' will. The few families who still adhere to the Margay cult were able to resist this pressure because, they say, they were protected by their personal Margay.[36] Today Bourzan has become a Muslim community and Muslim rituals are major events, despite the fact that some women still brew sorghum beer for the older men to consume. Our guard explained this as follows:

> "L'islam était venu avant les rebelles. L'arrivée de l'islam n'a pas rendu tout le monde musulman, parce que jusq'aujourd'hui certains sont des animistes, adorent le margay. Certaines personnes sont devenues musulmanes avant la rébellion et d'autres sont devenues musulmanes pendant la rébellion, parce qu'elles ont été forcées par les rebelles. Les rebelles les ont tapées et cassé leur margay. Les rebelles ont dit que celui qui adore le margay on va le taper et casser son margay. Tous les rebelles sont des musulmans."

The inhabitants of Bourzan suffered during the famine caused by the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s but the effects of the droughts were aggravated by the war. In times of war, drought is a definite blow to people's livelihoods. The famine was aggravated by reduced opportunities for people to go out in the bush to gather fruits or to hunt game.

[36] An important account was given by the old Margay priest in the village who fled the village at this time with his family. He had two reasons for fleeing: one was famine and the other was intolerance of the Margay cult.



The women told us that the fear of being raped or attacked in the bush stopped them from gathering bush products, which is one of the important activities of Bidiyo women. Even today they have not resumed gathering bush products in the same way as other villages we observed. The situation in Bourzan seems to have been worse than in Baro. The only option left for the inhabitants of Bourzan was to migrate, as one of the informants said: '... those who remained in the village died'. People who lived through this time told us that the village was deserted; nobody was left.[37] Some migrated far, others stayed in the vicinity, for instance in Niergui, where they were able to gain access to food distribution centres. Many from Bourzan did not survive, or did not return to the village.

Taken together, these accounts indicate how the inhabitants of Bourzan were not able to resist external pressures and did not have an answer to the violence imposed on them. They were neither important in the war as a stronghold for the rebels, nor for the government which turned them simply into objects of predation.

### *Korlongo: Accommodating Political Reality*

The third village in which we collected information about the war is a large village; comparable in size to Baro today. Korlongo is located about 30 km west of Mongo, 2 km off the main road from Mongo to Bokoro (and N'Djaména), in fact easy to control for government forces. From a socio-economic point of view, this village is relatively wealthy. It consists of a number of compounds that are spread all over the village territory. The village is inhabited by Dangaleat; one of the larger sub-groups of the Hadjerai. Each compound is made up of 5 – 20 houses inhabited by extended families, surrounded by fields that are intensively cultivated. In total around 4,000 people live in the village. Like Baro, the village has a Catholic mission post, which was established in the 1960s, and also has a dispensary and elementary schools. It is not however the seat of the *sous-préfecture*. The most striking difference with the other villages is its agricultural system, which consists of an elaborate system of infields separated by cattle routes for herds of cattle going to and from the compounds. Besides the infields, which are mainly cultivated by the women, the men cultivate fields of sorghum and flood-retreat sorghum sometimes as much as a three-hours walk from the main village.

[37] In the area there are many deserted sites where villages were once located. The neighbouring village of Bourzan – where probably 100 families lived given the number of stone circles indicating the presence of a granary – has completely disappeared. What remains is one large compound about 1 km south of Bourzan where mainly women live.

When the German anthropologist Peter Fuchs did research in this village 45 years ago, the situation was quite different. Then the whole village was located close to the hills (Fuchs 1970). Over the past decades the village has fanned out but not without struggle and discord. However, a similar organization has developed in all the hamlets. This development took place despite the presence of rebels in the area, the famines of the 1970s and the 1980s, and the repressive policies of the various Chadian governments.

Information on the period of civil war in this village was collected from the *chef de village,* some migrants, old women and migrants who live in N'djaména in the Diguel Zafaye quarter, where an important Dangaleat community settled during the 1970s and 1980s.

