Navigations of a globalizing Chad: Nomadic Walad Djifir grounded in connectivity

Butter, I.C.

TWO BROTHERS IN ARMS: FERĪKH POLITICS

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In 2009, Harun's ten-year-old son was killed in a road accident, hit while herding livestock on the road to Am Timam, in the Salamat region. Harun is one of Hadj Hamdaan's younger brothers. As Islamic custom dictates, the issue was settled among those responsible and the victim's family. Harun's family sent an envoy of five to six members of the *ferīkh conseil*[143] to collect the body and receive compensation for the loss (known as *dīya* or blood money).[144] Traditionally, the amount of 1,500,000 CFA (2,287 EUR)[145] is distributed among the relatives. In this case, the money was not distributed evenly by Hadj Hamdaan, in his capacity as *chef de ferīkh*. For reasons still unclear, one particular ferīkh had refused to send a representative along with the envoy. In return, Hadj Hamdaan now refused to give them their full share. Instead of paying 500,000 CFA (762 EUR), he had given them 250,000 CFA (381 EUR). The situation escalated and has caused a rift in relations among members of the Walad Djifir.

— Based on fieldnotes, 26 April 2012

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The excerpt above preludes the dynamics found within the ferīkh and also the complicated social organization within the Walad Djifir as extended family and the Misseria Rouges as a larger group. It illustrates the way in which personal conflicts (informed by a tragedy in this case) are communal property and require organized action. These communal actions, however, are not always as unanimous as they may seem; and, in this case, Hadj Hamdaan's individual action has led to a rift

[143] Unfortunately it is not clear to me what the relations are between those who were sent as envoy. Generally speaking, such things as blood money are issues dealt with by kin relations. Whether this is the case here, and how close their relationship is, is unclear. Khazanov (1994) says the following: 'It is curious that sometimes even co-operation and mutual aid in the nomadic community seem to follow two courses. One is the neighbourly course and is concerned primarily with the needs of production; the other is based on kinship (for example, payment of bridewealth, participation in blood feuds, etc.) and is more connected with social functions. Thus it is not always the same group of individuals which has to be involved in both forms of mutual aid. Individuals from different communities, for example, may participate in mutual aid based on kinship. This may be very clearly observed amongst the nomads of northern Arabia. Here it is thought that all neighbours are obliged to help out with such work as sheep shearing (Musil, 1908: 285). However, assistance in the event of festivals of circumcision, marriages and, particularly, payment of blood dues is thought to be in the main the business of kinsmen, particularly of *khamsa,* i.e. members of one of the kin groups (Hess, 1932 [1938]: 32; Musil, 1928: 48; Daghestani, 1932: 202)' (p. 135).

[144] In relation to the Berti of Darfur, Holy (1974) defines *dīya* as 'a financial or material compensation by which cases of accidental killing or damage to person or property committed outside the maximal lineage are settled' (p. 132).

[145] French CFA to euro conversions are based on a constant assumed exchange rate of 655 CFA/EUR over the relevant time period. The online market exchange rate is 655.957 CFA/EUR.

within the community. While the incident took place in 2009, by 2012 the situation had still not been resolved, and Harun[146] had started paying off the 'debt' in person—a debt which, according to ferīkh consensus, was not his to pay but Hadj Hamdaan's. Through intermediation by another family member (Bachar), the situation had been somewhat calmed. Bachar spent endless hours speaking to each party in turn, trying to convince them of the importance of sticking together and not creating a rift. He argued that it would not do to have other sub-tribes hear of the internal discord within the Walad Djifir—they would be laughed at for letting such a split happen. Something like this had never happened in the history of their forefathers, and they had to be sure not to let it happen now. When Bachar went to speak to the ferīkh of the *opposantes* in April 2012, he went alone and was gone the best part of the day.[147] Recounting the incident to me afterwards, he said he had talked partly *par force* and partly in a calm manner. He had explained that he did not think this incident was a reason to split up their *chefferie*, presided over by Kolokos. Hadj Hamdaan was only one man, and many of the others did not agree with his stance. After much discussion, the opposing ferīkh agreed to make up. In the presence of 'three old men with white hair' (Bachar's words), the rest of the money would at some time have to be handed over. On Bachar's return from this lengthy discussion, he did not speak to the *conseil* as a whole but first took Fedellellah aside, and together they went for a long walk. He later informed Kolokos of what had been agreed with the other party, and Kolokos assured him he would ensure promises would be kept. On an earlier visit to Kolokos in mid-March 2012, Bachar had asked why he had not interfered. After all, as *chef de tribu* of the Walad Djifir, he outranked both the *chef de village* (Fedellellah) and the *chef de ferīkh* (Hadj Hamdaan). In the end, Kolokos agreed to pay the remaining 150,000 CFA by selling one or two of his cows. He would find his recompense by collecting among the *tribu*.[148]

In the meantime, Hadj Hamdaan had acquired a group of staunch supporters around him, all members of his ferīkh's *conseil* and, in general, the most outspoken ones. They stuck to their position and refused to contribute toward recompensing Kolokos. Over time, and probably due to several awkward social occasions where people were or were not greeted, the ferīkh which was owed the debt became known as the ferīkh of the *opposantes*.[149] When, in March 2014, the 29-year-old son of their own *sheikh* went missing, Hadj Hamdaan and his followers within the *conseil* refused to join the search party.[150] When, on the morning the boy had been discovered missing, Bachar (and I) arrived in the ferīkh and learned of what was happening, he countered the decision, claiming that it was in everyone's interest to work together, especially in a time of need. Much discussion followed, but it was enough to rally the troops to join the search. The boy—as they

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[146] In October 2017 on a visit to N'Djaména, I learned that Harun had passed away.

[147] Fieldnotes, 1 May 2012.

[148] The use of the French word *tribu* here reflects the way the Walad Djifir refer to themselves, as opposed to my placing this categorization upon them.

