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Disputed desert: decolonisation, competing nationalisms and Tuareg rebellions in Northern Mali

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Disputed desert

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VOLUME 19

Disputed Desert

Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali

Baz Lecocq

Brill

Cover illustration: painting of Tamasheq rebels and their car, painted by a Tamasheq boy during the mid-1990s in one of the refugee camps across the Malian borders. These paintings were sold in France by private NGOs to support the refugees.

Up until that time the D'regs, a collection of cheerfully warlike nomadic tribes, had roamed the desert quite freely. Now there was a line, they were sometimes Klatchian D'regs and sometimes Hershebian D'regs, with all the rights due to citizens of both states, particularly the right to pay as much tax as could be squeezed out of them and be drafted in to fight wars against people they'd never heard of. So as a result of the dotted line Klatch was now incipiently at war with Hersheba and the D'regs, Hersheba was at war with the D'regs and Klatch, and the D'regs were at war with everyone, including one another, and having considerable fun because the D'reg word for 'stranger' was the same as for 'target'.

Terry Pratchett, *Soul Music*

This is no affair for a boy who says he studied history and pretends to know

Cheick ag Aoussa, *F-16*

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This book has been long in the making, arguably since 1992 when I first heard of the Kel Tamasheq rebellions in Mali and Niger, but certainly since I started interviewing people on this subject in 1994 during my stay in Paris as an Erasmus student, and definitely since my first visit to Kidal in 1996, shortly after the end of the rebellion. The bulk of research, however, has been done between 1997 and 2000 in preparation of a PhD thesis defended at the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research in November 2002, which was financed by the ASSR, NWO and WOTRO. The material gathered then has been complemented by substantive research in 2004 and 2005, carried out as a research fellow at the Berlin Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, financed by the DFG. I would like to thank all my colleagues at both institutions, but especially Chanfi Ahmad, Erik Bähre, Elisabeth Boesen, Britta Frede, Nienke van der Heide, Laurence Marfaing, Dalila Nadi, Farish Noor, Mathijs Pelkmans, Marina de Recht, Oskar Verkaaik and Sikko Visser.

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The growing body of material available on the Internet since the last few years has filled the last gaps, while creating new ones. But the gaps could have been even greater. I thank Nadia Belalimat, Pierre Boilley, Daouda Gary-Tounkara, Charles Grémont, Bruce Hall, Georg Klute, Ghislaine Lydon, Greg Mann and Mohamed ag Eghless for not only sharing their friendship and intellectual insights with me, but also for giving me the most precious gift one historian can give to another: unused source material. A further number of friends and colleagues have contributed tremendously to this work with their insights and support. I thank Mariëtte Bloemer, Seydou Camara, Han van Dijk, Isaie Dougnon, Amber Gemmeke, Jan-Bart Gewald, John Hunwick, Paulo de Moraes Farias, Sean O'Fahey, Robert Ross, Benedetta Rossi, Marko Scholze, Paul Schrijver, Anita Schroven, Gerd Spittler, Bonno Thoden, Mahaman Tidjani Alou, Knut Vikør, and R@ Wichers for all they have done to make this book possible.

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No acknowledgement is complete without the disclaimer: All errors in this work are mine and mine alone.

Ghent, 09 September ’09

Baz

On terminology, spelling and pronunciation

This history focuses mainly on Kel Tamasheq and 'Malian' views of the world. In such an enterprise, it is hard to do justice to the complexity of the concepts presented while keeping the text easily readable at the same time. The use of some Tamasheq concepts is inevitable. I have used the terms and expressions as they are used in the Adagh, as this is the main site of this history. Hence *Tamasheq* instead of *Tamahak*; *eghewid* instead of *tagelmust*; and *ndêk* instead of *ma imoos*. I have not wanted to bother the reader with diacritical marks, using a very light and therefore rough transcription, but as the pronunciation of a number of vowels and consonants differs from dialect to dialect (especially h, j, s, t and z), and even within dialects, the average reader can do without and still grasp what is meant. Pronunciation of the transcription follows below. Nevertheless, I feel I owe my sincere apologies to the linguistically trained reader.

When it comes to the translation of French administrative terminology and Tamasheq concepts, I have been rather eclectic, translating those that could be easily and correctly translated, while those for which translation would mean loss of meaning have been left untranslated. Hence: Governor or Governor General instead of *Gouverneur*, but *Commandant de Cercle* instead of District Commissioner, and (most of the time): tribal chief instead of *Chef de Tribu* (and then in analogy *fraction* chief instead of *Chef de Fraction*). While *tewsit* can be translated into clan or tribe (and the appropriate term has of course been used in context), *egha* is too complicated to translate. I have used the term *Soudan Français* to indicate the former French colony and reserved Mali for the present-day Republic of Mali. The Mali Empire and the Mali federation are indicated as such. *Région* stands for the administrative unit (there are currently eight *Régions* in Mali), whereas region should be read as in English.

Writing a history of a place as unmapped as northern Mali involves great difficulty in spelling. There exist a variety of topographical spellings for Tamasheq place names. I have used the English spelling for those few places for which it exists, such as Bamako, Timbuktu and Segu. For many others I have used the most current spelling, used on the latest official map of the Republic of Mali, and on Google Maps. Many Tamasheq place names start with /In/ or /Tin/ followed by a noun, for example Tin Essako, or In Ekker. This is currently spelled as /I-n-/ or /T-in-/, but in many works and on other maps, these names can be spelled as /In-/, /In / or simply /In/, hence Ti-n-Essako can be found as Tin Essako, Tin-Essako, or Tinessako. The same problem arises with proper

names, which I have found in many different spellings. I have used one spelling throughout the text, in keeping with French spelling. Thus: Mohamed instead of Muhammad.

I have chosen to translate all quotes to English, including citations of published works. Unless indicated, all translations to English are mine. My limited linguistic capacities, combined with the linguistic limits of the authors (often not more than primary education), and the particular idiom used (Marxist or other revolutionary rhetoric) does not always make an easy reading, which cannot be changed however, without dealing too freely with the original text.

a	short
â	long open
e	short, as *∂* (shwa)
ê	long open
é	long open
i	short
î	long open
ou	as in French *ou*
u	as in French *ou*
ue	as *e* in English *get*
g	as *g* in English *get*
gh	as the Parisian *r*
j	as in French *jeu*
kh	as the Dutch *g*
q	as the Arabic *qaf* (glottal *k*)
r	as the Scottish rolling *r*
sh	as in English *ship*
th	as in English *the*
‘	*‘ain* and *hamza* both pronounced as in Cockney *bottle*

List of terminology

French or Tamasheq when not indicated, Arabic: (Ar.), Songhay: (Son.), Bambara (Bam.) masculin singular: (m.s.) masculin plural: (m.pl.) feminin singular (f.pl.) feminin plural (f.pl.).

aboubash (m.s.) *iboubashen* (m.pl.)	
tababasht (f.s.) *tiboubashen* (f.pl.)	cross cousins
Adagh	mountain area in Northern Mali
ag (m.s.), *ouled* (f.s.)	son of, daughter of
aggiw (m.s) *aggiwin* (m.pl.)	praise singer
'aid al-'adhâ (Ar.)	feast of the sacrifice
'aid al-fitr (Ar.)	celebration at the end of Ramadan
akafal	warfare without rules
akal	earth, ground, country, territory
alasho	indigo cloth from Kano
alesel	ancestor
alfaqiten (m.pl.)	specialists in Muslim law
Alfellaga	first Tamasheq rebellion in Mali
amashegh (m.s.) *imushagh* (m.pl.)	
tamasheq (f.s.) *timushaq* (f.pl.)	noble
amenokal (m.s.)	'owner of the land', leader
amghid (m.s.) *imghad* (m.pl.)	
tamghid (f.s.) *timghaden* (f.pl.)	free, not noble
annetma	mother's brother
aqqa	attack to restore or gain honour
aran meddan	male patrilineal parallel cousins
aran tidoden	matrilineal parallel cousins
Aribinda	Niger inner delta
Azawad	wadi in southeastern Mali
bahutan	lies
Bamanakan	Mande language
bellah (Son.)	(former) slaves
Bilâd es-Sudân (Ar.)	'the land of the blacks'
boubou	male Muslim dress
Brigade de Vigilance	para military movement under Keita

burnous	male Muslim dress
Canton	administrative unit in AOF
Cercle	administrative unit in AOF and Mali
cheick (Ar.)	leader
Commandant de Cercle	administrative head of a *Cercle*
Communauté Française	French Colonial Common Wealth
dibi (Bam.)	grilled meat
dugutigi (m.s.) *dugutigiw* (m.pl.) (Bam.)	owner of the land
egha	hatred and revenge
eghewid	male turban and veil
ellellu (m.s.) *illellan* (m.pl.) *tellellut* (f.s.) *tillellan* (f.pl.)	free, strong or noble status
Entoutcas	*ishumar* nickname for Intellectuals
eshardan	mulatto
eshik	honour, restraint composure
ettebel (m.s.) *ittebelen* (m.pl.)	drum, federation
exode	annual seasonal migration
fasobara (Bam.)	forced labour
fiqh (Ar.)	Muslim law
fraction	nomad administrative unit
gandoura (Ar.)	thin burnous
goum	camel mounted military police force
goumier	military policeman
Gourma	Niger Bend
al-guitara (Ar.)	musical genre of the *teshumara*
hajj (Ar.)	pilgrimage to Mecca
haratin (Ar.)	Moorish (former) slaves
jamu (s.) jamuw (pl.) (Bam.)	patronym
al-Jebha (Ar.)	‘the front’
ifulagen (m.pl.) *afuleg* (m.s.) *iklan* (m.pl.) *akli* (m.s.) *taklit* (f.s.) *tiklatin* (f.pl.)	fighter in *Alfellaga* slave
iklan n eguef	‘slaves of the dunes’ sedentary slave communities
Ikufar (m.pl.) *Akafer* (m.s.) *Takafert* (f.s.) *Tikufarin* (f.pl.)	‘infidels’, ‘Westerners’
imzad	monochord violin
inadan (m.pl.) *enad* (m.s.) *tenad* (f.s.) *tinaden* (f.pl.)	casted craftspersons
ineslemen (m.pl.) *aneslim* (m.s.)	

taneslimt (f.s.) *tineslemen* (f.pl.)	persons of religious occupation
ishumar (m.pl.) *ashamor* (m.s.)	'unemployed',
tashamort (f.s.) *tishumarin* (f.pl.)	those of the *teshumara*
jâhil (Ar.)	ignorant, anarchist
jihad (Ar.)	holy war
kokadjè (bam.)	('ethnic') cleansing
koual	black, 'black people'
al-Maghreb al-Aksâ (Ar.)	the far west', Greater Morocco
Malinke	Mande language
Mande	language and culture group
marabout	Muslim mystic or religious specialist
mazbut (m.s.) *mazbuten* (m.pl.) (Ar.)	'OK', *évolué* nickname for *ishumar*
Milice Populaire	para-military brigade under Keita
ould (m.s.), *mint* (f.s.) (Ar.)	son of, daughter of
Région	Malian administrative unit
senankuya (Bam.)	joking relationship
sattefen	'greenish black', 'white noble people'
sefham	to make understand
Service Civique	conscription alternative to Military service under Keita regime
shaggaran	red, 'white people'
shorfa (Ar.)	descendent from the prophet Muhammad
sous fraction	Malian administrative unit
Subdivision	colonial administrative unit
tabahohumt	melodious humming
tagelmust	male veil and turban
takamba	rhythm and musical style
takaraket	shame
takoubilt	tribal gathering
talaqiw (s.) *tilaqiwin* (pl.)	poor, weak
Tanekra	'the uprising', movement preparing the second Tamasheq rebellion
tanyatin	female paternal parallel cousins
at-tarikh (Ar.)	history, written history
ath-thawra (Ar.)	revolution
Targui	singular of Tuareg
tasirnest	long female veil-based dress

tayite	intelligence, understanding
tefoghessa	'being Ifoghas', Ifoghas culture
tegezé	pelvis, confederation, (relation with) sister's children
teghere	modern education
teherdent	four-string lute
temet	placenta, lineage, genealogy
temushagha	'being *amashegh*'
temust / *tumast*	social identity, nation
ténéré	emptiness, 'desert', 'fatherland'
tengelt	allusive language
Territoire des Oasis	colonial administrative region in Southern Algeria
Teshumara	'being unemployed', Tamasheq youth culture since 1970s
tewet	attack to gain booty
tewsit	descent group, fictive kingroup, clan, tribe
teylelil	followsome behaviour
tifinagh	Tamasheq alphabet
tikunbut	hat
timgheda	'being *imghad*'
tindé	mortar, drum, musical genre
tinfusen (pl.) *tanfust* (s.)	oral history, story
tisiway (pl.) *tasawit* (s.)	(oral) poetry
tiwse	tribute
tô (Bam.)	millet porridge
tobol	drum (*ettebel*)
tonw (Bam. pl.)	village associations
Touat	region in Southwest Algeria
Wilaya	Algerian administrative unit
zahuten	*ishumar* parties
zawiya	lodge of a sufi brotherhood

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADC	Alliance Démocratique pour le Changement 23 Mai
ADEMA	Alliance Démocratiqe du Mali
ADIDE	Association des Démandeurs et Initiateurs d'Emploi
ADVR	Association de la Défense des Victimes de la Répression
AEEM	Association des Etudiants et Elèves du Mali
AEF	Afrique équatoriale française
AEN	Aide de l'Eglise Norvégienne (Norwegian Church Aid)
ALM	Armée de Libération Marocaine
AOF	Afrique occidentale française
ARLA	Armée Révolutionaire pour la Libération de l'Azawad
ATNMC	Alliance Touarègue Niger-Mali pour le Changement
BAUA	Base Autonome du Timétrine
CAR/Nord	Consolidation des Acquis de la Réinsertion au Nord
CNID	Comité National d'Initiative Démocratique
CRN	Conseil pour la Réconciliation Nationale
FIAA	Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FNLA	Front National de Libération de l'Azawad
FPLA	Front Populaire pour la Libération de l'Azawad
FPLSAC	Front Populaire pour la Libération du Sahara Arabe Central
FULA	Front Unifié pour la Libération de l'Azawad
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armé
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat
MDJT	Mouvement pour la Démocratie et la Justice au Tchad
MFUA	Mouvements et Fronts Unifiés de l'Azawad
MNJ	Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice
MPA	Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad
MPGK	Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy
OCRS	Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes
PAREM	Programme d'Appui à la Réinsertion des ex-Combattants au Mali
PDS	Parti Démocratique Soudanais
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

POLISARIO	Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Rio de Oro
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
PSP	Parti Socialiste Progressif also Parti Progressiste du Soudan
TSCTI	Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative
UDPM	Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien
UMADD	Union Malienne pour la Démocratie et le Développement
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
US-AID	United States Agency for International Development
US-RDA	Union Soudanaise – Rassemblement Démocratique Africaine

An overview of the movements

Movement	*Date of creation*	*Motivation*	*Tewsiten involved*
Tanekra FPLSAC al-Jebha ath-Thawra MLT / FPLA / MPLA	1980s and at the start of the rebellion: *Tanekra*, al-Jebha and ath-Thawra After outbreak of rebellion: MPLA, MLT and FPLA	Independence	All those involved in the *Tanekra*
FPLA Front Populaire de Libération de l'Azawad	After the outbreak of rebellion, July 1990	Independence Hardliners Modernists *Timgheda*	June 1990 December 1990: All December 1990 – January 1991: All but the Ifoghas and Moors. January 1991 – January 1993: *Tewsiten* from the Azawad and Niger Bend. January 1993 – March 1996: Chemennamas.
MPA Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad	January 1991, during the negotiations of the Tamanrasset agreement	Autonomy Moderates Tradition-alists *Tefoghessa*	Mostly Ifoghas
FIAA Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad	January 1991, during the negotiations of the Tamanrasset agreement	Underlining Moorish participation	Moors of all clans, some Kel Tamasheq, mostly Kel Intessar
ARLA Armée Révolutionaire de Libération de l'Azawad	November 1991, after the signing of the Tamanrasset agreement	Autonomy Moderates Modernists *Timgheda*	January 1991 – August 1994: *Imghad* and Idnan. August 1994 – March 1996: *Imghad* from the Adagh, Imekelkalen and Irreguenaten
BAUA Base Autonome Unifié de l'Azawad	August 1994, after the military conflict between MPA and ARLA	Protection of *tewsiten*	Idnan No strong presence

Movement	*Date of creation*	*Motivation*	*Tewsiten involved*
FNLA Front National de Libération de l'Azawad	January 1993	Protection of *tewsiten*	Ishidenharen, Dabakar, Daoussahak No strong presence
FULA Front Unifié de Libération de l'Azawad	January 1993	Protection of *tewsiten*	Kel Intessar No strong presence
MFUA	December 1991	Negotiating with the Malian state Regroup all movements	All, and yet none Intellectuals
MPGK Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy	April 1994	Defending the sedentary population of the North	Songhay and other sedentary population of the North Kel Tamasheq bellah
ADC Alliance Démo-cratique du 23 Mai pour le Changement	Mai 2006	Local politics Claiming the implementation of the national Pact	Kel Adagh
ATNMC Alliance Touarègue Niger-Mali pour le Changement	July 2007	Local politics Unification Malian and Nigerien Tamasheq Movements	Kel Adagh Kel Aïr
MNJ Mouvement Nigérien pour la Justice	February 2007	Equitable economic and political treatment of northern Niger	Kel Aïr Kel Tedele non-Kel Tamasheq

Sources

Archives

In Mali, I have made use of the Archives Nationales du Mali (ANM), the Archives of the Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de Sûreté (AMATS) in Bamako, the Archives du Cercle de Kidal (ACK) in Kidal, and the Archives du Cercle de Goundam in Goundam (ACG). In France, I have used the Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer (ANSOM) in Aix-en-Provence, the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (SHAT) in Paris, the Centre de l'Histoire et des Etudes des Troupes d'Outre Mer (CHETOM) in Fréjus, and the Centre des Archives Contemporaines in Fontainebleau.

In the Archives Nationales du Mali, I have concentrated my research on the Fonds Récent (FR) and Fonds Numériques (FN), notably the series

FR 2D-15	Inspection des Affaires Administratives Gourma-Rharous: 1926-1953.
FR 2D-18	Inspection des Affaires Administratives Goundam: 1907-1957.
FR 2D-20	Inspection des Affaires Administratives Kidal: 1937-1957.
FR 7D-18, 24, 41,57,58,81, 90	Elections.
FR 1E-2	Rapports politiques d'ensemble du Soudan: 1937-1950.
FR 1E-24	Rapports politiques et des tournées Kidal: 1928-1960.
FN B2767	Correspondances - Courrier Secrét. et confidentiel au départ Du Gouverneur du Soudan à tous Cercles et divisions et Commune Mixte: 1954.
FN B1229	Correspondances secrets et confidentiel au départ du Gouverneur du Soudan à tous les Cercles, Subdivisions et Communes mixtes: 1954.
FN 1E 1227	Rapports des tournees dans le Cercle de Kidal: 1958.
FN 1E 1246	Trafic d'esclaves: 1957.
FN 1A 720	Décisions de la Région de Gao: 1964.

In the Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence (ANSOM), I have concentrated on the series Fonds Ministerielles, especially

FM 62	Afaires Politiques: AOF-AEF (affaires communes) 1920-1957.
FM 64	Affaires Politiques: Mauritanie – Soudan – Niger – Sénégal – Ht Sénégal-Niger.
FM 73	Affaires Politiques: Moyen-Orient – Palestine – Sahara – Syrie –Tunisie.

In these series, I have concentrated on files concerning French Sudan, Mauritania and the Sahara. Many of these files, especially those in FM 73 concerning Mauritania, the *Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya*, the Sahara and the French Moroccan conflict are still under embargo, with embargo dates varying between 2019 and 2020. I have received permission (dérogation) from the French Ministry of Culture to access these files under Archive law 79-18 of 3 January 1979 and decree 79-1038 of 3 December 1979 (permissions de dérogation CAOM 98/1844, CAOM 98/ 1655, and CAOM 98/ 1539). These permissions did not allow me to quote documents, but paraphrasing (and translation is perceived as such) was allowed. The archive codes given in the footnotes are those used in the ANSOM archives' digital database. These codes are the ones necessary to demand access to the pertaining file within the series. As footnotes serve to facilitate reference, these codes are the quickest way to the file or document referred to.

In the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (SHAT) I have used the series

5H	Inventaire provisoire, Afrique Occidentale Française (A.O.F.)
1K297	Fonds privées, fonds Colonel Lesourd

During my research, SHAT underwent a restructuring of its repertoire and classification system. The series 5H starts with AOF in general, followed by series on the various Territories within AOF in a more or less chronological order. The series on French Sudan run from 5H 186 to 5H 204. For this research, a more interesting series runs from 5H 23 to 5H 140, dealing with the organisation and activities of the French Military forces in the late 1950s, and with French military support for and intelligence on the new national armies and states of the former territories in the early 1960s. These files, however, are still under embargo and I have not received permission to access these files, due to logistical circumstances. A last very useful series is the series K – Fonds privées, containing the personal archives of various former army officers. Of this series, I have made use of 1K297, which contains the private archives of Colonel Lesourd, who had kept an archive of his personal interests, but also of his activities in the Maghreb and Sahara, concerning the OCRS and Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, the Qadi of Timbuktu in the late 1950s.

Research in the Archives du Cercle de Kidal (ACK) were initially hampered by two problems. The first is that they lack a repertoire. The archives do not

serve a public interest, they are mainly intended to facilitate the task of the *Commandant de Cercle*. Although physically in perfect shape, the files contained documents pertaining to various subjects, which made research a question of adamantly continuing to 'speed-read' file after file. For this reason, I do not make reference to archive codes when referring to the documents from these archives. I have simply given the name of the concerned document, followed by 'ACK'. Those interested in these documents are welcome to visit me and look at my notebooks. The second problem concerned the right to access itself. As the post of *Commandant de Cercle* was unoccupied during my research stay, I have received permission to search the archives from acting *Commandant de Cercle* and *Premier Adjoint* Marc Dara, with the support of His Excellency Eghless ag Foni, *Haut Conseiller du VIIIème Région de Kidal*. This permission was not put to paper.

Three other archives have been used less extensively in this research: the archives of the *Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de Sûreté* in Bamako (AMSAT, now known as Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales) and the *Centre de l'Histoire et des Etudes des Troupes d'Outre Mer* (CHETOM) in Fréjus. I have received permission by word in 1997 from the acting Minister, His Excellency Colonel Sada Samaké, to access the AMSAT archives. These archives do not have a repertorium. I have used one but very important file from this archive

AMSAT Dossier 35 – OCRS 1957-1962

This file contains material from the Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Information (as AMSAT was then called) under Madeira Keita on the US-RDA's policies towards the OCRS and the Kel Tamasheq. From the CHETOM archives, I have also used one file

CHETOM 15 H 77-2 Mali, armée nationale 1964

This document probably originates from the French Military Intelligence Services SDECE on the organisation of the Malian army. The document in question was updated yearly. CHETOM contains versions dating from 1962 and 1963 as well, but only the 1964 document contained an annex which gives a chronology of Malian military activities during *Alfellaga* from 1963 to 1964.

I have made use of a number of documents, especially on the Qadi of Timbuktu and the slave trade to Mecca described in chapters 1 and 2, emanating from the *Archives de Cercle de Goundam* (ACG). The problems stated above for the *Archives de Cercle de Kida*l also hold for these archives. I have not collected these documents myself. I am greatly indebted to Professor Bruce Hall

for his generosity in providing me with these documents, which he photographed during research in these archives.

As a last, I should mention the now no longer existent *Centre d'Etudes sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Moderne*, the former *Centre des Hauts Etudes pour l'Administration Musulman* (CHEAM) in Paris. This centre contained an archive of research reports written by its former students – administrators preparing for service in the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. Although I only refer to a few of these reports, many others have served to enlarge my understanding of French Administrative ideas and practices in AOF. The CHEAM has closed down in December 2000. Its archives have been transferred to the *Centre des Archives Contemporaines* in Fontainebleau (CACF), where they are accessible under filenumbers 2000.0002. There exists a small repertoire of all CHEAM files at CACF under their original file code from CHEAM. CHEAM documents used are listed as unpublished manuscripts, giving the original CHEAM code between brackets.

Map of Northern Mali

Introduction

What is *Alfellaga* and what does it mean? In June 1990, a group of Tuareg started an armed uprising against the Malian state. To anybody taking an interest in these events it would quickly become clear that the upsurge had its roots in a previous insurgency that took place in 1963, when the inhabitants of the Adagh n Ifoghas revolted against their inclusion in the Malian state. This revolt is locally known as *Alfellaga* and its narrative history, as well as its local historical interpretation and politization with its consequence in the past twenty years are central to this book. It is also about the contested meanings of de-colonisation, independence and nationalism in the desert part of the Republic of Mali.

Answering the main question of this book resulted in formulating other questions, as it goes with scholarly work these days, which became just as important. These questions evolve first of all around the workings of Kel Tamasheq politics. This book hopes in a way to fill the lacuna in knowledge on the recent political events of a remote corner of the world, the inhabitants of which are so widely yet so shallowly known. Then there are the eternal questions all historians ask themselves time and again: How does historical discourse influence the present, and how does the present influence historical discourse? Is the past created in the present or the present in the past? These questions will be dealt with not so much on the level of events, although of course that will be part of the book too, but more on the level of local visions and local workings of history in Tamasheq society and politics. In a way, this book wants to be an ethnography of the local politics of history in the Central Sahara. A history that has a worldwide impact if only because a number of its actors and eyewitness poets are now world famous musicians who sing the history studied in this book in sport stadiums and concert halls from Sidney, via Paris and London, to Los Angeles. But perhaps also since the Central Sahara has come under attention of those interested in the perceived conflict between 'Radical Islam' and 'The West' and despite their focus on actual geopolitics, most of those interested cannot help but to frame their vision on this supposed

'Clash of Civilisations' in historical terms.[1] But even if this history would not have had any worldwide ramifications at all, it would still be interesting simply because there is no such thing and there cannot be such a thing as an unknown remote corner of the globe.

The Adagh n Ifoghas, where *Alfellaga* took place, is a small range of low Mountains appended to the southwestern edge of the central Saharan Hoggar Mountains. The mountains are called Adagh n Ifoghas after part of its inhabitants, the Ifoghas, a Tuareg clan. Adagh n Ifoghas literally means 'mountains of the Ifoghas' in their language, Tamasheq. Worldwide the people speaking this language are known as Tuareg but unless I quote source material, in this book they will be referred to as they refer to themselves: Kel Tamasheq, 'the people speaking Tamasheq'. Kel Tamasheq is a general plural taken from the female plural. The masculine plural is *imushagh*, a term with a particular meaning fully explained later on, 'noble'. The masculine singular is Ou Tamasheq and the feminine singular Tou Tamasheq, which simply designate individuals, but which are seldom used. For the sake of simplicity these singulars will therefore not be used in this book either. A single person will be referred to as 'a Tamasheq', in full realisation of the grammatical abhorrence. Tamasheq normally means the language, but I will use Tamasheq as an adjective as well. The Ifoghas are the leading clan of a larger group of Kel Tamasheq clans in the Adagh Mountains. Only the Ifoghas call these mountains 'Adagh n Ifoghas'. The other clans in the Adagh simply speak of 'Adagh' – 'The Mountains' – and refer to its inhabitants as Kel Adagh, 'The People of The Mountains'. In turn, the Kel Adagh form part of the larger Tamasheq world, which forms part of the North African Berber culture and language group.

On a Tamasheq map of the area, the Adagh is bordered by the Hoggar Mountains to the north, by the sandy plain of the Tamesna to the east, by the Azawad valley to the southeast, by the stony and treeless Tilemsi plain to the south and southwest, and by the Timetrine plain to the west and northwest. Most of these areas are seen as part of the Kel Adagh living space. The areas beyond, the Hoggar Mountains and Touat plain to the north, the Azawagh valley and Aïr Mountains to the east, the Aribinda lands in the Niger interior delta to the south, and the land of Shinqit to the west, are not formally part of the Kel Adagh living space, but they do form part of their world as they are inhabited by other Kel Tamasheq groups and by their most direct neighbours: First and foremost the Bidân (also known as Moors) and other Arabs, and the Fulani, who share a nomadic pastoralist culture; second by the Songhay, Dogon, Bambara and Hausa peoples who are sedentary farmers.

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[1] Lecocq, B. & P. Schrijver 2007.

On a political map of the world the Adagh n Ifoghas is called Adrar des Ifôghas and it is situated in the Northeastern corner of the Republic of Mali, on its border with Algeria. While Mali's northernmost part, including the Adagh, is situated in the Sahara, its southernmost part, the Mande Mountains, is situated in the more forested part of the West African savanna. This geographical location places Mali in the Sahel zone, neighbouring Mauritania and Senegal to the west; Niger and Burkina Faso to the east; and Ivory Coast and Guinée (Conakry) to the south.

Kel Tamasheq politics

This book deals with political changes and internal debates about political changes within Tamasheq society from the late 1940s to the present. These debates focus on new political structures introduced into Tamasheq society from outside – such as the colonial bureaucratic administration, the post-independence socialist one-party state, nationalism, and multi-party democracy – and their impact on and incorporation into local concepts of politics, the origins of which predate colonial rule. These local concepts – and I try very hard here to avoid the much despised term 'traditional' – are based on concepts of kinship and hierarchy, which have long been misunderstood to be akin to European feudalism, with dire consequences for local political history. So before we can say anything on the political history of Northern Mali we need to have some basic understanding of the principles of Tamasheq social and political organisation, and the ways in which they have been shaped. The first thing that can be observed about Tamasheq social and political structure is its extreme diversity. As Clare Oxby has rightly put it:

> Scholars have always tried to distinguish "ordered structures" in Tuareg social organisation (...) In the end, all attempts to model society fail as one can always find a Tuareg group escaping the rule.[2]

This is not to say that the Tamasheq world does not know social or political unity. The Tamasheq are organised into a number of interconnected social and political constellations, acknowledging each others existence in cooperation and rivalry, and in the idea that they are all part of one culture and one people, the Kel Tamasheq: 'Those who speak Tamasheq'. However, it does mean that within the Tamasheq world, as everywhere else, variety in political organisation exists. What will be said here is only valid for the western part of the Tamasheq world included in the Republic of Mali. Other Tamasheq polities in other countries have different experiences, both at present as in the recent and more distant past.

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[2] Oxby, C. 1996: 172.

The bases of social-political organisation in the western part of the Tamasheq world are twofold. The first is hierarchy. The second is the one social structure all Tamasheq groups have in common: The clan or *tewsit*, which can be seen as quasi kin groups based on a lineage ideology, which varies per clan. The basis for the hierarchical structure of society is a system of social strata referred to as castes. The clans, or *tewsiten* (sing. *tewsit*), are largely based on lineage structures and are partly caste related. The very notions of hierarchy and even the mere existence of castes and *tewsiten* are controversial subjects of debate within Tamasheq society as well as among scholars. Various parties outside and inside Tamasheq society wanted, or still want, to abolish either the hierarchical relationships, or the clans, or both, while others wanted to enforce their role. Knowledge of this particular dynamic in internal Tamasheq social political debates is crucial in understanding all political events ever since the late 1940s, when the existence of the political order shaped by colonial rule was first put into question by Malian politicians and the lower strata of Tamasheq society as described in Chapter 1. When attempting to describe the workings and organisation of these castes and *tewsiten*, one is confronted with two problems. The first problem is the legacy of colonial observation, describing Tamasheq social strata as a feudal system in which racial characterisations played an important role. The second problem consists of the colonial and post-colonial administrative meddling in social and political organisation, which has resulted in confusion around the content and meaning of the term *tewsit*. I will first explain the colonial observation and the resulting description of Tamasheq society as feudal. Then I will describe the historical development of the various contents and meanings the word *tewsit* has acquired throughout pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times. I will explain how the French administrative terms *tribu* and *fraction,* translated throughout this book as 'tribe' and '*fraction*', are related to the Tamasheq term *tewsit*, without these three concepts being totally congruent, although many people, administrators, researchers and even Kel Tamasheq alike, think this to be the case.

Tamasheq society is based on a set of social strata into which one is born. Early French ethnographers described the social organisation as feudal.[3] At the top of this society stood the *imushagh* (m. sing: *amashegh*, f. sing: *tamasheq*) or noble warriors, referred to in early colonial ethnographies as a '*noblesse d'épée*' and perceived as racially 'white'. The *imushagh* distinguish themselves by a culture of honour and shame, quite common among the Mediterranean cultures

[3] It should be noted that the first explorers and ethnographers of the Kel Tamasheq, such as Barth, Bissuel or Duveyrier, hardly used the term feudal to describe Tamasheq society. They are nevertheless responsible for the introduction of this term which became popular especially among colonial ethnographers/administrators from the 1920s onwards. Barth, H. 1859; Bissuel, H. 1888; Duveyrier, H. 1864.

most anthropologists classify them amongst, precisely on the grounds of this particular trait.[4] This culture is called *temushagha*, 'the way of the *imushagh*'.[5] It consists first of all of the knowledge of honour and shame – *eshik* and *taka-raket* respectively in Tamasheq – and second in the knowledge of one's *temet* – one's lineage and ancestry – which form the basis of political organisation and which are kept closed off from strong political and social mobility through marriage strategies. The first group the French distinguished from the *imushagh* were the *ineslemen* (m. sing.: *aneslim*): A group of free or noble status, racially described as 'white', who specialised in religious affairs. They were described as a '*noblesse de robe'* that stood directly under the *imushagh* in the social hierarchy. Although their primary guidance in life are the tenets of Islam they also adhere to *temushagha*. The *imghad* (m. sing.: *amghid* f. sing.: *tamghid*) formed a third group. This group consisted of free, 'white' people who were not noble, but who tried to live according to the *temushagha*, the noble way of life, with one notable exception: Most *imghad*, but not all, do not have a *temet*, a lineage to which they belong, and which they guard against impurity or political encroachments through endogamous marriage strategies that form the basis of a policy to keep the social strata in place. They were often described as dependent on the nobles for protection and rearing their cattle for them, although neither was necessarily true. However, for these reasons they were referred to as '*vassaux*' to the nobles. The *inadan* (m. sing.: *enad* f. sing.: *tenad*) or craftsmen, generally simply referred to as 'blacksmiths', were another important group the French encountered. They stood out especially in the Timbuktu area and in the Algerian Hoggar and Ajjer, where they performed functions similar to that of the *griot* in other West African societies (sometimes a special subgroup from among the *inadan*, the *aggiwin* performed these tasks). They were racially classified as 'black', but free. Most ethnographers placed them outside the strict social hierarchy they construed for Tamasheq society as they enjoyed certain liberties of behaviour that the slaves – also perceived as 'black' – did not (and neither did other groups in society for that matter) as the *inadan* did not follow the *temushagha* the nobles adhered to. At the bottom were the *iklan* (m. sing.: *akli* f. sing: *taklit*): The slaves, divided into various subgroups which were all

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[4] Behnke, R. 1980; Hart, D. 1981; Peristiany, J., ed., 1966; Peristiany, J. & J. Pitt-Rivers, eds, 1992. In his groundbreaking work *Honour in African History*, Iliffe even excludes North Africa and the Kel Tamasheq from his work as they are part of a supposed Mediterranean culture zone in which, according to most works on honour and shame in this area, honour is bound to female chastity, in contrast to sub-Saharan African cultures where this is not the case. The fact that this is not the case in Bidân and Kel Tamasheq concepts of honour either escapes Iliffe and most other scholars dealing with this subject. Iliffe, J. 2005: 1-3.

[5] Bourgeot, A. 1990, 1995; Claudot-Hawad, H. 1990, 1993, 1993b.

categorised as 'black'. This social classification into five groups still form the basis of description of Tamasheq society by many present-day researchers, although more and more reluctantly so.

Actually, it is not at all clear what it exactly means to be a member of any of these groups nowadays. Slavery was formally abolished in 1905 in French West Africa, and Tamasheq slaves were gradually emancipated since the 1940s, as we will see in Chapter 1. At present, slavery formally no longer exists at all, although the emancipation process is still incomplete.[6] The *imghad* deny any form of actual dependency on the nobles. At most they pay an honorary tribute, the *tiwse*, the worth of which is trivialised by the giving party, and sometimes even by the receiving party. This does not mean however, that anyone denies their existence as a social category. To the contrary, being *imghad* or not is of the utmost importance in Northern Mali ever since the 1960s, and it gained even more importance during the rebellion of the 1990s as a form of self-ascription. However, what it exactly means to be *imghad* is an issue of hot debate and opinions differ. It is not even clear whether a social group called *ineslemen* actually exists. The exact meaning of the word is 'Muslims' and all Tamasheq are Muslims. True enough, some *tewsiten* are in one way or another connected to a Muslim identity, such as the Ifoghas who claim *shorfa* status (descent of the prophet Muhammad) or the Kel Essuq who are generally connected with religious study such as *fiqh* and therefore called *alfaqiten*, a Berber plural of the Arabic *faqîh*. But the strict hierarchical distinction made between *ineslimen* and other *tewsiten* is difficult to make. At present, the social political meaning of the word *amashegh* – noble – is very unclear. In present-day Northern Mali the term seems to be reserved to denote small groups of Ouillimiden, *tewsiten* of the former ruling elite of the Ouillimiden confederation that ruled Northern Mali in the 19th century. They are often referred to as 'Bajan's (their leader) *imushagh*' or, when speaking French, '*les Touaregs*'. Formerly an external ethnonym, the word is now internally used to denote exactly the one quintessential group imagined to be Tuareg in the global imagery of consumption.

It is only clear that one is born into either group and that these groups stand in a certain hierarchical relation to each other. What that hierarchy looks like or whether it should be there in the first place is another matter which is, as has been said earlier, hotly debated within Tamasheq society.

I would like to propose another way of looking at this system of hierarchical strata, one not based on the old colonial parallel to feudalism. As I see it, the main criteria for classification of the existing groups are the following three oppositions: Free – unfree; strong – weak; and lineage – non-lineage.

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[6] Lecocq, B. 2005.

Free – unfree. The main categorisation is between *ellellu*, free; and *akli*, (former) slave, hence unfree. French colonial politics towards slavery in the Sahara was characterised by a dual attitude. Formally denying its existence in Arab and Tamasheq society after abolition, the French had never done anything to change the situation of former slaves, thus perpetuating their servitude. From the 1940s onwards, Malian politicians made the freeing of slaves and the breaking up of Tamasheq 'feudal relations' one of their focal points in regional, and even national politics. But despite this, notions of free and unfree status still exist in Tamasheq society, and still form the major divide. The issue of social inequality expressed in the existence of a social category of former slaves will play an important part throughout this book. It should be noted directly that this divide is not a feature unique to Tamasheq society. Other Malian societies, or West African societies in general, know this social divide between slaves and free as well.[7]

Strong – weak. The distinction between strong protecting groups or even persons, and weak protected ones, is the most important in this study. The Tamasheq concepts of strong and weak are *ellellu* (meaning of free origins or social independence) and *talaqqiw* (poverty or weakness). It includes ideas on economic and cultural capital, physical and military capacity, and certain character traits. Weak and strong are more or less fixed categories, only slowly changing over time, and applied to whole social political groups, the *tewsiten*, although of course they can also be applied to individuals. The French at first perceived the opposition between weak and strong, poor and rich as a distinction between the nobles, the *imushagh*; and the 'vassals', the *imghad*. In reality, some nobles are classified as *tilaqqiwin* – poor or weak – and some vassal groups as *illellan*, rich or strong. It is arguable whether those people labelled as *talaqqiw* have a lower status than those who are not labelled as such. A poor noble might still be seen as better placed than a strong *amghid* from a noble's point of view or vice versa from an *amghid's* position. After independence, especially from the 1970s onwards among Tamasheq immigrants, the hierarchical position between *tewsiten* became open to negotiation, while its continued existence was a matter of political debate. During and after the second rebellion, the internal dynamics of Tamasheq society led to violent conflict between *tewsiten* to alter their hierarchical position. At the same time occurred a shift in terminology used in the selfascription of certain social groups. Those who were once referred to as *imghad* now referred to themselves as *ellellu* (strong, which they were), which came to be similar to 'noble', without using the term *amashegh*. The *imghad* now started to define their way of life as *timgheda* – 'the way of the *imghad*' – as in contrast to *temushagha* –

[7] Rossi, B., ed., 2009.

'*the way of the imushagh*' – while certain *tewsiten* went even further and defined their way of life as particular to their tribe: *Tefoghessa*, 'the way of the Ifoghas'. These new statuses were based on ideas on strength and the ensuing obligation to defend weaker groups.

Temet – lineage and prestige. The last major opposition is between those who claim a lineage and know their genealogy, and those who do not claim a lineage or do not know their genealogy. Lineage or genealogy is called *temet*, which literally means 'placenta' in Tamasheq. A clan's lineage can be either patrilineal or matrilineal. In the Adagh and Azawad, lineage is only patrilineal, but in the Niger Bend and the Northern part of Burkina Faso, some groups, such as the Udalan and Imededdeghen *imghad* (who have *temet*) are matrilineal.[8] In the Algerian Hoggar, the transfer of political power seems to be only matrilineal, which has been at the basis of much Orientalist speculation on (matriarchal) gender relations in Tamasheq society. Having a *temet* is perceived to be the major characteristic of a noble origin. One of the main functions of keeping and knowing one's *temet* (or, as it is, inventing one that is accepted by other groups), is to accumulate prestige, a criteria on which hierarchy is based, and to keep social and political power within the tribe through endogamous marriage strategies. The prestige generated by a *temet* depends on the ancestors claimed, and on the amount of known historical personae further down the line. It is partly through the *temet* that status and hierarchy are designated to a *tewsit* as a whole. The ideological construct of lineage and genealogy is based more on wider kinship relations than on strict descendance. In Tamasheq kinship terminology, most of ego's ancestors are called 'father' (*abba*) or 'mother' (*anna*), with the notable exception of mother's brother and his male ascendants, who are called mother's brother (*annet ma*). In this way, lineage and descent allow for a larger construction of *tewsit* belonging through an idea of direct descent.

All criteria presented here as split entities are of course totally interwoven. They are concepts that can be played with and moulded at will in everyday practice where scholarly classification is of no concern. What is presented here concisely is, and will always remain, one of the major subjects within the study of Tamasheq society, because of its enormous complexity and because of social scientists' fascination with classification.

Tewsit

Tewsit is the most important word in understanding the history and contemporary structure of Tamasheq politics. The etymological meaning of the word

[8] Guignard, E. 1984.

tewsit is that of a woven mat or a hair plait.[9] A plait starts at the roots of one's hair, taking various strands together, and intertwining them into a strong whole. A Tamasheq woman's hair is plaited into three plaits, consisting of a number of smaller plaits. The plaits are partly visible from under her kerchief. This comparison is highly illustrative for the construction and functioning of *tewsiten* and the imbroglio they have become nowadays. Due to the fact that the term is now in use to denote different but related social-political structures – the original clan, but also the *tribu* and *fraction* of modern administration – the meaning and content of the *tewsit* as a social political structure has become hard to define. Researchers, administrators and the Kel Tamasheq alike have used the word to denote various indigenous and administrative organisations in Tamasheq society. In these sorts of situations, words like 'traditional' (alas, it seems unavoidable to use this term) or 'original' immediately come to mind as useful to discern between what is old, indigenous and Tamasheq, and what is foreign or new. I will first discuss what the *tewsit* might have been and looked like in pre-colonial times. Then we will see how and why the French administrators thought it wiser to introduce their own system of social organisation, which they thought was reflecting the 'traditional' Tamasheq system. Finally we will see how in post-colonial times both systems became intermeshed into one inextricable whole in which practically everybody gets lost.

The shortest and least inaccurate translation of the *tewsit* into anthropological terms is 'clan'. Other appropriate translations could have been 'lineage group' or 'descent group'. What makes it more complicated is that the *tewsit* can also be seen as a ramage of lineages or clans. That is to say: A grouping of lineages or clans through descent from the same but more distant ancestor, which can be either male or female.[10] At present the Kel Tamasheq also use the term *tewsit* to denote the administrative units called *fraction* and *tribu*. The concepts of *temet* – genealogy – and *tewsit* – clan – are interrelated. Clan and genealogy together form a kinship structure. A *tewsit* consists of all the living members of a lineage, hence the anthropological translation 'descent group'. However, not all Kel Tamasheq are perceived to have a genealogy, such as *imghad* groups, former slaves and other poor and powerless or *tilaqqiwin*. This does not mean that those without a genealogy are without a *tewsit*. Slaves were incoporated into their masters' *tewsit*. Nowadays former slave families can still use their former masters' clan to position themselves socially. *Imghad,* or other socially poor or weak without their proper *tewsit,* were incorporated into the

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[9] This meaning might be particular to the Tadghaq dialect. H. Claudot-Hawad gives as etymologies for *tewsit*; a wrist; a circular trap; or a woven mat, which conveys the same meaning as a plait. Claudot-Hawad, H. 1990.

[10] Terminology according to Schusky, E. 1972.

clan of the free/strong *illellan* under whose protection they were placed. In fact, often the noble's real protection only consisted of this incorporation in the *tewsit*, since it offered incorporation into a social and political structure. A *tewsit* is thus a social-political group centred on a free or noble lineage or clan, containing other social categories. In practice a *tewsit* can be seen as a group of people who consider themselves to form one, explaining and justifying their common belonging in kinship terms, which makes it a quasi-kin-group. This is possible through the way *tewsiten* are both split and bundled into ramages, precisely like a plait. A person can therefore belong to more than one *tewsit* at a time. A clan is part of a larger ramage when one ascends in the genealogical tree. This larger ramage, in turn, can also be part of a larger ramage when moving even higher up the genealogical branches. Sub-branching goes a long way.

The relations between *tewsiten* of the same ancestor (*alesel*, from the Arabic *al-Asl*, the root) are expressed in the language of non-lineal kinship structures. The two most important supportive kinship relations in western Tamasheq society are the *aran meddan* and the *tegezé* relationships.[11] The *aran meddan* – which very likely means 'the backbone of men' – are male paternal parallel cousins (female paternal parallel cousins being called *tanyatin*, and male and female maternal parallel cousins being called *aran tidoden* – 'the backbone of women'). This relation can be extended over various generations, expanding the limits of the group to a fraternal interest group writ large. In the western Tamasheq world, the *aran meddan* relationship forms the ideal basis of most *tewsiten*, with the *tegezé* relation as a supportive relation between *tewsiten*. *Tegezé* – literally meaning pelvis – is the relation between sister's children (sons) and mother's brother. This relation entails unrestricted material support and protection to his nephews and nieces by mother's brother (called *annetma*), and protection and loyalty to their uncle by sister's children (called *tegezé*). This relation, too, can be extended over the generations, when it can be an instrument to invoke support between *tewsiten,* which are seen as related through *tegezé*. In the eastern part of the Tamasheq world (the Aïr and beyond), the term *tegezé* is used to denote a confederation of federated *tewsiten*.[12] Of course, with cousins being preferential marriage partners within the political

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[11] The relative importance attached to *aran meddan*, *tegezé* or *aboubash* relations differs throughout the Tamasheq world. In the Adagh, the *aran meddan* relation is most important, whereas the Nigerien Kel Ferwan do not even know the term. Among the Kel Hoggar the *tegezé* relation is more important, since it forms the basis of power transmission.

[12] For the perception and expression of social cohesion through the human body see Claudot-Hawad, H. 1990. For more detailed schemes of kinship classification, see Nicolaisen, J. & I. Nicolaisen 1997: 615-653.

ideal of *temet* and *tewsit* endogamy, *tegezé* relations also occur within one *tewsit*. This can eventually form the basis of differentiation between *tewsiten* within a *tewsit* (as ramage group), or at least helping the demarcation. The same goes for the *aran meddan* type construction of a *tewsit*. Cross cousins are called *iboubashen*.

The origins of a *tewsit* can be partly made and unmade at will. There is no exact system, and although the Kel Tamasheq see them as created in historical time, they are therefore often seen by researchers as post-fact creations, which has led many to describe the Tamasheq kinship and clan structure as a segmented lineage system. Paul Pandolfi argues against this description by stating that the making, dissolving and continuous blending of clans is not a form of segmentation, but of internal dynamics and adaptation to new social political and economic situations.[13] The same argument, however, led others to applying the term segmentary system to certain societies in the first place. A second argument is that many *tewsiten* that came into existence after the 1910s were not formed through internal dynamics expressed in kinship relations. They were the result of direct administrative meddling, which will be dealt with below.

All *tewsiten* are perceived to be incorporated, in or at least under the influence of, an *ettebel*, which literally means (war)drum, hence the anthropological translation 'drum group'.[14] An *ettebel* is a grouping of clans and ramage groups forming a political unit under the leadership of one clan or ramage group. The various clans and ramage groups stood in hierarchical relations toward each other. The leader of the *ettebel* as a whole is called *amenokal,* which literally means 'owner of the land'. The symbol of his power is a drum – the *ettebel* (from the Arabic *tobol*, drum) – hence the name. A convenient translation of *ettebel* is federation. The *ettebel* was historically the most important political and military defence group.

Federations could rise and fall. They could be made and dissolved, depending on the strength of dominant groups in the political field. They could also combine in an even larger unit, the confederation, called *tegezé* in the eastern Tamasheq world. The once powerful Kel Tademekkat confederation was dissolved shortly before colonial conquest. In the 18th century, the large confederation of the Ouillimiden split in two halves: The Ouillimiden Kel Ataram; and the Ouillimiden Kel Denneg. During the phase of colonial pacification, roughly between 1900 and 1920, the French military administration enhanced the internal process of creating and dissolving federations. Federations that posed threats to French rule, such as the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram and the Ouillimiden

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[13] Pandolfi, P. 1998: 204-205. See also Bernus, S. & E. Bernus, eds, 1986.

[14] The term was first coined by Johannes Nicolaisen. Nicolaisen, J. 1963a, 1963b; Nicolaisen, J. & I. Nicolaisen 1997.

Kel Denneg, were dissolved. Loyal collaborating clans were promoted to the rank of a federation, which might lead a French recognised confederation. This was the case with the Ifoghas federation in the Adagh, which was recognised by the French as an *ettebel* independent from the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram in 1910. Their leader Attaher ag Illi was promoted to the rank of *amenokal*, who informally led the other ramage groups in the Adagh Mountains – the Idnan, the Kel Taghlit and the Taghat Mellet – in a confederation called Kel Adagh. Although it might well be that the Ifoghas perceived themselves as independent from the Ouillimiden prior to French conquest, it is secretly known that this was not the case. However, the Ifoghas present themselves today as having had their own *ettebel* since the late 19th century, prior to French arrival, which, according to their own version of history, only helped to have their independence finally recognised by their neighbours. At present *ittebelen* are seen as historical relics in Northern Mali but, informally, they do exist and have an influence on local politics that is hard to measure.

It is clear that the flexibility and interchangeability of the social-political system outlined above would get on the nerves of French colonial administrators. Most colonial administrators dealt with this problem in the same way: They decided for themselves who belonged together and what that group should be called. The administration in *Soudan Français* was characterised by the colonial administration itself as a double system of French *Commandants* and locally recruited *Chefs Traditionels*. The largest administrative unit was the *Cercle*, lead by a *Commandant de Cercle,* who could be a military officer or a civil administrator. The *Cercle* was divided into *Subdivisions*, also headed by a *Commandant*, and into parallel French created *chefferies coutumiers*, traditional chieftaincies. In sedentary societies, these were the *cantons* and *villages*, each headed by a chief, the *Chef de Canton* being placed over de *Chefs de Village*. Among the nomads, the French had created *tribus* and *fractions* – tribes and *fraction*s – as 'traditional' social and now administrative units, with both headed by a chief, and the *tribu* regrouping the *fractions*. At first these tribes and *fraction*s were based on the French understanding of the *tewsit* system. The term *tribus* was believed to be the proper translation of the Tamasheq *tewsit* as a larger ramage group, for example the Ifoghas. *Fraction* was seen as the proper translation of the term *tewsit* as a clan, for example the Irayakan *tewsit* within the *tewsit* Ifoghas. It then slowly evolved into a system based on French politics of control. *Commandants* could merge or split *tewsiten* to group them together again into new *tribus* or *fractions*. The creation of *tribus* and *fractions* should not however be seen as a one-way process dictated by French administrators. Their administrative grouping and regrouping often took place on the demand of, and effected under the influence of, the chiefs. In the end, the connection with the pre-colonial *tewsit* system was almost totally severed when dependent

groups were regrouped into *fractions*, detached from their original *tewsit*. Until the late 1930s, the communication and dealings with the Kel Tamasheq for the *Commandants de Cercle* was limited to the tribal chiefs, the interpreters and the *goumiers* – the native police force. Hence, the real impact of the administrative reshuffling of the *tewsiten* into tribes and *fraction*s might have been quite small when it comes to internal social and political dynamics. The Kel Tamasheq only had dealings with their *tribu* and *fraction* insofar as they had dealings with the administration and their administrative chief. They could still use the pre-colonial *tewsit* and *ettebel* structures in internal matters. It took devoted *Commandants* who spoke Tamasheq and regularly visited the bush to make a real impact on the Kel Adagh social-political system.

After independence, the new Malian administration set out on an active policy to modernise society and to undo parts of the administrative colonial heritage. Like the French had done before them, but this time based on Marxist theory, the new regime concluded that Tamasheq society was feudal. In order to change this, the 'feudal lords' – the traditional chiefs – had to be ousted, and the still existing servile social relations between former slaves and their former masters had to be totally abolished. Paradoxically, part of the pre-existing colonial structure was now formalised by law in order to change the system. The new regime believed that in traditional pre-colonial African society, the village had been the center of social-political and economic organisation and it therefore proclaimed the village to be the basic unit of Malian political, economical and administrative organisation. Parallel to the village, the *fraction nomade* became the basic unit of administrative, political and economic organisation in nomad societies. However, the tribes that had stood over the *fraction*s in colonial times were completely dissolved as an administrative unit. Their place was left vacant and was only filled by the enlargement of the *fraction*s, which still exist today. But as the regime quickly discovered, it could not effectively govern without the assistance of the tribal chiefs, who were informally kept in place. The autonomy of the *fraction*s from the tribe and the empowerment of its chiefs, as against the power of the tribal chiefs that took place in the 1960s, opened the possibilities for political use of the *fraction*s in internal affairs between *tewsiten* as clans. In the 1970s the *Teshumara* culture of Tamasheq immigrant labourers in the Maghreb, and the *Tanekra*, the revolutionary movement preparing the second rebellion, were hotly debating the existence of *tewsit* and caste hierarchy. While a majority of the members seemed to have been strongly against hierarchy and the *tewsit* system, a minority was in favour of strengthening its existence. Eventually, this minority would win the debate with the active help of the tribal chiefs and the passive help of the community, but this struggle is not over yet. In the 1990s finally, the *fraction* and its institutions were democratised and the procedure for their creation or

dissolution formalised in law. This new democratic structure made it possible to create, split, or bundle *fraction*s on the initiative of others than the chiefs and *Commandants*. The main requirement to form a new *fraction* is one hundred potential members who agree upon a designated chief and elect among themselves a *fraction* council (often consisting of the initial organizers of the new *fraction*). The potential chief and his councillors can then request the necessary administrative forms from the *Commandant de Cercle*, fill them out and submit their demand. This procedure became very popular shortly after the second rebellion and still is today. In 1960 there were 64 *fraction*s in the Cercle *of Kidal*, a number that had been more or less stable since the 1940s. In 1974 there were 65, in 1996 their number had almost doubled to 114.[15] 'It won't be long until everybody is his own fraction' as one informant cynically observed. These new *fraction*s, created on the initiative of the Kel Tamasheq themselves partly reinstitute the internal social dynamics of Tamasheq society on clan basis. The new *fraction*s are often rooted in the social and political dynamics within a *tewsit* as clan (instead of as *fraction*), which, despite all French and Malian efforts, and despite the efforts of the *Tanekra* movement, has largely remained the basis of Tamasheq social thinking and organisation.

An ethnography of historical research

A historical work is always the outcome of the encounter between a historian and his sources. In this case, part of those sources consists of the historical discourse and memory of the actors and eyewitnesses of the presented events. These actors and eyewitnesses have informed the present writer from the point of view of their historical culture. Thus, it is necessary to be aware of their way of producing historical discourse, and the notions that inform this production. Therefore, I will give here an outline of Tamasheq thought on history, its sources, circumstances of its production, and the functions of its production.

My relations to those who could help to produce this history were characterised by both restraint and active engagement. During fieldwork in Northern Mali, I made contacts with a number of people I hoped to use as key informants and who could perhaps lead me to others. Some these were former *ifulagen* (sing. *afuleg*), as the fighters of *Alfellaga* are called, but they were not keen on talking much about their experiences, nor did they direct me to former comrades. I have not even been able to meet the leaders of *Alfellaga* as one of them, Zeid ag Attaher, had already died before I arrived in Mali, while the other, Elledi ag Alla, was reticent to meet me. Many former rebels of the 1990s were reluctant to speak too, since the organisation of the rebel movement had been

[15] Journal officiel de la République du Mali, 26/11/1996.

formally sworn to secrecy. As one informant put it, 'you erect a wall around a house to keep the rubbish out'.[16] Yet I did find one man who doubled as key informant and as fieldwork assistant in Kidal, the capital of the Adagh. Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, presented to me as 'the official historian of the Ifoghas clan', doubled as research assistant and informant on a period that is crucial in this book: That of the *Tanekra*, the movement that prepared for the second rebellion from 1975 to its outbreak in 1990. Fall had been among the first organisers of the *Tanekra* movement and knew the story – his story – by heart. Working with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall proved to be a pleasure, but sometimes a handicap when meeting other people. A handicap as it blocked access to some categories of informants who were not too keen on the ideas of 'the Ifoghas Minister of Propaganda' as he was called outside his own clan, and a pleasure as his narratives provided me with a basic story and a deepened understanding of how Tamasheq history works. When my attempts to have people discuss the subjects I was interested in failed, I often offered to recount what I presumed to know. I then told the history according to Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. More often than not people reacted to this version in exclaiming '*bahuten ghas dihadagh!*', 'those are nothing but lies!'

The relations between those who construe events in Tamasheq historical production are shaped by what Andrew Shryock calls 'a community of disagreement'.[17] During my fieldwork, Tamasheq society was in a phase of high political polemics, based on *tewsit* affiliation. And, like the tribal world of the Jordanian Balga described by Shryock, 'In a community defined by polemic, dissensus must be preserved (...) if tribal names are to retain their significance'.[18] The narrative I gave to potential informants was either too general to fit the narrative of their own *tewsit,* or it was too close to that of another *tewsit* to be acceptable. Thus, all information given (with a few remarkable exceptions) is coloured by the polemical relations between certain *tewsiten*. Indeed, I doubt that many of my informants would agree entirely with the story as I present it below, simply because the role of their own *tewsit* is absent or presented in a way which conflicts with their own vision. If there is one concept that lies at the heart of Tamasheq historical discourse, it is that of the fundamental incompleteness of narrative, since there is always a voice being left out. On the other hand, it is not completeness that matters so much, as does the vision presented in historical discourse.

The Kel Tamasheq encountered during this research distinguish between four main forms of historical knowledge constituting the sources of history as a

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[16] Interview with Malik ag Sallah. Ménaka, 28/04/1999.
[17] Shryock, A. 1997: 59.
[18] Ibid.

whole: *At-tarikh*, written history; *tinfusen*, oral history or narrative; *tisiway*, poetry; and *temet*, genealogical recollection. The Tamasheq appreciation of historical sources seems to be not far removed from common views on history in Western culture and, indeed, from concepts held by some professional Western historians, which is probably due to the fact that the Kel Tamasheq have a long-standing tradition of literacy in Arabic.[19] The literacy rate has increased in the last fifty years when some Kel Tamasheq became educated in French as well. Some forms of oral literature, like poetry, are highly regarded as historical sources, but most forms of *tinfusen*, stories or oral history, were discarded as unreliable. I do not know to what extent this was the case a few generations ago, but I imagine that this is a process linked to the increase in literacy. As far as they are available, books constitute a source of historical knowledge presented as such, and used as a final argument reinforcing the validity of historical discourse. The Arabic word *at-tarikh* – history – means 'written history' in Tamasheq. It is classified in two categories. Historical products written in Arabic are called *kitaban*, the Arabic word for book put in Tamasheq plural. Historical products written in French are called *livrtan*, the French word for book put in Tamasheq plural. Regardless of language, most value and credibility is given to these written historical works and many of my informants deplored their lack of availability or access to them. Some of my informants referred to articles or books written by local scholars (sometimes themselves), or the works written by foreign researchers. Some of them also referred to the local archives as *livrtan* of great value. One of the more frustrating moments of my fieldwork occurred when one of my informants asked me, 'Why don't you go to France? There are many books and archives there. We don't know anything about our history. France is where you can find it all'. *Tinfusen* (sing. *tanfust*) means 'stories' or 'oral narrative' in general, a large category ranging from folkloristic tales, jokes, and the narrating of anything from important events to what one did yesterday. The exact meaning of *tanfust* depends on its contents. In this respect, a *tanfust* might be historical discourse itself, or the stories passed on by others on which one bases one's own interpretation. *Tinfusen* are perceived to be untrue due to their changing nature. One can tell a story in one way, only to tell it differently the next time. Written texts and poetry are perceived to be fixed, unchanging, and hence more 'true'. *Tisiway* (singular: *tasawit*) means poetry. Poems dealing with historical subjects are highly valued as both sources of history and as historical discourse itself. Poetry is, however, not a form of historical narrative. Poems serve as an *aide-mémoire*, emphasising other historical genres. The events dealt with are presented very concisely. It is more a reference to events, than an account of them. What makes

[19] Norris, H.T. 1977.

a poem valuable is the argument, vision or feeling expressed, which can be debated or taken as an example in other forms of historical production. Fragments of poetry are often used to illustrate what has been said, or as a fundament to build one's own narrative on.[20] The *Teshumara* movement and its successors have been very prolific in the domain of poetry and song writing. Most poems and songs reflect upon the social-political situation the *ishumar* found themselves in, and upon the social-political conditions of the Tamasheq world outside the *Teshumara*. The aim of the poets was to raise political awareness within the Tamasheq world, along the lines of their own thoughts, which were not by definition shared by all Kel Tamasheq. Hence, the relations underlying the (re)construction of events in historically loaded political discourse was one of 'informed' towards 'non-informed'. *Teshumara* poetry is not only the result of relations contemporary to their production. Many poems evoke historical moments. Therefore, they are themselves historical end products, used to raise political awareness. I have collected a corpus of poetry myself but, due to unfortunate circumstances, most of this corpus remains untranslated and thus closed to me. Luckily enough, more competent people in this respect have done similar work. With few exceptions, I will make use of two unpublished corpuses of poetry. The first was collected in 1995, mostly from the mouth of the composers themselves, by Nadia Belalimat and translated with the help of Moussa ag Keyna, himself a poet of the *Teshumara*.[21] The second corpus was collected by Georg Klute in 1996 and 1998 and was translated with the help of Ehya ag Sidiyene.[22] These poems were collected largely in a similar fashion to my own collection and are similar in content as well. The two people that helped translate both corpuses were exactly those I had hoped to engage in the translation of my own corpus, simply because they are the best ones normally available. But alas, they were not.

The centrality of individualised history, the exploits of persons, is predominant in all forms of historical production mentioned above. Tamasheq communal identity and belonging are imagined, in the sense of Anderson's work, but the whole of Tamasheq society consists of face-to-face communities in close contact with each other. They know of each other's existence, stories and particular exploits. The role of the physical environment is related to this. In times of scarcity, it is vital to be able to leave one's territory and dwell on that of neighbours. In this particular environment, knowing people, and the relation to them over space as well as time, is essential to survival. It is easier to remember the historical relation one has to a particular *tewsit* through the inter-

[20] A good and available example of this is: Ag Alojaly, G. 1975.
[21] Belalimat, N. 1996.
[22] Klute, G. 2001.

mediary of some of its most renowned members than through knowing all of them personally. Second, the renown of individuals spreads out to their descendants and living kin. Tamasheq society is essentially hierarchical. The hierarchy is not only based on caste status, but within a *tewsit* on the value and consequent prestige of its members. One factor in acquiring status or keeping it is to have legendary personalities in one's genealogy. In this way, the history of a person reflects the history of a *tewsit* at a given moment, and their current status is partly derived from it.

The individuality of Tamasheq history is reflected in archive material of the French period and early Malian administration. Apart from oral sources of all kinds, this research is based on a set of archival sources from a number of archives. Although I have collected a large body of relevant data in the *Archives Nationales du Mali* in Bamako and at the *Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer* in Aix-en-Provence, the most important archive collections I consulted come from four rather obscure and sometimes less accessible archives. After some efforts, I managed to gain access to the Archives du Cercle de Kidal in Kidal itself, kept in the then-vacant office of the *Commandant de Cercle*. It is largely thanks to local administrators of Kel Adagh origins who knew and supported my endeavours that I gained access to this collection, which contained an important file on *Alfellaga*, on which I base part of my narrative in Chapter 4. This material is supplemented with a substantive report written by the French intelligence service, the Service de Documentation Espionage et Contre Espionage (SDECE), who observed *Alfellaga* from their bases in Algeria (without giving any indication on possible support from their side), that I found back in the Centre d'Histoire et d'Etudes des Troupes d'Outre Mer in Fréjus France. This archive holds a set of copies from the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre in Paris, which is still under embargo, but which is freely available in Fréjus. Material on the late colonial period, especially on the Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (OCRS) and its effects on local politics, were found first of all in the Archives of the Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Sûreté (now Ministère de l'Adminstration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales) in Bamako, to which I was granted access by then Minister of the Interior Colonel Sada Samake. Last, but certainly not least, I have been able to make use of a substantive body of documents from the Archives du Cercle de Goundam, which have been generously put at my disposal by Bruce Hall. Without these, this book would not have been possible.

French rule in the Sahara was highly indirect. The French *Commandants* in the North were all military officers until the late 1940s. These men were often from the French nobility, who thought in terms of leaders; army hierarchy; and French prestige. They only had contact with the appointed chiefs and their helpers, and then only when they went on inspection and tax collecting tours.

Their reports reflect this. Most reports deal with tax collection, the functioning of the chief, his actions, and disputes over leadership. The civil servants of the late 1950s largely kept to the military tradition that had set the paradigms of their policy. After independence they were replaced by French-trained Malian administrators and army officers, who had previously been their subordinates. It is striking to see the resemblance between early Malian administrative reports and the reports of French *Commandants*. This individualistic approach to events from all sides, both Tamasheq and administrative, will be mirrored in this work. If all sources available deal with individuals, it is more than logical that the stories narrated and the examples given will do likewise. One can consider a history as a case to be presented and analysed to the benefit of scholarly endeavours undertaken outside its original milieu. One could also see it as a presentation of the way a community looks at its existence and presents itself in time. If the latter option is taken, one should incorporate elements of historical production and presentation indigenous to the history told. I will try to strike a balance between both approaches.

A reader's guide to this book

The work presented here is a history, and presented as such, but it shares borders with anthropology. The two extreme visions on both disciplines have it that history asks how the past shapes the present and that anthropology asks how the present shapes the past. The general idea at present is that both visions meet half-way. This study is no exception to the rule. I will try to argue both ways. Discourses on the past are shaped in the present, but simultaneously discourses on the past shape an idea of the present and therefore a possible future. I will argue that preconceived stereotyped images of each other, most of which were of a particular racial nature, effectively shaped political and social interaction between the Malian state and the Kel Tamasheq between the 1940s and 1960s. In turn, the events that came of it – *Alfellaga*, the 1963 rebellion – were remembered and interpreted in a specific historical discourse, which served to muster support for renewed armed resistance against the Malian state since the 1970s. Thus, historical discourse both serves to explain events and to justify an intended course of events, but it also shapes reactions to events and thus events themselves. It is this interaction between idea and action in Tamasheq and Malian politics that will form the heart of this book. This approach means that I alternate various forms of historical writing in one book. While in one chapter I will construct a narrative, in the next (or in the same) I will show how narratives or similar narratives are used as an explanation or justification of a certain point of view. Where, in one part, I will use interviews as reference material in the construction of discourse or event, I will use them

elsewhere to deconstruct it as explanatory analysis to itself or events described. The underlying idea is that, to me, these analytical, argumentative and editorial means are valid if it is one's goal to come to a comprehensive answer to a question, and that is exactly my intention. Although history, as all human sciences, is involved in asking questions, I am somehow convinced that it should also be about giving answers. Structure, logic, ideas on veracity and interpretation, are subject to a desire for understanding, for an answer, albeit an improvised, incomplete, sometimes even incoherent and always temporary one.

The first chapter of this book will discuss decolonisation, independence and nationalism in late colonial *Soudan Français* through a narrative history on party politics and the creation of the Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (OCRS). The period at hand starts in 1946, the year France authorised the creation of political parties in its African colonies and organised elections for local representative bodies. This heralded the late colonial state and the first irreversible steps toward gradual independence. However, the discovery of mineral riches in the Sahara in the mid-1950s made many in France reluctant to grant full independence to the Saharan possessions. The idea to keep the Sahara under continued French rule was propagated among the Saharan political elite and, suprisingly perhaps at first sight, further promulgated with the ardent support of some of them, against the strongly expressed will of the West African political elite. However, French claims to the Sahara were also opposed by the newly independent Moroccan Sultanate, which claimed large tracts of the Sahara as part of the historical Sultanate, a vision supported by yet other politicians in the Sahara. These were the first seeds of a nascent and multivoiced Saharan nationalism, in opposition to a slowly evolving Malian nationalism.

The second chapter will discuss the role of stereotypes in colonial and post-colonial rule in Africa and especially the role of racial stereotypes and racism in the wider Sahel and Sahara, but especially in Northern Mali. These subjects will be presented through a short history of the construction of stereotypical images and racial categories as part of colonial policies and through a narrative on late colonial and post-colonial politics in Northern Mali regarding slavery in Tamasheq society: The so-called '*bellah* question' and the possible existence of a network of Tamasheq slave traders shipping slaves to Mecca.

In the third and fourth chapters we will look at the relation between state and society in the early post-colonial period, through a narrative and analysis of Malian rule over Tamasheq society during Mali's first Republic between 1960 and 1968. The arguments brought forward in these chapters are twofold. The first is that different colonial and postcolonial experiences led to different appreciations of colonial dependence and national independence, which are now expressed in local historical narratives. The second is that decolonisation and

independence led to competition over power between old and new political elites, which could be expressed in competing expressions of nationalism. While the first part of this contention is widely known and accepted, the second is less well known. In Northern Mali, this competition found many forms of expression during the precarious shift in powers between old and new political elites. The lack of actual control of the new political elite in Mali was hidden to themselves and to the outside world under a discourse of high modernism, which James Scott roughly defined as a firm belief in the malleability of society under the right rule.[23] Yet, their anxieties about their real lack of power in the North came quickly to the fore in their dealings with local political elites, and the contestations these made to their power. The main rival elites were the tribal chiefs, who successfully managed to retain the position as mediator between state and society they had occupied in the colonial period, and the Western educated *évolués* of Tamasheq origins, who were excluded from administrative office precisely because of the racialised stereotypical views discussed in Chapter 2. These issues will be the focus of Chapter 3. Sometimes the conflict between rival political elites expressed in rival forms of nationalism escalated into violent conflict. Such was the case in late colonial Ghana/Ashanti and Morocco/Rif, in post-colonial southeast Nigeria/Biafra, in south Congo/Katanga, in post-colonial Zanzibar, and in post-colonial Northern Mali. Chapter 4 will provide a simple comprehensive narrative of *Alfellaga*: the first armed rebellion of the Kel Tamasheq against their inclusion within Mali between May 1963 and August 1964. Apart from a narrative on the rebellion and its effects, we will look at the present-day politics of historical memory and narration of these events among the Kel Adagh in particular, but also by other inhabitants of Northern Mali.

Chapter 5 will deal first of all with the rapid and tremendous transformations in the Tamasheq economy, society and culture in the 1970s and 1980s. I will present a comprehensive narrative of the formation of a cultural movement giving shape to a new Tamasheq way of life in an altered world: *Teshumara*. This will form the background to a discussion of the transformation of Tamasheq politics from within, leading to the creation of a formal nationalist movement, the *Tanekra*, which gave shape to continued Tamasheq aspirations of independence. I will especially focus on the role of historical narrative and its politicization in the formation of this nationalist movement, arguing that induced narratives of revolt, injustice, oppression, and suffering, as well as Tamasheq concepts of honour and shame, hatred and revenge, were instrumentalised in the construction of nationalist sentiments that found their expression in the rebellion of the 1990s. However, although the movement could shape a com-

[23] Scott, J. 1998. See also Bähre, E. & B. Lecocq 2007.

mon nationalist project, it remained internally divided on other political and social issues, especially the desirability of a social hierarchy and lineage-based politics as expressed in the *tewsiten*.

In the final Chapter 6, I will present a narrative of the second Tamasheq rebellion, starting in June 1990, up until March 1996. All the issues discussed in the previous chapters will rise to the fore during the different phases of this rebellion. The rebellion took place in a generally turbulent period in Malian history in which dictatorship was replaced with democracy. Both the democratisation and the Tamasheq rebellion led to an upsurge in Malian nationalism that found its expression partly in the resistance against any compromise with the Tamasheq nationalist rebels. These competing nationalisms finally led to a full blown ethnic conflict locally perceived as a civil war, or an ethnic conflict cloaked in a nationalist discourse of true Malians against alien nomad invaders. All the stereotypical racist images and discourses discussed in Chapter 2 return to an even more prominent place than they had in the 1960s. But as the Tamasheq rebels were militarily superior to the Malian Armed Forces, compromise had to be reached. This, however, brought the internal divisions within the Tamasheq nationalist movement to light, which led to schisms on the basis of both national and social political ideals, and the politics of lineage and *tewsiten*.

In the end, the question arises whether the conflict was still a nationalist one or whether internal political issues were more important. This question will implicitly be answered in the Epilogue to this book that deals with the period from the final peace between Mali and the Kel Tamasheq in 1996 to the present.

It is perhaps a bit contrarian to present a book on precisely its discontents in a year in which half the continent celebrates half a century of national independence. So be it. This is as good a moment as any other to read on these subjects. Giving it more weight by placing it in a narrative of celebration would in fact counter all analysis in this book.

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Creating Mali

From the 1960s onwards, historians constructed a periodisation that still structures the practice of African history. The division then made, into pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods, now impedes a more profound understanding of current affairs on the continent. Stephen Ellis has already pointed out that writing on contemporary Africa remains largely steeped in a modernist discourse that aims to stimulate economic and political development. Alongside such usual suspects as journalists and political scientists, he fingers historians for their continued attachment to social theories and analyses held over from the heady days of social engineering.[1] Such concerns do not necessarily shed light on issues important in Africa today. Much recent historical scholarship argues against national histories and so do I here. But I would like to argue, as I have done elsewhere, that histories that take the nation-state as a unit of analysis, rather than serving a nationalist purpose, might make an important contribution to understanding the genealogies of contemporary African politics.[2] Studied in depth, independence, like colonialism, proves to be a gradual process with various stages and scales of interdependence, often labelled as neo-colonialism. But understanding the following assumption to be wrong, that all former colonial subjects desired independence in the same way, is rather new, at least in African history. From the 1950s onwards, most Africanists have been enthralled by the independence myth, and they set out to write national histories for the newly independent states, or at least to frame their subject matter – be it economic, social, or cultural – in a national grid. However, Africa in the mid-twentieth century saw a number of violent political conflicts over independence that belied the myth of national unity. The most notorious of these were the

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1 Ellis, S. 2002.

2 Lecocq, B. & G. Mann 2003.

Biafra war and the Katanga war of secession. While the Biafra war is among the few to be explicitly recognised as a war of competing nationalisms, the Katanga secession is generally seen as a Belgian attempt to retain control over the mineral wealth of this Congolese province. Nevertheless, since the 1990s, a growing number of studies have shown the fallacy of African national unity in the face of independence. Most radical is Basil Davidson who dismissed the nation-state model as an altogether inappropriate political structure in the African context.[3] But a small number of studies have shown that national sentiments were real but divergent in a number of African decolonisations. Jean Allman's study of late colonial Ashanti showed the complexities of political life in Kumasi in the 1950s, leading to the creation of Ashanti nationalism demanding for a federal Ghanaian state.[4] In '*Sorting out the Tribes*', Jonathan Glassman analyses political processes similar to the ones described in this study, where racial and national imaginations were fused in an attempt by the Zanzibari political elite to regain independence from Tanzania in 1964.[5]

Between 1946 and 1968, colonial Soudan Français was transformed into the Republic of Mali. The limits of the independence caesura as a useful moment in understanding Malian history have been amply discussed elsewhere, hence my focus here on a much longer period.[6] The shape Mali took can only be seen from a supra-regional viewpoint overlooking AOF, North Africa and the Sahara, with France at the horizon. The transformation process was inchoate at most times and often incoherent and contradictory. Agency in this process was dispersed over a multitude of players, and power balances shifted continuously between Europeans and Africans, administrators and politicians, parties and people. It was a slow and gradual process involving various legal statutory transformations of both the territory and its inhabitants, the formation of new political elites engaged in democratically organised party politics, the reshaping and reinforcement of states, and the imagination of nations. The main point of this chapter for my general argument lies in the plurality of these constructions. The outcome of the process was not a Malian nation-state, but a state harbouring at least two nascent national ideas, if not more: the Malian nation and the Tamasheq nation. Whereas the first was intended and successfully stimulated, especially in the 1960s, the second seemed to be an unforeseen by-product that threatened the newly found and still unbalanced political order.

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3 Davidson, B. 1992.
4 Allman, J. 1993.
5 Lecocq, B. 2003.
6 Mann, G. & B. Lecocq, eds, 2003.

Competing nationalisms

The choice between the terms 'ethnic group' or 'nation' sometimes seems arbitrary. Most writers agree that the concepts of ethnic groups, ethnicity, nations and nationalism are strongly interlinked. Ethnic groups and nations are seen as relatively large social units organised along principles of perceived common identity based on language, cultural traits, geographic location, polity and (fictive) bloodlines. Varying with the school of thought and purpose of use of both terms, other traits can be ascribed. The problem with both terms, as well as with the terms nationalism and ethnicity, is that they have never been the exclusive domain of either social science or politics. Both the realm of perception and analysis and the realm of creative practice have used these terms and, in interaction, given them meaning and shape. All over the globe, the social polity identified with the state is called 'nation' as well, hence the concept 'nation-state'. The dual use of 'nation' as both a social polity in itself and as the social polity identified with the political unit 'state' enhances confusion, which is then solved by distinguishing between 'nations' as embodying 'the state', and 'ethnic groups' as social polities living within but disconnected from the nation-state ideological construct. Thus, in Mali, there is a Malian nation and there are Malians. There are also ethnic groups: Mande, Bambara, Minianka, Senoufo, Sarakole, Bobo, Dogon, Songhay, Fulbe, Kel Tamasheq etc, but these are not nations. To both politicians and, it seems, researchers, recognising their existence as nations would imply recognizing their right to separate from the Malian state. The implied difference is inspired by political rather than academic concerns. The political distinction between nation and ethnic group forms the basis for the distinction between their respective ideologies or cohesive forces: nationalism and ethnicity. Indeed, as with the characteristics ascribed to nations and ethnic groups, it is hard to observe the difference between nationalism and ethnicity. According to Ernest Gellner

> Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind.[7]

Here, Gellner seems to create congruence between nation and state, and he probably does so for practical reasons, as it is exactly the idea that nation and state as a polity should be congruent that matters to the nationalist, and also as Gellner goes on to describe nationalism as an ideology intimately linked to the

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[7] Gellner, E. 1983: 1.

nation-state. It should by now be clear that what I will describe as the ideology of nationalism in this book is a modern-day, slightly less functionalist version of what Benedict Anderson has called 'official nationalism', or the 'nationalism of the state or empire'. In practice, it shapes a national idea or image through the use of specific symbolism and language, the ultimate goal being to create a national image that is coherent with state interests and serving state-set goals.[8] In this way, nationalism decides who is a member of the nation (not all are worthy to participate in its politics or even live on its soil). Let it also be clear that I see this particular form of nationalism as the one that both the Malian state as well as the Tamasheq nationalist movement adhered to.

Although ethnicity resembles nationalism as an ideology, it is not the same thing. In practice, they are both cohesive ideas intended to give shape to a social group larger than the direct surroundings and networks of its individual members, and stimulating these members to create a larger social (and/or economic) polity. However, the distinctions between them, fine as they may be, are important. Contrary to nationalism as defined by Gellner, there is no such thing as a longing for congruence between ethnic belonging and ... what? The point is that ethnic groups can be seen as exactly the same polities as nations (which will at least be the case in this study). Thus, the sentiment expressing the wish for congruence between political unit and social group could always be called nationalism. Ethnicity is an idea expressing or shaping the human and social cultural content of an ethnic group or nation. While ethnicity defines the nation, nationalism expresses its political aspirations. Therefore, I will not refer to Tamasheq political ideas as 'ethnicity' or 'ethno-nationalism', a term often used to define the political aspirations of nations intent on seceding from the state(s) they currently live in. The Kel Tamasheq efforts to obtain their national independence will be referred to as Tamasheq nationalism, indeed making it both an equal and rival to Malian nationalism and the creation of the Malian nation and, as I will argue, as such it was and still is perceived: a competing nationalism. Both the Malian state and the Tamasheq nationalists linked nation to state. Both the Malian political elite and the Tamasheq political elite imagined a nation – the Malian nation and the Tamasheq nation respectively – which had a right to political sovereignty or independence. Both political elites imagined these nations as having been historically sovereign in precolonial times. The one difference is that the Malian political elite imagined the Malian nation as embodying various ethnic groups which should all strive to further the interests of the existing Malian nation-state, while the Tamasheq political elite imagined the Tamasheq nation as one, striving in the interests of independence yet to be

[8] Anderson, B. 1991: 83-111 and 141-154.

achieved. In fact, within the Malian state, two nationalisms and two nations strove for different goals.

From Soudan Français to the Mali Republic

Decolonisation in French Africa was closely linked to the Free French realities of World War II and the post-war interpretation of these realities by both French and African leaders. While French West Africa (AOF) sided with Vichy France at the start of the war, French Equatorial Africa (AEF) rallied to de Gaulle. Brazzaville became the capital of Free France. Most Free French Forces were African conscripts who eventually participated in the liberation of metropolitan France.[9] As in World War I, massive African conscription was obtained on the *quid pro quo* 'blood for rights'. In the Brazzaville declaration of 1944, de Gaulle promised the colonial subjects more liberties after the war, notably the abolition of the *indigénat*, which would be replaced by a citizenship in a French Union, a promise kept during the slow but gradual process of decolonisation.[10]

The first elections where African candidates could present themselves to an African electorate were those for the Constitutional Assembly that drafted the constitution of the Fourth Republic and its colonial dependencies in October 1945.[11] Soudan Français elected Fily Dabo Sissoko as its territorial representative. The political process that saw the creation of the French Fourth Republic also restyled the colonial empire into the *Union Française* that came into being in October 1946. The *indigénat* was abolished, a principal demand of the African representatives, and replaced by a citizenship of the new French Union. The Overseas Territories could create their own assemblies, first called *Conseils Généraux* and later *Assemblées Territoriales*, with growing competencies over the decade to come. Its members were elected by a gradually expanding electorate. Along with the creation of territorial assemblies in this post-war decolonisation process came the freedom to create political parties.

In February 1956, the French overseas territories entered a new phase towards independence. First, the *Loi Gaston Deferre* that sought to clear the road for reform of the *Union Française* was adopted. These reforms took shape in the *loi-cadre*, adopted later that same month. The *loi-cadre* was in fact a framework for a series of laws, many of which were initiated by African senators, that provided internal autonomy to the colonies within the *Union Française* through

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9 Mann, G. 2006.

10 Ageron, C-R., ed., 1986. I here follow a more or less standard interpretation on the effects of WWII on French decolonisation. For a more elaborate view on the 'blood for rights' and the subsequent creation of a historical discourse of debt, see Mann, G. 2006.

11 Based on Campmas, P. 1978.

enlargement of the competencies of the territorial assemblies, the institution of universal (territorial) suffrage, and the decentralisation and africanization of the administration. The *Assemblées Territoriales* now held voting power over the territorial budget and internal economic and social policies. In the meantime, colonial subjects would acquire many of the rights of metropolitan citizens, although they never gained full French citizenship on the same basis as their metropolitan counterparts in the Union.

But while the demand for it grew stronger independence was still not reached. During his African tour in August 1958, de Gaulle proposed to reform the *Union Française*, together with the French Republic, which was nearing its fifth incarnation. The new *Communauté Française* would hold the same powers as the *Union Française*, but the former territories would formally become independent republics, with authority over most domains, with the notable exceptions of foreign policy, defence and finance. A referendum on the constitution of the Fifth Republic, to be held in September 1958, would be decisive on the membership of the new republics. Voting in favour of the *Communauté Française* would mean a vote for continued partial dependency. A vote against the *Communauté* would mean direct independence. With the exception of Guinée, all territories opted for inclusion in the new *Communauté Française*. In November 1958, the colony Soudan Français was transformed into the *République Soudanaise*, member republic of the *Communauté Française*, with its own Assembly and a ministerial cabinet presided over by the Governor, but manned by Soudanese politicians.

The creation of the *Communauté Française* and its adhering republics meant dissolution of the supra-territorial organisation of AOF, which many West African political leaders, in fact many West Africans in general, saw as a decisive setback.[12] Daouda Gary-Tounkara has argued that the transfer of power from the federal structure of French West Africa to the various semi independent republics was seen by many of the federation's inhabitants and leading politicians as a form of political divide and rule, as to many French West Africans, the federation had more political, social and economic meaning than its constituent territories.[13] The dissolution of AOF was a disappointment for most who had hoped that their territories would remain united. Therefore, a new form of regional integration was looked for: a Francophone West African Federation. The Union Soudanaise – Rassemblement Démocratique Africaine (US-RDA) took a leading role in its shaping.

Within the West Africa-wide RDA there were two visions on the form federalism should take. The first, advocated by the US-RDA under Modibo

[12] Based on Gam, P. 1965. CHEAM 4022.
[13] Gary-Tounkara, D. 2008.

Keita and the Senegalese PDS under Leopold Sedar Senghor, advocated a West African federation of states, independent from France. The Ivorian PDCI-RDA under Houphouët-Boigny opted for a West African federation associated to and in close collaboration with metropolitan France. In December 1958, the RDA organised a Federal Council in Bamako. Delegations from Soudan Français, Senegal, Dahomey (Benin) and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) voted in favour of the independent federalist option. But Houphouët-Boigny had effectively lobbied for his own form of federation with France. Shortly after the Bamako conference, Dahomey and Upper Volta opted out to join Houphouët's *Entente Africaine*, leaving Soudan Français and Senegal alone on the road to federal independence.

In February 1959, Soudan Français and Senegal formed the Mali federation, within the *Communauté Française*. Both republics would preserve their legal existence as such, but a federal government and assembly were to be created in Dakar, holding power over supra-territorial affairs. In many respects, the federation seemed a continuation of the federal structures of the AOF. The main goal of the federation was to achieve common independence form France. In April 1960, the federation leaders reached an agreement with France over its existence as an independent federation outside the *Communauté Française*. The Mali Federation declared its independence on June 20 that year, but it proved to be short-lived. Conflicts arose over the political course of the Federation. Whereas the US-RDA under Modibo Keita adopted a rigid standpoint on Marxist Socialism as the basis of economic policy, Senghor's African Socialism was far more moderate. Where the US-RDA took a stance against French foreign policy, notably on the Algerian war of liberation, Senghor's PDS was more reconciliatory. Personal enmity between Keita and Senghor and a conflict over the presidency over the federation did the rest. The elections for the federal presidency were to be held on 27 August 1960, but on 20 August 1960, two months after its formal independence from France, and the start of its existence as an international sovereign federal state, Senegal left the Mali federation. Soudanese politicians in Dakar, including Modibo Keita, were arrested and put on the train to Bamako. In response, the Soudanese Government closed the borders and halted all transport to Senegal. On 22 September 1960, an extraordinary congress of the US-RDA in Bamako declared the independence of the Soudanese Republic under the name Republic of Mali. Mali as we now know it came into existence.

Party politics in Soudan Français

In his influential historical essay *The Black Man's Burden*, written as an argument against the creation of the nation-state in Africa, *éminence grise* Basil

Davidson rightly points out that the post-colonial state is essentially a reshaping of the colonial state by African servants of the colonial order, mostly by those who had been shaped through an educational system controlled by the colonial state or its allies, the various Christian missionary organisations.[14] Writing on the decolonisation of French West Africa, Tony Chafer stresses the dynamics between the colonial administration both at the upper levels in France and at the local colonial levels, and the African political elites. The outcome of decolonisation in AOF, according to Chafer, was not so much shaped by dialectical discourses and practices of resistance and control, but through close association and the meeting of diverging interests in shared political arenas. Although Chafer stresses the unpredictability of the decolonizing process and the fact that independence was largely achieved against the grain, it was in the end transferred to an African elite which had proved itself stable and dominant within the colony.[15] This political class, whether or not one endorses Basil Davidson's claim that it set out on a political course in divergence with African experience previous to colonisation, did stipulate that course by means of party politics on a vessel of state they had previously been helping to keep afloat.

Contemporary observers to the decolonisation process in French West Africa have noted that its African participants fell into three groups: chiefs, teachers and soldiers.[16] According to this vision, before World War II, the traditional chiefs dominated the African political field within the colonial system. During the interbellum, the teachers, who stand as a profession for all French educated colonial civil servants and other colonial *évolués*, organised cultural associations and literary clubs, which formed the breeding ground for the post-war parties. The soldiers were still absent, fighting for France in the various theatres of World War II, but on their return as veterans they would play an important part in winning rights for colonial subjects. In the post-war period, chiefs and teachers struggled for political supremacy in the new political institutions, a battle won by the teachers. The soldiers were absent, fighting colonial wars for France elsewhere in Madagascar, Algeria and Indochina. But again, on their return as veterans, they would side with the teachers in the construction of political parties. Finally, not long after independence, the soldiers took over political power in various coups d'état. This vision is of course strongly oversimplified. First, it neglects other important actors such as, but not limited to, the Dioula merchants and the small professional class of mechanics, truck drivers, radio operators, veterinary assistants, nurses and other technical profes-

[14] Davidson, B. 1992.
[15] Chafer, T. 2002.
[16] Schachter-Morgenthau, R. 1964.

sions.[17] More importantly, it neglects the inchoate, *ad hoc* character of both decolonisation in French West Africa and the gradual construction of the post-colonial states-to-be through the workings of party politics.

The attention of historians to the process of decolonisation, and especially for its ambiguities and diversity, has been growing in the past decade. Although Tony Chafer stresses the collaboration of French and colonial political elites, he nevertheless stresses the difficulty these elites had to form a collective identity.[18] Gregory Mann has effectively shown that the African veterans of the French colonial wars, often presented as a homogenous interest group dedicated to the cause of independence, were in fact a very heterogeneous constituency prone to first defend its own interests, and whose collective political language, if any existed, lay in ties of debt and claims with France that never ceded, despite claims to national belonging and citizenship in either the French Union or the independent states of the 1960s.[19] Jean-Hervé Jezequel argues that the teachers, and *in extenso* the French educated West Africans, formed '*un ensemble déchiré'*.[20] He shows that the idea of a common political expression among this class, even the notion of this group as a class, is highly problematic.

I fully endorse these visions on the heterogeneity of all politically active groups in AOF, a heterogeneity that finds it expression exactly in the political landscape of the late colonial period, which saw the creation of many political formations in strong competition with each other. Probably, the vision of these groups as homogenous and fighting for the common goal of independence that was presented by researchers in the 1960s, has been shaped by the total dominance of the political field which the largest political formations in AOF had obtained by the early 1960s in single party states. In many former AOF states, these single parties in power were former RDA branches. In Guinée the PDG-RDA had ruled since 1958. In Côte d'Ivoire the PDCI-RDA ruled since 1960, crushing all potential political opposition. In Mali, the US-RDA dominated politics since 1958 and it would effectively create a single party state in 1960. The common origin of these single parties obscured their politically diverse stances, from Marxist to Liberal, and the fact that they had either absorbed or crushed their opponents without totally smoothing out the political differences with these coopted politicians.

However, despite the heterogeneity of all politically active groups, the centrality of French education in the creation of both a new class of party politicians, and the transformation of the ship of state by this class, cannot be

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[17] On the role of merchants and small professionals, see Amselle, J-L. 1977; Kaba, L. 1974.

[18] Chafer, T. 2002.

[19] Mann, G. 2006.

[20] Jezequel, J-H. 2005.

denied. Despite their conflicting political visions and interests, it was these groups that took the lead in the recreation of the political body of the colonial state through party politics. In Soudan Français, it seems that the key players in politics were educated in one colonial system or another, be it the army, the school, or the indigenous administration which created the chiefs and '*notables traditionels*'. Furthermore, many leading politicians were indeed teachers, although they might have been opponents in the two main political parties of the colony. It can therefore rightly be argued that those groups in Soudan Français who failed to board the new ship of state in time were those who could literally not read the signs of changing times. Among those, it has been argued, were the Kel Tamasheq. I will here try to show that this is only partially true. Many Tamasheq simply did not want to board, while others were thrown off deck.

In February 1946, the first parties saw the light of day in Soudan Français. Fily Dabo Sissoko, a schoolteacher from Bafoulabé, and the Soudanese representative to the constitutional assembly of 1945, founded the *Parti Progressiste du Soudan* (PSP). The PSP dominated the Territorial Assembly in Soudan Français from its creation in 1946 to the elections for the Territorial Assembly in 1956. It had the support of the French colonial administration as it saw the PSP as moderate and willing to collaborate with the colonial system since many traditional chiefs, the colonial administration's natural ally, adhered to it. It was therefore known as 'the chiefs' party'. Indeed, its uncontested leader Fily Dabo Sissoko was himself a traditional chief. Born in 1900, Sissoko came from a chiefly family in Bafoulabé, and he would replace his father as *Chef de Canton* in 1933.[21] He was educated in the French school system at William Ponty, and became assistant schoolteacher in Dori (Burkina Faso) in 1915, where he witnessed the bloody repression of the rebellion of the Tamasheq Logomaten tribe in 1916. Sissoko gained a certain reputation among fellow *évolués* as a novelist and poet in the *négritude* movement with a staunch anti-colonial stance. His modest fame as a writer, teacher and *Chef de Canton* had gained him his place in the constitutional assembly, where he collaborated closely with Felix Houphouët-Boigny, another chief and *évolué*, in drafting the law abolishing the much hated forced labour. In France, Sissoko would distance himself from his earlier admiration for the Soviet Union to take a moderate socialist position within the French SFIO. His position as *Chef de Canton* and his moderate socialism brought him the favour of the colonial government in the years to come. The PSP's second asset was the support of the Soudanese traditional *Canton* Chiefs and Tribal Chiefs, who largely controlled the votes of their following. In return, the PSP strongly advocated their interests and political role in the administrative organisation of Soudan Français. Initially, support of the

[21] Diallo, M.B. 2001.

colonial administration and the chiefs was enough to ensure the PSP's primacy in Soudanese politics against its only rival, the US-RDA.

Mamadou Konaté, another schoolteacher, also from Bafoulabé was key in the creation of one of the ancestor parties to the US-RDA: the Bloc Soudanais. This party fused in October 1946 with the PDS, created by Pierre Morlet and Jacques Fayette, two French communists in colonial service (as schoolteacher and P.T.T. inspector respectively) to form the Union Soudanaise.[22] The Union then immediately joined the AOF-wide Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) at its founding conference in Bamako, in October 1946. Originally initiated by the Ivoirian leader Houphouët-Boigny to coordinate the actions of the African delegates to the constitutional assembly in 1945, the party now sought to promote West African interests in the metropolitan *Assemblée* of the *Union Française*. Thus, in October 1946 the Union Soudanaise – Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (US-RDA) was born. Some of its main leaders, like Mamadou Konaté and Modibo Keita, had been schoolteachers. Others, such as Madeira Keita, were civil servants in the colonial administration. Again others, far less influential at first but growing in importance after independence, were army veterans such as Diby Sillas Diarra. Their political education took place in the 1930s when, during the rule of the Front Populaire in France, African intellectuals were encouraged to organise cultural associations. After the War, so called GECs – Groupes d'Etudes Communistes – were created under the guidance of French communist volunteers, which started the strongly pronounced Marxist orientation in the later ranks of the US-RDA.[23] Although most of its active members were intellectuals, and most of its early following came from the urban population, the US-RDA profiled itself as a 'people's party' or a 'party for the masses', whose rights they advocated. This position gained it the suspicion of a colonial administration that, in the heydays of the Cold War, saw the machinations of the Soviet Union in every strong anti-colonial stance.

To gain political prominence over its adversary the PSP, the US-RDA was faced with a multiple challenge. It had to enlarge its following in the countryside. To do so, it had to oppose the chiefs who controlled the votes of their subjects. Besides this struggle for internal political support, it had to deal with the colonial administration, which backed the chiefs and their party. According to Snyder, the answer to all these problems was threefold. Through tight organisation and by adherence to strict party discipline, high-ranking members were allowed to tour the countryside, where they spoke to the people in a language they understood, listened to their complaints, and actually managed to

[22] Campmas, P. 1978.
[23] Snyder, F. 1965.

do something to relieve their needs, thus increasing US-RDA support. In turn, this meant the US-RDA gained more votes when suffrage was extended.[24]

Many of the US-RDA main members were engaged in the colonial system as teachers or civil servants in the urban centres. The colonial administration could thus try to obstruct the US-RDA by sending its activists to the countryside, which proved counter-productive as it helped spread the US-RDA message to remote corners of the colony. Often, 'the bush' meant 'the North' as most US-RDA activists, if not all, came from the Soudanese Bambara and Mande heartlands and were sent to places far from home. However, the banishments worked in the party's favour by spreading its message in the country, as well as by dedicating the exiled to their cause of uplifting the Soudanese masses.[25] Thus, in 1951 Modibo Keita was sent as a teacher to Kabara, the port village of Timbuktu. Awa Keita, Minister of Social Affairs after independence, was sent as a midwife to Gao in 1950, as a disciplinary act for her political activities within the US-RDA. However, having served in Gao in the 1930's to the satisfaction of the population, Awa Keita's possibilities to promote her party only increased. Having helped to quintuple the adherence to the US-RDA in the Gao region as one of two literate party members in the constituency, she was transferred to Senegal in August 1951.[26] Thus having been banished and having served in the remote backwaters of the country came to be seen as an emblem of sacrifice to the party. The city-dwelling elite was not used to living in huts in remote hamlets and saw doing so as a sign of personal strength and political persistence.

> We always speak of the masses. But have we penetrated the masses so as to know their way of life, so as to have wiped away the hostility with which they look at those who went to the schools of the French, and finally so as to have sensed their vital needs and measured the extent of their ability to resist oppression? How many comrades agree to enter a dark and smoky hut, to sit on a mat which in colour and crust resemble the earth, to dip their hand, without the slightest repugnance, into the doubtful platter of *tô* or of rice, to carry to lip and drink without fear the milk on which swims a thin layer of dust.[27]

Overcoming one's repugnance for *tô* and milk reaped its rewards. In 1946, the US-RDA lost the elections in all *Cercles* except in Kita, San, and Sikasso. In 1951 it lost Kita but it won both Gao and Bamako, the two largest cities in Soudan Français, from the PSP. By 1956, the PSP had lost everywhere except Bafoulabé, Nioro, Macina (home of PSP's second man Hamadoun Dicko),

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Affaires Politiques, les partis politiques au Soudan 1951-1959. ANM – FR 1E-3/8.
[26] Keita, A. 1975.
[27] Modibo Keita in US-RDA political report 1955. In: Schachter-Morgenthau, R. 1964: 291.

Koutiala, Bougouni, and Goundam, home of the influential Tamasheq chiefs and PSP delegates Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar and his brother Mohamed Elmehdi. In 1957 only Fily Dabo Sissoko's home *Canton,* Bafoulabé, together with Koutiala and Macina, remained faithful to the PSP. By 1958, the PSP played no role whatsoever in Soudanese politics, and after their final defeat in the March 1959 elections the party was simply dissolved.[28] Smaller regional political parties such as the Union Dogon and the Union Démocratique Ségovienne, headed by Jean Sylvandre, a colonial civil servant from the Antilles, were simply banned on the grounds that regionalism was a dangerous divisive force.[29]

Kel Tamasheq and party politics

It has often been observed that the Tamasheq community was not actively involved in the politics of the post-war period, that they did not participate in elections due to a lack of understanding and interest, and that none of their leaders, also through lack of interest or understanding, presented themselves for elections. This picture is only partly true and does no justice to the complexities of the political arena in Soudan Français and to the differences within the Kel Tamasheq world during that period. The passive interest in, and knowledge of, political developments of the Kel Tamasheq is perhaps underestimated so far. First of all, interest in elections and politics was low throughout the Soudanese countryside, which had long regarded politics as a city affair. In 1955, only 26% of the total Soudanese population was registered as enfranchised.[30] Universal suffrage was not introduced until 1956. But even then, voting percentages in Soudan Français were generally among the lowest in AOF.[31] That the colonial administration often organised the elections at the start of the rainy season, the busiest time of year for farmers and nomads alike, did nothing to improve their interest. Additional handicaps to prospective nomad voters were the lack of information on upcoming elections, a shortage of ballot boxes, and the amount of time needed to get to existing polling stations. In general it can be said that the Kel Tamasheq inhabiting the Niger Bend were more active in party politics than those inhabiting the extreme north. Pierre Boilley analyses the elections

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[28] Ibid.: 279.

[29] Ernst, K. 1976: 93.

[30] Les partis politiques en AOF et les consultations électorales de 1945 à 1955. No. 8: Soudan. ANSOM – 1affpol/2263/6.