When the rebellions against the Chadian government started in the 1960s, Islam was already common practice in the village. Fuchs (1970) wrote about this village's links with the Muslim world and situates it in the history of the village in relation to the Islamic empires that surrounded the Guéra in the 19th century. Korlongo was then a stronghold for the Ouaddai warriors in the 19th century who came to hunt for slaves.[38] During the time of Fuchs's research in the 1950s and early 1960s, mention was even then made of Koranic schools in the village. However Islam was not the dominant religion. By the time of our field research, all the villagers were Muslim and they had destroyed everything that was related to the Margay cult (cf. Fuchs 1997: 245). For example, when we were in the village, we did not come across any women who brewed beer, which was still common practice in other villages. The geographical situation and the presence of Islam may be among the reasons for the different experiences of Korlongo during the civil war.

The first attack is remembered as a terrible event. In 1969 the Catholic mission was burned down, the nuns were abducted and all the personnel (Muslim and Catholic) had to flee. There are reports that the village was also burned down but some attribute this to an accident, while others say it was done by rebels. Hereafter, the village history gives a different picture of the war: It appears as a period in which there were difficulties but not on the scale of those in other villages.

The reason for the relative calm in this period in Korlongo might have been the different relationship they had with the rebels. The *chef de village* (Khalial Doungous) at the time collaborated with a rebel commander, Mahamat Kanem, nicknamed Timpi, who decided to choose the village as his base following negotiations with the *chef de village* in

[38] In Baro and Bourzan the villagers have stories to tell about how they fought against these warriors from Ouaddai, so historically these villages occupy a completely different position.



1970. The rebels set up a governance structure in the village that exerted firm control over the inhabitants' behaviour. Some informants even talk about a surveillance system with informants among the inhabitants. The rebel chief was placed next to the village chief (or above him), under them each quarter had a chief, called a *Khaid;* and a secretary. These people had to receive the rebels and administer the law when conflicts arose between the village inhabitants. The inhabitants of Korlongo did not escape exploitation and arbitrary fines like in Baro, though the pressure from the rebels was probably less severe and more regulated than in Baro after it was taken over by the rebels. This form of cohabitation with the rebels probably protected the village, and the livelihoods of the villagers were less affected. They were able to develop their complex system of land use and had more assets in the form of livestock and housing than in the other two villages.

## VI. Comparison Between the Villages

What do these stories tell us about the local manifestation of the civil war? First of all, we can no longer speak of one civil war on the local level. Secondly, people experienced it all differently depending on their situation in the village and in the developments of the time. There are similarities and generalities in these stories that can be summarized under the headings of relations between rebels and local leaders, of violence and repression, of organization of the bush rebellion, and of ideology and religion guiding the war leaders. However, these commonalities were experienced differently in the three villages discussed above.

### *Relations between Rebels and Local Leaders*

The differences can be explained to some extent by taking into account the linkages of the village leaders: the *chef de village, chef de canton* and the rebels or government; i.e. the way these villages are integrated into a 'larger' Chad and the higher levels of the civil war. The three villages differ clearly in the relationship that local leaders maintained with the rebels or the government.

In the *canton* of Niergui to which Bourzan belongs, the national struggle for power was linked with a local conflict over the position of the *chef de canton.* The brothers of the *chef de canton* were competing for this position. The brother who was *chef de canton* was murdered by the 'rebels' among who was at least one of his brothers who wanted to succeed him. This brother, who reached the rank of captain in the FAN of Hissein Habré, is still *chef de canton* in Niergui.

Bourzan was just a simple agricultural village without a Catholic mission, or any 'improvement' in the sense of modernization. So it was an unattractive village for the rebels and government troops to turn into a stronghold. The *chef de village* did not play any role in negotiations with the rebels, except that they forced him to convert to Islam. Consequently, the inhabitants of Bourzan were extremely vulnerable and unprotected, which culminated in the migration of almost the entire population during the droughts in the 1980s.

Baro was clearly a different case with the presence of the Catholic mission and the *chef de canton* who was loyal to the Chadian government until 1979. It became a target village and stronghold for both the rebels and government troops. Choices that are more conscious were made here by the leadership, though in the end the *chef de canton* was tricked, by luring him into negotiations and stealing the weapons of his troops and forcing him to change sides. The village came under extreme pressure from the various rebel groups who took power hereafter.

The chief of Korlongo seems to have taken a conscious decision to strike a deal with the rebel leaders in the bush, which may explain this village's present relative prosperity.