[149] What it means to be an *opposante* will be explained in more detail later on in this chapter. For now, suffice to say that an *opposante* is one who opposes the current leader. This can occur on any level (*chef de ferīkh*, *tribu*, or *canton*). Most *opposantes* are supported (financially) by members of their community.

[150] Fieldnotes, 8 March 2014.

referred to him themselves despite his age—was found in a grave condition on the third day after his disappearance. He had undressed and would not speak. Piecing the information together, it was discovered that he had just returned from a Qur'ānic school in the eastern city of Abéché. He had come back with malaria and had already received a first *perfusion* (medical drip) at the hospital in Mongo. On the night of his return, he had got up, most probably in a fever dream, and walked away. It was a young goat herder who had found his clothes strewn about miles away; and after finding the boy, he alerted a nearby search party on horseback.[151]

These are just a few details of a story involving many actors, factors, and much social hierarchy. It is not clear whether the animosity against that particular ferīkh was pre-dated by other events. Why, for example, did they not join the envoy when Harun's son was killed? What is clear is that Hadj Hamdaan's actions soured inter-ferīkh relations even further, instead of improving them. By March 2014, the *opposante* ferīkh was looking to join an even larger *opposante*, namely the *opposante* of the Misseria Rouges's *chef de canton*.

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This chapter presents two separate yet intertwined case studies: the aftermath of the death of Harun's son, and Abdoulaye Goudjeh's—the *chef de canton* of the Misseria Rouges—unlawful[152] selling of Walad Djifir land. In both cases, the role and strategies of several leaders come to the fore, with Bachar being one among them. Their stories reveal normative narratives of what is good for the ferīkh or Walad Djifir in general. The connectors of this chapter are thus the various self-proclaimed 'leaders'. By focusing on ferīkh politics[153] we are able to examine the nuanced complexities of social relations. The drivers of ferīkh politics are closely linked to the navigation of social cohesion and power relations. These are in turn related to kinship relations, enforced by cattle distribution and land-use rights, and by shared Islamic norms and values. However, by focusing on people, namely 'leaders', we allow room for the agency or choices of an individual which are perhaps not only linked to familial obligations but can be of a different nature. At the same time, I would like to follow up on something Marielle Debos wrote in relation to the state and its actors. She suggests:

> The state's practices are neither unambiguous nor coherent; they are the product of many decisions, sometimes contradictory, taken by various actors at different levels. However, the intentions of the known and unknown architects of this mode of government count less than their effects. (Debos 2016: 120)

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[151] During such searches, the community usually really comes together to help and everyone is concerned, men and women alike. These situations happen from time to time, though not always with a good outcome. Phone calls are made from ferīkh to ferīkh, and people also spread the news on horseback. Searches are organized by sending some men from early morning to nightfall on horseback, splitting into groups. Others go on foot. It takes a lot of manpower; but in such conditions as we find in the Guéra, time is everything.

[152] It is very difficult to know whether the selling of land was actually unlawful or 'merely' unjust.

[153] Here I follow Ladislav Holy's description of political activities as 'whatever actions contribute to the maintenance of the conditions for safe co-existence among individuals' (1974: 125). Of course, it is debatable whether everyone has the same idea of what is 'best'; and even at a very basic level, power hierarchies and manipulation can be observed.

This shift in focus from the intentions of individuals, or even those of a community, to the *effects* of their actions is something to bear in mind when reading the following case studies, as it seems to be precisely these effects which create a certain fission and fusion among the Walad Djifir. Debos goes on to argue for 'a non-normative analysis of concrete forms of the exercise of power (and of violence)' (ibid.) to understand how such a mode of governance works. While this ethnography accepts being narratively normative in some way or other—if only because the stories told through specific informants/people and reproduced by the author (myself) cannot escape a certain subjectivity—it can perhaps contribute to an understanding of ferīkh practices as being simultaneously just as ambiguous and non-coherent. Together, these practices provide the context in which individual Walad Djifir function and operate. And in forming such a context, ferīkh practices reveal a framework in which the various 'connectors', around which the following chapters are centred, function and derive their meaning.

Before continuing with the present-day situation, we first need to provide a sketch of how this present has grown out of the past.

From the past to the present

Administrative changes under the French

In *The Juhaina Arabs of Chad*, Frederic C. Thomas Jr (1959: 147) describes the dispersal of certain Arab groups in Chad, mentioning the Misseria on occasion. According to Thomas, sections of the Misseria crossed over to the French in 1907—escaping Ouaddaïan reign in eastern Chad—who had by this time come as far east as Lac Fitri.[154] In doing so, the Misseria installed themselves well to the west of their former homelands. Brahim (1988: 39) describes how in 1906 one of the Ouaddaï *aqīds* (Ahmad Magné of the el Zabada) confiscated all of the camels of numerous Misseria sub-tribes. The move away from Ouaddaïan reach followed the 1904 move of several other groups taking refuge under the French against hostile neighbours, raiders, and unreasonable tax confiscations by the *aqids*. The 1920s saw a shift in French policy when, in an attempt to improve the administrative control over highly mobile Arabs, certain chiefs were awarded considerable authority (the *grand kadmul* policy).[155] In doing so, some tribes became linked under one chief without there being clear family ties between them. A Humr Missairi chief, for example, was given command over all the Misseria, the independent Haimad tribe, and even the non-Arab populations of three cantons (sedentary tribal areas) to the north of the river Batha. By 1935, due to excessive

[154] The French first started taking a colonizing interest in Chad in the late 1880s / early 1890s, not establishing themselves there until 1909. As part of the AEF (est. 1910), Chad was more of a strategic asset for the French, a gateway to the British Sudan. Most effort was put into developing the southern part of the country—infrastructurally and economically—though most roads (if any) were laid out for tactical (military) purposes. See Arditi 2003; Azevedo 2004; Rense 2006; Souleymane 2017.