[31] Synthèse politique concernant les territoires d'Outre-Mer et les territoires sous tutelle, Janvier 1956. ANSOM – 1affpol/2238/1. This report notes that turnout in the 1956 elections for the territorial assemblies did not exceed 50% in any territory.

held in Kidal between 1946 and 1956 in full.[32] From the number of Kel Tamasheq who cast their vote at each election, he concludes that the Kel Adagh had no interest whatsoever in elections. Yet, looking at the material he presents, one comes to the conclusion that numbers drop whenever elections for the National Assembly in Paris are held, but rise with elections for the Territorial Assembly in Bamako. In other words, the Kel Adagh, indeed probably the least interested of all the Kel Tamasheq in party politics, show an increase in interest when territorial affairs are concerned. Furthermore, as Boilley remarks as well, in those elections where nomad candidates from other tribes presented themselves, the Kel Adagh interest rose. Unlike the Kel Adagh, other Kel Tamasheq, such as those inhabiting the Timbuktu region or the Niger Bend, did express an interest in elections and party politics comparable to that of their sedentary neighbours, or even surpassing it. In 1957, the *Commandant de Cercle* in Goundam noticed that

> If the sedentary population is hardly informed on news from the outside world (with the evident exception of some civil servants and other literati), the nomads on the contrary are more and more interested in the outside world. It is for that matter very difficult to know exactly what sources they have and how from camp to camp the news is transformed into spectacular but seldom unfounded rumour.[33]

When it comes to the active participation of Tamasheq and Bidân leaders in the new-style politics of the post-war period, the number of players was low. But those who did play did so at high levels and high stakes. The main reasons for the low number of active Tamasheq politicians were threefold. First, they were removed from the political centre. Party politics was an urban phenomenon in late colonial Soudan Français. Second, they did lack interest. Most Tamasheq tribal chiefs, the main intermediaries between state and subject, as many other forms of state infrastructure (schools, medical service, army) were absent in nomad areas, depended on French dominance. They did not feel the need to invest in the new political opportunities. When they did take an interest, they adhered to the PSP, which promoted their interests as chiefs. Third, an argument often put forward by some Kel Tamasheq and scholars alike: they lacked French education. Only a very small part of the Tamasheq world had access to French education, and this only at the lowest levels. In the Adagh and

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[32] Boilley, P. 1999: 272-280. The difference in the number of casted votes can also be explained by the fact that the Kel Adagh had no political representative of their own in Bamako, and had grown weary of the enormous amount of elections organised by the French. As the *amenokal* Attaher ag Illi summed it up: *'There are too many elections, he said, and too many taxes'* (Inspection des Affaires Administratives du *Cercle* de Kidal, 1937-57. ANM – FR 2D-20/1957).

[33] Territoire du Soudan Français, Cercle de Goundam. Revue mensuelle du mois de Juillet 1957. ACG.

Azawad areas, the first French schools were created as late as 1947. This was largely due to Tamasheq resistance against French education, but also, to a lesser degree, due to French reluctance. The French believed that education was unnecessary for a nomadic existence and that it would cause estrangement from the strongly orientalised Tamasheq 'traditional culture'. As late as 1955, Claude Blanguernon, a school director in Tamanrasset, whose task it was to educate the Kel Tamasheq, wrote

> I do not believe it to be necessary to bring the Tuareg to a high level of education (...) this will not be beneficiary to them as the educated nomad will find himself cut off from his tribe, his habits and, fatally, will not be able to stay a nomad.[34]

In this way the Tamasheq missed one of the most vital links to party politics: education and administrative jobs. As with their political interest, this vision of the lack of educational opportunities for the Kel Tamasheq is only partly correct. Indeed, levels of French education were low among them, but this was true for all of Soudan Français. According to Schachter-Morgenthau, in 1947 less than 5 percent of school-age children were actually attending school. Not until the 1950s were there Soudanese studying abroad, and not until the 1950s did the first *lycée* classes open in Bamako, when the former *Ecole primaire supérieure* Terrasson de Fougères expanded. In 1961, only 10 per cent of school-age children could find places in classrooms, and at least 98 per cent of the total population remained illiterate in French.[35] Literacy levels will not have been much different among the Kel Tamasheq by that time.

One Tamasheq group specifically managed to escape these obstacles to political participation and lack of education: the Kel Intessar, a tribe living in the area south of Goundam towards the Mauritanian border. First of all, their living area, the Goundam, was less removed from the political arenas of Timbuktu and Bamako. From the mid 1940s, Goundam was connected to the Soudanese capital by regular flights with Air France, landing at its own airstrip in Goundam.[36] Second, in the Goundam area and in Timbuktu, elementary schools had been available from an early date. The *Medersa Franco Arabe* of Timbuktu opened in 1911.[37] Third, from the start of his reign in 1935 the *amenokal* of the Kel Intessar, Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, was interested in modernising the living conditions of his people. In this respect he was even ahead of the colonial administration. His requests for a school had been honoured. The *école nomade*, a special educational institution for the nomad pupils of the Goundam that Louis Brenner characterises as a mix between a French

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[34] Blanguernon, C. 1955: 6.
[35] Schachter-Morgenthau, R. 1964: 269.
[36] Administration du Cercle de Tombouctou: 1953-1957. ANM – RNII-2D-1169.
[37] Brenner, L. 2000: 42.

school and a madrasa was founded in the late 1930s. The Kel Intessar were seen as an example of the adequacy of the French *mission civilicatrice*.[38] However, Mohamed Ali initially encountered administrative resistance to his plans for higher education. In 1942 he requested that his younger brother Mohamed Elmehdi be admitted to William Ponty in Dakar. His request was denied, like all his other requests for higher education. Mohamed Ali then started what he would later term a 'crusade' for education abroad. In 1948 he left his position as *Conseiller Territorial* to his brother Mohamed Elmehdi to perform the *hajj*. He travelled the Middle East and the Maghreb throughout the 1950s. During these years he managed to enroll some of his sons, which he officially took along with him to perform the *hajj*, in educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco.[39] Long after his resignation as tribal chief in 1948, the French would again change policy. Around 1947 a number of *écoles nomades* were created in the North. The ideal was to have one school per tribe or even per *fraction*. It was however very hard to find enough qualified personnel to staff these schools. Hence, by 1952 a number of former Kel Intessar school pupils were employed as teachers. Their level of education being low, the French founded the so-called *Collège Moderne* under the immediate direction of the Inspector of Education in the North, Henri Combelles.[40] The *Collège Nomade*, as the school became quickly known, was situated in Diré, one of the main village in the Kel Intessar area. Most pupils at this college were trained to become either teachers themselves to staff the expanding number of *écoles nomades* in the North for Tamasheq and Bidân pupils or as veterinary assistants, which was in line with French colonial views on improving nomad existence. The Kel Tamasheq educated at the *Collège Nomade* in Diré would later rise to administrative posts and join in party politics, such as *Commandant de Cercle* in Kidal, Mohamed ould Najim, and Muphtah ag Hairy, *Commandant de Cercle* in Bourem.[41] A number of these French educated Kel Tamasheq were of slave origins, which made their new position in society hard to accept for the nobility.

In the first elections for the Territorial Assembly in 1946, we find two Tamasheq candidates. Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar presented himself as a PSP candidate. Sidi Mohamed ag Zocka, chief of the Shoukhan wan Ataram

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38 Dossier Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar. ANSOM – 14 MIOM 2276.

39 For a full account of Mohamed Ali's education troubles, see ag Attaher Insar, M.A. 1990. This account is complemented by further study on the education of Mohamed Ali's sons in the Middle-East in Brenner, L. 2000: 96-101.

40 Cercle de Goundam, rapport politique annuel 1955. ANM – FR 1E 18/4.

41 Dossiers de personnel de l'enseignement. Dossiers de Moulaye Ahmed ould Assadek, Moulaye Mohamed ould Moulaye, Meynet Mind Hoddya, Muphtah ag Hairy 1920-1957. ANM – RNII – 1C-145.

tribe in Gourma Rharous presented himself as an independent candidate. Sidi Mohamed ag Zocka's short-lived political career was one in search of allies and direction. In 1945 he travelled to Bamako where he contacted politicians of all parties, including Balobo Maïga, a northerner himself and a member of the PSP, and Mar Diagne of the US-RDA. In 1946 he did not gain enough votes outside his own *Cercle* to be elected. In 1947 Sidi Mohamed ag Zocka became ill and asked to be relieved of his functions as tribal chief.[42] Mohamed Ali was elected in 1946, securing the Goundam and Timbuktu *Cercles* for the PSP. After Mohamed Ali left on the *hajj* in 1948, not to return to Mali until rendition in 1963, his younger brother Mohamed Elmehdi took over his positions as *Chef Traditionel* and as *Conseiller Territorial*. He remained active in politics until well after independence, first within the PSP and later within the US-RDA. In the 1951 partial elections for the *Conseil général*, we find a new PSP candidate from Kel Intessar origins: Hacko ag Ibrahim, a veterinarian from Goundam.[43] Hacko won these elections, but did not survive the political downfall of the PSP in the late 1950s. He remained active in the party in his home region of Goundam. In 1955, Hacko ag Ibrahim founded a special nomad subcommittee of the PSP to reorganise nomad support for the party and to strengthen their position against the US-RDA.[44] In 1956 he seriously opposed Mohamed Elmehdi's candidacy for the PSP list in Goundam, who was nevertheless elected.[45] Thus, two Tamasheq leaders competed in one constituency over parliamentary seats. But Tamasheq participation in elections did not guarantee their full inclusion in the political world of Soudan Français. Despite the PSP's downfall from 1956 onwards, the chiefs' party remained strong in Goundam and the Niger Bend, where Tamasheq chiefs remained supportive of the party. By 1958 the PSP had no representatives left in the *Assemblée Territoriale*. Some Tamasheq and Bidân chiefs then went over to the US-RDA. Some did so on their own initiative and political insight, such as Intalla ag Attaher, the second son of the a*menokal* of the Adagh. Some only did so under strong pressure from the US-RDA itself. This was for example the case with Badi ould Hammoadi, chief of the Bidân Kounta confederation. On the advise of Habib Wafi, a Bidân merchant elected to the territorial Assembly in 1956, Badi rallied to the US-RDA in

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[42] Rapport sur les élections au Conseils Généraux, 15 décembre 1946 – 5 janvier 1947. ANSOM – 1affpol/2265/6. Fiches de renseignements des chefs de canton Gourma (Hombori) I, 1911-1950. ANM – FR 2E-24. Rapports politiques et tournées du Cercle Tombouctou 1943-1957. ANM – FR 1E-42/II.

[43] Affaires Politiques, les partis politiques au Soudan 1951-1959. ANM – FR 1E-3/4.

[44] Cdt. Cercle Goundam à Gov. Soudan Français. Compositoin du sous-committee P.S.P. (nomade). ACG.

[45] Inspection des Affaires Administratives du Cercle de Goundam, 1907-1957. ANM – FR 2D-18/1957aa.

1959, without ever being active in the PSP. But he did so only after the new Soudanese administration had threatened to dismember his confederation and thus curtail his chiefly powers.

Despite later attempts to win them to their side, the US-RDA kept distrusting Tamasheq society in general and its chiefs in particular. The continued support of the chiefs for the PSP did not help their cause against a US-RDA bent on their abolition. In the first government installed after the implementation of the *Loi-cadre*, Minister of the Interior and US-RDA left-winger Madeira Keita started to curtail the chiefs' power. In 1957 he wrote a first circular about the modernisation or the possible abolition of the traditional chiefs. On 10 April 1958, the ordinance on the chiefs of March 1935 was withdrawn.[46] But despite its formal opposition against the chiefs, the US-RDA very well knew its power and influence in the North to be insufficient to do without them. The nomad tribal chiefs were kept in place because of their influence over their subjects and their knowledge of the country. At the time, the US-RDA was not yet strongly implanted in the extreme North and the political events of the moment were not in favour of losing grip on a group suspected to be politically active to the disadvantage of the new regime. But the Tamasheq chiefs were certainly not well regarded. Soon after independence in 1960 the new regime started to curtail their power.

International complications

The fear of US-RDA leaders for Tamasheq political opposition to their rule came to a height between 1956 and 1959, when the territorial integrity of Soudan Français came under attack in various ways. The discovery of mineral riches in the Algerian Sahara in 1956, together with the gradual granting of autonomy and independence to the colonies of the Maghreb and French West Africa, provoked a political and military battle over Saharan territory involving France, Morocco and the political elites of Mauritania and Northern Soudan Français. The French attempted to keep the Sahara French through the creation of a new Saharan colony: The Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes. Simultaneously the Moroccan Istiqlâl party claimed parts of the Sahara including Mauritania and the Soudanese north up to Timbuktu on historical grounds. These claims were enhanced, supported and juxtaposed in Mauritania and Soudan Français by a number of political players advocating either the Moroccan claims on Mauritania and Soudan Français or their own claims on a greater Mauritania. These advocates of a greater Maghreb formed a small poli-

[46] Arrêté Territorial 191D. 1-3/10-4/1958, published in the *Journal officiel du Soudan français* 1379, 1958. In Ernst, K. 1976: 114.

tical party, the Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya, Parti pour la Renaissance Mauritanienne (Mauritanian Renaissance Party), which played a crucial role in the conflict. Various Tamasheq and Bidân leaders in Soudan Français actively supported either the French or the Moroccan and Mauritanian claims, or all at the same time. Their support for these 'foreign' claims made them highly suspect in the eyes of the Malian nationalists. After independence they were regarded as enemies of the Malian state and 'vassals' to the 'French neo-imperialist cause'.

The OCRS

The OCRS was an attempt to keep the Sahara French, despite the imminent independence of the Maghrebin and West African colonies. Although the French efforts to remain in control over the Sahara became more intense after the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Algerian Sahara and the start of the Algerian war of independence in November 1954, the idea of a French Sahara predated these events. The first idea to unify the Sahara into one territory dates from 1951, when Emile Belime, the former director of the *Office du Niger* in Soudan Français, proposed to nationalise the Sahara. Belime headed a study committee for the creation of a French Sahara, which published its findings in 1952, and in that same year Senators Pierre Cornet and Pierre July proposed to regroup the Sahara into one autonomous *Région* under a High Commissioner of the Republic or into a *Département*. Their propositions were voted down in the National Assembly, but the idea remained alive and in 1953 Senator Paul Alduy invited the Government to promote the rational organisation of the economy in the Sahara.[47] In 1956, the idea resurfaced with more urgency. In February 1956, oil was struck in Algeria, near the Libyan border, in the northernmost part of the Tamasheq world.[48] Five months later, the largest oil well in Algeria until present started spouting its riches at Hassi Messaoud, while natural gas was pumped up at Hassi R'mel. At Colomb-Béchar, coal was mined. Various metals and other minerals were discovered in the Hoggar Mountains of Southern Algeria, and phosphor and iron ore were located in Mauritania. In a contemporary study on the creation of the OCRS, Jean-Louis Quermonne, professor of law in Grenoble remarked with some glee:

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47 Based on: Keita, N. 2005. 3; Annexe au proces-verbal de la séance de l'Assemblée Nationale du 9 mars 1956. ANSOM – 1affpol/2321/3; Jean-Louis Quermonne, L'Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes selon la loi du 10 janvier 1957. AMSAT – Dossier 35 – OCRS 1957-1962.

48 Dillinger, G. 2002.

> When he gave France a lot of Sahara for a lot of Sudan, Lord Salisbury declared: "The French Cock likes to scratch the Sand!" It seemed unlikely then that the Great Desert could harbour any useful riches, or at least not for a long time.[49]

Well, the French cock had scratched the sand and the discovery of natural gas, petroleum and other minerals underneath transformed the Sahara from a worthless stretch of sand and rocks into a potential goldmine. But the ongoing war of liberation in Algeria was threatening to spread into the Sahara, which would endanger the effective exploitation of this mineral potential. Unifying the Sahara into one territorial and administrative unit would facilitate countering military and propaganda actions from the Forces de Libération Nationale (FLN): the Algerian Liberation Army. Furthermore, the imminent independence of the sub-Saharan territories and the independence of the Maghreb could mean a loss of Saharan riches for France. This was made clear by the Moroccan claims on Mauritania, South Western Algeria and Northern Mali, and the subsequent Moroccan invasion of Mauritania in 1956.

The parliamentary debates, bills and amendments on the Sahara between 1956 and 1957 show the ambiguity of the plan to unify the Sahara, and the resistance to these plans from African politicians. In March 1956, several different proposals were made in the National Assembly for Saharan unification. Proposition 1131 proposed to erect the total Saharan zone in a group of three French *Départements* with special status called Afrique Saharienne Française. Proposition 1198 simply proposed to 'proclaim the French Sahara a "National Territory"', as did propositions 1068 and 1627.[50] What all these plans had in common was the idea that the Sahara should be put under direct French metropolitan rule. The Sahara was seen as French property, a mineral rich no-man's-land, to be efficiently exploited and administered.

However, none of these projects had included Mauritania or the Soudanese, Nigerien, or Chadian parts of the Sahara. When the members of the Political Bureau of the Ministry of Overseas Territories discovered that these Saharan territories were not included, they brought this to the attention of their superiors.[51] Overseas Territories was of the opinion that non-inclusion of the Saharan zones of AOF within a new Saharan territory would only enhance the administrative chaos. However, since all projects spoke of 'nationalising the Sahara', their idea to include the Saharan parts of these territories within the new 'National Sahara' met fierce resistance from African politicians.

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[49] Jean-Louis Quermonne, L'Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes selon la loi du 10 janvier 1957. AMSAT – Dossier 35 – OCRS 1957-1962.

[50] Sahara, administration générale, correspondance et études au sujet de l'OCRS, 1954-1956. ANSOM – 1affpol/2321/4.

[51] Sahara, administration générale, projets parlementaires et gouvernementaux au sujet de l'organisation du Sahara, 1953-1956. ANSOM – 1affpol/2321/3.

One problem in the debates about administrative unification was how to delimit the French Sahara.[52] To the west, north and east, this problem was easily solved. The French Sahara started in the west at the border with the Spanish Sahara. It ended to the north at the Moroccan border and the non-Saharan Algerian *Départements* and in the east at the border between Chad and the Republic of Sudan. Problems arose in the South. First, the leaders of Chad, Niger and Soudan Français did not relish the prospect of losing part of their future national territory, and the potential mineral riches it might conceal. The Soudanese leaders in particular fiercely opposed any territorial and political reorganisation that could be detrimental to *their* national territory.

A second problem was on what criteria the border between Sahara and Sahel should be drawn. On one side of the argument, the supporters of the Saharan unification believed the Sahara ended where the Soudan started. Here Soudan meant the original Arabic *Bilâd as-Sudân* – the 'Land of the Blacks'. Both the Bidân and the Kel Tamasheq were seen as racially 'white'. Accordingly, it was felt that those areas inhabited by the Bidân and the Kel Tamasheq were Saharan, and areas inhabited by the black population were not. The French opposition to territorial restructuring countered this argument. They stated that many Bidân and Kel Tamasheq were black, that the majority of the Kel Tamasheq lived as far south as the Niger Bend and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), which could hardly be called Saharan, and that these populations were socially and economically interwoven with the populations surrounding them. Therefore, the idea of creating a new administratively unified Saharan territory including the AOF parts of the Sahara would end in chaos and problems for the nomad populations.

Eventually, the project to unify the Sahara was put in the trusted hands of the Ivorian RDA leader and French Minister of State Felix Houphouët-Boigny, who managed to remove all the political angles. His focus was on the creation of an Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (OCRS), in which no mention was made of any political or territorial reorganisation, or of the delimiting of Saharan borders. All Boigny proposed to do was to create an umbrella structure to coordinate economic and social developments in the Sahara, regardless of territory or state. Nevertheless, he had to defend his project against the Soudanese leaders who still looked suspiciously on the OCRS as a French plan to annex their Saharan territory. Even in the final debates on Houphouët-Boigny's

[52] Based on: Affaires politiques, Sahara, administration générale 1947-1958. ANSOM – 1affpol/2207/1; Affaires politiques, Sahara, administration générale, 1951-1958. OCRS, correspondance, débats, études (militaire, sociale linguistique etc...). ANSOM – 1affpol/2208/1, under embargo until 2019.

project, the Soudanese Senator Amadou Bâ proposed to amend the law such that:

> The organisation of the Saharan regions should in no case lead to the creation of an autonomous territory.[53]

After further debate, Houphouët-Boigny managed to convince the Soudanese of the good intentions of the OCRS. His legal proposition was accepted and the OCRS was created on 10 January 1957. For Soudan Français this meant the inclusion of the Saharan parts of the *Cercles* Goundam, Timbuktu and Gao in the new structure. Soudanese suspicions were revived however, by the reaction of the French political establishment. François Mitterand, then Minister of Justice reacted in favour of the OCRS, but

> I would nevertheless have liked a more structured Saharan territory, in greater conformity with its geographical realities, administratively more autonomous from Algeria and the Black African Territories bordering to the South.[54]

The ensuing creation of a Ministry of Saharan Affairs in June 1957, headed by Max Lejeune, former secretary of state at the Ministry of Defence made matters far worse. The new ministry was endowed with economic, social, diplomatic and political competences over the Algerian *Territoires du Sud*, reshaped into French *Départements* in August 1957, and the Northern parts of Soudan Français, Niger and Tchad (the limits of which were never specified). The diplomatic and political competences given to this ministry made clear that the French had more than economic intentions with the OCRS.[55] From that point onwards, the political leaders of the AOF were no longer the only ones to oppose the OCRS. The Ministry of Saharan Affairs had been created to the detriment of the competence of the Ministry of Overseas Territories. Thus, some colonial administrators in AOF, who did not want to lose a part of their job or influence, and the Ministry of Overseas Territories, which felt likewise, now backed the African politicians against the competition of this new ministry.

Marcel Cardaire and the Qadi of Timbuktu

The OCRS had fierce supporters within the French administration and military services, and also among the Bidân and Kel Tamasheq elite. Two players in particular stand out: the French intelligence officer in Soudan Français, Marcel Cardaire; and the Bidân notable, Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, better known as ‘the Qadi of Timbuktu’.

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[53] Sahara, administration générale, correspondance et études au sujet de l’OCRS, 1954-1956. ANSOM – 1affpol/2321/4.

[54] François Mitterand in *L’Essor*, 08/03/1957. In: Keita, N. 2005: 7.

[55] Keita, N. 2005: 5.

Of all the officers who served in Soudan Français and in the Sahara in the late 1950s Marcel Cardaire was probably the most influential and certainly the best known. It is no exaggeration to place him in line with early colonial ethnographers and intelligence officers as Paul Marty or Maurice Delafosse. An officer in the Colonial Infantry, in 1954 Cardaire was posted in Soudan Français where he was integrated in the *Bureau des Affaires Musulmanes*. He was obsessed with the possible threats that pan-Islamism and various modernist currents in Islam, generally labelled Wahabism, could pose to French influence in Muslim Africa, a subject he wrote an elaborate and well-informed book on.[56] He initiated the so-called 'Counter Reform' movement to safeguard the influence of quietist Sufi Islam on African Muslim civil servants, in collaboration with Amadou Hampaté Bâ and Abdelwahab Doukouré.[57] Cardaire's involvement in Saharan affairs began in October 1956, when he was asked by the Ministry of Defence to study the Spanish Sahara, the Saharan areas of Algeria, and the connections of its inhabitants with the AOF in political and religious matters.[58] This request was connected to the conflict between Morocco and France over Mauritania (*infra*), and the ongoing Algerian war of independence.

Cardaire took Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick as his travel companion and interpreter, because of his connections with the communities Cardaire wanted to visit. They visited Tindouf, Atar, Colomb-Béchar, Ouargla, Ghardaïa, and Algiers. Cardaire was rightly convinced that to the inhabitants of the Sahara, the French administrative frontiers played no role whatsoever when it came to information, affiliation and travel. Such peoples like the Arab Rgaybat, Tajakant and Berabish tribes, and the Kel Tamasheq, thought and acted in interlinking networks of commerce, clan, and family affiliation extending from Colomb-Béchar, through Tindouf to Timbuktu and Agadez.[59] In these networks Cardaire saw a possible danger for continued French control over the Sahara, should local leaders decide to side with Morocco or the Algerian FLN. In his report Cardaire recommended that the borders between Algeria and AOF should be considered non-existent when it came to intelligence and military operations. Preferably the borders should be officially abolished. Furthermore, France should take actions among the Saharan population to ensure their continued loyalty to France, if they felt any, or to win their loyalty to the detriment of pan-

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56 Cardaire, M. 1954.

57 On the counter reform movement, see Brenner, L. 2000.

58 Personnel de l'Administration Affaires Musulmans, 1942-1959. ANSOM – 1affpol/2235/2.

59 Rapport de chef de bataillon Cardaire sur les chaînes commerciales sahariennes, janvier 1957 – fiches de renseignement sur les Hassan, Tekna, Ahel Ma al Aïnin, Tadjakant, Kounta, Regeibats. Affaires politiques, Sahara, affaires diplomatiques. ANSOM – 1affpol/2261/7.

Arab, pan-Islamic and Moroccan or Algerian nationalist sentiments.[60] His ideas and recommendations would return later that year in the debates surrounding the OCRS.

If there has been one advocate of the OCRS and the loyalty of the Saharan population to France, it is undoubtedly Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, the 'Qadi of Timbuktu' and principal informant to Cardaire on Saharan matters. Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick originated from theAhlAraouan tribe of the Berabish federation living north of Timbuktu. He was installed as Qadi of the Ahl Araouan in 1932, but had to resign his post in 1935, due to resistance from the local religious elite. Although he was reinstalled in his function, he resigned for good in 1949.[61] Nevertheless he kept using his title of Qadi, and remained involved in the social and political games of the Tamasheq chiefs' milieu. His main advantage over other Bidân and Tamasheq chiefs was that he could speak, read and write French, and had an extensive knowledge of French political and general culture through his travels and his library, which contained works on French penal and criminal law and the *Petit Larousse Illustré*.[62] In 1946 Mohamed Mahmoud joined the PSP. He was befriended by its leaders (except for Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, who was a bitter enemy), but left the party in 1956.[63] The Qadi's finest hour came with the creation of the OCRS. Like the various senators and ministers discussing the creation of a Saharan territory in France, Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick was convinced that the existing borders in the Sahara were a problem. But unlike French administrators and jurists, ould Cheick did not see any problem in drawing a new border in the Sahara that would separate the 'white' nomads from their 'black' sedentary neighbours. Or rather, ould Cheick felt that his native Timbuktu and the whole of the Niger Bend belonged culturally and economically to the Sahara, and should fall under the political supremacy of the nomads inhabiting the region, under the aegis of France. To prove his point he wrote a book on the history of Timbuktu and the Niger Bend entitled *Kitâb al-turjuman fi tarîkh al-Sahrâ' wa-'l-Sudân wa bilâd Tinbuktu wa Shinqît wa Arawân* (*A Biographical Book on the History of the Sahara and the Sudan and the Lands of Timbuktu and Chingetti and Arawan*).

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60 Personnel de l'Administration Affaires Musulmans, 1942-1959. ANSOM – 1affpol/2235/2.

61 Affaires politiques, Soudan, administration générale, évolution politique (rapports, télégrammes officiels, presse), 1947-1957. ANSOM – 1affpol/2198/11.

62 Rapports politiques et tournées Cercle Tombouctou 1943-1957. Fiche de renseignements (personnages religieux) concernant le Mohamed Mahmoud o/ Cheick. ANM – FR 1E-42/II.

63 After the PSP's dissolution, the Qadi formed a new party – the Parti du Rassemblement du Soudan – together with PSP's second man Hamadoun Dicko. This party was short lived. Schachter-Morgenthau, R. 1964: 298.

According to Bruce Hall, this book is exceptional in two points. The first is that it contains praise on the merits of French occupation. The second is that it meticulously 'whitens' the history of the lands described, arguing for nomad supremacy.[64]

In 1957, the Qadi started a campaign to promote the OCRS among the Saharan chiefs and notables, and to make their support for the OCRS and France known to the outside world. His campaign was based on the following arguments: the inhabitants of the Sahara are full citizens of France according to the *Loi-cadre* of 1956; they have become French subjects by signing treaties with France, and not with the leaders of African independence movements with whom they feel no affiliation; they are white and do not want to be incorporated into a territory or state dominated by blacks; they have their own specific culture and society and do not want to be incorporated into a North African state or territory. The Qadi maintained therefore that the inhabitants of the Sahara should either be given their own territory within the *Union Française*, or should remain French citizens like they were at that moment. In January 1957, shortly after the creation of the OCRS, the Qadi gave an interview to the Parisian monthly *Le Télégramme de Paris*, in which he explained his point of view. On 30 October 1957 he wrote a letter of petition addressed to President de Gaulle, signed by 'the notables and merchants of Timbuktu'. This letter was published in *Le Télégramme de Paris* in December 1957.

> If there exists a right to self-determination for a people, we would like to believe that we are allowed to make our aspirations known. We declare without restrictions that we already are, and want to remain French Muslims [Français musulman][65] and an integral part of the French Republic. We manifest our formal opposition to being integrated in an autonomous or federalist Black Africa or North Africa. (...) We demand the incorporation of our country in the French Sahara of which we are part, historically, emotionally and ethnically. (...) France has not found us under Sou-

[64] Hall, B. 2005: 258-261.

[65] The Qadi's revendication that all the inhabitants of the Sahara had the juridical status of 'French Muslims' (*Français musulman*) is both politicallly charged and, strictly juridically speaking, incorrect. *Français musulman* was a particular juridical status existing only in Algeria, linked to the status of *indigène*. The *Français musulman* was recognised to be French, but Muslim, hence ruled by Muslim law and thus witheld from full French citizenship. This status did not exist in AOF, but as the Saharan parts of AOF were now joined with the Saharan parts of Algeria in the OCRS, the status could possibly be extended to all Saharans. The Qadi's use of the term, despite it originally being intended to withold rights from Muslims, apparently perfectly fitted his ideal vision of the Saharan future: French (of course presumably with all its benefits), but ruled through Muslim law.

danese domination. We have the strongest confidence that glorious France will not give us away freely to anyone'.[66]

This would not be his last petition. The Qadi travelled extensively through the Sahara and Sahel. He first travelled to Ouargla, where a similar petition to de Gaulle was written and signed in the name of the traditional chiefs, the *Aghas*, *Caïds*, *Chioukhs*, the religious leaders, the notables and merchants of Ouargla. In Tindouf, he wrote a third letter of petition, which was signed by the *Caïds*, *Kebar*, merchants, the Qadi, the Imam, the notables of the Tajakant and Rgaybat. The letter was written in French and Arabic, and signed and sealed first by Abdallahi ould Sidi Senhouri, *Caïd* of Tindouf, followed by 152 other notables.[67] The Qadi also visited the Hoggar and Ajjer areas in Southern Algeria, but apparently the chiefs and notables in these regions saw nothing in his project and refused to sign the petition.[68] Back in Timbuktu, he wrote a fourth letter, in the name of the traditional chiefs, notables and merchants of the Niger Bend, Timbuktu, Gao and Goundam, in which he restated the demands of his letter of 30 October 1957. Two hundred seventy-six persons signed this last and longest letter.[69] The Qadi did not limit his campaign to the nomad populations. He sought to include a maximum number of sedentary *Canton* and village chiefs as well. The reception of his ideas in these circles was greater than could be expected. In September 1957 Mohamed Mahmoud and his followers had the opportunity to explain their petition in person to a delegation of the Soudanese Government, including Madeira Keita and Modibo Keita, who visited Timbuktu.[70]

During the Minister's reception in Timbuktu, the Qadi of the Kel Araouane, Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, insisted on presenting the nomad position. At his

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66 *Le Télégramme de Paris*, 23/12/1957. In: Lesourd, M. Black and White (manuscript, May 1958). Fonds privées, Papiers Lesourd, Carton 1. SHAT – 1K297.

67 Les Caïds, Kebar, Commerçants; le Qadi, l'Imam, les Notables Tajakant et Regeibat; et tout ceux qui ont soussigné à Monsieur le Président de la République Française, Tindouf 05/02/1958. Fonds privés, Papiers Lesourd, Carton 2. SHAT – 1K297. The letter in French is typewritten as are the names of the signatories. The Arabic version is hand written, the names of the signatories are in the same handwriting.

68 Ibid.

69 Claudot-Hawad. 1993a. Of all the letters I have seen, this is the only one carrying signatures, most in Arabic, a few in French and many thumb prints. All signatories were inhabitants of the Niger Bend, none of the signatories originated from the Azawad or Adagh. A number of them were Songhay. Songhay interest in the petition is confirmed in Territoire du Soudan Français, Brigade Mobile de Gao. Renseignements A/s propagande en faveur du rattachement des Cercles de Goundam, Tombouctou et Gao à l'OCRS. 5 August 1958. ACG.

70 Territoire du Soudan Français, Cercle de Goundam. Revue mensuelle du mois de Septembre 1957. ACG.

> arrival he organised a little manifestation, bringing together a number of supporters under a banner sporting "Long live the French Sahara". Then, received in audience, together with two Berabish leaders, he presented the wish of the Saharans to be given an exceptional status [*statut particulier*], and the next day he tried to offer, without success by the way, a petition demanding the inclusion of Timbuktu in the Sahara. Without taking such outspoken positions, the chiefs confer on the representation of the Saharan regions in the OCRS Commission.[71]

In December that same year, the Qadi could again explain his vision to a visitor to Timbuktu: AOF High Commissioner (formerly known as the Governor General), Gaston Cusin.[72] Clearly, Mohamed Mahmoud was not acting alone. First, he had the help of his brother Sidi Boubakar ould Cheick and his supporters. Then there were French officers who hoped to use the Qadi as the spokesman in a military strategy to unite what was referred to as the 'Saharan Block' – the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân – against both the nationalist forces of Algeria and the African political resistance against the OCRS as a political territory. Second, the Ministry of Saharan Affairs, which was still contested internally by the Ministry of Overseas Territories, and externally by the African politicians, welcomed the Qadi's actions too. All signatories of the Qadi's petition received a letter of receipt from the Minister of Saharan Affairs.[73] That these different services were at odds with each other becomes clear from a correspondence from the AOF High Commissioner Pierre Messmer. In reply to inquiries on the Qadi's activities by Madeira Keita, then Minister of the Interior of the Soudanese Republic, Messmer indicated that the Qadi could sometimes travel by military airplane.

> Minister, (…) The inconveniences of this person's activities and the facilities that have been accorded to him by certain authorities have not escaped me. Thus, having learned that during his last stay in Paris, Mohamed Mahmoud conspired to obtain transport to Timbuktu by military aeroplane, I have intervened at the department, which managed to abort his project.[74]

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71 Territoire du Soudan Français, Cercle de Goundam. Bulletin mensuel de renseignements, Septembre 1957. ACG. The 'minister' in this quote is likely to be Madeira Keita, although the text implies Modibo Keita.

72 Rapports politiques et tournées Cercle Tombouctou 1943-1957. Rapport politique mensuel Décembre 1957. ANM – FR 1E-42/II.

73 Lettre de Ministre des Affaires sahariens Max Lejeune à Matta ag Mamma, chef des Kel Intessar. 11 December 1957. Handsigned by Lejeune. AMSAT – Dossier 35 – OCRS 1957-1962.

74 Haute Commissaire de l'AOF Pierre Messmer à Ministre de l'Intérieur de la République Soudanaise Madeira Keita. Dakar, 3 Octobre 1958. AMSAT – Dossier 35 – OCRS 1957-1962.

The effects of the Qadi's campaign

The Soudanese political elite, who still strongly disapproved of the OCRS, regarded the Qadi's actions with more than suspicion. In October 1957 the Soudanese Minister of the Interior, Madeira Keita, toured the North in order to see what was happening in the Soudanese part of the OCRS. His reports were alarming to the US-RDA. In Gourma Rharous and the *Cercle* of Goundam, Kel Tamasheq raided the herds of their former slaves. In Rhergo, a tribal chief had publicly offended the *Conseiller Territorial* for the US-RDA Abdoulaye Nock (most likely a Tamasheq himself), forbidding him to speak in public, and finally challenging him to a sword duel. Mauritanian Bidân entered the territory to campaign for a greater Mauritania (*infra*). In the *Cercle* of Gao, the Kounta *cheick* Badi ould Hammoadi campaigned in favour of the OCRS and 'the separation of whites and blacks'.[75] The Kounta *cheick* had already campaigned for more political awareness among the Tamasheq and Bidân in 1955 but to no avail.[76] Inspired by the Qadi, he resumed his crusade. French reports about his activities and those of other Tamasheq chiefs confirmed US-RDA anxieties. It seemed the chiefs believed they could 'affirm in no discreet terms, their wish to be integrated into a still badly defined OCRS, which is not favoured by the African leaders of Soudan'.[77]

The Soudanese representatives in France accused the Ministry of Saharan affairs and the OCRS of engaging in racist policies, putting the Saharans against the Southern Soudanese population in order to make the OCRS a political territory after all.[78] The OCRS was directed by a High Commission, which acted as a means of control over the Ministry of Saharan affairs, and as highest executive organ of the OCRS. The Soudanese representation in this High Commission had been at stake during the autumn of 1957. Although the Houphouët-Boigny law on the OCRS stipulated that the representation of the Saharan populations should in majority be of nomad origins, the US-RDA had successfully contested this position. A number of tribal chiefs organised by Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, had proposed the territorial councillors Habib Wafi and Mohamed Elmehdi ag Attaher Insar as candidate commissioners. However the US-RDA appointed Mahamane Allasane Haidara, mayor of Timbuktu and prominent US-RDA member, instead of Habib Wafi, thus violating the stipulations of the selection procedure, but securing its oppositional voice in the Commis-

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[75] Ministre de l'Intérieur et de l'Information Madeira Keita à Chef du Territoire du Soudan français, 06/11/1957. AMSAT – Dossier 35 – OCRS 1957-1962.

[76] Féral, G. 1993.

[77] Affaires politiques, Soudan, Administration générale: Evolution politique (rapports, télégrammes officielles, presse) 1958-1959. ANSOM – 1affpol/2188/3.

[78] Ministre de l'Intérieur et de l'Information Madeira Keita à Chef du Territoire du Soudan français, 06/11/1957. AMSAT – Dossier 35 – OCRS 1957-1962.

sion.[79] At its inaugural session, Allasane Haidara made it clear that the High Commission to the OCRS or the Ministry of Saharan Affairs should avoid making the following 'mistakes': trying to transfer power from the Territorial Assemblies to the OCRS; trying to create a territory; and

> creating animosity between nomads and sedentary peoples, and between the different ethnic groups of Soudan, Niger and Chad. Certain campaigns of agitation in Soudan lead to believe that there is a risk that this mistake will be made.[80]

In Soudan Français itself the US-RDA leaders were well aware of the potential danger of the OCRS and the Qadi's campaigns in favour of a Saharan Territory. The US-RDA leaders therefore counteracted all attempts to put the OCRS into effect on Soudanese territory until the September 1958 referendum on the new French constitution, and the creation of autonomous republics out of the former Overseas Territories. Modibo Keita would later admit that one of the reasons the US-RDA had campaigned for a 'Yes' on the acceptance of the new constitution and the *Communauté Française* in the September 1958 referendum, was their fear that a 'No' would lead to French incursion on the Soudanese Sahara through the OCRS.

> In fact, certain *Commandants de Cercle* in the Northern regions have created the myth of the nomad and the myth of the sedentary, the myth of the white and the myth of the black. They have created an embryo of opposition between white nomad and sedentary African elements. If, by consequence, we had to adopt a standpoint which risked putting us in opposition to the solidly implanted colonial element under these conditions, well, then, surely, the Soudan would have had its northern part amputated.[81]

After the establishment of the Soudanese Republic in November 1958, the US-RDA remained reluctant to OCRS projects on Soudanese territory, and afraid of nomadic agitation in the North in favour of France. Indeed, expectations among the nomad populations of Soudan Français about the outcome of the referendum were linked to their perceptions of the function of the OCRS. In short, they expected that voting in favour of Soudanese participation in the *Communauté Française* had meant that their land would stay French within the OCRS. The visit to Goundam of the High Commissioner to the AOF, Pierre Messmer, accompanied by high-ranking US-RDA officials in November 1958,

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[79] Territoire du Soudan Français, Cercle de Goundam. Bulletin mensuel de renseignements, Septembre 1957. ACG.

[80] OCRS, Haute Commission, Procès-verbal de la session inaugurale tenue à Paris (21 au 24 Janvier 1958). ANSOM – 1affpol/2321/6.

[81] Speech by Modibo Keita at the 3rd territorial conference of the US-RDA, 29/09/1959. In: Dupuis, J. 1960: 30.

shortly after the proclamation of independence of the Soudanese Republic, again raised such expectations among the nomad population.

> Great importance has been attached to this visit in Tuareg circles, which expected either a definition of their status, which they see, rightly or wrongly, as not yet defined in the present conjuncture, or an opportunity to manifest their separatist [*particulariste*] sentiments and aspirations. After the visit from these higher authorities, they feel the question remains unsolved, and a certain feeling of discomfort remains.[82]

After full Malian independence in 1960, the OCRS remained existent in Niger, Chad and Algeria, until Algerian independence in 1962. Mali, despite the visible financial and material advantages of the OCRS in Niger and Algeria, formally retreated from the organisation, to the regret of the Kel Tamasheq. It is clear that the nomad populations of the North had great interest in the OCRS, but it was not their only point of reference. Most tribal chiefs and Tamasheq and Bidân *évolués* knew full well what the international political setting was and what their position in the national field was. They estimated the latter to be a future position as a national minority without effective power (although they were unlikely to have used this term themselves). They estimated however that the international setting could perhaps generate a measure of autonomy through the complications of the struggle over the Sahara, but also through the struggle in Algeria and the Middle East, and the larger setting of the Cold War in general.

> The nomads are particularly informed. If an old chief such as the *amenokal* of the Iforas, who now lives in retirement, inquires with his passing guests after the OCRS, Egypt, Morocco, the developments in the Algerian war, Russia and the United States, it clearly shows the present worries, and to which point the entire Sahara resonates the with news of all events that could have an impact on their own lives.[83]

Greater Morocco, greater Mauritania and Mali's Northwestern border

The OCRS project was not the only danger threatening the territorial integrity of Soudan Français or currying favour with nomad leaders. Although the direct impact was weaker, troubles in and over Mauritania would to some extent affect the Northern parts of Soudan Français as well. Bidân leaders of Soudanese origins were deeply involved.

On 2 March 1956 the Kingdom of Morocco became an independent state under Sultan Mohamed V. But in 1956, Moroccan politics had not found its

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[82] République Soudanaise, Gouvernement Provisoire, Cercle de Goundam. Revue mensuelle du mois de décembre 1958. ACG.

[83] Territoire du Soudan Français, Cercle de Goundam. Bulletin mensuel de renseignements, Juin 1957. ACG.

balance yet. The National Istiqlâl party was divided into various political wings. No one doubted the legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy, but just how much power the king should have was in question. There existed various military forces in the country. In the Rif Mountains, a rebellion broke out opting for independence outside Morocco. Then there were the Royal Army and the more or less competing Liberation Army under the control of the Istiqlâl. Many Moroccan politicians felt that large parts of the country were still under foreign domination. The Istiqlâl was divided into two camps on this issue. The left wing with Mehdi Ben Barka concentrated on political reforms within Morocco, while the right wing under Allal al-Fassi strived for the liberation of what it called *al-Maghreb al-Aksâ*: literally the 'Far West' and here meaning 'Greater Morocco'.[84] In July 1956, Allal al-Fassi presented a map of 'the Moroccan Sharifian Kingdom in her natural and historical borders'. The map showed what the Istiqlâl considered as the liberated parts of Morocco and those it considered to be under foreign tutelage, but part of Morocco. These 'occupied areas' included the Spanish Sahara, Mauritania, the Algerian Territoire des Oasis and Soudan Français from the Algerian border at Bordj Mokhtar south-eastwards, via Arouan to Néma at the Mauritanian border with Soudan Français. The claim was not only based in historical and nationalist sentiments. The Mauritanian north is rich in iron ore and phosphate, riches the Moroccan Government could well use. Although their claims were vast, the actual dispute over territories in the 1950s would be concentrated on Mauritania and the Spanish Sahara.

All sides to the conflict – mainly France and Morocco, but also the Mauritanian political elite – used diplomacy, press campaigns and military action to win the Mauritanian population and other Saharans to their side. Part of the Mauritanian population, politicians and other elite agreed with the Moroccan claims. They were headed by Horma ould Babana. As the leader of the Entente Mauritanienne party, Horma ould Babana had been elected to the Assembly of the Union Française in 1946. In subsequent elections however, his party became oppositional to the Union Progressiste Mauritanienne (UPM) headed by Mokhtar ould Daddah. In the conflict over the mere existence of Mauritania, disputed by Morocco, Mokhtar ould Daddah was the head of the pro-French part of the Mauritanian elite. He was a very prudent politician who managed to keep his country together by developing the political doctrine that Mauritania was the turning point between the Arab Berber Maghreb and 'black Africa'. This doctrine was given substance by a kind of neutrality of non-adherence to any regional or supra regional project. Despite French pressure, ould Daddah refused to join the OCRS, and neither did he join the Mali federation or its counter, the Entente States. Thus he managed to keep strong pro-Moroccan and

[84] Based on Obdeijn, H., P. De Mas & P. Hermans 1999: 150-157.

anti-French sentiments in check. A third important party was the Association de la Jeunesse Mauritanienne, a group of young *évolués* headed by Ahmed Baba Miské, which took a radical stance towards independence from France, and was decisively pan Arab in ideology. The AJM was divided on the question of Mauritanian existence, with a majority of its members ultimately opting for the Moroccan side. Both the Moroccan and the French camps tried to convince the chiefs and religious leaders in Mauritania to join their side. The most important traditional chief to join the Moroccan camp was Mohamed Fall ould Oumeir, the Emir of Trarza, but most others remained in the French camp.

The struggle did not stay on the level of propaganda and diplomacy.[85] In the last months of 1956, the Istiqlâl organised an invasion force of approximately 5,000 men. Part of this army consisted of officers and men of the Jaish li Tahrîr al-Maghrebiyya or Armée de Libération Marocaine (ALM), the Moroccan Liberation Army. The ALM was well equipped with sufficient personal weapons, mortars, field telephones and vehicles, and discipline was strong. Most of the fighters however were recruited locally among the Rgaybat from the Lgouacem clan. The Rgaybat are a Bidân tribe, famous for their camel-based pastoral life, whose pasture grounds stretch from Goulmime in Southern Morocco to the Draa valley, through the Seguiet El Hamra and Rio D'Oro or Spanish or Western Sahara, southwards into Mauritania, and eastwards to Tindouf in Algeria, and Taoudenit down to I-n-Dagouber in Mali. The Rgaybat had formed the core of warriors around the famous Moroccan resistance fighter Maa Al Ainine in the Draa valley and beyond. The last of their leaders had only surrendered to France in 1934. Throughout the conflict of the 1950s, the Rgaybat would play their own political game. In 1956, drought had hit the Lgouacem pastures in Mauritania, forcing them to move up to their pastures in southern Morocco. The Rgaybat lived in hostile relations with most Bidân tribes in the Southern part of Mauritania, who dominated Mauritanian political life, hence their resistance to the idea of Mauritanian independence. Furthermore, borders between their pastures complicated their nomadic existence. Thus, while herding their camels in southern Morocco in 1956, the Rgaybat joined the ALM forces.

On 13 January 1957, the ALM Rgaybat forces invaded Mauritania, with Atar as their main goal. To get there, the ALM fighters had to cross the Spanish colony of Seguiet El Hamra and Rio d'Oro. According to French sources, the Spanish authorities let the ALM pass for two reasons. First, they did not have

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[85] The following paragraphs are based on; Affaire politiques, Mauritanie, maintien de l'ordre 1957/1958. ANSOM – 1affpol/2229; Affaires politiques, Mauritanie, administration générale 1956-1958. ANSOM – 1affpol/2172. Both dossiers are under embargo until 2020. And on: Guillemin, J. 1982; de Boisboissel, A. 1963; Perrin, L. 1957, CHEAM 2953; Perrin, L. 1958, CHEAM 2955.

the means to stop them. Second, the Spanish were said to have struck a deal with the Istiqlâl to let the ALM into Mauritania unhindered in exchange for the dropping of Moroccan claims on Sidi Ifni, Villa Cisneros, Ceuta and Mellila, Spanish enclaves in Morocco and West Sahara. The ALM forces were driven off, mostly through the military assistance of local Bidân tribes hostile to the Rgaybat, including other Rgaybat clans hostile to the Lgouacem clan, headed by retired army Colonel Borricand. The French escape was narrow as the ALM forces had superior equipment. Only timely air support called in from Algeria saved the French forces on the ground. In June 1957, a large number of Rgaybat Lgouacem defected from the ALM and surrendered to France. The French accepted their surrender, gave them cloth and tea in recognition, and assigned them pastures in the Adrar, which was exactly what the Rgaybat had come looking for. Their transhumance cycle, rather than their political sentiments, had led them to the Adrar in June. Thus the ALM forces were depleted. But in September 1957, a new ALM force stood ready for invasion. This time their goal was the Spanish Sahara, the territory of their former silent allies. It came to heavy fighting over the main Spanish enclaves at the coast, Sidi Ifni, Villa Cisneros and Cap Juby. The ALM managed to capture Tentane and Smara from the Spanish troops. In threat of escalation, elements of the Spanish fleet patrolled the coast below Agadir. In retaliation to the ALM incursions, the Spanish and French armies jointly launched a counter offensive in February 1958 under the name *Opération Ecouvillon*, involving 10,000 men.[86] The main front of this operation was situated in the Spanish Sahara. The French forces involved were drawn from Mauritania, and Algerian Tindouf, who joined the Spanish forces in the Spanish Sahara. By the end of February, the ALM forces were driven from the Spanish Sahara into Morocco. After the battles of early 1958, the last Rgaybat, about 3,000, left the ALM, and surrendered to France. The recuperation and requisition of part of their herds and pastures in Mauritania by the French as part of *Opération Ecouvillon* were probably decisive in their new and temporary choice of allegiance. The heavy bombing of their herds and camps in the Spanish Sahara was another. The most violent phase of the Moroccan aspirations was over, but sporadic violence in the form of assassinations and bomb attempts inspired by the Moroccan services, and razzias from southern Morocco effected by Rgaybat, occurred until well into the 1960s.[87] The Moroccan claims over Mauritania did not subside until the 1970s, when both countries divided the Spanish Sahara between them, to the detriment of Rgaybat and other

[86] There is some uncertainty about the name of this operation. Guillemin gives *Ouragan*. De Boisboissel and most other documents state *Ecouvillon*, while in a few cases the name *Ecouvillon-Ouragan* is given.

[87] Guillemin, J. 1982; Lavroff, D.G., ed., 1979: 417; Ould Daddah, M. 2003: 210-215.

Saharan aspirations to independence. With Algerian help, the Rgaybat, Tajakant and Tikna of the Spanish Sahara then organised into the Sahraoui Arab Democratic Republic, with its army the Popular Front for the Liberation of Seguiet El Hamra and Rio d'Oro: POLISARIO, based at Tindouf. The battle over Saharan borders is yet to end.

Concentrating all their efforts on Mauritania and Spanish Sahara, the Moroccans paid much less attention to their claims on Soudan Français and Southern Algeria in the 1950s. The Bidân community in Soudan Français however responded vividly to the 'Saharan question', to phrase the conflict in the terminology of those days. In complementary response to the idea of a 'Greater Morocco', Bidân politicians developed the idea of a 'Greater Mauritania', which should include, besides Mauritania, the Bidân inhabited northwestern part of Soudan Français and southern Morocco.[88] This idea was based on the history of the 11th century Almoravid Empire, which originated in present-day Mauritania, from where it conquered Morocco and parts of Spain. This historical discourse implied that Morocco was part of Mauritania. Thus in the eyes of its advocates, greater Mauritania equalled greater Morocco and should in all cases include the Bidân-inhabited parts of Soudan Français. This idea was advocated by the Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya, the Mauritanian Renaissance Party. The Nahda was founded in August 1958 in Atar by members of the Association de la Jeunesse Mauritanienne who were in favour of the Moroccan claims. The party was presided over by Bouyagui ould Abidine, a Bidân with strong connections to Soudan Français. The leader of the Nahda was born in 1919 around Timbedgha, a *Cercle* that Soudan Français lost to Mauritania in 1944 as a result of the Nioro du Sahel incident, a religious dispute between the Tijaniyya Hamawiyya Sufi brotherhood, its neighbours, and the French administration that suspected the brotherhood of anti-colonial agitation.[89] After this administrative reshuffling, the Bidân who stayed behind in Soudan Français, including Bouyagui's family, pleaded that their territory should be included in Mauritania as well.[90] After his education at the *Ecole Primaire Supérieure* in Bamako, Bouyagui worked for the Postal Service. In 1952 he presented himself for the Territorial Assembly elections, but was not elected. From 1955 to 1958 he was stationed in Bamako. There, right in the den of the Soudanese nationalists, he focused most of his activity in favour of Greater Mauritania, culminating in the foundation of the Nahda in Mauritania with dissident pro

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88 Based on: Affaires politiques, Mauritanie, administration générale 1957. Fiche concernant Bouyagi ould Abidine. ANSOM – 1affpol/2172/2 (under embargo until 2019); and Ould Daddah, M. 2003: 182.

89 Traoré, A. 1983: 194-195.

90 Sahara, Soudan, Mauritanie, administration et maintien de l'ordre – les confins sahariens – rapports politiques 1955-56. ANSOM – 1affpol/2173/1. Under embargo.

Moroccan AJM members. With the creation of the Nahda in Mauritania, a Soudanese branch of the party was created with sections around Kayes and Nara. Later, local sections were founded in Timbuktu and Gao as well. With the French-Moroccan war in West Sahara and Mauritania at its height, the Nahda under Bouyagui's leadership became more pronouncedly pro-Moroccan, while maintaining the idea of a greater Mauritania. The French and the Soudanese political elite feared that the Bidân from Soudan Français would come into contact with the ALM via the Nahda. Many observers were apprehensive of a massive Bidân exodus from Soudan Français to Mauritania.

The Soudanese leaders do not seem to have worried as much about the Moroccan claims as they did about the French OCRS project, but they would have been well aware of Bidân support for the Moroccan cause, propagated by Bouyagui's Nahda. In return to this threat, the US-RDA laid claim on parts of Mauritania, especially on the *Cercle* of Timbedgha, which it had lost to Mauritania in 1944.[91] In 1959 problems arose in the *Cercle* when a dispute broke out among the local Bidân political elite about election results. As a consequence some of them retreated to their pasture areas in Soudan Français, from where they demanded the reintegration of Timbedgha in Soudan Français. Another part of the disgruntled joined with yet another small Mauritanian party: the Union des Originaires de la Mauritanie du Sud, which defended the interests of the riverain sedentary population along the Senegal River. These political forces created the Union Nationale Mauritanienne (UNM), which demanded the integration of Mauritania in the Mali federation. This would solve the problems of trans-border migrations of the Bidân population of the border area and ensure the position of the sedentary population along the Senegal. Both the UNM and the Bidân of Timbedgha were actively supported by the US-RDA, especially in their claims to join the Mali federation, angering Mokhtar ould Daddah.[92] In 1959, Mokhtar ould Daddah managed to unite all Mauritanian political parties into one single party, the Parti du Peuple Mauritanien.[93] Together with the Union Nationale Mauritanienne, the Nahda was dissolved, its aspirations unfulfilled. The break-up of the Mali federation a year later was greeted with relief in Mauritania, but the border dispute and the Malian threat were not over. From 1960 onwards, Mali actively supported the persisting Moroccan claims on Mauritania. Border incidents proliferated between 1960 and 1961, culminating in the assassination of the administrator of the nomad population in the Mauritanian *Cercle* of Nema, which Mauritania accused to have been plotted by

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91 Ould Daddah, M. 2003: 195-211.
92 Ibid.
93 Marchesin, P. 1994.

Photo 1.1
Bouyagui ould Abidine, founder of the
Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya
[*Source*: *Mauritanie Nouvelle*, October 1961. Courtesy of Archives Nationales du Mali.]

Horma ould Babana, still in exile in Morocco, with Malian support. Only in February 1963 did Mali and Mauritania sign an agreement on their mutual border.

The history of Saharan border disputes in the 1950s and 1960s is much more complicated than presented here and merits a book of its own. The aim of its presentation here however, was to show the political involvement of Tamasheq and Bidân political elites from the start. As many of these projects threatened the territorial integrity of Soudan Français, the Bidân and Kel Tamasheq involved became highly suspect as political troublemakers and anti-nationals, or even traitors to the Malian cause, which indeed was not always theirs. In the end, Mali became independent in 1960 with its borders as they had been since 1944. National construction could commence.

Creating Mali

Since the 1990s there has been much debate among Africanists about the failure of the state, and the creation of solid national identities in postcolonial Africa. Most vocal in this debate is the work of Basil Davidson described above, which refutes the possibility and the appropriateness of the national model for African states. Indeed, in 1960, the idea of a Malian nation was not yet deeply rooted.

This was perhaps due to the way the country had gained its independence. First of all, there had not been a long, violent and bitter anti-colonial war, so helpful in shaping a national identity in other postcolonies. The process of decolonisation in Soudan Français had been a long, calm and gradual one, taking shape in its last years through cooperation between the US-RDA and the administration, which had come to accept the inevitability of US-RDA power, and in fact by then included US-RDA members in the higher echelons. The mutual interests of French and African political elites described by Tony Chafer prevailed over anxieties over Marxist rhetoric.[94] Second, prior to September 1960, it had not been the aspiration of the Soudanese political elite to create a nation. The US-RDA, part of the AOF-wide RDA was staunchly Pan-African and it sought to create a Pan-African AOF-wide federal political union. Their efforts had resulted in the creation of the short-lived Mali federation with Senegal. When this federation broke up in August 1960, the Sudanese leaders were suddenly faced with the fact that they stood alone in their federalist ideal and that the Soudanese Republic had to go on as a singular state. The ideal of a federal political entity had foreclosed a strong nationalist identity within the ranks of the party. According to former ministers Mamadou Gologo, the main US-RDA ideologist, and Moussa Keita, Modibo Keita's younger brother and former Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, only after the break-up of the Mali federation did the Soudanese political leaders realise they had to inspire a national idea within what was now the Republic of Mali.[95] And even then, the idea of Pan-African federalism was not discarded. The new Malian constitution included the possibility of a 'total or partial abandonment of national sovereignty in favour of federation'.[96] Yet, today, a Malian national sentiment exists, even a very strong one. Malians in general are proud to be Malians, to the point of being chauvinist. A possible explanation for this rooted national sentiment is the existence of potent symbolic material to incorporate and store in the registers and libraries of a Malian national discourse. These include a rich history with which to create a national historical myth; folklore from which to create national customs; a strong ideological stance in which to interpret this myth and custom; a glorious future ahead now that the shackles of colonialism had been broken; and internal and external neo-colonialist enemies to fight against. These elements were all skilfully brought into play by the US-RDA regime, which purposefully sought to create a Malian nation, perhaps one of the few endeavours it succeeded in beyond expectations. For the purpose of brevity, I will limit myself to dealing

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94 Chafer, T. 2002.

95 Interviews with Mamadou Gologo, former Minister of Information, Bamako 18/01/1998; and Moussa Keita, former Minister of Youth and Sports, Bamako 10/01/1998.

96 Constitution de la République du Mali, titre X: De l'unité africaine.

with only the most substantial elements of Malian national identity. In 1960 not only the Malian national idea still had to be created. In part, the state had to be created too. This was done in full continuity with the colonial period. However much fanfare was blown at independence, in practice much stayed the same, while changing at the same time. As has been extensively argued elsewhere, the continuities of rule over the caesura of independence are more profound than the rhetorics of independence try to make us believe.[97]

Nation building

The land and peoples occupying the present day Republic of Mali have a rich and largely documented history, either through oral traditions or through Arabic documents written by local Muslim scholars. Some of the oldest cities of West Africa, such as Djenné, Timbuktu and Gao, are found here, and since medieval times, great empires and powerful kingdoms have succeeded each other on Malian ground. This is the stuff par excellence on which to build a national historical myth: antecedent states, which can be connected, without too much interruption, to a dignified present and a glorious future. To begin with, the best-known medieval African empire, the Mali Empire founded by Sunjata Keita, was largely situated within the borders of its present day homonym. The Mali Empire was followed and conquered by the Songhay Empire with its capital Gao. The decline of this empire was followed by a period of anarchy and 'foreign rule' – the capture of Timbuktu and Gao by the Moroccan Sultanate in 1591 – after which followed a series of kingdoms in the Mande and Bambara heartland of Mali and in the Niger Bend. These were the kingdoms of Kangaba, Kaarta and Segu, which were, in turn, conquered or reformed by Fulbe Muslim rulers from the Maacina (*Cheick* Ahmed Lobbo) and the Futa Toro (*Elhajj* Umar Tall) in the 18th and 19th centuries. This is, in short, how Mali's national history is presented to young Malians in the national educational history curriculum.[98] But even those who have not had formal education know this history. It can be said that in Malian societies, history forms the basis of social and cultural relations. The history of the founding of the Mali Empire by Sunjata Keita forms the explanatory basis and justification of Mande social, cultural and political organisation. The Sunjata epic serves to explain the relation between various Mande family groups (*jamuw*), villages and social strata. Without knowledge of this epic, a Mande simply cannot function socially or culturally.[99] The same can be said about the Songhay and their empire, the Fulbe and their

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97 Mann, G. & B. Lecocq, eds., 2003.
98 Guilhem, M. & S. Toe 1963.
99 Jansen, J. 1995.

jihad-states and the Bambara kingdoms, which are presented in the national myth (and much scholarly work) as the rightful heirs to the Mali Empire.

For a new state, the social and cultural importance of history in wider society is a solid anvil on which to forge a sense of national unity. If the new state can be successfully linked to the conception of history as embodying culture and society, the national historical myth is made. The Keita regime did its utmost to do so. By giving the Republic the name of its adopted medieval predecessor, the Mali Empire, the Republic of Mali presented itself as its rightful heir, and also as the rightful heir to its succeeding kingdoms. Modibo Keita, namesake to the founder of this empire, Sunjata Keita, was without a doubt to any Malian mind a descendant of the great imperial family, and he implicitly presented himself as such.[100] Sunjata's alleged device 'Rather dead than dishonoured' was taken up by the new nation.[101] The colonial period was presented as a short and disturbing interlude to the natural course of history, with only two positive elements: it had brought modern education and technical expertise with which the country could improve its living standards; and it had created the opportunity to reunite most of the areas formerly included in the Mali Empire and succeeding kingdoms into a new state.[102] The historical foundation of the Malian national myth is first and foremost based on the all-important living history of the Mande and Bambara areas. As Cutter argues, 'the variety of historical traditions which co-exist in contemporary Mali, while not explicitly dismissed, were denied operative consequence for the contemporary state in the leadership's myth of unity'.[103] However, the new government was quick to admit that these Mande and Bambara kingdoms had been conquered and transformed by other ethnic groups living in the present-day republic. The Songhay Empire and the Fulbe *jihad*-states, the glorious past of Timbuktu founded by the Kel Tamasheq, as well as Samory Touré's empire and the Sikasso kingdom of Babemba Traoré all found their place in the national myth, and not without reason. As Mamadou Gologo, former Minister of Information and the Keita regime's main ideologist explained:

> Nationalism is the awareness of belonging to a nation and the conservation of this identity, which is shaped in a rich history. All Malian ethnic groups have had the experience of state rule, to have been ruled and to have ruled. This experience excludes tribalism in national sentiments.[104]

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[100] Cutter, C. 1971.
[101] Snyder, F. 1967.
[102] Campmas, P. 1978; Snyder, F. 1967.
[103] Cutter, C. 1971.
[104] Interview with Mamadou Gologo, former Minister of Information. Bamako, 18/01/1998.

How far Malian national identity was perceived to be 'Mande' or 'Bambara' by the new republic's inhabitants is a pertinent question. Most elements used in Malian nationalist discourse and identity-building were taken from Mande culture and history. Even the name of the new republic is indicative. Many colonies in Africa changed their name after independence, but although references to the past were gladly made, most sought historically neutral names to avoid enhancing possible ethnic tension. Hence, Dahomey, a colony created largely around the kingdom with the same name, changed its name to Benin, a well-known pre-colonial kingdom which territory was located to the west of Dahomey. Although the Gold Coast Colony was more or less shaped around the Ashanti kingdom, the colony renamed itself Ghana after an empire that had been located at the upper Senegal River hundreds of kilometres to the north. Soudan Français however, opted to adopt the name of an empire, which had indeed largely been situated on the same territory as the new republic. However, the new republic included land that once formed part of other empires, such as Songhay, the name of which was explicitly not adopted. The name of the new republic reflected the dominance of its core populations: the Mande and Bambara. Mali was explicitly presented as the rightful heir not only of the Mali Empire, but also, more broadly, of a Mande civilisation whose glory and dignity, robbed by colonialism, had to be restored. Malian schoolbooks presented the history of the new nation almost uniquely through the history of the Mali Empire and other Mande kingdoms, leaving some space to the Songhay Empire, and largely leaving aside the complex histories of the many other communities in the republic. The imaginary glue holding the various peoples of the country together consisted of frequent reference to Sunjata's empire-building, thus reflecting an 'official nationalism' in Anderson's meaning of the term.[105] Certain Mande social structures, such as the village young men's associations known as *tonw*, were conscripted into 'the Revolution' and became the vectors of modernity. In this way, Malian national culture was Mande culture, and Mali's national character was the Mande national character of industriousness and self-sacrifice.

The new regime stimulated the creation of local *troupes artistiques* to promote national cultural heritage in music, song, and dance. Frederick Lamp discusses the function of similar groups in neighbouring Guinée (Conakry). He argues that the theatrical troupes in Guinée and the attention given to their performances served primarily 'the "Malinke-ization" of all of Guinée – at heart, the expansion of Islamic Malinke cultural hegemony'.[106] Cutter has described a similar situation for the Keita regime's cultural policies through

[105] Anderson, B. 1991: 83-111.
[106] Jansen, J. & C. Zobel, eds, 1996; Lamp, F. 1996.

national radio. Each night at six, Radio Mali broadcasted a music programme with folk music. More important in this policy was the broadcasting of the 'tales of Baba Sissoko' – the Sunjata epic and other tales of Mande kingdoms, performed by the 'national *griot*' Banzoumana Sissoko. To the Keita regime, national folklore largely meant Mande and Bambara music, song, and dance. The *troupe artistique* of Kidal was forbidden to sing in Tamasheq, and had to learn and perform Bambara songs instead.[107] The Kidal artists were not the only ones to experience this cultural exclusion. Afel Bocoum, an artist from Niafunké and musical heir to famous guitar player Ali Farka Touré, remembers his first performance at the national biannual festival in 1972:

> Everybody liked it, but the fact is, I couldn't have won first prize, because I was Sonrai, not Bambara (...) That's the way it was in those days in Mali – the Bambara ruled. If you weren't Bambara – forget it. Luckily, that's all changed now under our new democracy. But still now, the Sonrai aren't dominant culturally. Why should this be so? This is something I fight against in my music.[108]

Where Afel Bocoum fights against 'Mandefication' in songs, Tamasheq rebels fought against it in guerrilla warfare, both in 1963 and in 1990.

State building

In 1960 there was almost no infrastructure in Mali. Tarmac roads did not exist. From Bamako it took about a week to travel to Kidal over land. Electricity, telephone, transport, all means a modern government relies on to perform its functions, were desperately lacking in all remote parts of Mali. Reading the official newspaper *L'Essor* of those years, one is left with the impression that Mali did not extend beyond the area directly surrounding Bamako and Segu, with outposts at Mopti, Gao, Kayes and Timbuktu. The lack of infrastructure is expressed in the five-year plan of 1961 which foresaw the construction of a railway connecting Bamako to Conakry; the enlargement of six regional airports; the deepening of the Niger river for river transport between Koulikoro and Mopti; tarmac roads between Bougouni, Sikasso, Koutiala, San and Mopti, and between Koutiala and Segu; strengthened earthen roads between Bamako, Nara, Niono and Kayes; bridges and ferries; and, last but not least, extensive postal and telecom services.[109] The distance between government and governed that this lack of means created was closed in strategies adopted from the US-RDA's experiences of the late colonial period. Most party leaders and high-ranking government officials extensively travelled the country. Independent

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[107] ag Litny, I. 1992.

[108] Inlay booklet in Afel Bocoum, *Alkibar*. World Circuit Production 1999, CD, WCD 053.

[109] Société Nationale d'Etudes pour le Développement, S.N.E.D. 1980: 44.

Mali was administratively organised in six *Régions*, headed by a governor. The regions were divided into *Cercles*, largely taken over from the colonial period, and *Arrondissements*, which mostly overlapped with the colonial *Subdivision* administrative unit. In these constituencies existed parallel administrative and party structures, which were quite often filled with the same people. At each level, *Arrondissement*, *Cercle* and *Région*, a monthly *Conférence des Cadres* was organised to discuss the economic and political situation. These conferences were often attended by high-ranking party members and administrative officials from Bamako, who came to explain and defend measures taken. Moreover, each *Région* organised a *Conférence Economique des Cadres Trimestrielle* that was systematically attended by Modibo Keita himself.[110] Despite the regular attendance and close monitoring of the US-RDA leaders at meetings in the country, to adequately solve local problems governors and administrators were allowed a measure of executive freedom in a system described by Zolberg as closest to European medieval feudalism.

> Nowhere, perhaps, is the historical parallel with [Weber's view on medieval feudal] Europe as striking as in Mali, where Modibo Keita has appointed a set of regional governors directly responsible to him in his capacity as president, and also a set of roving party commissioners directly responsible to him as Secretary-General of the Union Soudanaise. In addition, he spends about one-quarter of every year touring the regions with a suite consisting of party officials, elected representatives, and important bureaucrats. (...) In spite of the use of modern Marxist phraseology, the mood is akin to that of pre-modern Europe.[111]

Although this image is fitting in its irony, since Keita was determined to eradicate social practices he himself described as 'feudal', it is not altogether true. It is more appropriate to compare Keita's travels to the colonial administrative tours made by the *Commandant de Cercle*, so often described in French colonial literature.[112] This comparison with colonial times could be, and indeed was, extended to the whole national administration. According to Barate, a jurist specialised in the administrative structures of Mali:

> The functions of the regional administration are, apart from their militancy, in no way different from those of their colleagues of the colonial period. No innovations are made in this field. The traditional administrative functions of the colonial administrators have simply been taken over. The only difference: nationals occupy the old positions.[113]

In the late 1950s the colonial government had officially inaugurated a policy of administrative 'Africanisation', promoting lower rank African civil servants

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[110] Traoré, A.S., K. Pleah, M. Talla & K. Sidibe 1996: 50.
[111] Zolberg, A. 1966: 136-137.
[112] Colin, R. 2004; Clauzel, J., ed., 2003.
[113] Barate, C. 1977: 1045.

to higher ranks to prepare for the growing autonomy of the colonies. The process was however severely slowed down by the reluctance of both the Ministry of Overseas Territories and local European staff to see large numbers of colonial administrators made redundant and swelling the administration in the metropole. Thus, faced with a lack of trained civil servants, after independence large numbers of Malians with higher levels of education but with hardly any administrative experience, among whom many schoolteachers were deployed to staff the fledgling administration, leaving gaps in the staffing of other institutions. Thus, the newly independent state started with a lack of both manpower and means.

In his speech preceding the Malian declaration of independence Modibo Keita made it clear that Mali would 'take the socialist option, derived from Malian realities, grafted on successful experiences elsewhere'.[114] Malian Socialism was, like the policies of many other African regimes, described as 'African Socialism'. The regime envisioned the development of the country through State planned economy, directed by the *Comité National de Planification et de Direction Economique*, indirectly presided over by Modibo Keita. This was nothing new *per se*, as the colonial economy of Soudan Français had been planned similarly in four-year plans drawn up by the FIDES since 1949. In practice planning in independent Mali meant strengthening the agricultural sector, while at the same time constructing a complementary industrial sector and supportive state enterprises almost from scratch. The latter was new, as the colonial plans had never invested in the secondary sector. The first plan in effect in independent Mali dated from 1959, hence shortly after the formal independence of the Soudanese Republic, sovereign in its economic course. This plan was drawn up almost exclusively by foreign experts, among them a number of colonial administrators. The team was headed by the Egyptian economist Samir Amin, but included Jean Benard, a student of the French Marxist Charles Bettelheim, lecturer at the EHESS in Paris and responsible for the economic planning of Guinée (Conakry); Jean Leroy, a Marxist colonial administrator specialised in agriculture and finance; and Eli Löbel, an Israeli planner.[115] In fact, trained economists were almost totally absent among the French African elite, the Senegalese Mamadou Dia being the only AOF politician holding a degree in Economy. The first four-year plan these men drew up was readjusted to economic realities into a five-year plan in October 1961.[116] Since Mali was essentially a rural society, social and economic policy remained based on the

[114] Keita, M. 1965: 7-12.
[115] Jones, W. 1976: 115.
[116] Société Nationale d'Etudes pour le Développement, S.N.E.D. 1980.

village as the primary social and economic unit.[117] The plan's programme for agricultural and rural modernisation, the *Action Rurale*, consisted of two main elements: the organisation of farmers into socialist cooperatives, and the rationalisation of agricultural production through the introduction of credit, modern equipment (ploughs, artificial fertilizer, improved seeds) and, most of all, education. Material means for this project were desperately lacking.[118] With the help of foreign development aid and loans from various countries, a wide range of state enterprises, industries and para-statal organisations were created. Industrial plants for the processing of agricultural products such as refineries for peanut oil; a soap factory; fruit canning industries; and large refrigerated abattoirs were planned and indeed partly constructed. The national air company Air Mali was invested with a fleet of six Iljouchins, two Antonovs and three DC-3s maintaining regular national and international flights.[119] All this at least gave a modern industrial and socialist look to the new country.

Despite the lack of material and personnel, the Malian political leaders were optimistic about Mali's bright future. Like most African leaders after independence, they had aspirations and ambitions, which James Scott has labelled 'High Modernist'. Scott defines High Modernism as

> a strong (…) version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws.[120]

Scott's description entirely fits the Malian case, as it fitted most African postcolonies. Although in scale Modibo Keita's Mali cannot be compared to Nyerere's Ujamaa, the most notorious example of social engineering in Africa, it could certainly be compared in intention. When in 1967 the regime's economic policy proved a failure, Keita proclaimed a Permanent Revolution in Chinese Cultural Revolution style, to save his policies from what he basically saw as a lack of commitment from the rank and file, not a failure in social and economic engineering itself. Scott observes that when high modernist plans remain unsuccessful, its directors tend to turn to 'easily controlled micro-order in model cities, model villages, and model farms'.[121] In Mali a number of such model villages were created, or existing villages were appointed to serve as such, such as Sanankoroba, Samayana, Kimparé and M'pésoba. Foreign re-

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[117] Based on Ernst, K. 1969.
[118] Based on Jones, W. 1972; Snyder, F. 1967; Société Nationale d'Etudes pour le Développement (S.N.E.D.), 1980.
[119] Cissé, M.N. 1964.
[120] Scott, J. 1998: 4.
[121] Ibid.

searchers studying the policies of the new African states were only allowed to do research in these model villages. Most of these researchers, regardless of their political orientation, were unimpressed with the results they saw in these villages and were immediately able to pinpoint the weaknesses in the execution of the planned economy. But high modernism is first and foremost an ideology, 'a faith that borrowed the legitimacy of science and technology' as Scott put it.[122] What the regime envisioned was the realisation of economic growth through sheer willpower. The modernisation of the economy could only be successful if the mentality of the rural population could be transformed from a backward traditional outlook on production and society to a modern rational one. If this process was successful economic production would rise automatically, or so the regime thought. Snyder teaches us that the Keita regime gave total prevalence to politics over economy. Like many other Marxist-inspired leaders, the regime thought economy was, by definition, political, and that changing politics would automatically mean changing the economy. Unfortunately, the regime also thought that politics was rhetorics and that speeches and education were enough to make people behave as desired. What Modibo Keita and his team envisioned was the reshaping of Malian peasant village society on modern scientific socialist principles, combined with the pristine traditions and the original Mande spirit of industriousness. Keita believed that humanity was in essence good, rational and malleable. Moreover he firmly believed in the existence of a Mande national character, one of the clearest signs Keita was inspired by nationalism after all. In his view, the Mande were serious, dignified, honourable, hard-working, constant, stubborn, patient, fraternal and loyal. They persisted in the pursuit of their goals, and kept their word.[123] These qualities had to form the new Malian national character, which could then be mobilised to harness the new Malian nation, and to inculcate a spirit of self-sacrifice and industriousness in the people. According to the ideology of the US-RDA, Malian society had been originally communalist or proto-socialist. The communalist spirit of the villager had been corrupted by the introduction of a monetary economy and feudalist rule in colonial times.[124] These distortions in Malian society had to be uprooted. Negative attitudes, introduced by colonialism, such as greed, individualism, selfishness and feudalism had to be stamped out. The new regime promoted the position of the modern and young, and of disadvantaged groups – women, members of the lower castes and former slaves – within the traditional village decision-making structures, which had so far

[122] Jones, W. 1976.

[123] Snyder, F. 1967: 86-98. Incidentally, these ascribed national character traits were exactly those the colonial administration had used to describe Mande character.

[124] For the regime's vision of pre-colonial and colonial Malian society, see Kouyaté, S.B. 1965: 23-40.

been the domain of elder men. Through the Rural Development Schools, farmers received education in modern agricultural techniques (which often, due to lack of means, could not be practiced). The Party Elementary Schools organised courses on the structure of the republic's administration, Marxism-Leninism and the aims of the US-RDA.[125] This then, would propel the nation forward both economically and morally. This process of mental transformation was called 'intellectual decolonisation'.[126] It was first and foremost directed towards those parts of the population that had enjoyed an advantageous position in society under colonial rule: the bureaucrats; the merchants; the elders; and the nomads.

Coercion, resistance and control

The leaders of the regime were quick to realise that several interest groups in the country could still effectively oppose their policies and that parts of the population were not necessarily happy with their restructuring of the economic and political landscape along socialist principles. Measures that especially caused resentment among the population at large were the *Service Civique* and the so-called *Investissements Humains* – human investments. Since the Malian Government lacked resources to develop the country, it tried to cut costs by demanding the population to work voluntarily with national fervour on construction sites in their spare time. The five-year plan for example, projected the improvement of roads throughout the country, financed for 40% through 'human investment'.[127] These '*chantiers d'honneur*' received much attention in the media and in administrative reports, since they were not only meant to create new infrastructure, but also to inculcate civic duty in the Malian population. The human investments caused strong resentment. To many Malians, the practice resembled too closely the much-hated forced labour under French rule, or *fasobara* as it was called in Bamanakan, which had been abolished in 1946. This resemblance was of course denied by the Keita regime, arguing that *fasobara* had been colonial exploitation in the service of the white man, while the human investments uniquely served the needs of the people.[128] A second asset was the *Service Civique*, the conscription of young man into labour brigades working common fields (*forobara* in Bamanakan) and state organised agricultural schemes. Many Malians closely associated the 'little farming soldiers' of the *Service Civique* with the so-called *Deuxième Portion* under French

[125] Ernst, K. 1976: 83-85.
[126] Snyder, F. 1967: 87.
[127] Société Nationale d'Etudes pour le Développement, S.N.E.D. 1980: 44.
[128] For popular feelings about *fasobara* during the Keita regime, see Hopkins, N. 1972: 160-163. For the official point of view, see Kouyaté, S.B. 1965: 68-69.

rule: a means to tap the labour forces of youths who were not conscripted for military service.[129]

One option open to Malians to escape the coercive forces of the new regime was a strategy they had deployed since the early colonial period: labour migration. In colonial times Soudan Français had largely served as a labour reserve at the service of other colonies. Especially Ivory Coast and Senegal profited, but Malian labour could be found as far away as Belgian Congo and the Middle East.[130] In the years prior to independence labour migration to the neighbouring colonies intensified. The *barangini*, or 'those in search of labour' as they were called in Bamanakan, circulated in West Africa by the ten thousands.[131] As a first step, young Malians from the countryside thronged to the Malian cities during the dry season, when agriculture came to a standstill, to look for work. The administration perceived these seasonal migrants as lazy and a nuisance, causing the congestion of the growing urban centres. But many of the young seasonal migrants used their stay in the city as a launching platform for labour migrations abroad, permanently drenching the countryside of the labour force needed for the intensification of agricultural production during the farming season. As early as 1959 Modibo Keita, then in his function of Mayor of Bamako, launched an appeal to 'Return to the land', an appeal transformed into a policy to force young seasonal migrants back to the countryside and to work the collective fields, or *forobara,* the administration had ordained, under the regime of *fasobara*, human investment. The attempts to curtail labour migration took serious forms in 1962 with the reintroduction of so-called *laissez-passer*, a travel permit needed to move around AOF under the colonial regime during the *indigénat*. Under the guise of national improvement, the US-RDA reinstalled colonial practices it had helped to abolish a decade earlier, to the resentment of the population.

Migration as a passive form of resistance could take a large scale. After the 1963 rebellion, an estimated 25% of the population of the Adagh had migrated to Algeria. But even prior to *Alfellaga*, massive migration took place. In November and December 1962, hundreds of Dogon and Kel Tamasheq living in the western part of the Niger Bend, between Hombori and Douentza, began to leave Mali for Upper Volta. Apparently, they left the country to avoid taxes and membership dues to the US-RDA. At first, the regime reacted calmly. Modibo Keita, the Minister of Finance Attaher Maïga, and the Chief of Staff Abdoulaye Soumaré, toured the area to calm people down and stop the exodus. In November, some government agents in the area were killed. The Government

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[129] Bogosian, C. 2003.
[130] The following is based on Gary-Tounkara, D. 2003.
[131] Ibid.

responded by sending two motorised army units, one to Hombori and Gossi and one to Douentza, to prevent the flight of the population. Although hampered by logistical and equipment difficulties, the army was able to at least partly stop the exodus through intimidating actions, such as test-firing weapons in Dogon villages. At least one serious clash resulted in a significant loss of lives, when government agents halted people from the Bandiagara region heading for the border. An estimated fifty civilians died in this clash. After the events at Hombori and Gao, Modibo Keita ordered certain villages to be razed to the ground, and the ringleaders to be imprisoned in Kidal or Ménaka.[132]

Another group the US-RDA sought to curtail in its economic endeavours were the merchants or Dioula. Many had been active US-RDA supporters in the 1950s, helping party members with transportation and spreading the message of the US-RDA in the countryside. Now the party dismissed them as petty bourgeois allies who were no longer functional or needed. Their AOF-wide trade economy had been partly possible through the existence of a French West African common currency. On 1 July 1962, Modibo Keita announced the launch of the Malian Franc. The new national currency served first of all as a national marker. As Keita put it: 'History has taught us that political power is always and by necessity accompanied by the regal right to coin money, that monetary power is inseparable from national sovereignty'.[133] The new currency was intended to serve Malian withdrawal from the monetary control of the CFA Franc zone and to allow the state to regulate its own debts in foreign currency, and hence to finance state budgetary deficits. These rose as official exports faltered behind plan, while state imports remained high, hence causing inflation and larger state deficits.[134] One way to curb this spiral was to exert control over the massive private import and export business the Dioula generated with neighbouring countries, which remained partly undeclared. A national currency would make this undeclared business impossible. On 20 July 1962 the Dioula community in Bamako protested against the curtailment of their activities and the Malian Franc. Apparently, slogans such as 'long live France', 'down with the Malian Franc' and 'down with Mali and its Government of infidels' were shouted.[135] A large number of the protesters were arrested. Fily Dabo Sissoko and Hamadoun Dicko, the former leaders of the PSP, who had not joined the

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[132] Dr. Ali Ongoiba, director of the ANM, first brought the 'Dogon rebellion' to my attention. My search for information on this totally unknown event has been unfruitful, since possible informants denied its existence. Further research on this matter is highly recommended. I am greatly indebted to Greg Mann for communicating the above information to me.

[133] *L'Essor*, 03/07/1962.

[134] Jones, W. 1976.

[135] *L'Essor*, 23/07/1962.

rally, were arrested as well. Despite its dissolution after the 1959 elections, support for the PSP was still strong in Mali, especially in the Dioula community, and not all of its party structures had dissolved.[136] The Keita regime took the opportunity the Dioula riots presented to rid itself of these potential opposition leaders. On 24 September 1962 a 'popular trial' commenced against those arrested who were accused of conspiracy against the state. Sissoko and Dicko were the main defendants. They were accused of organising the rally and of being in contact with such former colonial top brass as Max Lejeune and Marius Moutet, which was taken as evidence of French support for Sissoko's antinational conspiracy to topple the Keita Government.[137] The tribunal announced its verdict on 1 October 1962. Seventy-seven merchants received sentences ranging from one year of imprisonment to twenty years of forced labour in Kidal prison. The main defendants, Fily Dabo Sissoko, Hamadoun Dicko and Kassoum Touré, the organiser of the Dioula rally, received death sentences, which Modibo Keita changed to life sentences of forced labour in the Kidal area.[138]

Although probably the largest forms of organised protest before the 1963 rebellion in the Adagh, the Dioula riots and the mass exodus of the Bandiagara area were not the only forms of resistance against the Keita regime. More passive forms, such as simply not being a member of the US-RDA, tax evasion, disregard for communal fields and human investment, or other disobedience to government instructions, were commonplace.[139] These forms of resistance will have contributed to a heightened awareness within the new regime that its control over the country was still to be consolidated. The Keita administration consisted largely of educated urbanites with no small amount of contempt for the villagers, as its 'Return to the land' policy destined for lazy, free-riding urban migrants, demonstrated. The elite was determined to develop the population, even against its own will, but it was well aware of the possible resistance and reverted to harsh reprisals such as the deployment of the army in the Dogon area and the trial of the Dioula. However, one could develop the argument that the US-RDA needed resistance in order to consolidate the Malian nation and its control over that nation. In depicting resistance as unpatriotic expressions of hostility, or even as a plot against the nation – imagined or real – the regime could inculcate an acute sense of national danger and launch an appeal to defend cause and country. The colonial history, ideology and organisation of the US-RDA showed the party that it needed enemies both outside and

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[136] For PSP support and its remaining structures after 1960, see Hopkins, N. 1972.
[137] *L'Essor*, 27/09/1962.
[138] *L'Essor*, 02/10/1962.
[139] Based on: Ernst, K. 1976; Jones, W. 1972; Gary-Tounkara, D. 2006; Zolberg, V. 1976.

inside the country in order to grow. In colonial times, the US-RDA had two main adversaries: colonialism and the PSP. It had defeated both by consolidating its unity and following rigorous party discipline.[140] In order to keep this discipline, and thus for the party leadership to be in control, the party needed new enemies to fight. These were found in neo-colonialism, both outside the country where the 'retrograde regimes' of France, Senegal and Ivory Coast had conspired against the Mali federation, and inside the nation, where merchants, former PSP leaders and other 'anti-national elements' conspired to overthrow the regime. The Keita administration would soon find its most outspoken 'neo-colonial' adversary in the Kel Adagh.

Epilogue

The economic policy of the regime proved to be a failure.[141] In its attempts to modernise state and society the new regime perhaps overstressed politics, as Jones remarks, and underestimated the populations' resistance against 'getting them to grow more cash crops for sale to the Government while offering them little but patriotic slogans in return'.[142] In 1967, the Malian Franc was devaluated and reconnected to the West African CFA, in exchange for new loans from France to rebalance the state budget, and to jump-start the economy. The desired effect of the monetary agreements did not occur. The economy collapsed further and the state budget remained in deficit. The crisis was aggravated by the agitations of the *Milice Populaire* and the *Brigades de Vigilance*: two armed para-military forces under command of the US-RDA. In July 1967, Modibo Keita had urged these organisations to purge the party and the country of '(...) the smugglers and speculators, the degenerated rank and file at all levels whose revolutionary flame has withered or died (...)'. They did so with zeal, unleashing a reign of terror.[143] The various crises highlighted the long existing internal division within the US-RDA between economic moderates, such as Jean Marie Koné and Attaher Maïga, and Marxist hardliners, like Madeira Keita and Mamadou Gologo.[144] Modibo Keita had started his political career as a moderate, but had gradually developed towards the left side of the party. In line with Scott's description of High Modernist idealists, Keita strongly believed that at heart, the root of the country's problems should not be sought in the socialist option itself, but in those who were appointed to carry out socialist

[140] Snyder, F. 1965.
[141] Sanankoua, B. 1990.
[142] Jones, W. 1972: 32.
[143] Modibo Keita's declaration to the youth, 9 July 1967. In: Ouattara, T. 1979. See also Mann, G. 2003.
[144] See Campmas, P. 1978; Jones, W. 1976.

policies. To purge party and state of incompetent and moderate elements, Keita dissolved the executive office of the party in August 1967. In January 1968, Parliament was also dissolved. All political institutions were replaced by the Comité National pour la Défense de la Révolution, in which only Marxist hardliners found a place, but this did not end the economic crisis, and even aggravated the Cultural Revolution-style actions of the *Milice Populaire* and the *Brigade de Vigilance*. Finally, what seemed inevitable in those early years of post-colonial Africa happened. On 19 November 1968 the Comité Militaire de la Libération Nationale (CMLN) staged a coup d'état. Modibo Keita and his principal ministers and US-RDA leaders were imprisoned and sent to specially erected prison camps in the Adagh, where they were guarded and taken care of by the people they had most of all sought to educate, develop, and rule against their will: the Kel Adagh.[145] The news of the coup d'état was enthusiastically greeted in the Adagh. The fall of Keita, a reality to the Kel Adagh as he entered Kidal as a prisoner, was at first equated with freedom and the end of Malian rule. Children abandoned school. Caravans were formed to move to Algeria, probably as the effects of the drought were already being felt and many wanted to sell livestock before disaster befell them. The administration reacted quickly by organising an 'explanatory campaign' to warn the Kel Adagh against 'a possible deformation of the meaning of freedom'.[146] The caravans were halted; children were sent back to school; business remained as usual.

[145] Since the 1990s, a number of survivors of these camps have published their memoirs. Samaké, G. 1998; Traoré, A.S., K. Pleah, M. Talla & K. Sidibe 1996.

[146] Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de Novembre 1968. ACK.

2

Race, stereotypes and politics

If one was to draw a 'Top Ten' list of most mythical peoples, the Kel Tamasheq would probably rank rather high. If confronted with the ethnonym 'Kel Tamasheq', or even 'Tuareg', most people outside West Africa would not necessarily know who are meant. But if shown a picture they would quickly recognise one. Cars, camping gear, travel agencies, perfumes, even skiing outfits have been advertised with the image of a Tamasheq, some products even sporting a Tamasheq as their logo or simply being called 'Tuareg'. In globalised commercial imagery, the Tamasheq man with his veiled face and turban, flowing indigo robes and camel, has become the prototype desert nomad, a symbol of freedom. This essentialisation of the Kel Tamasheq into 'The Nomad' in global culture is the result of a process of stereotyping a strange 'other', which had already started in classical Arabic culture and even well before in the ancient Middle East. As evidenced in documents almost as old as writing itself, nomad-sedentary relations have been problematic since their beginnings, thousands of years ago.[1] Yet, sedentary fascination and idealisation of nomadic existence is almost as old. Much of the Old Testament deals with nomadic existence and draws its wisdom from it. Yet, the recollections (or imagination) of their ancestors' deeds were written down in a (by then) largely sedentary Jewish society. The present-day image of the Kel Tamasheq would definitely qualify as Orientalist in Edward Said's sense, but the creation of stereotyped images, and the subsequent projections of virtues and failings on the Kel Tamasheq and other nomads, is not a uniquely European business.[2] Tamasheq culture has a few characteristics that make it peculiar not only in the eyes of the European, but also of the Arab-Muslim culture or of neighbouring

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1 Klengel, H. 1972.
2 Saïd, E. 1978.

African cultures. When visiting Timbuktu, Ibn Battuta already remarked (and scorned) the relative freedom in gender relations that are now seen as almost unique to Tamasheq culture.[3] It is the men who veil their faces in front of women, and not the other way around, which astounded both Arabs and Europeans. European administrators cherished Tamasheq 'chivalry' but condemned their 'nomad laziness'. On the other hand, these days, rich Saudi tourists visit Northern Mali and Niger to see the people who still live the honourable nomad camel-breeding life their Saudi grandfathers had lived, as one of them told me. The nomadic pastoral existence of the Tamasheq ancestors was already extolled by Ibn Khaldun as an explanation for the military and moral superiority of the nomadic Berber tribes over their sedentary Arabised neighbours.[4]

On the other hand, the Kel Tamasheq too have their preconceived ideas about the Europeans, and about their neighbours. The idea of the European, in colonial times as well as now, is best summarised in the term reserved for them: *Ikufar*, infidels. Although militarily superior to the Kel Tamasheq, Europeans were (and still are) seen as ethically and morally inferior as they do not adhere to Islam. However, to some Kel Tamasheq in the late twentieth century, the rule of the 'infidel' was preferred over that of the 'slave'. Indeed, to many Kel Tamasheq of free origins, 'black Africans' were peoples who had long been subjected to Tamasheq rule. Ever since the Moroccan invasion and subsequent fall of the Songhay Empire at the end of the sixteenth century, the Kel Tamasheq had not been subdued to a sub-Saharan polity. On the contrary, after the quick demise of Moroccan rule in the area, it was the Kel Tamasheq federations who ruled the Niger Bend and present-day Northern Mali. In Tamasheq ideas on power, black peoples could not rule over the Kel Tamasheq. At best they ruled themselves and were left alone or were partners in business. At worst they were Kel Tamasheq dependents and victims to slave raids.[5]

Politics regarding, rather than involving, Tamasheq society from the 1940s onwards revolve around a complex set of stereotyped images. The image the Malian leaders projected on the Kel Tamasheq was partly inherited from their colonial predecessors, and was complemented with already existing local stereotypes held by those people who were in contact with the Kel Tamasheq in the Niger Bend. To paint the image at its most colourful and with the broadest of strokes: The Kel Tamasheq were thought of as white, feudal, racist, pro-slavery, bellicose and lazy savage nomads, who were used as the vanguard of French neo-colonialist and neo-imperialist projects in the mineral-rich Sahara. As for the populations of the Niger Bend: Until the 1940s they lived in fear that

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3 Ibn Battuta, C. Defremey & B.R. Sanguinetti (1858) 1982.
4 Ibn Khaldun & B.M.G. de Slane (1851) 1978.
5 Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. 1976.

the departure of the French would almost certainly be followed by a renewed period of Kel Tamasheq political dominance. As for the Tamasheq perception of, and consequent dealings with, the US-RDA political elite, it was not much better and, in a warped way, complementary to the images held by the latter. To paint the picture at its crudest: Based on the historical construction of local racial identities, and the pre-colonial socio-political realities of the Niger Bend, the Tamasheq political elite saw the politicians and inhabitants of the South as an overwhelming mass of religiously ignorant and uncivilised blacks, with whom they had nothing in common and with whom they either had nothing to do or who they had previously dominated. Certainly, such people were unfit to command the Kel Tamasheq, especially since prior to the French conquest the Kel Tamasheq had commanded them. Furthermore, the Kel Tamasheq leaders feared that the nomad minority would be left out of politics and power if they were included in the same state as this vast majority of sedentary Southerners. Like the US-RDA image of the Kel Tamasheq, Tamasheq fears about the US-RDA's intentions held some truth.

In his book *Native Sons*, Greg Mann argues that contemporary Mali, and in extenso Francophone West Africa, is as much a postslavery society as it is a postcolonial society, a phenomenon he holds to be perhaps more visible at the desert edge than in Southern Mali.[6] In this chapter I will show that in the case of Northern Mali, the post in postcolonial is fully entwined with the post in post-slavery and that race indeed played, and indeed still plays, a major role in the perception of Tamasheq society and in the perceptions held in Tamasheq society. For the late colonial period it can be argued that it was in fact still partly a slavery society. Starting in 1946, the emancipation of these (former) slaves was taken up by both the PSP and the US-RDA as a political rallying point in their campaigns against French rule, as the persistence of servitude demonstrated the failure of the French *mission civilisatrice*. Having its hands forced by political campaigns, and in fear of social disturbance, the issue was subsequently taken up by the colonial administration. The '*bellah* question', as the issue was dubbed, developed its own dynamics through the agency of (former) slaves in Tamasheq society. The issues of slavery, race, racism, and perceived colonial favouritism toward Saharan societies were brought to a head by a notorious case of slave trade from West Africa to Saudi Arabia in the 1950s, in which a number of Tamasheq tribal chiefs were involved, or at least accused of being involved. These two issues and the consequences they had for the way the future Malian administration would look at and subsequently deal with Tamasheq society will be at the centre of this chapter.

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6 Mann, G. 2006: 7.

But issues of race and slavery were not the only stereotypical images existing about the Kel Tamasheq. Just as important are the images of the Kel Tamasheq as primarily a war prone, nomad, and anarchist population. The myth of the Tamasheq slave raider is only part of the larger myth of the '*guerriers des sables*', the 'lords of the desert'. The colonial idea that the Kel Tamasheq were prone to military resistance originated in the period of conquest when the Kel Tamasheq did in fact put up heavy armed resistance. It was given further substance by the revolts against colonial rule the Kel Tamasheq organised during World War I when Tamasheq fighters under Kaocen ag Kedda, in alliance with remnants of the Ottoman forces and warriors from the Sanusiyya Sufi brotherhood, put up resistance against French colonial troops until 1920. These events led the colonial authorities to believe Tamasheq society to be constantly on the verge of open revolt, a belief that grew again at the outbreak of World War II. This image of the Kel Tamasheq was transferred to the post-colonial authorities, which linked this idea to the Tamasheq political support for the political projects described in the previous chapter into a fear for open revolt as soon as independence from France would be reached.

As a last important stereotypical image of the Kel Tamasheq, their nomadic existence itself should be mentioned. It will be argued here that a lack of understanding of nomad social and political organisation from the side of sedentary peoples leads to the belief that nomads are by definition unruly anarchists averse to organisation and control.

Colonial images

The colonial period in AOF can be divided into three phases: A first phase of conquest and pacification, followed by a phase of functional administration and exploitation, and a last phase of slow decolonisation and development of the colonised. During the phases of colonial conquest and pacification, the Kel Tamasheq put up heavy military resistance with some major successes and heavy defeats at great cost for both the Kel Tamasheq and the French. This led to the stereotype of noble and fierce warriors discussed below. The memories of their defeats and troubles in pacifying the Sahara were at the basis of French policy towards the Kel Tamasheq until well in the 1940s, which consisted solely of keeping *la paix française* at all costs. During the phase of functional administration and exploitation the Kel Tamasheq showed great deference and reticence towards the colonial system. Their attitude was considered as 'reserved' at its mildest or 'deceitful' and 'medieval' at its worst. On the other hand, there existed a great French interest in Tamasheq society during and after this period. Certain cultural peculiarities, real or imagined, such as the matrilineal transfer of power; a certain amount of liberty in gender relations des-

cribed as a 'courting culture'; men veiling their faces for women and not the other way around in contrast to other Muslim societies; and the hierarchical structure of society, often (wrongly) compared to the European feudal system, with a heavily racialist dimension to top it up: 'White' nobles ruling over 'black' slaves. It all helped to transform the Kel Tamasheq from real people into the quasi-mythical 'lords of the desert' in the best of Orientalist traditions as described by Edward Said.[7]

The myth of the 'lords of the desert', defiant and proud of their culture and traditions, had a tremendous impact on colonial policy towards the Kel Tamasheq during the third phase of colonial rule, that of 'development' during the 1940s and 1950s. The colonial administration saw no problem in applying development policies in the heartlands of Soudan Français. But its policy was 'protective', in Donald Horowitz' meaning of the term, towards the culture and traditions of Tamasheq society.[8] In his analysis of the general colonial attitude towards ethnicity and ethnic groups, Horowitz describes a distinction being made by most colonial authorities between 'modern' and 'backward' ethnic groups, the first embracing colonial modernity, the second being reticent towards it. The 'modern' groups are then perceived as 'degenerated', astray from their traditions, while the 'backward' groups are seen as proud bearers of original culture. In this particular logic, 'backward' groups are then seen as in need of protection from modernity to preserve their way of life. This model of reasoning is perfectly applicable to the case at hand.

Local French administrators certainly developed this protective attitude toward the Kel Tamasheq in the 1950s. Service in the Sahara attracted a certain kind of men. Former *Commandant de Cercle* Jean Clauzel has nicely evaluated their attitude toward the Kel Tamasheq as 'a double state of mind with partly contradictory orientations – a preoccupation with surveillance, attraction and sympathy'.[9] In some cases this attraction and sympathy resulted in civil or military officers 'going native'. In general it led to a resistance to any change that would destroy their subjects' 'traditional way of life'. It also meant the adoption of what the French thought to be the Tamasheq perception of their neighbours. This perception can be described as racist. According to this vision the Arabo-Berber 'white' Kel Tamasheq, living their harsh nomadic life in the Sahara, were naturally of a higher order than the 'black' inhabitants of Soudan Français, and saw themselves as their natural lords and masters. This supposedly indigenous view of social and racial relations can be sensed in colonial

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7 Saïd, E. 1978.
8 Horowitz, D. 1985.
9 Clauzel, J. 1992: 99-116.

reports and was then internalised by both the Kel Tamasheq and the Malian administration.

Race

The area that we now commonly refer to as the Sahel (Arabic for coast), has been known from the earliest Arabic sources to the end of the colonial era as *Bilâd as-Sudan*: Arabic for 'the land of the blacks'. This is the clearest and most obvious indication that race has always played an important role in the construction of social identities and realities in this part of Africa. It is only recently, through analysis of the discourse of justification in the genocidal conflict in Darfur, that issues of racial identity construction in the Sahel have been reaccepted in Western academia, albeit reluctantly.[10] But the problem is not new. Chad has been ravaged for decades by a civil war between the Arab and Tubu FROLINAT and the peoples from the South. In Mauritania, 'white' Bidân drove 'black' riverain Mauritanians across the Senegal River, while neighbouring Senegal did the same with Bidân on its territory in 1989, and again in 2000.[11] In Sudan itself, in the 1980s and 1990s, 'white' Arab tribes such as the Baggara and Rizeiqat, armed by, and under protection of, the state, raided the Bahr-el-Ghazal and Equatorial provinces for 'black' Nuer and Dinka slaves as part of a state policy to submit the Christian or Animist 'black' South to the 'Muslim Arab' North. Among African scholars, notably from Sudan, the importance of this issue and its connection to histories of slavery and slave trade has been recognized since at least the 1990s.[12] Jok Madut Jok rightly suggests that in Sudan the 'boundaries between "races" and ethnic groups are not so clear cut, at least to the outsider'.[13] Thus, racialist perceptions influencing political and social relations between local populations are not unique to Northern Mali. They can be found in the whole Sahel zone from Mauritania to Sudan. Even the Swahili coast had its racial problems in the late colonial and early independence period.[14] It will be argued here that the Sahel is not only a postslavery and postcolonial society, but also a society where racial discourse is at least always latently present.