Unlike in Baro and Niergui, the *canton* in which Bourzan lies saw no struggle for political leadership in its relations with the rebels and the Chadian government. Baro's *chef de canton* returned in a powerful position once Hissein Habré was in charge. He was so influential that he was able to persuade the FAN troops not to confiscate the food aid destined for the inhabitants of Baro but to hand it over to him to distribute in the village. He is still the *chef de canton* and is influential vis-à-vis the *sous-prefecture*.

*Violence and Repression*

From the village histories it becomes clear that the rebels exerted heavy pressure on the Guéra. They ruled through a system of exploitation, fear and oppression, although relationships with the rebels were not the same in the three villages and they changed over time. This certainly does not read as if a liberation movement supported by the population took hold of a liberated countryside. Instead, this local perspective reveals that a guerrilla war was fought against the people (cf. Doornbos 1982). The movements varied over time but this did not make much of a difference for the population.

It is important to note that indeed here we see a difference in the course of time between Korlongo and the other two villages. The question is whether it is possible to link the current economic and social



conditions, we saw in the three villages, to the situation of war and its variable effects. For instance the high number of female-headed households, and the absence of any technological progress in cultivation in Bourzan and Baro, in contrast with Korlongo, which is a well-organized village with a clear political structure that organizes common activities and solves all kinds of problems. The villagers of Korlongo told us that after a difficult time at the beginning of the war they were neither looted nor plundered during the civil war. Instead, they claim that they were simply not involved and continued their lives as normal.

*Organization and Recruitment*

In the interviews, the rebels are indicated as *rebelles,* or alternatively as 'Arabs', which is a proxy for stranger since the Arab nomads are regarded as strangers in the region, or *Sawraa* (warrior, rebel). By using these terms, our informants place these people in the bush, and classify them as outsiders, not their own people.[39]

The rebels and their commanders were of different ethnic origins, and certainly not only Arabs. They lived in groups of 50–60 men of varying ages. They made their camps far from the villages in the bush and in some cases they were encircled by *ferick* (tents, camps) of the Arabs, who helped the rebels to hide from the regular army. The adult men plundered the villages if necessary and the boys were left in the camp to do the cooking and camp maintenance. These camps were moved every now and then to avoid surprise attacks by the regular army. The villagers knew of course where the rebels were camped. As in Bourzan, women were forced to cook their meals and deliver them to the rebels at night.

It seems that each of these groups controlled a specific area. Sometimes, as in the case of Korlongo, a commander agreed with a village chief to take a village under his wing. In such cases, the rebels became commanders of the village. In the 1980s, the villagers of two areas refer to the same commander: Jamal Faya. Jamal Faya has become a legendary commander who is also well-known in N'Djaména where he lived until his death a few years ago.

From the local accounts we gain very little insight into the way rebels were recruited. From the literature we have gained some insight. In Sudan, campaigns were held by FROLINAT representatives to make locals join their forces. Refusing to join was not easy for fear of being

[39] At present tension between Arabs and Hadjerai are again mounting. Hadjerai villagers complain that cattle theft and violent incidents are on the increase and that they are not protected by the government (information June 2006).

labelled a traitor. On the other hand, the Chadian government perceived returning migrants as potential agents for the opposition and they were regarded with the utmost suspicion. Many migrants who were supposedly approached in Sudan joined the opposition forces because the economy there was bad and they were desperate for employment.[40] Men from the villages in the Guéra joined for several reasons. First, in Mangalmé they were part of the peasant revolt that was subsequently incorporated into the FROLINAT's 1st Army. Personal motives may also have played an important role.

The accounts we gathered reveal that only a few local villagers left their village to join the bands in the bush. The way in which the people in the bush are portrayed indicates that they may indeed have been mostly northerners or Arabs.[41] They said that the 'rebels' were mainly outsiders, migrants from Chad recruited in Sudan or people from the north, and that when young men joined the rebellion they did not remain in their home areas.[42] In a way, these findings indicate that the rebel forces were rather distinct from the population in the villages.

*Ideology and Religion*

A contested element of the movement was its religious character. Buijtenhuijs (1992) denies that the FROLINAT ideology had religious features. However, for the people we interviewed in the Guéra, an important characteristic of the rebels was their Muslim identity. As reported by a former rebel, one had to pledge an oath on the Koran before being allowed to join a band. The rebels also had a very negative attitude towards the animistic beliefs that were still prominent in the villages of the Guéra, and this created tacit resistance among the villagers. However, many turned to Islam, at least as far as the outside world was concerned, and hid their animistic practices.