[155] The *grand kadmul* policy was an extension of indirect rule, '[…] a policy which respected local traditions, customary institutions and habits. In utilising the indigenous authorities it had the obvious advantage of relieving the French of many of the less important tasks of administration and reducing expenditures at a time when economies were most needed.' (Thomas 1959: 149)

taxes by these French-raised chiefs, the Misseria were dispersed over ten administrative districts, while previously having been restricted to only one. They and other Arab nomads also altered their movements, leaving early from the north and staying longer in the south, to protect their herds from chiefs' taxes—at a cost to their own health and that of the herds. By the early 1940s, the French acknowledged the now weak position of their chiefs, both financially and socially. The chiefs were removed from their positions and replaced with new chiefs, this time those who were supported by leading sheikhs and the community (Thomas 1959; Collelo 1990: 65).[156] For administrative purposes the French had become interested in sedentarizing the nomads. In order to stimulate this, they increased the taxes on herd owners/animals and decreased taxes on straw-hut owners. In one district, the cantonal chiefs (mostly sedentary non-Arabs) were given authority over all the residents of their canton, including Arab nomads temporarily installed there. Some chiefs deprived the Misseria of the use of pastures and wells and charged heavy fees for usage. This ended in a tribal war between the Misseria Humr and Ratanin in 1947, in which 150 people were known to have been killed (Hugot 1997). In 1947 the French took away power once again from the tribal chiefs, forbidding the collection of *zakaat* unless it was voluntarily paid. The French also took over many tribal responsibilities and now had both 'civil and commercial powers'. Goudjeh Walad Hamatta, for example, was named *chef de canton* of the Misseria Rouges by the French in 1943, following the arrest of Sheikh Adoudou (aka Doudou)[157] for not collaborating with the French (Dangbet 2015a: 214). By replacing him, they also simplified the tasks of future *chef de cantons*—sheikhs like Goudjeh Walad Hamatta would no longer have the status of *chef superieur* in the Batha region.

Under the French, the town of Koundjaar, located in the Batha and falling under the canton of Assinet, became the seat of the canton of the Misseria Rouge (see Map 1.3) Administratively, the Walad Djifir fell under this *cantonage*. The paternal cousins Bachar and Brahim recall how the power over the Misseria Rouge canton came to be placed with the sheikh of the Walad Sūrūr, Goudjeh Walad Hamatta, in 1943 (Hugot 1997: 121). Upon this proclamation, the French also made it mandatory for each sub-tribe's sheikh to give one of their sons to be raised in Koundjaar. Writing about the situation in 1949, Pierre Hugot names Said Hassan as *chef de tribu,* aka Sheikh of the Walad Djifir. According to local sources, his name was Said Harun, Brahim Said's father and Bachar's uncle (see the Family Tree in Figure 2.1). Consequently, Brahim was brought up in Koundjaar, alongside Goudjeh's own son and current *chef de canton,* Abdoulaye Goudjeh. After Said Harun, his younger brother Saad Harun became the sheikh. Saad Harun was Bachar's father.

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[156] See Collelo 1990 on how the French tried to impose an administration based on territory yet ended up ruling the Arabs through their kin-based social structures; see De Bruijn 2004 for an article detailing the example of a Hadjeray/ Dadjo family whose lives were altered due to such policies. The Walad Djifir were also affected by French changes to local leadership, as we will see later.

[157] Sheikh Adoudou succeeded his father in 1911 and was quick to gain French trust. Between 1932 and 1935 he was tasked with regrouping the Misseria Rouges under his authority. In 1935 he was installed as Sheikh Kabīr of both the Misseria Rouges and Noirs, as well as of the sedentary populations of Oumhadjer. Adoudou and his sons succeeded in alienating those they had been put in control over, failing to unite them in any politically stable or economically productive way. In 1943 the French administration had also had enough and re-divided the Misseria Rouges and Noirs, reinstating former *chef de tribus* and *canton*. The sedentary populations took this opportunity to create their own canton, *canton des Sédentaires du Dar Misserié*. However, the rights to pasture, villages, wells, and cultivation land still belonged to the Arabs—a situation which still creates tensions, especially by rivalling *chefs de canton* (Brahim 1988: 41-44).

The current sheikh of the Walad Djifir is Kolokos, the son of the brother who followed Saad Harun.

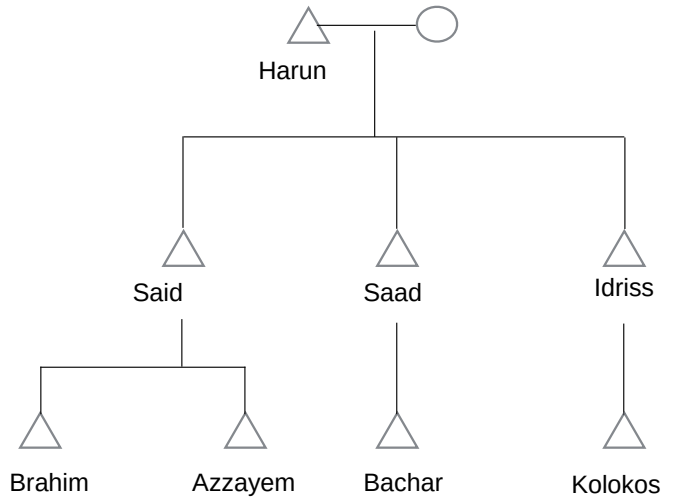

Figure 2.1: Family Tree showing the connection between Bachar, Brahim, and Kolokos

Land strife and strengthening allegiances

By March 2012 it had been three years since the Walad Djifir had left the canton of Abdoualaye Goudjeh.[158] As *chef de canton*, Abdoulaye Goudjeh had begun giving away—or rather selling—land to other sub-tribes. In the case of the Walad Djifir, he had forcefully taken a piece of Habilai and sold one part to the Walad ‘Umar and another part to the Mazakněh, in exchange for money and livestock (‘*boeufs vivres’*, in the words of the Walad Djifir). The incident occurred in the month of October, when most of the Walad Djifir can be found on their dry-season lands in the Guéra. It had started out with a visit to the terrain from the *chef de tribu* of the Walad ‘Umar. As most people do not live on al-Habilai year-round, a guard is appointed to protect their terrain, the focal point of which is now a deep, constructed well.[159] This guard, a brother of Brahim Said named Azzayem Said Harun,[160] received the aforementioned visitor. The chef of the Walad ‘Umar claimed that a specific part of the terrain belonged to the Walad ‘Umar. The guard denied this: ‘Since my father, I have never heard of such a thing—that there were Walad ‘Umar in this area.’ A meeting was

[158] Fieldnotes, 4 April 2012.