Let it be perfectly clear from the start that I do not use race as a category of analysis. Let me state it as plainly as possible that I here present race and racism as discursive categories, and as distinctions used by some of the players in this

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[10] Sharkey, H. 2008.
[11] Lecocq, B. 2009.
[12] See for example Idris, A. 2001; Madut Jok, J. 2001; Nyombe, B. 1994; Sikainga, A. 1996; and Sikainga, A. 1999.
[13] Madut Jok, J. 2001: 88.
[14] Glassman, J. 2000.

history to explain and justify their actions. From its beginnings in the late 1940s, the tension between the Kel Tamasheq and 'Mali' has been expressed through local and/or imported ideas on race. Both the Kel Tamasheq and the Malian political elite, as well as more common citizens used, and still use, concepts of race in their construction of 'the other'.

In his influential book *Desert Frontier*, James Webb argues that the Western usage of the terms 'white' and 'black' as racial markers 'seem to be a distant and refracted borrowing from the Arabo-African past'.[15] Webb rightly warns us of the dangers that lie in extrapolating European and American histories and historical constructs of race to the Sahel, to which could be added the danger of conflating Southern African histories of race and race construction. But Webb also hints at the possible common histories in the construction of racial identities in the European and Arab-African world. This idea is endorsed and further developed by Amir Idris in his writings on racial discourses and slavery in the Sudan.[16] The question of conflagration of these racial discourses is especially important in the postcolonial Sahara and Sahel. In other words: Can a term such as 'race' be used to describe the social realities and discourses of the present-day Sahel, and if so, how can it be historically analysed? This question has so far been most elaborately dealt with for Northern Mali by Bruce Hall in his PhD *Mapping the River in Black and White: Trajectories of Race in the Niger Bend, Northern Mali*.[17] Hall retraces the history of Arabic racial discourse in the Sahara and Sahel since the 17th century, and their final intermixture with European racial discourses in the colonial period. With Webb, Hall argues that ecological changes in the region since the 16th century worked in favour of nomad pastoral groups to the disadvantage of sedentary communities, leading to the political and military dominance of the former over the latter. This dominance was partly legitimated in a racialist discourse on cultural and religious differences borrowed in part from the thinking of Ibn Khaldûn on the origins of phenotypical difference. Ibn Khaldûn refuted the 'Ham thesis', linking the origins of race to the story of Noah's curse of his son Ham, but his thinking was racial in that he linked phenotypical difference to cultural, religious and mental inferiority, positioning the inhabitants of the most extreme zones, the Africans and the Slav populations of Europe close to animals. He explained this inferiority through the classic Greek theory of seven climatic zones, and the detrimental effects of living in the most northern and southern climates. Of course, this theory presented a major hermeneutical flaw in failing to explain the rise of Islam in such an intemperate climate as the Arabian Peninsula, which is refuted

[15] Webb, J. 1994: xxvi.
[16] Idris, A. 2001.
[17] Hall, B. 2005.

by insisting on the moderate influence of the sea winds, which temper the Arabian climate. But furthermore Ibn Khaldûn believed that the deficiencies caused by life in the harsh climatic zones could be mitigated by adherence to Islam.[18] This concept was, as Bruce Hall demonstrates, reworked in the Saharan context to become linked to descent from Arabic Muslim lineages.

First, ideas about 'white' Arab Islamic culture that originated in the Islamic Middle East and North Africa were made part of Southern Saharan cultural identity by a reconfiguration of local genealogies connecting local Arabic- and Berber-speaking groups with important Arab Islamic historical figures in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Second, local Arabo-Berber intellectuals rewrote the history of relations between their ancestors and 'black' Africans in a way that made them the bearers of Islamic orthodoxy and the holders of religious authority in the Sahelian region.[19]

The political dominance of these Arabo-Berber groups, partly originating in ecological advantages, was thus legitimated by a claim on Islamic cultural and religious heritage, handed down in particular lineages of Arabo-Berber origins. Thus, religion, behaviour and descent were primal traits of 'race'. Bruce Hall summons this reasoning up as: 'To be "Black" is to be a son of Ham; to be "White" is to be a bearer of "true" Islam'.[20] At present, the link between lineage – *temet* in Tamasheq – and a racialised Muslim identity is still made in Northern Mali, where the Ifoghas claim to be bearers of true Islam through descent from the prophet, while local *imghad* groups counter this claim by stressing an identity as 'true Berbers', against 'Arab invaders'.[21] This conception of race as defined through, first, belonging to a lineage; and second, the status quality of this lineage, is strikingly parallel to developments in Europe since the 15th century as described by Pierre Boulle. According to Boulle, the term race became used first by the Italian and French nobility to differentiate between older families and the newly ennobled. The difference was perceived to be one of moral character and (older) lineage.[22] How far these Arabo-African and European discourses are connected is a difficult but most interesting question. It is also strikingly similar to the way an 'Arab national' identity is construed in

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[18] Ibn Khaldun 2005 2nd, 1967: 58-62. The story of the curse of Ham is known in the Muslim world. It is even very likely that it was through Arabic texts that the link between this qur'anic and biblical story, and the origin of races came into European discourse. The link between "curse" and "black" is explicit in Arabic as both are derived from the same Arabic root: SWD.

[19] Hall, B. 2005: 30.

[20] Ibid.: 57.

[21] Klute, G. 2004.

[22] Boulle, P. 2002.

present-day Sudan.[23] The general claim that slaves do not have lineage, and are therefore inferior, is still of importance in most West African societies. It is not surprising that the Malian association in promotion of the social emancipation of former Tamasheq slaves founded in 2006 is called Temedt, 'lineage' or 'heritage'.

A second historical strand of racial discourse, linked to the previous one, is based in local and North African histories of slavery. Chouki El Hamel has developed the connection between Islam, race and slavery in North Africa.[24] Describing the creation of the so called Jaish 'abîd al-Bukharî, an army of partly expropriated slaves created by Moulay Isma'îl in 1705, El Hamel argues that all black inhabitants of Morocco were included in this army, regardless of their juridical status, while slaves of other origins were not included. Skin colour was the main, if not only, criterion for inclusion as the equation between African origins and servile status had already been firmly rooted in early 18th century Moroccan society. This equation stems from the interpretation of Islamic law regarding slavery and a local historical context.

> Only 'infidels' were legally allowed to be enslaved. Therefore, the best place to obtain slaves was across the closest borders of the infidels, in the Sudan. This borderline, with the contrast in physical type, contributed to the connection of skin colour with slavery. So, the ancient rivalry between nomadic Berbers and sedentary Blacks that led towards cultural and racial prejudice took an Islamic form after the conversion of the Berbers to Islam since the seventh century.[25]

This argument is developed by many scholars dealing with slavery in North Africa and the Sahara and Sahel, but El Hamel argues further that the connection between 'black' and slave status can be traced through the etymology of the term *haratin*: The present-day inhabitants of Oasis towns of servile origins. Contrary to the consensus that this word comes either from the Arabic hurr thânî (the second [generation is] free, i.e. manumitted) or the Berber *haratha* (gardening, from the Latin *hortus*), El Hamel argues that *haratin* is derived from the Berber root HRD or SHRD, denoting a dark colour – black or red – connected to skin colour and descent.[26] The word *eshardan* indeed means mulatto in Tamasheq, while *ehardan* indeed means a reddish or black dark colour.[27]

This brings us to the complex link between colour and race in Saharan racial discourse. With hard-to-measure historical depth, the word for black, *koual* in Tamasheq, is in use as a term to denote people of a dark complexion and low

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[23] Sharkey, H. 2008.
[24] El Hamel, C. 2002.
[25] Ibid.: 44.
[26] Ibid.: 38.
[27] ag Alojaly, G. 1980: 185.

social status, (former) slaves and casted craftsmen. This is parallel to the use of the term *sudân* in Arabic. But contrary to the Arabic use of the term *bidân*, in Tamasheq the term 'white' (*imoulan*) is not used in racial discourse. Instead, Tamasheq makes use of the terms *shaggaran* – red – and *sattefen* – bluish black – to denote people of noble status and a particular phenotype. According to Brhane, a similar colour label is used in present-day Mauritania, where the term *Khadriyîn* (Arabic *khadr*, green) is used to denote a group of *haratin* who have been manumitted in ancient times and who have since acquired slaves themselves.[28] Hence a similar colour to the Tamasheq *sattefen* – bluish black – is here used to denote a social group in between free and unfree. It can be concluded that local terms to describe racial and/or social status cannot easily be translated into Western racial concepts of skin colour. Yet, during the colonial period this is exactly what happened. What follows is a complicated language game, but it is of importance to understand as it explains the mixture of racial concepts that at present are at play in Northern Mali.

To the colonial administration, Tamasheq society combined two races in one social order: '*Blanc*' and '*noir*'. Through their own racial perceptions based on phenotype and skin colour, European explorers and French conquerors saw those inhabitants of the Sahara, who would locally most likely be denoted as *shaggaran*, red, as *blanc*, while failing to 'see' the locally constructed racial difference between *sattefen* – bluish black – and *koual* – black. Thus, while the lower strata of society were perceived as *noir*, the upper strata of society that would locally be seen as *sattefen* were simply seen as 'racially impure'. This idea of racial impurity of the upper strata of society can already be found in the oldest ethnographic descriptions of the Kel Tamasheq, such as those of Heinrich Barth and Henry Duveryier, and they persisted throughout the colonial period. In 1951, the French Colonial Administrator Lieutenant Barthé noted about the Tamasheq nobility of the Niger Bend, which would most likely be qualified as *sattefen*, that 'many are black and generally do not have the noble appearance of the inhabitants of the [Algerian] Hoggar'.[29] Through his own racial bias, and despite a hundred years of ethnography, the French commander still translated *shaggaran* as *blanc* and only *blanc* as *noble*. The French racial discourse had had a profound impact on local perceptions and constructions of race in Soudan Français. Bruce Hall argues that in pre-colonial days, not only Arabo-Berber families had constructed a racial identity based on Islam and lineage. Songhay and Fulani elites in the Niger Bend also considered themselves as different from 'blacks', albeit their claim was less thoroughly developed. But the French refused to acknowledge this self-perception as 'not black', since their perception

[28] Brhane, M. 2000.
[29] Barthé, L. 1951, CHEAM 1911.

of race was purely based on phenotype, and not on lineage or culture.[30] To recapitulate: In Tamasheq discourse *shaggaran* is the colour of the free (*ellellu*) but not of the noble (*imushagh*), who are seen as *sattefen*. But contrary to this local perception the French perceived *blanc*/*shaggaran* to be the colour of nobility. Hence, especially after the virtual extinction of the *imushagh* after the Tamasheq uprisings during the First World War, French racial perceptions gained ground and led to a gradual reappraisal of skin colours within Tamasheq society itself. *Blanc*/*shaggaran* won in importance and *noir*/*koual* became more and more stigmatised as the colour of slaves, with *sattefen* becoming in disuse.

Under the influence of French as the (former) colonial language, Tamasheq racial discourse has gradually incorporated European racial discourse and terminology even further. When speaking French, a Tamasheq will nowadays translate *koual* as *noir*, while both *shaggaran* and *sattefen* are translated as *blanc*. But when speaking Tamasheq, the local term *shaggaran* would still be used, while the word *imoulan* – white – would not be. Yet, although hard evidence is lacking, the French colonial equation of *blanc* with noble, together with the virtual elimination of the *sattefen* coloured nobility after their uprisings in the 1910s, probably helped the upward social mobility of some *shaggaran*/-*blanc* coloured groups. At present, some groups formerly described as *imghad* in colonial ethnography now stress that the term *ellellu*, which originally meant 'free' simply means 'noble'. By collapsing the terms *sattefen*, the colour of nobility, and *shaggaren*, the colour of the free into *blanc* when speaking French, and by changing the meaning of the word *ellellu* from 'free' into 'noble', these lower status groups effectively climb the ladder of society through the restructuring of race in society itself.[31]

On the basis of their perception of race in the Sahara, colonial historiography and ethnography presented the Kel Tamasheq elite as an 'alien invader'. They have been portrayed, among other things, as the descendants of the Vandals, lost crusaders or even of a 'Caucasian-populated sunken Atlantis'.[32] These invaders had then subdued an indigenous African population, an image that would resurface at various times after independence. In the colonial perception, in a way, Tamasheq society in its 'historical' and 'white' origins mirrored colonial images of the colonial project: 'Whites' ruling 'blacks'. This may have been at

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30 Hall, B. 2005: 67.

31 Based on discussions with members of the *fraction* Ishidenharen Kel Ashu, *Cercle* Ménaka, who claim *ellellu* (which they are) to mean noble, but who were described by Nicolaisen as *imghad* in the 1960s. Nicolaissen, J. & I. Nicolaissen 1997. Similar claims are made by the Ifoghas and Idnan in the *Région* Kidal. Although these groups were not noble in pre-colonial times, but were dominated by the Ouillimiden *imushagh,* their pre-colonial status is less clear.

32 Henry, J-R. 1996.

the root of the positive appreciation the French had of Tamasheq society. This stereotype is strongly connected to the stereotype of the Kel Tamasheq as slave holders described below. Both the French and the new African elite held this stereotype and appreciated it in different ways. The French obsession with racial difference linked to social inequality at the beginning of the colonial period can be easily explained in the way outlined above. However, the persistence of this obsession in the late colonial period is less easy to explain. It is however very likely to have still been based on ideas of 'white superiority', and linked to an idea of 'white' physical inaptitude to labour in Africa. Exemplary is the Governor General's circular of 1949 on the '*bellah* question', which included the following observation:

> It is a striking observation that populations living in servile conditions are to be found in the Saharan and Sahelian zones of West Africa, where all attempts at liberation are blocked by particular difficulties: The existence of a nomad population of the white race which, for historical and physical reasons, (...) can hardly be forced to perform manual labour.[33]

Whatever its reasons, the image of the 'white' Kel Tamasheq and Bidân dominating 'black' servants persevered. The social and economic emancipation of the former Tamasheq slaves was postponed partly for this reason, and dealt with only at the instigation of Soudanese politicians in 1946. The stereotype of Tamasheq society as racially divided between 'white' lords and 'black' slaves had by then been absorbed by the Malian political elite, often colonial civil servants themselves. The Soudanese political elite rightly regarded certain exceptions on colonial practice made for Tamasheq society as being based on a racist preference for the 'white' nomads over other, 'black', colonial subjects. For example, the 'white' Kel Tamasheq and Bidân had always been exempted from conscription in the colonial army. That armed service gave some advantages to the conscripts after their service – exemption from forced labour; a small pension; and some status at a local level – was forgotten. However, the Tamasheq slaves, the *iklan* or *bellah*, were enlisted in the colonial armies, which indicated to the Soudanese political elite that the exemption of the Kel Tamasheq from conscription was based on racial rather than ethnic grounds.[34] A second privilege was the exemption of the nomads from forced labour. Indeed, forced labour took a heavy toll in Southern Soudanese societies, and it must have soured the conscripted labourers in the Niger Bend to see their nomadic neighbours being exempted. Again, *bellah* were not exempted from forced labour. These exemptions led many Soudanese to believe the Kel Tamasheq

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[33] Haut Conseiller, Directorat Général Interieur no. 730 INT/ AP2 aux Gouverneurs Mauritanie, Soudan, Niger, 17/08/1949. ACK.

[34] Mariko, K. 1993: 191-201.

were the French colonial 'darlings'. In terms more appropriate to the US-RDA; they were the 'vanguard of French neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism'.

To the postcolonial Malian Government, the Kel Tamasheq were just as 'white' as they had been to the colonial administration. However, where the latter appreciated their 'whiteness' positively, the Malian Government saw it as a sign of 'otherness' and as a threat. In postcolonial Mali discourse on race was further complicated by a collapsing or superimposing of the ideas of 'nomad' and 'sedentary' as identity markers on the previously described discursive registers of race. This becomes evident in the indiscriminate use of the terms 'nomads' and 'whites' by the Government and by the population when talking about the Kel Tamasheq. Tamasheq and Arab 'whiteness' is now partly defined by their nomadic way of life. 'Nomad' and 'white' are interchangeable in forming one identity as 'other'. In contrast, the terms 'farmers' and 'blacks' remain used separately by both those who are indicated by these terms, i.e. Malian sedentary societies, and by the Kel Tamasheq themselves. On the other hand, 'black' and 'slave' seem interchangeable derogatory terms used by the Kel Tamasheq from the upper strata of society to denote all who are not 'their kind of people'. In other words, the lower caste members of Tamasheq society itself, but also members of other societies in Mali. In the 1950s and in the first years after independence, Malian political leaders made it quite clear that they perceived the Kel Tamasheq, their 'whiteness' and their way of life as a problem. This was because in the mind of the ruling US-RDA elite, the Kel Tamasheq had been colonial favourites because of their 'whiteness', which had given them a misplaced superiority complex.

Let us now look at the impact of racial discourse on the perception the Kel Tamasheq, especially the Kel Adagh, had of the newly independent Malian Government. This discourse has been shaped mainly in the early post-colonial period. By contrasting the independent Malian regime to the colonial regime I argue that contrary to most people in West Africa, or Africa in general, or even contrary to the experience of other Tamasheq tribes and federations, the Kel Adagh appreciation of the colonial period is rather positive. Understanding this inverse of the general logic and history of contemporary Africa is crucial in understanding the events under discussion. The racist dimension is in a way only secondary in importance to this main inversion of historical perception. The following is still hard to believe for those who are brought up with an African historiography in the service of the construction of national identities, a historiography prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, and one that still affects much present-day scholarship. This historiography depicts colonial times as the epitome of an African nightmare. At present, the Kel Adagh see colonial times as better days, as a golden age.

The Kel Adagh today maintain that their ancestors in pre-colonial times were reputed for their piety and knowledge of Islam, but not for their warrior prowess. Pre-colonial times were bad times for the Kel Adagh. They are presented locally as days of domination by surrounding federations, when the Kel Adagh were raided and dominated by the Kel Hoggar and Ouillimiden Kel Ataram, sometimes even by raiding parties from the Aïr Mountains. French rule ended these raids and the dominance of the Ouillimiden and Kel Hoggar. In the 1900s and 1910s, the French policy to pacify the Ouillimiden confederation, then the most powerful Tamasheq political entity in present-day Northern Mali, entailed the dismembering of the confederation by allocating political privileges to former tributary groups. Thus, in a series of treaties signed between the French, the Ouillimiden, and their tributaries, the Kel Adagh gained the status of an independent federation under the leadership of their new *amenokal*; Attaher ag Illi of the Ifoghas.[35] Not only that, under colonial rule the Kel Adagh gained renown and status as warriors within the Sahara at large at the side of the French.[36] The Tamasheq rebellions against the French in the 1910s saw the Kel Adagh combating the rebellious Ouillimiden as French allies. During the 1920s, the Adagh was under constant attack from the inhabitants of the Western Sahara and the Moroccan Drâa area, which had not yet surrendered to the French. These continuous attacks are now remembered as 'the war with the Rgaybat'. The French *Commandant* Charles Lecocq and a small army headed by the freshly appointed *amenokal* of the Adagh managed to end the raids in a decisive battle at Boceyat in 1928.[37] The story of Boceyat allows the Kel Adagh to present themselves as full-fledged warriors from then on. That this was done with French help is not forgotten. After the end of the Rgaybat war, peace and prosperity reigned in the Adagh. This prosperity culminated in the late 1940s and 1950s. The rainy seasons were good, and there were abundant pastures. Trade flourished as raiding had ceased almost totally. In 1947 the first school was created in the Adagh. French education met with heavy resistance in colonial times. It was then widely believed the French school would turn children away from Islam. It is now widely believed that *teghere* – education – is the only hope of ensuring Tamasheq survival as a people. This calls for a historical reappraisal of French efforts in education within Tamasheq society and historical discourse, but this reinterpretation has by now been largely completed. More importantly perhaps, communication and relations between the French administration and the Kel Adagh improved. Jean Clauzel, the *Commandant*

[35] For a detailed discussion of this policy and its effects on local Tamasheq politics, see Lecocq, B. 2003.
[36] See Boilley, P. 1999.
[37] Ibid.: 101-151.

serving the longest period in these two decades, spoke Tamasheq and it is clear from his own reminiscences that he deeply loved the Adagh and its inhabitants.[38] His love is returned with at least sincere affection. Many older people I interviewed in the late 1990s presumed I knew Clauzel and inquired about his wellbeing. Clauzel's name brought them memories of better days. In short, French presence in the Adagh in colonial times is at present not explained as conquest or occupation. The French are seen as having been allies. And then these allies left. In June 1960 some Kel Adagh looking for pasture in Algeria asked a French officer whom they met:

> (…) 'why have we been said to vote "yes" for de Gaulle and to remain French, and now you have left and have given the "tobol" (command) to the blacks' and 'why did France leave while neither she nor we desired this'?[39]

The Kel Adagh held a grudge against the French in 1960, and the French transfer of power to the US-RDA is still seen as treason from their side. But as some see it now, the French were not the only ones to betray the Kel Tamasheq in 1960. Some of my interlocutors felt the Malian Government had tricked them into accepting inclusion in the Malian state by making false promises. This is how former rebel leader Amegha ag Sherif told the story:

> At the last moment, France wanted all the chiefs to sign a petition to de Gaulle that they did not want their independence within the African states such as Mali and Niger. Therefore, it was necessary for all the chiefs to sign, all the chiefs of the Tuareg tribes and of the big confederations. They summoned the chiefs to Gao to inform them of this petition. All the chiefs came. They were told: "Look here: In a month we will go. If you do not want to stay in an independent Mali, you only have to sign this letter here to say that you want to stay with the French until you can have your own independence". So. They replied that this was a serious matter, and that they had to think about it. They had to confer with each other to see what kind of matter this was. So. It was in the morning at ten o'clock. They told them: "OK. Think it over and then come back to me around two o'clock this afternoon." So. They returned to the city of Gao where the black delegates who were there, such as Alassane, Alhuseyni Maïga and Anyi Doungouy and others were waiting for them. The people there were informing them and they were curious to know why the French had received only them. They repeated to them what the French had said. [The Kel Tamasheq chiefs] told [the black delegates that the French] had proposed [to the Kel Tamasheq chiefs] to sign a petition if they did not want to be independent with the blacks. So the others looked at each other and replied: "The French try to set you against us. As for us, we only seek our independence and not to command you or to command anyone. No one who will go to Ménaka to command the Ouillimiden in Ménaka. There will be no one going to Badi the Kounta to command in his place. This is unthinkable; we cannot consider this. There is no one who can go to Attaher in Kidal to command in his place. All we want is to separate Islam

[38] For Clauzel's memories of his service in the Sahara see Clauzel, J. 1998.
[39] Regnier, J. 1960, CHEAM 3457: 9.

> from the Catholics. We want them to go, and from then on everyone will command in their own right. There will only be exchanges between us. That is all we want. It is not to command in your place. Each will command in his own place. And the French want to set you up against this to slow it all down?" The Tuareg chiefs replied: "We and the French, we have agreed on nothing definite so far. If you do not want to command us, there is no problem". "We are not going to command you, each one commands in his own right. There will only be exchanges between us as much as there are now." So. They [Tamasheq chiefs] said: "We will go back to tell them this". [Amegha directly makes the others reply:] "Yes, yes, they have only one month left before they leave. No one will come to see you and they are forced to leave since they have signed to do so." So they did this. Everyone returned home after having bought some bags of millet. They returned home. One month later independence arrived. Contrary to what was said to the chiefs, we saw the black soldiers coming to command the *goum* platoons and the *ettebel*. We were occupied by civil servants while the *goumiers* were only loyal to France. And indeed, the blacks have changed things.[40]

Two main elements stand out in this story. First, the Kel Tamasheq chiefs were in contact with the Sudanese political elite on the subject of independence. The latter assured the former that autonomy was guaranteed and that independence to them entailed a religious commitment. It was their intention to free the country from the rule of infidels. Second, and most important, these politicians did not keep their word. The last two elements came up in other conversations I had with Kel Adagh on independence and the nature of the Keita Government. Mohamed Lamine Fall explained to me why the Kel Adagh had decided to fight the Malian Government in 1963 as follows:

> Attaher had come to an agreement with the head *iklan* of the South to unite, to form the Government. But the Malians are badly educated. They accept anyone into the army; Christians, the non-religious, et cetera. They did not send people here who knew politics. The people Mali had sent were not of the sort agreed upon in Attaher's agreement. (...) The people who were sent to the bush by the administration were not the nobles of the South, but bad people whom they had promoted to officer ranks so they would agree to come to the North.[41]

The language used is telling. Mohamed Lamine first calls the new Malian Government the 'head *iklan*', the 'head slaves'. These had no 'education', were uncivilised, and were not Muslims. He then recognises that the Southern

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[40] Conversation with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994. It is not clear which petition Amegha is referring to. It could be the September 1958 referendum, the petitions by Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, or an entirely new one. Interestingly enough, Amegha has developed a kind of standard narrative about these events. Amegha gave a very similar account to Pierre Boilley, see Boilley, P. 1999: 299-300. Boilley links this account to Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick's petitions discussed in Chapter 1.

[41] Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/5/1999.

population of Mali had nobility, but these nobles were not sent to the North, as it had been stipulated in a supposed treaty of agreement between Attaher ag Illi and the nationalist leaders.

Both Amegha's and Mohamed Lamine's form of discourse fit with notions held in Tamasheq society on 'black peoples'. This notion consists first of all of the equation 'blacks are slaves'.[42] Second come concepts of the mentality and ways of thinking perceived to be proper to slaves. Considering the Tamasheq concept *tayite* – intelligence, or mind/competence regulating behaviour – Gunvor Berge has argued that the Kel Tamasheq see the status of 'free' or 'slave' as naturally determined, and not as cultural and social constructs.[43] Both free and slave have *tayite*, but of a different nature. A free or noble person knows shame and honour, which restrains his or her conduct. Slaves do not know shame or honour, and therefore their behaviour is unrestrained by nature. They cannot control their desires and are therefore liable to steal, lie and deceive. This belief in the 'natural' difference (inferiority) of the racialised other is not unique to Tamasheq society. It should be kept in mind that this idea was long held in Europe as well as in the Americas before the abolition of slavery, and even now these ideas are not fully discarded. The South African apartheid example is almost too commonplace to bring to mind. Closer to the events studied here, conflicts based on racial antagonism occurred throughout the Sahel.

Given the equation 'blacks are slaves', the Keita Government could only be expected to deceive the Kel Tamasheq chiefs into accepting independence, based on certain promises, which were then easily withdrawn. In Kel Adagh discourse, this act of deceit, explains the reasons for their revolt in 1963, as my interlocutors indicated.

Both Amegha ag Sherif's and Mohamed Lamine's explanation of the reasons for the revolt are also telling in the way the Kel Tamasheq see the making and breaking of independence: By agreement and treaty. The Kel Adagh had surrendered their independence (as far as they had had any) voluntarily to the French. And they expected the same in 1960: To accept the inevitable inclusion in Mali at least as equal partners and under some conditions, set out in a treaty. This idea is illustrated in the following account of a discussion between Bakary Diallo, the first governor of the Gao *Région* after independence, and Attaher ag Illi in June 1960:

> Attaher, who certainly knew that we would come, received us with a strong delegation at a considerable distance from his tent. A few minutes after our arrival a

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[42] I realise that this is a harsh statement. One could argue at length about the question of whether this equation is made as literally as I present it here. However, during my research, remarks and historical discourse underlining this equation kept piling up.

[43] Berge, G. 2000: 204-205.

> large group of Ifoghas surrounded us already and conversations were struck up on various subjects. (...) The Kel Effele notables expounded their ideas on the future organisation of the state which can be summarised as follows: 1) Primacy of education through Arabic over education through French 2) An equitable place within state organisms and the administration for those instructed in Arabic 3) The establishment in the Adagh of a kind of regional autonomy in which the representative of central power, even in the case of public order, would only act when requested by the local power.[44]

Bakary Diallo saw things in a different light. He replied simply that such ideas on the organisation of the state were opposite to those of the central government. Of course, in a state there could not be two armies and the maintenance of public order should be the sole function of the state. 'Going beyond this principle would open the way to anarchy and secession' as Diallo told Attaher. In the eyes of the state, no promises about autonomy were ever made. But the Kel Adagh, at least today, regard things differently. The broken promise to grant autonomy and to rule the country in accordance with Islam proved to the Kel Adagh that they were not dealing with nobles after all, as Mohamed Lamine explained. They were dealing with slaves, as they had suspected beforehand. This belief in the untrustworthiness of the 'black' Malian Government still shaped historical discourse in the Adagh in the aftermath of the second rebellion. Consider the following excerpt from an interview I had in Kidal. We were discussing the Kel Tamasheq attitude towards the French. My interlocutor suggested that the Kel Tamasheq have a complex towards the French originating in colonial history.

> Me: Do you also have a complex towards the Malians?
> M.: No, not in the least. I have nothing but contempt for them, but their attitude is understandable. The French have never been colonised by the Berbers and Arabs as the blacks have been. We have brought them civilisation. Tekrur was a Berber empire. So was Ghana. When the Mande tried to conquer Ghana, the Almoravids kicked them out. We brought them civilisation, but by force. Now they have taken their revenge, that's all. Unjust? Certainly. Vindictive? Certainly, but that is how humans are. I only despise them, those slaves.[45]

Thus, in the Sahara and Sahel exist a number of alternate overlapping discourses on race which all come to play a role in the historical social and political relations described in this book.

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[44] Commandant de Cercle de Gao, Rapport de la tournée effectué du 4 au 10 Juillet 1960 dans la Subdivision de Kidal. Rapports politiques et rapports des tournées dans le Cercle de Kidal 1928-1960. ANM – FR-1E-24.

[45] Interview with M., Kidal, January 1999.

The *bellah* question

One of the main prejudices held against the Kel Tamasheq by the Malian regime and population at large is that they were slavers, slave raiders and slaveholders.[46] Even today, in Mali and especially Niger, the issue of slavery in Tamasheq society is not resolved and continues to play a role in local politics and in the popular image of the Kel Tamasheq. In both countries exist organisations of former Tamasheq slaves furthering their economic, social and political interests, apart from the rest of Tamasheq society, and in some respects an independent cultural or ethnic identity. In Niger the Association Timidria, created in the early 1990s by former Tamasheq slaves, propagates that in Niger today slavery still exists on a large scale. With the support of Anti-Slavery International (The Former British and International Anti-Slavery Society), Timidria claims their rights through written reports, lawsuits and ritual liberation, to the embarrassment of the Nigerien Government.[47] In Mali, the Association Temedt, an organisation with goals and a constituency similar to that of Timidria, was created during a conference of 'black Tamasheq' as they called themselves, in Ménaka in August 2006.[48] The historicity of Ménaka as the place where the politics of *bellah* emancipation started exactly sixty years earlier would surely have not escaped the minds of the conference organisers. Although the impact of Temedt seems smaller than that of Timidria, both organisations form the current expression of the historical and actual importance of discourses and politics of race and slavery in, and especially about, Tamasheq society, and their profound impact on state-society relations and rebellion in Northern Mali.

The stereotyped image of the Tamasheq slaveholder certainly held some truth in the late colonial period, during which the new Soudanese elite formed its opinion of the Kel Tamasheq. Besides being a basis for prejudice, the emancipation of the former Tamasheq and Bidân slaves, the *bellah* and *haratin*, became one of the US-RDA's major campaign themes in the North during the 1950s. In addressing their emancipation, the US-RDA hoped to gain the votes of the former slaves and to profile itself as the champion of social equality and liberty. It also served to attack the main reason for prolonged French colonial dominancy, the *mission civilisatrice française*. This subject became known as 'the *bellah* question'.

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[46] The 'bellah question' is explored in greater depth in Lecocq, B. 2005.

[47] Tidjani Alou, M. 2000. See especially Galy, K.A. & M.L. Dandah 2003.

[48] Based on the Minutes of its founding conference, the bylaws of the Association Temedt and a Press release sent to me by the Association Temedt as Microsoft Office Word documents. Private Archives.

After formally abolishing slavery in its African colonial territories in 1905, the French denied its existence in Arab and Tuareg society, thus perpetuating its existence.[49] The French denied the persistence of slavery in certain areas of the empire by voiding indigenous terms related to slavery of their meaning, using them without any relevance to social practice. During the colonial conquest of Northern Mali, the French took up the Songhay term gaabibi, meaning 'black person', but which they believed to mean slave, to denote all sedentary populations of the region. Thus, they even reversed local terminology on race and slavery to denote all inhabitants they did not see as 'white'. Exceptions were made only for the white Tuareg and Bidân, and for the Songhay Arma, who claim descent from the Moroccan army conquering the Songhay Empire in the late sixteenth century.[50] By the 1930s, the term gaabibi had been replaced with proper ethnonyms. French administrators avoided the term *iklan*, Tamasheq for slaves, when possible, replacing it with such euphemisms as serviteurs or travailleurs coutumiers. The term *bellah*, originally a Songhay word for all Tuareg of lower social status or a derogatory term for all Tuareg, quickly gained administrative and political acceptance to denote Tamasheq slaves

The absence of emancipation policies toward slaves came to an end in 1946 with two main events: The election of the first *Conseil général*; and the abolition of forced labour with the Houphouët-Boigny law. Contrary to the Tamasheq of free status, Tamasheq of *iklan*, or slave, status had not been exempted from the much-hated forced labour. The abolition of forced labour in Tamasheq society was presented as an element of *bellah* emancipation by the colonial administration. In fact, the abolishment of forced labour was interpreted as if no forced labour of any kind, including internal to African societies, existed any longer. The terminology used to describe labour relations between (formally former) slaves and (formally former) masters was now even more strongly rephrased in such terms as *travailleur coutumier* ('traditional labourer'), and these labour relations were then presented as normal, which of course they were in local societies. But the issue was also picked up by the newly founded political parties and presented to the *bellah* in much the same way. More important were the newly installed electoral policies in AOF. As they were officially free people, (former) slaves had the right to be enfranchised and cast their vote for the new installed Conseil général. Both PSP and US-RDA campaigners first brought this to their attention in the Ménaka area. They told the *bellah* population that they could elect an African who would certainly advocate for their rights with the administration and their former masters, something they had already proven to be able to do by having forced labour abo-

[49] Klein, M. 1998.
[50] Hall, B. 2005: 224-232.

lished. Many slaves indeed managed to reach the ballot boxes in the elections to come. They interpreted their vote as an act of liberation, calling the voting bulletins 'freedom papers'.[51] The effect of these elections in the Ménaka area was that many slaves left their masters, taking part of their masters' herds with them. The end result was twofold. First the colonial administration finally took the issue of prolonged servitude of the former slaves seriously, and took measures to promote their social and economic emancipation. Second, the US-RDA took '*la question bellah*' as its battle horse in the North and did not dismount until the fall of their regime in 1968.

The persistence of slavery in Soudan Français gave the US-RDA an argument to put French presence into question. After all, continuing French governance over Africans was publicly based on the idea of the *mission civilicatrice française*. The abolition of slavery was part of that mission. The open failure to put this practice to an end undermined the colonial raison d'être. Sure enough, servile conditions persisted (and persist) in all Soudanese societies.[52] But continued servitude was (and is) literally most visible among the Bidân and the Kel Tamasheq. First, the difference in appearance between former slaves and former masters can be seen, if not in physiognomy, then in bodily and social habitus. Second, in the Sahara, the colonial administration had not developed the infrastructure or policies that had helped to emancipate the slaves in other parts of AOF. There were few *villages de liberté* – liberty villages – and less labour or army recruitment which had offered slaves the means to leave their masters elsewhere.[53] The few *villages de liberté* that did exist in the North were situated in the Niger Bend; further north they were entirely lacking.[54] Pastoral existence in general and a lack of herd ownership in particular made it difficult for former slaves to leave their masters while remaining in their region of origin. This is especially true in the extreme north where agriculture is virtually impossible. However, it was less valid in the Niger Bend where agriculture is possible and where many former slaves lived in villages and practised agriculture. Finally, colonial policy towards slavery in Tamasheq society was based on political interests. Collaborating groups, such as the Kel Hoggar and the Kel Adagh, had been allowed to keep their slaves and even to acquire some more, while resisting groups, such as the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram and Kel Denneg, saw their former slaves being diverted from their influence.[55]

Thus, the efforts of the US-RDA to abolish servitude, the most prominent of all social inequalities, became focused on Tamasheq and Bidân society. Another

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[51] Forgeot, A. 1955, CHEAM 2577. Also Klein, M. 1998.
[52] Mann, G. 2006.
[53] Winter, M. 1984.
[54] Bouche, D. 1968; Mariko, K. 1993.
[55] Klute, G. 1995.

reason the US-RDA concentrated its efforts in the North was that it hoped to gain the electoral support of the liberated slaves. After all, the *bellah* constituted the demographic majority of the nomadic population in the Niger Bend. The strategy was very successful. Many slaves reached the ballot box with a clear understanding of the purpose of voting. Voting US-RDA equalled a vote against the master, it meant filing a 'freedom paper'. On 17 June 1951:

> 712 *bellah* in Gangaber, 59 at In Tillit, 26 at Chunkaye, and 203 at Indeliman have voted against their master. The results at the ballot box of In Tillit are especially interesting: A particularly isolated post, people untouched by propaganda, and yet 59 freedom papers.[56]
>
> In the Niger Bend, the campaigns of the US-RDA had the most impact, given the number of slaves who could be emancipated. In 1955, at the advent of the 1956 elections for the Assemblée Territoriale, the US-RDA made the *bellah* question one of its main campaign themes in the *Cercle* of Gao.
>
> Even before the start of the electoral campaign, [the US-RDA] seems to orient its actions on two issues in the central *Subdivision*. (...) A strong interest in the nomadic tribes in general and in the *bellah* question in particular. The current policy of the administration in this matter is closely scrutinised.[57]

The reaction of the colonial government to the '*bellah* question' was the gradual development of a policy of social and economic emancipation. Most of this policy was based on the practical measures taken by the *Commandant de Cercle* in Ménaka to resolve the problems after the 1946 elections. These were the administrative fissure between former slaves and former masters by giving the slaves their own identity cards; the redistribution of cattle between former slaves and masters; and the creation of separate *bellah fraction*s.[58] These measures were copied by the Governeur Générale in Dakar and dispatched as a basis for the emancipation policy of all *bellah* in 1949.[59]

In the Kidal area, US-RDA activists and schoolteachers Amadou Bâ and Cheick Bathily tried to use the '*bellah* question' to promote the US-RDA cause in the late 1950s. Both Amadou Bâ and Cheick Bathily were teachers at the nomad school of the Adagh. As an active US-RDA member, Bâ quickly clashed with the French administrators and with the local population, which was re-

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[56] Schmitt, E. 1954, CHEAM 2449.

[57] Sahara, Soudan, Mauritanie, administration et maintien de l'ordre – les confins sahariens – rapports politiques 1955-1956. Rapport politique 1955, Cercle de Gao. ANSOM – FM 1affpol/2173/1.

[58] Forgeot, A. 1955, CHEAM 2577.

[59] Haut Conseiller, Directorat Général Intérieur no. 730 INT/ AP2 aux Gouverneurs Mauritanie, Soudan, Niger, 17/08/1949. ACK. Galy & Dandah quote a letter found in the National Archives of Niger, from the Ministry of Overseas Territories to the Haut Conseiller, dated 08/07/1949 instructing the H.C. to implement these emancipation policies. See also Galy, K.A. & M.L. Dandah 2003: 44.

luctant to send their children to school in the first place. The same held for Bathily, who was of slave origins himself.[60] The local administration finally managed to get Bâ and Bathily replaced. The US-RDA and Bâ did not give up their efforts to win Kidal for the US-RDA through the '*bellah* question', but

> [T]he small number of servants diminishes their propaganda opportunities. They try nevertheless. Mr Bâ Amadou, who is no longer in service in Kidal, nevertheless returns each year by airplane to Tessalit, from where he travels on camel to the centres of Aguelhoc, Kidal, Ménaka and perhaps Ansongo. He also visits the camps where he tries to bring up the "servant question".[61]
>
> In the Niger Bend, the campaigns of the US-RDA had more impact, since the number of slaves who could be emancipated lay much higher. In 1955, at the advent of the 1956 elections for the Assemblée Territoriale, the US-RDA made the *bellah* question one of its main campaign themes in the *Cercle* of Gao.
>
> Even before the start of the electoral campaign [the US-RDA] seems to orient its actions on two issues in the central *Subdivision*: (...) A strong interest in the nomadic tribes in general and in the *bellah* question in particular. The current policy of the administration in this matter is closely scrutinised.[62]

An illustrative example of the '*bellah* question' was the 'Norben affair' in 1955 in the *Cercle* of Gourma Rharous.[63] The Norben are a community of *iklan* who practiced agriculture and tended the herds of their masters, the Kel Gheris, but did not live in their masters' camps. Under the influence of the US-RDA campaign, the Norben claimed that the herds under their custody actually belonged to them and consequently appropriated them. The Kel Gheris did not accept this behaviour and raided the Norben to reclaim their animals. It came to a trial in the traditional court of Gourma Rharous, which ruled in favour of the Kel Gheris. However, the *Commandant de Cercle* overruled its judgement. He decided that the Norben would no longer be part of their former masters' *fraction*, but would form an independent Norben *fraction* from then on. Furthermore, he awarded them more than half of the herds they had taken from the Kel Gheris. The success of these liberation policies could be debated. The allocation of land to *bellah fraction*s, as well as the general increase of land under culti-

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60 Inspection des Affaires Administratives du Cercle de Kidal, 1937-1957. ANM – FR 2D-20/1954. According to Eghlese ag Foni, former pupil of Bathily, he was a Marka. With regards to his first teacher, Eghlese ag Foni remarked that he 'était méchant, naturellement méchant, il n'aimait pas les Touaregs, il était atroce'. ag Foni, E. 1991: 117.

61 Inspection des Affaires Administratives du Cercle de Kidal, 1937-1957. ANM – FR 2D-20/1957.

62 Sahara, Soudan, Mauritanie, administration et maintien de l'ordre – les confins sahariens – rapports politiques 1955-1956. Rapport politique 1955, Cercle de Gao. ANSOM – FM 1affpol/2173/1.

63 Based on Winter, M. 1984.

vation in this period in the Niger Bend created new conflicts between the pastoralists and their former sedentary dependants over access to pasture and water around the temporary wallows and the river bank.[64] Neither did the former masters accept the loss of control over their former slaves. Nevertheless, the scant evidence seems to indicate that the emancipation policies were successful. With regards to the Norben, Winter has provided evidence from one camp. In 1951, the camp at In Ahara consisted of four *imghad* tents and ten *bellah* tents. By 1960, five of these *bellah* families had left (a sixth had died out). Of the fifty-six descendants of the four tents remaining in 1960, only eight still inhabited the camp, while seventeen lived in a separate *bellah* camp, and another thirty-one lived in Gao or elsewhere in West Africa.

In the early 1960s, the Keita Government still believed slavery had not yet been eradicated in Mali despite the US-RDA's campaigns over the '*bellah* question' in the 1950s. One of the major objectives of the new Government in the North was to end this state of affairs. But slavery did not so much exist legally, as it did psychologically and socially. Most former slaves who had had the opportunity to leave their former masters had by then largely done so. This can be said to a large extent for the more southern Tamasheq groups in the Niger Bend, where former slaves had easier access to new ways of existence, such as farming or leaving the area for the cities. Also, in these areas, the '*bellah* question' had been a major issue for both the colonial administration and the US-RDA.[65] However, the same cannot be said for the Adagh, where former slaves had no opportunities to employ themselves in farming, and where infrastructural conditions did not make migration easier.

Much still needed to be done therefore to emancipate the former slaves in the Adagh. Before the 1963 rebellion, the new regime, wary of further straining their already fragile relation with the Kel Adagh, did nothing to alter the social relations between former masters and slaves. Writing to *Commandant de Cercle* of Kidal Mohamed Najim in 1962, the Governor of Gao analysed the situation with regards to slavery in the Adagh as follows.

> It is beyond doubt that the people, the party, and the Government of Mali have abolished slavery once and for all. Nevertheless, as the President of our Government has put it so well, there can be no standard solution in this vast country of Mali. Therefore, it would be prudent, given the actual context, a context you know all too well, not to proceed immediately with the restitution of [slave] children who stayed with the family of old ATTAHER. A political education is needed, since it is necessary that, at the end of the day, the population itself understands the necessity of liberating the *bellah*. It is rather a national problem and, in waiting for a solution, we will be compliant and full of tact, as I have said above. In any case – our desire

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64 Marty, A. 1993.
65 Klein, M. 1998.

> to emancipate the *bellah* should not form an occasion for them to manifest their discontent beyond reason.[66]

This attitude of compliance and tact changed after the 1964 rebellion was crushed. But the actual measures the administration could take to promote slave emancipation were limited. One policy was the support of former slaves in their horticultural efforts, mainly through the agricultural brigades discussed in the next chapter, or through appointing allotments in Kidal to the few slaves who settled in the town. A second measure was the creation of *bellah fraction*s, a continuation of the policy the colonial administration had already pursued. But even this process was slow. The evidence on the creation of special *bellah fraction*s is scarce, but this does not mean they were not created. The first mention of the creation of a *bellah fraction* by the Malian Government in the Kidal area dates from 1966. The *Commandant de Cercle* invested the procedure with some ceremony by delivering a speech in which he stated that he

> (...) would have liked to see all of the Adrar assisting at this ceremony to see you fly away as free birds in the sky. You owe this present day that you live to the Party alone, and nothing but the Party, since it is thanks to its institutions that you live this memorable day.[67]

From the available data, this first creation of a *bellah fraction* seems not to have been followed by many others. Only one other mentioning of a *bellah fraction*; the *fraction* Kel Bella Kel Tadjmai has been found.[68] Another, more indirect measure to emancipate the slaves was formal education. In independent Mali, all children should attend school. Since the Kel Adagh of free descent were still reluctant to send their children to school, the administration ended up educating more slave children than free ones. This time, this was not a conscientious policy, as it had been in colonial times for both the Kel Tamasheq to send the children of their slaves to school, and for the administration to accept these children. In this way, relatively more former slaves than free Kel Tamasheq ended up in the administration, since they had been educated.

The former slaves were not the only ones to profit from ideas on class struggle in a feudal society. Since the number of former slaves was very low, much attention was given to the social elevation of the *imghad* in the Adagh and elsewhere, who were seen as a kind of working class. Sources on this elevation

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66 Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant de Cercle de Kidal. Gao, 02/06/1962. ACK.

67 Notes of speech written by the Commandant de Cercle de Kidal. Kidal, 07/05/1966. ACK.

68 Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de février 1967. ACK. In the Cercle Bourem, arrondissement Almoustarat, however, there existed a *fraction* Idnan Bellah in 1971. Répertoire des villages et des fractions, Cercle Bourem, 1971. ACK.

are even scarcer than on those of the *bellah*, except for some party rhetoric in monthly reports, which never omitted to say something like

> The sentiments of hostility clearly disappear, to make way for honest and loyal collaboration between members of different groups. A team spirit blossoms at the honourable sites of human investment. Most of them, having hardly passed the doorsteps of obscurantism, barely gaining conscience of belonging to a nation, having just shed a state of irresponsibility, are almost blinded by the eternally radiant perspectives of our socialist option: Socialism. On the triumphant march towards the goals of Socialism they progress like the others. Stumbling from time to time, but nevertheless progressing.[69]

I hope to make clear in the following chapters that this appraisal of local sentiments was utterly wrong.

The slave trade to Mecca

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, slavery and slave trade remained legal on most of the Arabian Peninsula and as far as it was illegal, trade and ownership remained lively despite continued efforts by the British Navy patrols in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.[70] Only in 1962, with the installation of king Faysal, were slavery and the slave trade formally abolished in Saudi Arabia. The history of abolition in Saudi Arabia in the early 1960s is entangled with the history of Mali and with the history of some of the main political actors in Northern Mali in the 1950s: Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, Marouchett ag Moussa and Sidi Mohamed ag Zokka. It should be stressed that the slave trade to Saudi Arabia had both all of French West Africa and French Central Africa and Baluchistan in present-day Pakistan as its main sources. African pilgrims to Mecca were not always sure to return home safely as they might end up being enslaved.[71] There is enough evidence that people from West Africa were indeed sold as slaves in the Arab Peninsula. French commanders were well aware of the existence of this trade and did not deny its existence in internal administrative correspondence or even to the outside world. Those French officers who were sent to accompany the pilgrims to Mecca as 'pilgrim agents' on what was referred to as the 'official' pilgrimage, such as Marcel Cardaire, Gabriel Ferral and Georges Brouin paid particular attention to the subject, stating as much detail on the trade as possible. But the final abolition in Saudi Arabia in 1962 came partly about through an international media scandal over the last remnants of slave trade to Saudi Arabia involving some Tamasheq chiefs and the Malian

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[69] Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois d'août 1964. ACK.

[70] A detailed presentation is beyond the scope of this work. See Miers, S. 2003.

[71] Ibid.: 339-352.

Government. It will be argued here that, whatever the true events around this trade might have been, the media scandal that ensued and the attention paid to this subject by the US-RDA leadership came from their vision of the Kel Tamasheq as slavers, and reinforced this vision. Perhaps the desire to effectively remove a powerful opposing politician from the political scene played a role in the denouement as well.

In 1948 Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, until then chief of the Kel Intessar and PSP councillor in the *Assemblée Territoriale*, left to perform the *hajj* and to travel extensively throughout the Middle East and the Maghreb.[72] With him travelled some of his family members, whom he wished to enrol in educational institutions in the Middle East, and also some of his servants. Among these was a certain Awad or Awatan, a *bellah* from the Igouadaran tribe, who had previously worked as a cook for a Tamasheq officer of the *goum* corps in Goundam.[73] Mohamed Ali was replaced in all his functions by his younger brother Mohamed Elmehdi ag Attaher Insar. After his *hajj* he travelled between Mecca, Egypt, Libya and Morocco, but he was back in Soudan Français in 1953, where he did not reclaim his old functions, although he was appointed as honorary tribal chief. In 1953, information came from the French consul in Jeddah that West Africans naturalised as Saudis were active in West Africa as slave traders, who offered to organise the pilgrimage overland, after which these pilgrims were sold.[74] The Consul was especially worried about a group of about five *bellah* from the Goundam and Gourma Rharous *Cercle*s, three men and two women and their children, who had travelled with Mohamed Ali. Inquiries were made with Mohamed Ali about who exactly these people were and what might have happened to them. With some embarrassment, Mohamed Ali explained that most of them had left him in 1952 in Khartoum, where they had found employment, on their way back to Soudan Français. Awad el Djouh, or Awatan, was among these five missing servants.

In March or April 1954 Awad el Djouh arrived in Niamey, where he filed a formal complaint to the Chief of Police against Mohamed Ali for having sold him in Saudi Arabia.[75] From Niamey, Awad continued to Bamako where his complaint was brought before court. The rumour about the slave trade organised from Soudan Français quickly spread in Bamako, and from there it reached the desks of the local press. The weekly *Afrique nouvelle*, a Catholic newspaper run

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[72] ag Attaher Insar, M.A. 1990.

[73] Cdt. Cercle Goundam à Gov. Soudan Français, 26/02/1953. ACG.

[74] Miers, S. 2003: 348.

[75] Affaires Politiques Confidentiels et Secrets: 1956. Correspondances secrets et confidentiels au départ du Gouverneur du Soudan à tous les Cercles, Subdivisions et Communes mixtes: 1954. ANM – RNIII B-1229. And Gov. Soudan Français au Cdts. Cercles Gao, Tombouctou, Goundam, 29/04/1954, no 216/C. ACG.

by the White Fathers from Dakar, was the first to track down Awad el Djouh in his lodgings in Bamako's Bagadadji neighbourhood to interview him. The interview is presented with a seldom given insight in the setting of the conversation and its pursuit, which leads to believe that the quotes are verbatim within the limits of translation as Awad's French was not very good.

"Awad el Djoud?
- Yes" (…)
- I have heard saying that you filed a complaint with the authorities against a certain Mohamed Ali who has sold you as a slave. Is this true?
- Yes, that is true (…)
- Would you like to tell me your story yourself?
- Oh, yes! You know, I am …
- Sorry. Do you allow me to write this down?
- Oh, yes! (…)
  "You know, I was born in Gourma Rharous around 1933. At the age of 9, Mohamed Ali ag Attakher took me in his service. I was not paid, but only provided for. In 1949 my boss decided to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. I was to accompany him with four other servants. (…) After our arrival in Mecca, we stayed there for a year. After a journey to Medina, we returned to Mecca for the 1950 pilgrimage.
- Were you well treated?
- Yes, we ate with Mohamed Ali from the same dish. (…) After the pilgrimage Mohamed Ali has send me to work for prince Abdallah Faysal, telling me that the money I would earn would serve to pay my return journey to Soudan.
- Did the prince pay you well?
- I have never received any pay.
- Where was your master at that moment?
- I understood that he had left Saudi Arabia. Only then did I understand that I had been sold to Abdallah Faysal as a slave. As a matter of fact, the prince himself told me so.[76]

In the meantime, Mohamed Ali had returned from Soudan Français to Mecca. Many suspected he had fled there, which seems not unlikely. However, no French politician or administrator wanted such an embarrassing case to go out of hand. It was reasoned that as slavery formally did no longer exist, the case could not be sustained. In the end the case was judged at the Bamako Tribunal de Travail as a work dispute, in which Awad el Djouh claimed 13 years of back pay between 1939 and 1952 from Mohamed Ali, to the sum of

[76] D. Traoré, "La route des esclaves noirs commence à Villa Cisneros et aboutit à la Mecque", *Afrique nouvelle* 04/09/1954.

1,083,304.55 Francs.[77] This ruling was to the despair of the French colonial administration, which envisioned thousands of this kind of claims from former slaves all through the territory.[78] In its ruling of 10 November 1954 the Tribunal declared itself incompetent to deal with the matter 'ratione loci', but the political dimensions of the case had to be dealt with. In 1954 the Commission on Social Affairs of the Assembly of the Union Française commissioned one of its members, Pastor Emmanuel La Gravière, of the French Reformed Church, to conduct an inquiry into the slave trade in AOF. Awad el Djouh, from his side, went to appeal at the Tribunal de Première Instance, which validated the judgement of the Tribunal de Travail and returned the case to this court. In its second judgement of 30 November 1955 the Tribunal du Travail restated its incompetence. In a letter to the Governor of Soudan Français, the Governor General in Dakar decided that:

> The competent Tribunal in this Territory is the Juge de Paix of extended competence in Gao to which the Procureur général will direct himself confidentially, to draw his attention to the social (and political) effects of the judgement he will be called to make.[79]

By then the case of Awad el Djouh was publicly known in France and throughout the world through newspaper articles, and the work of La Gravière who did not shun media coverage. The inquiries of La Gravière and the case of Awad el Djouh coincided with renewed efforts of the British Anti Slavery Society to integrate measures against slavery in the structures of the United Nations, which generated much media attention too.[80] By 1955 Awad el Djouh's story had been condensed and presented in the tabloid press as follows:

> Mohamed Ali ag Attaher, a powerful and rich man, engaged me one day as his servant, together with another man, his wife and their baby. This is a long time ago, probably 15 years. Together, we made the long sacred journey. But upon our arrival in Mecca, my master sent me to work for Prince Abdallah Faysal. Long months passed. (…) I learned one day that Mohamed Ali had left for Africa. The Prince called me before him and told me that I was no longer a free man; that I had been sold as a slave; that he had paid for me and that I was his property forever. Years went by. One day the prince ordered his steward to sell me on the slave market in Jeddah. I was brought there in a truck. I entered a great dark hall. There were many men and women assembled there: Slaves, like me. I managed to escape. (…) I tried to get on board of a ship destined for Africa a number of times but the police followed me. I managed to board a cargo ship: I hid on board and disembarked in

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77 Tribunal de travail de Bamako, no 174: Audience publique du mercredi 10 novembre 1954, entre le Sieur Aouat Aljou boy cuisinier demeurant à Bamako et Mohamed Ali ag Attaher demeurant à Goundam. ACG.

78 Cdt. Cercle Goundam à Gov. Soudan Français, 10/11/1955, 105/.c. ACG.

79 Gouverneur Général AOF à Gov. Soudan Français, 24/01/1956. ANM – FN 1E-961.

80 Miers, S. 2003: 317-332.

> Sudan. I was free! I sold my clothes to pay for my journey to Khartoum. Upon arrival I had no clothes and no money left. I left naked and on foot for my village in Senegal. I made the journey sometimes by train, mostly on foot, stopping and working to pay for my travels.[81]

The case of Awad el Djouh and his accusations of being sold by Mohamed Ali are less straightforward then they seemed in the press. Mohamed Ali vehemently denied the accusations in letters he wrote to his relatives and friends in the Goundam area.[82] According to Mohamed Ali, he had known Awad, or Awaten as he had been called in Gourma Rharous, since his childhood, as he had been brought up among the Kel Intessar, but he had not employed him. He had met him again in Bamako in 1948, where Awaten had worked, but where he now lived in destitution. Awad had asked Mohamed Ali to take him back home to Gourma Rharous, which Mohamed Ali did. From there he had followed him to Mecca on Mohamed Ali's expenses, after which he worked for the Saudi Minister of Defence (Prince Faysal) to pay back his travel debts to Mohamed Ali. The last bit seems to concord with Awad's own explanation, but with the difference that this was not to pay his return journey, but to repay his journey coming. Also, Awad stressed in the interview that he had been treated well; he had even eaten from the same plate as Mohamed Ali during the journey, which indicates a relation of equality rather than one of subservience. Normally a master would not eat from the same dish as a slave. According to Mohamed Ali, Awad's former patron from Gourma Rharous, Akounkoun, had visited him in Mecca, had been lodged by Awad and had given Awad some money in return. Everyone from Goundam and Gourma Rharous, in short, knew about Awad's whereabouts. According to Mohamed Ali, Awad had to flee from Mecca because he had started an affair with one of Faysal's concubines.

> How could I have forced Awaten to leave Bamako or Goundam without him filing a complaint? How can one think that I could have sold him here a long time ago

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[81] "Voici le dossier de l'esclavage en Afrique", *Paris Presse* 31/05/1955. It is suggested in this article that the quote is taken from *Afrique Nouvelle*, 18/09/1954. There is no *Afrique nouvelle* isued at that date and none of the articles on this subject found in *Afrique nouvelle* give exactly these words. Thus, it seems a rather loose interpretation of Awad's initial interviews.

[82] A series of letters written in Arabic in Mecca by Mohamed Ali to his relatives in Goundam, and which he had given to a pilgrim from Goundam on his way back home, were confiscated by Marcel Cardaire who functioned as French *hajj* agent during the 1956 pilgrimage, who had them translated and sent to Bamako and Goundam. ACG.

> without him filing complaint here with the French Consul? How can one believe that I sold him here while on the road he was often at least a month behind me?[83]

In fact, Awad had tried to file a complaint with the French consul in Jeddah, but had failed. According to Suzanne Miers, European consular policies in the 1950s towards questions of enslaved Africans was to not interfere when it concerned slaves belonging to the royal family, and Awad had been sold (or not) to the Saudi crown prince himself, reducing Awad's chances on consular help to almost zero.[84] On the other hand, it was Abdullah Faysal who soon after his instalment as king of Saudi Arabia abolished slavery and prohibited the slave trade, and before his coronation he had been known to oppose slavery and had manumitted a large number of his own slaves. The French political report from Goundam in 1953 quoted here above on the possibility that Mohamed Ali had sold Awad indicated that Awad had been able to send money back home, which would have meant that his situation in Mecca was not as destitute as he described it himself. The possibility cannot be ruled out entirely that Awad had either been manumitted by Faysal, or that he in fact had been employed by Faysal, with a large sum of his salary advanced to Mohamed Ali as repayment of the travel expenses that Mohamed Ali had advanced for him. Furthermore, the court case of Awad el Djouh resulted in an enquiry being made by the French administration among returned pilgrims about the existence of a slave trade, which was denied by all those questioned, including a number of prominent local members of both the PSP and the leader of the US-RDA in Diré, a man who had no political reason to protect Mohamed Ali (quite the contrary).[85] As a last point of unclarity should be mentioned the position of Mohamed Elmehdi, Mohamed Ali's younger brother who had replaced him in all his official functions. Documents from the colonial archives in Goundam show that the leading family of the Kel Intessar was deeply divided at the time. Mohamed Elmehdi was in dispute with his brother, who accused him of having sold all his possessions, distributed his lands and neglected to take care of Mohamed Ali's children. In his absence Mohamed Elmehdi had become a US-RDA member in the late 1950s, and it seems that by that time he had definitely turned his back on his older brother, a former PSP stalwart. In an article on the Casablanca conference, the chief editor of the Egyptian newspaper al-Ahram, Mohamed Hasanayn Heikal, mentioned in passing a discussion he had over-heard in the corridors:

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[83] Letter from Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar to Mohamed Elmehdi ag Attaher Insar, Mecca 10/10/1955. ACG.

[84] Miers, S. 2003: 317-332.

[85] Cdt. Cercle Goundam à Gov. Soudan Français, Enquête judiciaire sur les faits de traite, 27/11/1955. Confidentiel 109/C. ACG.

If I hadn't heard the discussion between Abdul Kader al-Aalam, the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs and sheikh Mohamed Mehdi, member of the official Malian delegation to the Casablanca conference, I would have believed that the whole story was nothing but pure fabrication without foundation. The discussion was about a man, a Malian citizen, who lived in exile in Libya. It attracted the attention and the curiosity of those present who heard the questions and answers. The sheikh Mehdi turned towards those around him and towards the Libyan minister and declared: "We claim this man: Listen to what he did. He was the sheikh of a tribe in Mali. Just before Malian independence he called the people of his tribe to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Many responded to his call, among them men and many women who took their children with them on this holy journey. After many misadventures, they arrived in Mecca (…) [There] he sold the group to a number of slave dealers: Men, women and children were delivered in the hands of slave traders of faraway lands where they were taken. Having received the money, the price for his own people, of his own tribe, he left, but he did not return to Mali. He installed himself in Libya and used the money to set up business. The men of his tribe, in Mali, incidentally discovered what their chief had done. One of the pieces of merchandise managed to communicate all the details of the case to the tribesmen in Mali. The case has been brought to court and the merchant was judged in his absence.[86]

In the early 1960s, the slave trade problem gained new momentum. Undeniable proof of the trade, although this time organised by less illustrious people, reached Mali in January 1960 in the form of a letter, written from Mecca by Aghali ag Nushbighair , a *bellah* from Diré, to his brother Ibrahim in late 1959.

> Praise be to God. I let you know that I have been sold in Mecca by Moussa Alhassan. The latter has sold me and collected the sum of the sales. He returned alone to you; this proves the truth of my declaration. Every one of you slaves who comes to Mecca will be enslaved without exception.[87]

The letter was translated, photocopied and sent to all the *Cercle*s in the North with a warning that all demands to perform the pilgrimage by road, hence escaping the formal control of the 'official' pilgrimage, should be thoroughly

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[86] "Extrait d'un article de Mohamed Hasanayn Heikal, conseiller du Président Nasser et rédacteur en chef d'Al-Ahram, quotidien du Caire, 27 janvier 1961". In Notes sur l'actualité politique no 48. Documents sur l'esclavage en Arabie Seoudite et dans d'autres pays Arabes, edited by the Israeli Ministry of foreign affairs, division of information. Jerusalem, June 1961. Documentation française: dossier esclavage. Archives du centre de documentation France-Europe-Monde – microfilm no. 171

[87] Photocopy of a letter from Aghali ag Nushbighair with translation. 26/01/1960. ACK.

checked. By 1961, the slave trade from Mali, involving Tamasheq chiefs reached a new momentum with the pilgrimage of that year.

The first pilgrims from independent Mali were accompanied by Abdelwahab Doucouré, a former subordinate to Marcel Cardaire in the Bureau des Affaires Musulmanes and now performing the same task as his former superior had: Being the formal pilgrim agent on the official *hajj*, responsible for the pilgrim's welfare, their safe return, and the monitoring of all things political surrounding the *hajj*. The official pilgrims delegation from Mali landed in Jeddah on 1 May 1961.[88] Upon his arrival in Saudi Arabia, Abdelwahab was confronted with what he believed to be a case of slave trade. On the 3rd of May he was visited by a certain Abdel Koudous, a high-ranking Saudi civil servant, who seemed to have functioned as a broker between Saudi clients and Soudanese suppliers, among them Mohamed Ali and Marouchett ag Moussa who was the *amenokal* of the Tengueregueguedesh tribe. In his interview to Afrique nouvelle, Awad el Djouh had indicated that another servant to Mohamed Ali, who had travelled with them, had been sold to Abdel Koudous.[89] Marouchett had fled in exile from Malian rule in the years before. From Abdel Koudous, Abdelwahab learned that Marouchett was awaiting Sidi Mohamed ag Zokka, the former chief of the Chouakhan tribe and former PSP candidate in the Niger Bend. Sidi Mohamed, so Abdel Koudous stated, would arrive with twenty-eight 'slaves'. When he learned of Sidi Mohamed's imminent arrival, Abdelwahab flew back to Bamako to receive instructions from Minister of the Interior Madeira Keita on this matter. Upon his return at Jeddah airport, he found Sidi Mohamed ag Zokka there in the company of 31 people, mostly children and some men. Immediately, Abdelwahab had Sidi Mohamed and his followers were arrested by the Saudi police, informing the Saudi head of security and Madeira Keita of his catch. The Saudi police decided not to deliver Sidi Mohamed ag Zokka and his followers to the Malians since Mali had no official diplomatic representation in the Kingdom, but instead extradited him to Sudan for want of legal visa and thus probably preventing a scandal. Sidi Mohamed's following was kept in Saudi Arabia, and, on his demand, entrusted to Marouchett ag Moussa, who was first made to sign all sorts of guarantees for their safekeeping. Abdelwahab then proceeded to deal with a number of smaller cases of slave trade, for example the arrest of Intaha ag Sidi Oualad Driss, who had tried to sell two children who he pretended were his own. Then there was a group of 30 pilgrims who had travelled with a certain Warninekh, who had tried to sell them to a Saudi

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[88] The following is entirely based on: Rapport sur le pélerinage 1961. Abdelwahab Doucouré. ANM – BPN104d398 Carton 104 Dossier 398. I thank Gregory Mann for sharing this material with me.

[89] D. Traoré, "La route des esclaves noirs commence à Villa Cisneros et aboutit à la Mecque", *Afrique nouvelle* 04/09/1954.

member of government, a certain Abdel Aziz Renchaïdane. The pilgrims had resisted by beating Warninekh up, after which they got arrested by the Saudi police.[90] Then there was a certain Mrs. Djamloul from Gao, who wanted to sell two children to a Saudi.

In the meantime, President Modibo Keita had written a formal letter to King Ibn Saud on the activities of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, Sidi Mohamed ag Zokka, and Marouchett ag Moussa, which was presented to his brother Nawaf, director of the Kings cabinet, by the Malian ambassador in Cairo, Modibo Diallo, on 18 May. Nawaf demanded a file on the complaints against these men, which Modibo Diallo wrote that same night. In turn, Mohamed Ali, Marouchett and Sidi Mohamed wrote a letter to the King asking for his protection. It is not clear how the king reacted formally to both the report and the letter, but none of the Tamasheq chiefs was extradited to Mali. However, Prince Faysal stopped the financial support that Mohamed Ali had until then received from the Saudi Government. Mohamed Ali left for Libya shortly after.

> Mohamed Ali is seriously hindered by the growing goodwill Mali holds in the Arab countries. In these countries no one can organise any opposition to Mali any longer. The only option that he still has, is to write to the former tribal chiefs in Mali to send him a large number of *Bellah*s to sell. The average price of a slave is 25,000 Ryals, being 1,400,000 CFA francs. If we could have Mohamed Ali returned to Mali in one way or another, I think that would clearly diminish the massive departure of *Bellah*s.[91]

As for Marouchett ag Moussa and Sidi Mohamed ag Zokka, in a meeting with Abdelwahab Doucouré Marouchett declared his motives and desires.

> When the chieftaincy was abolished they took my possessions and my lands to give them to the *Bellah*s. I had the impression that the *chef de poste* avenged himself on us. I spoke of my troubles to President Mahamane, Madeira and Abdoulaye Dicko. They did nothing to improve the situation. If President Modibo assures me my lands will be given back to me and that I will not be humiliated in front of my brothers, I swear I will come back to Mali without even passing through Mecca. Me, I have no need for the pilgrimage. All the Tuareg think like me, they will all come.[92]

Marouchett was offered the possibility of return with his following, which he did not immediately take up, but he would return soon after to be reinstalled as *amenokal* of the Tengueregueddesh and to rule that tribe until the early 1990s. To complete the story, in 1962, King Ibn Saud was replaced by his brother Ab-

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[90] Warninekh could either be an alias (meaning "I didn't tell you"), or in fact a Tamasheq slave name, which would mean that *bellah* were involved on both ends of the trade.

[91] Rapport sur le pélerinage 1961. Abdelwahab Doucouré. ANM – BPN104d398 Carton 104 Dossier 398.

[92] Ibid.

dullah Faysal who had been openly opposed to slave trade for a few years, and who had manumitted the majority of his own slaves. In 1962, after the rather embarrassing episode of publicity around the case of the slave trade with Mali, king Faysal formally abolished slavery in Saudi Arabia.[93]

Stories about these cases of slave trade are not unknown in Tamasheq society. Concerning Marouchett, it is told that he sold hundreds of slaves in Mecca. One of my informants said that, contrary to what he said in his letters found in the local archive in Goundam, Mohamed Ali has never denied that he sold some of his slaves in Mecca, but that he acted for their benefit. They would have a much better life in Mecca than he could give them in Soudan Français. Whatever might have been the intentions of the sellers, it goes without saying that these affairs did no good whatsoever to the reputation of the Kel Tamasheq. It is clear from the report presented by Abdelwahab Doucouré, and from his French predecessors, that slaves were traded from Northern Mali to Saudi Arabia. But close inspection of detailed cases shows that whether or not particular individuals were sold or not by particular others is harder to establish. Political motives could lead to exaggeration. From the side of Christian clergy such as La Gravière, to rekindle the image of the savage Muslim was part of the game. The claims in his report, endorsed by the British Anti Slavery Society, that thousands of people were sold were clearly exaggerated and meant to stir their cause. The motives of the Malian Government to have Sidi Mohamed ag Zokka arrested for slave trade without any proof, existing or further being given, or even mentioned, in Abdelwahab's report, were undoubtedly inspired by the image created of the Kel Tamasheq as slave traders, enhanced by the case against Mohamed Ali by Awad El Djouh. That Mohamed Ali was further simply treated as a slave dealer by the Malian Government and therefore remained in exile in the Middle East, whatever truth there might have been in his involvement in the trade, meant that a powerful possible opposition leader against the US-RDA regime was effectively removed from the political field. Given the fate of his political comrades, Fily Dabo Sissoko and Hamadoun Dicko, who ended up in prison in Kidal, Mohamed Ali got away lucky for a few years until he was finally extradited by Morocco as a leader of the rebellion in the Adagh in 1964. Stereotypical images, their grounds, and political realities converged here in ways almost too good to be possible.

Les guerriers des sables

If there is one mythical name attached to the Kel Tamasheq, it is that of '*les guerriers des sables*' – the warriors of the sand. The stereotype of the fierce

[93] Miers, S. 2003: 350.

Tamasheq warrior is perhaps the most long-standing of all Orientalist visions of Tamasheq society, renewed through photo-reportages of the last rebellions. What the Zulu and Maasai are to the British colonial stereotype of 'warrior tribes', the Kel Tamasheq are to the French. This stereotype was constructed even before colonial conquest. Explorers travelling through Tamasheq country, like Gordon Laing or Alexandrine Tinne, did not live to tell their story. Those who did, like Henry Duveryier, were heralded as great heroes for their mere survival. Where in other parts of Africa the murder of European explorers would be avenged by sending in the troops, this did not happen when it came to the Kel Tamasheq, in fear of their military power.

The Kel Tamasheq put up more than fierce resistance against French conquest. In 1881 the second mission Flatters was totally annihilated by the Kel Hoggar despite superior French armament.[94] In January 1893, the Bonnier expedition was defeated near Timbuktu by the Tengueregif under their *amenokal* Cheiboun.[95] The ensuing reprisals led by Colonel Joffre culminated in a defeat for the Tamasheq-led coalition under the Tengueregif at Niafunké a few weeks later, but still the Timbuktu area was not pacified. In 1897 a coalition of Kel Intessar, Kounta, Ouillimiden and Tengueregif besieged Timbuktu for two days after having defeated a French squadron under Lieutenants Chevigné and De La Tour de Saint Ygest. In 1896 Lieutenant Hourst travelled the land of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram. He estimated their fighting powers at 20,000 men and therefore thought it unwise to even try to conquer the Aribinda.[96] The Kel Adagh and the Kel Ajjer, who did not resist conquest militarily, did not, in their own opinion, surrender either. The Kel Ajjer had merely signed an alliance with the French while the Kel Adagh had obeyed religious prescriptions forbidding *jihad* against a stronger military opponent.

The French conquest did not end combat between the French and the Kel Tamasheq.[97] The first to contest French power were their first allies, the Kel Ajjer in 1913. In 1916, practically all Tamasheq federations revolted against French occupation. In April 1916 the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram under their *amenokal* Firhun ag Elinsar rose against the French in the Azawad. They were followed by the Logomaten under *amenokal* Bokar wan Zeidou, and the Ouillimiden Kel Denneg under *amenokal* Elkhurer. In 1917 the Kel Aïr rose under Kaocen ag Kedda. They were joined by those Ouillimiden Kel Denneg who had survived their resistance against the French in 1916.[98] Kaocen's army, well-equipped with field canons and machine guns, first besieged Agadez for

94 Bissuel, H. 1888.
95 Hureiki, J. 2003.
96 Hourst, L. 1898: 200.
97 Bourgeot, A. 1977.
98 Brock, L. 1990.

nearly two months. This tactic proved to be unsuccessful and Kaocen changed his strategy. His army kept defying French troops in guerrilla warfare until 1920, leaving the Aïr in ruins after the crushing French repression.[99] The notable exceptions to revolt were the Kel Hoggar and, most important for our history, the Kel Adagh who fought as French allies against the insurgents.

Bidân resistance against French conquest was perhaps smaller in scale, but it showed longer endurance. While part of the Kounta federation in French Sudan allied to the French under their *cheick* Hammoadi, another part under Abidine ould Sidi Mohamed el Kounti resisted French rule in alliance with the Rgaybat of the Western Sahara. Until 1927 Abidine's men successfully attacked the Adagh and Mauritania from their base in the still unpacified Drâa valley.[100]

The stereotype of the desert warrior led to a permanent state of distrust and paralysis of the administration. In evaluating French occupancy of the Sahara afterwards, French administrators and scholars attribute French inactivity in the Sahara to the respect and sympathy of the 'victorious warrior for the honourably defeated warrior'.[101] All the French tried in Saharan affairs was to keep *la paix française* at any price.

The experience of Tamasheq rebellion during World War I led to a state of almost paranoid fear for renewed revolts during World War II. This is well illustrated by the situation in Gourma Rharous.[102] By the end of 1939 the tribes of the Gourma were buying horses on a large scale. Rumours were circulating that the French who were mobilising forces against Germany would soon leave the country. When they had left, the Kel Tamasheq would take over the country again. On these rumours, an inquiry followed, which led to the replacing of the chief of the Kel Ansattafa *fraction* of the Irreguenaten tribe. In April 1940, a *goumier* noticed that a blacksmith of the Igouadaren tribe was repairing lances and that a slave was repairing a shield. On the basis of these rumours, the chief of the Igouadaren tribe, Ouedan ag Baber, was arrested and relieved from command on charges of plotting a rebellion. Reports were written, asking for reinforced military presence in the area. By 1942, the French *Commandant de Cercle* of Gourma Rharous had become so paranoid, that a gathering of chiefs under presidency of Cheiboun, *amenokal* of the Tengueregif and victor over Bonnier expedition in 1893, was directly taken as a sign the French were 'under

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[99] Triaud, J-L. 1993.
[100] Aouad-Badoual, R. 1993.
[101] Dupuis, J. 1960: 25.
[102] Based on: Inspection des Affaires administratives, Gourma-Rharous 1926-1953. ANM – FR 2D-15/1939/1941/1942/1944.

the threat of revolt similar to that of 1916'[103] The alleged revolt in the Gourma also revealed the fears and thoughts held by the local population towards the Kel Tamasheq. In 1939, the administration held an inquiry among the local sedentary population about the plotted uprising. The assembled statements of the questioned population are not only revealing about Tamasheq acts; they also inform us about local sentiments towards them. Clearly, not only did the French administration still see the Kel Tamasheq as rebellious warriors and pillagers, the local population did so as well.

> If the French leave, we will ask God to disappear with them. We do not want to be ruled by the Tuareg. (...) If it were Mougassou [a Tamasheq chief] who ruled, I would have been beaten; I would no longer have a boubou to wear, no harvests, nothing. (...) A Targui, Trafatou ag Moussa-Gallo, of the Kel Ansattafa asked me for millet. I refused. He insulted me, insulted my father and mother and said to me: 'You are going to bring this millet to me since the French are no longer here', and he left. I answered: 'The French are still here, because if they were not, you would have taken my millet by force.'[104]

Suspicion toward the Kel Tamasheq and the obsession with la paix française led to other excesses of thinking about security. Thus, the few solitary men who refused to submit to French rule in the 1940s and 1950s, such as Alla ag Albachir, Inalaghen ag Dida and Ahmed wan Egarew, were hunted down systematically with all means the French disposed of. Even cars and aeroplanes were used to put them out of action. These men, often living with their family or even totally on their own, were the subjects of reports and concerns on levels totally outweighing their real importance and possibilities of effective resistance. Yet, the French, concerned with their image as strong occupiers and the guardians of peace, could not allow themselves to leave these men unbothered. Their capture would be proof of French capacities to rule and maintain law and order. Their liberty and resistance against French domination, however marginal, could set a bad example to the local population. This French obsession with the Kel Tamasheq as rebellious warriors was easily transferred to the Malian administrators, especially since the Kel Adagh were seen as under French influence, and since France was still a military presence in Algeria.

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[103] Télégramme lettre Subdivision Rharous à Cercle Tombouctou. Inspection des Affaires administratives du Cercle de Gourma-Rharous. 1926-1953. ANM – FR 2D-15/1942.

[104] Procès verbal d'enquête, affaire Ouedan ag Baber, 1939. Inspection des Affaires Administratives du Cercle de Gourma-Rharous. 1926-1953 ANM – FR 2D-15/1939.

Nomad anarchy

Besides being seen as racist slaveholding warmongers, the Kel Tamasheq, and nomads in general, were perceived as anarchist. This will be the last important stereotypical discourse on the Kel Tamasheq dealt with here. The last, less important stereotype, laziness, will be dealt with briefly in the next chapter. The idea of nomadic anarchism stems from two main characteristics of nomadic society – its social-political structure; and nomadic existence itself. At heart, it all comes down to the question of blood and soil. Pastoral nomadic societies are organised along the lines of expanding lineages (see Introduction). A member of a given society organised along these lines is prone to see herself as part of ever larger bodies of organisation, which form a whole at the top level. European administrators and their sedentary African heirs however, were inclined to first look for the largest unit and then work their way down to the smallest group – the family unit. This up-side-down look at nomadic societies earned them the label 'segmentary societies'. In other words: Fragmented, scattered, unbound, anarchist.[105] Indeed, nomadic social organisation leaves room for decisions on the smallest level, necessary for the optimal exploitation of the scarce resources in their environment, but this does not mean anarchy. In Tamasheq society, and in many other nomadic societies, hierarchy binds the freedom of the individual. As has been argued in the introduction – social order is created by who you are in relation to others in your lineage, the origins of your lineage and the status attached to it.

A second argument put forward in ideas on nomad anarchy is sheer nomadic existence itself. Here I will allow myself a degree of speculation since it is hard to underpin exactly why nomad existence is found so disturbing by those who are not nomads. It is, I think, not so much mobility itself, as it being the rule and not the exception in nomad existence that is disturbing for the sedentary mind. In sedentary societies social order is created through the appropriation of space. In village-based Mande society, social relations are regulated on the structure of the village. Social positions are reflected in spatial organisation, age and land tenure, which, in turn, are reflected in the local tale of origin, and the local version of the Sunjata epic.[106] 'Who you are' is partly defined by 'where you are' and 'whose land you are on'. This does not hold for nomadic societies. Tamasheq society hardly knows the equivalent to *dugutigiw*, the Mande term for 'owners of the land'. The *imenokalen*, the 'attributors of land and water' are few

[105] For a discussion on segmentarisation in Tamasheq and Bedouin societies, see (among many others) Behnke, R. 1980; Pandolfi, P. 1998.
[106] Based on Jansen, J. 1995; Jansen, J. 1996.

in numbers and their tenure is as symbolic as their 'estates' are enormous.[107] This is not at all to say that nomads do not have any form of spatial organisation or land tenure. On the contrary, land tenure systems are specific and elaborated. But land tenure is only significant in economic organisation, not in social organisation or identity. Tamasheq groups might have the right to use certain areas first, or they might 'own' a well they have dug, but they cannot simply forbid others to cross this area or to use this well. Trespassing does not exist because of the absence of land that has been divided up and legally distributed. One's position in space and landownership are crucial to the sedentary mind, but insignificant to the nomad with respect to belonging and social organisation (but very significant in land use itself). 'Who you are' is defined through 'whom you are related to'. This fundamental difference in spatiality might well explain why sedentary governments (and there are no others) are inclined to see nomads as anarchist. They do not stick to one place, they own no land, thus they have no space and they are therefore unorganised and asocial.

Epilogue

The social-political relations between the Kel Tamasheq and the Government and broader populace of Mali became governed by a set of preconceived stereotyped negative images of the other which were created in the colonial period, but which were largely based in ideas and images with much longer historical standing. Essentially, the Malian Government came to see Tamasheq society as inherently racist with a divide between unscrupulous white masters able to sell their black slaves into servitude in the Middle East, inherently anarchist perforce their nomad way of life, and prone to violence and military rebellion against the authorities. That the Kel Tamasheq were also seen as lazy and irrational in their economic endeavours will be dealt with at great length in the next chapter. In turn, the Kel Tamasheq, certainly the Kel Adagh, saw the Malian Government if not directly as black slaves, then at least as the untrustworthy deceiving descendants of slaves who had not kept their promises regarding home rule and local autonomy for the Kel Tamasheq, and who unjustly and unrightfully sought to rule where they had no right to do so. These visions would form a major handicap in the effective political relations between the Kel Tamasheq and the Malian Government that will be the focus of the next chapter.

[107] I here follow the interpretation of the etymology of the term *amenokal* given by Dida, B. 2010.

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Mali's *mission civilisatrice*

In his influential work *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, Merwin Crawford Young describes the late colonial phase of the 1950s in Africa as gilded years, in which the colonial governments, for the first time confronted with a question of legitimation towards their colonial subjects, created the rudimentary basis of a welfare state – education, public health and other infrastructures – to the benefit of the local population.[1] For the first time, African subjects reaped some benefits from the colonial system. Especially in comparison with later post-independence regimes, so Crawford Young argues, Africans who witnessed that period tend to look back in favour. I will not try to refute or defend the idea that the late colonial period can be justifiably gilded. Although many of the nomad inhabitants of Soudan Français now indeed look upon the late colonial period as a golden age, the interview I close this chapter with shows another sentiment toward the French, one of abandonment and treason. I do however hope to make clear that, in the 1960s, the Kel Tamasheq were in a situation to compare colonial rule to the new US-RDA regime and that this comparison then did not fall in favour of the new rulers.

As has been discussed in the first chapter, the new regime was essentially positive about Mali's political and economic future. This positivist high modernist belief in the national capacity stood contrary to social and economic realities in Northern Mali at the moment of independence. Of course, most of Northern Mali's desert region is very difficult to develop when development is not based on mining or industry. But as far as the new regime was concerned, the colonial regime simply had done nothing to improve economic or social conditions in their Saharan territories, where this could have been done. This would certainly change under the new regime, which was determined to bring

[1] Crawford Young, M. 1994: 211.

all its subjects the benefits of modernisation. Government and the party presence were to be strengthened, the feudal rule of the tribal chiefs was to be crushed, schools had to be created to uplift the ignorant masses, production needed to increase, and therefore the nomads had to be transformed into productive sedentary ranch farmers. This ambitious project came down to doing what the French had neglected to do: Truly ruling the Kel Tamasheq. This ambitious project could provocatively be described as a *mission civilisatrice,* to avoid calling it internal colonialism. It is not an exaggerated observation that the Keita Government saw the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân as a kind of 'barbarian others' who needed to be integrated in the fabric of national society, while being closely scrutinised as possible traitors of the Malian nation. This double attitude did not make for easy relations between rulers and ruled.

It has been argued by a number of scholars and by some Tamasheq politicians that the Kel Tamasheq did not understand what independence would mean. In an article published in 1987, three years prior to the second rebellion, Hélène Claudot-Hawad made the general argument that most Kel Tamasheq saw *ledepadas* (independence), as a new form of colonisation.[2] More specifically, Pierre Boilley has argued that the Kel Adagh had not clearly understood what the colonial elections and the 1958 referendum on the *Communauté Française* had been about and did not realise quickly enough to what sort of organisation and to what sort of situation these elections would lead.[3] In a 'Manifesto from the Malian Tuareg appealing to France and the international conscience' written after the start of the 1990 rebellion, the author starts by assessing colonisation and decolonisation.

> As of 1958, we observed the progressive departure of French troops to Algeria without understanding its meaning; we had to witness their total retreat from our territory and their replacement by others whose existence we had not known about, to hear the word 'independence' pronounced.[4]

I will argue that this argument does not hold true when examined in detail. Not only were the political elite involved in independence politics, but so was the average Kel Tamasheq who knew that independence was imminent and that a US-RDA-led Mali would be the incarnation of this independence. However, they hotly debated whether or not they wanted to be part of the new political configuration, and if so, under what conditions, in the full but erroneous conviction that conditions could be set. This debate was especially pronounced

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2 Claudot-Hawad, H. 1987.

3 Boilley, P. 1999: 283-284.

4 Anonymous, 'Nous Touaregs du Mali. Le génocide du peuple touareg. Manifeste des Touaregs du Mali, en appelant à la France et à la conscience internationale'. (n.d. (July) 1990), 2-3. Private Archives.

among the Kel Adagh where it continued even after the establishment of the Malian state at a moment of internal political change: The succession to Attaher ag Illi as the *amenokal* of the Adagh.

This chapter will focus on the administrative and political relations between the Keita regime and the Kel Tamasheq throughout the 1960s. The US-RDA's high modernist social economic policies were unrealistic and unwanted, and they proved to be a failure in the end for more or less the same reasons as they were a failure elsewhere in the country: Too few material and financial investments, and too much reliance on willpower. But perhaps more so than elsewhere in Mali, the patronising attitude of the regime toward the population, informed by existing stereotypical ideas, caused a build-up of tension that would in the end form one of the root causes of the rebellion. The regime's lack of understanding of local work ethics, gender relations, social dynamics, and political power structures led to a wavering policy that was much resented among a population bent on preserving the colonial social-political legacy. The Kel Tamasheq, especially but not only the Kel Adagh, saw the US-RDA policies and rule as either an unjustified and unwanted meddling in local affairs, or at least as a discrimination of the Kel Tamasheq over other Malians. This last opinion was certainly not unfounded. In the Adagh, the international setting further complicated the already tense relation between the Kel Adagh and the Malian administration. While the Malian regime felt itself surrounded by possible neocolonial adversaries in general, these adversaries were actually present in north Mali, where the French Air Force continued to use a military base until 1961 while Algerian FLN fighters were located at a training camp right next to them, at the invitation of the Keita regime. This is what the local administrators seem to have feared the most: The active meddling of the French army or the FLN in Northern Mali, stirring the local population to revolt. The tension was further enhanced by the spread of rumours. In a context where a political frame of reference based on long standing experience with the other is lacking, and where most thinking is directed by stereotypical images and uncertainties, rumours are both an indication of the lack of mutual trust and enhancing distrust.

Ruling the North

The Keita administration was well aware of its precarious relations with the Kel Tamasheq. Its initial policies were intended not to disturb the peace and to create a more positive image of itself. Politically loaded issues, such as the emancipation of former slaves, were handled with care. Despite the abolishment of traditional chieftaincies by law, the nomad tribal chiefs were maintained in place (infra). As far as possible, local administrators were recruited among the Kel Tamasheq and the Bidân.

If it wanted to integrate French-educated Kel Tamasheq, the Malian Government had no other option than to recruit members of the Kel Intessar tribe who had a reasonable level of education thanks to the Collège Nomade in Diré. But due to their background, these Kel Tamasheq administrators would never be fully trusted by the Keita Government either. Former Kel Intessar chief Mohamed Ali was in exile in the Middle East and North Africa, due to the Awad el Djouh affair. Besides, he was a former PSP stalwart, and from his place of exile in Morocco he had furthered the cause of a Tamasheq state, or inclusion of Tamasheq country in the Maghreb states. Mohamed Ali's pupils – those Kel Intessar he had managed to integrate in the Saudi, Egyptian and Libyan educational systems – were suspected of anti-Malian sentiments as well. Although educated, and although the present chief of the Kel Intessar, Mohamed Elmehdi, was an important US-RDA member, Malian leaders felt that the Kel Intessar could not be entirely trusted. This distrust, although undoubtedly other motivations existed as well, resulted in a large number of administrative posts in the North not being given to these educated Tamasheq, to the discontent of the excluded. In August 1961, Zeïni ag Hamouta, a Kel Intessar school teacher in Timbuktu, wrote a letter to Minister of the Interior Madeira Keita:

> We both agree that the nomadic populations of the Niger Bend have participated in the expulsion of the enemy and in the destruction of the OCRS chimera. Therefore, their rights within the nation should be respected. We want a two colour government, in which both sedentary people and nomads figure. (...) The nomadic populations of the Niger Bend consider the sedentary representatives as usurpers in Goundam, Timbuktu, [and] Gao. To be recognisable, one needs a bi-coloured [*bi-couleur*] representation. We do not have a nomad minister since we do not have nomad representatives; we do not have nomad representatives since our sub-section committees consist solely of sedentary people, and the regional congresses work under political boycotts (the *fractions* are not represented). In fact, the representatives and the politicians of the Niger Bend have never approved of a nomad with political responsibilities (local or national), and that is the real racism, since we want to trust our affairs to capable men, nomadic or sedentary.[5]

In November that year, Zeïni was joined in his protest by Mohamed Ayoul ag Mohamed, another Kel Intessar, who wrote a letter of the same purport to Modibo Keita himself, in the name of the Kel Intessar party committees.

> We thank God who has taken us out of slavery and who gave us our freedom. Also, glory to God, who saved us from the hands of the Christians and who lets us be commanded by Muslims, because of our understanding and our unity. (...) We are very happy to see our enemies (the French) leave the country. The chiefs of the nomad committees wish you a long life, Mister President, while presenting you with this letter to tell you that we Malians, we have only found our freedom through

[5] Lettre de Zeïni ag Hamouta, professeur d'école à Tombouctou, à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur et de l'Information. Tombouctou, 21/08/1961. ACK.

> agreement on good terms. We inform you that for our brothers, the Malians, that is to say, our Soudanese *Commandants*, we are always ready to obey their orders and we are willing and ready too, for all that Mali needs. (...) We see that they [the *Commandants*] barely consider us as we consider them, they judge us differently. That is to say, they do not know our character. We would like our leaders [*chefs*] to organise the country and to understand that disorder stains everyone's name. We ask you to appoint one of us, who understands our character, as your representative here, to become our chief [*chef*]. Our Soudanese brothers do not understand our character, and therefore we fear that disagreement will rule in our country. This serves no purpose, this only stains the names of some, and if this should continue, there will be shame. We all follow the same book, and it would bring us shame when you, who are our chief, will hear about disagreements between us. Or worse, that other nations will hear about them. We do not want our country to be like the Congo, or like the disagreement between the Algerians and the French.[6]

A third letter written that same month by an unknown Kel Intessar, directed to the Secretary General of Youth Affairs and younger brother to Modibo Keita, Moussa Keita, continued among the same lines:

> We approve of the promising acts of your executive office. But one thing is indispensable, that is to place a nomad in your executive office for this office to be representative of the Malian populations. Mali is a country of racial diversity. It is normal that all the races partake in political power. We should see all colours figuring in all the democratic organisations: Youth, trade unions etc. (...) The suppression of racism is only possible with the disappearance of patronage. Well, the acts of our sedentary brothers in the Niger Bend towards the nomads are in many respects not in this interest. The nomads do not participate in the politics of their sub-sections. They are not committee members, there are no nomad delegates, no nomad ministers, no nomad ambassadors. Even in the smallest detail the racism of the politicians towards the nomads is daily manifested.[7]

The letters and their authors received ample attention from their respondents who sent copies to all the *Commandants* in the North, asking them 'to attentively follow these young men and to take adequate measures against all attempts to subversion at their part'.[8] The distrust the petitioners had sensed was certainly present. In a report on the region from July 1960, Governor Bakary Diallo neatly reveals the administration's attitude to the incorporated Kel Tamasheq administrators in his discussion of the functioning of Mohamed ould

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6 Lettre de Mohamed Ayoul ag Mohamed, *Fraction* Kel Kaoukoraï, Tribu Kel Intessar, à Monsieur le Président et Secretaire Général de la République du Mali. Niafunké, 26/11/1961. ACK.

7 Lettre à Secrétaire Général de la Jeunesse et du Sport. Tombouctou, 28/11/1961. ACK.

8 Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale Madeira Keita à Gov. Gao et aux Cdts. Cercles Gao, Ansongo, Bourem, Kidal, Ménaka, Tombouctou, Gourma-Rharous, Goundam, Diré. No2/MIITCAB, 05/12/1961. ACK.

Mohamed Najim, the *Commandant de Cercle* of Kidal. Mohamed ould Mohamed Najim had attended the Medersa Franco Arabe in Timbuktu and had continued his studies to become a schoolteacher himself in Gourma Rharous before entering the administration.[9] Najim spoke Tamasheq, Arabic, French, English and Spanish and was a true *évolué*.

> Today, more than ever, I am convinced that we have been well inspired to place the command of this *Subdivision* in the hands of Mr. Mohamed Najim. His profound knowledge of the Berber psychology permitted him in a difficult moment to affirm his authority, and by consequence that of our state, over the difficult and unintelligent Ifoghas, accustomed to illegality and irregularity by Clauzel and Allard. (...) He has already rendered us eminent service in this respect and will continue doing so until the moment we have found a cultivated African officer, capable of accomplishing the administrative and political tasks needed in this nerve-racking region of our state.[10]

The language used by both the Kel Intessar petitioners and Bakary Diallo is revealing of the mutual images and stereotypes, as well as of the ensuing attitudes towards each other. The least one can say is that all make use of a discursive register from the colonial period, which remained in use, even in political science, until quite recently: The belief in a 'national psychology'. Furthermore, all three petitioners are, to say the least, race conscious. They explicitly state an opposition between white nomads and black sedentary people, who are seen as fundamentally different. As Mohamed Ayoul phrased it: The 'Soudanese do not understand the nomadic character', they see the nomads as different and judge their actions wrongly. This could lead to disorder, which should be avoided. Mohamed Ayoul makes an explicit connection between discord, disorder and shame. In Tamasheq society, open quarrels and brawls are things a noble person does not engage in. It brings *takaraket*; shame, which stains honour: *Eshik*. Only slaves, who have no shame and honour, would behave like that. By accusing the Government of not understanding Tamasheq ways, which would lead to quarrelling behaviour and shame, he indirectly accuses them of shameless behaviour, hence of a slave's mentality. Second, to some extent the petitioners place themselves outside Mali. They speak of ex-

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[9] Dossiers de personnel de l'enseignement. Dossiers de Mohamed Ali ag Hamma, Mohamed Aly ag Mamatal, Mohamed Ali ag Moctar, Mohamed El Moctar, Mohamed ould Najim 1944-1957. ANM – RNII 1C-143.

[10] Cdt. Cercle Gao, Rapport de la tournée effectué du 4 au 10 Juillet 1960 dans la Subdivision de Kidal. ANM – FR 1E-24. Then Commandant de *Cercle* Gao, Bakary Diallo, would become Governor of the Gao *Région* shortly after, when the administration was reorganised. The *Cercles* Gao and Timbuktu became *Région* of Gao, the *Subdivision* Kidal became *Cercle of Kidal* and the *Postes* became *Arrondissements*.

clusion by the state and oppression by 'Soudanese' administrators and politicians. This implicit positioning outside the Malian state is perhaps most visible in Mohamed Ayoul's letter. Although he overtly claims to be a Malian citizen he also speaks of 'our brothers the Malians, that is to say the Soudanese commanders'. The Soudanese commanders are Malians since they represent the state, instead of the excluded Kel Intessar.

These thoughts are exactly mirrored in Governor Bakary Diallo's choice of words when speaking of Mohamed Najim and the Kel Adagh. First, the Kel Tamasheq are not seen as African. Although Diallo holds Najim to be of good service, he should be replaced by an African officer as soon as a suitable one is found. Second, the 'unintelligent' Kel Tamasheq have been 'spoiled' and influenced by colonial administrators 'who accustomed them to illegality and irregularity'. Through this influence, they are perforce allies of neo-colonialism. The same point of view is reflected in Bakary Diallo's speech quoted in the introduction. Diallo's opinion that Najim is not an African tallies with the idea that 'white Africans', the Arabs and Berbers, originate from outside the African continent, and thus with their implicit otherness. This otherness is here expressed as a different 'national psychology'. The Kel Tamasheq have a different, Berber, 'psychology'. They are unintelligent, but cunning and anarchist, and one needs someone to know this 'national psychology' in order to control them. For the moment, the only ones available were educated Kel Tamasheq. But even these 'civilised' Kel Tamasheq had better be surveyed since their education could also serve them to express their still latent anarchism and predilection to violence, as the Kel Intessar petitioners demonstrate. Those willing to, especially those who held these conflicts to be neo-colonial machinations could easily read Mohamed Ayoul's reference to the war in Congo and the Algerian war of independence as subtle threats to national unity with outside support. This view might well have been prevalent among US-RDA politicians.

Thus, for the moment, the regime could not function in the North without men such as Mohamed Najim, since 'Africans' did not know the 'Berber psychology'. On this point, all parties agree. The accusation by the Kel Intessar that the Soudanese did not know their character is fully acknowledged in Diallo's views on the 'Berber psychology'. The Kel Tamasheq and the 'Soudanese' did not know each other and acknowledged their mutual lack of understanding in messages to each other stating the difference in a mutually shared discourse on 'national character', or 'national psychology', inherited from colonial rule. Stereotypes could take over. In June 1963, one month after the start of the rebellion, both Mohamed Najim and Mohamed Mahmoud were transferred from the Adagh to other posts. Najim was replaced by an 'African' officer, Diby Sillas Diarra, who stayed in command until 1967. The distrust toward Kel Tamasheq civil servants, and their consequent absence in local administration,

was locally seen as one of the signs that independence would not bring what was hoped for, liberation from foreign rule. Worse, where they previously were ruled by a people who had defeated them militarily and politically, they were now ruled by people who had done nothing to earn their supremacy and who, in the eyes of many, were mere slaves.

The chiefs' question

Ironically, although tribal societies are often portrayed as pre-modern, they are in fact essentially modern. In many places, tribalism was created during the first few decades after colonial conquest and where it pre-existed, such as among the Berber and Arabs, it was thoroughly reconfigured. The colonial *tribu* and *fraction* into which the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân were organised in colonial times were based on the French understanding of the Tamasheq social-political system. The term *tribu* was believed to be the proper translation of the term *ettebel*, or clan federation, the highest level of Tamasheq political organisation. *Fraction* was seen as the proper translation of the term *tewsit*, or clan. The tribes were headed by chiefs. A number of these chiefs were given jurisdiction over a larger group of tribes as *amenokal* or chief over a set of tribes. These chiefs were salaried administrators, with their own ranks and salary scales, and the possibility to be promoted or demoted. In French West Africa, the Mogho Naaba of Ouagadougou was the highest ranking traditional chief, while in Northern Mali *amenokal* Attaher ag Illi of the Adagh was the highest ranking and best paid traditional chief after the *cheick* of the Kounta tribes; Badi ould Hammoadi.[11]

In the African socialist language of the Keita Regime, before independence the oppressors of the masses had been, of course, the French colonialists. But they had been assisted by the traditional chiefs who had been integrated in the colonial system. Therefore, in order to ensure the successful emancipation of the people, these chiefs had to be abolished and their feudal power over the masses had to be broken. This administrative and political elimination of the chiefs could start the moment the US-RDA leaders wielded some effective power, which they did after the Loi-Cadre came into effect in 1956. By 1958, the *Cantons* – the administrative unit under the rule of a chief in sedentary areas – and the *Canton* Chiefs themselves, were formally abolished.[12] However, the nomadic tribus, the administrative equivalent to the *canton* and their chiefs had been maintained. At that time, dissolving the power of the nomad chiefs was thought unwise, since they still effectively controlled a population hostile to

[11] Chefferie, Correspondance et Divers: 1918-1961. ANM – FR 2E-258.
[12] Ernst, K. 1976: 93.

incorporation in the Malian state, just as these chiefs themselves were partly hostile to that same state. Enhancing hostility while losing control was judged a bad strategy at that moment.