The question is whether any ideology at all motivated the rebel troops in the bush. Were they simply warlords whose own survival was most important? Or were their actions inspired by an ideology, i.e. a

40 This information was given to us by a villager from Bourzan who lived in Sudan in this period.

41 This is confirmed by another eyewitness account. El Hadj Garondé (2003) reports that there were few Hadjerai who joined the bands in the first stages of the rebellion against the Tombalbaye regime.

42 As it is not clear to which part of FROLINAT the bands in the Guéra belonged (1st army, Armée Volcan, CDR, FAN) during the successive phases of the conflict, who is recruiting whom is very unclear. There could be parallels though with the current situation in eastern Chad and Darfur, in which numerous rebel groups recruit deserters from the Chadian army, Chadian refugees residing in Sudan and even in refugee camps across the border in eastern Chad.



Muslim identity coupled to an anti-modern ideology? Muslim ideology was probably part of an anti-imperialist ideology of the rebellion's leaders in the Guéra. Doornbos (1982) also mentions that once the rebels occupied an area in eastern Chad they completely neglected development in the area, or worse, they wilfully destroyed any existing infrastructure. The stories of the people testify to the fear the villagers had for these men as they would not allow them anything considered 'modern' such as chairs, torches, hospital equipment or western/French education. Staff at the Catholic and Protestant missions was forced to leave, and their infrastructure was destroyed. Healthcare facilities were dismantled as these represented the western world and the 'western' buildings were used for housing the rebel troops, which also meant that they were ruined over time.

## VII. Discussion

The most important observation is that in general the ordinary people during the civil war were not connected to or involved with either the party that represented the state or the party that opposed the state. At this local level people were concerned about their own survival and to some extent involved in local power struggles, but they were not emotionally connected to the larger struggle at the level of the state. Therefore, the differences in the nature of the information about the civil war obtained from the literature and from our interviews are so vast that we wonder whether they are dealing with the same political conflict and war. From an ideological point of view none of the multiple parties was able to incite any enthusiasm for their cause. The majority of the rural population did not feel involved in any of the political projects of the parties involved. They resented state oppression just as deeply as the exploitation by those they regarded as 'bandits', 'rebels', 'Arabs' and *sawraa*. Any claims by the parties about representing the interests of the rural population are therefore false.

An alternative explanation for this apparent gap between official and local information on the civil war may be the fact that people simply do not want to be reminded of the war. Since 1990 when Idriss Déby's MPS took power, there has been some degree of political stability. However, this does not mean that the lives of the people in the rural areas have become easy. Because of this long period of insecurity, which is indeed very long compared to other conflict areas in Africa, remote rural areas like the Guéra are in an extremely bad shape. Any physical or social infrastructure was destroyed during the conflict, and when some stability was attained the Chadian state did not have the resources to rebuild what was destroyed. Recurrent food deficits as a

result of periodic drought continue to plague the population and malnutrition levels are high despite all kinds of NGO development efforts to improve food security. As a result, people are preoccupied with the daily struggle for survival and do not have the psychological space to delve into the past, when their current existence is already so difficult.

The strange thing is that, although they remained outsiders and were socially disconnected from rural society, the rebels in the bush interacted in many ways with local power relations. In the view of local people, power is embodied by a person and his function, and not by systems of thought and political parties or movements. They associate a specific movement with the one in charge and with the intensity of violence and oppression. It must be emphasized that these groups of rebels spent a number of years in the vicinity of the villages, and that there must have been no fighting for considerable periods of time as neither the government nor the rebels were able to harm the other. As a consequence, there must have been some level of daily interaction between the population and the rebels, resulting, for example, in a number of cases of marriages to village women. Local perceptions of rebels as outsiders must, therefore, be considered with caution. These perceptions probably reflect the ambiguous relationship people have with the past, and may not have been the same at the time of the conflict.