[159] On the Wodaabe of east-central Niger, Köhler (2016a: 156) writes: ‘De facto, the owner of a well in the pastoral zone enjoys priority use rights over the surrounding rangeland (see Thébaud 1990).’ It is not clear whether a similar system is in place in Chad. From accounts gathered, it seems that wells are not necessarily owned by anyone but very much shared between certain groups in specific locations and that these locations coincide with claims made to grazing land.

[160] Same father, different mother. See Figure 2.1.

organized with the Walad ‘Umar, Walad Sūrūr, and Walad Djifir. The Toumaï, who are not Misseria Rouges, were called in by the Walad Djifir to act as witnesses and confirm who the rightful owner was. The chief of the Walad ‘Umar refused to accept this, even after they had sworn on a copy of the Qur’ān. Here the information on what happened next is somewhat unclear. However the meeting went exactly, the outcome was one with which the Walad Djifir did not agree. When they voiced this, soldiers and gendarmes arrested them and placed them in the full sun[161] for 25 minutes, after which they were released. The indignity of having been held unjustly is what everyone remembers most when recounting the story.[162] One may assume that the Walad ‘Umar (the Mazakněh were not mentioned in this situation) were directly supported by Aboudoulaye Goudjeh when placing their claim on the terrain.

In the beginning, attempts were made to resolve the issue directly with the two sub-tribes who had occupied the land, and with Abdoulaye Goudjeh himself. None of the parties would budge; and as a protest and out of desperation, the Walad Djifir left the *canton* of the Misseria Rouges and joined that of the Dadjo.[163] When Abdoulaye Goudjeh heard of the definite transfer, he undertook several steps to try and win them back. He first visited the Dadjo *chef de canton* to persuade him to give him back his people. The Dadjo chef advised him to go and speak to his own people instead of coming to him. He then offered the *ferīkh conseil* ten million CFA, or whatever they wanted. The Walad Djifir refused every amount proposed—‘even 14 and 20 million’, as one person recounted. Abdoulaye Goudjeh then decided to visit the *préfet* in Mongo to lodge a complaint. When this complaint arrived at the level of the Walad Djifir, Hadj Hamdaan called Bachar for advice. Bachar told him that they should go to see the local (and only) political party, the MPS (Mouvement Patriotique du Salut).[164] The case was put forward and an appointment was made to which Abdoulaye Goudjeh was also invited. At this appointment, Abdoulaye Goudjeh was told that the MPS had brought democracy, which meant that every Chadian has the right to live where he wants, whether this is on a mountain or in a tree.[165] So if a *chef de canton*’s people wanted to leave his *canton*, they were free to do so. Following this meeting Abdoulaye Goudjeh retracted his complaint and returned to the Batha, where he continues to negotiate with those who left—although this now happens in a more passive manner. In the meantime, those tribes that had sworn on the Qur’ān that a part of al-Habilai had always belonged to them and not to the Walad Djifir had left the territory. Bachar joined several others to confirm this. No one is allowed to touch the land until the Walad Djifir have decided whether they will continue to fight for it or not. The land is guarded by the same man as mentioned earlier, Azzayem Said Harun, and his family.

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[161] Perhaps an unnecessary reminder: temperatures in Chad during the day, in the sun, reach the mid-40s, if not more—also in October. Also a note on soldiers, gendarmes, and police: the police play a role in towns and villages, while the gendarmeries are responsible for the security *en brousse*.

[162] Based on a conversation with Bachar Adoum Judah and Fedellelah Uthman in Tchoufiou II Arabe, 13 April 2012.

[163] The Dadjo belong to the ethnic-linguistic group known as the Hadjeray and make up a large part of the sedentary population of the Guéra.

[164] The MPS was created in Darfur in 1990 and initially supported by France, Sudan, and Libya (Debos 2016: 63).

[165] This is literally what was said; conversation with Bachar, 4 April 2012.

On a visit to Koundjaar on 11–12 April 2012, Bachar and I stayed in the *chef de canton*'s compound following an invitation from Brahim Said and Abdoulaye Goudjeh himself. In accordance with French regulations, Brahim Said, as son of a *chef de tribu*, had been raised in the household of the *chef de canton* in Koundjaar, together with the sons of other sub-tribes (*khashim beyt*). In practice, this meant that he had been sent to school, which greatly influenced the possibility of his education in Romania as a veterinarian, his subsequent work as such in the Ministry of Pastoralism, and later ministerial posts under both Habré and Déby.[166] In 2012 he still occupied a seat in the Conseille de Presidence. His being raised alongside Abdoulaye Goudjeh (*'ils sont ensemble depuis'*), together with his political function, partly explain his loyalty to the man. His family *en brousse*, however, do not understand why he fails to take their side and to oppose Abdoulaye Goudjeh. Bachar explained that it was politics. If Brahim does not report certain developments to the Gouverneur of the Batha, there will be consequences to be faced.