After independence the new Malian administration set out on an active policy to modernize society by undoing parts of the administrative colonial heritage. Paradoxically, to do so, part of the colonial structure was now formalised by law. The new regime believed that in 'traditional African society' the village had been the pivot of society, and therefore proclaimed the village to be the basic unit of Malian political, economical and administrative organization. In nomad society, the new regime saw the *fraction*, an essentially colonial administrative structure that had the same administrative status as the village, as the basic 'traditional organization'. Thus, officially, the nomad *tribu* was dissolved as an administrative entity in 1960, and its place was taken over by the *fraction*.[13] What happened was that former *tribus* were now referred to as *fractions*, and *fractions* were officially referred to as *sous fractions*: Sub-*fraction*s. Unofficially however, the tribes, the *fraction*s and their chiefs were still used by local administrators in day-to-day rule. The main difference was that the *Commandant de Cercle* now directly appointed the *chefs de fraction*. The tasks of the *fraction* chief were largely extended, surpassing even the tasks the tribal chief had formerly fulfilled. He was made responsible for the control of land use and land tenure, the management of collective goods (all means of production were eventually to become collective), the handling of economic problems in the interest of the *fraction*, general policing, the maintenance of public order, the protection of goods and persons, rural policing, the protection of crops and herds, and the administration of his *fraction*. However, despite their direct appointment by the Government, the *fraction* chiefs were also seen as potential 'feudal oppressors'. Their power was to be checked by the *fraction* councils (*conseils de fraction*), who were elected by the *fraction* members. These *fraction* councils were inaugurated as early as 1957, and legally installed in 1959.[14] The new regime created political structures at *fraction* level too: The *fraction* committees (*comités de fraction*) were to give shape to the party and its activities in this smallest of socio-political groups. These two structures – both council and committee – remained largely ineffective, just as the cooperatives

[13] This is based on the knowledge that the Malian administration wanted to abolish the tribes, and a document stating the abolishment of the tribe Taghat Mellet by decree no 537/DI-2 of 10 August 1960, dated 07/03/1962, signed by the Governor of Gao. ACK.

[14] Loi No. 59-6/AL, modifiant l'ordonnance No. 43 du 28 Mars 1959, portant organisation des villages et des conseils de village. ACK.

and the rural brigades would remain dead letters of modern economics in nomad territory.[15]

The Malian leaders might well have wanted to rid themselves of the last remaining chiefs, but they soon felt they needed them. 'Because of their knowledge of the country and the people, and because of their personal influence they could and should be valuable collaborators to the administration'.[16] Despite all Marxist rhetoric against the 'traditional feudal chiefs', they were maintained for some time to come. This double attitude is nicely evoked in a circular on the role and status of the chiefs written by Minister of the Interior Madeira Keita in 1961:

> The heads of the administrative circumscriptions should never forget that the maintenance of the tribal chiefs can only be justified by their conversion to democratic development, and to justice in progress. In our daily actions we should not give the impression that the tribal chiefs do not participate in our work. But it is even more important not to let the population get the impression that these traditional ranks are tolerated against their interests.[17]

This double attitude also existed among local administrators. On the one hand they were (or pretended to be) convinced of US-RDA-cum-Marxist doctrines prescribing the abolition of social inequality, and hence of the chiefs. On the other hand, the administrators knew perfectly well that they needed the chiefs to have access to the nomadic population. Despite the increase in staff since colonial times, the administration was still too short-handed to effectively control the North. The chiefs were welcome extra manpower who knew the population and the area, which the administrators of Southern origins did not. The chiefs on the other hand were caught in the same dilemma they faced in colonial times. They needed to juggle the roles of assistant to the administration in its policies on the one hand, and representing their subjects on the other. In a mid-way attempt to (not) deal with the dilemma of the chieftaincy, the Keita Administration resorted to the simple tactic of not officially replacing deceased tribal chiefs. The policy towards the tribal chiefs was first seriously tested in late 1962, early 1963, with the death of Attaher ag Illi, *amenokal* of the Kel Adagh; a test with serious consequences for the region in the years to come. The following narrative on the chief's question in the Adagh is of major im-

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[15] Barate, C. 1977.

[16] Ministère de l'intérieur et de l'information: Circulaire à mm. les Cdts. Cercle Gao, Goundam, Tombouctou, et les Chefs de Subdivisions de Bourem, Ansongo, Kidal, Ménaka, Gourma-Gharous, concernant le rôle des chefs traditionels defini par la loi 59-63 du 30 décembre 1960, portant organisation des fractions et créant des Conseils de Fractions. Bamako 06/02/1961. ACK.

[17] Ibid.

portance in the buildup of political tension toward the rebellion of 1963. The political ideas and ideals of the Kel Adagh – of internal autonomy or at least a measure of control over their own organisational institutions – were shattered, setting the tone for State/Tamasheq relations in the decades to come. But it is also simply illustrative of the Malian policy toward chieftaincy: It is indecisiveness and makeshift pragmatism, cloaked in socialist rhetoric.

Attaher had two potential heirs: His sons Zeyd and Intalla. Both had been assistant chiefs to their father in the late 1950s and thus had experience in command, while the administration had some experience with both men. Intalla and Zeyd had opposing opinions on the position of the Adagh in Mali. Intalla was in favour of cooperation with the Malian authorities. He had become a member of the US-RDA in 1958, and was therefore highly favoured by the Keita Regime. Zeyd had always opposed the inclusion of the Adagh in Mali. In the debates on who should succeed their father, these opposing views evidently played an important part. Both the French and Malian administrators, and the Kel Adagh characterised Intalla as a 'real chief': Authoritative, authoritarian even; intelligent and able-bodied. He was also seen as a moderniser, interested in economic development and in favour of modern education. His modernity and willingness to cooperate with the Keita Regime meant however that the Kel Adagh disfavoured him as the new *amenokal*, despite his qualities.

> The French opened their school in 1947, but *cheick* Baye [an influential religious leader] told Attaher not to send the children to school. Attaher was very religious, so he did what *cheick* Baye said. (...) In 1956 or 1955 Attaher sent Intalla to France for the parade [celebrating 14 July]. There he met other Tamasheq chiefs, such as Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick. They said: "You are stupid. We are *marabouts* but we can read and write French, we can stand up for our rights. You don't know anything and will be deceived". At that moment Intalla understood that Attaher had been mistaken to listen to *cheick* Baye. He took his camel and went to the camps to gather children for the school. Attaher told him: "If you want to remain my son, you stop this", so Intalla stopped. Intalla then decided to live in the city [of Kidal] and to start a shop. Perhaps this example would get the Ifoghas interested in the school. But everybody laughed at him. "Intalla is looking for candy, just like the children", they said. After two years he gave up, discouraged. I remember that as children we would say: 'Our Zeyd and Intalla the Frenchman'. That's how we called him then, 'Intalla the Frenchman'.[18]

The impression all parties had of Zeyd was just as unanimous. He was seen as less fit to be a chief; less authoritative; amiable, but a loose cannon and not in favour of cooperation with the Malian administration. His later actions as leader of the rebellion are the strongest proof of his anti-Malian sentiments, but they were not the first signs of his discontent. In the summer of 1961 Zeyd had spent

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[18] Conversation with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 08/06/1999.

a long period in Tamanrasset, the capital of the Algerian South. There he had met with the French *Commandant* of the Oasis Territory, Colonel Nivaggioni; the Nigerien Minister of Nomadic Affairs Moudour Zakara, responsible for the continued Franco-Nigerien cooperation within the OCRS; and with Baye ag Akhamouk, *amenokal* of the Kel Hoggar and Zeyd's official host. The Keita Regime regarded Zeyd's visit with suspicion, and not without reason. It was rightly seen as a sign of his opposition to Malian rule. Indeed, Zeyd did not conceal his dissatisfaction with Mali, and it was clear to all that he had sought to ally himself to other powers.

The respective sides chosen by both heirs provoked lively discussions in the Adagh. In discussions about who should succeed Attaher ag Illi, the main topic was not the suitability for chieftaincy of both candidates, but their respective sides on the question of Malian rule over the Adagh. This is how Mohamed ag Intalla remembers those days:

> At the moment of independence I was still very young, but I still remember. I attended the Koranic school near the mosque. There were always people discussing things there. They had heard of Mali and said the country would become Muslim now. That provoked much discussion. Some believed it, others did not. Not only the Kel Adagh came to discuss things, but a lot of strangers too. People from Timbuktu, from Algeria, and from Gao. My grandfather had to put up I don't know how many tents to lodge these guests. They discussed the problem at length. Attaher said he didn't know any more either, and had to think about it. Intalla said they had to decide now. Then a *marabout* arrived from Gao, not an important *marabout*, but a minor one named Ghissa. He came with a black commander, or whatever he was, by car. They held prayer beads all the time. Everyone said it was true then, that the country would be Muslim. Intalla, who was *amenokal* [assistant chief to his father] then, signed a letter to the Malians written by Embakoua [the religious leader of the Adagh at the time] that they agreed on independence. Only Zeyd was against this. He said "Whatever his religion, I prefer to stay with someone of my own skin colour". Zeyd said the blacks had a complex because of their skin colour and this would give troubles. Then there was the problem with slavery. Intalla said it was too late now and if Zeyd really thought about it that way he should have said so earlier.[19]

Both parties had their supporters. However, support for Zeyd, and thus against Mali, was highest. Zeyd could count on the support for his case from Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, who remained in contact from his place of exile in Morocco. Zeyd was not only supported by the politically active. The common Kel Adagh was not much in favour of Intalla either. Even before Attaher's death, when both Zeyd and Intalla ruled as second in command to their father, the subject of Malian rule had provoked discussion as some Kel Adagh travellers had pointed out to Jerôme Regnier, a French officer in Southern Algeria.

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[19] Conversation with Mohamed ag Intalla. Kidal, 23/05/1999.

> Attaher has said he will never accept the rule of the blacks. He wants the same *tobol* [rulers] as Bey [ag Akhamouk, *amenokal* of the Hoggar]. Intalla on the other hand is happy with the blacks. But Intalla is "nothing". At present, Attaher wants nothing to do with Intalla. He only wants to work with his son Zeyd.[20]

In the end, Kel Adagh discussions on who should succeed Attaher were closed in Zeyd's favour, and he was subsequently appointed by the council of the Kel Adagh as the new *amenokal*. It then became clear whose alliance proved the strongest. Zeyd's support inside and outside the Adagh could not prevent the administration ruling in favour of Intalla, whom they appointed as the new *amenokal*, but only unofficially. Whereas his father had held an official and classified rank, with corresponding remuneration in the colonial administration, Intalla only held an informal position as figurehead and representative between the masses and the administration. Administrative meddling in what they considered their internal affairs became clear once again to the Kel Adagh. Those in favour of Zeyd would not consent to this situation. Their protest – a protest against not being heard and against being Malian in the first place – was brought home to the Malian Government in a violent way throughout 1963 and 1964.

At the height of the rebellion, the policy towards the chiefs was at its most incoherent. Officially, the chieftaincies had been completely dismantled. Nevertheless some chiefs, still being seen as such by the population, served as mediators between the army and the rebels. Their mediating task was facilitated by the army, which equipped them with guns, food and camels to tour the area. Therefore, in 1965 those chiefs who had rendered services during the rebellion were reinstated.

> In fact, these auxiliaries of the administration were put aside and therefore provoked difficulties in the execution of administrative orders toward the population (...) The decision to associate these traditional administrative agents has been favourably received by both the concerned chiefs and the population. To the administration this is a unique occasion to have the chiefs at their side, to educate them and to force the incapable into a real reconversion.[21]

In January 1967 Commandant de Cercle Diarra went even further, proposing to the Governor in Gao to reinstate Intalla 'officially at the head of the Kel Effele tribe, even if tomorrow a general decision to suppress the chieftaincy will hit him as it will hit others'.[22] Minister of the Interior Madeira Keita blocked Diarra's proposal, but despite not having an official position as tribal chief, Intalla was referred to as such by the administration and was financially re-

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[20] Regnier, J. 1960, CHEAM 3457:10.
[21] Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de janvier 1965. ACK.
[22] Cdt. Cercle Kidal à Gov. Gao. Kidal, 06/01/1967. ACK.

warded for his activities. In November 1967 Diarra proposed rewarding Intalla 'who is the sole to render some service, by according him, with retrospective effect from 1 January 1967, a monthly recompense of 10,000 francs, that, without nominating him as a tribal chief, will encourage him to serve with relative loyalty'.[23] The 10,000 francs proposed was the same amount of money Intalla had earned as salary as assistant chief to his father in colonial times.

Chiefs who did not collaborate faced a totally different fate. In February 1967 Hamzata ag Alkassem of the Kel Telabit, Ebeug ag Elmouack of the Taghat Mellet, and Bissaada ag Ghakad of the Idnan protested against the forced education of girls and their inclusion in the *Milice Populaire*, which they believed to be against Islam. Two other chiefs, Oumayata ag Sidi of the Iforgoumoussen and Bégui ag Rabidine of the Ibotenaten, who were in the *Cercle* of Ménaka at that time but who also resisted the education of girls, escaped with most of their tribes to Algeria before any measures could be taken against them.[24] The former three were removed from their unofficial office and brought to trial. They were sentenced to forced labour, carrying out the most menial activities, such as cleaning latrines. Being of advanced age, Ebeug ag Elmouack died under this punishment in November 1967.[25]

The institution of the chieftaincy would survive the Keita Regime. It might have come out in a transformed way, as it had come out of the colonial period in a transformed way, but the adaptive powers of African society and its internal political structures to new circumstances, a well studied subject, proved just as effective in the Adagh as elsewhere on the continent. After the 1968 coup d'état against Keita, and the creation of the single party Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien (UDPM) by Moussa Traoré in 1979, which was less hostile to traditional leaders that the US-RDA had been, a number of tribal chiefs or their sons managed to have themselves elected as representatives of their constituencies. Thus the traditional elite regained power in national politics after only two decades of absence.

The nomad problem

With the presentation of its first five-year plan in 1960, the Keita Government had embarked on a rather ambitious scheme of modernisation and industrialisation for the country. The plan counted on an extraordinary economic growth rate of 11% in the primary sector to finance the planned industrialisation and

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[23] Rapport du Cdt. Cercle Kidal no 45/KI.C. Rélatif au comportement des chefs de tribus nomades face à la révolution malienne. Kidal, 10/11/1967. ACK.

[24] Extrait de la revue mensuelle du mois de mars 1967 de l'Arrondissement nomade Tidarmene, Cercle Ménaka. ACK.

[25] Cdt. Cercle Kidal à Gov. Gao. Kidal, 15/12/1967. ACK.

infrastructural investments.[26] The Keita Regime based its financial investments in the industrial sector on increasing revenues in the primary sector. One of the most direct ways to increase these revenues was through better control over increased cattle exports. Even before independence, livestock had been Mali's main export product. The country was the largest exporter of cattle in West Africa.[27] This comparative advantage had to be put to use. In February 1962, Oumar Baba Diarra, Secretary of State for Animal Husbandry and Meat Industry, projected that by 1965, Mali should reach livestock exports 'at a value of 4,560,000,000 Franc CFA, 22% of total exports, involving 330,000 heads of cattle and 1,800,000 sheep and goats, against 180,000 and 830,000 respectively at present'.[28] Unfortunately, there were some major handicaps to overcome.

> Stockbreeding is confronted with unfavourable conditions: Difficulties in providing water, thus a pastoral hydraulic problem, scarcity of pastures and watering holes in the dry season, tsetse flies and other parasites, epidemics and animal diseases (bone-black, pneumonia, rinderpest, etc ...), pastures outside of Macina; no choice of reproductions; finally the mentality of the stockbreeder who prefers quantity over quality and who only takes older animals to the butcher.[29]

However, since the Government reserved most of its investments for the creation of a secondary sector not much money was left to improve conditions in the primary sector. Budgeted investment in agriculture was set at 25.6% of the total budget, but only 1.55% of this 25.6% was reserved for 'cattle'.[30] This investment had resulted by 1964 in the deepening of 16 seasonal wallows; 5 explorative drills for new wells; 12 veterinary posts; and 12 vaccination corrals.[31] By 1967 this 'impressive result' was augmented with 26 new wells in the *Cercle*s of Gao and Niafunké, the deepening of 20 others in the *Cercle* of Nara, and a campaign against rinderpest.[32] It is easy to imagine that these investments were insufficient to overcome the problems outlined above.

In livestock production, as in agriculture, the increase in production and revenues was expected to come from a change in attitude from the pastoral population towards livestock rearing. If the Mande were perceived to be essentially hard working, industrious and communalist, the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân were seen as essentially idle and lazy. The idea of the idle nomad is older than the Bible. Ancient Babylonian texts already convey the notion that the

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[26] Jones, W. 1976: 126.
[27] Cissé, M.N. 1964, CHEAM 3935.
[28] "Conference des chefs de circonscriptions d'élevage du Mali", *L'Essor*, 12/02/1962.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Jones, W. 1976: 119.
[31] Cissé, M.N. 1964, CHEAM 3935.
[32] Cissé, M.N. 1967, CHEAM 4239.

nomads surrounding the kingdom were lazy, anarchist and dangerous.[33] Both administrators and scientists alike reinvigorated the idea of the lazy nomad in colonial times.[34] Early literature on pastoralism notes a nomadic preoccupation with quantity in neglect of quality. A pastoralist's primary concern is the steady increase of numbers of the herds. When beset by catastrophe, numerous heads of cattle save nomadic existence. Herdsmen do not want to increase lactation yields or improve meat-build in animals; they simply want loads of them, at all costs. This is what is generally called 'contemplative pastoralism'. It is seen as irrational, inspired only by the love of herds, without regard to their conditions. Pastoralists are also seen as defiant of profit maximizing strategies. They only sell their animals when in need of cash to pay taxes or to acquire some basic materials, without further plans for investment since their herds are the only investment known to them.[35] Beside this laisser faire attitude in stockbreeding nomads are often accused of having a laisser faire attitude in general. The nomad is contemptuous of hard agricultural labour, '(...) all alike regard horticulture as toil forced on them by poverty of stock, for at heart they are herdsmen, and the only labour in which they delight is care of cattle'.[36] These ideas are basically false and the described attitudes are non-existent, but that did not make this perception less persistent among anthropologists, development specialist and colonial and post-colonial administrators until well in the 1990s.[37] The idea that nomads are disinclined to engage in any activity other than contemplative herding, caravan trade, and warfare, are hard to root out, despite the many detailed ethnographies depicting pastoral life as one of constant toil and labour.[38]

Scientific and colonial ideas about contemplative pastoralism and nomad anarchy informed the Keita Regime's policy in the North with respect to the nomad Kel Tamasheq. But not only their mentality with regards to raising cattle had to change, their whole way of life needed to. In his opening speech to the second regional social economic conference in Gao in 1962, governor Bakary

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33 Klengel, H. 1972.

34 Camel, F. 1996.

35 The fact that in many African societies cattle form the main investment for sedentary farmers, to the point of becoming nomads themselves, is overlooked. Haaland, G. 1969

36 Evans-Pritchard, E. 1940: 16.

37 For an excellent analysis of pastoral flexibility and operation in the high risk environment that is usually theirs, see Bruijn, de, M. & H. van Dijk 1995. For an analysis of Tamasheq pastoral trading patterns and profit maximisation, see Swift, J. 1979.

38 The most detailed work on pastoral work, concepts of labour and work ethic relevant for this study is Klute, G. 1992. But see also Bernus, E. 1981, 1990; Bourgeot, A. 1995.; Spittler, G. 1990, 1998.

Diallo gave a very vivid image of the Malian vision on French colonial policies in the Sahara, and its social and political outcomes:

> The colonial regime has entailed a prejudicial policy towards the nomads, of which the consequences are now fully visible. The colonial maniacs, in love with exotism, wanted to preserve the nomads for anthropologists, berberophile ethnographers, and Orientalist scholars exasperated by the XXth century, for whom an island of men untouched by the pollution of progress had to be found, so they could inhale the delicious perfume of antiquity from time to time. Thus, while everywhere else the first act of the colonial regime was to suppress slavery, France authorised the white nomad to keep his black slave called "*bellah*". The nomad was dispensed from military service and education. (...) Nomad society, as it is left to us by the colonial regime, undoubtedly poses us problems in light of the objectives of our socio-political programme. (...) Our objective is to know the problems that we, in reference to the colonial regime, will call the nomad problem.[39]

Photo 3.1
Bakary Diallo (with sunglasses),
Governor of the Gao *Région*, in 1963.
[*Source*: Klemm, H. & H. Klemm, *Die Enkel der Könige*. Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt. Courtesy of Mrs. H. Klemm.]

[39] Typescript of speech by Gouverneur de la Région de Gao, Conférence régionale des cadres politiques, administratifs, août 1962. AMATS dossier no 6.

The 'nomad problem' that the Keita Regime perceived to have, mainly consisted of inherited colonial perceptions of the nomadic populations and of a negative appreciation of nomad social economy as counter to modernity. It can be summarised as follows: The nomad practices an irrational pastoral mode of production, the results of which are illegally exported; there are deficits in cereals due to the non-existence of agricultural practice; there are further deficits in basic needs as the nomad population is basically unproductive; they have a lack of formal education; they are still ruled by traditional chiefs, instead of organised US-RDA party structures; and, last but not least, nomadic existence itself makes effective administration and development of these backward populations impossible. In James Scott's terms: Their mobility made them illegible to the administration.[40]

The new Malian administration was determined to solve 'the nomad problem'. Believing in modern technique, rational production, socialism, and, above all, the malleability of the human condition, the new regime was determined to put the Sahara to use and civilise its population. The regime was convinced that agriculture was possible in the Sahara; that the Kel Tamasheq could and should be sedentarised and educated; and that they should take up farming and ranching, instead of wandering around and counting their heads of cattle.

In order to rationalise the pastoral economy and to socialise the nomads the Keita Regime made the sedentarisation of nomadic populations one of its main goals in Northern Mali. Material found in the Kidal *Cercle* archives indicates that sedentarisation projects were indeed high on the local agenda during the Keita Regime. In reports to their superiors, local administrators on *Arrondissement* and *Cercle* level paid much attention to the topic. But in assessing the outcome of the effort, it is hard to discern between discourse and practice. Reading administrative reports from the Keita period is similar to reading a communist manifesto. Much paper is used in phraseology; far less is used to give concrete results. No figures are given on sedentarised nomads. Nevertheless, existing material draws at least a rough outline. Sedentarisation policies were non-existent prior to the 1963 revolt, despite the regime's rhetoric. The sedentarisation process gained impetus after the revolt was over in 1964, and gained more speed at the end of the Keita Regime in 1967. It can only be guessed whether the growing numbers of sedentarised nomads were due to the regime's efforts, or to the then already rising deficit in rainfall, culminating in the drought of 1973. The regime's success in settling the nomads in the Kidal area seems to have been restricted to the central *Arrondissement* of Kidal itself, and the *Arrondissement* of Boughessa, where the Wadi Telabit and the proximity of the Tigharghar Mountains, with their more permanent water sources,

[40] Scott, J. 1998: 2-3.

made sedentary life less hazardous. The most western *Arrondissement* of Ti-n-Essako was rightly seen as totally unsuitable for sedentary life, since the plains of the Tamesna had no permanent or even temporary water wells. Even if some Kel Adagh settled in villages, this was only on a temporary basis. To the annoyance of the administration, nomads would settle during the dry season, cultivating small gardens, only to leave again after the rainy season had started. *Commandant de Cercle* Diarra noted in August 1967:

> Many settled nomads, who consider nomadism these days as a holiday, have abandoned the villages and their gardens in favour of the tents, thus compromising the success of the first part of our agricultural plan. We have been obliged to redistribute the abandoned gardens among the workers who remained, especially to a *bellah fraction* which made demands for a collective garden.[41]

Nevertheless, some nomads settled for at least part of the year. Places like Aguelhok, Boughessa, Telabit and Anefis, until then mere names on a map, became real villages after 1964. A few figures give us an idea of this process. In 1967, the village of Aguelhok counted 122 inhabitants.[42] Kidal town grew from 460 inhabitants in 1960 to 1,945 inhabitants in 1967.[43] However, it is unclear how many of these inhabitants were sedentarised nomads and how many were civil and military servicemen and their families who were strongly present in the Adagh after the 1964 rebellion. The earliest reliable data we have for the numbers of sedentary inhabitants and the numbers of nomadic inhabitants in the Adagh after independence dates from 1974. In that year the census counted a total of 15,489 people, of whom 3,544 were sedentary villagers and 11,945 nomads. But the number of town dwellers is likely to have been inflated by the number of drought refugees who took up nomadic existence again when conditions were favourable. In Kidal city, it seems the only settled Kel Adagh were the *goumiers* with their families, amounting to 417 people, and 146 former slaves who had settled in town. In Aguelhoc and Telabit there lived, in all, 76 villagers of unspecified origins. In Tessalit there lived 808 town dwellers, of which the majority is likely to have been of Algerian origins.[44]

Above I have briefly sketched the outcomes of the French colonial educational policies in the North. The Malian attitude towards educating the Kel Tamasheq was entirely different. It was perceived as a first necessity to bring the Kel Tamasheq within the modern progressive world, liberating them from

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41 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois d'août 1967. ACK.

42 Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de mai 1967. ACK.

43 Rapport du Commandant de Cercle de Kidal sur le problème d'eau face à la sédentarisation dans l'Adrar, 02/06/1967. ACK.

44 Répertoire des villages 1974, Région de Gao. ACK.

their 'backwardness'. Compared to the colonial efforts in education, the Malian results are impressive indeed. A large increase in the number of pupils was due to the rebellion ravaging the *Cercle* in 1963-1964. It left the boarding school in Kidal town with approximately 400 orphaned children in permanent residence. But this was not the only cause of the increase. Whereas by the end of the colonial period only one school had existed in the *Cercle* of Kidal, at In Tedeyni, the Keita Regime left an additional five at Kidal, Tessalit, Boughessa, Aguelhoc, and Ti-n-Essako. In the educational year 1967-68, a total of 910 children attended school, drawn from a dispersed nomadic population of around 15,000 in all.[45] The educational curriculum under the Keita Regime went beyond mere courses in literacy and mathematics. Its first aim was to inculcate youngsters with a patriotic spirit and a sense of national consciousness. At school, speaking Tamasheq was forbidden. Only French and Bamanakan were allowed. The Mandefication of the state was in full swing in the Adagh. Next to patriotism, the children were taught the sense of equality of all Malian citizens. The feudal lords and the feudal system needed to be abolished. After school hours, children were occupied with the Pioneers, a national scouting corps, where they were taught how to camp and shoot rifles, strange occupations indeed given the distrust the Government had of the nomad anarchist Tamasheq warriors. In addition to the Pioneers, the *troupes artistiques*, folk groups performing theatre, songs and dances, played an important educational role. These *troupes artistiques* had a uniquely Southern repertoire of Mande origins. The theatre pieces were meant to educate and uplift both performers and audience on a large variety of social issues. In Northern Mali, theatre often had slavery and feudalism as its main themes. The *troupes artistiques* also performed outside the Adagh. Captain Diby Sillas Diarra was of the opinion that, in this way, the Kel Adagh children would get to know their country and would get to appreciate the efforts the Party made for their education.

Education and sedentarisation were not enough to transform the nomad into a hard-working member of Malian society. Work ethics needed to be changed as well. This was promoted in the same ways as it was elsewhere in Mali: Through the so-called 'human investment' and the creation of the *Service Civique*.[46] The '*chantiers d'honneur*' in the North were not only meant to create new buildings, but also to install a sense of civil duty and a particular work ethic in the nomad population. From the *Rapports Mensuels* one gets the impression that nearly every administrative building in the Kidal area has been built through *fasobara* after independence. The *Service Civique*, organised into brigades, had very likely been installed in the Adagh as well on a small scale.

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[45] Based on ag Litny, I. 1992.

[46] Bogosian, C. 2003; Rossillion, C. 1966.

Fasobara and the *Service Civique* have left bitter memories among all Malians who lived those days, as they resembled the colonial forced labour and the *deuxième portion*. However, to the Kel Tamasheq of free origins, both *fasobara* and the *deuxième portion* were unknown since they had been exempted from forced labour and military recruitment of any kind in colonial times. To them, the state demands in labour were an entirely new experience, and so were the works they were forced to do: Building houses and tending gardens. What made things worse from a Tamasheq perspective, was that the regime forced women to work as well. In an ideal Tamasheq discourse on work and activity, women of free descent do not work. Only younger women of lower social status might be active as goat herders. Women are only responsible for putting up the tents (which are theirs) and cooking. The house slaves provide all other necessary labour. If these are absent, men and boys fetch firewood and water, tasks that in a Mande household would be women's labour. Although in reality many Tamasheq women worked, labour divisions and practices were still different from those in the South. This was much to the contempt of southern administrators. As one Lieutenant Mamadou Traoré, *Chef d'Arrondissement* in Ti-n-Essako observed:

> Here, men are revolted by manual labour. Their efforts are restricted to watering the animals and fetching water. In certain classes and by weakness of character, they voluntarily consent to perform household tasks instead of their spouses. (...) Previously isolated from the outside world, the nomad woman is now involved in certain activities: Fetching water and tending the animals. She evolves more rapidly than the men do.[47]

Thus, women were put to work making clay bricks at the sites of human investment. This practice seems to have been put in place after February 1964, when the Malian army installed the 'zone of retreat' (see Chapter 3), concentrating the civil population – especially the women – in urban centres. This is still remembered with great resentment in the Adagh.

> Mali put women in prison. He [Mali] forced them to make bricks. If they didn't make bricks, he killed them and flogged them. Tamasheq women who, before, did not even pick up with their own hand what was in front of their eyes![48]

The fact that women were forced to work was not the only source of resentment. Forced labour on the sites of human investment was exactly seen as such, and this experience was then put to words in the local discourse on domination: That of slavery. This in turn would upset the Southern administrators who felt attacked in their dignity.

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[47] Rapport de synthèse de fin d'année 1972 de l'Adjudant Mamadou Traoré, *Chef d'Arrondissement* de Ti-n-Essako no 007\SC\A.TKO. ACK.

[48] Conversation with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.

> The chief of the *fraction* Imrad wan Adjous is honoured to inform you that certain individuals, (...) on their turn to work on the human investments have said to others of the same *fraction* that they do not work for captives.[49]

The scale of human investment in the Adagh can still be seen. Reports from towns such as Telabit and Aguelhoc also frequently mention the creation of schools and other buildings by 'human investment' and these buildings are still standing. The sports stadium in central Kidal – a large, walled, levelled terrain with a terrace, a basketball field and soccer posts – was constructed in this way as well. Ironically and perhaps to erase the bad memory, construction of this much used public space is now attributed by most Kel Adagh to their favourite colonial administrator, Jean Clauzel.

Educated, sedentarised, and hard working, the Kel Tamasheq would be able to raise their living standards by supplementing their improved pastoral techniques with horticulture and agriculture. In September 1958 a Sudanese delegation headed by Modibo Keita paid a ten-day visit to Israel on the invitation of then Minister of Foreign Affairs Golda Meir.[50] The delegation visited the Kibitzes in the Negev, which would make a lasting impression. The mission reported to the US-RDA territorial conference of October 1958, where Keita summed up the reasons for Israeli success in desert farming as follows:

> This economic take off is most of all the result of belief. Belief in the ideal of the resurrection of a country, of the rehabilitation of a persecuted and shattered people willing to regain its unity, which it has already gained by rallying around that what binds: The soil. (...) Fatherland, to them, is first and foremost land, and this notion, considered sentimental by some, makes Israel today the only socially equal and truly independent country in the Middle East.[51]

The impressions of the US-RDA mission to Israel would form the basis of the Malian agricultural policy, finding direct expression in the '*Retour à la Terre*' and '*Action Rurale*' policies proclaimed directly after the 1958 territorial conference, and strongly influencing the first five-year plan. But it would be especially influential on the Malian ideal of desert agriculture expressed in the Malian North in the years to come. In those days the miracle of the Israeli socialist democracy and its accomplishments in desert farming served as an example to many arid countries. It showed that fertilizing the desert, growing citrus fruits and cereals, even in sufficient quantities for export, was possible after all. The Malian visitors were equally impressed. However, they forgot one

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[49] Message RAC 11/01/1962. ACK.

[50] Affaires politiques, Soudan, Administration générale: Evolution politique (rapports, télégrammes officielles, presse) 1958-1959. ANSOM – 1affpol/2188/3.

[51] Action Rurale, Conférence Territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise 17-18-19 Octobre 1958, Compte Rendu du Voyage en Israël. Imprimerie du Gouvernement, Koulouba (Soudan). ANM – RS 233.

crucial point: Israel had permanent sources of surface water, which Northern Mali did not. Nevertheless, the regime was determined to launch agricultural and horticultural schemes in the North. At present a small number of shrub-like orange trees in Ménaka and a few mango trees in Kidal still bear testimony to this enterprise.

Under the guidance of the Malian army, installed in the Adagh in large numbers after 1963, the local administration launched agricultural projects. In 1965 five production brigades were created in the *Arrondissements* of Kidal, Tessalit, and Aguelhoc, each consisting of twelve people. These brigades were very likely to have been a variety of the *Service Civique* mentioned above.[52] Most of these new farmers were former slaves. Their incorporation in the brigades not only served the cause of agricultural production and civic coercion, but also their own emancipation. The brigades were responsible for most of the agricultural production in the Adagh in the last years of the Keita Regime but besides these brigades collective gardens were created at each school; at army bases; in each village; and for some *fraction*s. Women's groups too had their own gardens.[53] Dates, potatoes, wheat, maize, tomatoes and tobacco were planted, and sometimes harvested. At the local economic conference of Gao in 1965 *Commandant de Cercle* Diarra outlined a bright and optimistic picture of horticultural results in the Adagh.

> After the one hundred percent conclusive experience of more than 15 posts spread over the *Cercle*; of the quantitatively and qualitatively satisfactory harvests at Kidal, Tessalit, Aguelhoc and Telabit; we formally affirm that at the conclusion of his education and initiation the nomad of our circumscription ceases to be the symbol of misery and razzias, because of the possibilities he will have to sow and to harvest potatoes in quantity and quality. (...) Our primary goal is to convince the nomad that not only should he continue to perfect and enrich his pastoral methods, but also to balance his economic life, while avoiding to look elsewhere, especially abroad, for what he can produce in the family gardens. Some date palms, some beds of wheat, potatoes, and tobacco suffice to strongly elevate the subsistence level of the nomad in the Adrar. With the help of our example and education, we are sure he will get there.[54]

This presentation of horticultural results is likely to have been exaggerated and overoptimistic. First of all, as far as horticulture was possible in the Adagh, it was only so in the oasis towns mentioned. Here, horticulture had already been

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[52] ag Mohamed, A. 1977: 16-18. Ag Mohamed calls these units *brigades de promotion*. From his description it becomes clear that they were organised along the lines of the *Service Civique*.

[53] Ibid.: 16-18.

[54] Typescript of speech by Commandant de Cercle Diarra at the 7th conférence régionale, Gao 22 to 24 august 1966. (n.d.). ACK.

practised since the foundation of these towns. In the case of Tessalit and Kidal, date palm groves and tobacco gardens had been erected and owned by Bidân well before colonial conquest.[55] In colonial times, European and African administrative staff alike grew potatoes and vegetables with moderate success for their own consumption. The vast majority of the Kel Adagh however, had always refused to alter their nomadic life in the slightest way to tend gardens. Date palm projects started by French *Commandant de Cercle* Clauzel in the early 1950s had all failed miserably due to lack of local interest.[56] The agricultural projects started by the Malian army as an example to the local population in the Adagh only worked under threat of arms. Many of those families who had fallen victim to the repression of the 1963-1964 rebellion, either by losing their herds or by forced settlement in the villages in the 'zone of retreat', had no other choice than to try and grow vegetables. Only in this way could the formerly idle wandering nomads be transformed into Malians.

But growing vegetables and eating them are two different matters. The administration was not only concerned with the horticultural endeavours of the sedentarised nomads, but also with their consumption of their own products. Vegetables did not form part of the traditional nomadic diet. In order to stimulate the population to grow them anyway the administration decided to buy the crops from the gardeners at subsidised prices.[57] This policy seems to have born some fruit. In February 1967 the inhabitants of Kidal, organising their first agricultural market, could bring sixty tons of potatoes to the market, produced by two hundred farmers. A feature proudly announced by *Commandant de Cercle* Diarra as 'the Adagh's most revolutionary act'.

> During this month the consumption of vegetables has increased considerably, as well as the consumption of potatoes, which shows an unprecedented engagement in agriculture of all social classes in the *Cercle*.[58]

The analogy of the parent trying to force his unruly child to eat vegetables for his own good is almost too banal to make, if it wasn't for the fact that much colonial discourse is framed in precisely that language of paternalism, and that this paternalism is generally seen as the hallmark of European colonial domi-

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[55] The French military explorer of the Adagh Cortier states that before colonial times a small number of farmers existed in the Adagh. They cultivated dates, tobacco and wheat, but their numbers had declined. Cortier, M. & R. Chudeau, 1925: 10. According to ag Mohamed, agriculture was stamped out by the colonial administration, which was afraid the nomads would settle. Ag Mohamed, A. 1977: 16.

[56] Inspection des Affaires Administratives du Cercle de Kidal, 1937-1957. ANM – FRD-20/1957.

[57] Interview with former Lt. Samaké. Bamako, 03/11/1998.

[58] Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de février 1967. ACK.

nation in the 19th and 20th century. There is hardly any stronger proof possible for the paternalistic and colonial attitude of uplift and betterment of the lives of the poor natives from the side of the Keita Regime than this attempt to make the nomads eat vegetables.

The optimistic horticultural situation in the Adagh outlined by Diarra can be juxtaposed with the presentation of a report on agriculture one year earlier by his colleague Muphtah ag Hairy in riverain Bourem at the regional conference in August 1966.

> We abstain from advancing figures for the good reason that until now they do not represent reality. Indeed our experiences so far show us that the agricultural agents invent them at their desk, multiplying random yields per hectare to a random cultivated surface. (...) It should, however, be recognised that even in good years, the *Cercle* is not self sufficient and always needs exterior help. (...) The second phenomenon, not less dangerous, is the tendency of the farmer to become a pastoralist and to abandon the soil. (...) This year, laudable efforts have been made in the horticultural domain in which the riverain villages take more and more interest. The consumption of vegetables still not having entered the alimentary habits of our masses, we fear our gardeners will face a sales problem in the near future. Rural cooperatives have been installed in all villages, but it should be admitted that they do not function. The collective fields, with some small exceptions, have not produced anything, and funding is so minimal that they do not allow for important operations.[59]

This grim but honest picture is likely to represent the situation in the Adagh as much as it represents the state of affairs in riverain Bourem. As a provisional conclusion it can be said that the efforts undertaken by the Keita Regime to sedentarise the Kel Tamasheq and to transform them into hard-working farmers were a failure. In 1966, in all, three hundred people practised horticulture in the *Cercle*. This number probably consisted mostly of administrative and military staff.[60]

After the fall of the Keita Regime the Traoré regime quickly decided to stop all efforts in forced sedentarisation and agriculture in the Sahara.[61] The agricultural brigades ceased to exist and even the agricultural service withdrew itself from Kidal. Only in the village of Tessalit, which already had a small tradition of growing dates and tobacco before colonial times, was the experiment somewhat successful.[62] However, involuntary settlement rose dramatically with the drought of 1973, and again with that of 1984. The decimating effect on herds of these droughts made most of the Kel Adagh either flee the region or

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59 Rapport du Cercle de Bourem, présenté à la 7ème conférence régionale, Gao 22 au 24 août 1966. ACK.

60 ag Mohamed, A. 1977: 17.

61 Vallet, M. 1970, CHEAM 4374.

62 ag Mohamed, A. 1977: 19.

forced them to settle down in the provisional refugee camps. Some of them probably remembered the days when the Government helped the sedentarised nomads to grow vegetables, which they could sell to stay alive. Cynically enough, demands made in the 1970s by some spokesmen of the community to be equipped with farming material were not at all heeded.[63]

The revenues: Cattle and tax

Although I have tried to make clear that 'the civilisation of the backward nomad population' was a goal in itself, the policies in the North were partly geared toward the increase in state revenues form livestock. The main option for the Government to command revenues from livestock production was control over cattle export, which was then still in the hands of private merchants. These bought cattle from their producers and then hired professional herdsman to drive them on foot to the neighbouring countries. Formally, export taxes had to be paid, but these could be easily circumvented by lack of border control. This changed in 1962 with the creation of the Malian Franc. The new currency had the same value as the CFA Franc, but currency exchange was only possible at the Malian National Bank, which forced the merchants to declare their imports, exports, and revenues. The creation of the Malian Franc struck a major blow to the merchant community, but not to the Kel Adagh who exported most of their livestock themselves to the Algerian Touat, exchanging their animals directly for consumer goods on the local market. This could not be prevented by the new monetary measures. Another measure taken by the Government to augment state revenues from animal husbandry was the heavy increase of the cattle tax in 1962. The increase in cattle tax was announced ex ante in the national newspaper *L'Essor* on 20 February 1962.

> Cattle are without doubt one of the greatest riches of our nation (...) its value in capital amounts probably to the sum of 50 billion francs. Yet, the returns on cattle tax were thus far ludicrous. The reasons for this insufficiency in returns are known. Whatever the case, we should distance ourselves from former mistakes such as simply retaking the numbers from last year, without taking into account the intermediary increase, and to tax the big cattle owners for an infinitely small part of their herds, while the small and average pastoralists find themselves taxed on the totality of their production (...) in reality, the percentage of taxation varies between 1.5% and 3% of the market value of the animals. The effort demanded from pastoralists is thus smaller than that of other categories of contributors and they can, without much inconvenience, contribute about 3% of their riches in tax, and sometimes even less.[64]

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63 Ibid.: 28-29.

64 "M. Attaher Maiga, ministre des finances expose les grandes lignes du budget national", *L'Essor*, 20/02/1962.

Officially the new tax rates on livestock were effective on 1 January 1962, but they came into effect in the 1963 budget. The rise of the cattle tax in 1963 has been put forward as the main explanation for the 1963 revolt in the Adagh. Nomadic existence is hit hard by an increase in cattle tax, as livestock is not only a source of income but also a means of production. Let us look at the figures available. Indeed, theoretically, when the cattle tax increase came into effect, the amount of tax paid should rise dramatically. Per head, the tax on cattle rose 150%, on donkeys 100%, on horses 33%, on camels a huge 207%, and on sheep and goats again 100%. The dramatic effect of this increase was greatly enhanced by coming after years of stability since the small increase in 1956. However, there are several reasons why I would like to refute the idea that the tax increase, even when it came in exactly the right year – 1963 – was the primary reason for revolt in the Adagh. On the basis of Tables 3.1 to 3.3, I have calculated the number of animals (by species) per taxable head of the population in the various *Cercle*s of the North, and the average amount of tax they should pay in sum for their herd in 1963. These figures are presented in Table 3.4. It is clear that the tax on camels rose most spectacularly, and despite the fact that in Kidal the amount of cattle tax to be paid was among the highest in the *Région*, we cannot say the Kel Adagh were hit the hardest by the tax increase. The *Cercle* of Kidal ranks third in the classification of possible tax revenues. Stockbreeders in Gourma Rharous and Ménaka especially, had to pay even more. Their considerably higher average number of cattle per capita partly made up for their lower numbers of camels, which in Ménaka was not much lower than in Kidal in the first place. Despite being hit less hard than Kidal, the *Cercle* of Ansongo still shows a dramatically higher amount of cattle tax to be paid than the last five *Cercle*s: Bourem, Diré, Goundam, Gao and Timbuktu. Yet, the Kel Tamasheq and other stockbreeders in these three hard hit *Cercle*s – Ansongo, Rharous and Ménaka – did not rise in revolt. Second, the total amount of cattle in the entire North amounted to 513,748 head. The total amount of cattle in all of Mali advanced by Cissé was 4,200,000.[65] Hence, only 12% of all cattle could be found in the North. The vast majority of Malian cattle herds could be found in the *Région* of Mopti. If the tax increase was a strong reason to revolt against the Government, certainly, the hardest resistance would be found in this area, where a large part of the population was also largely dependent on livestock for its existence, unless, of course, this population had a stronger sense of civic duty and loyalty to the tax-imposing state. The third and perhaps strongest argument against tax increase being the main incentive for revolt in the Adagh can be found in a poem:

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[65] Cissé, M.N. 1964, CHEAM 3935.

Table 3.1 Cattle tax in Soudan Français and Mali 1955-1963 in CFA Francs and Franc Malien

Tax per head per year in CFA (=FM)	cattle	asses	horses	camels	sheep/goats
1955	110	55	275	110	20
1956-1962	120	60	300	130	25
1963	300	120	400	400	50

Source: Projet de budget, Cercle de Kidal, 1960. ACK.

Table 3.2 Numbers of livestock and budgeted cattle tax revenues per *Cercle*, *Région* of Gao, 1963

Cercle	cattle (300)	asses (120)	horses (400)	camels (400)	sheep/goat (50)	budgeted revenues 1963
Ansongo	79,529	9,322	1,067	8,486	236,489	41,262,190
Bourem	67,885	13,982	3,026	12,867	127,581	36,595,190
Dire	22,202	3,575	1,333	52	74,947	12,401,750
Gao	59,229	7,390	2,295	3,225	111,958	27,858,400
Goundam	60,000	10,000	1,200	2,800	190,000	31,065,000
Kidal	14,015	6,371	13	14,203	102,112	15,768,820
Ménaka	53,999	16,904	222	24,271	230,293	44,673,320
Rharous	131,704	11,157	1,530	1,535	395,177	62,762,890
Timbuktu	25,185	7,159	547	9,542	124,728	19,014,780
Total	513,748	86,860	11,243	77,031	1,593,265	291,382,250

Source: *Région* de Gao, Budget regional 1963, taxe sur le bétail. ACK.

Table 3.3 Regional per capita tax, *Région* of Gao, 1963

Cercle	amount 1963*	population	revenues 1963**
Ansongo	120 and 100	34,160	3,793,680
Bourem	120 and 100	51,263	6,691,440
Diré	120	34,424	4,130,880
Gao	120 and 100	39,559	3,820,560
Goundam	120 and 100	56,200	6,204,000
Kidal	120 and 100	11,034	1,137,720
Ménaka	120 and 100	21,477	2,161,360
Rharous	120 and 100	41,501	4,321,480
Timbuktu	120 and 100	25,637	3,621,500
Total		315,255	35,882,620

Source: Région de Gao, Budget Régional 1963, taxe sur le bétail. ACK.

* Amount of tax to be paid by sedentary population: 120 FM, nomads: 100 FM.

** This is the budgeted revenue, not the levied revenue.

Table 3.4 Average number of head of livestock per taxable head of population and average amount of cattle tax to be paid sum total in *Région* of Gao, 1963

Cercle	cattle	asses	camels	sheep/goats	average cattle tax sum total
Ansongo	2.32	0.27	0.24	6.92	1170.04 FM
Bourem	1.32	0.27	0.25	2.48	652.40 FM
Diré	0.64	0.16	0.001	2.17	320.10 FM
Gao	1.49	0.18	0.08	2.83	642.10 FM
Goundam	1.06	0.17	0.04	3.38	523.40 FM
Kidal	1.27	0.57	1.28	9.25	1423.90 FM
Ménaka	2.51	0.78	1.13	10.72	1861.78 FM
Rharous	3.17	0.26	0.03	9.52	1470.20 FM
Timbuktu	0.98	0.27	0.37	4.86	717.40 FM

Source: Based on Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

Ahelelu is behind the mountain with his camp
They pay no tax
Mali goes to the wars against the Iforas to punish them
They pay no tax
But the Iforas have guns and bullets, they kill the military of Mali
Iforas pay no tax
Ahelelu is dead, but his son takes his place
Iforas pay no tax.[66]

Here, the reasons for revolt are turned upside down. It was not so much the increase in taxes that sparked the Kel Adagh to revolt, but the fact that they did not pay any taxes in the first place that set the Malian army to punish them. The idea that the Ifoghas did not pay tax can be easily supported. Virtually every report from the colonial administration mentions the resistance against the levying of taxes. The delay in payment is constant. The same goes for the scant evidence available for the Malian administration. In spring 1967, only a rough 15% (FM 3,659,725 of FM 23,873,060) of national taxes and a rough 65% (FM 490,740 of FM 768,720) of regional taxes had been collected in the *Cercle* of Kidal for the running fiscal year, with regional and national taxes for the fiscal years 1966 and 1965 still not fully collected.[67] Ifoghas paid no tax.

[66] Nicolaisen, J. & I. Nicolaisen 1997: 581.

[67] Based on: Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de février 1967; Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois d'avril 1967; and Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de mai 1967. ACK.

Fear and rumours in Kidal: The buildup to rebellion

So far, this chapter has discussed the relation between the Keita Regime and the Kel Tamasheq in a more general way, looking at policies toward all nomads and their impact, albeit with much evidence coming from the *Cercle* of Kidal. Here, I would like to deal with the Adagh in particular in the years prior to *Alfellaga*, the rebellion of 1963. After independence, relations between state officials and the local elite in the Adagh were strained almost from the start. The Malian administrators, on the one hand, had a fearful perception of the Kel Adagh as a people under the sway of French neo-colonialism, unhappy with their inclusion in the Malian state, and therefore liable to rebel. On the other hand, the Kel Adagh loathed the Malian administration which to them represented a government which broke its promises on the form Kel Adagh inclusion in Mali would take, which consisted of infidels and mere slaves, and which had been unwanted from the start. I will argue that, again, the lack of communication and misunderstanding were based on deep-seated mutual negative stereotypes, this time leading to, and enhanced by, rumours spreading on both sides.

Rumour is not so much about its subject as it is about trust and distrust, about familiarity and distance. Rumour is not necessarily a misinterpretation of things not well understood, nor is it necessarily fed by the absence of information. It is an interpretation within the realities of the interpreter, and an appreciation of the trustworthiness of the information and the trustworthiness of its source. There is a marked difference between the well-known African *radio trottoir*, which shares a number of the qualities of rumour, and rumour itself. *Radio trottoir* is essentially regarded as news. That is to say: A rendering of actual reality conveyed through, and emanating from, trustworthy sources. Rumour conveys an inherent message of uncertainty and lack of trustworthiness. Rumour is perforce about tension, excitement in the case of positive rumour, and anxiety in the case of negative rumour. Rumours are telling about social and political relations and power structures. As a very off-hand rule of thumb, one could say that the intensity and persistence of rumours rise and fall in proportion with the level of power relations and the acceptance of its structures, while they react in a manner inversely proportional to the level of intensity of the social and political contact that is at the basis of the subject of rumour. Rumours can be about good or bad things, and in both cases the rule of thumb applies. Also, the wilder the rumour, the further one is removed from the organisation. Rumours are not untrustworthy sources; they are just tricky to interpret correctly. As Luise White put it: 'The imaginary makes the real, just as it makes more imaginings: It is the inclusion of both that gives depth to historical

analyses, and, if not some certainty, at least solid grounds on which to assess motivations, causes, and ideas'.[68]

The national and international setting further complicated the political situation in the Adagh. Nationally the new regime was not sure of its command over the newly independent country. The Dioula protest over the Malian Franc, resulting in the political elimination of the former PSP leadership, and the Dogon rebellion discussed previously were the clearest signals of this lack of full control. The Keita Regime was therefore prone to overreact in tense situations. Internationally, continued French presence in the Adagh and in the countries surrounding Mali, notably the Algerian Sahara, made the regime uncomfortable on one hand, and on the other hand it was seen by some Kel Adagh as a sign that not all hopes of an independent Tamasheq existence with French help were lost.

Under the policy of Africanisation of the administration inaugurated prior to formal independence, the top ranking civil and military commanders serving in the Adagh were chosen from what came closest to the local population. By May 1960 the *Commandant de Cercle* of Kidal was a local man from Goundam: Mohamed ould Mohamed Najim of mixed Bidân and Kel Intessar origins. The *Chef de Poste* at Tessalit, Mohamed Mahmoud, was a Bidân. The commander of the Kidal *goum* police corps, Mohamed Belkacem, was from the Adagh itself. The commander of the main army platoon in the area, the *Groupement Nomade du Timetrine* (GNT), was second lieutenant Mohamed ag Mohamed Alhadi, nicknamed Zoulbeyba, a Kel Intessar. The new local commanders, particularly those of the *goum*, tried to gain the confidence of the population in the same way the French had done. On each patrol they took such luxury items like medicines, tea and sugar with them to distribute as presents in the visited camps. Another way to gain popularity was the elimination of predatory animals that caused so much loss of domestic animals in the area. The task of the *goum* to gain confidence was not an easy one. In colonial times, the *goumiers* were the epitome of all that was bad in the state: They collected taxes; kidnapped children to bring them to the French schools; and claimed riding camels from the population for their work. They had only been kept in check by the French commanders, who were now gone. The presence of Tamasheq administrators at the head of the *Cercle* meant that all language barriers between rulers and ruled had fallen away, but despite the possibility of clear communication the relations between the Malian administration and the Kel Adagh were fed by rumours. Nothing seemed tangible; everything depended on hearsay, misinterpreted statements, shreds of information and fear on both sides.

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[68] White, L. 2000: 308.

The regime's fear of troubles in the Adagh was enhanced by the political circumstances in the bordering countries. The Adagh borders Algeria to the north and Niger to the east. Where Mali had opted for the socialist road, and was eager to break with 'neo-colonial dependency relations', Niger opted for stronger ties with France. The country remained part of the OCRS which had survived West African independence as a development organization, resulting in French investments in Northern Niger and a prolonged administration by French *Commandants* of the Nigerien Sahara. The last French *Commandant* in Agadez only resigned from his post in 1964. The result was that Malian Tamasheq citizens living in the border area were eager to migrate to Niger, much to Malian resentment. In Mauritania, French troops were still present at the request of the Mauritanian President Mokhtar ould Daddah, to ensure the new Mauritanian state's security against unrelenting Moroccan claims on its territory. The reality of this threat was proven by various smaller attacks against Mauritanian officials throughout 1960 and 1961. French troops were also employed against smaller pro-Moroccan uprisings within Mauritania during those years, in the Hodh and in the *Cercle* of Nema.[69] In Algeria the war of independence had still not reached the Tamasheq south, despite efforts made to include the Kel Hoggar and the Kel Ajjer in the ranks of the FLN.[70] French rule in the Saharan part of the country was still strong. French military presence was only on the increase. The development of de Gaulle's French nuclear strike force started in 1957 with the construction of nuclear test bases in the Hoggar at I-n-Ekker, Reggane and Takormiasse. These bases were constructed by locally recruited workers and workers from Soudan Français, since Algerians were not trusted for fear of FLN affiliation. The working conditions were harsh, but work was well paid and attracted quite a few Kel Adagh who were eagerly employed.[71] The nuclear bases were to remain under full French control until 1967. Moreover, some French officers who had served in the Malian North and some officers from the *Administration des Affaires Musulmanes* had been transferred to the Algerian South.[72] Clauzel, one of the longest serving French *Commandants* of the Adagh now served in Tamanrasset, where he would stay until Al-

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69 Guillemin, J. 1982.

70 Based on Blin, L. 1990; Renaud, 1993; Vallet, M. 1990.

71 Tschumy, J. n.d., CHEAM 3937.The first base was built at Reggane in 1957, where above ground test explosions were carried out in 1960. The second base was constructed at I-n-Ekker, where below ground test explosions took place. The third base was built at Takormiasse.

72 From 1958 onwards, Marcel Cardaire, former head of the Administration des Affaires Musulmanes in Soudan Français, was stationed in Southern Algeria, Annexe du Tidikelt Hoggar, until an unknown date. Affaires politiques, Mauritanie, administration générale 1958. ANSOM – 1affpol/2172/5. Under embargo.

gerian independence. The presence of Clauzel and other former colonial officers who had served in Soudan Français inspired distrust. Would they stay in Algeria, uninterested in Mali, or would they take the opportunity to spark unrest and rekindle the OCRS fire within the Adagh? Although the Malian Government lacked any tangible evidence of their further interest in Northern Mali, clearly these 'agents of neo-colonialism' could not be trusted. In October 1960, Minister of the Interior Madeira Keita wrote a circular to the *Commandants* in the North about the possible presence of French spies and agitators in Mali.

> I have the honour to inform you that it has been brought to my attention that Frenchmen disguised as Bidân might have been sent from Senegal through Mauritania, in order to spread subversion in the Republic of Mali. The elements concerned have served a long time in the Sahel and speak Bidân without accent. To mislead the population, the elements concerned could visit the mosques, nomad camps, they could act piously, recruit informers, select reconnaissance posts, introduce and distribute firearms, explosives and radio transmitters and receivers.[73]

These French subverters would be accompanied by young Kel Intessar who had been educated abroad in Libya and at al-Azhar through the efforts of the 'anti-national' Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar. In this atmosphere, any rumour concerning the French was directly reported. Another document in the Kidal archives contained a statement by Touhaya ag Bacrine, questioned by Mohamed Mahmoud, *Chef de Poste* at Tessalit, upon his return from Tamanrasset where he worked for a French official.

> I came back definitively to my country which is Mali, because I heard the Europeans at Tamanrasset say a war will break out between the French and the Malians to keep the Efelings leaders in power in Mali. Yesterday night, upon leaving Timiaouene, I left [I saw] two aeroplanes, which brought arms and ammunitions to the base. (...) Upon our arrival at Tamanrasset, commander Clozé [Clauzel] and Captain Dogare [Godart] received us and invited us to tell them on Mali, that they would each give us 10,000 metropolitan francs. Moussa and I gave them some information (here is what we said to those two French officers, Mali is poor, we die of famine, there is no grain, we eat the excrements of donkeys, there is no work, there are some Malian soldiers who occupy the French air base at Tessalit. The Efeling leaders are numerous in Mali, especially in Kidal and Tessalit). (...) In my presence, Captain Dogare has sent Agaly ag Boubacar to Kidal to inquire what is happening in Mali. Agaly ag Boubacar returned saying to the Captain that Mali does no longer exist and that the Efelings rule from now on.[74]

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[73] Missive confidentielle Ministre de l'Administration Territorial et de Sûreté à tous Cercles et Subdivisions, 18/10/1960. ACK. Indeed, in 1961, the French army interfered militarily in Mauritania. Guillemin, J. 1982: 136.

[74] Déclaration de Touhaya ag Bacrine à Chef de Poste Tessalit, n.d. (September 1961). ACK. It is unclear who exactly Touahya meant with 'efelings'. They could be either of two parties: The FLN or the Kel Effele, the Ifoghas *fraction* to which the family

Upon this declaration, Touhaya was arrested and sent to Kidal for further questioning. He would eventually join the rebellion in 1963.

To make matters worse, international complications and neo-colonial agents did not stay abroad. Both parties entangled in the Algerian war of independence were physically present in the Malian Adagh! In the 1950s the French had built a small military air base near Tessalit. Between 1957 and July 1961 it accommodated about 150 air force men.[75] After independence in 1960, the base remained in French hands, like three other military bases did, until the summer of 1961, a presence that France saw as crucial in its strategy to secure southern Algeria.[76] But from February 1961 onwards, an FLN training camp was installed next to this French air base. The US-RDA was among the most ardent supporters of the Algerian cause. Even before Malian independence, Modibo Keita had made no secret of his point of view concerning the situation in Algeria. After 1960, moral support gave way to active help. At the Casablanca conference of African states, Keita declared the Malian border open to the cause of the Algerian people. The FLN was allowed to open training camps in the Adagh, which were located in and around Gao, Tessalit, Aguelhoc and in Kidal itself. To students of the Algerian war of liberation, Northern Mali is known as *Wilaya* VII. The names of the men commanding *Wilaya* VII are still known to many Kel Adagh, but also to the rest of the world. The current Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, stood at the head of the FLN organisation in Mali, seconded by revolutionary, novelist, psychiatrist and philosopher Franz Fanon, who was responsible for contact between the FLN and the Malian Government and the local population. The FLN members in Mali were provided with Malian passports and presented themselves locally as merchants of the Algerian Touat.[77] They were equipped with arms and vehicles, and were free to move around. In Tessalit, they cultivated gardens and, every now and then, they organised feasts for the local population. In order to enlarge their ranks and make operations more effective, the FLN recruited with some success among the real Touati merchant community in the Adagh and among the Kel Adagh

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of the *amenokal* belongs. In both cases, rumour had it that France would attack Mali, either to support their former allies or to attack their enemies now believed to be in power in the Adagh.

75 Rapports des tournées dans le Cercle de Kidal. ANM – FN 1E-1227.

76 The Tessalit air base was evacuated and handed over to the Malian authorities on the 2nd of July 1961. The air base at Gao was evacuated in August 1961, while the last army base in Kati was evacuated in September 1961. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes (CADN) – Bamako 15 – Evacuation des bases 1961.

77 Organisation administrative du poste de Tessalit. ACK. This file contained some documents dealing with the FLN base at Tessalit. Most of these documents were without date or signature.

themselves. The French occupants of the Tessalit air base knew of the existence of their FLN neighbours and vice versa. But in order for the French to continue their own air force presence at Tessalit, they could not complain. After all, since September 1960, they were only guests in Mali. As for the Malian commanders, they of course knew of the situation, but it seems they were not allowed to interfere in any way. Control over both the French base and the FLN camps seems to have been placed on a higher level. The only ones who could try to effectively manipulate the presence of both foreign armies were the Kel Adagh. The Malian Government had put a number of men from the *Groupement Nomade du Timetrine*, an army unit largely consisting of Kel Tamasheq, at the disposal of the FLN as guides in the area.[78] The local population was regularly treated on free meals by the FLN forces in Tessalit, and some had even joined their ranks. In an essay entitled '*Cette Afrique à venir*', published in his collection *Pour la révolution africaine*, Fanon even sketched a furtive plan to launch a new front in the Algerian war from Northern Mali using locally recruited Kel Tamasheq.[79] The FLN thus presented another source of rumour and concern.

> I have the honour to inform you about the following. Information received from a trustworthy person on the whereabouts and behaviour of the Algerians in de circumscriptions of the *Région* of Gao. It concerns the Algerian military stationed at Kidal, Tessalit, Aguelhoc and Anefis. It seems these Algerian nationals, whom we consider to be real brothers, are distributing arms to all the nomads in the Gao *Région, Cercles* and *Arrondissements* cited above. They are staging an anti-Malian campaign among the nomads, trying to convince them that they are of white skin and therefore their brothers in the white race. Several nomads have enrolled in the National Liberation Army.[80]

Zeyd's visit to Algeria in 1961 too was, not without reason, regarded with suspicion by the Malian regime. After all, he had been talking to French agents as well as to the Nigerien Minister of Nomad Affairs, and, possibly, with FLN leadership. Again, rumours ran high.

> I have the honour to send to you Assafah ag Mohamed, one of the suspects in the Zeyd affair. He admits to have visited the latter, but he did not want to say anything serious. With respect to the current rumours he declares that Halou Saloum who, on his return from In Djezzal, has spread the word that he carries a message in which

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78 Fanon, F. 1964: 211.

79 Ibid.: 214.

80 Sous-Lieutenant Abidine Maïga, Commandant le compagnie de gendarmerie de Gao, à Commandant de gendarmerie nationale du Mali, Bamako. Gao, 18/04/1962. Objet: Activité algérienne dans circonscription région Gao. ACK.

> Zeyd informs you of the impending bombardment of the *Cercle* of Kidal by the French forces.[81]

Rumours and panic were not the prerogative of the Malian administration. The Kel Adagh were just as much informed by rumours about what exactly the Malian Government wanted to do. In February 1962, the increase in cattle tax was announced. In July that year, the Malian Franc was created to curtail illegal exports, especially of cattle. But the Kel Adagh exported their cattle outside the West African monetary economy. They drove their herds to Algeria and exchanged their revenues directly for consumer goods, without ever seeing a customs officer. Therefore they had to be persuaded to stop this practice and sell their cattle within Mali, a policy that was only partly understood. In October 1962, the rumour spread that Mali wanted to nationalise all livestock. What was understood as nationalisation was the requisition of all cattle by the Government. At that stage requisition or nationalisation of cattle as means of production was not included in government plans at all. This rumour was not confined to the Adagh. Zeyd ag Attaher and a delegation of Ifoghas notables brought the matter forward to *Commandant de Cercle* Mohamed Najim. Not believing his explanations, they set out to Gao to have a clarification on the matter. Badi ould Hammoadi, the *cheick* of the Kounta federation brought the issue to Bamako to receive an explanation.[82] To counter the rumour, the Minister of Finance, Attaher Maiga, and Modibo Keita himself toured the North throughout November to inform the population on the true nature of Mali's livestock politics and the need to sell cattle within Mali, instead of in Algeria and Niger.[83]

In this climate of fear and distrust, small incidents could well be blown out of proportion into a blazing rebellion. A few months before independence a *goumier* collecting taxes had an argument with a certain Inadjelim ag Ebanzen, a notable of the Iforgoumoussen tribe.[84] During the argument Inadjelim drew his sword in anger, upon which the *goumier* either shot him in the thigh or killed him on the spot. In any case, Inadjelim did not survive the incident. The *goumier* was not punished for this, although inquiries were made about his actions.[85] In the following days however, a delegation of Ifoghas complained to *Commandant de Cercle* Mohamed Najim about the killing of Inadjelim, and the

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[81] Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aguel'hoc à Cdt. Cercle Kidal. 01/09/ 1961, no 44/CF/ AA. ACK.

[82] Chef d'Arrondissement de Tessalit à Cdt. Cercle Kidal. 27/08/62, Confidentiel no./ AT/CF. ACK.

[83] *L'Essor*, 07/11/1962.

[84] Télégramme officiel de Subdivision de Kidal à Chef de Subdivisdion de Kidal à Tessalit, no 351/Ki. 16/05/1960. ACK.

[85] Bâ Baba à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, n.d. ACK.

ways in which tax collections were carried out. The Ifoghas accused Najim of wanting to collect the taxes 'by the bullet'.[86] In the meantime, a family member of Inadjelim had avenged his death by attacking the *goumier*. Fear of a revolt grew. In the following days a kind of state of emergency was declared. Governor Bakary Diallo ordered Najim to organise shooting exercises twice a week.[87] The arsenal should be well guarded, as well as the *goum*'s camel herds, since 'an intelligent rebellion might start by depriving us of our means'.[88] The older *goumiers* in the *Cercle* were to be replaced by younger ones, a platoon of 25 *goumiers* was sent from Ansongo as reinforcement, and another patrol of 20 men was sent to Kidal from Ménaka. Besides these *goumiers*, the new Republican Guard of the three nearest *Subdivision*s at the Niger River were sent north.[89]

The prevalence of rumours, panicky reactions and overblown events outlined above says a lot about the reign of preconceived stereotypes, and the lack of communication between all parties involved. If there ever was a period in which direct contact and communication between the Kel Tamasheq and the state was possible, it was in these few years. Except for Jean Clauzel, who is fondly remembered in the Adagh for speaking correct Tamasheq, contact between state and society in colonial times had mostly run through intermediaries: Interpreters, chiefs and *goumiers* who spoke some French. When the language barrier was removed, the culture barrier remained. With the appointment of Mohamed Najim and Mohamed Mahmoud as administrators, and the promotion of Mohamed Belkacem and Zoulbeyba as commanders of the *goum* and the Groupement Nomade, both the language and cultural barrier had fallen. It is therefore all the more surprising that communication, so helpful in countering rumours and smoothing misunderstandings, was entirely lacking. It can only be explained by unwillingness on the side of at least a part of the Kel Adagh to see the Government and its representatives as valid interlocutors, and unwillingness on the side of the new regime to see the Kel Adagh as anything other than unruly and unintelligent nomads.

Understandably, US-RDA's fears of 'French neo-colonialist' attacks on Mali ran high. The accusation of French plotting in Dakar during the break-up of the Mali federation and the presence of French troops in Mauritania, Niger and Algeria can be seen in that light. It is revealing that Madeira Keita himself believed in the possibility of French subversion in the Sahara, as we have seen

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[86] Regnier, J. 1960, CHEAM 3457. The accusation that Najim wanted to arrange taxes 'by the bullet' was expressed to Regnier by Kel Adagh travelling in Algeria that summer and is very likely to have been connected to this incident.

[87] Based on letters Gov. Gao à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, 20/05/1960 and 26/05/1960. ACK.

[88] Gov. Gao à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, 20/05/1960. ACK.

[89] Gov. Gao à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, 26/05/1960. ACK.

above in his anxious warnings against French elements penetrating Mali through Mauritania to arm the nomads. The ghost of the OCRS had not yet been fully exorcised. Whether or not the French did send 'agents of subversion' to Northern Mali is irrelevant from this perspective. As for the accusations to the FLN in arming nomads and inviting them to join their ranks as 'brothers in the white race', I do not doubt that the 'trustworthy person' who conveyed this information to the Second Lieutenant Maïga would have invoked the idea that both the Algerians and the Kel Tamasheq are white. Neither do I doubt that Maïga and his superiors would take this argument seriously. What the message shows is a concern for a possible FLN – Kel Tamasheq alliance based on racialist notions and stereotypes of the other held by the administration and the Kel Tamasheq alike.

Epilogue

So far this has largely been an archive-based narrative. Most of the smaller events described above have been forgotten and, as happens, the rumours have been replaced with newer ones, more urgent in order to assess the situation of the day. But the events and rumours of these days have been distilled into a single essence that is today still very much living history in the Adagh, feeding into local discourses on state Tamasheq relations. This single essence is apparent in the following short lecture I received one day in Kidal from Moussa Baswish, a local intellectual who had studied in Algeria and who knew much about local history. After he had prepared a first glass of tea, he asked me what I was interested in. I told Moussa that I concerned myself with a very simple question: What had happened in the Adagh in 1963?

Moussa: That is very simple indeed. Right, what happened in 1945?

Me: The start of decolonisation in AOF, on the basis of the Brazzaville declaration, Felix Eboué and de Gaulle.

Moussa: Exactly. And what happened in 1957?

Me: The OCRS.

Moussa: Exactly, the OCRS. 1963 comes from the failure of the OCRS, which was instigated by Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick al-Timbukti, and supported by Mohamed Ali and Amegha ag Sherif. Further, it comes from the broken promise made by General Messmer in Gao to the assembled tribal chiefs that the Kel Tamasheq would form an independent unit within a federation. The promise of a federation and the establishment of the shari'a made by Madeira Keita were very important to the Kel Tamasheq in those days. Well, the federation broke up on the twenty second of September 1960, and the shari'a has never been employed. That is where the dissatisfaction with Modibo Keita's regime came from. Then there was the promise of support to Zeyd's cause made by the FLN. They had a base here in Kidal, in the

> Intekoua ward. Have you seen it? It was led by the current Algerian President Bouteflika himself! Well, this promise was betrayed, just like the promises by the French, by the local commander. Do you really believe the French commanders and the FLN would promise to cooperate with Zeyd's rebels? Come on! Only, the whole thing started too soon. It was Elledi who, at Timeaouine, took the gun of the *goumiers* who had beheaded his father. That's the direct cause of 1963, which has nothing to do with what Zeyd and Amegha did. There you are. In short, that is what has happened in the Adagh in 1963.
>
> Moussa sipped his tea and it was clear that the subject was now closed.[90]

There you are indeed. It is not so much the density of the story that is interesting, but Moussa's surprise about me asking in the first place. It is all so obvious and clear, nothing to inquire about. To the Kel Adagh, dissatisfaction with the Keita Regime – as with other Malian regimes – is almost natural. They should never have been part of Mali in the first place, since the French had promised them independence, and then they were deceived, as could be expected from Malians, and French, and the FLN alike. With the hindsight of the historian, it is now clear to Moussa that the Kel Adagh had miscalculated the international setting they found themselves in. But in the early 1960s with the French still in Mali and Algeria, and the Arab brothers of the FLN around the corner, anything seemed possible, or so rumour had it.

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[90] Interview with Moussa Baswish. Kidal, January 1999.

4

Alfellaga

Declaration received from the *goumier* Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza:

> We had left for Timiaouïne to get our mission order [*ordre de mission*] signed by Souleymane. He made us tea. After tea, we got up to pray when two young Ifoghas, Alladi ag Allah and Tuteka ag Alladi, seized our guns and equipment (...) Directly after prayers, I pursued them, alone. While walking, I encountered them around 19:00 hrs. One of them was in firing position and the other was tying up the camel. The one who was in firing position shot at me and the bullet passed over my head. I replied and they fled with their arms, taking their camel with them. (...) The next morning I was walking when one of them, Alladi, stopped me. He told me to climb off my camel, his weapon with fixed bayonet pointed at me. I climbed off my camel, after which he told me to take off my burnous and to hand over the camel with its saddle. I told him I would not give him the camel, after which he told me to take off my accoutrements. I kept refusing, whereupon his companion came close and told me again to take off my accoutrements. I did not want to be shot, so I took off my accoutrements. He then told me to drop them and to be off. After I had distanced myself, he told me to 'go and tell the slaves at Boughessa that we are here'. This happened in the Wadi Atelaf this morning 15/5/63.[1]

By stealing the gun and equipment from the *goumier* Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza, Elledi ag Alla and Touteka ag Effad started what is now known among the Kel Tamasheq as *Alfellaga*, 'The Rebellion'. To the rest of the world, the 1963 rebellion is generally known as 'The First Tuareg Rebellion' with the rebellion of the 1990s then called 'The Second Tuareg Rebellion', while the current situation in the *Région* of Kidal, from 2006 onwards, could then be referred to as 'The Renewed Rebellion'. These rebellions are indeed intimately linked in practice, ideology and historical memory. Kel Adagh historical discourse emphasizes a continuum of resistance against foreign domination stretching from

[1] Déclaration recueillie auprès du milicien Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza, n.d. (15/05/1963). ACK.

the defiance of Alla ag Albachir and his band in the colonial period; through *Alfellaga*; to *al-Jebha*, the rebellion of the 1990s and the recent events from 2006 to 2009.

This chapter has three aims. The first is to give a comprehensive narrative of *Alfellaga*. The second is to show how Tamasheq concepts of masculinity and warfare determined patterns of warfare during *Alfellaga*, as well as the military tactics used by the rebels. The third is to show how in Tamasheq historical discourse *Alfellaga* is intertwined with other historical events and embedded in an explanatory narrative of resistance. This chapter focuses on those topics presented as relevant in Kel Adagh historical discourse: Historical continuity of resistance; masculine values of honour and combat; the fighting itself; and especially the suffering of the population under the repression of the Malian Armed Forces.

There is one notable exception to following Kel Adagh narrative lines. Kel Adagh informants, both those who lived through *Alfellaga* and those who participated in the 1990 rebellion, stress the unprepared nature of the first rebellion, its lack of organisation, and its lack of a clearly formulated goal. This is in stark contrast with my main archive sources on *Alfellaga*; the RAC messages from the Malian Armed Forces and the interrogation reports of various captured fighters found in the *Cercle* of Kidal Archives. From this information it seems the rebels were prepared and organised to a much larger extent than they are now perceived to have been, and that they knew their goal: Independence, reached through an armed conflict with the support of Algeria and, if possible, France. The rebels hoped that by starting their armed uprising these two powers would come to their aid as they had promised to do in the previous years. At least the principal rebel leader Zeyd ag Attaher thought that these two countries had promised support, which was not the case. I realise that one of these two sources, the interrogation reports, is problematic as it is unclear under what circumstance exactly these statements were made. It is well known that Captain Diby Sillas Diarra, who led most interrogations, used torture in some cases. I nevertheless believe that the content of the information the rebels gave on their organisation and their tactics and armament are sufficiently accurate to be used. Using such material is questionable, but I know that the Kel Adagh themselves want the story of *Alfellaga* to be known and there are few sources to know it through.

The chapter is divided into five parts. The first part presents a history of Alla ag Albachir, a notorious rebel-bandit in colonial times, which in Kel Adagh historical discourse serves to outline both their reasons for resistance and to present *Alfellaga* as but one important chapter in a continuing story of revolt. In this section I will introduce the all-important Tamasheq notion of *egha*, revenge. It is crucial to understand the importance of honour and revenge in

Tamasheq society in order to understand the discursive continuity in Tamasheq revolt underlying continued military resistance against the state. The second part deals with preparations for revolt, the goal and strategy of the rebels, and support from inside and outside Tamasheq society. This part is generally downplayed in Kel Adagh accounts. The third part deals with combat itself. I will here focus on Tamasheq masculine ethics of warfare and its code of conduct, which structured and regulated the actions of the rebels. They will be contrasted with the acts of the Malian regular armed forces in the fourth part, which deals with army repression and retaliation on Kel Adagh civilians. This, although not often narrated in detail, is seen as the most important aspect of the revolt. To most Kel Adagh, it was not the fighting between rebels and army but the heavy army retaliation on civilians that matters in *Alfellaga*. In the fifth part I will come back to the question of how memories of *Alfellaga* are given meaning in a continuing story of resistance and struggle for independence, linking it to the second rebellion dealt with in Chapter 6.

A continuum of resistance

'Old leatherpants', the great chief
When he approached the wells of Indjezal
Even the *tishghen* and *idhan* trees would move aside
The donkeys would balk, the cows would bellow
From Tidjim to Adrar, the wardrums would sound

The above is a translation of part of a poem from the 1950s in honour of Intidgagen: 'Old leatherpants', a nickname for Alla ag Albachir. The poem was set to music and recorded by the *al-guitara* band Terakaft from Kidal on their 2008 CD *Akh Issudar*.[2] When I was discussing the 1963 revolt with Kel Tamasheq there seemed to be an almost natural connection between Alla ag Albachir and his men, who defied the French authorities in colonial times, and his son Elledi ag Alla, the instigator and one of the main leaders of *Alfellaga*. This connection is not coincidental. It is made with the explicit aim to create a continuous line of Kel Adagh resistance against foreign rule from colonial times to *al-Jebha* in the 1990s, via *Alfellaga*.

Alla ag Albachir was a member of one of the Adagh's leading clans or *tewsiten*: The Irayaken. According to Kel Adagh history, the Irayaken had once headed the Ifoghas, the *tewsit* leading all of the Kel Adagh, of which they are a subgroup. Alla ag Albachir refused to obey any power, both that of the French and that of *amenokal* Attaher ag Illi. Instead, he lived as an outlaw with a

[2] "Intidgagen". Composed by the Kel Adagh poet Magdi in the 1950s. Available on Terakaft, 2008. *Akh Issudar*. World Village, B001EC23S0.

number of his relatives, defying French rule and regularly clashing with the forces of order. Alla's activities as outlaw and his widespread popularity as a local hero among the Kel Adagh during his lifetime made him a stain on the prestige and honour of the French administration and their capacity to maintain *la paix française*. Therefore they wanted Alla's head. The *goumiers* finally caught him in July 1954. According to Tamasheq history, Alla was decapitated after his elimination, and his head was exposed in Boughessa to convince the Kel Adagh of his death.[3] Alla's story is known in all of the Adagh and beyond.

Kel Adagh warrior qualities and their resistance against foreign rule in post-colonial times are well established through *Alfellaga*. However, for colonial times, Kel Adagh history has to compete with stories of resistance against the French from other federations. The Kel Adagh had always been faithful allies of the French. They had even helped the French to defeat the Ouillimiden uprising in 1916. But, as former rebel Amegha ag Sherif put it: 'Ever since the French colonisation there were people who rebelled, like Alla ag Albachir and the others of his group who have resisted France'.[4] Amegha clearly underlines the political meaning of Alla and his men in the Adagh. They were not simple bandits but resistance fighters, the direct predecessors to *Alfellaga* and *al-Jebha*. According to Amegha, the French never had full control over the Kel Adagh, since there always were people who resisted power with violence. This tradition of resistance was passed down to Alla's son Elledi who started *Alfellaga* by avenging his father's death.

> Alla ag Albachir was killed by decapitation after a chase, when Elledi was about seven years old. Years later he was at a well with his herd, milking his animals, when a group of soldiers passed. It was a kind of law that when you were at a well and soldiers passed, you immediately had to fill their containers for them. Elledi said he was busy milking his camel and that he would fill their containers after. One of the soldiers said that he knew who he was and if he didn't do it right away they would do the same to him as they had done to his father. That is how Elledi knew who had killed his father. He wanted to revenge his father's death. He wanted to kill his assassins, both the Tamasheq – because there were Tamasheq among the killers

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3 French reports do not explicitly mentions Alla's beheading for obvious reasons, but the administration did want to make Alla's death quite clear to the Kel Adagh: '*I have sent away a patrol of one group with Zuber to try to bring Alla's corpse to Bouressa for the civil population of the region to see it and I have announced that the members of the band who are still in the Tidjem Mountains and its surroundings should turn themselves in with their arms in the shortest possible term*'. Affaires politiques, Soudan, service publique police, maintien de l'ordre, incidents 1948-1955, Affaire Alla ag Elbacher. ANSOM – 1affpol/2197/14.

4 Interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994.

– and the others. He wanted to kill them all without exceptions. This revenge was what the revolt of Kidal was.[5]

The story of continuity of resistance against external rule and the struggle for independence is presented in the most binding grid of Tamasheq historical production: Genealogical continuity. First Alla ag Albachir led resistance against France, then his son Elledi led resistance against Mali. By connecting the events surrounding Alla to the events surrounding Elledi, present-day Tamasheq historical discourse overcomes an artificial mark in time – independence – which is blurred in a non-stop presence of outside forces to fight against. Elledi's father Alla ag Albachir had been – in Eric Hobsbawm's terms – a social bandit who refused to obey French colonial and Tamasheq power. [6] But in Kel Adagh political historical narrative, his actions serve to redefine Kel Adagh history under colonial rule from one of compliance with, to one of resistance against foreign rule. Although Elledi ag Alla's goal had only been to avenge his father, he soon became the rebellion's most prestigious leader. Tamasheq historical discourse now explicitly interprets his avenging action as a political act. The event that triggered the rebellion is seen as a continuation of resistance against foreign domination. The story of Elledi avenging his father introduces an element linking the various periods of resistance: Revenge, a shorthand translation of the more complicated Tamasheq concept of *egha*. The importance of *egha* as a discursive continuum of resistance cannot be overestimated. I will discuss *egha* at great length in Chapter 6 in connection to the organisation of the rebellion of the 1990s, but a few preliminary remarks should be made here. *Egha* is closely connected to two other important concepts in Tamasheq society; *eshik*, honour, and *takaraket*, shame. *Egha* is a debt one contracts against those who have stained one's honour, and who have thus caused one shame. Both the damaged honour and subsequent shame, and the contracted *egha* can be either individual or on the collective level of the clan (*tewsit*). It is important to note that honour can only be stained by those perceived to be on an equal footing with those whose honour is stained: The free and noble. Until the attack on one's honour is countered, the contracted debt of *egha* remains open. It can only be repaid in violence. In this light we can see the history of Alla ag Albachir and his son Elledi gaining importance. Alla, in a sense, can be seen as repaying the Kel Adagh honour debt of colonial subjugation towards the French. The violation of his body damaged Alla's honour and through him that of his whole *tewsit*, the Irayaken, or even that of all the Kel Adagh. The *goumiers* who were involved in Alla's killing then proceeded to insult Elledi by referring to his father's decapitation, implying they had the same fate in store for Elledi him-

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5 Conversation with S. Paris, 09/01/1996.

6 Hobsbawm, E.J. 1959.

self. Elledi could do nothing else than to repay this double *egha* debt: The shame brought upon him; and that brought upon his father. After his arrest in 1964, when asked for his motives for rebellion Elledi answered:

> I became a rebel to avenge my father, killed by the French administration, and to personally avenge myself for what the security agents of the Malian security post at Boughessa kept repeating at me**:** that if I did not stay quiet I would be slain like my father had been. (...) I have but my personal motives cited above.[7]

Alfellaga

In the previous chapter I have tried to show that the Kel Adagh in particular did not want to be part of Mali. After independence came about, all they wanted was their independence from Mali and they were ready to fight for it. In October 1963, a mission of US-RDA officials and tribal chiefs was sent to negotiate with the rebels. They met at the wells of In Tamake. After the members of the mission had explained the grave error in revolting against the Malian state, the rebels replied.

> We fight for our independence. We don't want any of this Mali. The leaders have no patience. They throw us in prison for no reason. There are heavy taxes and exaggerated customs duties. We are beaten and chained in front of our women and children. There is also the marriage act, which does not conform to Muslim custom. We are against Mali because all its institutions are anti-religious and against us. We want our independence, that is all we look for, but we cannot stay with Mali. We are against all the principles of the Party and the Government.[8]

If the rebels conveyed this message as it is presented here, it surpasses a mere wish for independence from Mali. As I argued in Chapter 3, the Kel Adagh knew more about Mali and its new regime than what is generally thought. The first two years of independence had given the Kel Adagh a first glance at what might be expected from the new state. The taxes and customs duties would hinder them in their cattle export to Algeria, which was the main lifeline of the Adagh. The newly instated marriage law, put into effect in February 1962, was apparently known and disapproved of as being anti-Islamic, or at least against local customs. It is unlikely that the *ifulagen* knew all about 'all the principles of the Party and the Government', but they had had a glimpse of it, and it had been enough to confirm the pre-existing ideas the Kel Adagh had of the new regime. That pre-existing stereotypes played their part as well becomes crystal clear from the way the reasons for the rebellion are summed up by captured rebel Amouksou ag Azandeher.

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[7] Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Sillas Diarra, Commandant d'armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/03/1964. ACK.

[8] Dicko, Procès verbal de compte rendu de mission. n.d. (+/- 30/10/1963). ACK.

The reasons are numerous, but the main ones are:

1º We, nomads of the white race, can neither conceive nor accept to be commanded by blacks whom we always had as servants and slaves.

2º We Ifoghas, do not accept or conceive of the equality between races and men Mali wants to impose on us, starting with taking our *imghad* and *bellah* away from us.

3º We gain nothing from Malian independence, but heavy taxes and customs duties to pay.

4º The Malian Government thinks it is superior to our Chief Zeyd and does not listen to him.

5º The Malian gendarmerie mistreats us irrespective of whether they are wrong or right'.[9]

The source in question is problematic, as it is a report of interrogation. It is not unlikely that torture was involved. According to Michel Vallet, a former French colonial officer still serving in Southern Algeria during *Alfellaga*, commander Diby Sillas Diarra had been trained in torture in the French colonial army while serving in Indo-China.[10] The statements made might very well reflect what his interrogators wanted to believe and hear. Part of the statement given by Amouksou might be a very loose interpretation of his words by Captain Diby Sillas Diarra. I must now bring into play the paranoid double bound of stereotypical thinking and its analysis. Diby Sillas Diarra saw the Kel Tamasheq as intoxicated by neo-colonial racism.[11] Hence, in his analysis the rebellion must spring from racism toward the Southern populations, whether this was the case or not. The point that one indeed encounters racist discourse among the Kel Tamasheq makes this analysis more difficult. Does the statement of Amouksou ag Azandeher contain a statement on the racially inspired motives of the rebellion because Diby Sillas Diarra read that into his words, or because he effectively made this statement, and if he did, was it because he knew that Diby Sillas Diarra wanted to hear this, or because he really meant it? Nevertheless a few observations can be drawn from Amouksou's statement. The rebellion seemed not so much directed in favour of but rather against something: Malian rule. As former rebel Bibi ag Ghassi later analysed his actions:

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9 Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.

10 Personal communication by Michel Vallet. Paris 18/06/1994.

11 In an interview he gave to the magazine *Le Mali*, Diarra stated that the neo-colonial enemies of Mali had '*preached themes of intoxication according to which (...) The black man, normally the "slave" of the "Targui", cannot become his master especially since the histories of the two races are totally different*'. 'Interview accordée à la revue "Le Mali" par le Commandant Diby Sillas, Commandant de Cercle de Kidal'. *Le Mali*, 02/02/1966.

> We had no ideological concepts that come with a revolution. We were essentially motivated to save our identity and by the wish to reconquer the independence the French had given to us, and which the Malians had confiscated to their own benefit.[12]

But what did independence mean? The question arises whether we should see *Alfellaga* as an expression of Tamasheq nationalism. The answer to this question depends on whether or not one is prepared to see nationalism disconnected from the state. Without a doubt, the *ifulagen* wanted independence for the Kel Tamasheq nation. But their concept of independence was framed in visions on leadership, political order and the structure of society as they had come to know it through French colonial rule and the pre-colonial histories of their society. Only the reasoning of political science and, for want of a better term, 'Western' political concepts explicitly link 'nation' to 'state'. The exact contents of these concepts were then still largely alien to most Kel Tamasheq.

From a military point of view the armed uprising of a few dozen lightly armed men against a few thousand soldiers equipped with tanks, airplanes and heavy artillery could have amounted to suicide if it wasn't for the advantages the rebels had in their knowledge of the terrain and their partisan-style tactics (infra). But the tactical advantages of the rebels could never make up for their simple lack of men and means. A rebel military victory was out of the question. What then, was the strategic goal of the armed rebellion? First of all, by waging war on the Malian state, the rebels manifested their discontent with the regime towards that regime and towards the population. Undoubtedly, the rebels hoped for support from other Kel Tamasheq groups, both in Mali and perhaps in Niger, as had been the case during the massive Kel Tamasheq revolts against the French colonial forces in 1916. But it seems that the rebels mainly hoped that Algeria and France would come to their help. This becomes clear from the statements of Amouksou ag Azandeher on the ways the rebels hoped to win their cause:

XIII In what time schedule have you planned to win from Mali?
R There is no time limit, but we intend to fight to the day of our victory or to the day we are convinced that we have lost the cause.
XIV Are you not convinced that Mali is much stronger than you are?
R We are convinced of this as long as you have more arms than we have, but we nevertheless believe that we can win one day.
XV On who do you count to reach that goal? What do you expect exactly from outside support?
R We count first and foremost on Algerian support, but also on France. As for Algeria, its territory is our greatest support. We also expect arms from Algeria,

[12] Interview by Sidi Mohamed ag Zimrou with Bibi ag Ghassi, n.d. n.p. Courtesy of Georg Klute.

> as we do from the French. But we also expect Algeria to arbitrate between us and Mali when the moment comes.[13]

The underlying strategy of the armed rebellion was not based on expectations of a military victory, but on a possible military or diplomatic victory of Algeria and France on their behalf once the fight and cause of the Kel Adagh had become known to the outside world. Fighting a well-equipped army with so few men and material only served the purpose of fighting itself, in the hope of outside reinforcement. Some hoped France would return to rule their country. The OCRS and what it might have stood for was not forgotten. By starting their armed conflict the rebels hoped for French intervention on their behalf, which of course never materialised. Others opted for inclusion of the Adagh in Algeria, as had already been suggested in the last years of French rule by *amenokal* Attaher ag Illi. The trips his son Zeyd made to Algeria in 1961, and again in 1963, to muster Algerian support should be seen in this light as well. This support never materialised either. The outside world remained unknowing of the Kel Adagh struggle or kept its knowledge hidden. Of course, the rebels had gravely misjudged the workings of international politics. Zeyd ag Attaher's diplomatic skills and political experience did not surpass the regional setting of Northern Mali and Southern Algeria through the few contacts he had had with the Algerian FLN and French administrative personnel. From a Kel Tamasheq perspective, where personal contacts in politics are of the highest importance, his judgment of the situation and his chances on support might have been overoptimistic and extremely naïve, but not altogether incomprehensible. But in the world of international politics, his expectations made no sense at all. Algerian-Malian relations were characterised by the closest of friendships. France was still contemplating its defeat in the Algerian liberation war and could hardly be asked to risk its nuclear test bases, their last and very important interests in Southern Algeria, in favour of its old but now useless ally. Therefore, the rebels stayed alone in their fight for an ill conceived but heart felt independence.

Men and material

As we have seen in previous chapters, some men had fiercely resisted the incorporation of the Kel Tamasheq in Mali since the 1950s. Some of these men actively prepared for revolt between 1961 and 1963. The deposed *amenokal* Zeyd ag Attaher had gathered a group of men who shared his idea that the Tamasheq country in general and the Adagh in particular should not form part of Mali. Zeyd was in close contact with Amegha ag Sherif, one of the very few Kel Adagh who had attended French schools. His education completed, Ame-

[13] Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.

gha engaged himself in the struggle for Tamasheq independence, which made him suspect of subversive activity. He was arrested and released shortly after independence in 1960. He then went to Algeria where he found a job at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse in 1962.[14] He managed to bring in other Kel Adagh employees at the base. In return, the employed Kel Adagh gave part of their wages to Amegha, which he used to buy weapons in Tamanrasset for the future revolt.[15] Zeyd's group was not limited to the Kel Adagh. They kept contact with Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar who encouraged and supported Zeyd's plans. In Zeyd's following were also Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyouba, the sons of the very wealthy Ayyouba ag Mohamed Adargajouj, the chief of the Daoussahak, a tribe living in the Tamesna plains south-east of the Adagh. With their help and money Zeyd bought about thirty rifles in the Tamanrasset area from a Frenchman working there.[16] The rifles were hidden until the start of the revolt. Former *goumier* Sidi Alamine ag Cheick and his brother Issouf ag Cheick were at the head of a second group. In January 1963 Issouf broke into an arms depot in Timbuktu and took some guns, ammunition and battle fatigues destined for the future uprising.[17] With this material the two brothers fled to Algeria where they joined Amegha and Zeyd's group at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse.[18] In January 1963 this group of men decided to start an armed revolt, although no date was set. A second reunion was held in the Adagh at Tidjim in June 1963.[19] Elledi ag Alla, who had by then declared his intentions of vengeance to the *goumier* Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza described at the start of this chapter, knew about Zeyd's presence at Tidjim and joined him there. After he had explained his action to those assembled it was decided that this was a good moment to start the rebellion.

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[14] The French nuclear test base in the Algerian Hoggar Mountains, generally referred to as Reggane, was in fact multi sited, spread between three localities: Reggane, In Ekker and Takormiasse. The first ground surface nuclear test explosion took place on February 13th, 1960, with two more following in April and December that year. The local population was assembled in places on a distance of about 12 Km, equipped with radiation dosimeters and guarded by French army personnel. Many feared for their lives as the explosion had been explained to them as "similar to the end of the world". Rozier, J. 2007. Later tests at the base were subterranean. The base remained functional until 1964.

[15] Interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Bamako, 10/02/1998.

[16] Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.

[17] Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, 14/01/1963. ACK.

[18] Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.

[19] Ibid.

The initial group of about ten men around Zeyd ag Attaher grew rapidly. Still, the number of *ifulagen* was never high. From all data at my disposal I could calculate that at most 250 men were involved during the rebellion. However, the number of *ifulagen* at any precise point during the rebellion must have been lower. These men lacked sufficient material to fight the Malian forces. Mounted on camels in their flowing indigo robes and armed mostly with outdated rifles they are easily depicted as a hopeless band of warriors of old. However, this picture is besides the truth. Many of the warriors were not dressed in flowing indigo robes, but in green battle dress. Why would the *ifulagen* spend their resources on obtaining these outfits? An explanation could be that wearing battle dress exemplified the movement's concern to present themselves as a liberation army. To most Kel Tamasheq, dress is a highly valorised means of expression. Dress should reflect presumed (or desired) status. If the Kel Adagh fighters wanted to present themselves as the rightful army of Tamasheq independence, they had to dress accordingly. In keeping with this idea they adopted a new dress code for combat. Another explanation for wearing French battle dress might be that it served to make the Malian army think the country was being invaded by French troops, or that at least French troops were supporting the Kel Adagh. Whether this was their intention or not, not surprisingly the Malian officers were quick to believe the French were indeed involved.

> I have been informed that these fellagas are directed by French units including Clauzel, Jean, and a certain Bretodeau, who formerly served in Timbuktu, Gao and Ménaka, and who was responsible for Muslim affairs in colonial times.[20]

Camels were the only available means of transport all fighters could use. However, they are also highly effective in the Adagh. Part of the Adagh surface is covered with boulder formations or by small but sharply broken stones. These terrains can be crossed by camels, but not by cars. The Malian motorised forces were only effective in open terrain and wadis. As for arms, they were easily and cheaply obtained in Algeria where a lively smuggling of light arms existed ever since World War II.[21] In the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s the most obtainable firearms were 'Mausers' and '*Bouceta's*' (a local name for Manlicher-Carcano), German and Italian repeating rifles of WWII stocks, and French MAS-36 rifles. By acquiring these cheap and known arms, more men could be armed than if more expensive and harder to handle modern rifles were bought. Nevertheless, the *ifulagen* were equipped with some more advanced weapons. Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar had managed to ship a small amount of material from Morocco

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[20] Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, 20/8/1963. ACK.
[21] Rapports des tournées Kidal 1944. ANM 1E-24 / 1944.

to the rebels in Algeria, consisting of thirty battle dresses, and five Egyptian automatic rifles with ammunition.[22]

Support and defiance

The official Algerian and French support the rebels hoped for never materialised, but they did receive some support from these two countries. Algerian support was unofficial and given on the initiative of local Algerian commanders who lacked the means to halt rebel incursion in Algeria anyway. The *ifulagen* were therefore allowed to dwell in Algeria and sometimes had their wounded treated in Algerian infirmaries. The rebels were allowed to stay at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse where they had pitched a tent to store their supplies. They received marginal help from the French employees at the base who sold or gave them ammunition, medication, battle gear and a few privately owned arms. The French doctor present at the base treated some of the wounded.[23] But it seems that most material had to be bought on the local markets, especially arms. Evidence of official French or Algerian support is lacking.

As for internal support, the reaction of the Kel Adagh was not unanimously in favour of revolt. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the death of *amenokal* Attaher ag Illi had caused a split within the Ifoghas tribe over his succession, which was linked to the pretenders' view on Mali. Although Zeyd's supporters seem to have been in the majority, a number of Ifoghas supported Intalla. Since Attaher ag Illi had been the *amenokal* of all the Kel Adagh, other tribes were involved in the dispute over his succession as well. The split among the Ifoghas on this issue continued throughout the revolt.

> There are two groups of Ifoghas: Those who are loyal to Zeyd, and those who are loyal to Intalla. To us, who are loyal to Zeyd, Intalla is reprehensible and we formally condemn his position since he does not follow us. We regret that our tribe is divided into two equal groups between Zeyd and Intalla. In fact, we have seen that all the Ifoghas *fractions* of the south and west follow Intalla while those of the north and east follow Zeyd.[24]

Intalla was not the only tribal chief loyal to the Malian Government. The tribal chiefs were employed to make contact with the rebels and to persuade them to surrender. In October 1963 Intalla, in the company of Bissaada ag Khakad, chief of the Idnan; Hamzata ag Alkassoum, chief of the Kel Telabit; and Baye ag Atikbel, chief of the Telguetrat, were sent on such a mission. Kola

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[22] Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Sillas Diarra, Commandant d'armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/03/1964. ACK.

[23] Déclaration de Kaza ag Larlar. Kidal, 08/02/1964. ACK; and interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994.

[24] Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.

ag Saghid, chief of the Irayakan, performed similar missions. The actions of these men should be seen in the light of their double bound position as intermediaries between state and society. It is not at all said that they approved of the actions of either side. Both the rebellion and the repressive counter actions of the army went against their interest, which was peaceful continuation of existence under their intermediary rule. The violence also stirred their feelings as men and Kel Adagh. Many of the rebels were their close relatives, as were the victims of repression. The *ifulagen* highly mistrusted the chiefs. After all, they were servants of the Malian Government. One of the first victims of the rebellion on the 'Malian' side was Enawnaw, the chief of the Irreguenaten, who was shot by Elledi ag Alla for collaborating with the Malian Armed Forces. The same double bind as Kel Tamasheq and servants of the administration goes for the *goumiers* who were deployed against the *ifulagen*, and thus forced to shoot at their own kin. But the Malian Armed Forces also mistrusted both the chiefs and the *goumiers*. They were thus under double threat when they contacted or fought rebels, even if this was by order of the Malian officers.[25]

The *ifulagen* took material from the Malian army whenever they could. But as the revolt continued also they took more and more camels from the Kel Adagh themselves. The principal victims of these raids on livestock were *goumiers* and tribal chiefs. With the continuation of the revolt however, other people suffered losses in animals by rebel raids as well. Many Kel Adagh contributed means to the rebellion in the form of food, animals or cloth. Not necessarily because they were in favour of the rebellion, but also to avoid being raided by the rebels. Of course, genuine voluntary contributions were also made. The rebels' actions towards the population will not have enhanced their popularity. As former rebel Bibi ag Ghassi put it: 'The rest of the population had sided with the authorities and considered us a bunch of thieves'.[26] A raid on civilian camel herds led by Elledi ag Alla in February 1964 failed since its owners collectively managed to chase the *ifulagen* away.[27] Although many joined the rebels in Algeria or in Mali because of the army repression, one cannot uphold that this was always done with enthusiasm. Many were simply left with no choice.

Another issue is the lack of support for the revolt outside the Adagh. Pierre Boilley has explained why the revolt was limited to within the Adagh from a

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[25] Le Sous-Lieutenant Mohamed ag Mohamed Elhadi, Commandant du GNIG de Tarkimt à chef d'escadron Commandant la Gendarmerie Nationale du Mali à Bamako. 10/02/64. ACK.

[26] Interview held by Sidi Mohamed ag Zimrou with Bibi ag Ghassi. n.p. n.d. Courtesy of Georg Klute.

[27] Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de mars 1964. ACK.

geographical and historical perspective.[28] The position of the Adagh near the Algerian border permitted the *ifulagen* to retreat into Algeria after attacks. However, relations between Mali and Niger were far less fraternal than between Mali and Algeria, and fighters could well have retreated there too. The mountainous landscape of the Adagh gives a second explanation. The ridges and boulders in the Adagh made pursuit of the *ifulagen* by the motorised army units difficult. In the more flat and sandy area of the Azawad, this advantage was lost. But neither explanation accounts for the lack of other Kel Tamasheq warriors coming to the Adagh to join the rebellion in the Adagh itself. Boilley explains the lack of participation by other groups as a result of their memory of military defeat in the period of colonial conquest. Indeed, this explanation is still given today by the Ouillimiden for remaining aside in both post-colonial revolts. However, some Kel Tamasheq from outside the Adagh had joined the *ifulagen*. Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyouba were Daoussahak, a group which had never been part of the Kel Adagh. One of the main political leaders was Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, the former *amenokal* of the Kel Intessar. Some of his men did most likely join the *ifulagen* in Algeria. Besides these leaders a number of others had joined the *ifulagen* from the Bourem, Ansongo and Ménaka *Cercles*.[29] We cannot estimate the total number of people from outside the Adagh who participated in the revolt but they were most likely a minority within the movement. Nevertheless, they were there.

Organisation

The *ifulagen* were organised into several units ranging in size between twenty and thirty men under shifting leadership. Often only half the unit consisted of fighters. The other members – unarmed and in civilian dress – served as scouts who contacted people for information on army movements. As the rebellion progressed, new groups of men rallied collectively under the leadership of one of their own and operated as a new unit. Sometimes units merged to direct a general attack on an army post or column. The *ifulagen* divided the Adagh into three zones of operation from north to south but this was not taken too strictly. Around thirty men were active in each zone. The first zone consisted of the Timetrine, a plain west of the actual Adagh Mountains. Operations in this zone were generally led by the brothers Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick. The second zone went from Mount Tigharghar and Mount Doriet to Boughessa, and

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[28] Boilley, P. 1999: 346-348.