However, this does not rule out the possibility that national and local levels were disconnected. In the Guéra national events are mentioned with different terms than those used at the national level. At the national level, people make a distinction between the colonial period, the Tombalbaye regime, the war, and the reigns of Habré and Déby. But these periods are not in any way related to local events. Events at the national level do not necessarily have their corollary at the regional and local level at the same time, and it would also not seem to make a difference for the people at the local level who is in charge in the capital or who is hiding in the bush as a rebel. Inhabitants of the rural areas are always caught in between. The difference is to be found in the way in which local leaders engage in these national struggles. In Korlongo the agreement between the local chief and a rebel leader probably saved the villages a lot of trouble. In Baro, resistance was initially successful. However, later on when the village was no longer backed by the government and had been taken over by the rebels, the villagers had a hard time when they found themselves exposed simultaneously to the rebels' harsh regime and to the drought. The canton in which Bourzan is located was engaged in an internal struggle for its political leadership and the parties made use of one of the opponents in the national conflict.



It is tempting to attribute all the changes observed to the war and associated events. However, the inhabitants of the Guéra were already exposed to the outside world, with Islam and Christianity, and with economic opportunities, which they encountered when on labour migration in Sudan or elsewhere. However, some changes that were already under way were speeded up by the civil war. From being a very remote refuge area for runaway slaves and population groups that resisted enslavement by neighbouring empires in pre-colonial times, the Guéra found itself at centre stage in a civil conflict during which the social and political organization of the area was fundamentally transformed. The key to understanding this is the role of modern weaponry. In the past the inhabitants of the Guéra were able to resist outsiders because, even with their primitive weapons, they were greatly helped by the terrain and their own personal courage. In the age of firearms, this possibility no longer existed because the villagers were helpless against a regular army and rebel groups with automatic rifles and machine guns. Conversion to Islam gained pace during the civil war, either voluntarily (as in Korlongo), or forced in some way or another (as in Baro and Bourzan). Christianity as the religion associated with the West and with the south of Chad lost ground.

Today nothing much has changed from an economic point of view. Life is still very hard in this part of Chad. Periodic droughts, poverty and malnutrition still dominate the lives of the inhabitants of the Guéra. The achievements and the impact of development efforts have been limited. This situation in itself leads to resistance against a government that does not facilitate their lives, does not stop the exploitation of the population and is not able to bring development to the zone despite all the rhetoric about the oil exploitation project. Discontent with today's policies also came to the fore when the Guéra was to be divided into two parts as a result of the decentralization policies in 1997 and 2002. The opposition of the Hadjerai was direct: *'Nous sommes disposés. Prêts cette fois-ci pour mourir à cause de notre région comme ce fut le cas de 1965'*, were the words of a leader of the movement against this plan (*L'Observateur*, 5, 1997, 04/16). These words illustrate how the Hadjerai have not forgotten the war and the terrible times they endured. Whether they will be able to join forces is another question. With all their different war stories it will not be easy to draw these people together to oppose today's dominant regime.

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## Synopsis

Most research on the recent political history of Chad has concentrated on events at the national level, but different parts of Chad were involved in the political conflict and ensuing civil war in very divergent ways. Little is known about the motivations and organization of the rebel groups on the ground, their relationship with the local population and how the latter were affected by these rebel groups and the clashes between the Chadian national army and opposition groups. The aim of this article is to show how a specific region, the Guéra in central Chad, was involved in this national conflict. The different war stories of three villages in Mongo sous-préfecture show how different the war was at the local level.

## Zusammenfassung

Der überwiegende Teil der Forschung zur neueren politischen Geschichte des Tschad hat sich auf Ereignisse der nationalen Ebene konzentriert, obwohl ver-

schiedene Regionen des Tschad in unterschiedlicher Weise in den politischen Konflikt und den daraus hervorgehenden Bürgerkrieg verwickelt waren. Nur wenig ist über die Motivlage und die Organisation der Rebellengruppen in der Provinz bekannt. Ebenso weiß man nur wenig über die Beziehungen der Rebellengruppen zur lokalen Bevölkerung und darüber, welche Auswirkungen die Kämpfe zwischen den Rebellengruppen und der tschadischen Armee auf die lokale Bevölkerung hatten. Das Anliegen dieses Artikels ist es zu zeigen, wie eine bestimmte Region, das Guéra im Zentrum des Tschad, in den nationalen Konflikt einbezogen war. Der Artikel stellt dabei die verschiedenen Verläufe des Bürgerkrieges in drei Dörfern der *Sous-préfecture* von Mongo dar und zeigt damit auf, wie sich der Krieg auf der lokalen Ebene entwickelte.

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