On the way to Koundjaar, we had run into Fedellellah and Adoum Judah, who, after hearing where we were heading, decided to take advantage of the occasion (car transport and the added benefit of Brahim's presence). They hoped they could talk to Brahim about the land issue, refusing to speak directly to their former *chef de canton*. In practice, this led to a somewhat awkward (and to me almost funny) rotation of who would be inside the *chef de canton*'s main building at the same time. The building in which the *chef de canton* held office was built over fifty years ago by Abdoulaye Goudjeh's father. It is a square building with entrances to the front and rear. The traditional building style, using mud, wood, and branches, means that it stays relatively cool during the day—its high ceilings allowing the hot air to rise up and escape through the small window slits under the roof. The floors are covered by rugs—some of which seem to be specifically *a la mode*, as they are the same ones Brahim, Bachar, and Hadj Hamdaan own and use for special occasions.[167] The rest of Abdoulaye Goudjeh's household is spread out over a large compound, housing his three wives and their children. He used to have four wives, but one left. Each wife has her own enclosed compound. On this occasion, we spent the night in the second wife's compound. In honour of Brahim's visit, a calf was slaughtered.[168] Several armed men in army uniform were in the compound at the time of our visit. They were not there to guard the *chef de canton*—he hardly has any weapons of his own—but on a separate governmental mission.

Returning to the reason for Fedellelah and Adoum Judah's presence in Koundjaar: the Walad Djifir's *conseil* had agreed that if Abdoulaye Goudjeh did not come up with a solution within three

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[166] 'There was a policy by many communist countries to offer scholarships to potential allies, thus maybe not on a country-specific level in the case of Chad, but certainly as part of a wider strategy.' From a conversation with Andrea Behrends, fieldnotes, 28 March 2012. Brahim, now retired, lives in N'Djaména but tries to visit the Batha regularly, on private and state business. On the occasion of our joint visit, he had taken his wife and children along with him.

[167] This specific rug is imported from Libya. Bachar advised Hadj Hamdaan against buying such an expensive rug for use in the ferīkh, as he claimed they would not know how to care for it properly.

[168] By the time we left the next morning, the left-over calf's meat which had been hung out to dry was already being taken off the lines—this is how dry the air is in Koundjaar!

months from then, they would group themselves and attack.[169] When presented with their proposed plan of action, Brahim did not agree with them. Fedellellah, speaking for the *ferīkh conseil*, had hoped Brahim would raise their issue at a national level. The ever-diplomatic Brahim instead remained very calm and passive during this heated yet low-voiced discussion and advised them to, instead of taking up arms, build a case proving the land had always been theirs. He suggested a book written about the Misseria Rouges in colonial times, which mentioned which lands belonged to which sub-tribe. It was the book written by Pierre Hugot in 1997, dealing with the situation as it was in 1947 in relation to the Misseria Rouges, based on colonial archives and most probably on the work of Courtecuisse et al. (1971). When I later found the book at Librairie La Source in N'Djaména and brought it back to Tchoufiou for Fedellellah, we found that, indeed, the Walad 'Umar are never mentioned in it in relation to al-Habilai. In fact, according to Hugot's sources, in 1947 their terrain was far away from that of the Walad Djifir. It is important to note that it is sometimes difficult to prove which land belongs to which group of people.[170] This is especially the case because much of such ownership has been passed down orally, and archives—if there were any—have often been destroyed during the various rebellions.

By switching to the Dadjo canton, certain benefits have arisen.[171] The Walad Djifir have had a sedentary village along the road to Ati for thirty years. The village is known as Tchoufiou II Arabe and is just a few kilometers north of the Dadjo village, Tchoufiou. Tchoufiou 'Deux' Arabe, simply 'Tchoufiou' from now on, has fairly recently been given official status by the local Mongo government officials, and with this official status the inhabitants have been able to apply for a

[169] Luckily, an attack never occurred. However, on our way back from Koundjaar in 2012, we learned that the Mazakněh had grouped themselves in Oum Hadjer in preparation for an attack on the same *chef* in Koundjaar. They too had a land issue with their *chef de canton.* In the case of the Mazakněh, he had allowed the mobile telephone company Tigo to build an antenna on their land. The *chef de canton* had received money from Tigo in return. His argument was that the land belonged to the canton as a whole, giving him this right. The Mazakněh did not agree and thus had prepared an attack. News travels fast, and before the attackers could properly leave Oum Hadjer, they had been detained by government forces. After having learned of the situation, Brahim had informed the Gouverneur of Ati, who had in turn called the *sous-préfet* of Oum Hadjer. Bachar explained that these situations happened more often and that it was a tactic sometimes to get the issue brought to court. By being arrested for an attack, the Mazakněh would now be brought before the Court of Judgement in N'Djaména. To my question about why they did not just approach the court directly, he answered: 'That's now how we are. We will first try to solve it with the person or group. If that doesn't work, we fight for our right.' On our return to Fadjé we heard that the Mazakněh were also grouping together in Mongo.

[170] De Bruijn & van Dijk (2007: 62); Van Dijk 2003; De Bruijn 2004. Souleymane (2017) highlights how this remains a problems in the Guéra and Sido area, where refugees are encroaching on land. The few archives that used to exist have been destroyed.

[171] For the situation of the Wodaabe in east-central Niger, Köhler (2016a: 155) writes, '… the establishment of schools and other physical structures like cereal banks and store rooms must also be understood in the sense of a political strategy to establish a permanent and visible presence at a specific site in order to be able to claim priority use rights over the pastoral resources of the respective area. In order to understand this aspect, it is important at this point to introduce the notion of *terroir d'attache*.' The colonial administrator J. Latruffe (1949: 18) noted down several measures that need to be taken vis-a-vis the Misseria to encourage them to be more sedentarized, e.g. by increasing the taxes of those living in tents year round without having a 'fixed' (sedentary) village. It may be that the needs of the Walad Djifir and the wants of the colonial administrators overlapped to create the sedentary village of Tchoufiou II Arabe.

public school.[172] The process was a long and tiresome one, with a lot of bad will from the neighbouring Hadjerai population; but on Monday 19 March 2012, the first school day became a fact. The Walad Djifir are not the only ones who see the benefit of splitting from their former *chef de canton* and joining that of the Dadjo. Another sub-tribe experienced a similar problem not long after and requested to join the Dadjo canton and be given land. They were refused by the Dadjo, however, and told to go back and talk to their former chef. Although relations between the Walad Djifir and the Dadjo chief are relatively stable and peaceful, the Dadjo chief is still dealing with issues which arose when he gave the Walad Djifir land. He does not want to add to this by taking on another tribe.