[29] Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK. Participation of men of the Ishidenharen tribe from the Ménaka area was emphatically stressed during various conversations I had with members of that tribe.

southward to Kidal. Here, operations were led by Elledi ag Alla and Ikhlou Saloum. The third zone extended from Mount Ouzzein southwards, where operations were led by Azzezen ag Iksa and Mohamed ag Amane.[30] The division into zones and units, and the assumed leadership in each zone is striking. It is logical that those who were most familiar with the area led units and that other unit members should be familiar with the terrain as well, but it seems unit composition was partly organised according to tribal affiliation. The area between Mount Tigharghar and Mount Doriet, Boughessa and Mount Ouzzein is where most Irayaken live. Elledi ag Alla and Ikhlou Saloum, both Irayaken, led operations during *Alfellaga* in this zone. Azzezen ag Iksa, a Telgetghat, led operations in the Ouzzein area, but he did so together with Mohamed ag Amane, an Arayak. The Timetrine is an area generally inhabited by the Idnan, the tribe to which Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick belonged. Their group was significantly smaller than the groups around Elledi ag Alla and Azzezen ag Iksa, fifteen men at most.

Operations were planned at the rebel base in Algeria at Takormiasse. Most planned attacks consisted of raids on camel herds or fixed army posts. Units were selected, mounts, arms and ammunition were distributed, and routes to Mali and back were discussed. The road to take depended on information on the presence of Malian forces (to attack or to avoid) and the situation at the wells the *ifulagen* used to take in water. The units mostly travelled by night, spending the day in hiding while scouts gathered information. Ambushes on encountered army columns were decided upon on the spot. It was a general tactic to only attack small forces disadvantaged by the terrain. When a rebel was captured, the planned operation was cancelled in fear of the captured rebel disclosing the plan of attack. Operations in Mali were kept as short as possible, followed by retreat into Algeria where the rebels were safe from the Malian forces.[31]

The Malian Armed Forces

The basic unit of the Malian Armed Forces was the *Compagnie de Commandos Autonomes* (CCA).[32] Each CCA consisted of one command section; four commando units of about sixty men each; an artillery unit; about forty vehicles and five armoured cars. In all there existed ten CCA units, which formed the core of the Malian Armed Forces, complemented with a separate tank squadron, an airborne squadron, and several paramilitary organisations. The former colonial

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30 Ibid.

31 Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Sillas Diarra, Commandant d'armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/03/1964. ACK.

32 This paragraph is entirely based on: Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

military *goum* units of Timbuktu and the Adagh were transformed into the *Groupes Nomade d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie* (GNIG) of around fifty men. In May 1963, the 8th and 10th CCA were stationed in the Adagh, together with the GNIG14 under Lieutenant Mohamed 'Zulbeyba' ag Elhadi, around 650 men in all.

In the first months of the rebellion, only the GNIG14 and the local *goum* police forces were employed against the rebels.[33] By August 1963, it was clear that the *goum* forces could not suppress the rebellion. Therefore, the 8th CCA was employed as well. Shortly after, the 10th CCA became active. Soon, forces employed in the Adagh were on the increase. By the end of September 1963, three units from the 1st CCA stationed at Segu were in the Adagh as well. Two new units were created especially for service in the Adagh: An artillery unit; and the *Commando Saharien Motorisé* (CSM), under the command of Captain Diby Sillas Diarra. The CSM consisted of about four hundred men. It had more vehicles at its disposal than the average CCA, and five armoured cars. In October 1963, the 2nd, 3rd and 6th CCA were sent up North as well. Two airplanes were sent to Kidal to evacuate troops and wounded men to Gao. Thus, in October 1963, an average of 2,200 men, 35 armoured cars, 2 airplanes and an assorted number of heavy arms were fighting rebel forces numbering about 200 men at most. By March 1964, the amount of troops and material deployed in the Adagh had dropped. The 1st, 3rd and 8th CCA were retreated, but the 2nd and 6th CCA and the CSM were strongly reinforced with another twenty armoured

Table 4.1 Number of Malian forces employed in the Adagh during *Alfellaga*

Date	Units	Men	Vehicles	Combat vehicles
May 1963	CCA8 /CCA10 /GNIG14	650	80	10
Sept. 1963	3 units CCA1 / CCA8 / CCA10 / GNIG14 / CSM / Artillery	1,230	180	20
Oct. 1963	CCA1 / CCA2 / CCA3 / CCA6 / CCA8 / CCA10 / GNIG14 / CSM / Artillery unit	2,200	300	35 2 airplanes
March 1964	CCA2 / CCA6 / CCA10 / GNIG14 / CSM / Tanks batallion/ Artillery unit	1,500	160	40 1 airplane

Source: Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

[33] Both the camel-mounted units of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais and the camel-mounted police forces recruited locally were known as *goum*. The military units were transformed in the GNIG, the local police units remained known as *goum*.

cars from the Bamako based tank squadron. In all, army presence in the Adagh still amounted to about 1,500 men, 40 armoured cars and around 160 vehicles (trucks, jeeps, fuel trucks, et cetera). To keep men and material rolling 200,000 litres of fuel and food for a 1,000 men for 3 months had to be shipped to Kidal.

Raids, skirmishes and ambushes

Despite the deployment of more than half of its effective strength, the Malian Armed Forces could not bring the rebellion to an end. First of all, cars were highly ineffective in large parts of the Adagh. Most of the Adagh consists of very rough terrain; sharp rocks and boulders and sudden steep climbs. The rough terrain demobilised the vehicles, which were under constant repair, and spare parts were lacking. Logistical problems in the transport of water for the troops and fuel for the vehicles further hampered the mobility and effectiveness of the Malian Armed Forces. The Adagh consists of a number of important mountain ranges separated by wadis and valleys. Most clashes between army and rebels took place in three of these mountains: Mount Tigharghar; Mount Doriet to the west of Mount Tigharghar; and Mount Ouzzein. This landscape is ideal for ambush tactics. It is especially advantageous when fighting motorised forces. The relatively flat and sandy wadis are the only suitable terrain for cars, which had great trouble on the stony surface of the mountains. The wadis are generally closed in by boulder formations, sand dunes, or low but steep mountains. The Malian Armed Forces largest weapon was basically an armoured personnel carrier equipped with heavy machine guns, but with an open top. It was not difficult for the *ifulagen* to shoot at the soldiers inside from their high ground positions.

The *ifulagen* did not suffer from the disadvantages of motorised vehicles. Their camels had far less difficulty with the stony surface of the Adagh. After an attack the camel-mounted *ifulagen* could easily retreat over the rocks into the mountains, where the heavy armoured cars, truck and jeeps were unable to follow them. Lack of water and fuel supplies did not hamper them in retreat in the way it hampered the Malian Armed Forces. Of course, this advantage was lost when the rebels had to fight the equally camel-mounted *goum* forces. In fact, the only unit the rebels feared was the GNIG14; the *goum* unit, mounted on camels and armed with the same MAS-36 rifles the *ifulagen* used, and headed by a Kel Tamasheq officer. The attacks of the *ifulagen* against the Malian forces were therefore mostly directed against the camel herds of the *goum* forces to deprive them of their means of combat and pursuit. In August 1963, a group of about fifty *ifulagen* under Sidi Alamine ag Cheick and Ikhlou

Saloum raided the *goum* camels at Boughessa, capturing 25 animals.[34] A second and third raid at the *goum* herds of Kidal led by Sidi Alamine and near Ti-n-Zaouaten led by Elledi ag Alla were just as successful.[35] As well as raiding the *goum* herds, the rebels ambushed army patrols. The rebel ambushes did not take the form of hit-and-run actions.[36] Rather, series of protracted skirmishes, retreats and pursuits took place. Between 17 and 19 September 1963 a prolonged skirmish took place around the wells at Arli and Djourmel in the Wadi Ouzzein, at the edge of Mount Ouzzein. The rebels managed to cause serious damage to the army. Ten wounded soldiers had to be evacuated by airplane to Gao. A second skirmish took place at Arli at the end of September; when the Malian forces counted three wounded. But the most important result of this encounter was the defection of nineteen *goumiers* to the rebel side, taking their mounts, personal arms and a heavy machine gun (which they knew how to operate) with them. On 11 October 1963 a fight took place at the west side of Mount Tigharghar. The rebels were pursued and retreated to Mount Doriet where the cycle of skirmishes and retreats was continued until the pursuing Malian units had to give up for lack of water. In November 1963 a similar skirmish took place at the Wadi Taghlit, which is surrounded by mountains on two sides. Here, the *ifulagen* managed to destroy an armoured car. One soldier was killed and five more were wounded.

Rebel attacks intensified at the start of 1964. On 18 January 1964, a group of *ifulagen* attacked the village of Tessalit. They were guided by Najim ag Sidi, a *goumier* who had served at the Tessalit post. Since the army had accused him of being a rebel accomplice, he had defected and joined the rebels. The raid was very successful. Attacking at night, the rebels managed to break into the Tessalit arsenal, taking with them fifty arms, twenty of which were modern Czech rifles. With this new equipment a total of about eighty *ifulagen*, divided into five units were active in the Adagh throughout that month. On 29 January 1964 this group staged a well-prepared ambush at the Tin Tedjnouten Pass, which is now seen as the rebels' finest moment. The fight ended with the death of the commanding officer of the army unit involved, Lieutenant Konimba. About fifty rebels took part. Mohamed wan Daghada recounts that day.

> We arrived late in the afternoon. Our chiefs, Sidi Alamine and Magdi, called us and Sidi Alamine told us, El Khader and me, that he thought we had better wait in the canyon and dig a ditch. He explained that if we dug a hole and covered it up as a trap, any vehicle falling into it would overturn. Once this was done, we should wait

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[34] Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, 20/08/1963. ACK.

[35] Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le capitaine Diby Sillas Diarra, Commandant d'armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/04/1964. ACK.

[36] Based on; Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

> attentively, and in the event of an alert we should retreat in different groups behind the hills. (...) If there were many vehicles we should let the first one pass since the men looked like the ground [were hidden] and the enemy could not suspect anything. Magdi, who died in this ambush (and who is the father of Bachir who you probably know), called us, El Khader, Aghmadou and myself, to ask us to go to the opposite hill to dig trenches. That's all. We went to the hill where we stayed until the morning. (...) We spent the night there and during afternoon prayers, Atiyoub served as Imam. After prayers, someone ventured it was Atiyoub who withheld the vehicles from arriving. Everyone asked Atiyoub to do something to make the vehicles come. Atiyoub stood up from where he was praying, turned to the group and said to them: "Is that all you want"? He wore a burnous, which he started to flap around. Immediately someone said he heard the sound of a motor. The opinions on this were divided until everyone saw a dust cloud. We directly dispersed and when the vehicles arrived some of us were on the hills and others were in the canyons. The first vehicles that arrived were a Zil [truck] transporting soldiers, a Land Rover and a tank. The vehicles followed each other, the Land Rover first, the tank after it and the Zil brought up the rear. El Khader and me, we hid behind the rocks. We immediately opened fire and the tank, which was hit, had turned around. (...) When the tank was hit and turned around, many of us said to ourselves that it was returning to Kidal while really it had retreated to join the Zil that was following it. It took a good number of soldiers from the Zil on board while the rest had to march towards our positions. Like a cow from which one tries to take away its calf, the furious tank attacked us. The sustained fire of our fighters seemed to have no effect. The tank fired until it killed two of our men. We were greatly upset by this loss. I stood up to observe the tank at close hand and Inkatouf signalled to me that I should hide from the tank's fire. Looking from above, I saw the heads of the soldiers lined up like melons inside the tank, which was not closed. As the tank was open, its occupants were well visible. I aimed my rifle and I took two down. One of the tank soldiers immediately shouted to his chief and the tank withdrew and stayed immobile until the evening. (...) I had a Mauser of quality that day.[37]

Mohamed wan Daghada's account exemplifies some Tamasheq concepts on war and masculinity: Ruse; patience; trust in God; and bravery in the fight. He explains with great detail how the *ifulagen* set up a well-prepared trap for the Malian army. The trenches are not explained as a means of protection, but as a way to lure the army into advance without suspicion. Then they sat in wait for the army. When it arrived, the fighters had to withhold fire until the first vehicle had passed. Before the fight, after normal prayers, the men invoked God's help in the fight to come. In fact, they longed for combat and invoked divine assistance to make the enemy appear. At that moment, the army arrived and was subsequently defeated. In this way, Mohamed shows that trust in God will be rewarded. Combat is engaged and at this point ruse is abandoned for bravery. Mohamed gets up from his trench, despite heavy enemy fire and the warnings

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[37] Interview by Ibrahim ag Litny with Mohamed wan Daghada. Kidal, August 1994. Courtesy of Georg Klute.

of his comrade, and thus manages to kill two enemies. His contempt for his own possible death helped him in killing the enemy forces. These four concepts are most important when actual combat is engaged. However, in how to wage war and on whom, other concepts and rules are involved.

Aqqa, or the rules of conflict

Like everywhere else, warfare is controlled and regulated in Tamasheq society. The regulating principles however, are of a different nature than in most European approaches. Warfare is not about territorial conquest, but about people, material and honour, with the latter forming the main classifying principle. A first form of warfare is *aqqa*, which Hélène Claudot-Hawad translates as a 'countering movement' or 'counter attack'.[38] *Aqqa* is a raid intended to avenge an attack on the honour of the group sustained by one or more of its members. It is thus the way in which *egha* is acted out. But *aqqa* is regulated through rather strict rules, the breaking of which does not lead to repaying *egha*, but in further staining one's honour itself. Only those who are on equal footing can stain honour and can therefore be subject to an *aqqa* counter attack. This excludes women, children, slaves and craftsmen. Religious groups should also be excluded from an *aqqa* attack. The principal goal of an *aqqa* attack is not to kill the enemy, but rather to capture its herds, and possibly its slaves (which could be captured but not killed, and who were often released for ransom afterwards). The raid is most successful if the attackers can capture their bounty without a fight, but if combat is engaged, then only the enemy's able-bodied warriors should be involved. Civilians (women, children, religious personae and craftsmen) should be left unharmed. A second form of warfare is called *tewet*. More or less the same rules as in *aqqa* are applied with two main differences: An *aqqa* attack should be announced to the adversary while a *tewet* attack does not have to be; and the main aim of a *tewet* attack is not to restore or gain honour, but simply to acquire booty. A third form of warfare is *akafal*, which has been described as 'barbarism against barbarism' by both Claudot-Hawad and Berge.[39] While *aqqa* and *tewet* attacks are only carried out against people seen as on an equal footing with the attackers, and are bound to certain rules and goals, *akafal* is war against outsiders who are not seen as on equal footing. In *akafal* there are no rules, honour is not at stake, only defence and booty.

The *ifulagen* tried to apply concepts of honourable conduct in warfare. Non-combatants should not be harmed in the fighting itself, and a minimum of civil

[38] Claudot-Hawad, H. 1993b.
[39] Ibidem; Berge, G. 2000: 108-141.

behaviour and warrior conduct was still expected from the Malian forces, as becomes clear from the following account by Mohamed wan Daghada.

> Interviewer: You, who have experienced the conflict of 1963, does the present one remind you of it? Are things better at present in your opinion?
>
> Mohamedd wan Daghada: They are two different wars that do not resemble each other at all. The first conflict, which was ours, was played out in broad daylight. (...) As soon as they brought me the news [of a skirmish near a camp], we took to the road, at night, and we travelled all night to arrive. In the early morning we were joined by other groups; Elledi's, Azzezen's, and Didari wan Ibelouten's group. I told the group that the soldiers were very close to the camps and in those conditions we could not attack them. The others replied they agreed and that we should warn the soldiers. I went to look for two women, Badaweise and her little sister Tichya – the mother of this young man – whom I asked to go and warn the soldiers. I told the women to go and tell them there was a group of men with bad intentions and that they should leave. Badaweise went to see them and she called aside a *goumier* of the Idnan tribe who is called Mohamed wan Kharam Kharam, to whom she said: "Today, I have seen a group of men who do not belong to you and who are scary". The *goumier* asked her who they were and the women replied that it was a large group from which she knew no one and which prepared for attack. The *goumier* asked: "What are we going to do (...) Should we run away"? The women replied that no, they should not flee. While Mohamed – the father of this young man – and myself took positions, surrounding the enemy, one of ours, Ikhlou Saloum opened fire and the fight started immediately. The firing had alerted the people in the camp who fled. Combat went on until the destruction of one of the vehicles of the enemy. They had wounded men too, which forced them to fight in retreat.[40]

Mohamed wan Daghada makes clear that his war does not resemble the second rebellion at all. His war was fought in broad daylight, in open combat (apparently in contrast to the behaviour of the new generation of fighters), and after announcement. He makes clear that he and his fellow *ifulagen* made sure no civilians fell victim in the fight if they could help it. They would not fight the Malian army in the vicinity of camps. Thus, he first went to the camp to warn the inhabitants, and then had a message sent to the Malians soldiers to invite them for combat elsewhere. This message was passed through the intermediary of a woman to whom, the *ifulagen* trusted, no harm would be done. Only then the *ifulagen* engaged in combat, leaving time for the civilians to bring themselves to safety. In the first months of the conflict, the main aims of attack also followed the rules of *aqqa* and *tewet*. The *ifulagen* primarily raided the camel herds of the *goum* units of Kidal and the GNIG14, probably without announcement and with the aim to loot, which made them *tewet* attacks. A first

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[40] Interview by Ibrahim ag Litny with Mohamed wan Daghada. Kidal, August 1994. Courtesy of Georg Klute.

successful raid was held around Boughessa.[41] A second raid was held at Farar, near Kidal, where the *ifulagen* captured forty camels of the Kidal *goum*.[42] Many more raids would follow. The raids had a tactical value. Not only did they provide means for the *ifulagen* themselves – well-trained mounts for their fighters and livestock to be exchanged for weapons – it also deprived their adversaries of their means of warfare. But the raids on the *gou*m*'s* camels also adhered to the rules of *aqqa*; they were intended to restore honour. The sole objective Elledi ag Alla had with his attack on Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza that started the revolt, was to restore the honour of his family. He wanted to erase his honour debt with the *goumiers*, who had dishonoured his father. Other *ifulagen* too had their honour at stake in the events around Alla ag Albachir. Rebel leader Ikhlou Saloum had been part of Alla's band for a while before becoming a *goumier* himself. Since the *goumiers* were able-bodied warriors par excellence, and on an equal footing with the *ifulagen* as free men, they were legitimate targets for *aqqa*. Hence, the raids on their animals were also in revenge for the stained honour of Elledi and Ikhlou Saloum (and many others) in the mutilation of Alla ag Albachir's body by the *goumiers*. Individual *goumiers* were raided for their own animals as well. Still, the values of honourable warfare were upheld. In November 1963, a group of *ifulagen* attacked the camp of a certain Akly, who lodged the *goumier* Sidarmor ould Mini. At first, the *ifulagen* wanted to kill Sidarmor, but after the intervention of Akly and his wife, they spared his life and only took his arms, clothes (in humiliation) and camels. The leader of the group then told Sidarmor:

> We wanted to make you suffer the same ordeals to which our people are victim. We will not give you back this gun, which would be employed against us. You say you want peace. We don't want it. (...) We have no fear. Day and night we will be everywhere. We have no need to hide ourselves and don't you think we will not come back. Even if you go to the river we will follow you there.[43]

The language used is one of masculine honour and bravery. The *ifulagen* insist that they fight in the open and will continue doing so. Instead of killing the adversary, his life is spared in request of his host (and not heading this request would damage honour as the safety of the guest is the honour of the host), and he is left in humiliation to get the message across. The *ifulagen* invite the *goum* to battle in the open. They have no reason to hide and will find their adversaries wherever they go. The fight is between equals, who are dealt with as such. Until August 1963, only the *goum* and the GNIG14 pursued the rebels. Thus, only attacks on valid adversaries were made. However, by August 1963 it

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41 Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc à Cdt. Cercle Kidal, 20/08/1963. ACK.
42 Boilley, P. 1999: 326.
43 Rapport du goumier Sidarmor ould Mini. Tessalit, 30/11/1963. ACK.

was clear to the Malian Government that the *goum* and the GNIG14 alone could not end the rebellion. Therefore the CCA's of the Malian Armed Forces were sent in. All parties involved until that moment, the *ifulagen*, the *goumiers* and the Kel Adagh in general were quick to learn that the new adversary would not fight by the rules. Women and religious persons were arrested or killed, and so were men who had not participated in combat. Wells were poisoned and cattle were killed. It therefore comes as no surprise that many *goumiers* deserted the Malian forces to join the *ifulagen*. One of the first to do so was Azzezen ag Iksa. Having first fought against the *ifulagen*, he would become one of their main military leaders and the last to surrender his arms.[44] At the end of September 1963, after (or during) a battle between the rebels and the army at the well of Arli, in the Wadi Ouzzein, a group of nineteen *goumiers* defected to the rebels.[45] The methods applied by the Malian Armed Forces went against their ethics as warriors and their feelings of belonging to the Kel Adagh. After all, the people under attack were 'their people' and the people who attacked them were not. Moreover, the Malian Armed Forces attacked the wrong people, the civilians, instead of the warriors. That the Southern Malian officers had no high opinion of their effectiveness will not have helped to sustain their loyalty either, in contrast with the *ifulagen* who knew with whom they were dealing. Concepts of *egha* and subsequent *aqqa* counter attacks do not exclude feelings of respect or tribal affiliation.

With the change in tactics by the Malian forces, the tactics of the *ifulagen* altered similarly. The camel herds of the *goum* forces were no longer the sole focus of their raids. The tribal chiefs who assisted the regime to talk the rebels into surrender were raided as well. Above all, even the herds of the civilian population in and outside the Adagh were now targeted. The indignation of the fighters about the atrocities of the army on one hand and their own plundering on the other hand seem to be in striking contradiction. But by that stage the Malian forces had clearly abandoned the code of conduct of civilised warfare as it was known in the Adagh. The concept of *aqqa* was no longer valid. The rebels' later attacks on all and sundry are *akafal*: Barbarism against barbarism.[46] On one hand, *akafal* means war against non-Kel Tamasheq, which this clearly was. In these wars, honour was not at stake and could therefore not be damaged by one's own actions. Therefore, no pardon or rule was necessary. On the other

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[44] After the end of the rebellion, Azzezen ag Iksa stayed in Algeria. In January 1971, he returned to Mali where he symbolically surrendered his gun. He was sent to Bamako where he was released under the National Reconciliation Act proclaimed by Moussa Traoré in 1978.

[45] Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

[46] Claudot-Hawad, H. 1993b.

hand, *akafal* is the lawlessness imposed by barbarism. In a war were the adversary is not Kel Tamasheq, who does not know the internal martial code of conduct and behaves accordingly brutally, one has no other option than to react similarly in order to survive.

Repression and retaliation

After operations in Mali, the *ifulagen* retreated into Algeria. There they were relatively safe from the pursuing Malian Armed Forces. This changed considerably when the Malian forces obtained the right to pursue the rebels, or whoever was perceived as such, on Algerian territory. When and how exactly is still not clear, but between November 1963 and February 1964 Mali and Algeria concluded an agreement according the Malian Armed Forces the right to pursue the rebels in Algeria as far as necessary.[47] The Malian right of pursuit in Algeria proved to be dramatic. First of all, it made clear to the rebels that their strategy – starting the conflict in the hope that Algeria would come to their aid – would not work out. Second, the main tactic of the rebels – retreat into safety behind the Algerian border – was now seriously undermined. On 15 February 1964, a group of *ifulagen* engaged the Malian Armed Forces at Mount Tikiane in Algeria.[48] The rebels retreated further into Algeria, leaving five of their men dead and one captured. In a second skirmish at Agedem, just across the Algerian border, the rebels left three of their most valuable fighters in combat and two captured.[49] Third, not only the rebels suffered under the Malian incursions. The Kel Adagh who had fled to Algeria to escape the violence were also confronted with the pursuing Malian forces who considered the refugees as rebel accomplices. In November 1963, more than 400 cows and 250 camels were massacred together with their herdsmen at the wells of In Ouzzel, a few hundred kilometres into Algeria.[50]

The forbidden zone

Whether in Algeria or in Mali, the *ifulagen* were hard to track down. The Malian Armed Forces therefore quickly resorted to retaliation on the Kel Adagh

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47 It is unclear on which date this agreement was signed, or whether an agreement was signed at all or on what level.

48 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

49 Déclarations des deux rebelles rendus avec leurs armes le 10 juillet 1964 au Chef de Tribu Bissaada – II/Déclarations du nommé Bilal ag Indialal, *fraction* Taghat Melet, Tribu Ebeug. ACK.

50 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c. See also Boilley, P. 1999: 333.

civilians, whom they viewed as accomplices and potential rebels. On 27 September 1963, the army decided to try to cut the rebels off from their support by declaring the Adagh north to Kidal a forbidden zone (*zone interdite*). This meant that all of the Adagh was forbidden territory for its inhabitants since Kidal is situated at the southernmost limit of the Adagh. Anyone found in the area was considered a rebel and could be shot on sight. But evacuating all the Kel Adagh to the utmost south of the Adagh was unfeasible. In January 1964, the policy was probably reformulated. The population was now to be concentrated in so-called regrouping zones (*zones de regroupement*) south and west of Kidal and around administrative posts and army bases at Aguelhoc, Telabit, Boughessa and Tessalit. The rest of the Adagh remained a 'forbidden zone'.[51] It is not clear how and to what extent the population was informed on these policies. We have to keep in mind that communication with a nomadic population is difficult, despite the existence of population concentrations in the best inhabitable parts of the Adagh: The wadis, which were accessible to army vehicles. In December 1963, a campaign was organised to inform the population on

> (...) the social policy of our Party and at the same time their proper interests. In general, the nomadic populations, following the psychological political work of our troops and the call to the rebels by our head of State, divide themselves between two opposing groups, in opinion as well as on the ground. The first group, and by far the most numerous, underwent the dynamic actions of our officers who are in charge of their political education, whereas the second group, situated in Algeria, has remained under the influence of the propaganda of the rebels, to whom they are, explicitly or not, accomplices.[52]

Thus, part of the population knew about the new measures. But knowing about them and being able to comply with them are two different matters. The concentration of the population would cause tremendous difficulties in the allocation of sufficient water and pastures to support the herds in such small areas as those designated by the army. Thus, those Kel Adagh who knew about the 'forbidden zone' were faced with the choice between complying – and watching their herds perish within the regrouping zones – or risking their lives and those of their livestock by staying where they were.

> Question – Why did you flee from the soldiers when you saw them? They had to shoot your mounts to arrest you.

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[51] Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c. The idea that this policy was slightly altered in January 1964 is based on: Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle du mois de février 1964. ACK, which speaks of a *zône de regroupement* to the south and west of Kidal.

[52] Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de décembre 1963. ACK.

> Reply – We fled from the soldiers because at the last Party meeting at Tessalit (...) we had been warned that the sector is forbidden, that all those who go to that zone will be killed. So, when we crossed the soldiers in that sector, we tried to flee from the soldiers to head back to Tessalit, but unfortunately our camels were shot and we were arrested by the soldiers'.[53]

A third and most popular option was to escape to Algeria. The *ifulagen* too knew about the 'forbidden zone' tactics and responded by trying to escort as many people as they could out of the Adagh on their way to Algeria. Thus, in December 1963, around 400 families and their herds fled to Algeria to escape persecution.[54] Many more would follow. By the end of the conflict, an estimated 5,000 of a total population of no more than 20,000 Kel Adagh had installed themselves in Southern Algeria with no intention of returning to Mali. By then, most of those who had preferred to return to Mali had already done so. The army responded to the exodus by pursuing and killing those on their way to Algeria (or even those already in Algeria), or by evacuating even more people to its zones of control. In January 1964, the population of the area around Tarkimt, almost on the banks of the Niger and the base camp of the GNIG14, was evacuated to the south on rumours that they planned to flee to Algeria.[55]

For those Kel Adagh who remained in the 'forbidden zone', life must have been hell. The army systematically poisoned wells throughout the Adagh since the rebels depended on wells to provision themselves, but so did the local population. The army just as systematically shot herds and herdsmen to keep them out of rebel hands. For those in the regrouping zones, life was not much better. Women and children were not deliberately executed, although many died of poisoned water. Instead, they were taken to villages in the regrouping zones such as Kidal, Tessalit and Boughessa where they were put to work.

> I was lucky, because the army did not kill women at the time, tss tss, no no. They only put them in prison, to make bricks and all that. Building things. But they didn't kill women and children. Only men. There were many people who died, eh!?[56]

This sounds more innocent than it was for at least some of these women. As pointed out earlier, in Tamasheq concepts of work, class and gender, noble women should not carry out manual labour, and concepts of female beauty in-

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53 Rapport d'interrogation, Arrondissement de Tessalit, Cercle de Kidal, 08/02/1964. ACK.

54 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de décembre 1963. ACK.

55 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

56 Interview with Takhnouna. Bamako, 08/02/1998.

clude extreme obesity brought about by fattening from early adolescence.[57] Many Kel Adagh tried to live up to these noble values with devastating effects for the women involved when forced to perform hard physical labour. Even for those women who were accustomed to work within the Tamasheq household economy, fabricating clay bricks was a totally alien occupation that struck them as utterly humiliating. Not unsurprisingly, many women had to endure physical and sexual harassment by their guards. Some were forced into marriage or concubinage since their husbands or male relatives were (presumed) rebels, prisoners, or dead.

> I have the honour to send to you Atakora Oueled Sikema, originating from your *Arrondissement*, for the following reasons: (...) In fact, the concerned is at present under the threat of the knife of one of the co-wives of the gendarme Mallet Keïta who insists on marrying her despite her irregular situation. It is most important to consider that the presence of this woman in Tessalit is harmful to Mister Mallet Keïta's family and risks producing grave consequences in the future, since the man adamantly insists on making her live in his house without entering into a legal marriage contract.[58]

The forced marriages were unbearable in many ways. First of all, some of these women were already married or engaged, but with their husbands and male relatives away or dead, they had no choice but to accept their situation. I once heard a story about the Kel Adagh wife of a former officer who served in the Adagh during *Alfellaga*. Her husband imposed his marriage proposal by killing most of her male relatives in front of her eyes. Whether this story is true or apocryphal is beside the point here. The existence of these stories informs us on what Kel Adagh think has happened and on their opinion on the Malian Armed Forces' lack of civilisation in warfare and the taking of booty. Apocryphal or not, it is certainly true that many Malian soldiers and officers who served in the Adagh married Kel Adagh women, especially of free descent and of pale complexion, whom they regarded as prestigious prizes to take home to the South. In the 1970s and 1980s, marrying a career soldier serving in the North became an exit strategy out of misery for many Kel Tamasheq women, causing much disturbance among Tamasheq men who regarded these marriages as a further cause of collective social shame. Second, in Kel Adagh society, as in all Tamasheq societies, monogamy is the norm. To these Kel Adagh women, their status as co-wife must have been equivalent to being a concubine, a position previously only held by women of slave origins. Her new role as wife to a non-Tamasheq also brought her tasks she was unaccustomed to performing:

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[57] So far this important aspect of Tamasheq and Bidân culture has generated only one serious study. Popenoe, R. 2004.

[58] Chef d'Arrondissement de Tessalit à Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc, 25/02/1965. ACK.

pounding grain, fetching firewood, and sweeping the compound. Sometimes the (non)marital situation even grew dangerous as the above quote shows. Imprisoning women had the effect the authorities desired. Many families returned from their exile in Algeria to plead for the liberation of their womenfolk.[59]

The arrest of the leaders

If the Malian right of pursuit on Algerian territory had not made it clear to the rebels that their strategy to start the fight in the hope for external support had failed, the fate of Zeyd ag Attaher's mission to Algeria to explicitly demand Algerian support would certainly have done so. In the autumn of 1963, Zeyd ag Attaher decided to contact the Algerian Government to remind it of what he perceived as its promise, made during his visit in 1961 to the Hoggar, to support his cause.[60] He travelled to Tamanrasset, where he asked to meet the Governor. During the meeting Zeyd requested to speak to the Algerian President, Ahmed Ben Bella, and to be provided with transport to Algiers. The request was granted, but Malian diplomacy had been ahead of Zeyd. On 28 September 1963 the Malian Chief of Staff, Abdoulaye Soumaré, had visited Algiers to speak with the authorities about the uprising.[61] Soumaré managed to convince the Algerian authorities of the necessity of arresting Zeyd or other rebels when they presented themselves. At their arrival in Colomb-Béchar, Zeyd and his companion Ilyas ag Ayyouba were arrested. The car in which they travelled turned around and drove them to Tessalit. There, they were put on an airplane to Kidal where they arrived on 1 November.[62]

In the same period, the ground was laid for the arrest of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar who had lived in exile in Morocco since the 1950s. Again, international relations worked against the rebels. In October 1963, Morocco was at war with Algeria over the border area around Tindouf. The area was Algerian territory, but Morocco claimed it on historical grounds as *al-Maghreb al-Aksâ*, Greater Morocco. The conflict was resolved with the help of Modibo Keita, whose diplomatic skills and international prestige made him a valid interme-

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[59] Le Sous-Lieutenant Mohamed ag Mohamed Elhadi, Commandant du GNIG de Tarkimt, au chef d'escadron Commandant la Gendarmerie Nationale du Mali à Bamako. Objet: Compte rendu sur une tournée du 14 au 21 Avril 1964. ACK.

[60] The following is based on three interviews with Amegha ag Sherif, Brussels, October 1994; Bamako 08/02/1998; and Bamako, 10/02/1998. For a similar account, based on the reminiscence of the same witness, see Boilley, P. 1999: 318.

[61] Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

[62] Boilley (1999), 338. 15 November is given as the date of Zeyd's arrest in Algeria in Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM – 15 H 77-2c.

diary. In return for his help, Morocco arrested and expelled Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar in March 1964.[63]

After the expulsion and arrest of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, another more major blow was struck to the *ifulagen*: The capture of Elledi ag Alla by Malian forces on 9 March 1964 at Intachara, Algeria. Elledi was perhaps not the most important military leader, but as the son of a famous rebel against France and the instigator of the conflict, his prestige and renown was greater than that of any other combatant. After his arrest and severe torture, Elledi was given the option between collaboration and direct execution. He chose the former. Thus, the Malian army was able to make further arrests within the network of rebels in Mali.

Psychological warfare

The arrested leaders were used in a campaign to demoralise both the supportive population and the remaining fighters. Zeyd ag Attaher and Ilyas ag Ayyouba were paraded through Kidal and the Adagh in a campaign of public humiliation. As is visible in Photo 4.1, Zeyd's veil was draped around his neck as a shawl. Ilyas ag Ayyouba does not wear a veil at all. In those times, nothing was more humiliating and dishonourable for a man than to show his face in public. If Zeyd had had to walk the streets with his pants around his ankles the effect would not have been greater. But Zeyd was not simply unveiled. In the elaborate language of honour that men express through their veil, draping it as a shawl expresses utter defeat and distress.[64] The same fate was bestowed upon Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar. His picture was taken while he was unveiled and shown in the Adagh and elsewhere.[65] Thus the Malian forces wanted to make sure the message came through, and it did.

> And what did Mali do? This is what the Tuareg have never been able to digest. They undressed them, Zeyd and Mohamed Ali, and they exposed them throughout Tamasheq country as if to say: "Here are the men you counted on". They did this in Goundam, they did this in Timbuktu, in all of the country. The soldiers spat on them, they undressed them (...) undressed them. This is what the Tuareg could never digest. They were the most respected among men. Doing something like that is like killing someone's soul.[66]

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[63] The date of Mohamed Ali's expulsion is based on: Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Sillas Diarra, Commandant d'armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/04/1964. ACK. The explanation that his arrest and expulsion to Mali are linked to Modibo Keita's intervention in the Moroccan–Algerian conflict is common in the Adagh and elsewhere in the Tamasheq world.

[64] Claudot-Hawad, H. 1993d.

[65] Ibid.: 32.

[66] Interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994.

Photo 4.1
Captured rebel leaders Zeyd ag Attaher (middle), Ilyas ag Ayyouba (right) and Mohammed Ali ag Attaher Insar's messenger Mohammed Ali (left), are paraded in victory through Kidal.
[*Source*: Archives du *Cercle* de Kidal. Courtesy of the Archives Nationales du Mali.]

Photo 4.2
Mohammed Ali ag Attaher Insar shortly after his extradition from Morocco in 1964.
[*Source*: Archives du *Cercle* de Kidal. Courtesy of the Archives Nationales du Mali.]

To those who could not witness the public exposure of the leaders, the army wrote a note, which was dropped by airplane over the Adagh.

LAST WARNING TO THE REBELS

1º/ YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM YOUR FAMILIES
YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM YOUR PEOPLE
YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM YOUR LEADERS
YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM THE WHOLE WORLD

2º/ ALGERIA PURSUES YOU AND ARRESTS YOU AT ITS BORDERS TO HAND YOU OVER TO MALI

3º/ YOU STILL HAVE A LAST CHANCE - THAT IS TO SURRENDER YOURSELVES WITH YOUR ARMS AT THE NEAREST MILITARY POST WITHIN THE NEXT 48 HOURS

MISSING THIS LAST CHANCE THAT MALI OFFERS YOU WILL MEAN:

NAPALM BOMBS
CANONS
MACHINE GUNS DESTROYING YOU IN ONE DAY

4º/ ZEID AG ATTAHER AND HIS MAIN COLLABORATORS HAVE BEEN IN OUR HANDS SINCE 10 DAYS AGO

450 REBELS WERE ARRESTED BY ALGERIA AND HANDED OVER TO MALI

LONG LIVE MALI
LONG LIVE THE MALIAN ARMY![67]

The message could not have had a large impact, as almost none of the Kel Adagh could read French. But other means where employed as well to convince the population and the rebels of the hopelessness of their struggle. The army had a mobile cinema, which toured the regrouping zone in May 1964. The movie showed Modibo Keita and the Algerian President Ben Bella embracing each other as proof of Malian-Algerian solidarity.[68] Again, much probably needed to be explained, as the Kel Adagh knew the image of neither man.

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[67] Flyer found in ACK.
[68] Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de mai 1964. ACK.

Diby's oven

Worst of all the means employed in this 'psychological war', were the totally random executions of both the population and leading personae in the Adagh. Opposite the commander's office in Kidal, on the other side of the wadi, is a low rocky ridge. Within the ridge is a sand-filled recess, which some refer to as 'Diby's oven' after the Commanding officer of the *Cercle* of Kidal, Diby Sillas Diarra. A pit was dug in this recess, which was filled with blazing embers. Executions took place at the edge of this pit, after which the body was thrown in and covered with sand. Meat and bread are cooked in the same way in the Sahara, something that cannot escape the attention of those who know this story. To those who understand Bamanakan, the pun on this form of execution, and the man who invented it, is as apparent as it is macabre. In Bamanakan, '*dibi'* means grilled meat.

Photo 4.3
Captain Diby Sillas Diarra
[Source: *Le Mali*, 02/02/1966. Courtesy of the Archives Nationales du Mali.]

On 16 February 1964, the army executed the venerated *marabout* Sidi Mohamed Embakoua ag Oumayyata who had studied with *cheick* Baye al-Kounti, the most important Kounta *cheick* in Northern Mali in the first quarter of the 20th century.[69] In the 1940s it was Embakoua who had replaced the descendants of *cheick* Baye as the spiritual leader of the Ifoghas. His execution struck the Adagh with terror, as was intended. *Commandant de Cercle* Diarra was of the opinion that 'the spectacular sanctions applied against the agents of subversion would have the merit of discouraging duplicity and complicity in all their forms'.[70] On 25 March 1964, Sidi Haïballa ould Abidine, a venerated Kounta

[69] Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de février 1964. ACK.
[70] Ibid.

cheick, and one of the most influential religious leaders in the Adagh, was arrested and interrogated. He was accused of having made charms for the *ifulagen* to protect them from bullets, which he denied having done. No proof was found against Sidi Haïballa or his son Sidi Mohamed. Of the latter it was even noted that 'despite the accusations against him, the concerned has always informed us [of the whereabouts of the *ifulagen*] in the western sector'.[71] Nevertheless, according to Diarra, Sidi Haïballa had done nothing to prevent the rebellion and had not used his influence to stop the rebels in their actions. Thus he was guilty by compliance and a rebel himself. The public execution of Sidi Haïballa and his son Sidi Mohamed caused tremendous grief. That year, the Kounta in the Adagh and elsewhere, in mourning for his death, did not celebrate *'aid al-'adhâ'*, the most important celebration in Islam. Chiefs who did not collaborate with the army were shot as well, like Ayyouba ag Mohamed Adargajouj, chief of the Daoussahak, and the father of Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyouba. Ayyouba, who lived in the *Cercle* of Ménaka, was arrested and sent to Kidal, where he was executed on the grounds that his sons were rebel leaders and that he himself had furnished camels to them. But not only local leaders were executed. In February 1964, the army discovered 'intelligence networks' in and around Kidal, Telabit and Aguelhoc amongst the population held in the regrouping zones. This was taken as a pretext for summary executions among the regrouped population.[72]

The last months

The arrest of the main leaders, the executions and the imprisonment of the population did provoke a drop in morale among the fighters.

> So, after what I've said before – the psychological work they had done by showing the chiefs Mohamed Ali and Zeyd through all the villages – many men abandoned their arms. They returned. Many returned to Algeria. There were few fighters left with sufficient means.[73]

Within the ranks of the *ifulagen*, two options prevailed. One group supported abandoning the fight and seeking refuge in Algeria under the protection of either the French at their military bases, or under protection of the Algerian Government. The largest group however opted for returning to Mali and surrendering unconditionally to its authorities since they knew that those who

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71 PV d'écoute concernant Sidi Mohamed ould Sidi Haïballa, 18/03/1964. ACK.
72 Cercle Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de février 1964. ACK.
73 Interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994.

had been taken prisoner had not been killed.[74] Elledi, Zeyd and others were still alive. In May and June 1964, Intalla ag Attaher toured the Adagh west of Boughessa to persuade the *ifulagen* to surrender. Intalla's efforts were intended to gain the confidence of the rebels he encountered, but some came to him to surrender on their own initiative. Those who did were disarmed and remained with Intalla to convince others to surrender as well. The tours were successful as a total of forty-eight men gave up the fight.[75] The remaining fighters were mostly men of the first hour such as Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick, Azzezen ag Iksa and Ikhlou Saloum. Not all rebels gave up the fight immediately, despite the hopelessness of their situation. In June 1964, the group around Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick was spotted in the Timetrine by the GNIG14.[76] After a long, drawn out pursuit through the Timetrine, the group was finally tracked down. On 27 July, Sidi Alamine ag Cheick was killed on the run.[77] His brother Issouf ag Cheick fled to Algeria with the rest of the survivors.[78] With Sidi Alamine's group out of action, rebel military activity came to a low point.

On 15 August 1964, the Malian Government officially declared the rebellion vanquished in the national newspaper *L'Essor*. To the few readers of the paper, the news of the end of the rebellion was probably more shocking than the news of the rebellion in the first place. The announcement was the third article ever written in the Malian press on the revolt, and the first to call it a rebellion. Victory was celebrated in Kidal on 22 September 1964, on the third National Independence Day. The festivities were attended by Mali's military top brass: the Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence Mamadou Diakité; the Governor of the *Région* of Gao Bakary Diallo; and the commander of the *Bataillon Sahélien de l'Est*, Bokar Sada Diallo, next to all the officers in command of the administration and the army in the Kidal area. The *goumiers* and the various CCA units paraded through Kidal. Flowers were placed at the monument for the

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[74] Déclarations des deux rebelles rendus avec leurs armes le 10 juillet 1964 au Chef de Tribu Bissaada – I/Déclarations du nommé Salia ag Bakarine, fraction Imerade Intalla. ACK.

[75] Compte rendu de la mission d'Intalla au Commandant la C.S.M. n.d. (July 1964). ACK.

[76] RAC message: Origine Commandant GNT télégramme officiel à Commandant BSE. Info Base GNT à Commandant le 10e CCA – Telabit; and RAC message: Gov. Gao 26//00h télégramme officiel à Cdt. Cercle Kidal NR 37/Chiffré/BSE; and Réponse au télégramme officiel de 26/6/64 à 1820h; and RAC message: Cdt. Cercle Kidal télégramme officiel à Gov. Gao no 18/chi/Cercle. ACK.

[77] RAC message: Lieutenant Cissoko télégramme officiel à Commandant de la C.S.M., 29/7/64. ACK.

[78] RAC message: 28/7/64 FM Commandant la gendarmerie de Tarkimt télégramme officiel au Commandant de la C.S.M. ACK.

dead, followed by the ceremony of the flag, after which the regimental flag of the *Bataillon Sahélien de l'Est* was hoisted. A minute of silence was twice observed in memory of 'the valiant builders of the Malian nation who fell here in defence of national unity and integrity'.[79] The forty captured rebels who were present were symbolically unshackled and pardoned for their acts. The message conveyed in this military symbolism was Malian victory, a victory over 'a feudal society, convinced of the rule of the strongest, an anarchist society without attachments and without sedentary spirit, a society relishing adventure, a society of hate and complexes, which the French administration had left to the Republic of Mali'.[80] In his speech, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence Mamadou Diakité passed on a message from Modibo Keita who pardoned 'all those who, understanding their error, had laid down their arms. They may thus consider themselves to be free citizens in all respects in a Mali that makes no distinction among its children. But it is necessary that they remember, and I am sure everybody will remember'.[81] Keita was absolutely right.

Epilogue

The fact that those Kel Adagh who lived through the events of 1963-1964 would remember them vividly needs no explanation. An outsider with an inclination to dissect factual events from historical discourse could easily discard the connection made here in a way similar to ones disconnecting Gavrillo Princip's assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand from the real causes of the First World War. But history does not work that way. Historical narratives are produced at a specific moment, under specific circumstances, in a specific cultural context. When I conducted my research, Tamasheq society was recovering from the second rebellion, between 1990 and 1996. Years of renewed resistance against the state are part of the circumstances creating the link between resistance in colonial times, *Alfellaga*, and the second rebellion. However, almost all of those who are likely to have witnessed the events were reluctant to speak about them. Some of them simply said they were not in the Adagh at the time, which could be true given both the massive retreat of the Kel Adagh into Algeria during those years and the Malian tactics of the regrouping zones. But other reasons for silence are more likely. Tamasheq speech is bound by honour. One should measure one's words and preferably speak in a concealing language called *tengelt*. Emotions should be restrained to preserve dignity. All this is quite impossible when invited to tell a tale of horror. I must admit I had great

[79] 'Kidal a célébré la fête nationale avec un éclat particulier', *L'Essor Hebdomadaire*, 28/09/1964.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

difficulties in pressing further when confronted with reluctance to revisit the events I was interested in. The fact that I was a stranger could also have played a large part in form and content of (non-)communication. However, those who had witnessed *Alfellaga* and wanted to speak about the subject invariably told me the story of Paul Ahmed Nardy 'the Frenchman'. Nardy was actually of mixed Algerian and French origins. After independence, he stayed in Mali where he worked as administrator of the customs service in Gao. He was, rightly or not, accused by *Commandant* Diby Sillas Diarra of being the head of the resistance movement's information network in Gao. Nardy was arrested in March 1964.

> (...) but he had nothing to do with the revolt, he was an innocent type. He was imprisoned together with my older sister who survived. They let him die of thirst. He asked someone to moisten the tip of his veil so he could have some water, but it was refused. When he died after three days there was a bright light on the spot were he was, like a lamp. Only it wasn't a lamp, it was a miracle. That was because he was a good Muslim and a perfectly innocent man. He had nothing to do with the rebellion. They only killed him because he was French, and they thought he had spied for the rebels. He was a brave person.[82]

Nardy's story was not only told because of our presumedly shared French (European) origins. To those who told it, somehow, it was an outstanding example of the barbarisms of the Malian Armed Forces. As mentioned above, in the Tamasheq concept of honourable war – *aqqa* – certain social categories should be left unharmed: women; children; the free unprotected craftsmen; religious groups (*ineslemen*); and strangers. Nardy fitted the last two categories. He was a Frenchman who had converted to Islam, and he was apparently reputed for his piety. He was certainly not the only victim of the Malian Armed Forces who, according to the rules of *aqqa*, should have been left unharmed. The public execution of the Adagh's men of religion still provokes resentment.

The imprisonment of women and children in the towns and the labour they were forced to carry out constitutes another source of bitter recollection. In Kel Adagh memory, many of the arbitrary acts committed against the population and their chiefs after the rebellion are now placed within the context of the rebellion, or they are believed to have taken place in those days. The arrest and humiliation of Bissaada ag Khakad, Hamzata ag Sidi and Ebeug ag Elmouack in 1967, described in Chapter 3, is now remembered as having taken place during the rebellion as well. The whole Keita period is seen as not only one of great suffering, but also one of continued resistance and rebellion. It is as if *Alfellaga* did not take place between 1963 and 1964, but between 1960 and 1968, from the coming of Mali to the coup d'état by Moussa Traoré. The im-

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[82] Conversation with Keyni ag Sherif. Kidal, 05/05/1999.

portance of *Alfellaga* as a time of great suffering stretches even further and is connected to later catastrophes. Not without reason the poverty of the Adagh after the rebellion is blamed on the destruction of herds by the Malian Armed Forces.

> Before *Alfellaga* the Adagh was rich. There were no Tuareg beggars. There were many camels. There were people who had never tasted grain. They only lived on milk, dates and meat. Only after *Alfellaga* did they learn to eat rice. The soldiers brought rice, since there were no herds left. The women did not even know how to swallow this rice. They were not used to it. When the army found a herd [makes a shooting gesture] they gunned them down. They killed many animals, camels and goats.[83]

The extermination of herds and the destruction of the environment, the poisoning of wells and the cutting down of trees by the Malian Armed Forces are even presented as direct causes for the drought of the 1970s.

> Before *Alfellaga*, the Adagh was green. All the wadis were covered in trees. The army cut them down and that brought the drought.[84]

Not only those who lived the events remember *Alfellaga*. Poems and songs have been composed in remembrance by those who lived those times, but also by the *ishumar*, the young men and women preparing the rebellion of the 1990s. These songs and poems are known throughout the Tamasheq world. Poetry is the main vehicle of historical knowledge. One stanza in particular was recited to me in and outside the Adagh. It compares French and Malian rule. Even the men who epitomised the bad side of French presence – the *goumiers* – are now remembered with some fondness when compared to their Malian counterparts.

The *goumiers* of old
those of the French
were beautiful
With their white-haired camels
How should the worth and wickedness
of Sidi Ongoiba be judged?
If not by the massacre
If not by the silly hats[85]

This particular stanza was recited to me twice in the Adagh and twice outside the Adagh by different people on different occasions. 'Sidi' Ongoiba served as Second Lieutenant in the Adagh during the rebellion, and afterwards as *Chef d'Arrondissement* at Boughessa and commander of the *goum*. The 'silly hats' refers to the caps worn by Malian soldiers, which are compared to the

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[83] Conversation with Takhnouna. Bamako, 08/02/1998.
[84] Conversation with Amegha ag Sherif. Bamako, 08/02/1998.
[85] Part of a poem by Akhmudan ag Meddi.

Tamasheq veil and turban, the *eghewid* that conveys honour and proper behaviour. Later generations and other groups not only know of the events through poems and songs. Some witnessed certain events as children; others heard stories about it from parents or relatives.

Stories about *Alfellaga* have spread beyond the Adagh. Today they are relevant knowledge of history for all the populations of Northern Mali. *Alfellaga* is seen as the origin of the second rebellion, which involved all Northern Mali. Thus, stories about *Alfellaga* have been incorporated in an explanatory narrative on the second rebellion. Those from outside the Adagh involved in the second rebellion will stress not only the continuity between the two revolts, but if possible even the participation of non-Kel Adagh in *Alfellaga*. Informants of the *tewsit* Ishidenharen residing in the *Cercle* of Ménaka insisted that at least fourteen of their men had joined *Alfellaga*. They could mention one by name: Bahoni, the father of Moussa ag Bahoni, one of the most important Ishidenharen leaders of the second rebellion. Albachir, a Daoussahak from the Ménaka area, explained that 'If one told the scientific truth, one would give paternity of *Alfellaga* to the Daoussahak. In 1962, it was well and truly with Ilyas ag Ayyouba's money that the rebellion took place with the Ifoghas in Kidal'.[86] That Younes ag Ayyouba and his brother, Ilyas, were most likely the only two Daoussahak involved in *Alfellaga* is less relevant to Albachir. Their involvement justifies a claim to early resistance and participation in later events for his own group. Thus, even outside the Adagh, continuity between *Alfellaga* and the second rebellion is assured along the genealogical lines of tribe and *fraction*. Just how widespread stories about *Alfellaga* are becomes clear from a conversation I had in Ménaka with Almoustapha, a young Songhay man from Gao. Almoustapha knew I was a historian, and he asked me the reasons for the second rebellion. I answered I didn't know and asked for his opinion. He gave me his personal opinion.

> Among other things, it has to do with taxes. In the French period taxes were levied arbitrarily. Those who could not pay their taxes were put in the sun from eight in the morning to nightfall, or they were beaten. With independence we thought these shameless practices would come to an end. Unfortunately there was the "famous", or rather infamous leader of Kidal after independence, Diby Sillas Diarra. He caused a complete massacre. He killed many people in Kidal. Those who could not pay their taxes were instantly executed. (...) One day, Diby passed a merchant on the road. Diby drew his pistol to shoot him. Do you know why he wanted to shoot him? Because in walking by, the merchant had caused dust to fall on him. Only with the greatest effort could Diby's following withhold him from killing the man. "Very

[86] Interview with Albachir. Bamako, 24/01/1998. Ilyas and Younes ag Ayyouba had sold part of their father's herds to finance the purchase of arms in Algeria before the start of the rebellion.

> well, Diby said, I shall not kill him, but when I have drawn my pistol I cannot holster it without shooting. Bring me a donkey so I can fire the bullet meant for the merchant on that animal."[87]

Like the Kel Adagh, but with different arguments, Almoustapha draws an immediate parallel between French colonial rule, Malian rule in the Adagh under the Keita Regime, and the reasons for the second rebellion. The explicit line of reasoning is not only a good example of created continuity over time, but the story told is also a good example of a particular colonial genre. The reason why *Commandant de Cercle* Diby Sillas Diarra wanted to shoot the passing merchant echoes similar stories about the injustice and power of the *Commandants de Cercle* under French colonial rule. Almoustapha thus invokes a parallel between colonial times and newly independent Mali. However, the beating of passers-by for lack of respect was uncommon in the Adagh, but not in Almoustaphas home, the *Cercle* of Gao. The way in which Almoustapha creates a parallel between colonial and Malian rule is an example of what Charlotte Linde has called 'narrative induction', which is 'a process of being encouraged or required to hear, understand, and use someone else's story as one's own'.[88] This is brought about by what she calls 'non-participant narrative': 'An oral story told to someone not present at the events narrated'.[89] Almoustapha's example shows that appropriated narratives will be transformed in ways to fit a historical experience closer to the narrator. Undoubtedly, he will have heard stories of wicked colonial officers from his own family.

We see here how various non-participant narratives have been blended into a new whole with the aim of appropriating historical events and their significance for non-Kel Tamasheq: The outbreak of the second rebellion. The Kel Adagh, who see Malian rule as a continuation of colonial dominance, would not deny the parallel drawn by Almoustapha. In the coming chapters I will discuss the causes and effects of narrative induction on non-participants of *Alfellaga* at greater length. I will try to demonstrate how *Alfellaga* is linked to the rebellion of the 1990s in ways similar to those linking Alla ag Albachir to *Alfellaga*. Memories of the brutal repression of *Alfellaga* by the Malian Armed Forces described in this chapter are vital elements in explaining the preparations and outbreak of the second rebellion. In this historical link, the same explanatory elements are used: Individual action; genealogical continuity; and revenge.

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87 Conversation with Almoustapha Maïga. Ménaka, 24/03/1999.
88 Linde, C. 2000: 613.
89 Ibid.: 609.

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Revolution: *Teshumara* and and *Tanekra* (1968-1990)

This chapter describes the radical changes Tamasheq society went through between the late 1960s and the 1990s and their political translations. Of course, changes in Tamasheq life had occurred throughout the 20th century, but not on such a tremendous scale, and in such a short period, as the changes described here. The Keita Regime declared itself revolutionary and despite continuities with the colonial regime, in many ways it was. But the efficacy of that revolution was limited. Despite the use of military force in the Adagh, the Keita Regime was not able to alter Tamasheq society significantly during its reign, although the successful introduction of western style education would leave a particular legacy. The men of the *Tanekra*, the group responsible for the organisation of the rebellion of the 1990s, often refer to their work as *al-Thawra*, 'the revolution' in Arabic. Their goals were certainly revolutionary, but I will describe later how they were not attained. But the droughts that struck the Sahel in the 1970s and 1980s caused such devastation that radical change was simply forced upon Tamasheq society without any possible escape. The real revolution in Tamasheq society took place in the decades after the Keita period, and before the rebellion of the 1990s. In these decades Tamasheq society changed from a rural society to an urban society; from an economy based on pastoral household self-sufficiency and direct exchange of a limited range of goods to one of wage labour and the introduction of new consumer items. It also changed from a society living in a geographically limited (if large) and coherent region, to a scattered diaspora of community pockets around West Africa, the Maghreb and Europe. These major changes in location and economy brought about shifts in gender relations; cultural forms of expression; education; and politics.

The first part of this chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the economic, social and cultural changes that occurred between the late 1960s and 1990s. The

description I give here of the new *Teshumara* culture of these days is far from exhaustive. The subject merits a book on its own. I will here only highlight and exemplify some of the main social, economic and cultural changes to give an indication of the scale of change. The second part of this chapter describes the political reflexions within the *Teshumara* culture and the creation of the formalised nationalist movement that prepared for this 1990 rebellion. The Malian Kel Tamasheq generally refer to this movement as *Tanekra*, the uprising. Three elements will be central in the description and analysis of the *Tanekra* movement. The first element is the *Tanekra* conception of nation and state. Whereas the Kel Tamasheq community has been imagined – in Benedict Anderson's meaning of the term – for centuries as a community of people related by (fictive) blood ties, the movement chose to imagine the nation as a community bound by territory. To some extent, I will invert Benedict Anderson's argument that nations, through primordial kinship terms, imagine themselves as old, while they are in fact new constructions.[1] In this case, social cohesion of the nation-to-be had always been expressed through kinship ties. However, the Tamasheq nationalists carefully avoided imagining their nation according to these ties as they perceived them as an obstacle to national political unity. Instead of through the language of kinship, national sentiment was expressed primarily through the language of territory. Despite nationalist discourse and ideas of territory, concepts of kinship, expressed through the *tewsiten* – the clans and tribes – kept structuring political practice, interfering with the ideology of Tamasheq unity. Political thinking along clan lines eventually led to the near collapse of the movement in the 'Tamanrasset War' of 1985. The second element is the Tamasheq concept of *egha*, hatred and revenge of stained honour. The *Tanekra* movement was multiform in its outlooks and goals. It was, however, kept together through a common hatred for Mali and the desire to avenge the wrongdoings of the state in previous decades. *Egha* was not the sole motivation to join the movement, but it was the binding factor for all Kel Tamasheq. The movement made explicit use of memories of *Alfellaga* and the feelings of hatred it had left to muster support for the movement among young men. A third element is the possible legacy of the Keita Regime. The political ideas of the Keita Regime on social change were partly incorporated in the political ideology of the *Tanekra* movement. The Keita Regime tried to actively and ostentatiously reform Tamasheq society. But where it failed in immediately imbuing socialism, the children educated in the schools of the Keita Regime inadvertently might have internalised certain socialist ideals despite their hatred for 'Mali'. I will first sketch the political ideals and concepts of the *Tanekra* movement, and then I will describe its organisation and internal struggles.

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[1] Anderson, B. 1991: 141-54.

Teshumara

The Tamasheq name for the new way of life that was shaped in this period is telling for its economic origins. It is called *Teshumara*, a Tamasheq derivative of the French '*chômage*', meaning unemployment. The adherents to this new way of life were called *ishumar* (masculine singular *ashamor*, feminine singular *tashamort*, feminine plural *tishumarin*), meaning unemployed. Or at least this ionterpretation, based on the writings of Tamasheq poet and former *ashamor* Mahmudan Hawad, is the generally accepted origin of the word.[2] However, some *ishumar* ascribe the orgins of this word to the Tamasheq word *ashmar*: To endure with patience.[3] In any case, an *ashamor* was first of all someone who had abandoned pastoral life in favour of employment in other economic sectors. In large parts of the Tamasheq world, this meant migration outside the Tamasheq world, since no economic options outside pastoralism existed within the community. When unemployed, an *ashamor* would travel, looking for new jobs. As the number of people looking for jobs outside the pastoral realm and outside the Tamasheq world grew, the *Teshumara* became more than an economic way of life. It became a culture in itself. From the 1980s onwards, those *ishumar* involved in the preparation for armed rebellion saw themselves as a revolutionary military vanguard, who would lead their people to independence. They can also be seen as an organic intellectual elite in the Gramscian sense, as they put their thoughts on migration, modernity, and politics, to words in the poems and songs of the *Teshumara* movement. They produced knowledge, even if part of this knowledge was based on experiences they had in common with their less articulate audience. The *ishumar* were not the only Kel Tamasheq who claimed a new form of elite status within Tamasheq society to the detriment of the older elites, the noble *imushagh* and the religious *ineslemen*. A growing group of Kel Tamasheq were educated in universities in Africa and beyond. They worked for the Government or the NGOs that established themselves in numbers in Mali after the droughts, and tried to give new meaning and new course to Tamasheq social economic existence as well. These *évolués* as they are generally called – a name that ironically echoes colonial society – shared in the *Teshumara* experience and many later joined the rebel movement. I will first look at the early origins of the *Teshumara* and the origins of those who were to shape it. I will then look at the economic and political background of the *Teshumara*, found in the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s. Then I will present *ishumar* life as it developed in its economic and cultural aspects, with special attention to the changes in economic existence; attitudes to work; urbanisation and sedentari-

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[2] Hawad, M. 1990.

[3] Kidalinfo, forum. Subject: Ishmaren ou chomeurs? Author: Kigat Posted: 26/02/2006 19H12. http://www.kidal.info/Forum/FRv1/lire.php?msg=4245

sation; gender relations; and cultural expressions, notably a new musical and poetical genre called *al-guitara*, now known to audiences worldwide as 'desert blues'. I will show that the changes in Tamasheq societies in this period were far from homogenous. Various routes led to various new ways of life.

Origins

Cultures do not come into existence at one given moment. They develop slowly and it is hard to pinpoint their origins. Nevertheless, it would be convenient to point to a few points in space-time. The first is the late 1940s, when Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar travelled the Middle East with a few of his tribe's young men to have them educated abroad. Mohamed Ali was not the only one to travel to Mecca. Since the late 1940s, throughout the 1950s and up till present, many Kel Tamasheq moved permanently to Saudi Arabia where a large Tamasheq community still exists. Many travellers had religious motives in the 1940s, but in the 1950s political motives came into play when a number of Kel Tamasheq moved to Saudi Arabia as they did not want to live in an independent African country where they would form a minority. Just as in the early colonial period, the pilgrimage to Mecca became a flight, a *hijra* to the sacred land of Islam. Since the 1970s, economic reasons became more important as labour demands in Mecca and Medina grew under the ever-increasing number of pilgrims, as they did in the oil-rich Saudi kingdom in general. A second movement from another place of origin occurred in the late 1950s, when a number of Kel Tamasheq migrated from Soudan Français to Southern Algeria where they looked for employment in the construction sector. These men found work at the sites where the French built their future nuclear test bases: I-n-Ekker, Reggane and Takormiasse.[4] The French did not trust labour from North Algeria as it might be infiltrated by the FLN. Young Kel Tamasheq from the Adagh and the Azawad were easily recruited and made good money on the construction of the very base they would later use as their refuge during *Alfellaga*. During and after *Alfellaga,* a substantial amount of Kel Adagh migrated as refugees to Southern Algeria. A number of them returned, but an estimated 500 families would remain in Southern Algeria after the end of the rebellion. These families became a semi-sedentary community between the Algerian border cities with Mali and the Algerian Hoggar. These disparate groups formed the first nuclei of what would become a large Tamasheq diaspora after the drought in the 1970s and 1980s.

The most important group of *ishumar* however, the ones who stood at the basis of its conception as a culture and a way of life, were those Kel Adagh born between the late 1950s and early 1960s. The major legacy of *Alfellaga* was

[4] Tschumy, J. n.d., CHEAM 3937.

a number of young children who are now generally called 'the orphans' or 'the children of 1963'. Often traumatised by what they had witnessed during *Alfellaga,* these orphans would make up the core of the Tamasheq revolutionary movement. Likewise, their experiences will form the core of this chapter and the next. They were both the nucleus of the *Teshumara* culture as well as the inner core of the *Tanekra* revolutionary movement. A number of these orphans migrated to Algeria with their families, but about 400 of them were kept in boarding schools in Mali.[5] Whereas other children were allowed to visit their parents during the holidays, the four hundred 'orphans' were permanently kept in Kidal during their school career. One can imagine what years of forced boarding school does to group formation and cohesion. It can also be imagined what being kept against one's will in a system responsible for the death of one's parents does to one's emotional state.

The droughts

The late colonial period was not only a golden age for the Kel Tamasheq because of their improved relations with the colonial state. It was especially an age of material prosperity. Pictures taken in that decade by ethnographers such as Johannes Nicolaisen, as well as their ethnographic work on Tamasheq material culture, speak of that abundance.[6] This was largely the effect of favourable climatic conditions. Discussing the paleoclimate and the present climate in West Africa, Roderick McIntosh proposes to call a particular climatic pattern of unpredictability with regards to rainfall '*Dènkejugu*', the Mande rascal prankster boy. In the decades between the late 1940s and the mid 1980s, McIntosh's *Dènkejugu* (a phenomenon analogous to El Niño) produced a climate of abnormal abundance followed by equally abnormal extreme droughts.[7] Rainfall in the 1950s was more than abundant and seasons were mild. Pastures increased and so did the number of livestock, which was further augmented by the new French development schemes in the Sahara and Sahel. New wells were dug, opening up new pastures otherwise out of reach. Veterinary assistance toward the nomad populations improved, and *la paix française* meant that the need to spread the herds to keep a high degree of mobility as a defence against razzias had fallen away. However, the abundant rainfalls and the growing populations in the Sahel meant that farmers brought more and more previously marginal lands under cultivation, with the encouragement of the colonial administration, which gave prevalence to agricultural production over livestock, despite their

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5 Cdt. Cercle Kidal à Gov. Gao, 09/06/1966. Objet: Demande de maintien de la cantine scolaire pour enfants sans parents. ACK.

6 Nicolaisen, J. 1963.

7 McIntosh, R. 2004: 23.

efforts in the latter. This policy and the growing agricultural possibilities on marginal lands probably inspired the Keita Regime's agricultural efforts in the desert as well. Growing disputes over land tenure in these marginal areas were almost always settled in favour of the new farmers and to the detriment of the nomad rights to pasture, which, in turn, forced the latter to turn to previously marginal, now more promising, but still very insecure pastures in an increasingly fragile ecosystem.[8] During the 1960s, this favourable trend reversed, slowly developing towards a catastrophic period of drought in the early 1970s, reaching its peak in 1974. As the details of climatology and ecological impact have been well covered elsewhere, I will here briefly sum up the cycle of devastating effects.[9] *Alfellaga* had provoked a dramatic slaughter of animals by the Malian army in the Adagh, leaving herds depleted. Under the most favourable conditions, a camel reproduces every two years. Therefore, the herds of the mostly camel breeding Kel Adagh had not yet recovered from the impact of *Alfellaga* when the drought hit hardest only ten years later. The annual decline in rainfall slowly but surely dried up wells and temporary lakes, while pasture decreased.

Periods of poorer climatic conditions are normal in the Sahara, and reacting to them in a timely and adequate way is an integral part of nomadic life. In a period of drought, families or clans would normally first settle around temporary wells, and in the case of continuing drought, they would normally either migrate southwards to the Azawad or Niger Bend areas with their herds, or move northwards towards Algeria to sell surplus animals. The revenues would be spent on extra grain stocks replacing the falling lactation yields of the undernourished herds. But conditions had changed considerably. First of all, in the past decade many nomads had been forced away from their pastures that had been brought under cultivation. When rains failed, these more marginal pastures were the first to be depleted, while the former pastures brought under cultivation would not yield harvests or grow pasture. Hence, more pastures were in fact lost than would have been the case if the previous abundance of the 1950s had not led to expanded agriculture. Second, transhumance was more strictly monitored by the authorities in the years after *Alfellaga* than it had been before, which hampered movement and caused many to wait until the last moment before moving out of their own area. Herdsmen had to compete with the few agriculturalists for water at the permanent wells, with favour being given to the latter. They also had to compete with each other over access to a smaller number of wells and pastures. Third, the Azawad and Niger Bend areas

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[8] Lecocq, B. 2003.

[9] For detailed analysis of the economic and ecological impact of the droughts on pastoral existence in Northern Mali and Niger, see: Ag Foni, E. 1978; Boilley, P. 1999; Bruijn, de, M. & H. van Dijk 1995; Glantz, M., ed., 1976; Spittler, G. 1993; Stol, A. 1975; Swift, J. 1979.

were struck just as hard by rainfall deficits, offering no relief to the already hard-hit herds. There was therefore a collective move towards the river Niger, as had taken place during the droughts of 1947 and 1914.[10] This was to no avail. The river had dried to a trickling stream, leaving the sedentary population with failed crops and the pastoralists without pasture for the animals. Fourth, the move towards Algeria to sell surplus livestock was impossible as there was no surplus livestock left to sell.[11] Livestock losses were estimated at around 80%. Early warnings by academic specialists in the field were, as usual, not heeded.[12] When it dawned on governments and international agencies that a disaster was taking place in the Sahel, relief aid was organised, but largely ineffectively.[13] The bureaucracies of agencies such as FAO and USAID were highly ineffective and unprepared. The FAO early warning system signalled food shortages in the Sahel in September 1972, but it took FAO director Adde Boerma until May 1973 to react to this warning by installing the Office of Sahelian Relief Operation (OSRO) that came to the conclusion that at least 1,000,000 tons of grain were needed to avoid total disaster. This conclusion was reached by autumn 1973. Only by February 1974 did the FAO start its campaign, a delay partly due to the FAO staff Christmas holiday.[14] Most relief aid came from the United States, but their food aid distribution was bound to Law 480 stipulating that US food aid stocks should first be bought from surplus production within the US, thus subsidising US farmers. To aggravate matters, most of the US 1972 harvest surplus and the shipping capacity to transport it had already been bought by the USSR. USAID also took an extraordinary amount of time to assemble its relief efforts, partly due to internal competition within the organisation, and through competition with FAO. When sufficient amounts of foodstuffs and medicine were finally assembled, they were shipped to the ports of West Africa without taking into account the handling capacities of these ports and the difficulties in transporting the goods from these ports to the landlocked Sahel countries. Transport was not only handicapped by lack of infrastructure in the concerned countries, but also by a lack of means of transport. What transport was available was in the hand of government agents who demanded outrageous prices for transportation of relief aid. The result of this disastrous course of events was a massive exodus of Kel Tamasheq seeking refuge elsewhere.

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[10] ag Sidiyene, E. & G. Klute 1989; Spittler, G. 1993.

[11] Swift however, reports that Algerian merchants residing in Gao still bought livestock for export to Algeria in the early 1970s. Swift, J. 1979: 297.

[12] In 1973 the French development anthropologist and Tamasheq specialist Edmond Bernus published a first article on the ongoing drought and its effects, based on fieldwork dating from 1972 and previous. Bernus, E. & G. Savonnet 1973.

[13] Derrick, J. 1977; Glantz, M., ed., 1976; Sheets, H. & R. Morris 1974.

[14] Stol, A. 1975: 100.

Taking the 'normal' course of migration towards the Azawad, many inhabitants of the Adagh, the Azawad and the Niger Bend ended up fleeing without livestock to Niger. There, they populated refugee camps called Lazaret I and II, which were guarded by the Nigerien army that tried to keep away the world press flocking in droves to film and photograph the hunger without much real explanation of the causes to the public confronted with these images. In 1974, an estimated 18,000 Malian refugees, mostly Kel Tamasheq, inhabited the camps, divided into wards organised by region of origin. Water was delivered by trucks once a day, food and medical care were well arranged by the International Red Cross and the UNHCR. The first camp, close to Niamey, was evacuated and rebuilt 20 kilometres outside the city as the inhabitants roamed the streets of Niamey trying to sell what goods they had left, or making some extra money by prostituting themselves.[15] In 1975, an estimated 13,000 Kel Tamasheq still inhabited this camp, although by then the rains had returned and the worst of the drought was over.[16] But what was there to return to when all livestock had perished and no money was left to replace them with imports from elsewhere? At present the majority of the Tamasheq community in Niamey consists of former Malian refugees, mostly from the Niger Bend, who settled permanently, making a living as guards or day labourers. Others took the road to Algeria, where they populated refugee camps at the border towns of Timiaouen and Bordj Mokhtar, where an estimated 12,000 Kel Tamasheq sought help.[17] Some moved on to Tamanrasset and other cities in Southern Algeria, where they were helped by relatives who had fled during *Alfellaga*. Others went to the South of Mali and from there to cities throughout West Africa, as far away as Abidjan and Lagos. But the vast majority of the Kel Tamasheq did not have the strength or the means to leave. They had to stay on, waiting for help that never arrived in the towns of Northern Mali. Their numbers were estimated at 47,000, dispersed over thirty refugee camps in the Gao and Timbuktu *Régions*.[18] Most victims were children who, weakened by malnutrition, died of seemingly innocent diseases like measles, or more direct effects of hunger such as oedema. Choleric diarrhoea did the rest. Both relief aid organisations and journalists had only limited access to these camps. The Traoré Government was of the opinion that food and medical supplies were necessary, but that their distribution and the further organisation of the relief effort could be left to them. Import taxations, levies, forms and paperwork that needed 'greasing' to be completed, all manners of 'eating' in the relief supplies were

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15 Ibid.: 51.
16 *Courier de l'UNESCO*, (April 1975), 11. In: Boilley, P. 1999: 374.
17 ag Litny, I. 1992: 162.
18 *West Africa*, 01/04/1974. In: Derrick, J. 1977: 561.

common practice by all bureaucrats who could. It should be noted that the few high-ranking officials of Kel Tamasheq origins were no better in that respect. Many a villa in Bamako and Timbuktu, indicated by the public as '*chateaux de la sécheresse*', rose on the foundations of embezzled relief aid. What food arrived in the refugee camps and drought-struck areas, arrived too late and was often of a kind or quality unfit for human consumption. But when it arrived, it passed from the hands of the providing agencies into the care of the local authorities who were in charge of its distribution. Again, corruption took its toll. Most of the offered foodstuffs were not freely distributed as was intended, but sold by functionaries at local markets at high prices. Aid that was freely distributed was distributed unequally between the sedentary population and the nomads. The monitoring groups from the US Center for Disease Control surveying the famine in the Sahel and reporting to the US Government concluded that:

> Survey data from 3,500 children emphasise the fact that undernutrition in the four country area is to be found more among nomads than sedentary persons, and more in the North than in the South. Children from nomad clusters ranged on the average ten to seventeen percent below the threshold while those from sedentary or Southern groups were approximately three to seven percent below. The existence of pockets of extreme undernutrition is supported by data from all countries but particularly from Mali where up to 80% of children from one nomad cluster were acutely undernourished. The above statements on the nutritional status of children must be considered conservative.[19]

Information on what happened on the ground in Mali was scarce. Most agencies and governments relied for information on the few journalists who went to the Sahel and managed to get access to the refugee camps. Their accounts may have been scant, but not necessarily incorrect. *Le Monde* reporter Philippe Decreane might have been the best informed, given his networks among former colonial officers in France.[20] Invoking the pre-colonial relations between nomads and sedentary populations; racial issues; the OCRS; and even the 1963 rebellion in the Adagh, Decraene concluded that 'Bamako' was taking the opportunity to settle 'the nomad problem' once and for all.

> The army can have its way in the 6th *Région*. The area is geographically isolated and sparsely inhabited. There live only about a dozen Europeans, and the 'sand curtain' veils the region from the rest of the world. Who manages to pass through that curtain is met with the silence of the Government officials. (…) Our guide refuses us access to the food warehouses. Some shops sell the relief aid grain supplies. It is

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[19] Kloth, I. 1974. *Nutritional Surveillance in West Africa*. Atlanta: US Public Health Service, Center for Disease Control. In: Sheets, H. & R. Morris 1974: 132.

[20] Decreane started his career in journalism as Africa correspondent for *Le Monde* in 1958 and became the director of the former colonial institute CHEAM in 1983.

therefore no wonder that some indicate the position of Colonel Moussa Traoré's regime towards the Tuareg as 'the final solution to the Tuareg problem'.[21]

The CDC commission cited above reached similar conclusions and impressions of existing 'traditional enmities between nomadic and sedentary populations'. The conclusions might have been exaggerated, but a few things cannot be denied. The conclusions of 'traditional enmities between nomads and sedentary populations' made by the CDC were not totally unfounded. In times of tension the division between nomads and sedentary populations becomes stronger. The drought and its effects on the Kel Tamasheq might not have been unwelcome to the Traoré Regime at the time.

The drought of 1973 meant a near total collapse of the pastoral economy in Northern Mali. Anything that was left was then taken away by a second period of severe drought in the early 1980s, culminating in 1984. If the Adagh was hit less hard this second time, the onslaught was even heavier in more Southern regions. This time the wave of refugees came particularly from the Azawad and moved mostly to Algeria and Libya. Otherwise, an almost identical devastating pattern repeated itself. The second drought of the 1980s brought more and more effective relief aid to the Niger Bend. Many NGOs, such as the Norwegian AEN, set up lasting and large-scale development projects. However, in the perception of many of these NGOs, development could only be brought to sedentary people. As in 1974 the reaction from all sides, including the Kel Tamasheq *évolués*, was that pastoral nomad existence was no longer feasible, and especially undesired. Sedentarisation facilitates the control over the nomad populations by the Government and relief work to their benefit by the NGOs. As for the Kel Tamasheq themselves, many tried to pick up nomad pastoral existence with their depleted herds as good as possible, repleting their animals by imports and traditional systems of mutual aid, such as borrowing livestock under various conditions.[22] Their success was marginal and to hardly any avail, especially after the drought of the 1970s as it was followed by that of the 1980s, again decimating the still precarious herds.

The number of people who died in both catastrophes cannot be estimated, but they were in the hundreds of thousands. Even if Philippe Decraene's accusations to the regime in Bamako were incorrect, they very likely expressed the thoughts of those Kel Tamasheq who witnessed their children die of malnutrition and disease in the aid-abandoned camps. Unsurprisingly, many left the country with no intention to return even after the drought was over.

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[21] Decraene, Ph. 'L'Afrique subira les effets d'une sécheresse plus dramatique', *Le Monde*, 06/02/1974.

[22] Bourgeot, A. 1975.

Migration

The droughts reshaped Tamasheq existence in drastic ways. By force and overnight, Tamasheq life changed from rural and pastoral to urban and wage earning. Among the Western-educated Tamasheq elite, many of whom worked for international NGOs active in the drought relief and redevelopment of the Sahel economy, the drought led to a rethinking of pastoral life. Many young Kel Tamasheq reached the conclusion that pastoral existence had no future.

> Pastoralism as we have always practised it is no longer an honourable option in our days. For different reasons it is condemned to be abandoned, or at least to be restructured. It is not a goal in itself, and a Tuareg is not in the least predestined to be born and to die as a pastoralist.[23]

The Tamasheq-inhabited Sahara and Sahel are characterized by a long history of urban culture and identity. Some of the oldest cities of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Gao and Agadez, are part of the Tamasheq world. Ruins of cities in the Sahara such as Essuq Tademekkat and Tamentit form further evidence of a long urban tradition of which the Kel Tamasheq form an integral part.[24] Nomadic existence is deeply connected to urbanity in the Sahara and Sahel. As hardly anything is produced in the nomad economy outside the pastoral domain, the nomad is depending on city markets to procure most necessities. The Kel Tamasheq dominated the caravan trade connecting the cities, and even the village markets of the Sahel and Sahara. Kel Ewey, Kel Ferwan, Ahl Araouane and other caravan drivers and merchants have dwelt in Timbuktu, Taoudennit, In Salah, Agadez, Bilma, Teguida n Tesimt, Kano, Ghat, Murzuk and Tripoli for centuries. In fact, caravan trade is about the connection of urban centres. Caravans traverse the desert in order to arrive at cities. It is a part of Saharan city culture par excellence. The historicity of Kel Tamasheq city dwelling is documented to at least the 10th century AD.[25] Even seemingly colonial cities have deeper histories. The city of Kidal is often thought of as founded by the French, where it in fact was founded by the Dabakar, a tribe that has since moved, but who used the oasis as a date grove, and had small allotments of tobacco and peppers there, besides stone houses which might date back to the same era as Essuq Tademekkat. Tessalit too is a village with a considerable date grove of around 6,000 trees founded prior to colonial conquest.[26] The historical link between Kel Tamasheq and city life becomes even more evident in the name Kel Essuq, referring to a group of not necessarily related tribes that derive

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[23] Anonymous, *Quand le chef travaille, le peuple le suit* (n.d. 1990). Document circulating in Niamey in 1990 among Kel Tamasheq intellectuals.

[24] Hunwick, J. 2003; Moraes Farias, de, P.F. 2003.

[25] Ibn Hauqal 1964.

[26] Cauvin, C. & M. Cortier 1908.

their identity from Islamic learning. Their name refers directly to the city of Essuq Tademekkat, which they all claim to be their place of origin. Hence, in Tamasheq discourse, as in that of many other peoples, Muslim scholarship is intimately linked to urban culture. In short: city, intercity caravan trade, and the wider Muslim world have been part of Tamasheq culture for at least a millennium. In that view, urban life and an outward look are not new. But the colonial period had changed things. The French focus on Tamasheq existence as nomad existence, to the detriment of urban life; the competition of European trade houses against the caravan trade; and the creation of colonial borders: These developments had contributed to a retreat into pastoral nomad existence during the 20th century. And of course, the droughts had taken away the means to pursue traditional caravan trading to the cities or villages of the Sahara and Sahel. Tamasheq city life had to be reinvented.

As many other young Malians, many young Kel Tamasheq became involved in a seasonal migration towards the cities to look for temporary jobs known as *l'exode*.[27] But as few new durable means of existence could be found in Northern Mali, many drought refugees stayed in their places of exile in Algeria, Libya, Niger and the rest of West Africa. The first Kel Tamasheq to migrate to Algeria were the Kel Adagh fleeing army retaliation during *Alfellaga*. They settled in the border towns of Bordj Mokhtar, Ti-n-Zaouatene and especially Timeaouene, from where they could venture back into Mali with their herds to their pasture grounds, to retreat back into Algeria where they were protected from the Malian administration. Although these refugees became semi-sedentarised, they remained as close to home and as close to their way of life as possible. It should be noted that, as elsewhere on the planet, cities can only expand to the capacity of economic and infrastructural possibilities. Work or commerce, water, food and energy should be available in pace with the growing population. Many Kel Tamasheq chose their dwelling place according to the availability of sufficient water and firewood, until the introduction of modern wells and pumps reaching the Saharan aquifers, subsidised food, transport and horticulture, and canned butane gas for cooking. From Ti-n-Zaouatene, Timiaouene and Bordj Mokhtar, the Kel Tamasheq diaspora spread out in a haphazard way, depending on family and tribal affiliation, the availability of work and means to live on, the spread of technique and commerce.[28]

Since the 1970s, the towns of the central Sahara, both in Algeria and Libya are booming. Conscious efforts to develop the Sahara and the Saharan towns by the Algerian and Libyan Governments resulted in the attraction of migrant labour from sub-Sahara Africa, notably the Sahel countries. By far the most

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[27] Gary-Tounkara, D. 2008: 200.
[28] Bellil, R. & B. Dida 1995.

important of these central Saharan towns is Tamanrasset. Centrally located in the Hoggar Mountains, it became the administrative capital of the Algerian South; the centre of Sahara tourism in Algeria; and of the Algerian oil industry in the South. The growth rate of this town is telling of the speed of urban development in the Sahara. In 1920, the city had 50 inhabitants. In 1973, there were 8,000. In 1974 the city became the capital of the *Wilaya Sud*, the administrative region of the Hoggar. By then the speed of the population growth was almost out of control: 15,000 inhabitants in 1976 and 42,000 only a year later. By 2003, the city had an estimated population of 180,000 inhabitants, with an unknown number of illegal immigrants on their way to the coast of the Mediterranean living on the outskirts of town.[29] At present, Tamanrasset is inhabited by a plethora of at least 45 different nationalities from all over Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, serving for many as a springboard to 'Fortress Europe', but the first migrants to arrive in the city were the *ishumar*. The first to reach Tamanrasset were a number of Kel Adagh *tishumarin*, women who had previously settled in Timiaouene and who occasionally prostituted themselves to the Algerian employees of the SONAREM mining company who took them to Tamanrasset.[30] Their migration and professional occupation deserves emphasis. Most Kel Tamasheq moved to the city as refugees during the droughts. These refugees were mostly women, children and elderly persons, as the men either stayed on to save the herds or had already moved to look for work. Young women travelled to the cities of Southern Algeria looking for a better life. They often travelled alone. The mobility and independence of these *tishumarin* made many Algerian men look with disfavour upon the refugees. Particularly the Kel Hoggar, the Kel Tamasheq inhabiting Southern Algeria, had a denigrating attitude towards the Malian and Nigerien newcomers, which was expressed in a discourse on the looseness of the refugee women, a discourse that found its justification in the prostitution activities of some.[31]

In the 1970s a whole new shantytown arose after the drought, inhabited by the Malian Kel Tamasheq. It was called Tahaggart-shumara, which would translate as 'unemployed in the Hoggar', the Algerian mountain range in which Tamanrasset is situated. Similar neighbourhoods arose in Djanet, Adrar, and in Libyan cities, such as Ghat and Ghadames.[32] Tamanrasset was the main destination in Algeria for the Malian Kel Tamasheq. Djanet was the main destination for the Nigerien Kel Tamasheq. In Libya, there was a mix of all communities. In these neighbourhoods, the *Teshumara* developed. To the Kel Tamasheq, city

[29] Based on Dida, B. 2007 and Nadi, D. 2007.
[30] Bellil, R. & B. Dida 1995.
[31] Bellil, R. & B. Dida 1993.
[32] Pliez, O. 2003.

life is characterised by a number of traits: Salaried employment and unemployment; living in houses; the availability of consumer goods (not per se to the impoverished newcomers); and a multilingual and multicultural environment. For those who are used to living in a tent, living in a house is a constricting experience. A Tamasheq tent is open at least to one side, often more, giving a view over the vast plains or mountains. Tamasheq camps are often small, consisting of about five tents, spaced about 50 metres apart. The next camp can be kilometres away. Urban space is thus a stark contrast to nomad space. Houses are walled and roofed on all sides, situated at smaller intervals and only looking out on the court walls or on other houses. Houses are square, small wattle-and-daub constructions with a flat roof. The house is surrounded by a large walled court with a toilet in one of the corners. In the middle of the court a tent can often be found where people live and sleep. The house is used to store household items but it is not a living space. In the early days of Tahaggart-shumara the court walls and houses were lacking. It was a ramshackle town of improvised tents. Although at present many Kel Tamasheq are city-born, the unease about living indoors is still prevalent.

Even if I wanted to live in a house
always locked with a key
where there is no cooling breeze
The body does not benefit from its shade
It has no use but for resignation.[33]

The *ishumar* looked for employment in sectors that were at first totally alien to them, such as salaried herding; agriculture in the oasis towns of the Sahara; the guarding of villas (notably those of expatriates); construction work and masonry; car mechanics; and, in coastal West Africa, even fishery. Most jobs were temporary, and many moved from town to town, from job to job. Many Kel Tamasheq still believed that hard manual labour was unbefitting for a free person. A free man should occupy himself only with pastoral affairs, trade, religion, or warfare. Depending on region and caste, free women should not work at all or engage only in pastoral activities, religion, or the household. Due to the droughts, pastoralism became regarded as a hazardous and even impossible occupation. The preferred professions, however, were derived from this labour ethic.[34] Being a car driver or mechanic is seen as a modern equivalent to being involved in pastoral affairs. Commerce, especially transnational smuggling, is seen as a logical follow-up to the caravan trade. However, these occupations and jobs were scarce, which left many men of free origins with no other choice

[33] Part of a song by Mohamed ag Itlal, 'Japonais', 1994. In: Klute (2001), op. cit., Annex rebel songs, 39.

[34] Klute, G. 1992.

but to take up manual labour, which they saw as degrading. These occupational restraints did not hold for former slaves who were free to take up any job available. At present, for instance, a community of *bellah* (and some *imghad*) is successfully retailing fish in Abidjan, an unimaginable occupation for other Kel Tamasheq.[35] Since Kel Tamasheq of free origins perceived manual labour to be dishonouring, they saw themselves forced to ask their protégés for economic assistance, thus involuntarily reversing social relations and still dishonouring themselves. In the eyes of the deprived free, the choice was between dishonour through accepting menial jobs – which would mean public humiliation – and privately asking their former dependents and slaves for assistance, which was a private humiliation that could be personally justified as 'enforcing one's rights over one's *bellah'*. However, former slaves perceived this strategy of their former masters as trying to live on their backs, something they had done in the past too. They believed that their former masters should take up work as they themselves had done. Thus, the discourse on the absence of honour and shame was turned to the advantage of the unfree in a circular way. Their lack of honour and shame ensured their economic survival, and the free should take this example, abandoning their honour in favour of work, instead of dishonouring themselves by living at the expense of their former slaves.[36] This radical change in relations between *bellah* and free Kel Tamasheq, and the shift in attitudes towards work, was quickly settled in the lands of migration.

A more profitable, but far more dangerous occupation many *ishumar* took up, was trafficking between Algeria, Libya, Mali and Niger. The Algerian and Libyan states subsidised basic goods, such as flour; bread; sugar; oil; tea; dates; and petrol under world market price levels, whereas they were often lacking in Mali and Niger.[37] The *ishumar* smuggled these goods southwards to Mali and Niger on foot or on the backs of donkeys or camels. They were then sold for CFA Francs in Mali and Niger, which were taken back to Algeria.[38] As Algeria suffered from a lack of foreign currency and as the CFA Franc was easily exchanged for French Francs at fixed rates, CFA Francs were in high demand, often going for six times their official exchange rates at the Algerian black market. The profit in smuggling was thus doubled. Goods were sold in Mali and Niger, and the small profit made was then quadrupled in Algeria.[39] A third

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35 Bouman, A. 2003: 253-259.

36 Tidjani Alou, M. 2000: 281.

37 Kohl, I. 2007: 169.

38 The Malian Franc was first devaluated and coupled to the CFA Franc in 1967. In 1984 Mali re-entered the CFA franc zone.

39 ag Ahar, E. 1991. Ag Ahar is an alias for the Tamasheq poet Hawad, who wrote this article in interview style. However, his statement is no less valid of *ishumar* practices.

benefit of this trafficking was that the remaining inhabitants of Northern Mali and Niger were provided with basic products, unavailable at reasonable prices in the state-run shops at home. Most *ishumar* would spend the money earned on luxury items, such as watches, stereos, sunglasses or other consumer goods. Others would save their money and invest it in more trafficking; buying trucks and off road vehicles to facilitate transport. The experience in trafficking consumer goods that many *ishumar* acquired during the 1970s and 1980s proved to be of immense value during the rebellion, when petrol, food and weapons had to be brought into Mali. Many *ishumar* varied their economic existence, taking up jobs as herdsmen or gardeners, moving on to masonry, saving some money, which would then be invested in smuggling. Or they would set up legitimate businesses if they had access to the Algerian or Libyan administration to obtain the necessary papers.

Whenever the host states could, they tried to expel the unwelcome Kel Tamasheq. In the late 1960s, the Algerian local authorities had discussed the possibility of sending back those Kel Adagh who had fled from *Alfellaga*. At the time, a number of these Kel Adagh had volunteered to return, as the first signs of the upcoming great drought were already noticeable in Algeria. The Malian authorities, however, refused to have them back. Since they had opted for Algeria as their fatherland, the Kel Adagh had to bear the consequences of this decision for better or worse. Nevertheless, in 1970, a first group of Kel Adagh was expelled from Algeria to Mali, without the consent of the Malian authorities that closely monitored the returnees.[40] In 1974 and again in 1983, haphazard returns of drought refugees were organised in Niger as well as in Algeria.[41] The largest expulsion from Algeria would come in April 1986, when at least 6,000 Kel Tamasheq from Mali and 2,000 from Niger were rounded up in Tamanrasset and transported to the borders on trucks. At the borders they were left to their own devices, without water or food. The expulsions had been merciless and were exposed in the international media. From 1987 onwards, the Algerian Government started a larger, better-planned project to reintegrate the drought refugees in their countries of origin with the help of UN-FIDA. The programme came into effect at the end of 1989.[42] In Libya, the Kel Tamasheq were slightly more welcome, especially after a speech by Colonel Mu'ammar Qadhafi in 1982, in which he declared Libya to be the home country and place of origin of all the Kel Tamasheq, which gave them the undeniable right to 'return' there. In practice the Kel Tamasheq were confronted with Libyan racism and discrimination. Many Kel Tamasheq migrants were arrested and

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[40] Cercle de Kidal, Revue des évènements du 2ème trimestre 1970. ACK.
[41] Klute, G. 2001: 214.
[42] Ibid.: 217.

molested at the Libyan border. As immigrant workers, only the lowest jobs were open to them and they were insulted in the streets. Legal papers remained hard to get, which kept the *ishumar* in Libya in a precarious illegal situation. But Libyan citizenship was not popular, as Libyan citizens were not easily allowed to travel abroad. Even when it was available to them, most *ishumar* chose the hardships of a free migrant existence over the more comfortable state-supported but enclosed life of a Libyan national.

Ishumar life

As the *ishumar* earned money, new consumer items became available to them. Dietary habits changed. To a pastoral Kel Tamasheq, the ideal repast consists of fresh milk and fat meat, with three glasses of sweet tea for dessert. When fresh milk and meat are scarce this diet is completed with dairy products, cheese, buttermilk and butter; wild or cultivated grains; dates and gathered fruits. Food taboos exist. Fish is out of the question even when available. Poultry is only eaten by children who hunt them in the bush. This ideal diet was abandoned during the droughts and again during the second rebellion, when the Kel Tamasheq were even forced to eat fish, as canned herrings were shipped to the desert as relief aid. But the diet also changed in exile. It can only be the irony of history that the Kel Tamasheq now adopted the diet that they had at first refused when forced upon them by the Keita Regime. As fresh fruits and vegetables were available, they slowly adopted them. At present, many repatriated (if this is the correct term) youngsters in Kidal relish the memory of fresh apples and grapes, available at the markets of Algeria and Libya. Yams, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, cabbage and lettuce have found their way into Tamasheq dishes. Fresh dairy products were harder to get. Fresh milk was substituted with milk powder and butter with olive or peanut oil. Even those Kel Tamasheq who stayed in Mali were now prepared to take up gardening. The Kel Adagh themselves investigated the possibilities of horticulture in their mountains. In 1977, Acherif ag Mohamed, a Kel Adagh, graduated at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Bamako on a thesis entitled '*Les possibilités agricoles dans le Cercle de Kidal*'. His thesis is a plea for agricultural development in the Adagh, despite possible resistance from the population.

> During the search for a theoretical solution to the social problem posed by the drought and its consequences, I thought of the agricultural possibilities in the *Cercle* of Kidal. In fact, these possibilities exist and their exploitation is necessary to save thousands of human lives.[43]

[43] ag Mohamed, A. 1977: 41.

Photo 5.1
Two young *Ishumar* have their picture taken, somewhere in Libya in the mid 1970s: Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall (left) and Iyad ag Ghali (right). Note the 'soul boots', the 'flared' trousers and the absence of a turban.
[Courtesy of Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall]

In a way, Acherif pleaded for the reintroduction of the agricultural endeavours of the Keita Regime. The efforts in relief aid and subsequent development in the drought devastated Sahel concentrated on the (semi-)sedentarisation of the nomad population and their reconversion into agro-pastoralists. Most development experts at the time were convinced that pastoral overproduction of animals and subsequent overgrazing were the root cause of the drought. Agriculture would be the solution against future overgrazing and halt the subsequent desertification. It remains to be seen how far these settlement schemes and agricultural projects in the Niger Bend in the 1970s were part of the cause of the drought of the 1980s. Be that as it may, horticulture and agriculture, and the consumption of vegetables, were successfully introduced among the Kel Tamasheq. Ironically enough however, Acherif ag Mohamed's plea for horticultural projects in the Adagh was not heeded at all, as the Traoré Regime probably remembered the agricultural échec of the 1960s.

Not only dietary habits changed, clothing habits changed as well. Most women who had migrated to the Maghreb stuck to their customary dress: A pagne and a *tasirnest* (*melhafa* in Arabic), a long veil wrapped around the body, knotted on the shoulders, with the end forming a loosely draped headscarf. Their face remained unveiled, a practice that grew more and more contested during the 1990s with the rise of fundamentalist Islam, but which remained largely customary nevertheless. Women who had migrated to coastal West Africa were quicker to adopt local dress codes, wearing *boubous* and headscarves in West African fashion. The male *ishumar* dress code differed sharply from traditional dress. Sandals were exchanged for sneakers or high-heeled boots. Wide trousers gave way to jeans or 'flared' trousers. T-shirts and collared shirts, sometimes completed with a *gandoura* – a thin *burnous* – covered the upper part of their body. More telling were the changes in wearing the *eghewid* or *tagelmust*, the male turban and veil.[44] In Tamasheq culture, the *eghewid* is the most direct instrument available to express male personal honour, dignity and pride. In general, the less of the face visible, the more a man is preserving his honour. To a Tamasheq, his mouth is a private part. The veiling of a man's face is most important in the presence of female company, especially female in-laws and cousins. The *eghewid* has always been subject to fashion changes, expressing the wealth and prestige of the owner. Late 19th and early 20th century images depict it as one cloth wrapped around a cone shaped hat or fez (*tikunbut* in Tamasheq), while in the mid twentieth century the *eghewid* became a wrapping of two or more cloths, one white muslin and one indigo *alasho* cloth woven in Kano, which could be as long as twenty metres or more. The *ishumar* deliberately expressed the turmoil they found their society to be in and their desire for radical changes in the way they dealt with the *eghewid*. The multiple layers were abandoned for a single cloth of cheap south Asian import, generally referred to as *Bukstan* (Pakistan). The length of this cloth was reduced considerably to about four metres, which expressed their chosen status as young and irresponsible men without wealth, but also the loss of honour Tamasheq society had faced. This shortened *eghewid* was wrapped around the head in a careless fashion, which expressed the turmoil of society and their rebellious state of mind.[45] The mouth was carefully exposed, instead of covered, as a reminder of the loss of honour Tamasheq society had undergone in the last decades: A lost rebellion; and two droughts forcing them into exile and mendicity, on show to the world as TV crews passed the refugee camps. The lowered veil exposed a moustache and shaved chin, an abhorrence to elder men, who shaved

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[44] Generally known as *tagelmust* in 'high' Tamasheq, the turban and veil are called *eghewid* in the dialect spoken in the Adagh.

[45] Claudot-Hawad, H. 1993d; Rasmussen, S. 1991.

their moustache and grew beards following the example of the prophet Muhammad. Some *ishumar* even went further. They wrapped the shortened *eghewid* around their necks as a shawl – an expression of utter despair – or gave up wearing an *eghewid* altogether, even in the presence of women.[46]

This is but one small aspect of the notable changes in gender relations also taking shape in the 1970s and 1980s, due to the change from a pastoral to an urban wage economy.[47] Most telling about changing perceptions of gender relations, productivity and the female body, but perhaps also expressing a changing perception of the economic and ecologic environment, was the diminishing practice of female fattening. Fewer women would try to become as big as possible, which would involve consuming no longer available amounts of calories, while the fattened body would hamper their mobility and activity in a world of migration where slaves and men were no longer available to depend upon in an immobile life without work.[48] Besides, standards of beauty and sexual attractiveness changed in general. While round female bodies are still seen as embodying female social beauty, fertility and sexual activity, as the pillar of the household, Western influences on the perception of the female body slowly crept in, leading men to express preference for women who are not too slim and not too fat either.[49] But with increased mobility in an urban landscape came the loss of female control over domestic space through a loss of ownership of the domestic space par excellence. In pastoral society, the tent and accompanying household items are a woman's possession, presented to her at her first marriage by her mother and female relatives. Her husband is only living in it, until the marriage is dissolved, when he becomes homeless. In urban society, the house is often built or rented by a man, who then lodges his wife. In the case of divorce, it is she who has to look for other living space. The dowry changed considerably as well, especially among the wealthier *évolué* city dwellers, much less so among the 'true' *ishumar*. Where it used to consist of practical household utensils, it now became fashionable among those who had found a more fixed residence to include a large wooden cabinet filled with all kinds of trinkets: A mixture of china, small statues, picture frames, silk flowers, small 'traditional' Tamasheq leather objects, mosque shaped clocks, or snow globes with

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[46] At present, a reverse trend is visible. Many former *ishumar* took to wearing the *eghewid* again after the end of the rebellion of the 1990s. This might well be an indication of a general sense of reinstated honour. Kohl argues that in present-day *ishumar* culture standards of beauty and vestimentary habits have gained importance but show a clear shift away from western clothing, although soccer shirts and trainers remain popular among men. Kohl, I. 2009: 22.

[47] Achterberg, van, A. 1988.

[48] Popenoe, R. 2004: 121-122.

[49] Kohl, I. 2009: 68-75.

the Kaaba in Mecca or the Eifel Tower, and other souvenir items brought from travels. A more opulent sign of sedentary consumerism would be hard to find. Part of the walls of migrant houses would be decorated with Tamasheq leather bags, and reed mats, a memory of nomad tent dwellings, while the furniture would be a mixture of Maghrebi diwans and Northern Atlantic sofas. Ideas of gendered wealth also changed, partly expressing the new consumerism in Tamasheq culture. In pastoral society, the future husband and his relatives pay the bride price in livestock. In urban society, the bride price is paid in money, which is then either used to buy new household utensils, or gold jewellery (instead of the formerly preferred silver). When needed, jewellery could be sold. The expected virtues of future brides also changed gradually. In contrast to most of the surrounding cultures, Tamasheq female sexual conduct or purity is not related to group or masculine honour. Female virginity is not highly prized. Extra-marital affairs are only a cause of shame when an unmarried woman becomes pregnant. Today, virginity is still not related to group or masculine honour, but many men individually disapprove of what they have come to look upon as 'loose' sexual morals or 'knowledge of (too many) men' from their future wives.[50] A last, notable, change in gender relations is the gradual acceptance of polygamous marriages. Tamasheq society characteristically has a strong preference for (serial) monogamy. Although the legality of polygamy in Islam is known and accepted, it was highly disapproved of. Polygamous practice was limited to a few affluent members of the religious part of society, the *ineslemen*. Recently, the move towards polygamy amongst richer city-dwellers is growing, despite still being regarded as 'not done'.

Al-guitara

The evenings in Tahaggart-shumara and other *ishumar* neighbourhoods were regularly enlivened with parties called *zahuten* (from the Arabic *zahu*, distraction).[51] The parties were staged at the houses of young women or, as the parties began to attract more police attention, outside the city. The men would provide the necessities: Food; tea; sugar; tobacco; and cigarettes. People flirted with each other, sported their newest gadgets, danced, and women would sing songs and poetry, accompanying themselves on the *imzad*, the Tamasheq one-string violin made and played by women only. Or the *tindé* would be played; a drum made out of a wettened leather skin, a mortar and two pestles. A woman would sing to the rhythm, improvising the lyrics as she went along. More women would sit around the drum and singer, accompanying drum and song with handclapping, while men might form a background chorus of melodious rhyth-

[50] Figueiredo, C. 1996.
[51] Bellil, R. & B. Dida 1993.

mic humming called *tabahohumt*.[52] A famous singer of these early days of the *Teshumara*, was Lalla Badi, a young Kel Adagh *tashamort* woman. Her house in Tahaggart-shumara attracted many *ishumar*. She sang traditional songs, as well as songs which related the life of the *ishumar*. These songs were taped on cassettes and copied for those who were not present.

A new phenomenon in Tamasheq party culture was the introduction of the *aggiwin*. The *aggiwin* originally came from the Timbuktu area where they had for long been part of Tamasheq culture, but they were previously unknown in other areas of the Tamasheq world. Now, in the melting pot of migrant *ishumar* culture, they rapidly gained popularity. The *aggiwin* can best be compared to the West African griots: musicians of caste origins who accompany themselves on a *teherdent*, a four-string lute, while they recite oral histories or sing family praises to those who pay them to do so. They would be accompanied on drums made of upturned gourds in a syncopated 5/4 rhythm known as *takamba*. The rhythm and the music and dancing style of the same name are of Songhay origins, but they became popular in the Tamasheq world since the late 1960s. The *ishumar* spent fortunes on these *aggiwin* at the *takamba* parties they staged, paying them to sing the praise of their exploits and travels. By the late 1970s their activities were condemned as 'anti-revolutionary' by the politically active *ishumar* of the *Tanekra* movement, although *takamba* music remained highly popular.

In the late 1970s, a new musical genre came into existence: *Al-guitara*. Contrary to *imzad* and *tindé*, *al-guitara* is a primarily male genre developed by *ishumar* in Libya and Algeria.[53] In these countries, but also in the Malian *troupes artistiques*, the *ishumar* became familiar with guitars (from which the style derives it name), and rock music. The first to make *al-guitara* music were a few Kel Adagh men from the Irreguenaten tribe, notably Ibrahim ag Alkhabib, nicknamed Abaraybone. Abaraybone started his musical career playing a self-made instrument out of a plastic jerrycan and some strings. He obtained his first acoustic guitar in Tamanrasset from a Sahraoui man who played the revolutionary songs of the POLISARIO. He was joined by other now famous artists such as Inteyedin, Keddu ag Osad, Mohamed 'Japonais' ag Itlal, Ghabdallah, Sweyloum and Abenneben. Together, these men formed a band called Taghreft Tinariwen: 'Reconstruct the Deserts', which would later be shortened to Tinariwen. They were accompanied by women doing background vocals in a question and answer lyrical poetry, while being accompanied on an improvised jerrycan drum. Musical inspiration came from their former teachers in the *troupes artistiques* such as famous Kar Kar and Ali Farka Touré, the POLISARIO

[52] Dida, B. 2006: 43.
[53] Belalimat, N. 2003: 2008.

guitar music, the *takamba* of the *aggiwin*, Maghrebi raï and chaabi, the virtuous solos of Jimmy Hendrix and the simple clear chord schemes of Dire Straits. *Al-guitara* developed into an original sound reflecting a Saharan globalisation and cosmopolitanism from below that now influences and inspires rock bands from the northern Atlantic, as Tinariwen and bands of former Tinariwen founding members, such as Keddu ag Ossad's band Terakaft, tour the international stages, with their hit CDs available in your record store. However, the sound that gained them their international reputation long after the rebellion they announced was over remained long subordinate to their message of reflection on Tamasheq existence. It developed from a 'bluesy' perspective on misery into a call for active revolution to all the Kel Tamasheq. The first known song dates from 1978. It reflects the misery of Tamasheq existence:

> The world changes, we sit in ruins[54]

But slowly the message changed from one of despair to one of hope for a better future through common action:

> We pull up our trousers and fasten our belts,
> we no longer accept the mistreatment we have endured[55]

In the coming decades, the music from the band Tinariwen or its individual members would accompany all major stages of the *Teshumara* and *Tanekra* resistance movement. But Tinariwen had no monopoly on poetical expression. It is open to all members of Tamasheq society. Those who are gifted for poetry only gain more renown. All major concepts of the *Teshumara* and, more important, the *Tanekra* movement were expressed in poetry by some of its main participants. The lyrics of the *Teshumara* poets and songwriters, sometimes performed by Tinariwen in their name, described the position of the Kel Tamasheq in their world created by the rise of the African independent state, man-made ecological disaster, and globalising culture, as well as the rebellion and its various stages.

Alternatives to the *Teshumara*

It should be strongly emphasised that the *Teshumara* was not uniform, and not the only alternative to pastoral nomad existence the Kel Tamasheq had. I will here deal with some of the aspects of *Teshumara* diversity and with alternatives to *Teshumara* existence, notably the path of formal education. Then again, the

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[54] Part of a poem by Kel Hoggar poet Khaffi ag Hanni in Tamasheq transcription and with French translation. In: Bellil, R. & B. Dida 1993: 108.

[55] Part of a poem by Cheick ag Aoussa, 1983. Klute, 2001, op. cit., poem 7. Cheick ag Aoussa would become one of the most influential leaders of the *Tanekra* movement.

latter path did not exclude *Teshumara* existence. The two paths could be complementary, as both contributed to the construction of the revolutionary movement, but in practice they were often at odds.

The region of exile chosen by various Kel Tamasheq had a large influence on the form their lives took. The *Teshumara* described above is particular to those who migrated to the Maghreb. The Kel Tamasheq who moved to the cities of coastal West Africa had different influences transforming their way of life. The Malian Kel Tamasheq who moved to the Ivory Coast, for example, found employment on the coffee and cocoa plantations where they worked alongside other Malian immigrants. Under these circumstances, a particular Tamasheq culture such as the *Teshumara*, even if it did develop, could hardly be expressed. Naturally, cultural influences were different as well. Different origins within Tamasheq society also influenced personal experiences, or at least the chances one was given in a new environment. The number of Kel Tamasheq of slave origins moving to the Maghreb was small compared to their numbers moving to West Africa. I have noted above that the *ishumar* in Libya were confronted with racism and discrimination. In Libya, those Kel Tamasheq who considered themselves as 'white' were confronted with a contrary opinion on their racial belonging. To the average Libyan, a 'white' Kel Tamasheq was simply a 'black' African. The racial prejudice the 'black' Kel Tamasheq of slave origins were confronted with in the Maghreb was multiplied, since skin colour is differentiated in the Maghreb as in other parts of the world, which made them even more 'black' than they were in Tamasheq society. The situation was entirely different in West African places of exile. Here, the 'black' Kel Tamasheq of slave origins easily blended into the local environment, as their physical appearance did not betray them as Kel Tamasheq. The 'white' Kel Tamasheq on the other hand, stuck out strongly as immigrants. Although one might expect that the common experience of 'otherness' and foreign racism would enhance common ties between Kel Tamasheq of all castes, this proved not to be the case, as I discuss in the next chapter.

At the beginning of this chapter, I indicated that large groups of Kel Tamasheq had migrated to Saudi Arabia in the 1940s. Most of these immigrants were religious specialists who came particularly from the Kel Essuq tribes. Their trajectories differed considerably from those of the *ishumar*. At present, a large Tamasheq community is living in Saudi Arabia, notably in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Many took up religious professions, teaching Arabic or instructing in the Qur'ân. Some even managed to gain positions of considerable prestige and wealth. The religious path did not only lead to Mecca and Medina. During colonial times (and probably even before), a number of Kel Tamasheq had travelled to Egypt where they studied at the prestigious al-Azhar university. This institution linked the Kel Tamasheq with developments in the wider Mus-

lim world and the new directions of Muslim thought in the 19th and 20th centuries, which were known in colonial times as Wahhabism, a term which has recently resurfaced to denote 'fundamentalist Islam'. This particular current within reformist Islam gained tremendous popularity in Northern Mali after the droughts.[56] Not only Western NGOs became active in the region. Muslim NGOs such as Secours Islamique became just as active. Although locally they were sometimes mockingly referred to as ONG-Mosqué, the impact of these NGOs remains largely underestimated. The majority of *ishumar* was confronted with developments in the Muslim world as well in their Maghreb diaspora. Although it should be said that the *Teshumara* has a profoundly worldly character, some *ishumar* were nevertheless influenced by Muslim ways of thinking. The Kel Adagh, who until the 1980s formed the majority of *ishumar*, had always been renowned in the Tamasheq world as pious and learned Muslims. Their piousness and Muslim learning had originally given them their status and place in the overall hierarchy of the Tamasheq community. Even at present, piety and punctuality in ritual performance form an important part of their identity. It is no wonder that some of the most influential members of the *Tanekra* nationalist movement stressed the importance for Muslim ideas on social organisation and the restructuring and rebuilding of Tamasheq society.

A more important alternative to the *Teshumara* was the path of formal education. In colonial times, completion of primary education was the end of one's education, as the French did not allow the Kel Tamasheq to study further, because they thought this would alienate the Kel Tamasheq from their natural environment and life as pastoralists. This changed in independent Mali. Inside and outside the Adagh and Azawad, the number of Tamasheq *Lycéens* rose over the years. A number of these *Lycéens* managed to enter higher education in Mali at Bamako's Ecole Nationale Supérieure or the Ecole Nationale de l'Administration. Only the Ecole Nationale Inter-Armes – the Malian military academy – remained closed to them, as the regime still feared the possible effects of well-trained Kel Tamasheq soldiers on the security of the state. A large number of Kel Tamasheq pursued higher education outside Mali, mostly in Algeria, but sometimes as far away as Khartoum, Nouakchott, France, West and East Germany, or the USSR. The educated could join the civil service or they could offer their services to Western or Muslim NGOs, which abounded in Northern Mali after the droughts. These Kel Tamasheq also lived in cities, were exposed to new cultures and ways of thinking, new consumer goods, and forms of organisation. But the outcome would be totally different from the *Teshumara* experience. Whereas the *ishumar* would develop a more and more radical political outlook, calling for revolution and independence, the educated Kel Tama-

[56] Triaud, J-L. 1986.

sheq had a far more moderate standpoint with regards to the state, but a far more radical outlook on the necessary changes within Tamasheq society itself.

Teshumara and formal education were not mutually exclusive but the educational efforts of the *ishumar* were hard to sustain due to their illegal, migratory existence. Most of their interests were in practical skills such as mechanics, masonry or electronics, which they acquired on the job. Besides, their education was in Arabic (which accounted for part of the Muslim influences within the *Teshumara*), whereas those educated in Mali were instructed in French. This greatly hampered communication on intellectual matters. Both groups simply used other terms and vocabulary to express themselves. To the *ishumar*, education meant something different than reading, writing and calculus. To them, education meant political education and awareness about the situation Tamasheq society found itself in. On the other hand, a number of educated Kel Tamasheq lived an *ishumar* existence for a part of their lives as migrants in Algeria, Libya or elsewhere. Although they had more steady jobs – often as teachers – they too were confronted with illegality, discrimination, expulsions and the other *Teshumara* experiences. A number of these *évolué*-cum-*ishumar* would become influential members of the *Tanekra* movement during one period or another. Students based in Europe in particular would come to hold a special position during the rebellion, as they dispersed information on the rebellion in Europe and provided contact between the rebels and various organisations. Nevertheless, animosity between these educated Kel Tamasheq and the 'true' *ishumar* ran high.

I've heard you are educated
We have not seen the benefit
Our history is known to all
But you bear no witness
The tears of the old burn all living hearts
And the image of children who lost all
Searching for water without halt
At deep, dried-up wells
And you tell me you live normally
An organised, quiet life
Since your birth you run in vain
Surrounded by enemies
The easy life always escapes you
Unless you make some effort to commit yourself
To reach that truth that belongs to you[57]

[57] Islegh Teghram (I have heard you are educated), Keddu ag Ossad, Libya 1986. Available on: Terakaft. 2008. *Akh Issudar*. World Village, B001EC23S0.

The nicknames tagged onto the educated by their *ishumar* counterparts are revealing. They were called the '*Ondit*' or '*Entoutcas*', after the French expressions *on dit que* and *en tout cas* they often used, even when speaking Tamasheq.[58] They were accused of having knowledge, but not using it for the benefit of the Kel Tamasheq; or even of outright betrayal to the Tamasheq cause. Finally, they were accused of being acculturated, a strange accusation that could easily be inversed. On their part, the educated reproached the *ishumar* for being ignorant of the realities of the world; uncivilised; and pursuing an irrelevant cause: National independence for the Kel Tamasheq. Changing society was necessary, but not along the vague and half-conceived ideas of the *ishumar*. The educated, in turn, called the *ishumar* '*Mazbuten'* from their favourite colloquial Arabic expression *mazbut*, 'right', 'OK'.[59] The animosity between both groups would reach a head during the rebellion, when the rebels had no choice but to let the educated negotiate with the Malian Government in their place, as the rebels saw themselves unfit to do so or had been side-tracked by the Malian authorities. In any case, in this dispute between *ishumar* and the educated I have entered the arena of political debates within Tamasheq society.

Tanekra

The disasters hitting the Kel Tamasheq since the 1960s made it all the more clear to the *ishumar* that Tamasheq independence was necessary. Some of these calamities would not have struck if the Kel Tamasheq had been granted their own independence, or so the *ishumar* thought. The *Tanekra* movement was all about regaining that independence, expressed in ideas on territory – *akal* – and the Tamasheq as a people or nation – *temust*, or *tumast*. These concepts found their essential expression in the *Tanekra* creed *akal iyyan, ittus iyyan, temust iyyat*: One country, one goal, one people. The slogan is awkwardly similar to the Malian national creed '*un peuple un but une foi*': One people, one goal, one religion. Its similarity to the Malian slogan is not coincidental. National slogans all over the world resemble each other. The language of nationalism lacks originality, but this is made up for in zeal. The zealously pursued goal of the *Tanekra* was to reunite the Tamasheq nation in a liberated independent country.

Scholars studying Tamasheq society have long argued whether or not a Tamasheq country ever existed as a political unity.[60] Those in defence of the

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[58] Belalimat, N. 1996: 75.

[59] Conversation with Moussa ag Keyna, frontman and lead guitarist of the *al-guitara* band Toumast. Leiden, 04/10/01.

[60] This subject dominated the debate that broke out over the political sense and nonsense of the second Tamasheq rebellion between notably Hélène Claudot-Hawad and Mahmoudan Hawad on one side defending the rebellion and Tamasheq nation-

idea that Tamasheq country forms a political unit focus on the argument that political unity lays in common social cultural concepts of politics within a given space. Those refuting Tamasheq political unity focus on the lack of central political authority in the Tamasheq world with a form of power over all Tamasheq country. In other words: The absence of a state. Indeed, it is hard to detect a moment prior to the *Tanekra* nationalist movement in which Tamasheq society formed a state-like political entity but the question should be asked whether or not one should judge political unity solely on criteria of state formation. Where, for example, would that leave the European Union? Political unity has never been the prerogative of the state as those in defence of Tamasheq political unity argue. But if one does apply state formation criteria as a litmus test for political unity in the Tamasheq case, a few observations can be made. Prior to colonial conquest, the territorial integrity of Tamasheq country had never been under threat, and neither had been their political supremacy in it. Although one central power was lacking within the Tamasheq political constellation, the Kel Tamasheq ruled their land with a strong political influence over their neighbours, even if these were more or less strong states, such as the Fulani *jihad*-states of Macina or Sokoto. The French colonial armies had conquered Tamasheq country with tremendous military superiority over the defenders, and with a speed forestalling Tamasheq attempts to unite in defence, which were made nevertheless. When the French retreated, the Kel Tamasheq made great efforts to regain independence as a unified Saharan state, if need be under French tutelage in the form of the OCRS, or inclusion in Algeria or 'Greater Morocco'. This was not achieved and the Kel Tamasheq were faced with the dismemberment of their territory between five former colonial states. Only then was the need first felt to find ways to regain territorial and national independence, and it was concluded that this could only be done if all Kel Tamasheq were united.

The Tamasheq pronoun 'Kel', the first part of the name of most tribes and clans, literally means 'those of' or 'those from'. Kel Hoggar, Kel Ajjer, Kel Adagh, Kel Aïr, or Kel Udalan: Those from the Hoggar, the Ajjer, the Adagh, the Aïr, or the Udalan. Since the 1960s, national belonging has slowly crept into ideas of identity. The pronoun Kel is now not only used to indicate specific social-political groups internal to Tamasheq space, but also to denote one's

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alism, and on the other side André Bourgeot and Dominique Casajus being critical of it in light of the rising democratisation movement of the early 1990s in Mali and Niger. Other contributions came from Georg Klute, Gunvor Berge, André Salifou, and Pierre Boilley. The debate remained unsettled after it took an embarrassingly personal tone. See Berge, G. 2000; Bourgeot, A. 1990, 1994; Boilley, P. 1999; Claudot-Hawad, H. 1987, 1992, 1993a, 1993c; Casajus, D. 1995; Klute, G. 1995; Salifou, A. 1993.

belonging to a state. Kel Alger, Kel Libya, Kel Mali, Kel Niger, or Kel Burkina: Those from Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger, or Burkina Faso. The *Tanekra* movement sought to counter this idea of state belonging by developing the idea of their own country through the term *akal*, earth, ground or political territory. In the latter meaning it could indicate the territory of a tribal federation. The title of the federation's paramount leader, the *amenokal*, literally means the 'owner of the land'. But *akal* could also denote the whole space inhabited by the Kel Tamasheq: *Akal n Kel Tamasheq*, or *akal n temust*, the land of the people. In this meaning too, it had political connotations. *Akal n Kel Tamasheq* meant the country where the Kel Tamasheq rule. This idea can be taken in two ways. It can mean the whole territory where Kel Tamasheq exercise some form of political power. It can also mean a part of the Tamasheq country where a federation or confederation exercises power, independent of other parts of the Tamasheq world. Within the *Tanekra* movement the idea of *akal* came to embody the territory of all the Kel Tamasheq on which an independent state was to be created. This idea was already expressed in 1978, at the start of the *Tanekra*, in one of the oldest *al-guitara* songs:

Friends, hear and understand me
You know, there is one country
one goal, one religion
And unity, hand in hand
Friends, you know
there is only one stake to which you are fettered
and only unity can break it[61]

The concept of *akal* did not only come to mean country in the sense of a unified political territory. The concept came to mean home country or fatherland in the nationalist sense: A country where one's ancestors had lived, where history had been acted out, from which one was now driven away, but to which one should return from exile, a fatherland to be loved despite its shortcomings. In *al-guitara* songs, it was referred to as 'the desert', *ténéré*.

I live in deserts
where there are no trees and no shades
Veiled friends, leave indigo [turban] and veil
You should be in the desert
where the blood of kindred has been spilled
That desert is our country
and in it is our future[62]

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[61] Poem by Intakhmuda ag Sidi Mohamed, 1978. Klute, G. 2001, poem 1, Belalimat, 1996, poem 1. In lines 7 and 8, the poet invokes the idea that the Kel Tamasheq are fettered to a stake, which is customarily done with young goats or animals in lactation. It is an idea of imprisonment.

In Tamasheq, *ténéré* has two meanings: Wasteland and solitude. It is the barren land, the sand dunes and empty rocks, the 'real' desert where life is impossible. This is in general not where the Kel Tamasheq live. They inhabit the valleys and mountains of the central Sahara where life is possible. The *ténéré* is a threat to physical, mental and social existence. As life is not possible, society or socialised space is not present. Inversely, all space where Tamasheq social life is absent is *ténéré*. The drought had transformed much of Tamasheq social space, where life had been acted out, to a physical and social desert. Physically, because much of the vegetation was destroyed, leaving but barren land; and socially, as the Kel Tamasheq had been forced to flee and therefore could no longer uphold their community. Socially also, as the herds had perished and with them social economic existence as it had been known. The second meaning of *ténéré* is silence or solitude. Those who had to cross the desert or had to dwell in it, notably caravan traders, were confronted with this silence. Enduring *ténéré* – silence or solitude, an absence of social structure – is one of the harshest experiences a Kel Tamasheq could endure.[63] The two meanings of the word *ténéré* became intimately linked in exile. The droughts of the 1970s and 1980s had not only shattered Tamasheq existence economically, but the resulting dispersion over West Africa and the Maghreb threatened the very fabric of Tamasheq existence as a community of people. Most seasonal migrants, refugees and *ishumar* stuck together in their diaspora. As Klute argues, within their places of exile, the Kel Tamasheq created a cultural and economic existence that stayed as close as possible to 'home' and their previous ways of life.[64] But close to home is not home itself, and *ténéré*, desert, is not social space, *akal*. The droughts and other events had transformed their country into a desert and had shattered Tamasheq society. The absence of international support for their cause during *Alfellaga*; the fraud committed with relief aid during the droughts; the expulsions from Algeria; the discrimination in Libya; and the general lack of welcome in Mali and Niger made one thing clear to the *ishumar*: The Kel Tamasheq had no allies; no exterior help; no welcome; no resources.

> The Kel Tamasheq saw that they were alone. The blacks, even the stupid ones, are supported because they are numerous. They are organised. If a poor country has a problem, the others support it. The same goes for the Arabs. If Mauritania is poor,

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62 Poem by Ibrahim ag Alkhabib, 1979. Klute, G. 2001, poem 2. Belalimat attributes this poem to the poet Swalam, 1981. Belalimat, N. 1996, poem 4.

63 Based on Casajus, D. 1987.

64 Klute, G. 2001: 235-236.

> the rich Arabs support it. The Kel Tamasheq are one group, closed in on itself in the Sahara.[65]

The Kel Tamasheq were in the desert and in solitude, wherever they were. Under these circumstances, their own country, with all its deficits, took on a sanctified air. It was a desert, but it was their desert. And if they could return there, rebuilding the country and securing Tamasheq social existence, that desert would cease to be one, and would become instead a fertile social space, a home country: *Akal n temust*.

Etymologically, *temust* or *tumast* is a derivation of *imas*: 'nature' or 'essence'. In the first instance, *temust* or *tumast* means 'identity' or 'self' in Tamasheq. Now, *temust* came to mean 'nation', embodied through Tamasheq unity in culture. The idea of *temust* was thus first and foremost cultural, but it acquired political meanings later on. Cultural unity was stressed through elements that had always been criteria of unity within the Tamasheq world, notably the Tamasheq language and alphabet, called *tifinagh*. 'Kel Tamasheq' means 'those who speak the Tamasheq language'. It was language that had always provided both a common identity and a way to express it. Through this common language and alphabet, a revived Kel Tamasheq nation was imagined which found expression in the politization of the term *temust*.

> The foundation of our identity is TAMAJAQ. Our language, the central axis of our society, is the most precious thing we have to preserve. We can lose everything, but if we can save the Tamajaq, we save our specificity. Nothing distinguishes a people more from another people than language![66]

In these decades both *évolués* and *ishumar* developed the idea that 'tribalism' or the political competition between federations, clans and castes, had foreclosed political unity in the face of colonial conquest, and was now foreclosing political unity and social change.

> On the eve of the 21st century we more than ever need to ban the caste system that has undermined our unity for too long. (...) At the risk of repeating ourselves, we insist on certain values, which besides conservation deserve special attention. One of those is the political unity of the Tuareg that has suffered so much. (...) One of our greatest misfortunes is that we have never succeeded to form a united front. It is time we understand that the resistance of a broom is proportional to its number of bristles. We should therefore dismiss certain sectarian concepts that honour neither those in their defence nor the Kel Tamajaq as a whole.[67]

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65 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.

66 Anonymous, *Quand le chef travaille, le peuple le suit* (n.d. 1990). Document circulating in Niamey in 1990 among Kel Tamasheq intellectuals.

67 Ibid.

The postcolonial state structure was not the only problem the *Teshumara* perceived as an obstacle to Tamasheq existence. Society itself needed to be changed as well. The primary schools founded by the Keita Regime in Mali had vehemently propagated socialism. Together with the events of 1963 in the Adagh, the Malian educational system left its legacy to the *Tanekra* movement: Social equality. The major issues were the position of the tribal chiefs, the tribes and tribal affiliation, and the caste system. The Keita Regime had depicted the chiefs as colonial feudal lords working against the interests of the labouring Malian masses. The tribal chiefs, who owed their legitimacy to state appointment, had grown synonymous with the collection of taxes, the forced education of children and other forms of coercion. To the members of the *Tanekra* movement the chiefs were part and parcel of what they perceived as the persistence of colonialism under new masters. They thus had to be eradicated, together with the tribal structure they represented and controlled. Interestingly enough, the pre-existing stereotyped views of Tamasheq society held by the Malian administration, which had been at the basis of Malian politics in the 1960s, were now taken over and internalised by members of Tamasheq society. Caste identity is based on four main behavioural types: That of the noble; the religious expert; the craftsman; and the slave. Of these four, only that of the noble had been given a name: *Temushagha* or noble behaviour (but see infra). It is taken for granted that all Kel Tamasheq, even the former slaves aspire to live according to the concept of *temushagha*.[68] The proverb '*ellellu ulhe*' – 'nobility comes from the heart' (hence not from birth) – is often taken to mean that all can acquire nobility and all seek to do so. *Temushagha* as an expression of the fundamental inequality within Tamasheq society became severely contested in the 1970s, both implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly because the cultural and social habitus of former slaves had profound advantages. Not restrained by *temushagha* the former slaves could take up any job and therewith ensure their immediate economic survival. Explicitly because the *Tanekra* attacked the exemplary basis of *temushagha* power: The tribal structure of society and the tribal chiefs at its head.

Tamasheq society is generally endogamous and *tewsit* or clan identity is connected to caste identity. One's identity is first and foremost derived from one's *tewsit*, one's tribe and clan. It is primarily to these social groups that one is loyal. *Tewsiten* are grouped together in federations, *ittebelen*. In pre-colonial Tamasheq society there existed a constant competition over relative status and hierarchy within the expanding circles of power – family, clan, tribe and federation – based upon personal merit; prestige of one's lineage; the historical descent of one's tribe; the number of clans in a tribe; economic wealth (herds);

[68] Bourgeot, A. 1990.

military power; religious learning; etc. *Tewsit* identity can be a large bone of contention. It is perforce a definition of self, constructed in permanent competition with others, and it is therefore no basis for communal belonging on a larger scale. Most *ishumar* abhorred the clan system. They derived their identity from a common experience of marginalisation within their host societies, and within Mali and Niger, to which *tewsit* affiliation had no meaning. At the margins of Algerian and Libyan society, the *Teshumara* formed a network of men and women who largely depended on trust in each other and their common situation for economic and social survival. Coming as they did from all parts of Mali and Niger, and from all the various *tewsiten*, clan affiliation could not serve as a common factor establishing social coherence and group loyalty among *ishumar*. On the contrary, the constant competition over hierarchy between *tewsiten* could only sow discord in their ranks. It should therefore be abolished. One of the main rules of the *Teshumara* was that one should never mention someone's *tewsit* affiliation. Only the use of someone's name or nickname was allowed.

One should keep in mind that the problems of Tamasheq society and their answers are presented here from the viewpoint of the *évolués* and the *ishumar*. These groups saw themselves as having escaped these problems, or trying to escape them, while they persisted among those Kel Tamasheq still living their life as pastoralists. Both the discourse about the problems as well as the various discourses about possible solutions are those of an 'enlightened' city-dwelling elite abroad towards the 'disadvantaged' members of their society; the people in the bush back home. Having said this, I should immediately soften this statement. Reflections on the problems of society were not reserved for the new elites. Consider the following part of a poem composed in the early 1980s by a man who was part of neither new elite. He was a simple 'bush dweller'.

There are no friends left to count on
Each for himself and God for all
From the biggest chief to the smallest child
I hope the worthy are blessed
The best for us is righteousness, honour and patience
The wrong path leads to failure
A change is needed or the worst will come
The young say it all, without omission
But it is left in oblivion
Not being serious is an evil
that runs everywhere, grows and spreads
We need a remedy before it hurts us
These are my thoughts on a solution
Where will it be without the respected ones
who know the right choice and banish evil
who don't like the road of lies and banditry

Awful is he who thinks he is superior
who forgets the ties of his mother[69]

The poem does not only speak of the wrongs of society, it addresses those who propose a solution, the *ishumar* – 'the young say it all without omission'. It is clear the poet has heard the message of the revolutionary-minded, but he is not without reserve towards this message – 'not being serious is an evil'. The *Teshumara* was not seen as a serious answer to the problems besetting Tamasheq society by all 'bush dwellers' for whose benefit the revolution was intended. Many regarded the *ishumar* with their illegal activities in smuggling and their revolutionary ideas as a possible cause of more problems, and condemned their behaviour – awful is he who thinks he is superior, who forgets the ties of his mother.[70]

Egha*, the motor behind the* Tanekra

Shame, honour and revenge are topics with which most anthropologists working on the Mediterranean region are highly familiar.[71] The essence of most writing so far, is that these three concepts are intimately linked. My concern with these topics is their explanatory value as the motor behind political and military action undertaken by the Kel Tamasheq from the early 1970s to the second rebellion in the 1990s. I will first explain what *egha* means. The concept has a broad range of meanings that are not easily covered with one term or translation. Above I have outlined only a few of the various new political and social ideas that took root in *Teshumara* culture. These various political views and projects were sometimes at odds with each other. *Egha* was the sole feeling uniting the *ishumar* in the idea that something had to be done.

Egha can well be explained with the recent thinking on anger and revenge developed by Peter Sloterdijk. In his book *Zorn und Zeit* (Anger and time), Sloterdijk explores the creation in Europe of a moral economy, and a monetization of some kind, of pride, anger and revenge, leading to their distillation in a discourse of debt and repayment – 'anger transactions' – in which anger and revenge finally become debit and credit in an 'anger bank', where immediately experienced anger is conversed in projects of revenge with a possibly higher 'return' in the shape of '"programs" claiming world political meaning'.[72]

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[69] Part of a poem by Hamayni ag Essadayane, early 1980s. Translated by Lamine ag Bilal and myself.

[70] Here, 'the ties of his mother' refers to the cross cousins – the *iboubashen* – to whom one owes both economic support and absolute loyalty.

[71] See for this subject: Black-Michaud, J. 1975; Blok, A. 1994; Gilmore, D.D. 1987; Jamous, R. 1981; Peristiany, J., ed., 1966; Peristiany, J. & J. Pitt-Rivers, eds, 1992.

[72] Sloterdijk, P. 2007: 74. My translation into English from the Dutch translation of the original German.

> The Nietzsche-inspired critic of the General Economy comes to realise that the current economic system is based on the transformation of moral guilt in financial debts. It is almost self-evident that the triumphal march of capitalism could only begin with this shift. The time of guilt is characterised by the haunting of a perpetrator by the consequences of his deeds: Logically, he ends up expiating these consequences. 'Being in debt', to the contrary, means to spend a time characterised by the obligations of repayment. But while guilt burdens us, debts revive us, at least when they are accompanied by enterprising energy. Guilt and debts share a crucial characteristic: Both produce the effect that the life of those on which they are imposed remains tied to the past. Together they create a backward oriented compulsion to connect with the past, causing that past to retain its power over coming events.[73]

Although in this crucial passage of Sloterdijk's Nietzsche-inspired thoughts he speaks of the transformation of guilt into debts, my understanding of his argument leads me to believe that he could just as well speak of the transformation into debt of shame, which is generally seen as guilt's twin, with dishonour being their little sibling. The construction of revenge as a tie that connects perceptions of a painful, shameful, anger provoking past with a determined vision of future repayment works through the transformation of anger in hateful revenge projects, on an anger account filled with wrath. This is exactly what *egha* is. Apparently, the Kel Tamasheq preceded Sloterdijk's thinking in analogy on 'anger banking'. At least when they speak French and use the standing French expression '*des comptes à régler*'.

Me: What is *egha*?
Keyni: Egha is when you have fought and you have not made up afterwards, you have not acquiesced, you have not shaken hands. Then, something remains open. That is *egha*.
Me: It is an open account?
Keyni: Exactly, that's it, a settlement of scores.
Me: Can that take long? Years?
Keyni: Oh yes, sure, more than that.
Me: All your life?
Keyni: Absolutely.
Me: Even several generations?
Keyni: Absolutely. Oh, the Tuareg have too many open accounts. There are always accounts to balance. That happens too much among the Tuareg.
Me: Was 1990 *egha*?
Keyni: No there was no *egha* between the Tuareg. Only more recently *egha* has come between us. But there was definitely *egha* between the Tuareg and the blacks.
Me: Between the Tuareg and Mali?

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[73] Ibid.: 42.

Keyni: Absolutely, only between the Tuareg and the blacks.[74]

Egha is first of all an emotion, or rather a complex set of emotions. These emotions arise from the perceived inability to counter an act against one's dignity and honour. When an attack against one's honour can be immediately countered, *egha* does not arise. The sentiment of *egha* can be individual in the case of an attack against oneself. But *egha* can also be felt, or be made felt, collectively in the case of an attack against a group or an attack against a member of the group that is felt as damaging the group. *Egha* comprises shame about having lost face or respect, powerlessness towards the perpetrator, and hatred for the perpetrator.[75] So far, the concept of *egha* does not deviate from common ideas in the anthropology of honour or the role of revenge. It is a way to uphold or restore honour. But *egha* can be disconnected from honour. In a disconnected perception, crucial to understanding the role and use of *egha* in the two Tamasheq rebellions, *egha* only means powerlessness, the restoration of power, and hatred. Let me present an *al-guitara* song that explicitly deals with *Alfellaga*, the rebellion of 1963:

Nineteen sixty-three came, and goes on
Its days came, leaving memories
It crossed wadis, killing cattle
It killed the elderly and newborn children
The brave men died
Until no one we knew was left
Only graveyards and loneliness came of it[76]

The opening verse of the song is the most crucial: Nineteen sixty-three came, and goes on. The verse links the events of *Alfellaga* directly to the moment of composition. What goes on is not the fighting, but the memories it invoked, mentioned in line two. The rest of the poem is dedicated to what these memories essentially are: The death of loved ones. What the poem does not invoke is honour. Although many other poems implicitly appeal to the honour of the Kel Tamasheq community, not one does so explicitly. Most poems deal with a situation of powerlessness, the wish to regain control over the future of Tamasheq existence through revolutionary action and a hatred for those who have taken away the capacity to control existence.

We are mangled between the Arabs and the West
But even more so by Mali against whom we fight

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[74] Interview with Keyni ag Sherif. Kidal, 25/05/1999.

[75] This is almost *ad verbatim* the explanation given to me by Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall during one of our many conversations.

[76] Part of the lyrics of Soixante-trois (1963). Cheick ag Aoussa, Lebanon, 1982. Available on: Tinariwen, 2007. *Aman Iman*. World Village, 468067.

I have a question for my brothers in my nation
Consider the situation you are in[77]

Egha can thus be seen as an emotion in itself: Hatred and the pain of powerlessness and revenge for any wrong committed, not just a wrong against one's honour. In Chapter 4, I have briefly explained the role of *egha* in *Alfellaga*, the 1963 rebellion. It is possible that feelings of *egha* were not strongly present among the former *ifulagen* after the rebellion was over. After all, as warriors they had been able to immediately counter the strikes of the Malian army. But it is clear that those who witnessed *Alfellaga* as victims, and who survived, took strong feelings of *egha* towards those they saw as 'the Malians' or 'Mali'. These victims were the women and children, who hold feelings of *egha* but do not have the social means to act out revenge since they cannot wield arms. Revenge is in violence only. Many of these children would later join the *Teshumara* and the *Tanekra* movement.

> In 1963, Mali rose in its entirety against the Kel Tamasheq and started to kill people. They killed the camels too, and put everyone in prison in Kidal. The Kel Tamasheq lived through a war that was really (...) a real massacre. And me, I grew up seeing all this, and in my youthfulness I grew a really, really strong hatred. In those years an incredibly grave obligation fell upon us. It was they who owned us, like hostages. All young people of my age in that period had the same hatred, the same sentiment of being recolonised, and that caused a great feeling of hate in us.[78]

Acts of revenge are not necessarily committed against those who caused the original feelings of wrath. They can be inflicted upon others who embody the same entity that caused wrath. Thus, the killing of Malian soldiers by the rebels in 1990 avenged the death of their parents killed by the Malian army in 1963. Of course, revenge provokes new feelings of hatred among those against whom revenge has been taken, which can cause new reasons for vengeance. The Kel Tamasheq are fully aware of this cycle, but it seems to be accepted as inevitable. It is better to avenge and await new actions than to remain passive.

At first sight, feelings of *egha* about *Alfellaga* and the contracted debt with Mali would be limited to the Kel Adagh and those few groups outside the Adagh who assisted them. It could therefore be argued that the *Tanekra* movement should have been limited to the Kel Adagh if *egha* was the main explanation for the *Tanekra* and the second rebellion. There are a number of arguments to counter this idea. First, as we shall see below, the Kel Adagh indeed played a leading role in the *Tanekra* movement for long, and some even

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[77] Part of the lyrics of Matedjem Yinmixan (What is this division). Keddu ag Ossad, Mali, 1994. Available on: Tinariwen, 2007. *Aman Iman*. World Village, 468067.

[78] Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998. In the Tamasheq original the word *egha* was used where it is here translated as hatred or hate.

considered the *Tanekra* as only their affair, but they were not the only ones involved. At the start of the second rebellion, they did not even form the majority of fighters. Second, a process of imagining and reification in political discourse had assured that *egha* over *Alfellaga* had been extended to all of Tamasheq society. The bloody crushing of *Alfellaga* by 'Mali' had not only touched those directly involved. It had been an attack on the honour and dignity of a large part of society, and by extension it had left a feeling of powerlessness with all the Kel Tamasheq. In discussing the memories on *Alfellaga* in Chapter 4, I have introduced Charlotte Linde's term 'induced narrative'. This is exactly what happened with stories about *Alfellaga* among other Kel Tamasheq. Within the *Tanekra*, all were confronted with the pain of the Kel Adagh over *Alfellaga* and, together with its' stories and poems, made it their own. It was the reifying and essentialist language of nationalism, in which large social bodies and political entities can be represented as almost anthropomorphic beings that enabled the collective feeling of *egha* to be expressed. In Tamasheq nationalist imagining, *egha* over *Alfellaga* was a contracted debt between Tamasheq society and Mali and Niger. Third, *Alfellaga* was not the only cause of shame, pain and powerlessness. The unfolding of events after the droughts of the 1970s – the lack of governmental cooperation in strategies to counter the effects of drought, and the corruption of civil servants responsible for the distribution of relief aid – was set against the national discourse of the Malian state as one of 'brothers in unity'.

> I listen to Mali. He says: "one People, one Goal, one Religion". I say nothing. I say nothing![79]

On the contrary, the Kel Tamasheq had the sentiment that they were on their own. In exile after the droughts, the *ishumar* could compare the wealth of their hosts to that of their countries of origin and their own poverty. Many *ishumar* came to see their society as backward, in need of education and more modern political organisation. All the problems described above were seen as humiliations and signs of Tamasheq impotence.

> The young Kel Tamasheq had seen that Algeria had its independence, the South of our country [Mali] had its independence. The Kel Tamasheq had not had their independence. They had become the slaves of the blacks. The young Kel Tamasheq had seen that the other countries in the 1960s and 1970s were constructing villages, were modernising, while they remained nomads. That too caused hatred. In the year of the drought, they had seen that they had nothing but themselves to protect them. There was no country that came to their rescue. That too created hatred.[80]

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[79] Interview with Taghlift. Ménaka, 19/04/1999.
[80] Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.

The various currents within the *Tanekra* movement did not agree on various political issues and goals, but what they all had in common was a feeling of powerlessness against Mali and Niger. A feeling that Tamasheq society had been robbed of its honour in the public exposure of their distress during the droughts, the forced begging for food in the refuge camps. A feeling of outrage for the massacres perpetrated by the Malian army against civilians during *Alfellaga*, and hatred for the riches of the modern world they somehow could not reach.

Egha as an emotion can be reified and instrumentalised to connect a past with a future, via the present, as Sloterdijk's thoughts on the 'anger bank' make clear. The anger debt, transformed into hate, remains open until an act of revenge has been carried out. In this sense *egha* had the power to give the *ishumar* meaning to their suffering in the past; their destitution and marginality in the present; and a purpose for their future: To unify in a political movement that would settle the debt with Mali in kind. They did this in 1990, after fifteen years of preparation, carefully managing their anger, their hatred, their wrath, their *egha*.

Organising the *Tanekra*, a narrative

Alfellaga ended in the summer of 1964 with three of its most important leaders imprisoned: Zeyd ag Attaher; Ilyas ag Ayyouba; and Elledi ag Alla. Three others had managed to escape to Algeria: Younes ag Ayyouba; Amegha ag Sherif; and Issouf ag Cheick. In the early 1970s, or perhaps already in the 1960s, Issouf ag Cheick and Amegha ag Sherif were contacted by the Algerian secret services which regarded both men as of possible use in the future and therefore to be surveilled.[81] Both Issouf ag Cheick and Amegha ag Sherif obtained jobs within the Algerian administration, which permitted them to help those Kel Adagh who came to Algeria after the end of *Alfellaga* and during the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s. At the end of 1974, Elledi ag Alla, one of the two most charismatic and notorious leaders of *Alfellaga*, managed to escape from Bamako where he had been kept under house arrest.[82] Travelling by truck,

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[81] The contacts between Issouf ag Cheick, Amegha ag Sherif and the Algerian secret services were confirmed by archive material in Kidal and various interlocutors. However, stories about the *Tanekra* abound with secret services and agents, betrayal and individual projects.

[82] After a few initial years of imprisonment, the captive rebel leaders had been put under house arrest in Bamako. They were allowed to leave their house on certain days, but they were not to leave Bamako. This house arrest was part of the programme for national reconciliation set up by the Traoré regime to restore some of the wrongs done by the Keita regime. In 1978 Zeyd ag Attaher and the last re-

Elledi reached Algeria, where he was welcomed by his former brothers in arms Issouf and Amegha. Shortly after Elledi's arrival, a meeting was held in Ouargla at the house of Amegha ag Sherif. The meeting was attended by a few young Kel Adagh in exile in Algeria and the former leaders of *Alfellaga*. The main issue was the continuation of the struggle for independence from Mali. This meeting was the informal foundation of the *Tanekra* movement.

Tanekra and *Teshumara* were not uniform. One cannot speak of one *Tanekra* or one *Teshumara* movement, but of a number of them. Nigerien *ishumar* had their own networks and their own plans. Dissidents or opponents of the Malian and Nigerien regimes from other walks of life were sometimes involved in the *Tanekra* too, while pursuing their own goals again later on. The *Tanekra* in the late 1970s should be seen as a network of like-minded men, who travelled from job to job, from town to town. Those *ishumar* who at one moment lived in Libya could live in or travel to Algeria, or to their families in Mali, at another. One should not look at the movement as based at a location. Structures remained in flux until the 1980s, when they became more fixed. I here present the story from the perspective of a Kel Adagh-centred *Tanekra*, with other groups joining them at various times. But a variety of different stories of the *Tanekra* could be told from different perspectives.

In the early 1970s no formal structure existed yet. The former leaders of *Alfellaga* informally held leadership, particularly Issouf ag Cheick. The main decision made at the initial meeting was that a new rebellion should be organised in an unspecified future, and that the Kel Tamasheq should be made aware of their situation. To these men, the situation was one of *egha* with Mali. It was not taken for granted that all *ishumar* or refugees would have a political understanding of their situation. Therefore they needed to be made aware. The verb used in Tamasheq to describe the process of raising awareness is *sefham*: To make understand, from the Arabic *fahima*, to understand. In French the verb *sensibiliser* and its noun *sensibilisation* were used. It meant invoking the memories of *Alfellaga* and exposing the current situation the Kel Tamasheq found themselves in. The concept of *egha* was then put in the context of the current situation. Consider the following excerpt from an interview with Sallah, a cousin to Younes ag Ayyouba, one of the leaders of *Alfellaga* and one of the first organisers of the *Tanekra*.

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maining rebels were formally tried and sentenced to death. They were not executed. Instead, they were immediately liberated under the same national reconciliation programme.

Me: Why did you enter the Libyan army?
Sallah: Because my uncle had enturbanned me. My uncle had sent me. I was very young. The army is a sort of kindergarten, right? To make the army spirit enter your mind and body.
Me: And what did you think of that, that he sent you to Libya?
Sallah: (Thinks for a long time) I thought 'better death than dishonour'. A wound heals, but evil does not heal. If a bullet passes through (points at his leg), it will heal, but [the memory of the death of] parents do[es] not heal.

Clearly, Younes ag Ayyouba had invoked memories to Sallah of what had happened to Sallah's family during *Alfellaga*: The Malian army had executed Sallah's 'grandfather' (his uncle's grandfather) Mohamed Adargajouj in Kidal. Sallah had been 'enturbanned' by his uncle, which means his uncle had been responsible for Sallah's education as a man of honour. By dressing Sallah with his first turban, Younes ag Ayyouba had bestowed male honour upon Sallah, which could not be upheld when the *egha* of the family had not been paid.[83]

If a person was perceived to be receptive to the message (and many were), and if he was considered to be trustworthy, he would be recruited. The new recruit had to swear an oath on the Qur'ân that he would do anything in his power to further the cause and that he would not betray the secret existence of the movement. Breaking this oath would mean death through the swelling and exploding of one's intestines. Secrecy was of the highest importance. In fact, the *Tanekra* movement was obsessed with secrecy and riddled with rumours about secret agents of all kinds who would betray the movement and arrest its members. These rumours were not unfounded. Those who were sworn in raised consciousness in others on their turn. Ranks were informal or non-existent. Leadership was in the hands of a few respected men, such as the former *ifulagen* and a few early younger recruits. Meetings between members were informal and could hardly be distinguished from simple meetings between friends or *ishumar* parties at which politics, life and the predicament of the *Teshumara* were discussed. Within the *Tanekra*, many different opinions were brought forward. There were those who were not in favour of an armed uprising. There were those who were in favour of the inclusion of other social groups in Northern Mali apart from the Kel Tamasheq, such as the Daoussahak, the Bidân, the Fulbe and the Songhay. Notably the Daoussahak were in favour of this option. One of the main leaders of the *Tanekra*, former *afuleg* Younes ag Ayyouba, was a Daoussahak. Others were even against the inclusion within the movement of Kel Tamasheq from outside the Adagh. These issues were all hotly debated. In the end, those in favour of inclusion of other Kel Tamasheq won their plea, and from the late 1970s onwards, recruitment of members from

[83] Interview with Mohamed Sallah ag Mohamed. Bamako, 18/01/1998.

other clans and federations accelerated, although many Kel Adagh ignored this 'external' recruitment. Sallah, who I cited above, for example, would leave the movement before rebellion broke out, as he was against the idea that the movement would fight for Tamasheq independence only, and not for all the peoples in Northern Mali.[84] Exclusion went even so far that very few former slaves joined the movement. This exclusion is largely explained by fear of betrayal. The consequences of this exclusivity would become apparent during the rebellion and after, when the rebels could not count on support from outside their own networks.

The members of the *Tanekra* soon felt they lacked forms of education that could help them in analysing the social-political situation the Tamasheq world found itself in. They also felt a lack of educated members who could further the movement's cause. Primarily directed towards action, the movement felt a need for 'politicians'. Therefore, *Tanekra* members sought contacts with those who were educated, the *évolués*. In the first instance these were sought among the Kel Intessar pupils of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, who had been enrolled in the Libyan educational system in the 1940s and 1950s. A number of these still resided in Libya. However, they refused to join the movement for fear of losing their privileged positions within Libyan society. A number of Kel Tamasheq who had been educated in Mali and in Algeria did join the movement. These men were involved in contacts with the Algerian and Libyan authorities and, later, in the peace negotiations with the Malian state. Some of them, like Abderrahmane ag Galla, Cheick ag Bay, Ibrahim ag Litny, and Acherif ag Mohamed would become influential leaders of the movement.

In late May 1976, a second meeting was organised in the Algerian town of Adrar. At this meeting a name for the movement was established: Mouvement de Libération de l'Azawad. The Azawad is a wide valley formed by two large wadis, the Azawad and Azawagh, which flow between the Adagh and the Air Mountains on the northeast bank of the river Niger, in which they end. Not without coincidence, the *ishumar* saw this valley, stretching over the border between Mali and Niger, as the heartland of the Kel Tamasheq. By extension, Azawad became synonymous to *akal n temust*, the Kel Tamasheq homeland. The name Azawad can be found in the names of practically all the rebel movements that came into existence after the outbreak of rebellion in Mali and Niger, even when they were not based in the Azawad. The choice for Azawad over, for example, *temust* (people, nation) indicates that the movement, although then still dominated by the Kel Adagh, sought to incorporate other Kel Tamasheq. The name chosen is also an indication that the *Tanekra* had incorporated the territorial thinking of a state in its outlook on independence.

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[84] Interview with Mohamed Sallah ag Mohamed. Bamako, 18/01/1998.

The importance of territorial sovereignty was inscribed on the movement through the logic of the existing states of Mali and Niger. At the heart of the problem of Tamasheq unity lay its division between various states, and the *Tanekra* sought to overcome this division through independence from these. Therefore, the *Tanekra* insisted on a name referring to land that would blot out all possible divisions between states and therefore between tribes. However, the political construct of the existing states appeared too strong to be countered. In the 1980s, *ishumar* from both Mali and Niger found each other in diaspora in Algeria and Libya. Both 'Kel Mali' and 'Kel Niger' joined the movement and entered the training camps provided by the Libyan army. In order to counter the identity determined by the states they came from, a new name was invented in the early 1980s: Kel Nimagiler, a garble of Mali and Niger. Ironically, the name taken to indicate the unity of all *ishumar* opposing the postcolonial states was derived exactly from these states. Only in the later days of the rebellions in both countries, when the once united movement was at its most fragmented along lines of state and tribe did one newly created Nigerien movement refer to the Tamasheq nation, the Front de Libération Temust (FLT), in what seemed to be an attempt to reinvigorate the idea of the Tamasheq nation.

Some other important decisions were made in 1976 in the city of Adrar, and embedded in the rules of the movement.[85] The coming war against Mali would be one without peace. The ultimate goal was total independence. The beginnings of an organisation were set up. The *ishumar* world was divided into geographical sectors: Ouargla; Ghardaia; Adrar; Tindouf; Timeaouine, Djanet and Libya; and Mali.[86] In each sector, one of the attendants of the meeting would be responsible for the organisation of the *Tanekra*. This person would control finance; he would be responsible for raising awareness; and he would be the main contact person for the movement's members in his sector. The treasury of each sector was funded by a kind of tax. Those sworn in would henceforth contribute part of their earnings to the *Tanekra* organisation. At first, their money served to pay for travel; to help out needy comrades; and to buy some material. Later the money was used to buy cars and military equipment, which were to be kept in hiding until the moment the uprising would start.

Algeria and the POLISARIO

Despite the sworn secrecy, outside forces were informed about the existence of the *Tanekra* movement. The Algerian 'secret services' were in contact with the

[85] Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, May 1999.

[86] Nigerien Kel Tamasheq were not yet included at this stage, but had their own networks and organisation.

initial leaders of the movement, the former leaders of *Alfellaga*.[87] In the first years after the creation of the *Tanekra*, the Algerian authorities proposed to its leaders that the *ishumar* would be recruited in the POLISARIO, the movement fighting for the Liberation of the Seguiet al-Hamra and Rio d'Oro, or Western Sahara. Until 1974 this area remained formally under nominal Spanish administration, which was restricted to some coastal towns. In 1975, King Hassan II of Morocco had organised the occupation of the northern part of the Western Sahara in the famous 'Green March', in agreement with Mauritania, which took the Southern part. Mauritania withdrew in 1978, after which Morocco occupied the remaining part. All this was without the implication of, and to the discontent of, the inhabitants of the Western Sahara: The Arab Rgaybat, Tajakant and Tekna federations. Their spokesmen had previously negotiated independence with Spain. After the Moroccan occupation, the West Saharan independence movement POLISARIO, together with a substantial part of the Rgaybat and Tajakant population, withdrew to the Algerian town of Tindouf. With Algerian support they organised a well-equipped and trained army which at first defeated Moroccan occupation forces, but with a heavy loss of life. These lost lives could now be replaced with fresh troops: The members of the *Tanekra*. The offer the Algerians made might have provided a welcome way for the *Tanekra* members to gain military experience, but after hot debate, it was declined. The main reason for refusal was that the *Tanekra* felt they had nothing to do with either Morocco or the Western Sahara. Their fight was with Mali only. A second reason might have been that the Kel Adagh and the Rgaybat of the Western Sahara and Drâa valley shared a history of enmity, dating from the Rgaybat raids in the Adagh in the 1920s. A third reason for the refusal to join POLISARIO was that the younger members of the *Tanekra* did not trust the motives of the former *ifulagen* in sending their men to this movement as recruits.

> I went to Tamanrasset, where I found Ibrahim ag Agellokelok with his group. They explained to me that, in fact, Issouf [ag Cheick, former *afuleg* and *Tanekra* leader] had not been honest, that he works with the Algerian secret services, that the secret services had betrayed Issouf, and that Issouf betrayed us. (...) Algeria needed men, they spoke to Issouf, and Issouf said that O.K., he had men and could provide them, so that he could receive a commission or an important job.[88]

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[87] Which secret services were meant was never specified in any conversation I had.

[88] Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998. Young men like Ibrahim ag Agellokelok and Fall were not the only ones to disagree on *Tanekra* engagement in POLISARIO. Both former *ifulagen* Keyni ag Sherif and Amegha ag Sherif stated that most former *ifulagen* within the *Tanekra* refused to engage the movement in the Western Saharan conflict.

A first conflict within the *Tanekra* movement was born only shortly after its creation: The conflict between generations. The former *ifulagen*, the leaders of the 1963 revolt, had held power within the movement on the basis of their prestige as veteran freedom fighters. But their relations with the Algerian state disqualified them in the eyes of the marginalised *ishumar*. This generational conflict had its impact on historical discourse and appreciation of actions later on. Former *ifulagen* complained to me during our talks that the younger men had no respect for them and had no esteem for their actions in 1963.

> We only had this problem with the young men who went to Libya, because Libya has played an important part in this. It tried to sort of brainwash them. It first tried to divide them to better control them for its own purposes. (...) They told them "the old men have a colonial mind. You should no longer take into account what they say. You should be revolutionary. You should no longer take these men into account".[89]

This was admitted by former *ishumar* who stated that *Alfellaga* could not be compared to their own actions. The *ifulagen* had lacked a clear political goal, a revolutionary spirit, military skills and tactics. Without wanting to take sides or defend anyone, I hope to have made clear in previous chapters that the latter accusations are without foundation. The endeavours of the first Tamasheq and Bidân politicians in the 1950s, the actions of the *ifulagen* and those of the *ishumar* generation form a continuity of resistance against outside interference in Tamasheq society and a wish for independence. That this wish took various shapes and was reformulated according to the historical context does not change this. Continuity in resistance is also a powerful historical discourse for most Kel Tamasheq. '*Alfellaga* and 1990 are one and the same thing' was a remark made by many of my interlocutors, regardless of their walk in life. But this constructed continuity in historical discourse could not prevent internal conflict in the moment.

Libya

Originally set up and centred in Algeria, the *Tanekra* movement would gain strength in Libya in the 1980s. The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahuriyya, as the country is officially called, is rich in one particular resource: Oil, but severely lacks another: Labour. In the 1970s, the country's population grew from roughly 1,986,000 to 3,042,000, which included a rough estimate of 500,000 African immigrants.[90] The latter are desperately needed to make up for the shortages in labour, despite the social tension their presence created due to their sometimes higher level of education and, strangely enough, their cultural similarity (most migrants are from the Arab world and Pakistan),

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[89] Interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994.

[90] http://www.populstat.info/Africa/libyac.htm

which makes them competitive in the same job market as the Libyans themselves.[91] In the late 1970s, a large number of *ishumar* preferred working in Libya to working in Algeria, as both the chances of finding employment and the offered wages were higher than in Algeria. From the late 1970s onwards the Libyan leader Qadhafi and the Libyan secret services supported the Tamasheq national movement but, as the Algerians had before them, Libya intended to use the *Tanekra* for its own international adventures, in Chad and Lebanon, and as a trump card in its own regional politics, notably towards Niger. When no longer needed, the Libyan authorities dropped the *Tanekra* movement or actively worked against its existence. But where the Algerians had failed to use the *Tanekra* in its POLISARIO policy, the Libyans succeeded to co-opt the *Tanekra* with the agreement of the organisation itself. The *Tanekra* activists knew very well that they were being used, but looked upon Libyan support as a chance to receive military training and combat experience, and to organise their own movement. Contrary to popular belief, Libya never provided the movement with arms or supported it actively when hostilities finally broke out in Mali or in Niger. Their only remaining support in the 1990s was the continued use the movement could make of training camps on Libyan territory. From 1979 onwards, contacts between *Tanekra* members and representatives of the Libyan authorities would lead to the establishment of a more formally structured movement. At the end of 1979, through the mediation of Malian Bidân, the Libyan representatives of the *Tanekra* met a Libyan researcher at the Libyan Research Centre for Saharan Affairs. This researcher, Mohamed Sa'îd al-Qashât had previously been a Libyan contact for POLISARIO. During the 1980s al-Qashât would collaborate with a number of Tamasheq intellectuals and *Tanekra* members. The result of this collaboration was the publication of a book in 1989 entitled *at-Tawâriq, 'arabu s-Sahrâ'i l-Kubrâ'* (The Tuareg, Arabs of the Great Sahara). This book is one of the very few widely distributed books on the Kel Tamasheq they read themselves. Although the book has a highly folkloristic content, it does mention the fights of the Kel Tamasheq against colonial occupation, including a small chapter on what was then the most recent struggle: *Alfellaga*, including a short interview with former *afuleg*, Elledi ag Alla. The book is in some respects a source of nationalist inspiration. However, the book is not the most important contribution al-Qashât made to the Tamasheq cause. His most valuable asset was his connection to the Libyan authorities, which resulted in structural support of the Libyan Jamahuriyya to the *Tanekra* organisation.

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[91] Birks, J.S. & C. Sinclair 1979.

The creation of the FPLSAC

In 1980, the organisation of the *Tanekra* gained momentum. A first contact between the *Tanekra* and the Libyan authorities was made through Mohamed al-Qashât, but other contacts were made with the Libyan army. The organisation also came in contact with other dissidents such as Nigerien Arabs and Kel Tamasheq *ishumar*; Nigerien Sawabists, an outlawed Nigerien opposition party; and the survivors of the aborted Nigerien coup d'état of 1976. In their turn, many of these dissidents were in contact with either Mohamed al-Qashât or the Libyan army. In September 1979, about seventy delegates of all these informal opposition networks gathered in the Libyan city of El Homs, under the aegis of Mohamed al-Qashât, to discuss their various projects and to weld them together into one movement. The congress of El Homs resulted in the creation of al-Jebha ash-Sha'biyya li Tahrîr as-Sahara' al-Kubra al-'arabiyya al-Wasta: The Popular Front for the Liberation of the Greater Arab Central Sahara, which is best known by the French acronym FPLSAC: Front Populaire pour la Libération du Sahara Arabe Central. At the head of this movement were elected a number of Nigerien Arabs and Kel Tamasheq. The presidency fell to Limam Chafi, a merchant of mixed Bidân and Tamasheq descent, based in Niger and Mauritania, who had allegedly been involved in the aborted coup d'état in Niger in 1976, and who did not have much standing or reputation among the *ishumar*. Military matters were delegated to a certain Hassuna Jafri, a Nigerien Arab. Hassan Faraji, a Malian Bidân who had integrated the *Tanekra* at an early stage, was responsible for development. The Libyan authorities furnished the movement with an official office in Tripoli.

Two things stand out in the creation of the FPLSAC. First, the name of the movement speaks of the *Arab* Central Sahara. No reference is made to the Kel Tamasheq. Second, leadership and dominance within the movement lay with the Nigerien Arabs and not to the Malian Kel Tamasheq. One can first of all see a Libyan logic behind this structure. Libya shares a border with Niger, but not with Mali. The dominance of Nigerien elements within the FPLSAC can be explained through the interest Libya had in influencing the policies of its direct southern neighbour. Libyan interests in the movement were in furthering a pan-African-Arab cause, the goals of Libyan international politics at that moment.[92] In the 1970s Libya had promoted the pan-Arab cause in trying to unify the Jamahuriyya with a number of other Arab states: Egypt; Syria; Tunisia and Morocco among others. These unifications all ended without ever being very effective. Qadhafi now turned to sub-Sahara Africa, but without forgetting the Arab element. His aim was to unify African countries, starting on the common base of geography (Africa), religion (Islam) and language (Arabic). The pre-

[92] Based on Buijtenhuijs, R. 1978, 1987; Haghebaert, B. 1986; Otayek, R. 1986.

sence of a large number of Arab peoples in Africa could unify the Arab and African world. The FPLSAC, explicitly referring to a native Arab presence in Sub Sahara Africa, fitted with this policy.

The FPLSAC was not only given an office for its political bureau, the movement got access to military training camps as well. In the 1980s, Libya hosted several liberation movements, the best known being the IRA, the ANC and several Palestinian groups. In theory, each group had its own camp under Libyan auspices, but in practice the Libyans provided infrastructure, material and food only. A first training camp for the Kel Tamasheq, called Camp an-Nasr, was opened in December 1980 near the village of Ben Walid (therefore the camp was also known as Ben Walid). By March 1981 the camp lodged an estimated 2,700 recruits. When the camp was closed to the Kel Tamasheq in late 1981, an estimated 4,000 recruits had received basic military training.[93] The camps were not only a male experience. In the camps, Tamasheq women, but also other African women, cooked and cared for the recruits, as the camp was shared with freedom fighters for other causes, such as the Sudanese. The recruits were trained by Libyan, Palestinian and Lebanese officers. The training included instruction in personal arms and unarmed combat but focused most on physical endurance through long marches. On a voluntary basis, recruits could take evening classes in literacy, history and revolutionary instruction, mostly through Qadhafi's Green Book. In early 1981, a second camp was opened, Camp Badr, which lodged the families of the recruits.

Lebanon

By the end of 1981, the camp at Ben Walid was closed. There are a number of possible explanations for this closure. Pierre Boilley has inscribed the logic of the closure within the international setting of Libyan politics. Qadhafi's involvement in the Chadian Aouzou conflict, together with the involvement of the Nigerien Kel Tamasheq in the *Tanekra*, notably the former leaders of the 1976 coup attempt, had deteriorated Qadhafi's relations with Niger, leading to diplomatic rupture in 1981. The subsequent attacks of Kel Tamasheq commandos in Mali at Fanfi and at the uranium mines of Arlit in Niger (*infra*) further damaged strained relations. Finally, in 1982, Libya stopped its support for the Kel Tamasheq and perhaps other African movements in view of the 19th OAU summit, which Qadhafi intended to host.[94] My Kel Adagh informants also placed the closure of the camp in an international context, but did not fail to link it with their own activities. According to Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, the camp was closed for the following reason. In January 1981, the FPLSAC exe-

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93 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998.

94 Boilley, P. 1999: 421-427.

cutive office met with Elledi ag Alla and Issouf ag Cheick, the leaders of the *Tanekra* movement in Algeria. Elledi and Issouf proposed to ask the Algerian Government to start the war of liberation from Algerian territory. To this end, they wrote a formal request to the Algerian Government, which was transmitted by the Libyan authorities in the movement's name. The Algerian Government refused and threatened to break its relations with Libya if the Libyans would not stop their support for the movement. When Camp an-Nasr closed down the recruits were presented with a number of options: Return to Mali or Niger; stay in Libya as migrant workers; enroll in the regular Libyan army (as Libyan nationals); or enlist for training and combat in Lebanon with the Palestinian forces. An estimated five hundred recruits chose the last option. They were first sent to Syria for intensive training. Arriving in Damascus, about three hundred recruits backed out. They had either become fearful of what lay ahead of them or, as one informant (who had left) stated, because they had not been informed about where they were going and why they were going there in the first place when they joined the group.[95] They presented themselves at the Algerian embassy and asked for repatriation to Algeria, which was arranged. About two hundred fighters remained in the Middle East. They were first trained in the use of heavy arms, armoured vehicles and tanks, and then sent to Lebanon, where they joined various Palestinian units.

We had accepted our enrolment in the Palestinian revolution. We accepted it. Five hundred people had signed documents for this in Libya. We left with five hundred people on a military aircraft to Syria, where the Palestinian bases were. We were with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command. Its Secretary General: Ahmed Jibril. We stayed there until we had finished our training in heavy arms: Tanks, howitzers, Katyushas 40 and 12 calibres, Russian 130 mm howitzers, Russian tanks, machine guns, anti-aircraft missiles, American cannons that shoot tanks, calibre 106. We did heavy arms and rockets, anti-vehicle mines and anti-personnel mines. Five hundred combatants. We were divided. Three hundred were discouraged and asked for their return to Algeria. The Secretary General Ahmed Jibril accepted this. They returned to Algeria, to Tamanrasset. After six months they were discharged. We stayed there, me and my friends Iyad, Latfi, and Abdurahman, we stayed in the war. We were divided into groups of twenty, thirty, forty, ten, between the movement's posts at the Israeli-Lebanese border. From the start of the war until the end of the war, we stayed.[96]

To those veterans of the Lebanese period, their enrollment in the Palestinian movement had nothing to do with loyalty to Qadhafi, sympathy to the Palesti-

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[95] Conversation with Maza'. Lyon, March 1994.
[96] Interview with Baye ag Alhassan. Ménaka, 13/11/1998.

nians or hatred for Israel. It was simply a chance to gain further military skills and combat experience, needed for their own fight to come with the Malian army. After their training, the fighters were based in Beirut or in the Bekaa valley, where they served mostly at air defence units, together with other Libyan volunteers.

Eight days we suffered
F-16 flew here, it shot, we shot
We had arms but we were few
The *Minta* roared like thunder
Six SAM launchers were erect
They were bombed, F-16 flew over
This is no affair for a boy who says
he studied history and pretends to know
Friends, I give you the news
F-16 is hot as hell fire
Hey, he who has one million Dollars
should buy an F-16 and hide it
until the day we battle all Africans together[97]

The Lebanese experience would end rather well for the involved *ishumar*. In June 1982, Israel launched operation Peace for Galilee, which would end the military presence of the PLO in Southern Lebanon after heavy fighting in both the Bekaa valley and Beirut, where the units of the *ishumar* were centred. With the withdrawal of the PLO came an end to *Tanekra* presence in the Middle East as well. How exactly is unclear, but the Tamasheq battalion was shipped with other expelled PLO fighters to Tunis, where the PLO set up its new headquarters and from where the *ishumar* returned to Libya. They had lost one man in battle, while five had been taken prisoner by the Israelis during their Lebanese adventure. These prisoners were eventually released, allegedly through the mediation of Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba's wife Wassila, and returned to Libya as well.[98] In return, the two hundred Lebanon veterans had gained military skills and tactical knowledge that would be of great value in the rebellion to come.

Restructuring the movement

Ishumar narratives about the years of preparation in exile are rife with secret services and secret agents of unspecified kinds, mostly from Algeria and Libya. Most of these vaguely defined outside forces are called in when historical gossip and stories of distrust and treason are told. They are often the supporters or instigators of quarrels and outright fights between various *ishumar* factions.

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[97] Poem by Cheick ag Aoussa. Lebanon, 1982. Klute, G. 2000, poem 4.
[98] Conversation with Maghniyya oueled Mohamed. Ménaka, March 1999.

They serve as an explanation for a development that still puzzles and embitters many former organisers of the *Tanekra*: Why was there so much infighting, discord and outright hostility within the movement? Whereas in theory the *Tanekra* strove towards the unity of all the Kel Tamasheq in one national movement, in practice this unity was not reached at all. What foreclosed unity between all the Kel Tamasheq was a substratum of older political practices within Tamasheq society: The wish for hierarchy; and the validation of group affiliation through confrontation along the faultlines of tribe and clan. Internal political culture ingrained the idea that unity had to be reached under the aegis of one group. But which group? That would remain constantly open to dispute, leading to open friction and even conflict between factions, based on tribal affiliation.

The FPLSAC episode had as its only salutary effect the training of a large number of Kel Tamasheq soldiers. But most of the Malian and Nigerien *ishumar*, especially those who had volunteered for Lebanon, did not see the FPLSAC representing their cause. In Lebanon, the *ishumar* had maintained an organisation of their own, in close contact with Palestinian hosts of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. A few documents on the structure of both FPLSAC and the organisation in Lebanon survived as correspondence in the PLO archives, which were captured by the Israeli army during operation Peace for Galilee.[99] From the documents, it becomes clear that the *Tanekra* organisation in Lebanon had gained organisational strength, and that it had disconnected itself from the defunct FPLSAC. The official dominancy of Nigeriens and Arabs within the FPLSAC, as well as the name of the movement itself, were looked upon with disfavour by many Kel Adagh *Tanekra* leaders. As the volunteers in Lebanon wrote to their Palestinian superiors:

> At the congress of el-Homs, at which the organisation was founded, the selected representatives did not represent the people, neither in their personalities, nor in their targets. And it happened that they did not listen to the representatives of the people, despite what they said as members of the executive office. As an example of this: The person that was appointed as general secretary of the organisation was not present at this congress and was not known among the people, nor among its representatives.[100]

During the early 1980s, the *Tanekra* movement in Libya and Algeria remained divided and loosely structured. Treason and internal mistrust had fractured the fragile FPLSAC structure. Limam Chafi, its Secretary General, had been arrested in Algeria. The Malian Government had been informed of the

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[99] A selection from these archives, including a small number of documents on the Tamasheq movement, were published. Israeli, R., ed., 1983. Documents 56, 57, 58.

[100] Letter by the *Tanekra* representatives in Lebanon to the PLO. Document 56A-1 (dated October 1981). In: Ibid. 195. Translated by Paul Schrijver.

existence of the movement, notably by a premeditated strike in Mali and Niger by a small group of *ishumar* in 1982. These men, apparently on their own initiative, had attacked an administrative post at the village of Fanfi, Mali, and at the uranium mines at Arlit, in Niger. Whereas the attackers at Fanfi were largely unarmed, those at Arlit had firearms.[101] Both attacks failed and a number of assailants were arrested and interrogated, which to some extent exposed the existence of the Kel Tamasheq network. As a result, the FPLSAC office at Tripoli was closed and a number of its members were arrested.

However, in March 1983 two new training camps were opened in Libya for Kel Tamasheq recruits: Camp Ithnân Mars and Camp Rawd, both in the vicinity of Tripoli. This time, the camps were explicitly open only to Nigerien Kel Tamasheq, but a number of the Lebanon veterans integrated the camps, and soon they were responsible for organisation and part of the instruction. Many of the new recruits were Malian Kel Tamasheq holding Nigerien passports. The recruits were deployed in Qadhafi's campaigns in Chad where he was heavily immixed in the complicated policies of rebellion in that country.[102] Again, the Libyans used the Kel Tamasheq for their own political intentions. The *ishumar* were fully aware of this, but they did not mind. Their gain was military experience, and the creation of a well-trained army of their own. The Kel Tamasheq who soldiered in the Libyan campaigns in Chad received a salary of 30,000 Libyan Dinar. One third of this salary was handed over to the organisation of the newly recreated movement, which was now called *al-Jebha li Takhrîr ash-Shimâl al-Mali*: The Liberation Front of Northern Mali.[103] The movement's leader, Iyad ag Ghali, and a number of his comrades had moved back to Algeria and Mali. The money that was raised among the Kel Tamasheq soldiers was used to buy cars in which the leaders toured Northern Mali to find new recruits. These were amply available, due to the second drought that struck Mali and Niger in those years. The disaster of 1973 repeating itself on a smaller scale, paired with the same problems of unequal aid distribution and corruption, gave ample proof to the Kel Tamasheq of the need to topple the Traoré Government and to break loose from Mali.

Despite the organisational efficiency of the Lebanon veterans internal divisions and treason undermined the effective organisation of the *Tanekra*. The *Tanekra* started out as a movement of the Kel Adagh looking for a way to uplift *egha* and to rekindle the rebellion they had started in 1963. From the beginning, a small number of Kel Tamasheq from other clans or federations had joined.

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[101] Interviews with Fituk. Ménaka, 30/03/1999; and Alhadi Alhaji, Niger 1995. Courtesy of Nadia Belalimat who conducted this second interview.

[102] The recruits were most likely deployed in support of the GUNT's attempts to take over the BET region and Faya Largeau, 1983, 1984. Buijtenhuijs, R. 1987: 377-385.

[103] Interview with Taghlift. Ménaka, 19/04/1999.

Leadership remained in the hands of the Kel Adagh, but it was contested from the 1980s onwards, especially after the opening of the two new training camps in 1983. While leadership in the newly restructured movement and within the camps rested in the hands of Lebanon veterans of Kel Adagh origins, a substantial number of the new recruits came from other clans form the Azawad or, to a smaller extent, from the Timbuktu area. These new recruits contested Kel Adagh supremacy within the movement. They did so on the basis of the very revolutionary principles developed within the movement on social equality. If all are equal and the clans should be abolished, then why should leadership remain in the hands of men from one particular tribal federation? Dissent and private initiatives abounded, due to the internal friction between the tribes. Distrusting the aims of the Kel Adagh, *Tanekra* members from outside the Adagh organised into separate groups and started to buy arms at the Libyan border with Chad and Niger, at the notorious arms market at the El Salvador Pass.[104] The ongoing conflicts in Chad and Sudan and the high turnover of weaponry provided the local arms markets with ample supply in Kalashnikovs and ammunition.

> There were problems, there were constraints. We, Iyad and the others, we wanted the Kel Adagh Kel Tamasheq to do it all. When I speak of the Adagh, at the time, we had an idea. That is to say that we believed it to be a work for the Adagh people. This work did not even concern the other Kel Tamasheq, because it was us, it was our job to revolt and we believed the other Kel Tamasheq would not agree with that and that they thought it concerned them as well, that it concerned all. To us, it was the Kel Tamasheq of the Adagh who were most concerned.[105]

The Nigerien members of the movement also reorganised themselves on the basis of their region of origin and common nationality in the Front Populaire pour la Libération du Niger: FPLN. Because Camp Ithnân Mars and camp Rawd, which had been explicitly opened for the Nigeriens, had been taken over by the restructured Malian *Tanekra*, the FPLN was provided with a new camp near the city of Waw al-Kabir in 1984. In this camp, the Nigeriens formed the majority and thus the division between 'Kel Mali' and 'Kel Niger' was finally established, the united Kel Nimagiler did no longer exist.[106] Internal friction was not limited to Malian and Nigerien nationals, or between members of different Malian tribes or social groups with a different status. Within the Kel Adagh leadership of the *Tanekra*, friction and fighting occurred as well, on various levels. The most strenuous conflict was between the tribes of the Idnan and Ifoghas. In Kel Adagh historical narrative, the history of Idnan-Ifoghas

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[104] Interviews with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, Kidal 27/12/1998; and with Baye ag Alhassan, Ménaka 11/04/1999.

[105] Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998.

[106] Interview with Alhadi Alhaji. Niger, 1995. Courtesy of Nadia Belalimat.

animosity is now presented as complicated and dating from the early colonial days. The Ifoghas form the largest *tewsit* within the Adagh, followed by the Idnan. At the advent of colonial conquest, both tribes held a precarious power balance, which was upset when the colonial administration gave preference and political power to the Ifoghas. Their leader, Attaher ag Illi, was made *amenokal* over the federation and therefore held power over the chiefs of other *tewsiten*. The Ifoghas at present contend they had held formal power well before the arrival of the French. They had created an *ettebel*, or political federation, in the early 19th century. The Idnan do not deny the existence of this Ifoghas federation, but they do deny that it had power over the Idnan. Some Idnan even argue that they had made their own *ettebel* – the drum, symbol of political power – shortly before French arrival, but that the French denied this *ettebel* its legitimacy as symbol of supremacy over the other tribes because they preferred the Ifoghas at the head of the federated Kel Adagh. In short, the struggle over power within and over the Kel Adagh federation is presented to date back at least a century. This power struggle gained new historical context and meaning in the 1980s in the struggle over leadership within the *Tanekra*. In reading the following interview excerpt with Kel Ifoghas Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, one has to keep in mind that of the four initial leaders of the *Tanekra* – the former *ifulagen* Issouf ag Cheick, Amegha ag Sherif, Younes ag Ayyouba and Elledi ag Alla – the two most important were Idnan and that the younger men in the movement, notably those of Ifoghas descent, challenged their power and intentions.

> In 1985, Algeria started to understand what was happening. Algeria still worked with Issouf and they asked Issouf: "you told us that you were the leader of all the Kel Tamasheq and now we see that the movement develops more and more". Issouf told them: "That is because of the Ifoghas. They are stronger than I am, I cannot command them". The Algerians asked him what to do. He replied that they should be weakened and to weaken them, all their leaders should be arrested. The rest would be weak. They arrested about eighty men among the leaders. The soldiers burned all the houses at Tamanrasset, at Timiaouene, at Djanet, the houses of the Ifoghas. They started to beat people up and to arrest the Ifoghas or their parents. The Ifoghas left for Libya and for other countries. That was in October 1985. It continued until August 1986.[107]

This is generally known as the 'Tamanrasset War', after its main location in this Algerian town. The story is here presented from an Ifoghas point of view, and the allegations made at the address of the Idnan should be seen in this light. What is clear, however, is that during 1985 a large number of Ifoghas and other Kel Tamasheq in Tamanrasset were arrested. Also, a small number of murders

[107] Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998. Idnan interlocutors were less inclined to elaborate on this episode.

or 'executions of traitors' were committed that year.[108] In 1986, the Algerian Government forcefully expelled about 6,000 Malian Kel Tamasheq and another 2,000 Kel Tamasheq from Niger to their respective countries. Perhaps these expulsions too can be seen in the light of the ongoing conflicts between *ishumar* in Algeria, which threatened the security in Tamanrasset and other Algerian cities. Whatever the facts may have been, the story is now interpreted in the context of the ongoing struggles for power and dominancy within the movement of various currents, and especially between various *tewsiten*. Despite all ideals, discourse and rhetoric on 'one country, one goal, one people', unity was far from a daily reality. Among the *ishumar* as among their less revolutionary inclined kindred, *tewsit infa temust*: Tribe prevailed over nation.

The later years of the *Tanekra*

Despite dissent within the movement, the organisation slowly gained strength. The number of trained fighters with ample combat experience steadily increased until the return in 1986 of the Tamasheq units who had fought in Chad in the Libyan campaigns. In 1987, the movement was again renewed, now also spreading to Mali. Small groups of *ishumar* returned there and settled in and around Kidal, Gao and Ménaka. Weapons were bought and hidden in Mali for the moment rebellion would break out. Nevertheless, the inter-tribal conflicts had resulted in a more or less formalised division of the fighters into units based on tribal affiliation. The fighters were grouped in three battalions. The Kidal battalion consisted of Kel Adagh. The Ménaka battalion consisted of fighters from that area. A third battalion, the Gao battalion, consisted of fighters from the surroundings of Gao city. Members of these battalions, as well as part of the movement's leadership positioned themselves in their respective areas. However, the Malian regime had remained on alert with regards to the movements of the *ishumar* in Mali. The failed attacks in Mali and Niger in 1982 and the attack in Niger in 1985, together with constant cases of treason within the movement, had made the Traoré Regime aware that something was planned. Possibly, contacts between the movement and the Libyan and Algerian secret services, and their respective contacts with the Malian and French secret services, had contributed to Malian knowledge of the movement. On 9 April 1990, the regional security service in Gao arrested a member of the organisation. After interrogation he admitted to membership of the *Tanekra* movement. On 23 May 1990, the arrest of seven other members and the capture of an arms deposit further damaged the movement's plans.[109] The Malian security forces also arrested the

[108] Bourgeot, A. 1990.
[109] 'Etat d'urgence à Gao'. *Les Echos*, 28/09/1990.

larger part of the Kidal battalion put in place over the previous year. By luck, the Ménaka battalion was spared, but it was sparsely armed. The movement now had to choose between starting preparations all over again and attacking. On 27 June 1990 the Ménaka battalion successfully attacked several posts of the army and the administration in the Ménaka area. The second rebellion had begun.

Epilogue

> Hot on the heels of the Tinariwen Tunng caravanserai around the UK in March, the full 7 piece Tinariwen band will head off to Australia for four dates, including Sydney Opera House and Byron Bay Blues Festival. After that it's a hop across the Pacific to play at San Francisco Jazz Festival and Coachella, the premium American rock fest.[110]

While *Teshumara* is no longer a very popular concept in Northern Mali, its worldwide renown has only grown after the rebellion of the 1990s ended. Idealised as the original 'African blues' or 'desert blues', the music of the *Teshumara* now forms an inspiration to a number of bands and performers from the Northern Atlantic in search of new sounds, such as Arctic Monkeys, Soul Williams, or Tunng. In the late 1990s the Tamasheq community had to be reconciled with itself after years of internal bloodshed (*infra*). The musicians of the *Teshumara* played in smaller groups or individually at parties that were staged in the houses of the influential members of the Tamasheq community in Bamako, Kidal, Tessalit or Tamanrasset. As a band, Tinariwen played at the various tribal gatherings called *takoubilt* in Tamasheq, that were organised in the major cities in the North, under the aegis and with the financial support of various embassies, notably the US, Canada, the Netherlands, and France. There, disputes were solved, arms were handed over in an effort to promote safety for the nomad community, and festive races and matches were organised in an effort of reconciliation. In 1997 the members of Tinariwen met with the French band Lo'Jo in Bamako, who were impressed with their sound and who invited them to the Festival Toucouleur in France in 1999. The *takoubilt* of 1999 in Tahabanat remained a local affair but in 2000 the *takoubilt* was organised in Ti-n-Essako at the edge of the Adagh under the name Festival au Désert. The festival attracted a small number of tourists and journalists and featured Lo'Jo as the first foreign act. With their help, Tinariwen recorded its first CD, the Radio Tisdas Sessions (2001), named after the local radio station in Kidal. It was only then that Tinariwen started to include percussion and bass in their previously strictly guitar and vocals-based music. The 2001 issue of the Festival

[110] '19/12/2008 – Downunder and across the pond in 2009!' http://www.tinariwen.com

au Désert in Tessalit remained local again, while the *takoubilt* of Anderamboukane, called Tamadasht (horserace in Tamasheq, the main festive event) was of greater importance. The Tamadasht would grow into an annual festival, which remained true to the original character of the *takoubilt*: A tribal and political gathering to settle local matters. In 2002, the Festival au Désert was organised in Essakane, near Timbuktu. The emphasis was no longer on reconciliation and local affairs, but on tourism as the festival was organised by the Tamasheq tour operators of Timbuktu, who had gained experience in these events during the 'Timbuktu 2000 Caravan' event, organised at the eve of the new millenium. By that time the mythical city had already been discovered by tourists, who had been introduced to the 'desert blues' of Ali Farka Touré through his album with blues guitarist Ry Cooder: *Talking Timbuktu*. The fame of the Festival au Désert had quickly spread among the planetary muscial elite for its setting, its intimacy and the local bands. Among the participating artists at the 2002 Festival au Désert was legendary Led Zeppelin lead singer Robert Plant, who introduced Tinariwen and their sound to the Anglophone world of rock music. In 2005 Tinariwen won the prestigious BBC Radio 3 World Music Award. Touring the world stages, playing to crowds of over 50,000, Tinariwen abandoned their jeans, T-shirts and sneakers for more 'traditional' festive garments: Two- or three-piece *boubous* and huge indigo *eghewid*, the very same indigo veils and turbans they once urged their brothers to abandon. Every counterculture becomes mainstream. As their fans outside the Tamasheq world do not understand their lyrics, sound and image become more important. The Tinariwen website (www.tinariwen.com) therefore emphasises the history of the band and the meaning of their lyrics. The songs that are recorded on Tinariwen's four studio CD's and one live DVD, and on those of a number of bands of former Tinariwen members and other *ishumar*, such as Terakaft and Toumast, are largely still the songs from the days of the *Teshumara* and the rebellion. Without knowing it, a worldwide audience listens to a recording of decades of Kel Tamasheq history.

6

Rebellion: *Al-Jebha* (1990-1996)

On 28 June 1990 started what is now known in Mali as 'The Second Tuareg Rebellion', or 'The Problems of The North'. The Kel Tamasheq, especially the *Tanekra* members involved, refer to this period in their history as *al-Jebha*: the Arabic term for front or rebellion, but also as *Tanekra*, the Tamasheq word for uprising. The rebellion would last until March 1996, when the conflict was ceremoniously ended with 'The Flame of Peace': the burning of around 3,000 weapons, handed in by the rebel fighters, at a Timbuktu marketplace.

One can discern four partly overlapping phases in the conflict. I have labelled the first phase, from June 1990 to January 1991, the 'real rebellion'. In this first half year, a united rebel movement fought the Malian Armed Forces, winning a series of military victories culminating in the 'Battle at Toximine', the rebels' most decisive defeat of the Malian Armed Forces. The victory at Toximine, together with strong rising opposition to the Traoré Regime resulted in negotiations leading to a ceasefire: the Tamanrasset Agreement. The conflict entered a second phase in January 1991, lasting until early1994. This three-year period was characterised by factionalism and constant negotiation over peace with the Malian Government. I have therefore labelled it the 'confused rebellion'. Both the Malian state and the Tamasheq movement were faced with internal conflicts and changes. I will describe and analyse this complex set of alterations in the second part of this chapter. In 1994 the rebellion entered a third phase. The obstruction of the National Pact – a peace agreement signed in 1992 – and the absence of the state in Northern Mali, combined with continued army retaliation, led the movements to reorganise themselves almost strictly along *tewsit* lines, which then engaged in hostilities over the structure of the Tamasheq political landscape. In April 1994 a new player entered the conflict. The Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy – MPGK, created in April 1994 – was a vigilante brigade created in Gao by deserted army officers in reaction to

repeated attacks by rebel forces on the villages in the Niger Bend and even on Gao itself. Observers of the conflict between the Ganda Koy and the rebel movements, inside and outside Mali, have argued that it was an ethnic conflict. I argue that Ganda Koy discourses on the rebellion, Malian and Tamasheq society and the Ganda Koy itself, are best explained by looking at the discourse and images used internally, which were based on concepts of race and on fierce nationalism. Ganda Koy means 'Masters of the Land' in Songhay. I have therefore called this section of the chapter likewise. The last phase of the rebellion, between October 1994 and March 1996, is formed by a gradual return to peace, which was finally concluded on 26 March 1996 with the ceremonial burning of about 3,000 weapons in the marketplace of Timbuktu. This *Flamme de la Paix*, 'Flame of Peace' was organised by the Malian Government in collaboration with the United Nations. However, both the conception and implementation of this peace initiative were the result of local initiatives, which emanated from civil society leaders: the tribal chiefs and village heads. I will not linger too long on this last phase of the conflict, the return of the chiefs. Others, particularly within the world of international organisations and NGOs, have written sufficiently on the subject. I will simply narrate how and under what conditions peace was brought about.

One of the aims of this book is to show the workings of contemporary Tamasheq politics. Therefore, much attention will be paid to the internal processes within the rebel movement during the second rebellion. All issues that have so far been central in this book were magnified and played out in violent ways throughout the six years of rebellion. As in the previous chapters, we will find a number of key groups in the political landscape of the Kel Tamasheq: the *ishumar*, the *évolués*, the *bellah*, the tribal chiefs, the sedentary population of the North, and the Malian national political elite. These groups were not internally homogenous. One can differentiate between those who were in favour of rebellion and those who were against it; those, within the rebellion, who were 'hardliners' in favour of independence, and those who were 'moderates' in favour of autonomy within Mali; and finally, those who were in favour of social changes within Tamasheq society and those who were in favour of strengthening the existing structure of society. Within the movement, discussions and conflicts centred on the desirability and realisation of a Tamasheq nation-state, and on the nature of Tamasheq social structure and the need to change or preserve it. While these were the discussions and conflicts of opinion, the events in the field showed different matters: the inescapability of clan thinking, structure and hierarchy; and the primacy of (fictive) kinship over imagining a nation on a territorial basis. The various opinions on the goals of the rebellion were expressed in various break-ups, violent conflicts and renewed alliances. The story told here is one of factionalism, alliances and various political currents. The

movement progressed from a strengthened unity, which had long been sought, during the first months of the rebellion, towards factionalism over the course of the second phase of the conflict, leading to extreme fragmentation on the basis of existing clan and *fraction* structures, and to increased violence in the third phase. Many of these movements were created along the faultlines of the tribal landscape in Northern Mali. In order to prevent confusion, I present the main movements and the differences that created them in the table on pages xxi-xxii. The violence in the North between rebel movements, the Ganda Koy and the army led to a state of general insecurity for all inhabitants of the North, which brought civic leaders from all groups involved, notably the Kel Tamasheq and the Songhay, to undertake measures to improve security conditions, irrespective of the state or the movements. A local peace agreement on the initiative of tribal leaders and village heads in the *Cercle* of Bourem would finally form the blueprint for a constructive peace process. The movements' leaders, realising the loss of support for both their own negotiations with the state, and their violent encounters with each other, ended up joining this peace initiative at the instigation of the tribal leaders, which strengthened the latter's position within society as the rightful mediators between state and society, bypassing the rebels and thus dealing a final blow to initiatives to change Tamasheq society.

The reaction of the Malian Government, army and population oscillated between violent outbursts on the one hand, and reasoned discussions on what the rebellion was about and who the rebels were, on the other hand. Within the context of the Malian nation-state, its government and its inhabitants, the Tamasheq rebellion provoked a revival of the Malian national imagination, and the return of stereotyped images of self and other, of Malian and Kel Tamasheq. In practice, but also in national discourse, the rebellion also contributed to a change in the political shape of the Malian state from a dictatorship to a multi-party democracy. In the last phase of the rebellion, a new movement of the local sedentary population gave birth to a resurgence and reconceptualisation of race in the North. Discourse on inclusion and exclusion in the Malian nation and the image of the Kel Tamasheq as Malian or foreign was fully developed by the Ganda Koy, which can be seen as the vox populi about the rebellion. Starting with a depiction of the Kel Tamasheq as never having belonged to the Malian historical nation and of the rebels as foreign mercenaries, Ganda Koy discourse changed towards inclusion of the Kel Tamasheq 'cousins' within the Malian nation through mythical history and the concept of *senankuya* – joking relationships – as the process towards peace began in November 1994. Exclusion by the Ganda Koy of the Kel Tamasheq from the Malian nation and depiction of the Kel Tamasheq as 'foreign' was largely based on a discourse on race and racism. By accusing the Kel Tamasheq of being 'white slavers' and as 'Qhadafi's Arab mercenaries' they were depicted as foreign elements seeking to dominate

the autochtonous Malian population. By stressing the rebels' 'whiteness', the Ganda Koy managed to develop an othering discourse that left aside those elements of Tamasheq society that were not 'white': the *bellah* or former slaves who could and did join the Ganda Koy ranks. Indeed, the *bellah* had been largely and conspicuously absent within the *Tanekra*. From their side, rebel spokesmen rightly accused the Ganda Koy of developing a racist and national discourse of the Kel Tamasheq other. But contrary to the 1950s and 1960s, the Kel Tamasheq community now had the means to defend itself against these stereotypes: Kel Tamasheq intellectuals countered the Ganda Koy's polemical language and denied it by stressing the positive consequence of their rebellion: the end of dictatorship in Mali and the establishment of a multi-party democracy.

The 'real' rebellion: June to December 1990

The start of the rebellion was originally planned for around 1992 or even 1993, but some men and material had already been moved to Mali by 1989, organised in three battalions stationed in Kidal, Ménaka, and Gao.[1] However, the Malian Armed Forces had been informed of the *Tanekra* plans. In May 1990, members of the Kidal and Gao battalions were arrested, and their arms depots confiscated. Only the Ménaka battalion of about 30 men was left unharmed, but it had very few arms. The commander of the Kidal battalion, Iyad ag Ghali, had managed to escape and fled to the Ménaka battalion, based in the village of Ikadewan. Upon arrival in Ikadewan, Iyad ag Ghali was accused of treason by the men of the Ménaka battalion and nearly executed. After convincing the Ménaka battalion of his good intentions and diverting execution by his comrades, Iyad and the Ménaka commanders discussed the situation the movement found itself in. With some of their most important leaders arrested and their arms confiscated, the fighters could either cancel all plans and start from scratch, or they could move forward in attack. They chose the latter option and set the start of the rebellion for the 4th of July, the celebration that year of *'aid al-fitr*, the end of Ramadan. But this plan failed as well. On 27 June 1990 a Malian border patrol looking for smugglers intercepted a rebel vehicle carrying men and arms. After a short fight, the patrol managed to immobilise the vehicle, while its occupants escaped. Apart from arms, the vehicle contained a document on the plan of attack. Members of the movement, stationed in their regions of origins were supposed to attack the administrative and military posts in their

[1] The following is based on: Lettre 1er adjoint Cdt. Cercle Kidal à Gov. Gao. Sujet – Mouvement de Liberation des Terres Tamacheq. 12/07/1990. Courtesy of Pierre Boilley; and Interview with Baye ag Alhassan. Ménaka, 11/04/1999.

area simultaneously at 04:00 PM. The intercepted car was to attack the military camp at Kidal itself. Arrests followed, but someone must have been able to communicate the interception and subsequent arrests to the Ménaka battalion at Ikadewan because the next day, 28 June the Ménaka battalion came into action, attacking the administrative posts and military camp in Tidarmène. At the wells of Tejerert, four cars belonging to the NGO World Vision were taken over. In Ménaka, the same NGO and the Italian organisation Zooconsult lost eight more cars. The next day, the administrative posts at Ikadewan were attacked. The attacks were successful in their aim: Seizing material, as the movement had lost most of its stocks. The administrative posts and military camps were looted for arms, food and petrol, providing the movement with the necessary means to start their fight.[2] After their successful attacks the rebels retreated to Mount I-n-Taykaren, a solitary mountain at the southern edge of the Tamesna plain, in the northern part of the *Cercle* of Ménaka.

Between June and October 1990 the rebels were constantly on the move, attacking army camps and administrative posts on all sides of the Adagh and parts of the Azawad. On 2 July the military post at Ti-n-Essako was attacked, leaving three soldiers and one rebel dead. On 16 July the rebels attacked the gendarmerie at Tarkimt; 28 July: the military post at Abeïbara; 11 August: the military post at Ti-n-Zaouatene; 15 August: those at Tadjoujemet; 17 August: those at Telabit; 25 August: a military convoy near I-n-Ekker was ambushed. In September, attacks on the military posts at Abeïbara, I-n-Tedeyni, and I-n-Ghar followed. Skirmishes between rebel and army units occurred at the end of September and the beginning of October at Tadjoujemet and Tadjnout in the Tigharghar Mountains.[3] The tactics of the rebels were to attack as often as possible, in as many different places as possible. The underlying strategy was first of all to give the impression that they were numerous and well organised, thus confusing the enemy, and secondly, to secure the Algerian border in order to ensure access to supplies. Except for Tarkimt, all the military posts attacked were situated in the Adagh, near the border with Algeria, the same region of combat as during *Alfellaga*. The Malian army's withdrawal from the border area would secure the rebels free passage to Algeria to stock supplies; bring wounded or fatigued fighters to a safe haven; and, in the case of necessity, to retreat altogether. A third aim was to seize more material – weapons, ammunition, petrol, cars, and food – as they were still short in supply and the number of rebels had increased over the weeks. In the first few months of the rebellion,

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2 Nous, Touaregs du Mali (Paris 1990).

3 Based on: Cheick ag Baye, 'Chronologie des événements liés à la Rébellion Touarègue au Mali' (hereafter, chronologie Cheick), in annex to Klute, G. 2001; Boilley, P. 1999: 446-447; and Klute, G. 2001: 440-441.

the practically unarmed fighters managed to take a large number of arms from their adversaries, and contrary to their predecessors, the *ifulagen* of 1963, the fighters knew how to handle these weapons and could thus successfully pursue their campaign.

The tactics of the rebels worked in their favour. All the attacks mentioned above ended in victory for the rebels, who lost few men compared to the losses of the Malian Armed Forces.[4] The Malian Armed Forces, present in the Kidal area with around 500 soldiers, were completely on the defensive and no match for their adversary. Contrary to the Tamasheq fighters who had years of training and combat experience in guerrilla warfare in Lebanon and Chad, the Malian soldiers had hardly any training and no combat experience. The heavy and slow material employed in the Adagh by the Malian forces – armoured cars and artillery – were no match either for the fast and agile four-wheel-drive vehicles used by the experienced Tamasheq drivers who had gained their marks in the years of smuggle.

In 1963, the army's heavy armoured cars and jeeps proved almost useless against the *ifulagen* in the Adagh, except in the wadis. The camel mounted *ifulagen* could quickly withdraw over terrain inaccessible to the tanks and jeeps of the army. This time, the rebels also mostly made use of cars, transformed into so called tecnicals: All-terrain vehicles, equipped with extra fuel and water tanks, and mounted with heavy machine guns and rocket launchers. The drivers would make use of the terrain and the winds to create a dust cloud, obfuscating the enemy's view, then discharging an independently operating fighter unit of around twelve men that would fight afoot, encircling the enemy, while the tecnicals heavy machine guns and rocket launchers provided cover fire. The technique of tecnicals was not new or unique to the Tamasheq fighters, who had first learned their use in Chad, where the troops of Goukouni Wedey and Idriss Deby had made use of them.

Both sides also differed in their experience and ability to kill. The Malian soldiers were trained for regular combat in large attacks with coordinated fire. In practice, this means a soldier does not learn how to aim and shoot as a sniper, but to 'spray' bullets in sustained fire, creating a wide 'death zone'. The Tamasheq fighters were trained to aim and shoot at single enemies. In addition, the Tamasheq fighters were trained and experienced in man-to-man combat with personal arms. The first attacks at Ménaka and Tidarmène were made with a highly restricted number of rifles, and mostly by men armed with knives and

[4] Cheick ag Baye estimates the number of military casualties on Malian side in the first half year of the rebellion at 441, and casualties on rebel side at 28; 'Chronologie Cheick'. Klute estimates the number of military casualties at 429, and rebel casualties at 17 during this period. 'Opferzahlen (Mali)', annex Klute, G. 2001.

traditional swords. To this form of fighting, in which the Tamasheq excelled, the Malian soldiers had no answer.

A last, but not the least important element in favour of the rebels was their motivation to fight. The Malian soldiers were only professional soldiers in the literal sense. They were paid for their duty. A stable income, a career prospect, and a few advantages in civil life were the largest instigations for a Malian to join the army under the military regime of Moussa Traoré. Patriotic motives or an acutely felt necessity to fight were not considered relevant. The opposite goes for the Tamasheq fighters. The *ishumar* did not fight for a salary, but for a cause: the liberation of the Tamasheq homeland from Malian occupation. Having started their rebellion without any means at their disposal and with only a small number of fighters, they had but two options: to fight and win or to perish in retreat and abandon the uprising with all the consequences that would bring to the Tamasheq community. Where years of preparation had not been able to establish unity in the ranks of the *Tanekra*, the actual fighting in these first months of rebellion succeeded. The *ishumar* fighting in Northern Mali achieved unity under the pressure of combat and immediate survival. Years of military discipline, which meant obeying orders when given, did the rest. As former rebel Baye ag Alhassan put it with some pride, 'At that moment, there was no movement in the country, no way. There was only one thing: The Tamasheq Revolution'.[5]

The fighters struck up their first base camp in the I-n-Taykaren Mountain, a monolith at the edge of the Tamesna plain near the village of Tejerert. It can only be accessed through a small number of wadis, passing through a number of gorges, and embanked by fields of short, sharp stones, cliffs and boulder formations that render the terrain virtually impassable by vehicle. It is impossible to reach the interior of the mountain other than through these known passages. In the interior of the mountain is a small number of accessible plains surrounded and cross-cut by ridges and heaps of large boulders. A second base was put in operation at Essali, near Boughessa, in the Adagh, a few weeks later. A third one was located at Mount Tigharghar, a place that had already served as the base for the honour bandit Alla ag Albachir in the 1940s and 1950s, and for the *ifulagen* in 1963 (and it would again host rebels in 2006). In the later stages of the rebellion, the number of bases came to around fifteen throughout Northern Mali.[6] Such a base should not be imagined as a classical military base: A structure concentrated at one point with fortified bunkers and fixed defence lines. Rather, the whole mountain served as a base. Only the outer edges and passages would be defended if necessary, but they could be abandoned to take

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5 Interview with Baye ag Alhassan. Ménaka, 01/04/1999.