Old leaders and new '*opposantes*': '*Chaque chefferie cherche un canton*'[173]

In March 2014 Abdoulaye Goudjeh's *cantonage* was increasingly finding itself in troubled water. This tendency to malpractice by Abdoulaye Goudjeh had affected his relationship with other sub-tribes under his *cantonage* and, consequently, opposing *chef de cantons* had arisen. There were now four or five[174]—three of which have official backing by the state, although it is not clear what this means exactly. Abdoulaye Goudjeh's malpractice is not the only reason for this rise in *opposantes*. In the whole of Chad this tendency can be found, a tendency linked not only to issues of income but also to injustices carried out by these leaders and or their designation as such in the first place. In colonial times, a *chef de canton* was given a salary. After independence, this practice was suspended for a while, or the salary was negligible. With the influx of petrol revenues, salaries once again became worthwhile.[175] Under the French, then Habré, and up until fairly recently—before the coming of petrol as state revenue—taxes were paid for both people and cattle. These taxes were collected by the *chef de khashim beyt*, who would pass them on to the *chef de canton*, who in turn

[172] In the case of the school in Tchoufiou, the parents joined forces to raise the money for a classroom to be built. They also constructed a *kouzi* (round hut made of stone bricks and a straw roof) for the teacher and jointly paid his salary. For a discussion of problematics and trade-offs with this format of schooling, see Swift 2011; Siele et al. 2013; Köhler 2016a: 150-55. Unless this has changed, the school's curriculum was French. The children speak a Chadian Arabic dialect. Arabic has been taught in public schools in Chad since 1994 (Ben Yahmed 2006: 42) but is often a form of Standard Arabic (*fusha*), which is like teaching Italian-speaking children Latin. Swift (2011) points out that education encompasses more than scholarization. There is also a social aspect, and choosing one type of schooling over another could cause children to lose out in terms of their knowledge of more 'traditional' techniques related to nomadic life, leading to a potential loss in becoming part of relevant social and economic networks. How best to merge the best of both worlds whereby children are given the opportunity to be part of both their local nomadic world and a wider national social and economic network? This ethnography argues that, in fact, they already are part of various local and national worlds, yet at times they miss the tools (such as literacy) to become even more successful in their endeavours.

[173] 'Every *chefferie* is looking for a [to make their own] *canton.*' — Conversation with Bachar; fieldnotes, N'Djaména, 21 January 2013.

[174] Fieldnotes, N'Djaména, 13 May 2012.

[175] With the decline of the oil sector and the empty treasury, we can only guess what consequences this may have for future motivations. From 2016 onward, the frequency of protests and strikes increased. These protests were often a reaction to the months of unpaid salaries of government workers and teachers.

would hand them over to the *sous-préfet*. Nowadays, the *khashim beyt* pays them out directly to the *sous-préfet*, as large portions were 'getting lost' in transit—namely, at the level of the *chef de canton*. It is said that the *chef de khashim beyt* is known to sometimes keep some of the tax revenue aside, leaving the *sous-préfet* to make up the difference out of his own salary.[176] Nevertheless, the post of *chef de canton* is first and foremost a political one—it is the state which appoints a *chef de canton*, thus also holding the power to dismiss and replace them from their post. A certain affinity with the current political powers (MPS) is necessary.

In terms of the appointment of a new *chef de canton*, it costs two million CFA to put someone's name forward at the level of the state. In order to do so, one thus needs to be either well endowed or have the financial support of others. In general, a new *chef de canton* should be brought forward by his *tribu*. While in practice this does still happen in some cases, in other cases it is the aspiring *chef de canton* who rallies support among his *tribu* (and is, more often than not, well connected to certain members of N'Djaména society).

Opposing *chefs de canton* among the Misseria Rouges

The first *opposante* to Abdoulaye Goudjeh was Muhammed al-Tubukh,[177] currently an officially recognized *chef de canton* of the Mazaknéh. Another such *opposante* is Muhammed Souleymane, a member of the Matanine *khashim beyt*.[178] Muhammed Souleymane lives in a three-storied house[179] in N'Djaména and makes his living as a successful merchant. As a young child, he was placed under the care of a *marabout*, like so many other Chadian children.[180] As *muhadjireen*, children take part in Qur'ān lessons in the early morning, afternoon, and evenings, while begging for food the rest of the day. The exact sequence of events is unclear, but at one point he had started selling three or four litres of *essence* (petrol) to get by. Slowly but surely he was able to climb up and develop a steady business. He now owns a petrol station (not an official one but functioning nonetheless) and has built a nice house, both in Ati. Muhammed was able to come to N'Djaména with the help of Brahim Said, who helped him obtain the right papers to be able to work as a merchant. His petrol station in N'Djaména is well frequented by government *fonctionaires*. More recently, he has moved on to the building of schools in the interior of the country, obtaining a state contract to build a total of 200 schools. When we discuss the man's ambitions, Bachar says, '*Il a jeté la tasse*' (lit. 'He has thrown away his bowl'), referring to the silver bowl the *muhadjireen* carry around when begging for

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[176] From a conversation with Brahim Said, N'Djaména, 25 February 2014. In 2012, the tax per person was 500 CFA—just under one euro. Fieldnotes, 7 March 2012.