6 Boilley, P. 1999: 507.

up other positions within the mountain. The only vital points within the base were the wells, to be defended and held at all costs. Any infrastructure that was built consisted of a few mud-brick houses serving as shelter and meetingpoints. Most material inside the bases was buried or left in small caves. These bases had four main aims. First of all, they served as places where the rebels could hide men and material. Second, by making the location of the bases known to the army, the rebels hoped to avoid repression against civilians by the army, as there was no reason for it. The army knew where to find the rebels and could not mistake civil camps for rebel units. Third, by making the location known to the population and other *ishumar* who had not yet joined the fighters, but who had received military training at some point in the 1980s, they hoped to attract new recruits and material support. Also, if the army attacked against civilians, these knew where they could hide under rebel protection. Finally, by setting up bases within Mali, instead of retreating into Algeria after attacks as the *ifulagen* had done in 1963, the rebels hoped to gain more support from the local population. These would notice that the rebels did not abandon them to their fate after stirring problems, while they themselves remained behind for the army to come. Clearly, the rebels had learned some tactical and strategic lessons from their *ifulagen* predecessors.

After the attacks at Ménaka and Tidarmène the rebels left messages for the army indicating their location. This message was repeated over the radio at the conquered gendarmerie post at Tarkimt. The message was basically inviting the Malian army to combat, an invitation that could be expected from Tamasheq warriors following the honourable *aqqa* conduct of warfare. The ethics of the *ishumar* in warfare were just as much informed by Tamasheq war ethics and honourable conduct as that of the *ifulagen* had been in 1963. The *ishumar* saw themselves as the new *illellan*: the strong protectors of society who should defend the *tilaqqiwin*, the weak. By staying in the neighbourhood and offering protection sites, the rebels ascribed to their perceived *ellellu* status in taking measures to protect the weak and dependent. And only through *aqqa* attacks could *egha* – revenge for humiliation – be acted out.

In the first few months of the rebellion, the strategy underlying the creation of fixed bases was partly successful. The Malian army accepted the invitation to come and fight at I-n-Taykaren. On 17 July 1990 a large section of the Malian Armed Forces arrived at I-n-Taykaren to fight the rebel forces. The army employed four hundred infantry and artillery units armed with truck-mounted rocket launchers at their siege of the base. After four days of shelling, the unharmed rebels easily countered the infantry assault. The shelling had been too random and too small in scale to do any harm. The rebel forces awaited the end of Malian fire from the safety of the rocks and caves, planning to resume their positions when the infantry advanced. When the infantry attack finally came,

they were shot one by one. A day of sniper activity left the Malian Armed Forces with forty men dead, which was enough to have them retreat. The operation was repeated at the end of July and the beginning of August, with an even more disastrous effect. Despite hundreds of shells being fired at I-n-Taykaren in a week, the following infantry attack failed again, leaving a hundred Malian soldiers dead on the field.[7] A similar attack at the rebel base of Essali near Boughessa was equally unsuccessful. Here, the rebels simply left the base for the surrounding mountains, only to return when the Army retreated, without doing battle. The Army was quick to learn that rebel bases were invincible when defended and not worth going to or staying in when abandoned. The Malian Army also quickly learned that when it set up a base itself, it was prone to deadly attacks by rebel forces. The largest victory the rebels had over the Malian forces, recognised as their worst defeat by the Army itself, came on the night of 4 September 1990 at the wells of Toximine near Mount Tigharghar. Here, a force of around 45 rebels, armed with knives and hand grenades, took on an army unit of around 450 soldiers, supported by armoured cars, mortars and rocket launchers. Making use of the terrain, the internal organisation of the military camp and the element of surprise, the rebel unit entered the camp; engaged in close combat with the Malian soldiers; captured the heavy firearms which they deployed immediately against further removed quarters of the camp; and finally dispersed the Malian forces in panic. Afterwards, rebels claimed to have killed more than a hundred soldiers at Toximine, whereas they suffered a loss of fifteen men.[8]

The reaction of the Army to the rebellion was at first very similar to the options chosen during *Alfellaga*. The tactic of installing a 'forbidden zone' could not be employed effectively as the terrain of operation was no longer confined to the Adagh, but included all of North-Eastern Mali. Nevertheless, the Army tried to install 'concentration zones' around the main cities and villages of the North and 'zones of free circulation', next to 'combat zones'.[9] By the end of July 1990, the state of emergency and a curfew after 23:00 hours were declared in all of Northern Mali.[10] Transport by four-wheel-drive vehicles was forbidden, as this was the rebels' chosen means of transport.[11] Trucks needed

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7 Nous, Touaregs du Mali (Paris 1990).

8 Klute, G. 2001: 480-486.

9 Ibid.: 414, mentions the concentration and combat zones. The zones of free circulation are mentioned in annex *Comission ad – hoc sur les évènements du nord (sessions des 18, 19, 20 Octobre 1990),* Boilley, P. 1994: 846-851.

10 'Des nouvelles atrocités auraient été commises contre les civils touaregs', *Le Monde*, 05/09/1990.

11 Annex Transcriptions de messages radio de l'armée malienne (Documents provenant de la serviette du sous-lieutenant Diawara Gollé, commandant du poste de Bou-

special permits, as did other cars. In practice this meant a stop to most motorised transport since almost all vehicles used in the North are four-wheel-drives or trucks. Random civilians were interrogated and executed. When these executions made the Malian and European press, the Malian authorities ascribed them to 'uncontrolled elements of the Army'. Some of these executions might indeed have been the result of frustration and stress among the Malian soldiers. The majority of these executions however, were part of a deliberate terror campaign to undermine support for the rebellion and to discourage the fighters. Spokesmen for the Tamasheq and Bidân civil population accused the Malian Armed Forces of having started a campaign of ethnic cleansing in the *Région* of Timbuktu in July 1990, entitled *Kokadjè* in Bamanakan, which indeed means 'cleaning'.[12] Whether or not this was actually the case, other sources confirm that Malian soldiers had no trouble in employing any means necessary to end the rebellion and to stop civilian support. The largest 'cleaning operation' took place at I-n-Abalan, near Ti-n-Essako in July 1990, where the Army killed an estimated 94 nomads.[13] The ghastliness of these executions was in accordance with methods applied during *Alfellaga* as well. On 29 July 1990, a unit of airborne soldiers passing by the camp of the chief of the Idnan tribe, Attaher ag Bissaada, let the inhabitants of the camp dig their own grave, after which they were killed by throwing in hand grenades.[14] An anonymous witness in a *Le Monde* article of 15 August 1990 stated that eleven people were executed in Gao. Their bodies were run over by a tank after which 'the people picked up pieces of the corpses, one a finger, another a head, and went to wiggle them about in front of the doors of Tuareg families'.[15] Estimates of the number of civilians killed by the Army during the first two months of rebellion alone range between 125 and 262.[16] Georg Klute estimates that the number of civil victims

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ressa. Saisie par les combattants touaregs après le succès de leur attaque du 9 août 1990), Boilley, P. 1994: 841-845.

12 'Les réfugiés touaregs au Burkina', *Liberté* no 3, 1992. *Kokadjè* – 'to wash thoroughly' in Bamanakan – was the campaign slogan of the ADEMA party during the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1992. This might have caused confusion in the North as the Northern regions did not participate in these elections due to the rebellion. On the other hand, the term might well have been employed to indicate 'ethnic cleansing' by Bamanakan speaking soldiers as well, in a stroke of *soldieresque* humour about democracy.

13 Nous, Touaregs du Mali (Paris 1990).

14 Ibid. and Amnesty International, *Mali: Ethnic conflict and killings of civilians* (21 September 1994).

15 'Des affrontements meurtriers auraient opposé l'armée aux Touaregs', *Le Monde*, 15/08/1990.

16 The number of 125 is advanced in *Le Monde*, 15/08/1990. The number of 262 is advanced in 'chronologie Cheick' in annex to Klute, G. 2001. Klute himself esti-

on both sides in the conflict ranges between 2,500 and 3,500. However, the number of Tamasheq civilians killed was at least ten times the number of sedentary victims.

Table 6.1 Estimated number of civilian victims June 1990 – October 1995

Tamasheq Confirmed Victims	Tamasheq Unconfirmed victims	Sedentary Confirmed victims	Sedentary Unconfirmed victims
2,374	734	178	272

S*ource*: Klute (2001), annex Opferzahlen (Mali).

After 'Toximine', the morale of the Malian Armed Forces was deflated, just as the morale of the rebels was boosted. The Malian Armed Forces probably lost at least forty men, almost ten percent of their forces, which is generally regarded as the de facto destruction of a unit. The rebels lost a third of their unit, which would in standard army terms mean 'annihilation', but the rebels did not look at it in this way. These men were martyrs to the cause and they had died an honourable death in combat. 'Toximine' brought in a large amount of new weapons taken from the defeated troops, but especially an enormous victory in their form of warfare: A small group of extremely skilled warriors had been able to chase an army unit ten times its size, killing a large number of soldiers in true combat, man to man. It gave the rebels a feeling of military invincibility. Indeed, one can safely say that the Malian forces never defeated the Tamasheq rebels militarily. 'Toximine' proved that the regular army was no match to the guerrillas, and that a quick military end to the rebellion could not be reached. In the end, the Malian Armed Forces retreated to the main villages of North-Eastern Mali, leaving the land to the rebels. Many smaller army posts were entirely abandoned. The defeats of the Malian Armed Forces, combined with the troublesome situation the regime found itself in at the capital Bamako, led President Moussa Traoré to decide that negotiations with the rebels were necessary.

Negotiations between the Malian Government and the *Tanekra* movement started in October 1990 with a first reconnaissance mission, and began in earnest in December 1990 on the initiative of The Traoré Regime. The Tamasheq rebellion was not the only problem the Traoré Regime had to face. In the capital Bamako, a democratic opposition and a free press were making both Traoré's handling of the rebellion and his position in general more and more

mates the number of civilians killed in the first months at 181 in annex Opferzahlen (Mali). Klute, G. 2001.

problematic. In 1979, General Moussa Traoré had changed the military style of his regime to a civil one in founding a one-party state, governed by the Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien (UDPM) over which he presided. But the one-party state was as undemocratic and oppressive as its predecessors. In 1990, the democratic movement gained momentum. Possibly under the influence of the Tamasheq rebellion, but certainly under the moral support of French President Mitterand's speech at the Franco-African Summit at La Baule in May 1990, in which he linked development aid to 'good governance' and democratisation. On 15 October 1990, fifteen young men took to the streets of Bamako to protest against the Traoré Regime, carrying banners with slogans such as 'Down with the UDPM'.[17] A few days later, the student union Association des Etudiants et Elèves Maliens (AEEM**)** was born. In the same month, two covert political parties founded in exile in France and Senegal came to the open; the Comité National d'Initiative Démocratique (CNID); and the Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali (ADEMA). The already existing national labour union Union National des Travaileurs Maliens (UNTM), hitherto an appendix to the regime, rallied to the side of the democrats. Together, these organisations formed a massive front against the Traoré Regime. But there was not only external opposition urging for democracy. Inside the UDPM, a large faction demanded multi-party democracy, or at least a democratisation of the party itself. Although Traoré gave in to the wish to reform the party, demands for multi-party democracy were initially put aside.[18] The pressure build-up in Bamako, together with the demoralizing defeats of the Army by the Tamasheq rebels, led to the opening of negotiations between the regime and the rebels. Probably, Moussa Traoré hoped to calm the situation in the North in order to have troops and attention free to deal with the democratic movement in the South.

The reasons the rebels had to negotiate were just as practical as those of the Traoré Regime: they were exhausted. Having started the rebellion with nothing but a handful of guns, they desperately lacked resources by the end of 1990. The diminishing supply of petrol, ammunition and especially food hampered the continuation of attacks and even the possibilities of adequate defence.

> In fact, we had expected that a solution would be found within six months of combat. And the Malians fell for our strategy. Six months, that was the maximum before the Army would recuperate, and we had to make a maximum of resounding victories to bring it home, to change mentalities in Mali, and to provoke all the upcoming changes. (...) We did not expect a longer fight, first because of a lack of means, also

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17 Brenner, L. 1994.

18 'Conseil national extraordinaire de l'UDPM: L'immobilisme', *Cauris*, n.d. 1990.

because of strategic reasons it was impossible to continue the fight for more than six months.[19]

First contact between the *Tanekra* and the state was made through the mediation of the tribal chiefs. The meeting took place in Tamanrasset between 10 and 12 October 1990. The chiefs played their key role as intermediaries between state and society, a role the state recognised and legitimised in giving them this assignment. But to the members of the *Tanekra* organisation, the tribal chiefs had no legitimacy. First of all, a strong current within the *Tanekra* movement had always been in favour of the abolition of tribal chiefs and other hierarchies in Tamasheq society. Second, from the start of the rebellion, the most important tribal chiefs had made it perfectly clear that they were against the rebellion. In a declaration transmitted over radio and television in September 1990, they described the rebels as '(...) bandits and traitors, committing unimaginable follies disturbing the tranquillity and stability regained after years of merciless drought'.[20] Intalla ag Attaher, chief of the Kel Ifoghas, and the other chiefs of the Adagh, had immediately volunteered to tour the Adagh to inform the population about the activities of the Army; to search for the rebels, and to bring the young men to their senses as they had done during *Alfellaga*. Unfortunately, a group of soldiers disarmed and molested the chiefs when they presented themselves to the *Commandant de Cercle* on the first day of the tour, as they held them to be rebels themselves. During their tour, the family of the Idnan chief Attaher ag Bissaada was killed by soldiers. Attaher ag Bissaada, speaking to Moussa Traoré afterwards, asked him not to mention this 'incident' as one should look to the future and not to the past.[21] The Government could thus count on the loyalty of the chiefs and decided to send them as envoys to contact the rebels. The meeting was indecisive, as the chiefs' delegates had no mandate to accept or refute the rebel demands.

In December 1990 negotiations between the *Tanekra* and the Government were reopened, leading to the signing of a ceasefire and declaration of intent to continue negotiations for final peace on 6 January 1991. These documents are known as the 'Tamanrasset Agreement'. This time, negotiations took place under mediation of the Algerian Government. The latter would remain the sole officially mediating state between the rebels and Mali throughout the conflict. Algeria had a direct interest in the conflict as the country hosted a large amount of new refugees and a large community of previously sedentarised Kel Tama-

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19 Interview by Pierre Boilley with Ibiya ag Sidi. Paris, 28/06/1994, 478.

20 Declaration made by the Malian *fraction* chiefs and Tamasheq ranks of the Gao *Région*, 12/09/1990. Personal archives. The signing chiefs were all from the Kidal, Gao, Ménaka and Bourem *Cercles*, with the exception of Ehya ag Nokh, chief of the Immededdeghen.

21 Poulton, R. & I. ag Youssouf 1998: 93.

sheq from Mali. Moreover, the movement used Southern Algeria as its 'hinterland' where they repleted their provisions, treated their injured, and went for 'rest and recreation'. Apart from these practical arguments the Algerian Government rose to the occasion to strengthen its importance as a regional power, to the detriment of what it considered its close rivals: France and Libya.

The only common language for negotiations was French. This meant that the *ishumar* had to rely on the Tamasheq *évolués* who were sympathetic to the movement.[22] From the side of the rebels, the negotiators included Cheick ag Baye, Acherif ag Mohamed and Ibrahim ag Litny, three intellectuals who had joined the movement from the beginning. These *évolués*, headed by military leader Iyad ag Ghali (himself a true *ishumar*, but with enough Francophone education to conduct negotiations in this language) had a more realist view of the situation than some of the more idealist *ishumar*. And of course, Iyad knew perfectly well in what state and condition his troops were. Nevertheless, the Tamanrasset Agreement showed a radical stance from the *Tanekra* side. It consisted of a ceasefire, stipulating the mutual transfer of prisoners of war; the Army's gradual withdrawal from the North; the transfer of administration to civil servants; the withdrawal of the rebel forces to their bases; the possibility for the fighters to integrate in the Malian Armed Forces; and the creation of commissions to monitor the application of the agreements made. The Tamanrasset Agreement was never fully implemented, but it remained a blueprint for future negotiations. The importance of the agreement does not lie in what it was supposed to lead to, but in what it did lead to in practice. Most of my interlocutors who had participated in the *Tanekra* movement and the rebellion from its first days onwards insisted that the 'real' rebellion ended with the signing of the Tamanrasset Agreement. With the benefit of hindsight, one can indeed conclude from the developments after the signing of the Tamanrasset Agreement, that this observation contains some truth. The *ishumar* reaction to the Tamanrasset Agreement can be summed up as negative for the most part. Many *ishumar* fighters were at least disappointed, but many more were outraged by what they perceived as a sell-out from the side of the *évolués*. After 'Tamanrasset' the second phase of the rebellion started. The Tamasheq movement, united in the first six months of fighting, split internally over the goals of the rebellion.

[22] From the side of the Government, the negotiators most likely included Issa Ongoiba (former right hand to Diby Sillas Diarra) and a number of tribal chiefs.

The 'confused' rebellion: January 1991 to February 1994

In the first six months of the rebellion, the movement had no fixed name. The Arabic terms *al-Jebha* **(**the front) and *ath-Thawra* (the revolution), or the Tamasheq term *Tanekra* (the uprising), were used internally. To the outside world, the names Mouvement de Libération Touareg; Mouvement de Libération de l'Azawad; and even Mouvement de Libération Malien were used. The Tamanrasset Agreement changed this. Although only one man signed the agreement on behalf of the rebels, Iyad ag Ghali, he did so in the name of two movements; the Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad (MPA), and the Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad (FIAA). Where the MPA represented the Kel Tamasheq, the FIAA represented the Bidân members of the movement. The Bidân feared that their contribution to the movement might be underestimated and that they would be left out of the negotiations with the Malian authorities, despite sharing the problems of their Tamasheq *ishumar* colleagues. This problem was solved by creating a separate movement with its own name to represent the Bidân section within the movement. The FIAA was nevertheless represented by the paramount leader of the movement, Iyad ag Ghali. It is in fact unclear whether or not Bidân representatives were present during the Tamanrasset negotiations. One informant even stated that the Bidân only joined the movement and the negotiations at the last moment, in fear of being left out. During the preliminary contacts between the movement and Tamasheq tribal chiefs no Bidân representative was present. However, during the later phases of the rebellion the FIAA and its representatives would play crucial roles. The creation of the MPA, both the name and the movement it came to represent, is more complicated. The Tamanrasset Agreement did not bring an end to hostilities. In February 1991 rebel units attacked the village of Bourem. In March, the villages of Tonka and Goundam followed. The attacks were claimed by the Front Populaire de Libération de l'Azawad (FPLA), a name the movement had also sometimes used previous to the Tamanrasset Agreement. Where the creation of two movements during the negotiations in Tamanrasset – one Kel Tamasheq and one Bidân – had not been the result of a serious political or ideological divide within the movement, the creation of the MPA and FPLA can be analysed as resulting from ideological and political differences within the movement. These can be retraced through the negotiations leading to the Tamanrasset Agreement. The ideological conflict within the movement boiled down to the principles of the rebellion: Fighting for independence, or not. The start of a hot debate can already be read in the minutes of the meeting between the movement and the chief delegates of the Malian Government in October 1990.

> The year nineteen hundred and ninety, the 12th of October at two hours took place in Tamanrasset: The closure of the meeting between the Malian delegation (*fraction* chiefs and Tuareg representatives) and the delegation of the movement called Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad – MPA (not having any territorial demands).[23]

Placed casually between brackets, the movement's envoys had apparently written off the initial goal of the movement: Tamasheq independence. While the October meeting had been inconsequential, the Tamanrasset Agreement was not. The minutes of the meeting between Malian and *Tanekra* envoys, which form the heart of the Tamanrasset Agreement, stated the view taken by both parties on the conflict. Representing the Malian Government, the Malian Chief of Staff Colonel Ousmane Coulibaly, 'After having expressed the wish of the Malian Government to find a lasting solution to the painful situation, stressed the necessity to preserve national unity and Malian territorial integrity'.[24] The formulation speaks for itself and needs no explanation. On behalf of the MPA and FIAA, Iyad ag Ghali 'accentuated the principal reasons that led his movement to take up arms against its country'.[25] Diplomatic and subtle, Iyad ag Ghali implicitly recognised that his movement had taken up arms against its own country, a formula which placed the Kel Tamasheq within the framework of the Malian state, and thus abandoning Tamasheq nationalist separatist aspirations. If the initial talks between the movement and the chiefly envoys of the Government in October 1990 must have been hard to accept for many fighters, the endresult of the Tamanrasset Agreement was unacceptable to a number of hardliners. These hardliners remained within the FPLA. Confronted with this hard line within the movement, Iyad ag Ghali and other moderates carried on negotiating under the name MPA: Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad. The difference with regards to goals and means becomes clear from the names adopted. Whereas the FPLA stressed its military nature by adopting the term '*Front*', the MPA insisted on politics and negotiations by adopting the term '*Mouvement*'. The idea was that, eventually, if the democratic movement in the South were to succeed in its goals, the MPA could transform itself into a political party within Mali. The FPLA, seeing itself as a front, remained focused on independence to be reached through military action. The FPLA hardliners declared that they had not been represented at the negotiations at Tamanrasset and were therefore not bound by the agreements made.

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[23] *Procès verbal de la rencontre entre délégations à Tamanrasset du 10 au 12 octobre 1990.* Annexed in Boilley, P. 1994: 826-836.

[24] Procès verbal de la rencontre entre la Délégation du Gouvernement du Mali et la Délégation du Mouvement Populaire de l'Azaouad et du Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azaouad à Tamanrasset, les 5 et 6 Janvier 1991. Personal archive.

[25] Ibid.

> We have created [the FPLA] after the failed treason of the Azawad people and we have called it the Front Populaire de Libération de l'Azawad, in reaction to what is called "the Tamanrasset Agreement" which seems to us to be a treason of some kind to our revolutionary principles: It is a reactionary position, our objective being the liberation of the people of the Azawad from the oppression it is suffering since the French have left.[26]

From the start of the rebellion in June 1990 to the start of negotiations in Tamanrasset in December that year, almost all attacks against the Malian Armed Forces took place in the Adagh. This changed after the Tamanrasset Agreement in January 1991. The military campaign launched by the FPLA in February 1991 was concentrated on the Azawad plain and the villages on the banks of the Niger River. From there, the attacks spread further south and west, towards the *Région* of Timbuktu and the interior of the Niger Bend. In May 1991, the FPLA even struck as far south as Gossi and Léré. The relocation of the conflict is linked to the schisms within the movement. The schism that brought about the FPLA in January 1991 meant a separation between the Kel Adagh and all the other Tamasheq *fractions* in the movement. However, local politics within the Tamasheq community, *tewsit* affiliation and the logic of Tamasheq society played their part as well. The larger part of the FPLA fighters came from *fractions* residing in the Azawad and Tamesna plains, and in the Niger Bend. The most important *fractions* and tribes represented in the FPLA were the Kel Intessar, the Chemennamas, the Ishidenharen, the Dabakar and the Daoussahak. The Kel Intessar had been at the heart of Tamasheq political life during the late colonial period. The Chemennamas, Ishidenharen and Dabakar *fraction*s live in the Azawad and Tamesna plains east of the Adagh and towards Gao. In fact, Djebock, the hamlet falling victim to the FPLA's second attack, is seen as the 'capital' of the Chemennamas. This is not coincidental either, as the leader of the FPLA, Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed, was a Chemennamas. In order to understand the division between the Kel Adagh and the other *fraction*s we should look at the history of the movement and to the Tamanrasset Agreement.

Until 1990 Tamasheq resistance against the Malian state had been largely a Kel Adagh affair. They had started *Alfellaga* in 1963; they had been at the basis of the creation of the *Tanekra* movement; they had delivered most volunteers for the Lebanon contingent; and after their return these fighters had revived and restructured the defunct movement in Libya. The Ifoghas claimed leadership within the movement.

> In fact, objectively, the Ifoghas are the spearhead of the Adagh and the Adagh n Ifoghas is the spearhead of the Tuareg in Mali in general. This is a fact. (...) The

[26] 'Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed, l'intransigeant colonel', *Mauritanie Nouvelles*, July 1992.

> other side of reality is that the other tribes exist and that they are more numerous than the Ifoghas.[27]

This leadership became strongly contested after the outbreak of the rebellion. Particularly after the second drought of the 1980s, the participation of tribes from outside the Adagh had risen within the movement. The new recruits were mostly from the Chemennamas, Ishidenharen, Dabakar and other *fraction*s from the Tamesna and Azawad, although a small number of them had joined earlier. These men had different experiences in the *Tanekra* and to them the leadership of the Kel Adagh was not a foregone conclusion. Most attacks in the first six months of the rebellion took place within the Adagh, which reconfirmed Kel Adagh leadership over the movement, and gave the rebellion the look of 'another Kel Adagh affair', probably to the discontent of the fighters from the Ménaka battalion. The negotiations at Tamanrasset again proved Kel Adagh leadership. The majority of the negotiators on behalf of the movement were Kel Adagh, with Iyad ag Ghali signing the treaty. Leadership and hierarchy among *tewsiten* and *fraction*s form the core of Tamasheq social political life. The leadership position the Kel Adagh claimed within the movement could thus not be without consequences for internal hierarchy and organisation. Those men resisting Kel Adagh leadership and control over the movement simply opted out to create their own front. The outcome of the Tamanrasset Agreement can be put forward as a second reason for the division between the Kel Adagh and the other Kel Tamasheq. The moderates leading the negotiations in Tamanrasset had opted for the acceptance of de facto Malian citizenship, on the condition that Northern Mali would gain a large amount of autonomy. This condition was met by the Malian state in the form of decentralisation of the hitherto highly centralised state. To phrase this mutual agreement, a rather strange formulation was used in the agreement.

> The two parties have agreed that the populations of the three *Région*s in Northern Mali will freely administer their regional and local affairs through the mediation of their representatives in the elected assemblies, in accordance with an exceptional status consented to by law.[28]

At the time 'Tamanrasset' was signed, Northern Mali was administratively divided into only two *Région*s: Timbuktu, the VIth *Région*; and Gao, the VIIth *Région*, which included the Adagh as the *Cercle* of Kidal. What had been arranged for in Tamanrasset, was the promotion of the *Cercle* of Kidal to a fully

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[27] Interview by Pierre Boilley with Iyad ag Ghali. Bamako, 10/02/1994. Boilley, P. 1999: 514.

[28] Procès verbal de la rencontre entre la délégation du Gouvernement du Mali et la Délégation du Mouvement Populaire de l'Azaouad et du Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azaouad à Tamanrasset du 10 au 12 octobre 1990. Personal Archive.

fledged VIIIth *Région*. The Tamanrasset Agreement speaks of three *Régions* as if the *Région* of Kidal was already existent. The new *Région* would come into de jure existence in August 1991, but de facto with the Tamanrasset Agreement.[29] Thus, the Kel Adagh had not only opted to remain part of Mali, but to do so apart from the other Kel Tamasheq communities. This manoeuvre did not earn the Kel Adagh any gratitude from the side of the other *tewsiten* in the movement, and will have undoubtedly contributed to the split between the Kel Adagh and the others. Apart from hardliners fighting for independence, the FPLA could attract those moderates who were not Kel Adagh. These had no interest in an administratively autonomous *Région* of Kidal since this would leave the Kel Tamasheq in the 'old' *Région* of Gao as a smaller minority against a majority of Songhay and other sedentary populations.

In November 1991 the Kel Adagh movement MPA split in two between Ifoghas and those Kel Adagh of other tribal affiliation who founded the Armée Révolutionaire pour la Libération de l'Azawad (ARLA), attracting the majority of Kel Adagh fighters. The MPA now represented a minority movement of 'moderate' Ifoghas and became subsequently seen as 'the Ifoghas movement', whereas the ARLA stood for the other Kel Adagh. The creation of the ARLA was mostly justified through their proclaimed vision on the need for change within Tamasheq society. The largest number of ARLA members came from the ranks of the *imghad* or *tilaqqiwin* tribes who had stood under Ifoghas domination in colonial times. The Keita Regime had promoted their status in the Adagh by declaring them to be the 'oppressed masses' and this discourse must have struck a chord. It was especially the *évolués* of *tilaqqiwin* origin who had stressed the ideals of social equality within the *Teshumara* movement, while many conservative Ifoghas attempted to maintain the idea of tribal hierarchy and status quo. Many *ishumar* felt a need to reform Tamasheq society through the abolition of caste, tribe and tribal chiefs. Ideas on equality and democracy were strongest among the intellectual elite of the *ishumar*, and these were generally also of *imghad* origins, as they had put up less resistance against education and had been favoured by the Keita Regime. Paradoxically, the ARLA was initially joined by a majority of Idnan fighters. These joined not so much out of agreement with the need to abolish the tribal structure of society, but largely because of the existing competition between tribes over political power within the tribal structure. As noted previously, the Idnan had been in competition with the Ifoghas over primacy in the Adagh since early colonial times. This competition had led to the Tamanrasset war between the two tribes and their

[29] The creation of the eighth *Région* Kidal was confirmed in an article on the Tamanrasset agreement in an article by Kaboré, G., 'La paix fragile de Tamanrasset', *Jeune Afrique*, 16-22/01/1991.

allies only a short decade earlier. In fact, the ARLA-MPA rivalry can be partly seen as a continuation of that conflict which was played out in violent ways directly after the creation of the ARLA. Having the majority of Kel Adagh fighters in their camp, the ARLA ousted the MPA/Ifoghas from the rebel base in Mount Tigharghar, forcing them to leave most of their material behind.

The conscious efforts within the *Tanekra* to overcome internal social differences paradoxically led to the creation of new concepts that furthered social differences. From the start of the 1990s, clan and caste based ideologies gained the upper hand, slowly destroying the previous ideals of equality the *Teshumara* had stood for. The first such ideology was *timgheda*: the behaviour of an *imghad*, a free but not noble Tamasheq. *Timgheda* found its origins within *Teshumara* culture and the resistance organisation of the 1980s, when a number of the movement's members with an *imghad* background questioned the leadership position of the Ifoghas tribe within the movement. The main characteristics of 'imghadness' were seen to be industriousness, as opposed to the perceived laziness of the nobles; the sense that all the Kel Tamasheq are equal; and that lineage or descent should be of no importance to one's place in society. This last idea forms an explicit denial of social privilege based on birthright. The perceived industriousness of the *imghad* and the laziness of nobles echo the writings of Malian administrators during the Keita Regime. In the relative absence of former slaves in the Adagh, the Keita Administration came to see the *imghad* as the oppressed class of the 'labouring masses'. The same idea had now taken hold among the *imghad* themselves. This conflicting view of *imghad* self and noble other had already played an important role in the Tamanrasset war in the mid 1980s, and it would play an important part in the conflicts to come within the movement, continuing throughout the rebellion. Like caste identity, *tewsit* identity has recently become the focus of essentialist conceptualisations bordering on ideology. This conceptualisation has large impacts on a local or regional scale. A powerful example is the conceptualisation of *tefoghessa* or 'ifoghasness': the essence of 'being of the Ifoghas clan'. *Tefoghessa* had largely been developed in reaction to *timgheda* and it was an extension of the idea of *temushagha*, nobility. *Tefoghessa* expressed the idea that the Ifoghas clan is one of noble, strong warriors and religious specialists. Their descent from the prophet Muhammad (the Ifoghas claim *shorfa* status); their pure adherence to Islam; and their historical role as the wise and just leaders of the Kel Adagh federation, would give them the undeniable right to political supremacy in the Adagh and even beyond. The *tefoghessa* idea was developed by *ishumar* and intellectuals from the Ifoghas, including MPA leader, Iyad ag Ghali. The latter had come to believe (or perhaps had always believed) that the chiefs and other traditional authorities were indispensable to Tamasheq society.

> The wise men that are seen by some as "outdated" remain the pillars of society until the contrary is proven. They remain as indispensable to the movements as they are to the administration. First of all, they were at the start the principal mediators between the rebel forces and the authorities. They also played a principal role in reducing the tensions between different communities. Personally, I believe their role to be fundamental in installing a definite peace and that is what we most need these days.[30]

A more fundamental reinterpretation of the meetings between the chiefs who had been sent as envoys and the movements of October 1990 is hardly possible. From backward colonial and neo-colonial collaborators, the chiefs had now been reinstalled in the mind of Ifoghas *ishumar* as the true leaders of Tamasheq society. With the advent of *tefoghessa* in the late 1990s, the ideals of the *Teshumara* were effectively abandoned. *Ishumar* slowly became a pejorative term in Tamasheq society itself.

From the fall of Traoré to the National Pact

The Tamanrasset Agreement brought temporary relief to the besieged Traoré Regime, but it came too late. In Bamako and other cities in Mali the democratic movement had only grown stronger. Starting from December 1990 CNID and ADEMA organised several marches in Bamako and other cities. On 18 January 1991, the students and workers trade unions and the opposition movements joined forces to organise a demonstration ending in riots, the sacking of a number of party leaders' villas and the death of several students. The next day, CNID and ADEMA organised a demonstration in Segu, while the national trade union UNTM proclaimed a general strike. As the demonstrations continued over the months and as the number of participants in the demonstrations grew, the regime reacted more violently. On 23 March 1991 a mass demonstration ended in severe riots that continued over the next days. The army was deployed against the demonstrators, leading to several hundred deaths. On 26 March Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré, commander of the airborne division stationed in Bamako, ended the spiral of violence by staging a coup d'état. Moussa Traoré and his wife Mariam were arrested. Thirty-one years of dictatorship and single-party rule came to an end.[31]

The new 'strong man', Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré, did not act alone. He immediately formed a Conseil pour la Réconciliation Nationale (CRN), including representatives of all the democratic movements in Mali

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[30] 'L'avenir du Nord. La société civile est incontournable affirme Iyad ag Ghali', *L'Essor*, 06/10/1993.

[31] Traoré and his wife were tried for crimes against humanity and for economic crimes. They received the death penalty, which was transferred to a lifetime sentence. At the end of his second term in 2002, President Konaré pardoned and released the Traorés.

(which, at that point, still excluded the Tamasheq movements). Touré proclaimed he would lead the CRN through a transitional phase, during which a new constitution would be written; political parties could be founded; and democratic elections for parliament and presidency would be organised. He himself would not propose his candidacy as president. After the presidential elections, he would step down and rejoin his post in the Army. All this, so he promised, would be done within nine months. In order to build democracy in Mali, and especially to discuss on which grounds it should be based, Touré organised a National Conference in July 1991. These National Conferences were much in vogue in the early 1990s all over francophone West Africa. Democracy took sail under the wind of the Franco-African summit at La Baule. The Malian National Conference gathered representatives of all the new political parties and civil movements in the country, including the *Tanekra*, which was represented by Iyad ag Ghali. On the one hand, the main outcome of the National Conference with regards to the North was a certain amount of recognition for the role the rebellion had played in bringing about the fall of Traoré. Yet, on the other hand, the Conference rejected the Tamanrasset Agreement, on the grounds that it had been anti-constitutional and too lenient towards the rebellion. Iyad ag Ghali, representative of the rebellion at the National Conference, pleaded for federalism as the new form of state rule, or at least economic and political autonomy through the creation of regional assemblies which had already been proposed in the Tamanrasset Agreement. The conference could not agree to these proposals and would not go further than to propose a decentralised form of state administration. However, the National Conference agreed on the need to solve the rebellion and a majority of delegates agreed this should be done peacefully.

Thus, for Touré to organise his democratic tour de force, a lasting peace in the North was necessary. In order to appease the *Tanekra*, Touré offered seats to two representatives of the Tamasheq movement in his interim government, and he assured that the Tamanrasset Agreement would be respected.[32] However, the Tamanrasset Agreement was 'only' a cease-fire, which had been violated by both sides before the ink had dried. New negotiations were needed. These ultimately led to the signing of the *Pacte National*, the National Pact. Negotiations leading to the National Pact started in December 1991 in the Algerian

[32] The first two representatives of the movements were Cheick ag Baye and Hamed Sidi Ahmed. They were replaced by Acherif ag Mohamed and Malainine ould Badi. When Touré formed a government (prior to the election of Konaré in 1992), Mohamed ag Erlaf, an Idnan from the Adagh with relatives in the movement, became Minister. He remained in the various governments under Konaré on various ministerial posts as a sign of inclusion of the Tamasheq movements and society in the Malian state. Poulton, R. & I. ag Youssouf 1998: 61.

town of El Golea under the auspices of the Algerian Government. They were pursued that same month in the Malian town of Mopti. The main issue during these two initial rounds was with whom the Malian Government should negotiate. By December 1991 the once united *Tanekra* had become divided into four movements: MPA; FIAA; FPLA; and ARLA. Under pressure from the Algerian mediators, the four movements tried to overcome their differences by creating an umbrella organisation that would conduct negotiations on behalf of all movements. This organisation was called the Mouvements et Fronts Unifiés de l'Azawad **(**MFUA). The MFUA united intellectuals and military leaders of all fronts, and even from outside the fronts, with the sole purpose of negotiating with the Malian state. As such, it became a sort of semi-autonomous diplomatic corps, only partly controlled by the movements, but acting on their behalf. A series of meetings took place between the MFUA and the Malian Government in Algiers between January and March 1992. The Algerian Government provided mediation, together with two independent mediators: the Frenchman Edgar Pisani, director of the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris (and a personal counsellor to French President Mitterand); and Ahmed Baba Miské, a dissident Mauritanian politician based in Paris. Their attempt at mediation was however unsuccessfully aborted. Their intervention would be the last French attempt at mediation in the conflict. The first round of meetings under single Algerian mediation took place between 22 and 24 January; the second between 12 and 15 February; and the last between 15 and 25 March 1992. These led to the final

Photo 6.1
Negotiations for the National Pact, January 1992. Edgar Pisani (right, white shirt) in conversation with Adberrahmane ag Galla (left, suit).
In the back-ground (turban, sunglasses), Iyad ag Ghali.
[Courtesy of Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall]

signing of the National Pact on 11 April 1992. Far more elaborate than the Tamanrasset Agreement, the National Pact consisted of six main clauses, various sub-clauses and a total of 86 paragraphs. I will here briefly describe the six main clauses, their implications and, especially, the lack of their application.[33]

I: Special social economic and administrative status for the North
The idea reflects the intent of the MFUA to gain a form of autonomy for the Kel Tamasheq within the framework of the Malian state, a weakening of the Tamasheq position in comparison to the ideals of the *Tanekra*. The Malian Government and general public however, were extremely hostile to any idea even hinting at the dissolution of national unity. One of the clauses in the National Pact was explicitly called 'On the consecration of solidarity and national unity in Northern Mali'. The idea of autonomy for the North was tacitly reshaped into the administrative decentralisation of the state. Not only in the North but in all of Mali. Ironically, the decentralisation process started first in the Southern *Régions* in 1996 before being implemented in the North in 1999.

II: Tax exemptions for the inhabitants of the North for the duration of ten years
The demand had been made by the MFUA to alleviate the economic need of the inhabitants of the North, struck by four decades of rebellion and drought. The tax exemption had been granted, but was never implemented and was more or less informally dropped as a demand by the MFUA with new rounds of negotiations. However, as in the previous decades, tax collection in the North remained a futile effort. The tax exemption was made after new negotiations in 2007.

III: The creation of two special funds to reconstruct the North
The Development and Reintegration Fund was meant to support former rebels financially in their efforts to reintegrate civilian life once the conflict would be settled. The Fund for the Assistance and Indemnification of Conflict Victims was analogous to the fund created to alleviate the needs of the victims of the demonstrations that brought the fall of Moussa Traoré in March 1991. Both funds for the North were formally created, but remained empty. The Malian Government claimed it did not have the money to fill the funds and looked for donor aid to provide funding. Donor countries were reluctant to provide the necessary means. Only in 1995 did money become available for the reinte-

[33] The integral text of the National Pact can be downloaded at: http://www.kidal.info/docs/pacte_national.pdf. Last visited 21/07/2009.

gration in civil society of former rebels. The fund to alleviate the victims' needs remained a dead letter.

IV: Decreasing deployment and withdrawal to a limited number of northern towns by the Malian Armed Forces

After the signing of the National Pact, the Malian Armed Forces did indeed withdraw from a number of towns and barracks in the North, concentrating on Gao, Ménaka, Kidal, Tessalit, Ansongo, Bourem and Timbuktu, which meant that the Adagh, Azawad and Niger Bend were left to the control of the rebel forces. Security would be provided by so-called mixed patrols of integrated rebels and army soldiers (*infra*). To be sure, army patrols still ventured out of their barracks and retaliation on civilians after rebel attacks or 'acts of banditry' did not end. Although they were stationed in a smaller number of barracks, troop strength in the North only increased.

V: The creation of structures to secure the gradual return of refugees after the end of the conflict

In response to the National Pact clause on refugee repatriation, the UNHCR released a budget of 3,500,000 US dollars. The various NGOs concerned with aid to the refugees set up a programme to facilitate repatriation. A series of granaries intended to feed the returnees was set up in the North. Eventually the grain was used to feed internally displaced Malians as the refugees refused to return. Despite the signing of the National Pact, the fighting and executions had not ended as the hardliner movement FPLA did not respect the National Pact, and neither did the Army.[34]

VI: Integration of former rebels in the Malian Armed Forces and administration

In the years following the signing of the National Pact until the final peace in 1996, the integration of former rebels in the Malian state was the main issue and the main bone of contention for all parties involved. Originally, the MFUA demanded that all former rebels be integrated within the Malian Armed Forces and administration. The demand of the MFUA to integrate 3,600 men outraged the Malian public and Government. The various movements also strongly disagreed on how many rebels should be integrated from which movement, which even contributed to the creation of new movements, such as the FULA and FNLA. On 11 February 1993, the Malian Armed Forces finally integrated a total of 640 rebels, who were deployed together with regular army soldiers in three so-called 'mixed patrols' under the command of Algerian officers. Res-

[34] Poulton, R. & I. ag Youssouf 1998: 65.

ponsibility for the mixed patrols was formally in the hands of the Commission Monitoring the Cease Fire (CCF), also provided for in the National Pact, and manned by MFUA members. In practice, control over the mixed patrols was totally unclear and so was their deployment. In fact, the mixed patrols formed an extra army that could be played out by all players in the field. The creation of the mixed patrols and the CCF were long the only measures of the National Pact to be applied, to the dissatisfaction of all: the rebels, who wanted more; the Army who wanted less integration of, and more combat against the rebels; the Malian general public who thought this was giving state means to the rebels; and the Tamasheq population, who did not see much improvement in security. Nevertheless, as ag Youssouf and Poulton conclude, the mixed patrols and the CCF "managed to buy a year of (relative) peace for Mali".[35] Despite the Army's resistance and the general disapproval of the Malian public, the MFUA kept insisting on rebel integration. In May 1994, the MFUA and the Malian Government renegotiated the implementation of the National Pact. The discussions focused entirely on rebel integration as the MFUA demanded integration of 3,000 men into the Army, and development projects leading to the reinsertion in civil society for another 4,000, which outraged the Malian negotiators.[36] The insistence on the integration of rebels in the Malian Armed Forces from the side of the MFUA was probably their worst public relations campaign in the whole conflict. It gave many Malians the impression the rebels were nothing but a bunch of unemployed mercenaries from Qadhafi (which they had been said to be from the start) demanding employment from the Malian state.

The National Pact has never been fully implemented. The significance of the National Pact lies in the road leading to it; and in the consequences of its structural non-application on the internal development of the rebel movement, Tamasheq society in general and their relations with the Malian state. It led first to two years of structural negotiation by a group of men, the MFUA, who had less and less contact with the communities or state bodies they formally represented, and could therefore hardly be considered as representative in real terms. Its non-application finally led to the outburst of severe interracial, interethnic, and intertribal violence in early 1994. The creation of the MFUA and its role in conducting negotiations meant a shift in importance within the movements from the *ishumar* towards the *évolués*. The MFUA's first secretary general and spokesman was Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed, the newly elected political leader of the FIAA. Before Zahaby joined the FIAA, he had been a development consultant to the AEN, the Norwegian Church development

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Poulton, R. & I. ag Youssouf 1998: 70.

organisation, which ran large projects in the Niger Bend. Zahaby was a typical *évolué*. Perhaps the clearest example of the *ishumar* retreat and the rise of the intellectuals is the signing of the National Pact by the hardliner movement FPLA. At first, the FPLA's military and political leader Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed had refused to sign the National Pact, condemning it as yet another attempt to sell Tamasheq independence in exchange for some small privileges. In the end, the FPLA did sign the National Pact, under the signature of Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine, also a former employee of the Norwegian AEN, a relative to FPLA leader Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed and representing the FPLA within the MFUA.

> Zeidane explains that he and Rhissa disagreed over the 1992 National Pact. Zeidane travelled to Bamako and signed it on behalf of the FPLA. Rhissa only came round to supporting the Pact in 1994, but "since 1992 I have consistently worked for the application of the Pact, which provides a good framework for integration", says Zeidane.[37]

From the perspective of the FPLA, notably from Rhissa himself, Zeidane's action could only be seen as a coup against Rhissa, a Lebanon veteran and *ashamor* of the first hour. The FPLA therefore continued its attacks against the Malian Armed Forces. The non-implementation of the National Pact and the constant renewal of negotiations between the MFUA intellectuals and movement leaders created substantial friction between, on the one hand, the MFUA members and the movements' leaders, and their fighters on the other. As many military leaders left the bases in the Adagh and Azawad for longer periods of time in Bamako, Algiers or Tamanrasset, discipline within the bases dropped. The MFUA intellectuals and high ranking officers were housed in luxurious villas and hotels in Bamako, while the fighters were still living on a military diet and sleeping on the rocks in their mountain bases. No results were forthcoming from the long protracted negotiations. The Malian Government was reluctant to meet new demands and promises already made were never fulfilled, which led the fighters to look upon negotiators with mounting suspicion and to accuse them of selling out the Tamasheq cause for their own interests. The waning discipline and morale in the rebel bases resulted in the temporary desertion of many fighters who, on their own account, started to attack merchant convoys, tourists and villages. Both the Malian Government and the MFUA negotiators were quick to denounce these attacks as 'acts of banditry'. Both the MFUA and the Malian Government had every interest in making these declarations as the Malian opposition parties were eager to attack the Government over the way it dealt with the rebellion, and as the MFUA members did not want to

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[37] Interview with Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine in *Frères d'Armes* (1994, p.13). In: Ibid.: 94.

lose what they thought they had won in negotiations. However, many fighters in the bases saw these 'acts of banditry' as a mere continuation of the fight. In the end, the difference between 'regular' rebel attacks on military goals as a sign of discontent with the peace process, and 'banditry' by rebel deserters became totally blurred. The musicians of the *Teshumara* had found a new theme for their songs: the divisions, discord and treason within the movement.

I live in hard times
In which kinship is untwined
In which my maternal kin hates me
When you have nothing left, they sell you
With the heavy burden you carry you support no one
Nothing is done together
The world cries like young animals that leave the tent to drink[38]

Insecurity, refugees and the exclusion of civil society

The outbreak of the Tamasheq rebellion immediately provoked strong reactions from the Malian population towards the Tamasheq community, both in the North itself and elsewhere. As early as August 1990 the houses of the small Tamasheq community in Bamako were pillaged and their inhabitants attacked.[39] Hostility towards the Kel Tamasheq in the capital died down at the beginning of 1991, after the signing of the Tamanrasset Agreement and the start of the demonstrations leading to the fall of Moussa Traoré in March that year. But in the North, especially in cities like Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao, hostility towards the Tamasheq and Bidân populations would only grow over the years. Waves of refugees coincided with various phases in the conflict. The first wave consisted of Kel Adagh who fled to Algeria during the second half of 1990. They mainly settled in the border towns of Bordj Mokhtar, Ti-n-Zaouatene and Timiaouene from where it was easy to move back into Mali if conditions were favourable. The Tamanrasset Agreement meant a temporary end to fighting in the Adagh. When the FPLA too agreed to adhere to the National Pact in 1993, the Algerian and Malian authorities judged it safe for the refugees to return. Algeria was eager to see its 'guests' leave as their presence was seen to be the cause of rising insecurity in Southern Algeria itself.[40] A project was set up to repatriate 12,000 refugees from Algeria between July and December 1993. In May 1993,

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38 Poem by Mohamed 'Japonais' ag Itlal, 1994. Klute, G. 2001, poem 37.

39 'De nouveaux affrontements auraient opposé des commandos de Touaregs et les forces armées', *Le Monde*, 21/08/1990.

40 'Tam: la passoire', *Algerie actualité*, 21/10/92. The security issue was connected to the rise of the FIS and GIA in the same period. Many former Tamasheq rebels counter the accusations by stating that the presence of their armed forces, together with the local authorities successfully blocked FIS and GIA presence in the South.

a pilot project repatriated 468 refugees. Upon arrival in Mali, these almost immediately returned to Algeria. In August a second group of about 1,000 was sent home, and these too had returned to Algeria by November as the sites of resettlement in Mali had been destroyed.[41] The project was aborted and no new attempts to return the refugees were seriously undertaken until the effective ending of the conflict in 1995. By the end of 1992, the main theatres of conflict were located in the Tamesna, the Azawad and the Niger Bend, provoking a second, larger wave of refugees, this time mainly towards Mauritania, and to a lesser extent to Burkina Faso. These countries were closer to the concerned areas. In Mauritania, three refugee camps were created at Bassikounou, Aghor and Fassala-Niéré. In June 1991, the number of refugees reached about 5,000.[42] By October, this number had increased by a factor of six.[43] In Burkina Faso, most refugees ended up in the neighbourhood of Gorom-Gorom and Saan Yogo. Between August 1991 and the end of 1994, their numbers rose from about 10,000 to 30,000. The conflict reached its high point in mid 1994 with the advent of the sedentary Ganda Koy movement (*infra*). By the end of 1994 the number of refugees in Mauritania reached an estimated 70,000, with 2,000 new arrivals a week in August 1994.[44] By then, fighting had flared up again in the Adagh as well, provoking a new wave of Kel Adagh refugees to Algeria. Some estimates of the total number of refugees by the end of 1994 reach 160,000.[45]

The refugees were not granted official refugee status by international organisations such as the UNHCR and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent. They were labelled 'displaced persons', which had consequences on the amount of help they received. Material assistance in the camps was often inadequate. The Algerian Red Crescent, for example, could only muster a 100 tons of semolina; 7,500 kilos of sugar; and 115 boxes of corned beef to feed a population of 5,700 souls at the refugee camp at I-n-Guezzam for the whole of 1992, without any further assistance.[46] In 1992, the UNHCR had released a budget of 4,000,000 US dollars to support the refugees in Mauritania. Unfortunately, a quarter of this budget had to be spent on transport from Nouakchott to the

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41 Based on 'Dossier Nord le prix de la paix', *Cauris*, February 1993; 'Face aux forces sociales réunies samedi à Koulouba, Alpha rassure sans convaincre', *Le Républicain*, 01/06/1994; 'Le pacte national deux ans après', *Le Républicain*, 26/01/ 1994.

42 'Razzias et représailles dans le Nord Malien', *Libération*, 26/07/1991.

43 Baqué, 'Des Touaregs doublement dépossédés', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (June 1992).

44 ag Mohamed Abba, Association des Refugiés et Victimes de la Répression de l'Azawad. Rapport sur la situation générale dans les camps des refugiés Arabes et Touaregs en Mauritanie (17/12/1994) Personal archive; and 'Rush des réfugies maliens vers la Mauritanie', *Mauritanie Nouvelles*, 25/07/1994.

45 Limam, Z. 'Mali: Avis de tempête', *Jeune Afrique,* 10-16/11/1994.

46 'Camps des refugiés, l'entassement', *Algérie actualité*, 21/10/1992.

camps at the Mali-Mauritanian border.[47] Without wanting to trivialise or diminish the refugee problem, being a nomad refugee had some advantages. As the conflict dragged on, many fled in a pre-emptive attempt to save their lives and possessions. They brought part of their herds, their tents and goods with them. Although the living conditions in the camps were harsh, they were not much different from those the refugees were used to. The refugees were often without medical assistance and diseases such as cholera, smallpox and tuberculosis took their toll, but many had been without medical assistance in Mali during peacetime as well. Food remained a problem. Just as during the droughts, relief rations were primarily based on the surplus production of other countries and were often inappropriate to Tamasheq dietary habits. The UNHCR even shipped canned herrings to the camps, which for many was their first ever encounter with fish. As the conflict continued, the camps started more and more to look like Tamasheq and Bidân villages, waiting for better days. The end of the conflict and a series of particularly good rainy seasons in the North led most refugees to return of their own accord, without much assistance.

Attacks from the rebel forces at the villages on the banks of the Niger, such as Djebock, Bamba and others, understandably created resentment, panic and grief over the victims, and hatred towards the Kel Tamasheq. The resulting pogroms against Tamasheq civilians led to avenging counter strikes by the rebel movements, which often took the form of attacks against commercial and private traffic on the road between Gao and Hombori. Gao in particular suffered under the rebellion. The rebellion effectively blocked the international trade over the main roads. At the village of Hombori, in the Niger Bend, transporters had to halt at night as use of the road was only allowed by daytime. From Hombori to Gao, cars drove in convoys under obligatory army escort, which had nevertheless to be paid for. Transport from Algeria to Gao had come to a halt in 1990, and gradually picked up again in 1992. With the conflict between ARLA and MPA in 1994, traffic between Algeria and Gao was again largely disrupted as the main road to Algeria goes through the Adagh. As the Bidân merchants in Gao and Timbuktu had better connections with the rebel movements, they were capable of partly attracting the remaining trade from their Songhay competitors. The main backers and funders of the Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy that would come as a reaction to the rebellion could therefore be found among the wealthier Songhay merchants of Gao. One of the co-founders and main advocates of the Ganda Koy was Ali Bady Maïga, owner

[47] Based on 'Le chemin de retour et de l'espoir est ouvert pour nos réfugiés', *L'Essor*, 08/04/1992; and Baqué, 'Des Touaregs doublement dépossédés', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1992.

of a large transport company, two petrol stations in Gao, and head of the local transport union.

> The rebels had cut off transport. To survive, we had to start eating our investment capital. They explained to us they wanted the region to develop, but all they did was attack the sedentary population. The army did nothing. They [the Kel Tamasheq] never thought the blacks would take up arms to fight in the bush. But without a fight, they would never have returned to dialogue.[48]

Apart from the lack of trading goods and provisions, Gao also suffered under the state of emergency that had been declared in the North in July 1990. It is no wonder that the sedentary population was not sympathetic to the rebellion. The *ishumar* had never included them in their movement, they had only scarcely included their own people, but they pretended to fight in the interest of the North. Particularly after the signing of the Tamanrasset Agreement the general discourse of the *Tanekra* had changed from a fight for independence to a fight in the interest of all of Northern Mali, which had been neglected by the Malian state. However true this neglect may have been for the Adagh and Azawad regions, it had never been the case for Gao or the villages along the Niger River. The Songhay population had never felt excluded from Mali. Particularly after the droughts, development projects had flourished in the Niger Bend. The projects of the Norwegian NGO AEN in the Gossi area, the projected building of a dam near Tossaye, the activities of World Vision, Accord, Oxfam and other NGOs had brought hope for prosperity after the drought. Now these organisations had to retreat from the area under the threat of violence from both the rebel forces and the Army. In revenge, pogroms were directed against Tamasheq and Arab NGO employees. In May 1992, a crowd at Gossi, headed by an army unit, killed twelve Tamasheq employees of the Norwegian AEN, including its vice-director and the assistant to the director. Negotiations between the rebel movements and the state in December 1990 leading to the Tamanrasset Agreement, and again in November 1991 leading to the National Pact, only included representatives of the rebel movements. Other groups within Tamasheq society were excluded, not to mention delegates from other communities in the North. In April 1993, during a congress organised in Gossi, the MPA leader Iyad ag Ghali pleaded for the inclusion in negotiations of members of civil society, the 'wise men and traditional leaders'. Fearing a growing influence of the chiefs to their own detriment, the MFUA intellectuals rejected this idea, stating that for the moment only the MFUA and rebel movements were valid interlocutors of Tamasheq interests.[49]

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[48] 'Ganda Koy, ou la revanche des paysans', *Le Monde*, 31/01/1996.

[49] 'Congrès MPA. Société civile: Un passage de témoin controverse', *L'Essor*, 14/09/1993.

Masters of the Land: February to October 1994

In Algeria and Libya, the exiled Kel Tamasheq in the *Tanekra* had discovered a relative freedom in the reshaping of *tewsit* hierarchy, which had led to competition over leadership within the *Tanekra* and the 'Tamanrasset War' of the mid 1980s. Complementary to this process was the reshaping of the ideas on Tamasheq warrior status. In previous times, the warrior status of an individual had been linked to his *tewsit* affiliation. Now, warrior status became determined by individual participation in the Libyan campaigns in Lebanon and Chad, and participation in the rebellion itself. Contrary to the civilian population, and despite the retaliation on civilians by the Army, these new warriors discovered they could use violence as a means to reshape *tewsit* hierarchy under circumstances that had been missing for more than a century: State absence. After the first six months of rebellion, the state was absent in Northern Mali. Administrators had been killed or had abandoned their posts, except in the major cities such as Kidal, Ménaka and Gao. After the Tamanrasset Agreement in 1991, the Army withdrew to a small number of posts, also largely situated in the main cities and villages. The number of posts would only decrease after the signing of the National Pact in 1992. Indeed, the Army occasionally left its barracks to fight rebel units and more often to terrorise and kill the nomadic population. But crudely put, that was 'all' it did. With this last remark I do not intend to trivialise their actions. It is to say that, on one hand, the Army largely influenced peoples' behaviour through the exercise of violence but, on the other hand, it had no means to directly control or influence developments within Tamasheq society, as it had had in previous decades. This situation of 'independence', or the absence of the state, combined with heavy military repression despite this absence, had a large influence on the reorganisation of the rebel movement along *tewsit* lines. The atrocities the Army committed against the civil population forced the population and the rebels to organise their defence. The concepts of *illellan* – the strong members of society – and *tilaqqiwin* – the weak members of society needing protection – needed to be reformulated to deal with the developments Tamasheq society underwent. In previous periods, notably in pre-colonial times, strong *tewsiten* had protected weak *tewsiten*. In practice, the clans and tribes of *illellan* status had monopolised violence to the detriment of the *tilaqqiwin*. During the colonial period, but particularly during the Keita Regime and the years of exile, the *imghad* had become aware of the possibility of a political existence independent from the noble clans. As a large number of rebel fighters were of *imghad* origins, they felt they did not need fighters of *ellellu* origins to protect them and their *tewsit* from the Army. However, this reformulation of strong and weak in society on the basis of personal combat skill instead of *tewsit* affiliation meant a fragmentation of protection. Where one

tewsit had formerly protected others, this shifted to some extent to groups of individuals protecting others within the same *tewsit*.

These conflicts between former *illellan* and *tilaqqiwin*, between formerly dominated and former dominators, came especially to the fore in what became known as the 'fratricidal war' between the 'modernist' ARLA and the 'traditionalist' MPA in 1994. In February 1994, members of the ARLA ambushed and killed MPA's second man Bilal Saloum. Bilal was a Kel Adagh of *bellah* origins and a close friend to Iyad ag Ghali with whom he had fought in Lebanon. Bilal had been a Colonel in the Libyan army, a rank he kept in the MPA. As a *bellah*, Bilal was the exception proving the rule of *bellah* absence within the movements. His high-ranking position within the MPA despite his *bellah* origins was often presented by the MPA as denial of its traditionalist outlook. As a high-ranking MPA officer, Bilal had integrated the mixed patrols created in 1993. In his function of officer and mixed patrol leader, he toured the Azawad region in search of 'bandits' or renegade rebels. On one of these patrols ARLA members ambushed and killed him.[50] The ARLA attackers took Bilal's weapons, car and body with them. The MPA demanded the ARLA to return Bilal's arms, car, and body. Failure to fulfil this demand would be taken as a declaration of war. The ARLA sent a mission to fulfil the MPA demand, but this mission was in turn ambushed by the MPA, who disarmed the ARLA fighters and injured their commander. In reaction to the MPA counter-attack ARLA troops invaded Kidal on 6 March 1994 and kidnapped Intalla ag Attaher, the symbol of Ifoghas dominancy in the Adagh. The Ifoghas and their movement, the MPA, considered the kidnapping of their supreme leader an outrage. The next day an MPA unit attacked the ARLA forces, killing three ARLA fighters and capturing a number of their men, among whom their leader Abderrahmane ag Galla.[51] An exchange of hostages was arranged and in April 1994 a treaty was signed to close the ranks of the movements in view of an upcoming meeting between the MFUA and the Government in Tamanrasset. This did not end the conflict. In July 1994 ARLA fighters belonging to the *tewsit* Idnan conducted a new attack against the MPA near Ti-n-Essako. Finally, in August 1994, the MPA and Intalla ag Attaher's private militia managed to oust the ARLA from its base at Tigharghar, with the logistical assistance of the Malian Armed Forces. By accident, Intalla had managed to obtain a number of weapons from the Malian Armed Forces, destined to defend himself and his entourage against attacks by the rebels.[52] In 1994, his militia, in alliance with the Ifoghas movement MPA, would start a campaign to re-establish Ifoghas and

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[50] 'MFUA. La mort du colonel Bilal fait monter la tension', *L'Essor*, 26/02/1994.
[51] 'Nord. Le rapt d'Intallah fait monter la tension', *L'Essor*, 08/03/1994.
[52] Klute, G. 2001: 421.

chief dominancy within the Tamasheq political landscape of movements, civilians and tribal leaders. The ARLA fighters were totally evicted from the centre of the Adagh. The ARLA fighters and their civilian protégés of *imghad* tribes sought refuge in the Tamesna plain at the FPLA base at I-n-Taykaren and the nearby base of Halboubouti. The Idnan members of the ARLA retreated to those areas of the Adagh generally considered to be their territory, notably the Timetrine valley, where they created their own movement: The Base Autonome du Timetrine (BAUA). In December 1994, these Idnan fighters were forcibly integrated in the MPA. Other former ARLA fighters followed after the signing of a final peace agreement between MPA and ARLA that same month.[53] The effective destruction of the ARLA forces meant a final victory for the Ifoghas in the Adagh, and thus a victory for the conservative elements within the movement. Hierarchy within the Kel Adagh federation was again established with the Ifoghas at the top.

The Kel Adagh were not the only ones to experience factionalism along *tewsit* lines. The FPLA, which had started as a movement of hardliners, suffered under the same problem. In January 1993 two new movements came into existence: the Front Unifié de Libération de l'Azawad (FULA); and the Front National de Libération de l'Azawad (FNLA). The FULA consisted largely of Kel Intessar inhabiting the western part of the Niger Bend around Goundam. The FPLA headquarters were established at I-n-Taykaren at the extreme eastern part of the Niger Bend, under the control of the *tewsit* Chemennamas. I-n-Taykaren is far removed from the Goundam area. Distance between operational bases and leadership questions led the Kel Intessar to opt out of the FPLA. The Ishidenharen, Dabakar and Daoussahak *tewsiten*, inhabiting roughly the same area as the Chemennamas, also withdrew from the FPLA, leaving the Chemennamas on their own. The Ishidenharen and part of the Dabakar created the FNLA, setting up its base at Mount Halboubouti in the vicinity of I-n-Taykaren. The Daoussahak, never having been much involved in the movement anyway, left altogether to form an independent defence militia. The splits along *tewsit* lines within the FPLA cannot be explained along the same ideological lines as the split between MPA and ARLA. The Daoussahak are both inside and outside the Tamasheq world. They speak their own language and are, strictly speaking, not Kel Tamasheq. However, they were incorporated within the Tamasheq political world as part of the pre-colonial Ouillimiden federation, with a status similar to *imghad*. The Chemennamas, Ishidenharen and Dabakar are *tewsiten* with more or less equal status within the *tewsit* hierarchy. In pre-colonial times, the *tewsiten* within the FPLA were under the protection of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram *imushagh* (or 'true'or 'highest' nobles), as were almost all other *tew-*

[53] 'ARLA – MPA: Signature d'un accord de paix', *Amawal*, 27/12/1994.

siten in Northern Mali at the advent of French conquest. The Chemennamas are a tribe consisting of a number of *fraction*s, created by the colonial authorities in the 1910s, but also under the sway of the Ouillimiden.[54] Their status is comparable to that of *imghad*, which they most likely are. The Dabakar are considered to be on one hand noble or *ellellu*, but on the other hand to be *tilaqqiwin* under the protection of the Ouillimiden. In the 1960s, Nicolaissen positioned the Ishidenharen as somewhere between *ineslemen* (religious specialists) and *imghad*.[55] The Ishidenharen would fiercely deny this position, arguing that they are nobles almost on a par with the Ouillimiden *imushagh*. It was exactly this contest over ascribed status that caused the break-up of the FPLA, a contest that was exacerbated by the fact that the status of most groups was rather unclear to begin with. Most are neither 'true' *imghad* nor 'true' nobles, but all had formerly been *tilaqqiwin*. The Ouillimiden, after their heavily defeated revolt of 1916, had never joined a rebellious movement afterwards, but had instead closely cooperated with the various regimes. Their former *tilaqqiwin*, however, had joined the *Tanekra* and were active within the rebellion. Therefore, these groups could now effectively claim status as *illellan* or protectors. As army repression on civilians went on during the second rebellion, the question of protection became more urgent. Being warriors in the present, defending their kin, their status as *tilaqqiwin* could no longer be accepted. The enormous historical prestige of the Ouillimiden *imushagh* did not permit other *tewsiten* to claim absolute predominance altogether. But the relative hierarchy among them could be argued about. As the Chemennamas claimed leadership position within the FPLA, the other groups opted out as they contested Chemennamas dominancy.

Just to complete the account of internecine strife, a few 'minor fights' should be mentioned. The Bidân movement FIAA also underwent a process of internal division. Exactly when is not clear, but the movement ended up in at least two different units. In early February 1993, a small war broke out between FIAA and FPLA when FPLA fighters murdered a FIAA supporter outside Gao. The fight between both movements threatened to become 'international' when Arabs from the Touaji and Almouchakarai tribes living in Niger came to the aid of the FIAA in attacking the FPLA forces and the Kel Tamasheq inhabiting the Tamesna plain, and stealing numerous cattle. The Touaji were also suspected of delivering arms to the FIAA. In April 1993, the conflict between FPLA and FIAA ended with a treaty between both movements after FIAA leader Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed threatened to leave the MFUA. In March 1994, the FNLA

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[54] Politique Indigène – Conventions de délimitation passées avec les chefs, Cercle de Gao 1907-1910. ANM – FA 2E-76.

[55] Nicolaisen, J. & I. Nicolaisen 1997: 579.

was ousted from its base Halboubouti by the MPA, after which a number of their fighters forcibly joined this movement. As for the FULA, it seems the movement was dissolved, after which part of its fighters rejoined the FPLA, while others joined the FIAA.

The movement had begun as a united force, but by mid 1994 all unity was lost, contributing to the general feeling of insecurity among all the inhabitants of the North, including the Kel Tamasheq. In the end, *tewsit* and *temet* – who you are and who your family is – remained more important than the ideal of *temust*, the Kel Tamasheq nation.

Ganda Koy

Negotiations with the Malian state seemed to only involve the Kel Tamasheq and Arab communities, leaving other communities in the North with a general feeling of exclusion. The creation of the *Région* of Kidal after the Tamanrasset Agreement was generally seen as a privilege granted to the Kel Adagh. The tax exemptions and special economic status for the North were generally interpreted as tax exemptions for the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân and as a special economic programme in their favour, while the rebellion had caused most economic disruption in the Niger Bend. The strong stress on the integration of rebel forces in the Malian Armed Forces and civil service, regardless of qualifications, was seen as excluding other societies of the North and favouring men who had committed all sorts of crimes. Neither the Tamanrasset Agreement nor the National Pact, nor any other agreement between the MFUA and the Government afterwards, met with approval from the other communities in the North. The MFUA and government hardly made any efforts to explain the contents of the National Pact or any other agreement to the broader public either, and none of these had brought an end to fighting and banditry. On the contrary, it had brought banditry and rebels inside the cities. The Commission Monitoring the Cease Fire, the MFUA and the mixed patrols all had their seats in Gao. In the eyes of its inhabitants, the former rebels behaved as victors and occupying forces. On 13 May 1994, a group of armed Kel Tamasheq tried to steal a car parked outside the main mosque in Gao when Friday prayer came to an end. They killed the driver and a bystander who tried to prevent the theft. When the outraged congregation leaving the mosque tried to apprehend the assailants, they fled but two were captured. Subsequently the congregation brought the two victims of the theft in procession to Gao hospital, where they delivered the two bodies, and then started to lynch the two apprehended thieves. However, the returned comrades of the thieves to be lynched surprised the lynching party as they opened fire and entered the hospital. Firing from inside

on the crowd and in its halls on the hospitalised patients, the thieves killed eleven people.[56]

The massacre in the Gao hospital was the event that led to the creation of the Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy. Ganda Koy had a clear solution to the problems of the North and a clear-cut goal: Protecting the sedentary populations from rebel attacks and banditry and chase the 'white nomads' from the land of the Songhay. According to its adherents, the Army did not or could not provide security in the North. Ganda Koy would do so in its place. Protection of the sedentary population would be delivered at all costs, and Ganda Koy did not make a secret about what the price was.

> Fellow citizens of the North, let us sweep away all nomads from our villages and cities, even from our barren land! Tomorrow the nomads will install themselves there as dominators. Black sedentary peoples, from Nioro to Ménaka, let us organise, let us take up arms for the great battle that waits. Let us send the nomads back to the sands of the Azawad. The existing social balance cannot be modified. The social economic problems of the North need to be solved for all citizens without discrimination. Why are there development projects for the nomads? Why are there army posts for the nomads? Why are there seats in parliament for armed rebel-bandits? Because they took up arms and killed? That is inadmissible. The Gandakoye movement is born. Signed without us, the [National] Pact is against us. The realities in the North show this. We should create insecurity for the nomads as they have created it for the sedentary populations.[57]

In this quote from the Ganda Koy pamphlet *La Voix du Nord n° 00*, announcing its foundation, we find almost all reasons for the creation of the movement, as well as its basic interpretation of the Tamasheq rebellion and society: Insecurity; exclusion; racism; nomadic versus sedentary existence; nationalism; and the economy.

Although some of the Ganda Koy's founders were civilian inhabitants of Gao, its most prominent leaders were a number of army officers, members of the elite airborne division or 'red berets', the unit Amadou Toumani Touré had commanded until his coup d'état in 1991. The military commander of the Ganda Koy was Captain Abdoulaye Mahamahada Maïga, a red beret of Songhay origins who deserted on 9 May 1994, together with Lieutenants Lamine Diallo, Abdoulaye 'Blo' Cissé and part of their company. These men would form the core of the Ganda Koy, leading most attacks against the Arab and Tamasheq populations in the months to come. They did so in uniform, and

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[56] 'Les populations sédentaires doivent assurer leur auto-défense', *Le Républicain*, 26/05/1994; and 'Nord: la vraie fausse paix', *Le Républicain*, 18/05/1994.

[57] Anonymous I, 'Extrait du no 00 de La Voix du Nord: organe de combat des peuples sédentaires' (n.p. n.d.). Although generally referred to as La Voix du Nord, there is no text known outside the Extrait de la Voix du Nord.

perhaps with the help of comrades who had not deserted. Even the desertion of Captain Maïga and his men is questionable. They might well have been authorised to desert and create their movement by their superiors, and although any form of proof is lacking, the common opinion in Mali holds this to be the case. The army had for long been dissatisfied with the way the Government dealt with the rebellion and its leniency towards renegade rebels and the MFUA. Some officers still believed a military victory against the rebels was possible, despite their resounding defeats in 1990. Even if Maïga and his men had really deserted, no one made efforts to arrest them. The general public in Mali approved of Maïga's actions. Support organisations were created in Bamako and elsewhere.[58] Active financial support for the Ganda Koy even came from the vast Songhay commercial networks in Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, and from the indigenous Songhay community in Niger.[59] Rumours had it the Ganda Koy fighters were provisioned in arms by the dissatisfied part of the Malian Armed Forces.

The Ganda Koy followed strategies similar to the Tamasheq rebels. They made use of tecnicals for transport and attacks. In addition the Ganda Koy used boats to patrol and control the riverain villages. They made use of the environment the Songhay were used to and improved the fighting tactics the Songhay knew. In pre-colonial times, Songhay pirates and river borne raiding parties had been as much feared on the banks of the river Niger as Kel Tamasheq raiders had been in the desert.[60] The Ganda Koy set up a base on an island in the Niger River near the village of Fafa. On 26 May the Ganda Koy struck its first blow at the village of Tacharane, killing nine Kel Tamasheq. Hearing about the attack at Tacharane, the Commission Monitoring the Cease Fire started an investigation headed by MFUA and FIAA leader Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed. They quickly discovered that the attack had been launched by boat from the Ganda Koy riverain base at Fafa. Leading a mixed patrol, mostly made up of his own FIAA fighters, Zahaby went to Fafa and attacked the Ganda Koy base on 4 June. The Ganda Koy fighters fled, leaving most of their possessions behind. Among these were documents that proved the implication of Ganda Koy fighters in the massacre at Léré in 1991 that had cost the lives of fifty Bidân.[61] In turn, Zahaby's patrol was attacked on its way back from Fafa by an armoured car of the Malian Armed Forces. In the ensuing fight, the mixed patrol managed to put the armoured car out of action, but it cost the life of Boubacar ould Sadeck, FIAA's military commander. The next day, in retali-

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58 'Les ressortissants d'Ansongo à Bamako réclament la suppression du Pacte National', *Le Républicain*, 26/05/1994.

59 'Nord: la vraie fausse paix', *Le Républicain*, 18/05/1994.

60 Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. 1969.

61 'Comment fut démantelée la base de Gandakoy à Fafa', *Union*, 21/06/1994.

ation to Zahaby's action, seven integrated rebels had their throats cut by members of their unit at the army post of Gourma Rharous.[62] The day after, integrated rebels and FIAA fighters retorted by attacking the army post and prison at Niafunké, killing nine men and stealing two cars, while simultaneously attacking the village of Tonka.[63] One day later, on 10 June 1994, most integrated rebels had deserted their stations, with the exception of integrated MPA members. The leaders of the various movements, often staying in Gao or Bamako, returned to the rebel bases. Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed, until then a negotiating moderate, became one of the most intransigent military leaders, commanding the FIAA from its base at Almoustarat. His colleague Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine returned to the FPLA base at I-n-Taykaren. Negotiations and the semblance of peace provided by the National Pact mirage came to an end. What followed were the bloodiest months the North had witnessed.

These first days of renewed violence and the nature of the Ganda Koy were decisive for what followed. As the first encounters had been between Ganda Koy, the Army and members of the FIAA, it was the latter movement, which had until then remained in the background, which took the lead in fighting the Ganda Koy. Proof that the deserted soldiers forming the Ganda Koy had been among the 'butchers of Léré' in 1991 resolved FIAA determination to avenge actions by the Ganda Koy against their kin. Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed, the main MFUA spokesman and one of the most outspoken intellectuals within the movement, became Mali's 'public enemy number one'. His 'treason' of the National Pact and the reopening of hostilities provoked army support for the Ganda Koy to a point where it became unclear if attacks were committed by Captain Maïga's deserters or by regular troops. The Ganda Koy consisted mostly of soldiers and fighters of Songhay origins inhabiting the villages and cities at the banks of the Niger River. Therefore, most attacks made by the Ganda Koy were concentrated at the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân population living in the Niger Bend. Many Kel Tamasheq of the Niger Bend had settled after the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, often creating villages of their own. These sedentarised Kel Tamasheq had not been part of the *Teshumara* as they had stayed in Mali and neither had they been part of the *Tanekra*. All of Northern Mali was engaged in the war, but most victims fell in the riverain villages and camps in a spiral of attacks and counter-attacks. After the first week of fighting between movements, the attacks changed in nature. Both sides in the conflict now concentrated their attacks on civilians. If the Ganda Koy and the Army attacked Tamasheq and Bidân camps and villages, the FIAA and FPLA would

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62 'Nord: La montée des périls', *Union*, 21/06/1994.

63 'Les attaques des hommes de Zahaby', *L'Observateur*, 03/10/1994; 'Le lieutenant Abdoulaye Cissé dit Blo: le tueur de Ber demasqué', *Union*, 19/07/1994.

respond in attacking Songhay villages. The number of victims on both sides grew larger with every attack as the conflict dragged on. On 12 June the Army killed between 26 and 60 Kel Tamasheq and Bidân in the vicinity of Anderamboukane. The next day, the Ganda Koy and regular army units attacked a nomad camp between Niafunké and Léré, killing an estimated 25 inhabitants. That same day and the day after, pogroms ended the lives of around 75 Kel Tamasheq and Bidân inhabitants of Timbuktu. Most of the victims belonged to the city elite of merchants and administrators. Simultaneously the Ganda Koy ambushed a caravan on its way back from the Taoudenit salt mines, killing 60 caravaneers. On 19 June the Ganda Koy killed 160 inhabitants of a refugee camp near the village of Ber and in the village itself.[64] In that month alone, an estimated 450 people died under Ganda Koy attacks. Those who managed to flee the killings wrote desperate reports to the outside world.

> About ethnic cleansing in Timbuktu city and vicinity
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> Date, 15 June 94
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> Crimes committed by the Malian Armed Forces and Ganda Koy movement and vigilante brigade – commanded by Lieutenant Abdoulaye Cissé called Blo and Sabre Kouyta and Chabone Barka and Casounké and Hamidou Mahamane Siréy – and commander of red berets sent to Timbuktu on 29 May. AEM 26 of the Malian Armed Forces has made an airlift 2 flights/day for 14 days and [on] each flight 55 persons [from] the red berets and the paratroopers and their material [arrive]. On their arrival [they are] deployed in the northern neighbourhood – east and centre town. Instead of going to their barracks they are quartered in Arab and Tamasheq houses and their Headquarter is in the Badjindé neighbourhood [in centre of Timbuktu] so they do not have a mission order which [is signed by the] local commander nor the governor of Timbuktu. (...) They have transformed the city of Timbuktu into their Head Quarter to massacre the Tamasheq and Bidân and the notable groups pay these soldiers. [for] Each Tamasheq or Arab, they get 200,000 CFA. [for each] Individual killed. The house of each killed person is looted if he is sedentary and if he is a nomad his animals are confiscated. All valuable objects are seized. Bracelets, rings, shoes, boubous – etc – Their bodies are thrown to the vultures or on the dunes for the wild animals (...).[65]

These and other messages arrived at Amnesty International and other human rights organisations, but their reports on the situation in Northern Mali remained without much consequence. In other times they might have made headlines in

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64 'Le lieutenant Abdoulaye Cissé dit Blo: le tueur de Ber demasqué', *Union*, 19/07/1994; 'Droit de réponse à M. Houday ag Mohamed', *Union*, 13/09/1994; Amnesty International, *Mali: Ethnic conflict and killings of civilians* (21 September 1994). Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a98714.html

65 ag Mohamed Abba, H., Association des Refugiés et Victimes de la Répression de l'Azawad, *Appel aux institutions qui défendent les Droits de l'Homme* (30/06/1994). Handwritten document. Personal archives.

the Western press ('Mysterious Timbuktu scene of ethnic violence'...) but except for French international radio station RFI, the world was too absorbed by the Rwanda genocide to notice anything else going on in Africa.

In reprisal for Ganda Koy attacks and pogroms, the FIAA and FPLA started a campaign of counter terror. On 1 July 1994 the FIAA attacked the villages of Bintangoungou, Biragoungou and Tenenkou, killing eight people. The village of Soumpi followed with twelve victims. On 17 July rebels attacked the road between Niono and Nampala. In return, the Army killed seventeen Kel Tamasheq in Nampala itself the same day. The severest FIAA attack came on 25 July at the village of Bamba. That day was market day in Bamba. The well-visited market is held at a crossroads. Camel mounted FIAA elements approached the market from all four roads and simply opened fire, leaving forty people dead.[66] In October 1994, the FIAA executed an elaborated series of attacks on the army base at Gao and the Ganda Koy leaders of the town. On 20 October 20 1994 FIAA fighters attacked the army post at Ansongo, forty kilometres from Gao, with the purpose of drawing troops from the Gao garrison to Ansongo, which it did. On the evening of 22 October the FIAA attacked Gao itself. In an attempt to draw the soldiers out of their barracks, a number of fighters entered the city at night, shooting at random, setting fire to two petrol stations belonging to Ganda Koy founder Ali Bady Maïga, destroying a pharmacy and shooting at the barges on the Niger River. Another unit laid in ambush to intercept the Malian soldiers when they left the camp. However, the soldiers remained in their camp only to come outside when the FIAA fighters aborted their attack under the assault of an assembled Ganda Koy crowd. The next day, pogroms against the few remaining Bidân and Tamasheq in Gao followed. A crowd of Gaois and soldiers left for the nearby village of Inelfiss founded by the *fraction* Kel Essuq, Kel Takailalt. This village of *ineslemen* or religious specialists served as a *zawiya*, a religious centre of the Qâdiriyya Sufi brotherhood. The inhabitants were former nomads who had settled to promote religious learning and to practice agriculture. The village head, leader of the *zawiya* and tribal chief Mohamed Anara ag Hamadou was among the most respected Muslim scholars and civil community leaders of the region. Many inhabitants of Gao had sought his advice on religious matters. Nevertheless, on the accusation of having given hospitality to the FIAA unit the evening before their attack, the enraged crowd killed Mohamed Anara and fifty other villagers, while the Malian soldiers stood

[66] 'Tueries sauvages au Nord', *Union*, 05/08/1994.

by and watched.[67] The FIAA attack and the revenge of the Gao population left thirty-eight 'black' Gaois and a hundred eighty 'white' Gaois dead.[68]

Race and stereotypes resurface

The coming of the Ganda Koy led to a renewed discourse on race, racism, and nationalism within Malian society on the whole and particularly in the North. This discourse was fed with arguments taken from the stereotyped images of Tamasheq society I have discussed in previous chapters. But contrary to the 1950s and 1960s, the Kel Tamasheq community now had the means to defend itself against these stereotypes held in Mali. Tamasheq *évolués* not only conducted negotiations with the Malian Government, some of them were also engaged in returning the Ganda Koy polemics against the Kel Tamasheq community in the Malian press. The stereotyped image of the Tamasheq always served the same purpose, a purpose it serves all around the globe: Creating other and self, with strong emphasis on 'other'. In all periods concerned in this book, the Kel Tamasheq served as an 'uncivilised other' in Mali, who had the indecency of viewing themselves as superior. With the start of the rebellion, these negative stereotypes resurfaced to be developed by the Ganda Koy from a discourse on the 'uncivilised other' into a discourse on the 'life-threatening other' who should be exterminated. Self and other are concepts limited by, and made operational by, shifting boundaries. The concept of ethnic or group boundaries is extremely well developed, but I'd like to add a few comments.[69] The general idea on ethnic or other boundaries between groups is that they are seen as in flux or permeable. Identity is created in dialogue, and is negotiable. True as this might be, the boundaries of identity, self and other, are created or negotiated in context, and these contexts can vary within a number of parameters. The first is the scale of the group to be identified. One can safely say that the larger the category to be 'othered', the more general and essential the stereotype applied to it. Nuance is lost as the group to identify becomes larger and stereotypes need to be all-inclusive. The second is the nature of relations between groups, in relation to the size of the groups involved. These can vary from friendly jokes swapped at the bar after a successfully concluded deal, to curses hurled together with hand grenades in wartime. I do not think I surprise anyone by saying that in a context of war, the boundaries of identity are no longer permeable. They are raised with barbed wire, with defence lines on both sides. It is also plainly obvious that the more hostile relations between groups

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[67] 'Bilan de l'attaque de Gao', *Ataram*, n.d. November 1994; 'Gao et les échecs', *Le Démocrate*, 22/11/1994; 'Chronologie Cheick'.

[68] 'Nord: l'équipe sanglante de Zahabi', *Le Républicain*, 26/10/1994.

[69] My observations here are in reaction to: Barth, F., ed., 1969; Chapman, M., M. McDonald & E. Tonkin, eds, 1989; Eriksen, T.H. 1991, 1993; Horowitz, D. 1985.

are, the more the image of the other becomes hostile and, especially, reduced. It is not only negative, it is almost void of substance as substance involves nuance. This process of stronger essentialisation and the drawing of fixed boundaries of self and other, followed by a nuancing of images and the reopening of boundaries when the opposing parties felt the need for reconciliation, can be seen at work in the discourse accompanying the conflict between the Ganda Koy and the Kel Tamasheq.

The Ganda Koy's problem was on what stereotype and criteria the construction of the Kel Tamasheq other should be focused. Tamasheq society is heterogeneous and so are the other societies of the North. Apart from the Kel Tamasheq, Bidân and Songhay, the North is inhabited by the Fulbe; Bambara; Dogon; and Bozo. Nevertheless, one thing was relatively clear: the rebellion, and thus the problems of the other inhabitants of the North, had been organised and started by the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân from the Northernmost part of Mali, the Adagh and Azawad. From these groups, only the upper strata of society had been involved. The rebels could thus easily be 'othered' on criteria applicable to these groups only. The first was their racial appearance, their 'whiteness'. Most Ganda Koy discourse focused on the Kel Tamasheq as 'white people'. Historical discourse on the relations between the Songhay and the Kel Tamasheq played an important part as well. The Kel Tamasheq were not only portrayed as white, but especially as slavers who had enslaved the Songhay in pre-colonial times. Ideas about Tamasheq racism and practices of slavery resurfaced in Southern Mali with the rebellion. In May 1992, the Ivorian journalist Venance Konan tried to find the reasons for the rebellion while travelling in Mali. Although he may not have found them, the quotes from his interviews give a rare insight into the thinking of the average Malian on Tamasheq society, and its divisions between blacks and whites, masters and slaves. His own words too might give an impression of what the average West African intellectual might have thought on the same issues.

> From Saint-Louis to Addis Ababa, there runs a line above which people are white and feel different and superior to blacks. How often has one not heard Moroccans, Tunisians and Algerians say "you Africans". The peoples to the north of this line, one should not hide it, have always been and, in some cases, still are slavers. The Tuareg today still have black slaves. In Bamako, they have told me various stories about the relations between Tuareg and blacks and between Tuareg and their slaves. Masters who break the arms of disobedient slaves, bella slave students obliged to serve them. (...) Seydou Boiré, a geographer who lived for a long time in Tamasheq country gave me a rather instructive case: "One day, we drank tea with a Tamasheq

> chief. And he said to us, as if it was the most normal thing in the world, that it was his dream to bridle a black man and to ride him as a horse".[70]

The Ganda Koy interpreted the Tamasheq rebellion as an attempt to regain control over the Niger Bend and its inhabitants on a basis of their racial superiority. The author of Ganda Koy's pamphlet '*La Voix du Nord n° 00*' gave this explanation for the outbreak of revolt in clear terms.

> Not one armed rebel-bandit claims the Azawad, but he seeks recognition of the right to dominate black peoples. (...) The armed rebels-bandits are racists, slave-drivers; they consider all blacks as slaves, as inferior beings. Even their intellectuals hold these ideas. They refuse to live together with blacks. At best they tolerate blacks.[71]

Ganda Koy spokesmen made statements of the same kind in the national newspapers.

> Again, it will never be said in the records of history that the Songhay people (they exist) have meekly accepted to being delivered, their hands and feet bound, to the slave-drivers of the desert, spurned straight from medieval obscurity; pro-slavers since they are only driven to this so called Tuareg rebellion by feudal, slave-driving, racist motives, and low mercantile considerations.[72]

The second element of Ganda Koy othering discourse was Tamasheq and Bidân social organisation. The societies of the Adagh and Azawad, be they Bidân or Tamasheq, were hierarchical, hence feudal, and especially nomadic. The idea of the lazy, anarchist, unattached nomad who should be sedentarised and civilised was as alive in 1994 as it had been under Modibo Keita. Analysing the problems of the North, an anonymous administrator in Gao gave his view of Tamasheq society and its problems:

> We have already mentioned nomadic existence. It was long deformed by the Western, particularly the French, press. One brings to mind the pride of the "blue men of the desert" in support of the Tuareg lobby. With regards to this subject, the picture presented by a European development worker who lived in Kidal for a year speaks volumes: "It is true that the Tuareg are proud, but proud of what? Everything but of work which they think is debasing. Rather, they are proud to beg, steal and kill". There is evidence that gardening yields high profits in Kidal. The Tuareg are accustomed to gifts and it is rare to find Tuareg who think that, in lack of livestock, they could commit themselves to agriculture or other forms of production.[73]

Set in a language of reason and analysis, we rediscover all stereotypes of nomad unproductiveness and the type of character nomadic existence produces: Lazi-

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[70] Konan, 'La libération des sédentaires', *Ivoir Soir*, 27 & 31/05/1992, in *Libertitres* no 14 (July August 1992).

[71] Anonymous I, 'Extrait du no 00 de La Voix du Nord: Organe de combat des peuples sédentaires' (n.p. n.d.).

[72] 'Ganda Koy l'oeil du Caïn de la IIIème République', *Le Tambour*, 27/09/1994.

[73] 'Pourquoi une rébellion touarègue au Mali?', *Le Républicain*, 14/12/1994.

ness; deceitfulness; and bloodthirstiness. Hence, in a desire to erase the other by making him akin to self, they should be converted into civilised sedentary citizens practising agriculture, just like the Songhay do. Apparently, the thoughts of administrators on Tamasheq society had not much changed since the days of Modibo Keita.

Where the Kel Tamasheq had not been able to provide an answer to the essentialising stereotypes during the 1950s and 1960s, they now had the means to defend themselves in words. Freedom of the press in Mali ensured that not only the Ganda Koy or the Government could be heard. The Kel Tamasheq also had a sympathising press. The newspapers *l'Union*; *Nouvel Horizon*; and *Ataram, le vent du Nord* ensured that those who were interested could read a different story. Particularly *l'Union* and its editor-in-chief Houdaye ag Mohamed ardently exposed the atrocities committed by the Ganda Koy and offered a platform for Tamasheq intellectuals of the more radical movements to counter the accusations made. In an interview with *Nouvel Horizon* in September 1994, Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine aired his grievances about the image of the Kel Tamasheq in no uncertain terms.

> From Modibo Keita to Alpha Oumar Konaré, from Moussa Traoré to General Amadou Toumani Touré, the Tuareg question has caused the flow of much blood, ink, sweat and tears, without ever being fully understood by the national opinion. Because the Tuareg have always been treated by certain compatriots as nationless. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as slavers. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as separatists. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as racists. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as invaders. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as strangers. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as traitors. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as dictators. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as outlaws. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as a useless part of the nation. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as fugitives. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as mercenaries. Because the Tuareg have been constrained by certain compatriots to be eternally on the move. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as "the darlings" of the Western and Arab countries.[74]

Iyad ag Ghali, remaining outside the conflict in the Niger Bend, was often interviewed by the newspapers *L'Essor* and *Les Echos*, which tended to be more government-supporting, in which he could give his views on the reasons and origins of the conflict. From the fall of Moussa Traoré in March 1991, and the signing of the National Pact in April 1992, to the renewal of hostilities in

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[74] 'Zeidane ag Sidalamine réagit', *Nouvel Horizon Quotidien*, 06/09/1994.

May 1994, the rebellion was not presented as a separatist movement in the Malian press. On the contrary, the *Tanekra* had been presented as concerned with the improvement of the living conditions in the neglected North on the whole, and bringing about the fall of Moussa Traoré's dictatorial regime. Thus, instead of nationless traitors and dictators, the rebels had been worthy sons of the fatherland in helping to bring democracy about. Iyad ag Ghali was prone to underline this interpretation of 'his' rebellion in 1990.

> It is certain that the start of the movements' fight has played an important role in bringing democracy by weakening the dictatorial regime. In its days, the MPA had formulated the problems of the North in terms of social, political, economic and cultural demands.[75]

The reconciliatory stance made by the Malian press, confirmed by Iyad ag Ghali, backfired in 1994 when the promises of the National Pact were not delivered. Many Southern intellectuals and politicians blamed the movements for demanding a special political and economic status for the North. The MFUA's unyielding stance towards the application of the National Pact, despite Southern resistance and the impossibility of meeting all demands, were seen as unpatriotic in comparison to their patriotic attitude in bringing about the fall of Traoré. The Kel Tamasheq had suffered under Traoré, but so had all Malians, and the honour of getting the credit of Traoré's fall should suffice as extra compensation. The idea that the rebellion had been about separation after all resurfaced. Ethnic and racial motives regained ground, not only among the Ganda Koy but also among the Southern political elite.

> If we put aside the suspicion of "disqualifying" secessionist intentions of certain rebel movements, we should recognise the merit of the armed revolt of the Azawad in starting the struggle leading to the fall of the decadent regime in Bamako. (...) By giving themselves an essential and distinct ethnic appearance, while sharing practically the same living conditions with other Malians who have never been consulted, nor associated, nor incorporated, the suspicion of a difference in pigment as a vehicle for secession re-emerges.[76]

Othering and conflict emphasise not only the essential features of the enemy, but also of the originating group. The Ganda Koy could claim essential traits opposite to those of the Kel Tamasheq rebels. They were 'black' and sedentary, and they lived along the banks of the Niger River. The emblem of the Ganda Koy consisted of a canoe crossed with a hoe and a harpoon, representing the Niger River; sedentary life; and defence. The *bellah* community of the Niger Bend shared these traits. Despite being part of Tamasheq society and culture,

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[75] 'L'avenir du Nord. La société civile est incontournable affirme Iyad ag Ghali', *L'Essor* , 06/10/1993.

[76] 'La Rebellion au Mali: Qualités et Vices', *Cauris*, February 1993.

many *bellah* participated in the Ganda Koy, which is less surprising than it seems. Elsewhere, I have described the differences between the *bellah* and the free Kel Tamasheq in their experience of the period between the 1950s and 1990s. The politics of the late colonial period and the Keita Regime brought them emancipation. *Alfellaga* did not concern them. The droughts brought them hunger and exile too, but to different places in Africa. Barely any *bellah* were part of the *Teshumara* or *Tanekra* and their community suffered just as hard under rebel attacks as the others. In June 1994, *bellah* intellectuals attempted to create a special *bellah* movement, the Mouvement pour l'éveil du Monde Bellah.[77] This movement never came off the ground. Most *bellah* simply joined the Ganda Koy. But the attempt to create a movement, and the reasons invoked in the article announcing its birth, do give an insight in the reasons why *bellah* joined the Ganda Koy.

> Considering the reigning climate of distrust between white and black in the North, between integrated rebels and the FAS [Malian Armed Forces]; considering that the few erring *bellah* (there are less than 10) who found themselves in the rebellion have been killed, in a cowardly way, by the "red", the assassination of Colonel Bilal Saloum by the "*imghad*" of the ARLA forms a notorious example; considering that the Songhay have created the Ganda Koy movement; considering that the Malian Government and people have been let down by the manipulators of the [National] Pact (Commissioner for the North and Malian rank of the MFUA); considering that thousands of *bellah* have been removed from their land by the rebels and armed bandits; considering the marginalisation of the *bellah* community (...) The Mouvement pour l'éveil du Monde Bellah (...) Informs the national and international opinion that a *bellah* is different from a Tuareg and that a *haratin* is different from a Moor [Bidân]. The Mouvement pour l'éveil du Monde Bellah fights against the new "Western apartheid" which the MFUA and the Commissioner for the North want to put in place in Northern Mali: A white, armed minority, controlling power and economic means, to the detriment of the Malian state and people, and dominating a black majority.[78]

Due to army repression and some results made by the movements in negotiating with the state, the rebel movements attracted more recruits. Most of these new recruits either joined in search of protection, or because there was something to gain. With the rising animosity against 'white' Kel Tamasheq, many had no choice. Either they fled, or they joined, or they fell victim to pogroms. The *bellah* community suffered less under pogroms, but in their turn suffered

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[77] 'Les Belahs réclament une gestion partagée du Pacte National', *Le Républicain*, 01/06/1994.

[78] Ibid. The *Comissariat au Nord* mentioned here is an inter-Ministerial office, created under the National Pact, to implement its social and economic terms.

under rebel attacks.[79] Many *bellah* had become internally displaced people within Mali as they had felt forced to leave their homesteads. Few had the chance to integrate into the movements. Their fate was cruder than that of the refugees outside Mali (as the latter at least had some support from international organisations), while simultaneously being excluded from the rebel forces. Pre-existing animosity towards their former masters also made many *bellah* join in the repression of free Kel Tamasheq by the Army and the Ganda Koy. When the Army attacked the Kel Tamasheq and Arab community in Léré in 1991, many *bellah* joined in, guarding the survivors who were more or less interned outside the village for more than a year.

> The *bellah* took our possessions, engaged in trade in our place, set up shops almost everywhere in the South, killed our cattle. Others lived with our herds in the bush. They also killed people in the bush and looted their camps. During the last dry season, we had neither access to the wells, nor to the market because of the problems [between the Malian Armed Forces and the rebels]. The *bellah* were charged to survey us. Some we knew, others we didn't. At night, military vehicles patrolled to prevent our escape. They threw stones at us when we tried to leave.[80]

Like the Ganda Koy, the Mouvement pour l'éveil du Monde Bellah used racial motives as the *Tanekra* had largely excluded the *bellah* community from its actions. Finally, the *bellah*, like most other inhabitants of the North, rejected the National Pact. They felt excluded from its stipulations and saw it as nothing but a privilege for their former masters. Support for the Ganda Koy in the *bellah* community and the racial view of the problems of the North by the *bellah* themselves meant that, on the one hand, Ganda Koy discourse could not be simply anti-Kel Tamasheq. To this day, most *bellah* see themselves as part of the Kel Tamasheq community, but as second-rank citizens. On the other hand, opting for racial discourse had become less problematic and the only option left to other the Kel Tamasheq accused of supporting or joining the rebellion. Despite the failure of the Mouvement pour l'Eveil du Monde Bellah and the integration of *bellah* in the Ganda Koy, *bellah* political organisation did come off the ground with the founding of a regional political party in Ménaka: the Union Malienne pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UMADD). The *Cercle* of Ménaka has a large *bellah* population, next to a large 'free' Kel Tamasheq population. The UMADD was often seen as 'the *bellah* party', although many of its adherents came from the *imghad* population of the *Cercle*. Its two main leaders belong to the *tewsit* Ishidenharen, one of which is of *bellah*

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[79] It has to be noted that Kel Tamasheq of *bellah* origins also fell victim to pogroms in Bamako, if it was known that they were Kel Tamasheq.

[80] Association des Refugiés et Victimes de la Répression de l'Azawad, *Témoignage de Fati Wellet Hamomo, retenue en hotage à Léré de mai 1991 à mai 1992* (Bassikounou, 26/05/1992). Personal archives.

origins. During the communal elections of 1999, the UMADD managed to gain 10 of the 21 seats in the Ménaka council, thus forming a political force to be reckoned with.

The rebellion had been instigated to achieve Tamasheq independence. This posed a threat to the existence of the Malian state. Therefore, nationalism became an important feature of the Ganda Koy. To justify its existence, it claimed that it defended the nation in ardent patriotism against people who, it was argued, did not want to be Malian and in fact were not Malian. It is significant that the Songhay movement quickly changed its name from simply Ganda Koy to Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy. As most nationalist discourses in wartime, that of the Ganda Koy was directed foremost against the enemy, instead of in praise of their own nation, which in this case meant that the negative stereotypes of the Kel Tamasheq and Arab communities formed the most important discourse in the movement. After being attacked by the FIAA in June 1994, the inhabitants of Niafunké wrote an open letter to the Malian press to complain about their fate and to strengthen their resolve to find a solution.

> Faced with this situation and total abandonment by the Government, we, the inhabitants of Northern Mali, are faced with a choice between three solutions: A. To accept being the slaves of the Tuareg rebels. In fact, this is one of their principal aims. The Tuareg culture and mentality has always made them feel racially superior to others. Therefore, they have never taken up productive work and will never do so. They only put effort into bedding their big-breasted women and robbing decent people who gain their livelihood by the sweat of their backs. B. To abandon our land to the profit of the nomads. This hypothetical option would permit them to reach their goal: the creation of a Tuareg state, based on the use of ethnic blacks for chores and productive labour. Historically, the land in question has been owned and tended by the Bambara kingdom of Segu, the Peulh empire of Macina, the Mali Empire and the Songhay Empire (...) In our history, there has never existed a Tuareg empire or kingdom. C. To defend our fatherland by all means.[81]

In nationalist war rhetoric, the other is not just the other. Rather, it is an invading other from outside. Most rebels had been involved in the *Teshumara* and *Tanekra*, which meant they had lived in exile outside Mali for a long period. This was put forward as a sign that the rebels were not Malians. After the FIAA attack on Gao, in October 1994, passports were found on the bodies of killed FIAA attackers. These Malian passports were issued in Tamanrasset and N'djamena, which led the pro-Ganda Koy press to conclude that Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed's FIAA had hired Algerian and Chadian mercenaries, des-

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[81] 'Le nord à la lisière de la guerre civile. Nous refusons le diktat touareg', *Le Républicain*, 22/06/1994.

pite evidence to the contrary; issued abroad, the passports were Malian.[82] Rhetoric on 'the other' was balanced by a discourse extolling the virtue of the Malian nation. This nationalist discourse was built on the same elements as those put forward in the 1950s and 1960s to construct the Malian nation: History; fraternity; honour; dignity; and labour. The sole missing element was a bright future. Indeed, in wartime, the future hardly looks idyllic. In the quote above, we find all these elements together. The Ganda Koy strongly invoked the glorious Malian past. Unsurprisingly, most attention was paid to the medieval Songhay Empire and its leaders, the Askia dynasty. The emphasis on the history of the Songhay Empire as an example to the present-day Malian nation should also be seen as countering the emphasis placed on Mande history and historical importance in the official Malian historiography. The Ganda Koy stressed that it should not be forgotten by the Malian South, which remained indifferent towards the problems of the North; and that the Songhay were Malians and equally important to the creation of the Malian nation as the Mande. To a large extent, Ganda Koy nationalist discourse countered the 'Mandefication' of Mali. But other empires, kingdoms and heroes were invoked too, including Ghana, Mali, *cheick* Ahmad Lobbo, *Elhajj* Umar Tall and Samory Touré. Surprisingly, the Kel Tamasheq heroes Cheiboun, *amenokal* of the Tengueregif and victor over the French conqueror Bonnier; and Firhun ag Elinsar, *amenokal* of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram, were included too. With regards to the latter, it was stressed by many *bellah* that, despite being *amenokal*, he was black and therefore must have been of slave origins. As I have discussed earlier, the colour differences made within Tamasheq society, which reserved *sattefen* or bluish black to the *imushagh*, had effectively been exchanged for a 'colour scheme' only including 'white' nobles and 'black' slaves. The sole picture taken of Firhun shows him to be *sattefen*, hence 'black', hence of slave origins. However, in contrast to the importance of the Songhay Empire and other medieval empires in forming the Malian nation, the Ganda Koy stressed there had never been an 'Empire of the Azawad'. The Kel Tamasheq had thus not contributed to the shaping of the Malian historical nation. Despite the virtues of Firhun and Cheiboun in resisting French conquest, the Kel Tamasheq remained outsiders.

The return of peace: October 1994 to March 1996

The attack at Gao and the massacre of the Kel Essuq Kel Takailelt *zawiya*, and of the 'white' population of Gao was the last of its kind. It more or less directly led the Songhay and Tamasheq civilian population to wonder what was happening to their communities. The goal of the FIAA attack on Gao had been to force

[82] 'Gao et les échecs', *Le Démocrate*, 22/11/1994.

the Malian Government back into negotiations and acceptance of the National Pact, recently abandoned by the Government under popular pressure as unworkable since it did not account for the sedentary population. The FIAA wanted to show the Malian Government, the Army, and the Ganda Koy that even the larger cities of Mali were not safe from rebel attacks and that the military capacity of the movement had not withered away. In this respect the attack was partly successful. The inhabitants of Northern Mali, 'black sedentary' as well as 'white nomad', realised that neither the Army, nor the rebel movements, nor the Ganda Koy could or would protect and defend them. On the contrary, only further spiralling violence could be expected. In realising this danger and the situation the population found itself in, the chiefs of the *tewsiten* and the village chiefs of the *Cercle* of Bourem, and representatives of the Ganda Koy signed a peace treaty of their own in November 1994, irrespective of the National Pact and other engagements between state and rebel movements. The local Bourem treaty arranged mutual protection; abstinence from violence; and especially land tenure and water rights.[83] In the Niger Bend, pastoral and sedentary communities largely depended on each other in daily life. The nomad population depended on the farmers' agricultural production for supplies in grain. In return, the farmers depended on the nomads for manure and the sales and transport of their surplus products, and they often put their own livestock into the care of nomad families. These relations had been disrupted during the conflict. Relations between sedentary and pastoral communities were not the only ones damaged by the conflict. Due to the absence of the state and parallel to the conflicts between the movements, many Tamasheq and Bidân tribes and *fraction*s had engaged in hostilities between themselves over pasture, wells, and internal hierarchy. By 1994, small arms abounded in Northern Mali. The Bourem Pact focused on daily relations between nomadic and sedentary inhabitants of the *Cercle*, by formally regulating practices that had been normal prior to the conflict. The sedentary population and the Ganda Koy would give the nomads access to the village markets and the watering sites for the herds at the banks of the Niger River, which had been denied during the rebellion. New to the agreement was that, contrary to practices over the last years, the village heads and the Ganda Koy would offer protection to the nomads. In return, the nomads would abstain from stealing animals belonging to the village inhabit-

[83] 'Un accord de paix entre Ganda Koy et Touaregs à Bourem', *Le Tambour*, 29/11/1994. The concerned fractions were the Takarangat Koual, Takarangat Shaggaran, Targuiguit Koual and – Shaggaran, Kel Ghela, Inheren, Kel Tangabo, Ibogholiten, Kel Titadialet and Ahl Sidi Alamine Foulane (Bidân). Most of the concerned fractions are 'river Idnan'; Idnan inhabiting the area south to the Adagh towards the Niger river. The concerned villages were Bourem Djindo, Baria, Karabassane, Bia, Moudakane, Dengha, Ouani, Tondibi, Hâ, Bourem, Maza, Konkoron and Hawa.

ants; would not carry arms when entering the villages; and would warn the villagers of upcoming rebel attacks. The latter arrangement would effectively prevent attacks by rebels or renegades, as the *fraction*s of the *Cercle* would certainly know of upcoming actions. With this agreement, the *fraction*s of the *Cercle* of Bourem explicitly denied support to the rebel forces. The Bourem Pact also provided for the creation of a committee to oversee its implementation, analogous to the committees created through the National Pact.[84] This committee would play a key role in promoting similar local agreements between *fraction*s and villages in the area throughout 1995, which were included in the Bourem Pact, and the peace agreements between the movements. This local peace treaty on local initiative meant the beginning of the establishment of a lasting peace.

The initiative for peace came mainly from the civil population, but most rebels too had grown weary of conflict. After six years of fighting, all parties were simply exhausted. Those *ishumar* who had fought for an ideal in 1990, had seen nothing of it. Unity was far from being attained, the movements only fought among each other. Tamasheq independence had been ruled out by the more pragmatic leaders.

> You know, of all the fighters who had been trained in Libya, perhaps only twenty percent understood the goal. The others had understood nothing, they just went along. With the Kel Tamasheq, there is this thing we call *teylelil*: If there is one who has a goal, the rest will follow automatically. Without knowing what the goal is, without thinking. That is *teylelil*. But we are also *jâhil* [ignorant, anarchists]. Give a *jâhil* a gun and the gun controls the man, not the man the gun.[85]

Fighters who had joined after the outbreak of revolt in fear of their lives and desiring to see their kin protected had come to realise that the protracted fighting only brought further insecurity. As one former rebel formulated his experience of the rebellion in 1995:

> I was in Libya in 1990. One day, I killed a reptile. A Libyan officer approached me and asked me why I had killed it. Before he went away, he said to me: "the reptile you just killed is more Libyan than you are". We started the rebellion. As time passed, the massacres between Malians began. There came a moment when we, the rebels, symbolised terror (...) Many Malians had enough of it, they wanted nothing to do with us. Then, I remembered the Libyan reptile and I started to fear that one day I would be considered less than a reptile in my own country.[86]

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84 'Un accord de paix entre Ganda Koy et touareg à Bourem', *Le Tambour*, 29/11/1994.

85 Interview with Lamine ag Bilal. Gao, 20/06/1999.

86 'Sites de cantonnement de Bourem – Kidal – Ménaka. Le triomphe du patriotisme', *Les Echos*, 10/02/1996.

As his leaders had done before him, this former rebel saw himself explicitly as a Malian. The idea that the Kel Tamasheq could be something else than Malian had given way to more pragmatic aims, but pragmatic leaders and intellectuals who had negotiated for as much autonomy and economic privilege as possible had been faced with a structural non-application of the National Pact and most other agreements made afterwards; outright hostility towards the National Pact culminating in the actions of the Ganda Koy; the total break-up of the rebel movements; and their incapacity to control their men. A new framework for resolving the conflict was needed. The initiative to end internal conflicts and to reunite the movements, by force if need be, came from the MPA and the FPLA. The movement representing the one tribe most involved in preparing the revolt – the Ifoghas – and the movement representing the most intransigent secessionists – the FPLA – took the initiative to end the fight and thus to give up the idea of *akal n temust*, Tamasheq independence. Throughout 1994, the MPA, with the help of the Malian Armed Forces and the Ifoghas militia led by *amenokal* Intalla ag Attaher, had fought the 'dissident movements'. The conflict between MPA and ARLA had been militarily settled in favour of the MPA. After defeating the ARLA, the MPA successfully attacked the Idnan militia BAUA, and the FPLA dissidents of the FNLA. After forcefully integrating BAUA and FNLA fighters in their ranks, or at least annihilating their fighting power, the MPA directed itself against the FIAA, again with active support from the Malian Armed Forces. In November 1994, the Army and MPA forces successfully attacked the FIAA base at Assid El Biat. The attack and conquest of the base was filmed and broadcasted on Malian TV.[87] However, despite military success, the ARLA and other movements remained existent and could pose a new threat to the MPA. Therefore, a final peace agreement was signed between the MPA and ARLA through the mediation of FPLA leader Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine on 15 December 1994.[88] The agreement was also signed by the FPLA itself and was placed explicitly under the umbrella of the Bourem Pact, sidestepping the National Pact. By giving supervision over the agreement to civilian leaders of the Bourem community, the movements acknowledged that further initiatives for peace should come from civil society. The agreement between ARLA, MPA and FPLA implicitly stated that the three movements would together fight 'renegade rebels' and 'bandits', in other words: the FIAA, which had taken the lead in fighting the Ganda Koy. In order to gain support, FIAA leader Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed

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87 'Démantèlement de la base rebelle de Assid El Biat', *Le Malien*, 28/11/1994. In fact, the FIAA, knowing of this attack, had already evacuated most men and material before the attack was launched.

88 'ARLA – MPA: Signature d'un accord de paix', *Amawal*, 27/12/1994.

had toured the surrounding countries. In 1994, rumours circulated that Zahaby, who spent much time in Algiers, had sought and gained the support of the Algerian FIS. All this ensured that the FIAA was as much of a threat to the other movements as to the Ganda Koy. In the weeks prior to the formal treaty between the MPA, ARLA and FPLA, the MPA and FPLA had reached an informal agreement with the Ganda Koy to fight the FIAA together.[89] This informal agreement was followed by a formal treaty between the FPLA and the Ganda Koy on 11 January 1995. Like the treaty between ARLA, MPA and FPLA, this treaty between Ganda Koy and FPLA was placed under the auspices of the Bourem Pact. Besides signing the treaty with its sister movements, FPLA leader Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine also came to terms with the Malian Armed Forces. On 11 December 1994, the Malian Army agreed to the reinsertion in its ranks of those FPLA fighters who had been integrated into the Army under the provision of the National Pact, but who had deserted after the outbreak of hostilities in May 1994.[90] Finally, in June 1995, Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed stated that the FIAA would from now on adhere to the National Pact, which in diplomatic terms meant he gave up the fight against the Ganda Koy and the other movements.

Peace between the movements led to a climate in which civilians could start to reconstruct relations among the various communities of the North. The reconstruction of relations of trust and cooperation between civil societies in Mali was just as necessary as those between movements. To reinstall trust, so called *Rencontres Intercommunautaires*, Inter Community Meetings, were organised by leaders of the communities involved. The first of these had resulted in the Bourem Pact. A second meeting was held at the end of March 1995 at Aglal, close to Timbuktu, to reconcile the communities in the Niger Bend. A third was held in September 1995 at M'bouna near lake Faguibine, to pacify the surrounding area. By then, the NGO community inside Mali, notably the Norwegian AEN, had become an active supporter of these meetings and helped in financing and organising these meetings. From October 1995 to March 1996, the AEN and other NGOs supported the organisation of 37 meetings.[91] The Inter Community Meetings – called *takoubilt* in Tamasheq – would become a necessary and institutionalised part of Northern Malian regional politics after the official end of the conflict.[92] Besides reconciliation, the meetings also served to re-establish power balances between those groups who participated

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89 'Le nord renaît!', *Le Démocrate*, 06/12/1994.

90 'ARLA – MPA: Signature d'un accord de paix', *Amawal*, 27/12/1994.

91 Lode, K. 1996: 54.

92 The word *takoubilt* was probably borrowed from the Kabylian word *thakbailt*, which means 'tribal gathering' but also political meeting in the discourse of Berber activists in Algeria.

and organised the meetings. The meetings were organised on the initiative of local powerbrokers: *Fraction* chiefs; the heads of local NGOs; and powerful former rebels. The organisers sought the financial support of foreign NGOs who often provided means of transport and money to buy the necessary food for the participants: Rice; sheep and goats; tea and sugar. Invitations to all communities involved were then extended, as well as to the local administration (often also involved in the organisation), which often formally presided over the meeting. The meetings involved extensive discussion between representatives of all *tew-siten*, often by mouth of the chiefs or religious leaders, on development; disarmament; banditry; and land and water tenure. Festivities, such as camel races, dance parties, and concerts by Tinariwen or other local bands, complemented discussions. The *takoubilt* meetings still form part of the political landscape in Northern Mali, although a number of them have become world music festivals and tourist attractions.

History, a source for the justification of hate in the previous months, was now invoked to reconcile the warring parties. Whereas in early 1994 the Ganda Koy stressed the otherness of the Kel Tamasheq and the historical difference between Songhay and Kel Tamasheq, now the common history and origins of the two peoples were presented.

> Even legend has cursed war between Songhay and Tuareg. Everyone who travels the Niger River knows the two stones called the Targui and the Songhay. According to legend, they were two warriors of the same mother. The one had a Tuareg father, the other a Songhay father. During ethnic troubles each was ready to defend his father's side. Despite their mother's tears, they were ready to attack each other. God changed them into stones looking at each other without ever touching.[93]

Another element used in normalising relationships was the concept of *senankuya*: Joking relationships between cousins or ethnic groups. Like in Tamasheq society, Mande social relationships are largely based on hierarchies and inequalities. These hierarchies and inequalities are mostly expressed through age or generation and kinship relations, finding expression and justification in the Sunjata epic or like epics in the Mande culture area. The social inequality between group members is the fundamental principle of day-to-day social interaction between individuals.[94] However, they cannot form the basis of interaction between groups of strangers. The institution of the joking relationship, or *senankuya* in Bamanakan, helps to overcome this handicap. Joking relationships allow the denial of hierarchy through the ritualised exchange of standardised jokes and insults. Non-hierarchical relations exist on the family level between cross cousins and between grandparents and grandchildren. They

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93 'Un regard de plus sur le problème du Nord', *Le Tambour*, 22/11/1994.

94 See Jansen, J. & C. Zobel, eds, 1996; and Nathan, F. 1972.

can also exist between certain families, who are thus perceived as having a cousin relationship. This is then extended towards members of other social groups with the same family name or *jamu*, who are therefore seen as actual family. The equality created between social groups through these joking relations is seen as primarily preventing violence and bloodshed. Originally used within social groups and between adjacent ethnic groups on a small scale, *senankuya* was now taken up to form the basis of inter-ethnic relationships within the Malian nation-state at large. As a traditional denial of hierarchy and the expression of equality, *senankuya* relations were highly functional in stressing the equality of the nation's members and member-groups. The most often quoted example to prove the existence of *senankuya* relations between ethnic groups is that between the Bozo fishermen and the Dogon, whose elaborate *senankuya* excludes both bloodshed and intermarriage.[95] All ethnic groups, it was postulated, stood in *senankuya* relations, putting them on equal footing within the nation. Thus, *senankuya* is said to exist between the Kel Tamasheq and the Dogon, between the Fulbe and craftsmen in general (as an extension between Fulbe and their own casted craftsmen), between the Bambara and the Somono (which are a kind of casted, but ethnified Bambara fishermen), et cetera. The equality between ethnic groups through *senankuya* relations, involving elaborate ritual insults and duties of mediation in dispute, was invoked to reconcile the disrupted nation which should include the Kel Tamasheq. On 30 May 1994, evaluating the progress in the implication of the National Pact after a fresh round of negotiations with the MFUA, and warning against ethnic war after the creation of the Ganda Koy, President Konaré explicitly brought *senankuya* relationships into play to stress national unity.

> If nothing else, we have to prove ourselves worthy of this rich and living history of the people who invented and instituted the "*senankuya*", an alliance of totemic fraternity as sacred, if not more sacred, than consanguinity.[96]

After the end of the conflict in 1996, *senankuya* would play an important role in both explaining the conflict and in reconciliation. In 1999 the Malian director Cheik Oumar Sissoko released the magnificent movie *La Genèse*. The

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[95] The idea that joking relationships could inform the relations between ethnic groups in Mali was expressed in several interviews I had with members of the former Keita and Traoré regimes. The idea that it manages relations between members of different ethnic groups was brought home to me during various formal and informal conversations. Literature on the subject seems to be non-existent. The debate on the issue of joking relations as a means to overcome ethnic antagonisms is extended by Ndiaye, who argues that joking relations could serve as a basis for new pan-African international relations. Ndiaye, A.R. 1993.

[96] 'Le Président réaffirme la gestion nationale et équitable du pacte', *L'Essor*, 30/05/1994.

movie is inspired by the Book of Genesis – chapters 23 to 37 – on the brothers Jacob, the pastoralist, and Esau, the hunter, and Hamor, the farmer from whom Jacob bought a piece of land. The story focuses on the conflict between Hamor and Jacob over the raping and kidnapping of Jacob's daughter Dinah by Hamor's son Sichem (Genesis 34: 1-31). The movie is explicitly set in a Malian context. It was shot on location in Hombori and Ansongo, two villages that had suffered under the conflict. Jacob and his family wear Tamasheq clothes (topped with Fulbe hats) and live in Tamasheq tents. Hamor and his family wear the traditional attire of Mande farmers. After the scene of revenge on Hamor's village by Jacob's sons for kidnapping their sister, a long scene of about twenty minutes follows. This scene depicts how both parties, presented in the film as cousins, are reconciled by concluding a *senankuya* pact to stabilise their peaceful relationship after war. Sissoko explained the subject of his film in an interview.

> I wrote the script of this film about fratricide five years ago [i.e. in 1995], and it shows what is happening in my country right now, in the southwest and in the northeast. Something like one hundred and fifty people died recently in a conflict between the Soninke and the Fulani. There are also conflicts between Arabs and Moors in the area around Gao. (...) In the film, you have peasants and farmers. They live together for centuries. They know each other very well, and they share many things. But because they know each other so well, they also have many reasons to hate each other. In the film, like right now in Mali and across Africa, they are choosing to focus on these. Why? They share customs, they marry together. But because of poverty, because of money, there is all this jealousy and envy and ultimately fratricide.[97]

Parallel tot the Inter Community Meetings the UN organisations UNIDIR and UNDP actively supported the disarmament of the rebel movements, including the Ganda Koy, and their integration in the Malian Army or in civil society. Most important in the reconciliation between the Ganda Koy and the MFUA movements was that the latter agreed to integrate the Ganda Koy in the National Pact. More prosaically put, Ganda Koy fighters could integrate into the Malian Armed Forces under the provision of the National Pact. This meant the Ganda Koy gave up its resistance against the Pact. It was now no longer seen as privileging the nomads and therefore 'directed against the sedentary population of the North'. The integration of former rebels into the Malian Armed Forces and into civil society was organised along the lines of a proposal made by UNIDIR consultant Lieutenant-General Henny van der Graaf. On the initiative of President Konaré, and as part of a more general study on this topic in West Africa, van der Graaf and his team had studied ways to halt the spread of small

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[97] Interview with Cheik Oumar Sissoko by Ray Privett, 03/01/2000. http://www.britannica.com/magazine/article?content_id=252652&pager.offset=30

arms in Northern Mali and the disarmament of the movements in 1994. They concluded that no action could be undertaken until a larger degree of security had been established.[98] These circumstances had come in July 1995, when van der Graaf undertook a second mission, parallel to the Round Table Conference of Timbuktu, held between 15 and 18 July 1995, uniting the Malian Government, the MFUA and Ganda Koy, and the international donor community.[99] The aim of the conference was to allocate money to the reconstruction of Northern Mali and the ending of the conflict. During the five years the conflict had lasted, donor countries and NGOs had made various promises to contribute financially to peace. In addition, money had accumulated that had been reserved for ongoing projects in Northern Mali that had been postponed in wait of better days. In all, during the Timbuktu Round Table, an estimated 150,000,000 US dollars were promised as contribution to the reconstruction of the North when lasting peace would be established. This large boon greatly helped to appease the warring factions. A last, but certainly the most important measure, was the creation of the FAR-Nord; a fund to finance peace in the North or, better put, to finance the disarmament and integration of the former fighters according to van der Graaf's plan for disarmament. This plan essentially consisted of the creation of special sites in the North where fighters who wished to integrate into the Malian Armed Forces or civil society could present themselves and hand over their weapons. In return for their arms, the fighters would be registered in the integration projects, with the assurance that they would either integrate into the Army, or would be financially assisted in setting up a civilian life. In the meantime, they would stay in the camps, where free food, clothes and basic army training were provided, as well as an entry bonus of 20,000 CFA and 600 CFA per day salary.[100] In other words, their arms, hearts and minds were bought. Bluntly put, peace was bought for a relatively small sum of money in comparison with amounts spent on other peace operations organised by the same or similar international organisations. That this could be done is due to the extreme state of impoverishment Northern Mali found itself in after four decades of war and drought. Even during the major part of my fieldwork in Northern Mali in the late 1990s, three years after the end of the war and the start of economic reconstruction, it was not uncommon to meet people who owned nothing but the clothes on their body, a few rags to construct a tent, and a pot to

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98 Graaf, H. van der, *Sahara-Sahel advisory mission report* (unpublished document, n.p., n.d.), courtesy of Lt.-Gen. (Ret.) van der Graaf, who kindly gave me this document from his personal archives.

99 Unless indicated, based on: Republique du Mali, *Rencontre Gouvernement-Partenaires sur le Nord-Mali. Version provisoire 7 Juin 1995* (unpublished document, n.p., n.d.), courtesy of Lt.-Gen. (Ret.) van der Graaf.

100 'Léré: La paix est cantonnée', *Les Echos*, 03/02/1996.

cook in. In the 1950s, one was not considered rich in the Adagh unless one owned a herd of 500 head of cattle, in the 1990s one was considered extremely lucky if one owned a herd of 50 camels. Four of these cantonment camps arose at Bourem, Léré, Kidal and Ménaka. The camps were under the command of regular army officers and financed by the Malian state as a sign of its commitment to establishing peace. In return, the FAR-Nord programme would finance the more expensive bonuses for the handing over of arms in the camp; the financing of training of integrated fighters; and the financing of projects to reinsert the remaining fighters into civilian life.[101] The cantonment started in November 1995 and lasted until February 1996. In all 2,902 fighters entered the cantonment camps.[102] However, most of the cantoned men had not been core members of the movements and most of the arms they presented were outdated models. The best fighters and arms never reached the camps. A number of these fighters would later form well-equipped tribal militias, their weapons in hiding, which ensured 'real' peace among the various communities of the North and, occasionally, serve to engage violently in political affairs.

The absence of skilled fighters and the newest weapons could not temper spirits. On 26 March 1996, a highly symbolic date as on that day in 1991 dictatorship came to an end, the conflict was ceremoniously ended in burning the weapons presented by the cantoned fighters at Timbuktu's main market. The ceremony was attended by the most important Malian Politicians, the MFUA and delegates of the international NGOs. Piled up with fire wood and poured over with petrol, the weapons burst into fire for the last time. While the arms burned, FPLA leader Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine proclaimed the movements united in the MFUA: MPA, ARLA, FIAA, FPLA and Ganda Koy, dissolved. The rebellion was over.

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[101] Poulton, R. & I. ag Youssouf 1998: 115. The costs of these bonuses amounted to $3,000,000, provided by Canada, Norway, the Netherlands and the US.

[102] The distribution of these fighters over the different movements showed which movements had won and which had lost in the internal struggle for power. Most fighters, 1,092 or 37%, came from the MPA. The Ganda Koy followed close with 811 men or 28%. The FPLA could integrate, 453 of its men or 16% of the total number of *integrés*. ARLA and FIAA were the losers with 260 and 288 men respectively, or 9% and 10% each. Other movements were not even considered for reintegration.

7

Conclusion

I began the introduction saying that this book attempts to answer a few simple questions that could be summarised as 'why have there been violent conflicts between the Malian state and its Tamasheq and Bidân inhabitants since the 1960s'? Perhaps I was too enthusiastic in asking such a broad question which brings about its own complexities. Of course the conflict had many reasons and various causes, but one encompassing answer can be given. Throughout this book I have argued that the conflict found its origins in a Tamasheq desire to regain the political independence they held in the 19th century and which they had lost after French colonial conquest. They expressed this desire in a gradually developing Tamasheq nationalism culminating in violent upsurge. This desire was countered by successive Malian Governments who wished to keep the Northern part of the country within the Malian borders because it was believed to contain mineral riches and, in a way, also because the Malian nation had imagined the Kel Tamasheq to be 'an other within' that was needed to give further body to the imagined Malian nation. This is an obvious answer, valid for many similar conflicts, and there have been many, but human history is not as difficult as it is sometimes made out to be. Nevertheless, this simple answer disguises complexities about the variegated, inchoate, and sometimes incoherent process of decolonisation; about the nature of the state and who holds power in it; about racial prejudice and stereotyped images of self and other; about various forms of competing nationalisms; and about political and social developments within Tamasheq society.

Decolonisation, the state and nationalism

After the Second World War, colonial politics were restructured worldwide. In French West Africa and the Maghreb this restructuring led to the establishment

of a new political elite, political parties and a gradual transfer of power in AOF and Morocco from the French colonial administration to this new elite. At the same time, as mineral wealth was discovered in the hitherto worthless Sahara, various conflicts broke out over attempts to redraw the Saharan borders, which culminated in the French creation of the OCRS in 1957, while in 1956 already the Moroccan Liberation Army invaded the Spanish Sahara and Mauritania. These were driven back by French and Spanish forces in 1958, while, further to the northwest, a ferocious colonial war of independence raged in Algeria. In this geo-political configuration, the Bidân and the Kel Tamasheq were at centre-stage as the inhabitants of the Sahara.

However, in Soudan Français the new political elite created in the decolonisation process consisted mainly of French educated colonial servants and army officers recruited from among the colonial elite of traditional chiefs. Most members of this new political elite came from the heartland of Soudan Français: the Mande and Bambara inhabited regions. The inhabitants of the North, especially the Bidân and the Kel Tamasheq, were less well represented but not absent. It is often argued by scholars and some Kel Tamasheq alike that the Bidân and the Kel Tamasheq had no interest in or understanding of the new political game. I hope to have shown that this was not the case. The Kel Tamasheq political elite did play an important part in the new politics, but they placed their bets on the wrong horses.

The inchoate and politically charged decolonisation of the Sahara led to competition over power between old and new political elites in the region, and finally to the creation of competing expressions of nationalism. The nascent nationalisms included those of Mauritania, where the political elite was divided over alliance with Morocco or France; and the West Sahara, where local Bidân tribes supported both the Moroccan invasion and the subsequent Spanish and French military Operation '*Écouvillon*'. This led to the birth of a national feeling among West Saharans that would ultimately lead tot the creation of POLISARIO. A Malian nationalism was already in the making, but it was certainly strengthened by the necessary political struggle to keep its territorial integrity intact even before independence was reached. In the attempt the US-RDA regime made after independence to modernise society, politics and state control dominated over economic development, while patriotism and Malian nationalism were preeminent in politics. The nation was imagined as Malian, but this imagining was specifically based on Mali as a Mande nation, an image that proved incompatible with the images of potential members of that nation: the Kel Tamasheq. Hence, the same adverse national ideal was constructed on both sides. The Malian political elite imagined the Kel Tamasheq as inherently not Malian and the Kel Tamasheq political elite fully agreed.

The last competitor was a Kel Tamasheq nationalism that originally was simply against something: Kel Tamasheq and Bidân incorporation in Mali. The OCRS sought to keep the Sahara under French tutelage. The Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya sought to incorporate the Bidân and (partly) Tamasheq inhabited parts of Mali in either Mauritania or Morocco. Even those Saharan leaders who participated in party politics and elections in Soudan Français did so in an attempt to curb the political power of the Southern political elite. Although the demands of the *ifulagen*, the fighters of *Alfellaga* in 1963, were only partly clear, it was clear what they did not want: to be part of a state ruled by 'black Africans'. Tamasheq nationalism only reached maturity in the 1970s and 1980s when it was developed by the members of the nationalist movement, the *Tanekra*, who made clear what they wanted: an independent Tamasheq state. Their demand found its full expression in the rebellion of the 1990s. A few things stand out when looking at the Tamasheq national idea as it was imagined in the 1970s and 1980s by the *ishumar*. The first seeming anomaly is that a people who organised society and politics on the basis of fictive kinship ties based its nationalist ideal on territorial notions and, more surprising still, that these territorial notions were based on the pre-existing states they sought to secede from: Mali and Niger. The Kel Tamasheq indigenous to Algeria, Burkina Faso and Libya never joined the liberation movement. Already during the 1980s the Kel Tamasheq from Mali and Niger, once united under the name Kel Nimagiler, had broken up along the lines of exactly these states. That they garbled the names of Mali and Niger to form their own name as a political entity shows how strongly the political geography of the existing states was already grafted on their political imagination. Their competing idea of a Tamasheq nation had already lost out, as it had to be imagined within existing territorial structures. There were nevertheless very specific reasons why 'soil' was taken as the binding national factor, instead of 'blood'. The Tamasheq nationalists perceived the already existent use of kinship ideology in Tamasheq social political organisation as a major obstacle to successful political unification of the Tamasheq nation. Indeed, the social-political structure of the Kel Tamasheq in *tewsiten* – clans – kept hindering the nationalist movement throughout its existence as various clan-based factions fought for political dominance within the movement. These fights started in the mid-eighties, continued during the rebellion, and even after the rebellion violence between clans continued to haunt Tamasheq internal politics.

Another development is that the *Tanekra* nationalist movement incorporated certain ideas on the nature of Tamasheq society and the need to reshape it, which its predecessors – the political leaders of the 1950s and the fighters of *Alfellaga* – had actively resisted. The US-RDA had sought to curb the power of the tribal chiefs, a power created or strengthened during the colonial period, and

to promote the interests of the lower strata of society: the *bellah* and *imghad*. These policies had not been successful at the time. They had formed a major cause for the discontent and subsequent violent rebellion of the Kel Adagh in 1963. But only a decade later, with the Keita Regime gone, the new Tamasheq revolutionaries not only sought to liberate their country from 'foreign occupation', they also sought to liberate it from tribal structures and 'feudal' leadership and social relations. The prejudices once held against them were now part of a Tamasheq image of self. In the end, the attempt to rid society of its 'feudal chiefs and social relations' failed as much as the attempt to liberate the country from Malian rule. After the 'fratricidal war' between the competing rebel movements MPA and ARLA in 1994, and especially after the initiative for a lasting peace in Northern Mali in October 1994 initiated by the tribal chiefs of the Bourem *Cercle*, the power of the tribal leaders was even strengthened at the expense of the *Tanekra* revolutionaries. The failure of the movement to incorporate the *bellah* as a social group would eventually lead many of them to join the Ganda Koy, a vigilante movement that sought to end the Tamasheq rebellion in violence and ethnic cleansing.

Stereotypes, nation and race

The discursive shape the conflict between the Malian state and nation and the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân took, forms part of a problem that haunts all of the Sahel, a problem often seen as one of ethnicity, but locally phrased in terms of race.

Soudan Français consisted of a number of different cultural and political spheres. One can safely say that the further apart geographically, the less contact these spheres had. Besides, in particular respects, these spheres were governed differently. Northern Mali remained under military administration until 1947 and particular social and cultural relations, especially regarding slavery, forced labour, and military recruiting, were judged differently on the basis of a racial perception of nomad society. When true interaction is lacking, ideas and attitudes towards each other are mostly informed by stereotyped images that were partly based on a perception of the colonial racial differentiation in administration, and partly on much older pre-existing stereotypes. The image the US-RDA leaders had of the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân was that they were 'white', feudal, slavers and 'colonial darlings'. The image the Kel Tamasheq and Bidân had of the Southern US-RDA elite was that they were 'black' usurpers of a power they had no right to have and which would upset social structure and power balances within society. The '*bellah* question' of the 1940s; the Tamasheq involvement in the slave trade to Saudi Arabia in the 1950s; and collaboration in attempts to incorporate Northern Soudan Français in other

political entities confirmed their image as 'white slavers' and 'vassals of French neo-imperialism'. Of course, this stereotype did not apply to the former slaves, the demographic majority of the Kel Tamasheq in Soudan Français. The US-RDA's stress on the '*bellah* question' during their election campaigns and their attempts to curb the power of the chiefs confirmed the stereotyped image of 'black usurpers of power' and 'destroyers of Tamasheq society'. Again, the slaves did not hold this image, but to the political elite and the common Kel Tamasheq of free descent, these events were threatening and the stereotype was a valid one.

During *Alfellaga,* racial discourse was again present on both sides, although the more solid historical evidence I have on this point comes from the side of the Malian regime for both their own point of view as well as that of the *ifulagen*. It was expressed by Captain Diby Sillas Diarra in an interview he gave to the Malian press, and his opinion as he stated it there was either based on his interrogations of *ifulagen*, or he had written his preconceived ideas on the *ifulagen* in his interrogation reports. In either case, it is at least clear that the Malian regime had a racial interpretation of the conflict, and it is most likely that the *ifulagen* were fed by racial ideas they had expressed earlier in writing.

During the rebellion of the 1990s, discourse on inclusion and exclusion in the Malian nation and the image of the Kel Tamasheq as Malian or foreign was fully developed by the Ganda Koy, which can be seen as the Malian *vox populi* about the rebellion. Ganda Koy's exclusion of the Kel Tamasheq from the Malian nation and depiction of the Kel Tamasheq as foreign was largely based on the same discourse on race that played a role in the period of decolonisation, as if decolonisation had indeed more or less taken off again with the start of the rebellion. By accusing the Kel Tamasheq of being 'white slavers' and 'Qadhafi's Arab mercenaries' they were depicted as foreign elements seeking to dominate the indigenous Malian population. By stressing the rebels' 'whiteness', the Ganda Koy managed to develop an othering discourse excluding those elements of Tamasheq society that were not 'white': the *bellah* or former slaves who could join the Ganda Koy ranks.

Perhaps the most interesting side to the racial aspect of the conflict between the Malian state and the Kel Tamasheq is that both sides were equally obsessed with race and that both used racial discourses. One could safely say that *Alfellaga* was the result of relations between two different political elites based on mutual distrust and negative preconceived stereotyped images. While the Keita Regime perceived the Kel Tamasheq as white, anarchist, feudal, lazy, slave driving nomads who needed to be civilised, the Kel Tamasheq elite saw the Malian politicians as black, incompetent, untrustworthy slaves in disguise who came to usurp power. These ideas resurfaced with the outbreak of the second rebellion in 1990 and were openly expressed in a mutually hostile dis-

course on 'the other' at the height of the conflict in the summer of 1994, when the Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy set out to defend the 'sedentary black' population against the 'white nomad' threat against national unity.

On a theoretical level one could argue about whether racialism is or is not a subcategory of ethnicity. The answer is: it depends on what one means with both terms and from which side one looks at the problem. Indeed, until the 1970s the term 'race' remained a significant concept of analysis, used in ways akin to the present-day use of the term 'ethnicity'. As Ashcroft *et al.* remark,

> In practice, "race" may be a major constitutive factor in determining ethnic categories, but to revive the idea that it is somehow "objective" and less socially constructed than ethnicities founded on religious, linguistic or other more obviously culturally determined factors is to fail to recognize that race is a cultural rather than a biological phenomenon, the product of historical processes not of genetically determined physical differences.[1]

Throughout this book, I have indicated a congruence between the social categories 'ethnic group' and 'nation': a social political group of a size that does not allow all members to know each other, which means it is partly an imaginary community the members of which recognise each other's membership on the basis of certain shared traits. The distinction often made between 'ethnic group' and 'nation' is a political choice stemming from the idea that 'nation' is inherent to 'nationalism', which in turn is linked to 'state', as becomes clear from the standardised usage of the term 'nation-state'. I have also indicated that I see ethnicity as the ideology that forms the imaginary framework of an ethnic group or nation, whereas nationalism, and here I take Gellner's definition, is 'primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent'.[2] In these definitions, race is not a subcategory of ethnicity. One can perceive members of the same nation to have various racial backgrounds and this is indeed the case in Tamasheq society. The Kel Tamasheq see themselves as phenotypically divided and so do the Malian Government and, in fact, most of the world. The Kel Tamasheq themselves make a distinction between: *koual*, black; *shaggaran*, red; and *sattefen*, bluish black. Each 'race' roughly corresponds with a certain social group within society, but none of these groups is seen as not being part of the Kel Tamasheq. The colonial administration, the Malian administration of the 1960s, as well as the Ganda Koy movement of the 1990s only saw two phenotypes in Kel Tamasheq society: 'white' and 'black'. But regardless of whether one distinguishes between two or three, one constructs racial differences within one and the same

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1 Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin 2000: 204-205.
2 Gellner, E. 1983: 1.

society. Whether the 'white' and 'black' (or 'red' or 'green') racial types can be seen as ethnic subgroups is arguable.

There seems to be a tendency among the former Tamasheq slaves to see themselves as a distinctive group within Tamasheq society. In Mali, this found a first expression in the creation of the Mouvement pour l'Eveil du Monde Bellah in 1994. The organisation remained dormant for a long time, but in August 2006, former initiators of the movement founded the Association Temedt, an NGO which has as its main stated goal the promotion of human rights, but which is mainly directed at defending the rights of former slaves.[3] Temedt is partly inspired by a similar organisation in Niger: Timidria.[4] The distinctions these organisations of former slaves made have some racial overtones next to the main social reasons for their existence: a feeling of being discriminated against as former slaves. However, it seems this process of ethnic differentiation is hardly on its way, but it cannot be excluded that, say, ten years from now, one speaks of the *bellah* as a different ethnic group or nation.

A last question

Throughout this book I have stressed the importance of a particular Tamasheq concept in explaining the outbreak of rebellion: *Egha*, a mixture of hate; powerlessness; and longing for revenge; or a contracted honour debt. *Egha* as revenge and the paying of one's honour debt formed the start of *Alfellaga*. *Egha* was the one feeling that bound all *ishumar* of every political persuasion in the *Tanekra* movement. *Egha* is created when one is powerless in the face of an attack on one's honour, and on one's existence. *Egha* created the link between the first and the second rebellion. Given the fact that the atrocities committed during the first rebellion were repeated in the second rebellion, given that yet another generation of young Kel Tamasheq was confronted with war and misery, it is pertinent to ask whether *egha* links these two rebellions with the most recent upsurge of the ADC in Kidal. The answer is negative on the whole but not entirely. The main leaders of the ADC were the same men who had led the rebellion of the 1990s, the generation of the 'orphans of the Adagh', who had taken *egha* during *Alfellaga*, but who had repaid their honour debt at the battle of Toximine. As far as *egha* did play a part in the past few years, it was

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[3] Statuts du LPDH TEMEDT, drafted and signed 02/09/2006. Personal archive. The association was created after the Essakane Conference, held in August 2006 in Essakane by a number of community leaders of *iklan* origins. The sole reference to slavery in the statutes of the *Association Temedt* is written in its Preamble: "c*onstatant la persistance des pratiques humiliantes et esclavagistes dans certaines zones du Mali*".

[4] Lecocq, B. 2005.

the *egha* of the *imghad* and Idnan towards the Ifoghas, an honour debt contracted in the 1990s in the 'fratricidal war' between the clans. In fact, the events around the ADC form more a continuity with the rebellion of the 1990s than a new episode.

But will *egha* then not link the previous rebellions to a new one in the future? Of course, it is impossible to answer this question. But I have asked it myself and so have others. I can only provide the answer others have given me. Whether or not the current generation of young Kel Tamasheq has taken up *egha* will be clear when they grow to adulthood. Their future actions are then dependent on the social political circumstances. Although the ideals of the Tamasheq nation have been lost for the moment, one could say that the Kel Tamasheq have won, or at least that they haven't lost the fight they started in 1990. They have reached a certain level of political autonomy and heightened participation in Malian politics. Their integration in the Malian nation is slowly but certainly on its way. Through democratisation and decentralisation the Kel Tamasheq community itself holds responsibilities for its future. They have been empowered and feelings of empowerment and *egha* are mutually exclusive.

Epilogue

The rebellion ended but despite the *Flamme de la Paix* ceremony, violence remained an integral part of politics and everyday life in Northern Mali. The Malian state made half-hearted attempts to reassume its powers in the North, while remaining faithful to its tradition to delegate state powers to local informal rulers. This delegation now included informal military power in the hands of local political elites, while at the same time efforts were made to disarm the local civilian population. Just how ephemeral these efforts in disarmament were became clear in a number of violent confrontations between local communities, despite the local peace treaties signed under the aegis of the Bourem Pact. At the same time, the administrative decentralisation and implementation of local democracy meant that, after a short century of political dependence and overlordship, the Kel Tamasheq could arrange their political life more freely. But here too, violence remained an integral part of the political process. Finally, in May 2006, almost exactly ten years after the *Flamme de la Paix* ceremony, a number of former rebels took up arms again in what seemed to be a renewed rebellion.

What had changed by that time however, was the global position of the region. Over the past decade, Kidal grew from one of the most isolated spots on the planet to being a small global hub. After the rapid modernisation of the Kel Tamasheq world from the 1970s onwards, there followed a rapid globalisation of that world (again, I use both terms offhandedly in their popular sense). From the 1950s onwards, more and more Kel Tamasheq left their homeland in search for work, new ways of life, and political and military experiences to further their cause of a Tamasheq homeland. Now that the rebellion was over, the world came to that homeland. African migrants en route for Europe or Libya turned Kidal from a backwater into a small cosmopolitan city, while international traffic and commerce, ranging between the customary Algerian foodstuffs to Colombian coke, provided income and provisions to the community, and turned it into a hub of renewed trans-Saharan trade. The *takoubilt* festivals, originally intended to further peace, attracted Western tourists, while Arabs

from the Gulf and Saudi Arabia came back for one of their favourite hobbies: hunting with heavy arms and vehicles in the Saharan desert. More recently still, Northern Mali is at stake in the new scramble for Africa between various petrol companies in search of hydrocarbons. Since 2005 the Australian-Malian joint venture Mali-Petroleum SA is exploring the Taoudennit Basin for reserves in hydrocarbons, while the Canadian Centric Energy Company is doing the same in the Graben field north of Gao.[1] At the turn of the Christian millennium, the South-Asian Muslim grassroots organisation Tablighi Jamaat reached Northern Mali, taking the region into a global network of religious movements. However, the peaceful South-Asian Tablighis were followed by the militant Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). Their activities in the Sahara, in turn, led to US military presence and intervention. The post-rebellion period coincided almost neatly with the post-9/11 world of 'War on Terror', leading to a continuation of military violence in the Sahara, although this time the local civilians were not targeted by either side. From the 1950s onwards the Malian Far North and its inhabitants had gained a sinister reputation as lazy anarchist nomads, racist slavers, and dangerous rebels. In the new century, in the international setting of 'War on Terror', the 'Clash of Civilisations' and the 'Global Village', they were framed in yet another stereotype: the potential 'Muslim fundamentalist terrorist'.

It is not my intention here to deal extensively with all these topics. For the most part I have done so already elsewhere.[2] I will here give a short presentation fitting these events, as far as possible, in preceding histories and social-political structures.

In the late 1990s, peace and prosperity reigned to some degree in Northern Mali, but it remained a heavily armed peace.[3] Despite general global warming, the Saharan climate turned milder in the last years of the 20th century, with abundant and well-spread rains in 1997 and 1998. Although 1999 was less affluent, the rains remained good until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, when hunger and famine reemerged, albeit on a far smaller scale than in the 1970s and 1980s.[4] Those Kel Tamasheq who were still living as nomads rediscovered that life could be good, and thanked God's blessing and mercy. In 1999, two small local factories were opened in Kidal to produce pasteurised milk and yoghurt (natural, vanilla and banana flavours) from locally produced milk. Telecommunications networks and public radio stations were rapidly spreading, connecting the Malian Sahara to the wider world. In June 1999 Kidal

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1 Lecocq, B. & P. Schrijver 2007. And http://centricenergy.com/

2 Lecocq, B. 2003; Lecocq, B. & P. Schrijver 2006, 2007.

3 The following is based on Vallet, M., "Chronique de la vie au Sahara". *Le Saharien* 148 (1st semester 1999) – 155 (4th semester 2000).

4 Jezequel, J-H. & X. Crombe 2005.

received electricity. Abundance seemed to return and so did the refugees from the conflict. By the end of 1998, about 130,000 of the total estimated 160,000 international Kel Tamasheq refugees had returned. Even the Kel Essuq Kel Takailelt, who had fled to Niger after the massacre of their tribe and *zawiya* near Gao in October 1994, did return. In June 1999, the UNHCR closed its mission in Northern Mali. Those Kel Tamasheq who had not remained nomadic could find means of existence in other ways. After the rebellion was over, the trans-Saharan traffic in consumer goods, set up in the 1970s, grew in importance. Apart from the basic consumer goods smuggled from Algeria (oil, sugar, flour, pasta, dates, essence), smuggler trade evolved in electronics, cars, arms, cigarettes, and, more recently, drugs. The most lucrative of these forms of trade is the transport of cigarettes along the 'Marlboro Road' that stretches from Mauritania, via Mali and Niger to Algeria and Libya and, finally, to Europe. This trade in consumer goods was doubled by a lively traffic in prospective African migrants to the Maghreb and Europe. The tightening of security measures against illegal immigrants in 'Fortress Europe', together with the growing marginality of young men on the continent, led to a growing trans-Saharan traffic from West to North Africa, in which Kidal grew to become a transport hub for young Africans en route for the Mediterranean coast. Another important source of income came from international donor-money for the reconstrucion of Northern Mali. The Timbuktu roundtable in 1995 had provided vast amounts of money for the peace process. Part of this money was spent on a building-boom in the North. The administrative decentralisation discussed below brought about the necessity to build a vast amount of new government buildings, as well as new schools, health care centres and other facilities. Some long awaited and very necessary infrastructure was finally put in place. On 22 September 2006, on the celebration of Malian independence, the Wabaria Bridge connecting Gao to the right bank of the Niger was inaugurated. It has decisively contributed to the economic connection of the North to the rest of Mali. Telephone, both landlines and mobile phones, as well as internet were introduced between 1996 and 2002, connecting Northern Mali to the globalisation hype spanning the world. Kidal now has its own website: *Kidal.info*. With more or less success, depending on their work experiences as *ishumar*, many former rebels started construction companies, winning a good deal of the building contracts written out under the development programmes. After the *Flamme de la Paix* ceremony, a large-scale Disarm Demobilise and Reintegrate (DDR) programme started with the integration of former fighters in civil life.[5]

[5] From 1996 till December 1999 this programme was known under the name *Programme d'Appui à la Réinsertion des ex-Combattants au Mali*, PAREM. From 2000 onwards it was known as *Consolidation des Acquis de la Réinsertion au Nord*,

The programme first took shape in the form of a cash-for-weapons initiative, in which each fighter who handed in his weapon would receive a demobilisation fee of 500 US dollars. This money was destined to finance investments for his future livelihood, but most fighters used it to pay a dowry and marry.[6] After 1999, the financial handouts stopped and were replaced by microcredits to set up small businesses. In all, some 9,500 former fighters were reintegrated through these programmes for a total cost of around 9,000,000 US dollars. A small sum to pay for peace, when one compares it with other DDR programmes in West Africa.[7] In the early 1910s the French had introduced firearms to exacerbate local conflicts, after which they reaped benefits in the form of mediation and, ultimately, colonisation. After that, the colonial administration tried to curb arms possession without much success.[8] But never had the amount of arms and their use been so widespread in the Tamasheq world as after the 1996 rebellion. By 2002, the DDR programmes had managed to collect about 35,000 small arms, but this was estimated to represent about one tenth of the amount of weapons then circulating in Northern Mali.[9] The possession of firearms had slowly become an integral part of daily life among the Kel Tamasheq.

Old and new local conflicts were played out in a new game of decentralised administration, democracy and violence. One of the main demands of the rebel movements in the later stages of the rebellion had been for more autonomy. This had been granted in a double shape: the decentralisation and democratisation of the Malian administration on a local level. Although these measures were 'sold' to the rebel movements as meeting their demands, the pressure in the early 1990s of donor countries and institutions to implement 'good governance' had weighed more heavily on the decision to implement decentralised democracy. Kidal had the honour of being the first place in Mali to be decentralised by being formally upscaled from *Cercle* to *Région* in August 1991, but the effective administrative installation of that *Région* came only in 1996 when Eghless ag Foni, a Kel Adagh himself, finally took his seat in the new Governors office. He was the first Kel Adagh ever to be appointed to high

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CAR/Nord. Both programmes fell under the direction of the Commissariat au Nord. It is unclear when exactly this programme ended but in 2002 it was slowly integrated into a West African region wide DDR programme set up by ECOWAS: Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development in Africa, PCASED.

6 Interview with PAREM responsible Gao. Gao, 10 December 1996.

7 OCDE, Regional Working Group on DDR Programmes and Post-conflict Management in West Africa. Vol. 2 Working Documents. Paris, December 2006. http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/18/38520347.pdf

8 Lecocq, B. 2003; Lecocq, B. & P. Schrijver 2006, 2007.

9 USAID office of Conflict and Mitigation, *USAID/DCHA/CMM Assessment: Northern Mali*. 17/06/2004. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADC966.pdf

administrative office in Kidal since the colonial conquest. In general, the number of Kel Tamasheq participating in high administration and in national politics rose spectacularly. As the representatives (*Députés*) to the National Assembly are elected by *Cercle*, with each *Cercle* sending one representative, the promotion of Kidal to *Région* meant that the Adagh could now send four instead of one representative. A number of Kel Tamasheq men and women rose to the ranks of ministers in various governments, such as Mohamed ag Eghlaf and Zakiatou wellet Haltanine. The rise in participation culminated in the appointment of Mohamed Ahmed ag Hamani, a Kel Intessar pupil of the Goundam *école nomade*, as Prime Minister in 2002. The essence of the Malian decentralisation rested in the creation of a parallel structure of *Communes* within and next to the administrative structure of the *Cercles*. While the *Commandant de Cercle* remained an appointed administrator, he now lost part of his powers to the democratically elected counsellors of the *Commune*, who elect a Mayor from their midst. However, in most of the Far North in Mali, the power of the *Commandant* had been mitigated for a long time and remained so after the administrative reforms. Kidal had been without a *Commandant de Cercle* since 1992, and formally remained without one until 1999, the administrative and political functions being performed by the *Adjoint de Commandant* in the intermediate period. The upscaling of the *Cercle* of Kidal to a *Région*, meant that its *Arrondissements* were promoted to the ranks of *Cercles*, with the Central *Arrondissement* of Kidal now becoming a *Cercle* too. Each new *Cercle* was now endowed with its proper *Commandant*. These new *Commandants* had no administrative means at their disposal to start with, and for the most time resided in Kidal City, or further down South. In practice, administration came more firmly in the hands of the tribal chiefs than ever before. They were now informally responsible even for civil peace and policing, which they did *manu military* in alliance with the former rebel officers, but of course within the parameters of local politics. However, they did have to answer to Bamako to a certain degree. When local disputes became too violent, it rested with Intalla ag Attaher, together with the other tribal chiefs, and Iyad ag Ghali, together with his trusted men, to 'mediate' and restore some form of order. Georg Klute has labelled this arrangement 'parasovereignity', by which he means the replacement of the formal state by traditional political institutions and modern NGOs, which perform the state functions of delivering safety and social services respectively. The appropriateness of the term 'sovereignty' is questionable (given the classical definition of sovereignty) but the description is of course accurate.[10]

[10] Klute, G. 1999; Klute, G. & T. von Trotha 2000.

In most of Mali the new democratic *Communes* were put in place in 1996. However, the *Région* of Gao had to wait until 1998 and Kidal even until June 1999 before elections took place. Most of the new *Communes* were created along the lines of the old *Arrondissements* within the *Cercles,* but in many places the new administrative structure reopened old land tenure conflicts between communities. This was the case in the North as much as in the South. They were, however, played out less openly, since the rebellion could no longer be taken as a pretext for open violence. Nevertheless, the revolt had shown that the Government could not prevent men from carrying arms and using them. Those *fraction*s with more combat experience, courageous men and better armament saw themselves as fit to protect their vested interests in certain areas, and felt they had a certain right to do so. One such a conflict was the fight over the wells of Tedjerert, a small hamlet on the border between Kidal and Ménaka, which was disputed by three main *fraction*s in the area: the Iforgoumoussen; the Chemennamas; and the Ishidenharen. Drawn in 1948, the border between these antagonistic parties goes from well to well, without any specifications about the rights to use these wells themselves. Violent conflicts over the wells at Tedjerert occurred in 1948 and 1974, during the drought, but the worst came in September 1997, when a fight between Iforgoumoussen and Chemennamas left several people dead around the wells, whereupon both parties took to their vehicles and drove into the Tamesna plain to pursue their fight. The area between the wells of Tedjerert (and other wells, like Ibalaghan and Sahin) and the Tamesna plain north of it were an administrative imbroglio. After the rebellion local politicians from all sides and sorts – traditional chiefs, newly elected communal counselors and mayors, former rebels – tried to get the boundaries changed in their favour. Formally, Tedjerert belongs to the Ménaka *Cercle* and, after the decentralisation, to the *Commune* of Tidarmène. In 1999, during the communal elections, a number of former rebel fighters from the Kidal area led by Ibrahim Bahanga, a fighter from the Iforgoumoussen tribe, kidnapped the election committee at Tidarmène to emphasise the claim that Tedjerert should be relocated to the *Région* of Kidal, within the '*Commune*-to-be-created' of In Tedjedit. Bahanga did not act alone. He had at least the tacit support of a number of traditional leaders in Kidal. His demands were not accepted in Bamako and thus the conflict continued. In December 2000, Ibrahim Bahanga attacked an army patrol, killed its leading officer and took four men hostage, a tactics he would repeatedly use in the coming years. After tumultuous negotiations led by his former commanding officer Iyad ag Ghali, Bahanga released his hostages in February 2001, in exchange for the creation of the In Tedjedit *Commune* of which he himself became the Mayor. Tedjerert however, remained within the Ménaka borders. On the day of the Tidarmène kidnapping, I witnessed the events at the house of a local politician, where most of the tribal

political elite had assembled to follow the events over the radio, since Bahanga and his men communicated over the RAC. At the end of the day one of them told me: 'sometimes we do certain things to show that, despite democracy, there is always the possibility of "demokalashi" in Kidal'. The ironic mixture of democracy and Kalashnikovs remains a reality in Northern Mali and clearly underlined the readiness to use violence to solve local political problems by turning them into national ones.[11]

Land-tenure questions were not the only ones that festered in the new decentralised democratic politics. Religion came into it too. Since the end of the rebellion, Northern Mali has been open to different global Islamic movements, starting with the arrival of the Tablighi Jamaat. During Ramadan 1419, December 1998, four South Asian Tablighis arrived in Kidal on a *da'wa* mission.[12] By May 1999, the Ifoghas had wholeheartedly embraced the Tablighi teachings. Two of *amenokal* Intalla ag Attaher's sons had completed a ten-day course in Bamako after which they became active at the mission in Kidal. One of these sons would later travel to a Tablighi Jamaat centre in Raiwind, Pakistan. Iyad ag Ghali had also taken the Tablighi Jamaat courses. The arrival of the Tablighi Jamaat coincided with the preliminaries to the first Communal elections in June that year. In Kidal city, the Communal elections had become the new battlefield for the old rivalry between the Ifoghas, determined to keep the power they had almost lost and won back with so much difficulty during the rebellion, and the Idnan and their found-again *imghad* allies, who were gradually allowed back in the city, from which they had been chased in 1994. The Ifoghas based the legitimacy of their power largely on religious grounds. They claim *shorfa* status (the status of descendants of the prophet Muhammad), and in his late days in power Intalla ag Attaher presented himself emphatically as '*amir al-mu'minin*: the commander of the believers. But, in the Communal elections, the Idnan had the most popular candidate for the position of mayor, a woman, affectionally called 'Tenhert', 'Doe', during the elections, as she is a member of the Idnan clan Inheren, 'The Does'. As I described in Chapter 5, Tamasheq women enjoy a great measure of freedom to involve themselves in public life and politics. A freedom that is often viewed as exceptional in the Muslim world, an exception of which Kel Tamasheq women, having lived in the Arab world as migrants, are very aware. They became even more aware of this with the coming of the Tablighi Jamaat, a movement which preaches strongly antifeminist concepts,

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[11] Similar conflicts like this one, for example between the Kounta federation and the Almouchakarai Arabs of the Gao *Région* over pastures and political power in the Tilemsi plain, or that between the Daoussahak and Foroforo Fulani over pastures in the border area between Niger and Mali, remain rampant until present, with similar scenarios of entwined power relations being in play.

[12] Lecocq, B. & P. Schrijver 2007.

based in traditional South Asian Muslim society. Intalla ag Attaher initially acted favourably to the female candidate, in spite of her clan origin. She was the appointed candidate for ADEMA, the party in power in Mali, and Intalla had made it his policy throughout his long career to side with the political party in power. He changed his position around May 1999. Under the influence of the Tablighi doctrine, the local '*ulama* decreed that it was impossible according to Muslim law to have a female mayor. Should Intalla fail to revoke his support for 'Doe', they would no longer acknowledge him as '*amir al-mu'minin*. Intalla thereupon suggested one of his sons to run as an alternative candidate to 'Doe' within the ADEMA party, while another son decided to run for an opposition party so as to hinder any eventual coalition talks after the elections. It is easy to guess that henceforth the sharpest opposition to the Tablighi Jamaat in Kidal came from women, particularly women from 'Doe's' immediate family. Not only did the Tablighi Jamaat create difficulties to her run for mayor, but many women also feared what they called 'Algerian situations': a forced retreat from public and political life under the impact of conservative Islamic teachings. In an open letter to the traditional rulers and notables of the city, a group of influential women from Kidal asked where precisely Islam bars women from becoming elected and since when the spiritual leaders of the region needed advice from strangers. They stated that women had always enjoyed the right to participate in social debates and that Kel Tamasheq traditions were preferable to those of strangers.[13] To avoid the political competition with the Ifoghas, 'Doe' then withdrew as ADEMA candidate to set up her own electoral list, called 'Tenhert', and continued to campaign with the continuous presence of a body-guard, as someone had tried to assassinate her in the meantime. She gained a percentual majority in the Communal Council, but the new ADEMA candidate came in second, blocking her direct election as Mayor of Kidal. Long-drawn negotiations followed under very tense conditions. The fear of internecine violence grew so strong that a state of emergency was declared locally, and a night curfew was set at eight in the evening with tanks patrolling the streets of Kidal. Finally an agreement was reached through the mediation of the party leadership in Bamako. In the end 'Doe' accepted defeat in exchange for a more or less assured position on the electoral lists of the newly created *Haut Conseil des Collectivités*, an elected advisory organ meant to represent the new *Communes* at the central-government level. She did so partly because of the unrelenting opposition of the '*ulama* and Intalla, but partly also because of the untimely death of Attaher ag Bissaada, the *amenokal* of the Idnan. The dispute over his succession also considerably weakened the Idnan power position in the establishment of the new democratic *Commune* council.

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[13] Ibid.

Contrary to what more suspicious minds would have anticipated, the Tablighi Jamaat quickly lost popularity in Kidal and in Mali in general after the events of September 2001. The inhabitants of the Sahel quickly realized what the adoption of global Salafi Islam might lead to. Many realized the link between radical Islam at home and the terrorist attacks abroad and feared possible retaliation. But religious questions nevertheless retained local prominence after 9/11.[14] From that moment on, the Pentagon and US intelligence turned a higher degree of attention to the outer reaches of the Muslim world: areas that bore some form of resemblance to Afghanistan within the interpretation of the US military and foreign affairs experts; areas with a favourable terrain for guerrilla warfare; with little or no state presence; and with increased activity of militant Muslims. They shared this focus of attention with their adversaries, the propagators of worldwide *jihad*. In April 2006, for example, a certain Abu Azzam al-Ansari wrote the article '*Al-Qaeda is moving to Africa*' in the electronic online *jihadi* magazine *The Echo of Jihad*.[15] Al-Ansari listed the many possibilities he saw the continent could offer to the worldwide *jihad*: African Governments are weak, divided, and corrupt. They lack, moreover, a strong army and effective security and intelligence services so that the *mujahedeen* can easily organize themselves and move without being discovered. The borders are poorly guarded, and weapons are available cheaply and in vast quantities. According to Al-Ansari, the notion of *jihad* is widespread on the continent, while, still according to him, the numerous ethnic conflicts and civil wars have fostered in Africans a certain readiness to die a heroic death in battle. This readiness would increase the potential to wage a successful *jihad*. It is remarkable how, in his analysis of the potentials of the African continent, al-Ansari thought in stereotypes similar to those of his adversaries in the US. His analysis of the *jihadi* potential of the African continent was sketched, as it were, in imperialistic geostrategic platitudes. According to Oliver Roy this is no coincidence as both sides in the War on Terror share the notion that the 'Clash of Civilisations' sketched by Samuel Huntington is the reality in which their battle is set. Islamists in fact frame the world in modes and discourses very similar to that of Washington-based think tanks.[16] Northern Mali almost perfectly fitted the picture drawn by both, especially after the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC) established itself in the area.

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[14] Shortly after 9/11, the Malian government proceeded to extradite 25 Pakistani members of the Tablighi Jamaat. The movement is now leading a dwindling existence in Northern Mali.

[15] Abu Azzam al-Ansari, 'Al-Qa'ida (...) tattajih nahwa Ifriqiyya'. In *Sada al-Jihad* 7 (Jumada al-Ula 1427), pp. 18-20. A translation and analysis of the article are available on www.sofir.org/sarchives/005627.php. Last checked 13/07/09.

[16] Roy, O. 2004: 77-78.

The GSPC is an offshoot of the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), and was founded in September 1998 by former GIA Commander Hassan Hattab. In 2003 there appeared a regional split in the leadership of the GSPC and a split in the organisation, with one branch operating in Northern Algeria, and a second branch in Southern Algeria and in the bordering Sahel states, directed by two new *emirs*: Amari Saïfi and Mukhtar Bilmukhtar. Amari Saïfi, a former Algerian Army paratrooper (hence his nickname 'Al Para'), was responsible for the spectacular abduction of 31 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara in March 2003.[17] After the Algerian army managed to free a first group of seventeen hostages in Southern Algeria in June, the GSPC retreated into Mali with the remaining 14 hostages. The general if diminishing sympathy towards Muslim radicalism in the region, and the business connections between Tamasheq and other smugglers in the Sahara, made Northern Mali a necessary and excellent hiding place for the GSPC, and its inhabitants excellent mediators to solve the hostage crisis. The crisis was solved through the mediation of the Malian Government (the Malian Prime Minister at that time was the Tamasheq Mohamed Ahmed ag Hamani), but especially through the intervention of Kidal's political elite. The main mediators were former rebel leaders, traditional chiefs and local '*ulama* from Kidal. The abduction ended in October 2003, when the German Government paid 5,000,000 euros in ransom for the 13 remaining hostages (one German woman had died of sunstroke, the remaining hostages were 12 Germans and a Dutchman). The Malian Government tolerated the continuing presence of the GSPC on its territory, as long as it kept quiet and did not attack anyone. The Kel Tamasheq intermediaries also made it quite clear that, if the GSPC would stir up trouble, it would be dealt with on their own terms. It is surprising that few of the reports written on the abduction case mention the fact that the GSPC hostage crisis was actually resolved through the mediation of 'the savage and violent rebel' Tamasheq from Kidal. Instead, some journalists even mistook the abductors for local Kel Tamasheq from Mali.[18] Thus, the good guys quickly turned again into bad guys in the perception of the public, simply because they had been the bad guys for more than a century. A year later, in 2004, Al Para's group was hunted down by the US Special Forces, but he was eventually captured in March 2004 in the northwestern part of Chad by a small, local rebel group, the Mouvement pour la Démocratie et la Justice au Tchad (MDJT). After chaotic negotiations in

[17] The tourists were travelling in small separate groups or as individuals. In all 15 German, 10 Austrian, 4 Swiss, 1 Dutch and 1 Swedish tourist were kidnapped during March and early April 2003.

[18] In a pre-interview by Dutch TV news *NOS Journaal* at the occasion of the liberation of the remaining hostages in October 2003, I was asked what was wrong with the Malian Tuareg that they had abducted the tourists.

October 2004, El Para was handed over to Algeria were he was given a life sentence. By that time, the US Army had installed itself in the central Sahara, especially in Northern Mali, aiming at the eradication of all possible forms of Muslim terrorism.

US counterterrorism specialists deemed Northern Mali to be a potentially explosive area. The region is poor, smuggling is the greatest pillar of the local economy, and firearms abound. The bad reputation of the Kel Tamasheq is not limited to Mali. Their image as freedom-loving nomads, yet anarchist rebels, has spread to the US as well. Another point of American concern was the supposed lack of state presence and anarchy reigning in the Sahara. The lack of strong state institutions, or their inefficiency, was seen as a lack of government in the region. However, as I have tried to show throughout this book and in the pages immediately above, this is far more complex than it seemed to the US government. Then there was of course the increase of Islamic activism in the region. The American military initiatives in Sahel were initially established not so much in response to an actual threat, but according to the idea that it was imperative to prevent the region from becoming a breeding ground for Muslim terrorism. While not being the only triggering factor, the abduction of tourists by the GSPC was, to the Americans, proof that real danger did hide in the Sahara and that therefore their military presence was indispensable. The US Armed Forces initiatives in the Sahel started in 2002 under the name Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), encompassing Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad.[19] With a limited budget of 6,000,000 dollars, the American Army trained and outfitted rapid-reaction units in each of these four countries, which had as their duty to better guard the porous state borders in an attempt to stem the flow of illegal persons, goods and weapons in the region. It was also their duty to prevent the Sahel from becoming a retreat for terrorists. American concern was especially focused on the developments in Northern Mali. More than half of the PSI budget was meant for this region. In 2005 the PSI was continued in the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), which has a wider range than its predecessor.[20] It has a planned time-frame of five years and a budget of half a billion dollars. In addition to the countries previously involved, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria also joined the TSCTI, and so will Libya possibly. The aim is to set up antiterrorism units in each of these countries, as well as semi-permanent bases of operations for American troops. According to local witnesses and GSPC websites, such bases have been set up in Northern Mali, where the old French Air-force base at Tessalit has been readied for use, at Nema (in Mauritania), at Tamanrasset (Algeria), and at Agadez in Niger. In

[19] www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/pan-sahel.htm
[20] www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/tscti.htm.

addition, American troops were stationed in Gao and Timbuktu, making regular patrols towards Kidal.

Meanwhile, internal politics in Kidal reached the boiling point. Local political powers and the new powers of the state became more and more enmeshed, while at the same time these two different political structures had to face intertwined crises. In the late 1990s an old generation of tribal leaders passed away, creating a power vacuum in the chieftaincy dimension. While indulging in some cases in internal struggles over tribal power, the chiefly lineages and their clans at the same time tried to grab the new decentralised democracy. In turn, the members of the new political elites – former rebel leaders, *ishumar* and *evolués* – tried to strengthen their influence in local politics by either (again) disputing the legitimacy of chiefly power, or by even trying to become tribal chiefs themselves. In January 1999 Inguida ag Hibba, *amenokal* of the Taghat Mellet died. His replacement went smoothly within the tribe, although it is noteworthy that, for a short time, his function was taken over by Intalla ag Attaher until the Taghat Mellet had found their new leader. This is significant as a demonstration of the power the Ifoghas could exercise over some of the other tribes in the Adagh. But this was not at all the case when Attaher ag Bissaada, the *amenokal* of the Idnan, died that same month. His death left the Idnan bitterly divided over his succession, which was violently disputed by the Talkast and Taitoq clans.[21] This dispute severely hampered 'Doe', a member of another Idnan clan, the Inheren, in her struggle to become Mayor of Kidal and gave new chances to the Kel Effele, the clan of the *amenokal* of the Ifoghas, to strengthen their grip on the new democracy. By the new millennium, Intalla ag Attaher, *amenokal* of the Adagh, had aged considerably. In June 2005 he had a car accident, which left him paralysed, but he did not die, leaving him nominally in power though effectively powerless.[22] Thus, other contestants to the title of *amenokal* could come to the fore. Within the Ifoghas, the position of leading clan had long been contested between the ruling Kel Effele and the Irayakan clans. This competition had last been in the open in the 1940s and 1950s, when Alla ag Albachir, an Irayakan, defied the French authorities as much as he defied the authority of *amenokal* Attaher ag Illi. Now the Irayakan again had a powerful contestant to Kel Effele supremacy: Iyad ag Ghali, former rebel leader and leader of the Irayakan clan. Despite his extremely powerful position based on his prestige as rebel commander, leader of the MPA, and Colonel in the Malian Army, Iyad held no formal power position within either

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[21] Moussa ag Intazoume. "Quelle sécurité pour le Nord? Cas spécifique de Kidal étude prospective des conflits dans la Région de Kidal". (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2005). http//library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/mali/03534.pdf

[22] Kidal info. Forum in Tamasheq Subject: Attayoub Author: Taywan Date 24/06/2005 13H02. http://www.kidal.info/Forum/TQ/lire.php?msg=78

the tribal structure or the new democratic institutions. Iyad never publicly expressed his claim to Irayakan leadership within the Ifoghas and hence to the title of *amenokal*, nevertheless the claim was clearly perceived. This forced the Kel Effele, especially the sons of Intalla ag Attaher, to bid for power within all possible structures in order to strengthen their hand in the struggle over the position of *amenokal*, which they knew was coming up. The 1999 Communal elections had finally brought Alghabbas ag Intalla to power as the new Mayor of Kidal city. Alghabbas was also generally seen by the Kel Effele as the most likely candidate to replace his father as *amenokal*. In 2002 he was elected Kidal's representative in the National Assembly. He was replaced as mayor by Bayene ag Ahawali. Somewhere during those years, Alghabbas' older brother Attayoub ag Intalla travelled to Pakistan to study Islam under the guidance of the Tablighi Jamaat.[23] The importance of this journey in political terms cannot be overestimated and reflects the further intertwining of traditional and national politics. The Kel Effele base the legitimacy of their power in their religious status as *shorfa* (descendants of the prophet Muhammad) and in their religious knowledge. The claims of Intalla ag Attaher to the position of *amir al-mu'minin*, ruler of the believers, should be seen in this light. Through his piety and religious learning, Attayoub ag Intalla represents the spiritual dimension of the Kel Effele powerbase. He was back from Pakistan well before the 2004 communal elections, which brought him to the position of Mayor, a position he kept until the 2009 elections, when he was replaced by Arbakane ag Abzayak. Their oldest brother, Mohammed ag Intalla, had been the representative for the *Cercle* of Kidal in the National Assembly since the 1990s and was now the representative for the *Cercle* of Ti-n-Essako. Thus, the Kel Effele covered their political power bases in the religious and democratic political domains to protect their position against the possible threats to their tribal power from the side of the Irayakan, a power they see as the most important in a variegated political field. Of course, the possible threats to their power came not only from within the Ifoghas, but also from outside. In 2002 Alghabbas ag Intalla had Zeid ag Hamzata as his rival in the elections for the National Assembly, and Zeid ag Hamzata also announced his candidacy for the post of Mayor of Kidal in 2004, challenging Attayoub ag Intalla (among other candidates, they were not the only ones). In 2007, Zeid again competed with Alghabbas for the election of the National Assembly representative, and accused Alghabbas of large-scale electoral fraud.[24]

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[23] The exact dates and duration of his travels are not known to me.

[24] Arrêt n°07-179/cc–el du 10 août 2007 portant proclamation des résultats définitifs du deuxième tour de l'élection des députés a l'assemblée nationale (scrutin du 22 juillet 2007). http://www.matcl.gov.ml/img/pdf/resultats2etourlegislives.pdf

A further problem in both tribal and communal politics was the growing independence of the Iforgoumoussen. Originally a clan within the Ifoghas, they had moved towards a status closer to that of an independent tribe during the colonial period. The creation of the I-n-Tedjedit *Commune* sketched above temporarily resolved long-standing conflicts over pastoral rights, but this solution generated even more independence for the Iforgoumoussen, who now had 'their' *Commune*, led by their strong man: Ibrahim Bahanga. A common soldier in the rebellion, Ibrahim Bahanga was now famous for his bravery, driving and fighting skills, which gained him the honorary nickname 'Lion of the Tamesna'. After the rebellion, he was integrated in the ranks of the Malian Army as a Corporal, which was a bitter demotion to him as he had held the rank of Sergeant Major in the MPA. But he was not successful in securing a higher rank because he lacked strategic and political insights. His independence from the political elite in Kidal as Mayor of I-n-Tedjedit would prove a political liability. Although he was now formally incorporated in the legal power structures of the state, his political behaviour was closer to that of Alla ag Albachir in the 1940s and 1950s: militarily defying the authorities with ever growing demands. After all, he had won his position in politics with the abduction of the electoral committee in Tidarmène and the attacks on all and sundry in late 2000 to obtain 'his' *Commune*. After the GSPC hostage crisis, he allegedly showed the GSPC drivers a number of secret roads in Northern Mali, only known to the most skilled *ishumar* drivers, in return for a large sum of money, which gave him more leeway in his enterprises.

Then there was the unresolved and very bitter fight between the Ifoghas and *imghad* dating from the mid-1990s when ARLA and MPA had fought each other. After the MPA had ousted the ARLA from their bases in the Adagh with the help of the Malian Army, the *imghad* had been driven out of Kidal and away from their pastures in the Adagh. Although they were gradually 'allowed' back in the city, their position remained precarious and the Ifoghas kept demanding a subservient attitude, under the ideology of *tefoghessa*, which became harder and harder to retain, leading to a hardening of the idea of *timgheda*. In the middle years of the last decade, a small group of integrated officers of *imghad* origins rose to prominence in the Malian Army. Most prominent is Elhajj Gamou, an *imghad* born around 1964 in Tidarmène, a village in the *Cercle* of Ménaka that is part of the disputed zone around Tedjerert. During the rebellion he was an officer within the ARLA.[25] He integrated in the Malian Army in 1996, and followed an intensive officer training at the Military Academy. In 2001 he was promoted Lieutenant Colonel and stationed in Gao as regimental commander.

[25] Dao, B., 'Insécurité au Nord: l'Etat entretient le conflit ethnique', *Le Républicain*, 16/01/2009. http://www.maliweb.net/category.php?NID=39658

He quickly became the commander *ad interim* of the 1st military region (Gao), to occupy that post formally in 2005.[26] While Elhajj Gamou and a small number of Kel Tamasheq from outside the Ifoghas tribe made good career progress, the career of the main Ifoghas (Iforgoumoussen) officer in active service, Hassan ag Fagaga, stagnated. This added to the Ifoghas perception that they were loosing their power. An *imghad* officer and former ARLA fighter commanded the military in the North and could thus put pressure behind the reintegration of the *imghad* within the Adagh. Probably in disgruntlement with being passed over and being overtaken in rank, and in fear of the shifting power balance, Lieutenant Colonel Hassan ag Fagaga deserted his post shortly after Elhajj Gamou's promotion.[27] After negotiations, he agreed to return to a new post in Timbuktu, but he did not present himself at the barracks. Instead he defected for good in March 2006, taking a small number of Tamasheq soldiers from the Adagh with him into Mount Tigharghar. President Amadou Toumani Touré then sent Iyad ag Ghali to mediate, but to no avail. Under unclear circumstances Iyad even ended up joining the deserted soldiers, perhaps in a bid to keep his own power base as leader of the former rebels intact, perhaps even to put more pressure on the Kel Effele in the undeclared struggle over the chieftaincy of the Ifoghas. They were soon joined by Ibrahim Bahanga, a clansman to Hassan ag Fagaga, and a group of his followers, among whom his half brother Moussa Bâ, an officer at the army base in Ménaka. On 22 May 2006 this group of prominent former rebels of Ifoghas origins seized a large amount of weapons and material from the army bases in Kidal and Ménaka and occupied Kidal city. Contrary to the situation in 1992, the material was not taken over violently as it was handed over by integrated Kel Tamasheq officers within both bases who joined the group around Iyad, Ibrahim, and Hassan. On 23 May 2006 the group announced its formal existence as the Alliance Démocratique du 23 Mai pour le Changement (ADC). They posted their main demands in June on their own website: Azawad-union.blogspot.com. The demands remained rather vague, evoking an unequal development between Northern Mali and 'useful Mali' and the lack of implementation of the National Pact of 1992.

> The greater North, a desert deserted by the central authorities in Bamako, cannot even pretend to any form of stability in face of a developmental crevice literally dividing the country in two: The useful Mali [*le Mali utile*] and the rest (…).
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> In its days, the National Pact had raised hopes, unfortunately snuffed out since then. The revenues of the country and the scarce development aid are unidirecti-

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[26] Sylla, C. 'Elhajj Gamou, patriote dans l' âme', *Le Républicain*, 08/02/2006. http://www.malikounda.com/nouvelle_voir.php?idNouvelle=8336.

[27] Unless indicated otherwise, the following narrative elements on the events since May 2006 are based on Vallet, M., "Chronique de la vie au Sahara". *Le Saharien* 177 (2nd semester 2006) – 187 (4th semester 2008); and on Saint-Girons, A. 2008.

> onally sent to the so-called useful part of the country. The lack of infrastructure in the North is not coincidental but the result of studied and planned political directives.[28]

A certain amount of support for the new mutinous upsurge (I feel great reluctance to call these events a third rebellion) was expressed on the Internet. A certain Ayor 54, for example, created a series of logos and posters celebrating the new movement, which he posted on his website.[29] However, the new violence did not meet general approval, not even in Kidal itself, let alone outside the Adagh. On the Kidal website Kidal.info, former rebel leader Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine posted a concise analysis of the reasons for this new upsurge.

> The situation is first of all a concentrate of social problems in the Adrar, notably:
> 1. the problem of a 'post-Intalla' period and the survival of the tribal rule of the Ifoghas sapped by internal struggles;
> 2. the role and place of the former political and military leaders of the former MPA in the partition and democratic exercise of political power in the Adrar;
> 3. the aftermath of the ARLA-MPA conflict of 1994 reinvigorating the fear of vengeance by the ARLA on the MPA through the present military command in Gao (held by an Imrad from Ménaka and of the ARLA) and that in Ménaka (held by an Ifoghas from Kidal and the MPA);
> 4. a wish for autonomy from the side of the Iforgoumoussen in Ti-n-Essako from the authoritarian power exercised by ADEMA-PASJ representative Mohamed Ag Intalla. Note that both Ibrahim Bahanga and Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Fagaga are from the Ti-n-Essako *fraction*;
> 5. the real or perceived sentiment within the Ifoghas tribe to no longer be at the centre of decisions in the *Région* of Kidal in the face of emerging democratic and civic powers and countering powers;
> 6. the birth of certain autonomous political forces (women, Imrads and *Iklan*s) escaping the local traditional Ifoghas order;
> 7. the poverty and economic vulnerability of the *Région* of Kidal;
> 8. the controversial choices of the Malian state in the management and administration of the *Région* of Kidal create and feed a syndrome of structural instability;
> 9. the rivalling identities of Ifoghas – Imrads between the political parties in Mali and their members, especially in 1994, when the State supported the MPA against the ARLA.

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[28] http://azawad-union.blogspot.com/2006/06/les-raisons-dune-rvolte.html

[29] http://members.lycos.co.uk/ayor54/tallywen.htm. This webiste in Arabic by an anonymous Tamasheq webartist is among the most fascinating websites created by Kel Tamasheq. The artist in question has designed posters, postcards and stamps for an independent Azawad Republic and other sharply political art.

10. the democratic deficit and the absence of social justice within parts of the Tuareg Community in the Adrar encourages omerta, violence and permanent small scale rebellions [*révoltes de poche*].[30]

If one compares Zeidane's analysis and the narrative above following similar lines to that of the previous rebellions sketched in this book, it becomes clear that the situation in 2006 resembles more closely that of 1963 than that of 1990. Local and national politics become enmeshed to form the ingredients of a violent dispute in an attempt to regain independence and a preceived lost political power. A major difference with the rebellion of the 1990s was the position and armament of the insurgents. While, at the moment of their attack in June 1990, the movement no longer possessed any means of warfare, the ADC possessed a large amount of heavy arms taken from the army bases they previously occupied as officers and soldiers themselves.[31] Thus, from the start, the ADC was just as well equipped as the Malian Army, from whence it more or less sprang. A second difference is in tactics and strategy. The ADC officers and men took with them a number of non-Tamasheq soldiers as prisoners of war when taking the material from the bases. If no other demand was met, they could at least discuss the situation of these POWs. The taking and keeping of POWs became an integral part of this conflict, with the ADC and its later offshoot ATNMC taking Malian soldiers prisoner on a large scale (at one point the ATNMC held over 70 soldiers and officers as prisoners) as means of pressure. In the later phases of the conflict, especially in 2007, the ADC and ATNMC were accused, rightly or not, of using landmines as part of a strategy of besieging army bases, notably the army base at Ti-n-Zaouatene. With the new heavy equipment, new tactics became available other than the hyper-mobile guerrilla warfare of the 1990s. A further difference with the previous rebellions was the international situation in which the events played out. *Al-fellaga* was set in a context of international ignorance and indifference to the plight of the Kel Tamasheq. *Al-Jebha* played in an international context where the great powers still did not care, but also one in which international media

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[30] http://www.kidal.info/Forum/FRv1/lire.php?msg=5581. Zeidane lists a further 4 points that are more observations on the present situation than causes for the conflict. From the above narrative it is clear that I largely share his vision and analysis, and that mine is partly based on his, although in large parts I reached my conclusions independenly from Zeidane by following the news. This particular analysis is shared by other outside observers, such as Pierre Boilley, who expressed similar views during the round table "Les rébellions au nord Niger et au nord Mali. 1990-2008" organised at the CEMAF in Paris 18/04/2008.

[31] A news item filmed by Al-Jazeera showed heavy anti-aircraft guns in possession of the deserters. Al-Jazeera Arabic. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbdTbaL9o_Q. Added to YouTube 29/02/2008.

attention could put pressure on the international community. But although there was international media attention, this was thwarted by news of the Rwandan genocide in a media landscape where the importance of African news was ever more decided by the number of victims. Of course, there was an international dimension to the conflict in so far as neighbouring countries mediated or accepted to host refugees from the conflict, but there was no further intervention from their side. Hoever, since 2001, the international setting was one in which the remotest areas of the Muslim world were under the attention of the only remaining superpower and in which a number of international mining companies were looking for new oilfields in a market of ever-staggering demands and prices. Next to the US, the Algerian Government was also very interested in the situation in Northern Mali as the area served as a rear base to the GSPC. Then, on a far smaller scale, the European Union and the United Nations were interested since they saw the region as a hub in the international traffic in drugs, arms and prospective migrants to Europe. On 25 May 2006, the Malian Army retook the city of Kidal with the help of US soldiers stationed semi-permanently in Gao as part of the Pan Sahel Initiative. The US Air Force provided further assistance in flying material for the Malian Army to the North, to which the ADC reacted by firing at these planes with the seized anti-aircraft guns. The US Army formally confirmed both the assistance to the Malian Army and the ADC assault on a USAF C-130 transport.[32] Never before had foreign troops been officially engaged in Northern Mali in the context of a Tamasheq rebellion. The US assistance had obvious reasons. While the Malian Government had now fully learned to differentiate between Kel Tamasheq identities, which in practice meant that this differentiation was actually lived up to by those groups, the US Government still had to learn who was who in the Sahara. The ADC therefore found it necessary to add a communiqué to its website which indicated that their struggle had nothing to do whatsoever with Islamic militancy and terrorism. On 9 June 2006 one could read on Azawad-union.blogspot.com:

> Denial of any connection between our movement and the GSPC. We could fight for Islam, but we fight first for our living conditions.[33]

Indeed, on 26 September 2006 the ADC attacked a group of GSPC fighters still present in Northern Mali and using it as a base for activities in the Sahel,

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[32] Soares, C. 'Tuareg rebels attack US plane as insurgency in Mali intensifies', *The Independent*, 14/09/2007. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/tuareg-rebels-attack-us-plane-as-insurgency-in-mali-intensifies-402323.html

[33] http://azawad-union.blogspot.com/2006/06/dementi-pour-toute-connexion-de-notre.html

killing one of the GSPC *emirs*.[34] The message had a double edge that the ADC tried to play out in the new international settings. Any connection to Muslim militancy was denied, but the ADC tried to communicate two different potential scenarios to the US and to the Algerian Government. Te first was that they were the force *par excellence* to fight Muslim militants in the Sahara and they could do so if the US would stop its alliance with the Government in Bamako against the Kel Tamasheq, and if Algiers was willing to keep playing its role as mediator.[35] But if this situation did not produce itself, and if the US forces would keep actively supporting the Malian Armed Forces, there was of course always the second scenario in which the Kel Tamasheq would indeed turn to Muslim militancy, thereby creating exactly the situation the US tried to avoid with its military presence. Clearly, the former rebels had learned more about international policy than their predecessors knew in the days of *Alfellaga*. By far the most important difference between the previous rebellions and this new crisis was the reaction of the Malian Government. President Amadou Toumani Touré reacted very prudently to the new rebellion. Contrary to his predecessors he had personal experience as a leading officer in the Army in fighting the rebellion in the 1990s, and it seemed that he had drawn important lessons from previous mistakes. The most important mistake ATT avoided was to think in stereotypes and to put all Kel Tamasheq away as a possible threat to national unity. Thus, loyal administrators and military commanders were not relieved from their posts to be replaced by men from the South, as had been done during *Alfellaga*. The Governor of the *Région* of Kidal, Al Amadou ag Iyan, was kept in place, while command over military operations rested with Elhajj Gamou. Repression against civilian Kel Tamasheq was avoided as much as possible. ATT appointed his secretary of state Modibo Sidibe at the head of a crisis centre which had as one of its primary tasks to make it clear to the Malian Armed Forces and to the population at large that not all Kel Tamasheq were rebels, and to do everything to avoid army repression and pogroms of the kind seen in the 1990s. The number of summary executions and retaliations against the civilian population was indeed kept very low.

In June, the ADC proposed negotiations through the intermediary of Algeria, to which the Malian Government agreed. The negotiations took place in Algiers between 30 June and 4 July, leading to the signing of the Algiers Agreement.

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[34] http://www.kidal.info/infos/news/infos.php. Accrochages mortels entre le GSPC et l'alliance democratique du 23 mai pour le changement.

[35] Some observers at Kidal.info saw this attack on the GSPC as 'tit for tat' to the Algerian government, in reimbursement for their mediation with Bamako. On October 6th, 2006 the GSPC retaliated with a counterstrike on an ADC patrol at Taoudennit, the GSPC's main base, leaving 9 ADC fighters dead and taking two prisoners.

Whereas the National Pact in 1992 stipulated problems and solutions intended for the whole of Northern Mali, the Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal *Régions*, the Algiers Agreement concentrated entirely on the *Région* of Kidal.[36] This was more or less logical. Just like *Alfellaga*, but unlike *Al-Jebha***,** the ADC was entirely based on the Kel Adagh, addressing and expressing issues internal to the Kel Adagh. But unlike *Alfellaga*, the ADC had virtually no support from outside the Adagh. While opposition to the National Pact from outside the North had always been strong**,** the Algiers Agreement received opposition from both Southerners and Northerners claiming that the President had bowed to the demands of 'the Kidal rogues'. However, if it was indeed President Touré's intention to stop the conflict as soon as possible and without high costs in human lives and material, and if one takes into account that given the military equipment, training and combat experience of the Kel Adagh mutineers the costs might indeed have run high, the price paid in the Algiers Agreement was very low. It must be said to his credit, however partial this might sound, that President Amadou Toumani Touré handled the new crisis with great resolve, determined not to let violence spiral out of control, despite the public attacks made on his honour for not choosing the military option against the insurgents. After initial political resistance in the National Assembly, it became possible to put the Algerian Agreement into effect by early 2007. Throughout February and March 2007, ADC fighters descended from the bases in Mount Tigharghar to newly installed cantonment camps. On 12 March a large number of the seized arms were ceremoniously handed over to the Malian Armed Forces, and between 22 and 24 March an international forum on development took place in Kidal, as had been stipulated in the Algiers Agreement.

But the new conflict was not over. As during *Al-Jebha*, refractory parties, disagreeing with the Algiers Agreement, split off to continue the fight. Contrary to Iyad ag Ghali and Hassan ag Fagaga and their men, Ibrahim Bahanga and a

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[36] The integral text of the Algiers Agreement can be downloaded at http://www.kidal.info/docs/Accord-Alger040706.pdf. The agreement stipulates hardly any measures on development that were not already been taken in by the National Pact and, in fact, parts of which were in progress at the start of the mutiny. As in the National Pact, the most elaborate clauses were on the integration in the Malian Armed Forces of former ADC fighters. One new demand was one hour of broadcasting time for regional matters on national television (of which all Malian *Régions* would benefit) and one very old point was finally won: academic degrees in Arabic were to be recognised as valid for administrative applications, a final victory for the long-sought integration of Arabic in the educational curriculum. One very important measure from the National Pact that had not been put into effect was now finally agreed upon: a ten-year tax exemption for the Kidal *Région* to catch up with its economic underdevelopment. This measure had created outrage in Mali at the time, and again met with heavy resistance when included in the Algiers Agreement.

number of warriors, including a large group of Idnan fighters beside Bahanga's Iforgoumoussen continued the fighting.[37] They found new allies in the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ).[38] As in Mali, new fighting had broken out in Northern Niger in February 2007. Here a number of key issues led to renewed violence. The first was the lack of application of the various peace agreements of the late 1990s, together with political tensions around former rebel leader (and then minister in various governments) Ghissa ag Boula, and general dissatisfaction with the Government of President Mamadou Tandja. But more important were tensions over the possible discovery of new mineral riches. With oil prices staggering to unprecedented heights and the search for other energy sources becoming more urgent, uranium prices also rose and so did international interest in Niger's uranium and petrol potentials. The carving-up of the entire northern part of the country into prospection and exploitation blocks for crude oil and yellow cake led to intense concerns among the Kel Tamasheq about environmental issues (of which they had plenty experience through the open-air uranium mines at Arlit), the possible loss of access to pastures and, not least, the distribution of the revenues of these new riches. Contrary to the Kel Tamasheq of the ADC, the MNJ made no public claims to more autonomy, let alone independence. They claimed to defend the rights of all inhabitants of Northern Niger, regardless of ethnical background, and the presence among their ranks of a few Fulani, Arabs and, especially, a group of regular army officers, gave these claims some credibility.[39] In July 2007 Ibrahim Bahanga formed a formal alliance with the MNJ called the Alliance Touarègue Niger-Mali pour le Changement (ATNMC).[40] Bahanga and his men joined in a number of attacks in Niger but the alliance was short-lived. The ATNMC was quickly rebaptised Alliance Touarègue Nord-Mali pour le Changement, allowing it to keep its previous acronym, and concentrated on

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[37] The motivations for the Idnan to join Bahanga in his continued struggle can only be guessed at. It might well be that this was a temporary alliance of two groups – Iforgoumoussen and Idnan – because both sought more independence for themselves and hence less power for the Ifoghas, this despite the fact that the Iforgoumoussen officially still formed part of the Ifoghas *tewsit*.

[38] Deycard, F. 2007. I am less familiar with the internal political constellations of the Kel Tamasheq in Niger, but undoubtedly a number of internal political issues played an important role in the new conflict as well. I have not yet come across a sound analysis of these internal issues.

[39] The presence of Nigerien Army Officers among the MNJ was due to internal conflicts within the Nigerien Armed Forces dating back to the time of the coup d'état by Colonel Ibrahim Mainassare Baré in January 1996, assassinated in a counter coup in April 1999 by Major Daouda Malam Wanké, leading to mutinies by troops loyal to Baré.

[40] http://atnmc.blogspot.com/

besieging the Malian Armed Forces in Northern Mali in their army bases in Ti-n-Zaouatene, making use of landmines, which lost him the last bit of support from outside the limited circles of insurgents.[41] His tactical strongpoint however remained his ability to take relatively large numbers of military hostages, which gave him a position of relative safety and negotiation. Looking for outside support to quell the continued upsurge, President Touré managed successfully to depict Bahanga and his men as ordinary drug traffickers and possible al-Qaeda affiliates, which led to continued US and French military assistance. Yet, Touré seemed to have remained determined to solve the insurgency with as few casualties as possible. In December 2007 negotiations under Algerian mediation led Bahanga to release 10 of the 36 soldiers he had taken captive in the previous months. However, during April and May 2008, Bahanga launched a massive offensive against the Malian Armed Forces, leaving 63 Malian soldiers dead, 67 wounded, 33 newly captured (bringing the total number of hostages to 59), and 12 cars, 4 BRDM armour carriers and a helicopter destroyed, with another 5 cars taken. On 6 May 2008 Bahanga's men ventured far south to attack the army base at Diabaly in the *Région* of Segu, about 500 km from Bamako, proving that the hyper-mobile warfare tactics of the 1990s had not been forgotten.[42] This attack caused outrage among the Malian public, but President Touré's decision not to perform punitive counter attacks in the North provoked even greater outcry, and insults were levelled at him.[43] After Bahanga's offensive, Mu'ammar Qadhafi offered his mediation, which was accepted by both sides. From then on, Tripoli would become the main mediator in a conflict that was more and more seen as one between a group of armed bandits and the Government. Given the lack of coherent political demands from his side, Bahanga's position indeed came closer and closer to that of Alla ag Albachir, who defied authorities for the sake of defiance itself. The difference between both men seems to be that Alla is a very popular historical memory among all Kel Adagh and beyond, while Ibrahim Bahanga is widely unpopular among many Kel Adagh and certainly beyond the Adagh, where constant fear of retaliation on all Kel Tamasheq for Bahanga's deeds is not unfounded. This was not without reason. In September 2008, Ganda Koy was revived under the name Ganda Djio: the Son of the Land. Its first act was to kill four Kel Tamasheq herdsmen. Still, President Amadou Toumani Touré remained determined to

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[41] IRIN-WA, "Mali: Indignation dominates reaction as attacks in north escalate". 31/08/2007. http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74058

[42] http://atnmc.blogspot.com/

[43] During a call radio programme discussing Bahanga's attack, one caller simply responded with the outcry 'ATT is his father's genitals', a major insult in Bamanakan that quickly became Bamako's most popular ringtone. Personal communication Greg Mann.

keep the peace as much as possible. In all 22 arrests were made to bring the murders to justice and to quell Ganda Djio before the spiral of ethnic killings would start. This did not mean, however, that Touré did not respond militarily to Bahanga's offensive. In June, Algeria and Mali agreed to organise communal border patrols to intercept both the fighters of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Lands of the West (the former Algerian GSPC which had formally joined al-Qaeda in 2007) and Ibrahim Bahanga.[44] That same month, Touré ordered large-scale operations to intercept Bahanga and his men and to chase them out of their bases in Mount Tigharghar. Colonel Elhajj Gamou led these operations. His troops did not only include regular soldiers of the Malian Armed Forces. Gamou had formed a militia of former ARLA fighters of *imghad* origins – ironically called 'Delta Force' after the US Special Forces – that was equipped with tecnical vehicles carrying heavy arms.[45] The motifs behind the formation of this *imghad* militia and its success in fighting Bahanga's ATNMC are easy to explain at the very end of this epilogue at the very end of this book: *egha* over their loss in 1994 and the subsequent humiliation and degradation the Ifoghas forced them into. Gamou's forces managed to drive Bahanga from his bases, leaving 20 of his fighters dead, but although the operations dealt a heavy blow to the ATNMC, the fight would take another half year. New negotiations in September 2008 led to the release of 44 military hostages and a short period of calm, but in December 2008 Bahanga attacked the army base at Nampala. In retaliation, Gamou's troops of Malian Armed Forces, largely consisting of Kel Tamasheq soldiers from outside the Adagh and solely led by Kel Tamasheq and Bidân officers; and completed by Gamou's 'Delta Force', decisively ousted Bahanga's ATNMC from their bases in Mount Tigharghar on 21 January 2009.[46] As an irony of history, Bahanga's last fight, which he decisively lost, took place at Toximine, the place where he had battled the Malian Army and won in 1990. It is less ironic that his defeat was brought about by his former comrades in arms who had given up the idea of resistance to the Malian state in

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[44] Berschinski, R. 2007.

[45] Kone, Ousmane. 'Accrochage à la base de Tin-Assalek: Le colonel Gamou a maté hier Bahanga et ses troupes', *Malijet*, 05/06/2008. http://www.malijet.com/rebellion_au_nord_du_mali/accrochage_a_la_base_de_tin_assalek_le_colonel_gamou_a_mate_hier.html.

[46] 'L'armée annonce avoir pris "toutes les bases" du groupe d'Ag Bahanga', *Jeune Afrique*, 12/02/2009. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20090211T172332Z/-defense-armee-touareg-Ibrahim-Ag-Bahanga-L-armee-annonce-avoir-pris--toutes-les-bases--du-groupe-d-Ag-Bahanga--.html The main commanders of the Malian Armed Forces in the North apart from Colonel Elhajj Gamou were Colonel Sidi Ahmed Kounta, a Kounta as his name indicates; Commander Barek of unknown origins; and Colonel Takni of Kel Adagh origins.

return for personal career perspectives and a modest development of their Sahara. Kel Tamasheq politics seem to have entered a phase of *real politik.* After his defeat, Bahanga managed to escape to Libya where he reportedly still resides in Tripoli.[47] On 23 January the remaining Idnan warriors within the ATNMC gave up the fight through mediation of Idnan politicians.[48] By then Hassan ag Fagaga's remaining men within the ATNMC had already left.[49] At the time of writing, Northern Mali is quiet, but it remains clear that violence might remain an integral part of Kel Tamasheq politics for the coming times.

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47 'Ibrahim Ag Bahanga se retire en Libye', *RFI*, 24/02/2009. http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/110/article_78672.asp?keepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=350&width=450

48 Takia, Ch., 'A l'initiative de Ag Erlaf et de Ag Bouya : 120 jeunes Idnanes se retirent de la bande à Bahanga et brûlent leurs armes', *L'Indépendant*, 23/01/09. http://www.maliweb.net/category.php?NID=39889&intr=

49 AFP. 'Des centaines de rebelles touareg déposent les armes', *Jeune Afrique*, 18/02/2009. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20090217T125512Z/-paix-armee-touareg-Ibrahim-Ag-Bahanga-Des-centaines-de-rebelles-touareg-deposent-les-armes.html

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Interviews

Over the years I have had numerous talks, discussions, and interviews in various forms with many Kel Tamasheq and other Malians and Nigeriens. All have contributed to my understanding of Tamasheq society and the problems described in this book. I will here only list those interviewees I have cited.

AMEGHA AG SHERIF, one of the leaders of Alfellaga, one of the principal organisers of the Tanekra movement in Algeria and mediator during the second rebellion. Amegha is one of the main informants of this work. I have had numerous informal talks with him and conducted a series of interviews, which led to two sessions on tape. Brussels, October 1994 (recorded). Bamako, 08/02/1998, and Bamako 10/02/1998 (recorded).

ALBACHIR, a civil servant of Daoussahak origins. Bamako, 24/01/1998.

ALMOUSTAPHA MAÏGA, Songhay, temporary researcher (ecologist) for SNV project Minika. Menaka, 24/03/1999.

BAY AG ALHASSAN, one of the veterans of the Tamasheq involvement in Lebanon and officer in the second rebellion in which he partook from day one. I have conducted a series of interviews with Bay, culminating in one recorded session. Bamako, 13/11/1998, Menaka, 01/04/1999, and Menaka, 11/04/1999 (recorded).

BIBI AG GHASSI, one of the military leaders of *Alfellaga*. Interviewed by Sidi Mohamed ag Zimrou, no date or place known. Georg Klute kindly provided me the transcript of this interview.

CHEIK OUMAR SISSOKO, cineast and later Malian Minister of Culture, interviewed by Ray Privett, 03/01/2000. http://www.britannica.com/magazine/article?content_id=252652&pager.offset=30

'COLONEL' TAGHLIFT, one of the veterans of the Tamasheq involvement in the Libyan campaigns in Chad and officer during the second rebellion in which he partook from day one. I have conducted a series of talks and interviews with Taghlift, culminating in one recorded session. In-Taykaren, 03/04/1999, and Menaka, 19/04/1999 (recorded).

FITUK, one of the participants in the premature attack made by the *Tanekra* on Fanfi in 1982. Menaka, 30/03/1999 (recorded).

KEYNI AG SHERIF, brother to Amegha ag Sherif. Keyni joined his brother in exile in Algeria after *Alfellaga*. He was involved in the organisation of the *Tanekra* movement from its first moments. Kidal, 25/05/1999.

LAMINE AG BILAL, participant in the second rebellion, amateur historian and Sergeant in the Malian armed forces and my research assistant in Gao. I have conducted a series of talks with Lamine, none of them recorded. Gao, 20/06/1999.

MAKHAMAD WAN DAGHADA, one of the fighters of *Alfellaga*. Interviewed by Ibrahim ag Litny on demand of Georg Klute. Kidal, August 1994. Georg Klute kindly provided me the transcript of this interview.

MALIK AG SALLAH, one of the first men from outside the Adagh to join the *Tanekra* movement. Menaka, 28/04/1999.

MAMADOU GOLOGO, former Minister of Information, under Modibo Keita and present-day leader of the revived USRDA. Bamako, 18/01/1998.

MAZA', one of the veterans of the of Tamasheq involvement in Lebanon. Maza' was part of the group of fighters who demanded to be returned to Algeria upon arrival in Syria. Lyon, March 1994.

MOHAMED AG INTALLA, *Député* in the *Assemblée National* for Tin Essako and oldest son of Intalla ag Attaher, *amenokal* of the Adagh. Kidal, 23/05/1999.

MOHAMED LAMINE AG MOHAMED FALL, one of the first men to join the *Tanekra* movement and long time its main organiser in Libya. At present amateur historian and one of the members of the (informal) Ifoghas council, nicknamed 'Ifoghas minister of information'. One of my main informants and research assistant in Kidal. I have conducted a series of interviews with Mohamed Lamine, most of which resulted in notes, and one in a formal taped interview. Kidal, 27/12/1998 (recorded), 23/05/1999, May (unknow date) 1999, and 08/06/1999 (recorded).

MOHAMED SALLAH AG MOHAMED, DAOUSSAHAK, cousin to Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyouba, two of the leaders of *Alfellaga* and organisers of the *Tanekra* movement. Mohamed Sallah joined the *Tanekra* in Libya, but left the movement out of discontent with its political direction and the exclusion of non-Tamasheq from the movement. Bamako, 18/01/1998.

MOUSSA BASWISH, a former member of the *Tanekra* and a local historian in Kidal. Kidal, 06/01/1999.

MOUSSA AG KEYNA, *al-guitara* singer-songwriter, took part in the Tamasheq rebellion in Niger. Leiden, 04/10/01.

MOUSSA KEITA, former Minister of Youth and Sports under Modibo Keita and the latter's younger brother. Bamako, 10/01/1998.

FORMER LIEUTENANT SAMAKÉ, serving in the Adagh during *Alfellaga* and Secretary of the Malian Association of Army Veterans. Bamako, 03/11/1998.

S. TAMASHEQ, woman who wished to remain anonymous. Paris 09/01/1996.
TAKHNOUNA, a Tamasheq woman living in Bamako. Takhnouna took care of *Alfellaga* leaders Zeyd ag Attaher and Elledi ag Alla during their imprisonment in Bamako. Bamako, 08/02/1998.

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