[177] There is some discrepancy as to the name of the *chef* of the Mazaknéh. In fieldnotes, Oyo village, 18 March 2014, the name of the Mazakné *chef de canton* is said to be Mahamat al-Kabbak. While in a conversation with a Mazakéh, Zamzam of Mongo, on 15 February 2013, he is named as Muhammad al-Tubukh. Bachar referred to him as Muhammad al-Takas.

[178] Fieldnotes, 21 January 2013. See Table 2.1 for an overview of chefs de canton including the *opposantes*.

[179] This is exactly how his existence was introduced: *trois etages*! Although N'Djaména is a fast-developing city, especially since Chad's oil exploitation took off in 2003, multi-storied buildings have only started springing up more frequently as of 2010, usually for commercial or governmental purposes. Private properties consisting of multiple stories are still fairly rare, though definitely becoming much more prominently visible by October 2017.

[180] See De Bruijn 2014 on itinerant Qur'ānic schools in central Chad.

food—he has left his *maraboutage* far behind. Although he is well known, the state acknowledges his position as such; he has submitted the necessary paperwork, though his position has not yet been officially declared. Nevertheless, he is still invited to all state occasions where *chefs de cantons* are requested to be present, such as for a *defilé* for the president or on one of Chad's national days. One such important day, especially for nomadic communities, is the yearly festival in Wadi Djadid. On this occasion, the state donates cattle, camels, sheep, rice, flour, and sugar to the various *chefs de canton* and their people.

Table 2.1: Chefs de canton Misseria Rouges (including opposantes), 2014

***Chefs de canton* Misseria Rouges**	**Seat (*sous-prefecture*)**	***Khashim beyt***
Abdoulaye Goudjeh (official, colonially appointed)	Koundjaar	Walad Sūrūr; colonially appointed
Mahamat al-Tubukh *(opposante)*	Wadi Djadīd	Mazakněh; since 2003
Capitaine Baïne (*opposante*)	Assinet	Adjadjiré; since 2001
Muhammed Souleymane (*opposante*)	N'Djaména	Matanīn

It was this Muhammed Souleymane who approached Bachar on several occasions, finally convincing him to meet him at his house. Here he tried to convince Bachar that he and his *parents*, the tribe led by Kolokos, needed to leave the Dadjo canton and join his instead. He argued that the Misseria Rouge as a tribe needed to stick together—they belonged together and not with the Dadjo. 'You live in N'Djaména, Bachar; you are an intellectual, not like your family *en brousse*.' Bachar replied that this was something the *parents* would decide together. When he related his conversation with Muhammed Souleymane to them over the phone and again on one of our visits to Fadjé in 2013, they answered that this was a decision that they had to reflect on calmly and slowly. Now was not the moment to act—'*avec "x" temps*', translated Bachar.

Bachar himself believes that they are fine where they are with the Dadjo for now. In his opinion, over time they should decide whether to stay with the Dadjo, whether to create their own canton, or whether to join the new *opposante*, a Walad Djifir. Ideally, they would want to have a *chef de race*,[181] who would function like a *chef de canton*, to whom they could go to settle internal disputes. Only if a solution could not be found within the tribe would they put the case forward to the Dadjo *chef de canton*. In reality, the position of *chef de race* is equal to that of *chef de tribu*, which is now

[181] The position of *chef de race*, like that of *chef de canton* and so on, was created under the French. A *chef de race* is like a *chef de canton* but without the *canton*. In most cities, one will find a *chef de race* for each tribe/ethnic group. In practice, however, here too we see the tendency to split up resulting in several *chefs de race* per *tribu*.

held by Kolokos. Kolokos, however, is not seen to be an assertive leader. To deal with things on the level of a *chef de race* (i.e. canton), they would require someone else.[182] According to the *conseil*, this someone else should be Bachar Saad Harun himself.

By early 2014, Bachar had been told by his family in Fadjé that he himself should step forward as their *chef de canton*. Their plan was to then leave the Dadjo canton and join him. Bachar has refused to accept the proposition, but they are convinced that, with time, he will accept. When asked if there was no one better suited, Bachar replied that the problem is that there are very few family members who can read and write French.[183]

Bachar, from intermediary to candidate

In the cases described throughout this chapter, the figure of Bachar keeps returning. This is not surprising, as he was my main research informant; and wherever he went, I went (and vice versa). Nevertheless, the role he has played throughout is a meaningful one to analyse. Through Bachar's intermediary role, one which at turns he took up and at other times was imposed upon him, certain actions and decisions were made. Bachar's role is one of close family and outsider at the same time. Firstly, the history of his father's position as *chef de ferīkh* in the time of the French has influenced Bachar's prestige and respect throughout the *tribu*. His father was a highly respected man and many fond, bravado stories were often brought up on hot afternoons with elder generations. It is difficult to prove, but Bachar's lineage appears to have given him a certain validity as a person of leadership. Secondly, Bachar left his nomadic lifestyle behind at an early age, working for a group of Mbororo in Cameroon for several years before settling in N'Djaména and pursuing a career as driver for various national and international organizations. Although he picked up the ability to read and write French at a late age, he does possess these skills. This fact, combined with his reliable reputation, has made him the go-to intermediary. A third contributing factor is his proximity to Brahim Said, the ex-minister, retired and living in N'Djaména. Brahim and Bachar are direct paternal cousins; their fathers are brothers.

Taking the legal route

The Adjadjiree are another of the Misseria Rouges' sub-tribes who left their former canton, namely that of Abdoulaye Goudjeh, around 2001 to recreate their own. In an interview[184] with Capitaine Baïne, the current Adjadjiree *opposante chef de canton*, he explained that his family had been leaders (*3agiib*) long before the colonial powers came and placed another family in power. Their *sous-préfecture* is at Assinet (Batha Est); and according to him, the colonial archives in Paris show that the *cantonage* of the Misseria Rouges used to belong to them. Since 2013 they have filed official paperwork at the Ministry of Interior, claiming their canton back. Submitting such a claim is free of charge. It seems that only in the last few years, people have started reclaiming their former, mostly pre-colonial, rights. At independence, the Chadian government took over the existing

[182] Conversation with Bachar, 21 January 2013.

[183] Conversation with Bachar, 21 February 2014.

[184] Interview held in March 2014 in Mongo, together with colleague Souleyame Adoum Abdoulaye.

colonial structures of governance. For a long time afterward, the government was more like a dictatorship—there was no possibility for people to exercise their own rights, according to Capitaine Baïne. In the last few years, this has become possible.[185]

Capitaine Baïne grew up as a nomadic child—behind his family's livestock, as they often say. Life was good, he recollects. On 2 April 1979 he left the ferīkh to join the rebels. He left because life for nomadic people had become difficult (*sa3b*). He noticed that nomads were not being given the same rights as others in Chad: there was no schooling provided for them, and they were being marginalized. He joined the rebels to gain literacy skills and to help reverse the nomads' inferior status. When the rebels were overrun by Déby in 1990, many were incorporated into the state army. This was also the case for Capitaine Baïne. He retired from his army post in 2011. The knowledge he gained during this time has made him aware of his and his people's rights. By approaching and becoming a part of the state's power, people have thus received rights and are now aware of these rights. The claim was submitted in 2013. Speaking in early 2014, Capitaine Baïne says patience is of key importance. It has always been that way. 'We will talk and discuss and wait until we find a solution. We prefer the fair [legal] course of action; it is very important to us. And it is our right. Carrying out this process the legal way will help us in the long run.' His advice echoes that which Brahim Saïd had given Fedellelah.

Leaders as strategy and resource

What is interesting here is who these opposing *chef de cantons* are and how leadership figures are seen, in a way, as a strategy and resource by the community. As might already have been deduced from the stories of Muhammed Souleymane and Bachar himself, being connected to the right people plays a role. But who are these 'right' people, and is this all? There is a real inclination to put those forward who speak French, have some form of non-Arabic education, and generally have ties with those in N'Djaména. Having a leader literate in French facilitates communication with authorities on various matters. On the very first visit in October 2011, for example, Bachar was asked to read a letter which Al-Hurr had received. Al-Hurr is the *khalīfa* and responsible for collecting taxes on livestock sold at the weekly markets. The letter informed the community of taxes to be paid per head of cattle. There are other ways to find out what the letter said, and I suspect that whoever handed it to Al-Hurr probably explained its contents to him. Nevertheless, having someone who could read and speak French within the community would be an obvious benefit. The cases of the Adjadjiree, and that of Abdoulaye Goudjeh, show the importance of having a leader who knows how to navigate the legal system and who has contacts in N'Djaména who may aid their cause.

Leaders thus form a 'resource', if you will, with specific qualities and are utilized to perform a specific role.[186] The leader-as-resource is managed by the community, while there exists at the same

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[185] Referring to Niger, Köhler (2016a: 179) writes: 'It should be noted that this multiplication of administrative chiefs is not a recent phenomenon, but has occurred since at least the mid-20th century.' In the case of Chad, the multiplication itself may also not be a recent phenomenon, but the judicial act of challenging the existing chiefs is.

[186] Connections are a resource, (re)creating forms of compartmentalization in society (De Bruijn & van Dijk 2012). As such, connections and connectors are embedded in power relations, access, and wealth—and vice versa.

time a certain dependency on one another. A leader is nothing without his following, and loyalties can change—as the numerous cases of opposing *chefs de canton* show. There is often a financial aspect to these positions, not only the raising of money to put forward a new *chef de canton*, but also traditionally the collection of taxes and access to these kinds of 'income' later on. Perhaps the tasks of these newly chosen leaders are slightly different from what they used to entail—of this I am unsure.[187]

In a way, the changes in choice of leaders—based not only on lineage as was previously the case, but also on their capabilities, skills, and connections, next to their general character—can be seen as a strategy which embodies both flexibility and control. Through choosing certain individuals, the Walad Djifir (and other sub-tribes) show the ability to be flexible while hoping to increase the control they have over their own lives.[188] De Bruijn and van Dijk (1995: 406) argue that flexibility cannot exist without political and cultural control, and they describe it as '[…] the basis of virtually all forms of organization, agricultural techniques, resource distribution, social security arrangements, and normative frameworks'. There are, however, numerous strategies which individuals and communities can choose from, and there is no set format.

At the time I was revising this chapter in 2017, Bachar had not taken up the position his family would have liked him to. His role as mediator still exists; yet owing to his current job[189]—the transportation of people and goods from N'Djaména to Ati, and between the various weekly markets around Ati—he often does not have the time or mobile network to be in such close contact as he was when permanently based in N'Djaména, or indeed during the various fieldworks periods with me. Nevertheless, the cases of Abdoulaye Goudjeh, Hadj Hamdaan, and Bachar himself are examples of how those in various positions of leadership can have both a connecting and disconnecting role, roles which they themselves take up or which are placed upon them as a result of decisions they have made.

In a way, a focus on leaders as both connectors and disconnectors reflects the histories of mobility and fluidity we often find in nomadic societies. Cordell explains how this need for flexibility with security provides a way of understanding the 'local histories characterised by confusing and seemingly contradictory narratives of raids and counter-raids, of pacts made and pacts broken' (1985: 322-23). In certain contexts, ferīkh members pull their strengths together and are as close as can be (fusion). In other cases, for whatever reasons, they 'fight' each other. In a way, they are brothers in arms (fighting a common battle), but also brothers *at* arms (fighting each other). Throughout the other chapters, this dualism—or paradox even?—returns in some form or

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[187] It is not clear to me how this would be arranged. When discussing the various new and opposing *chefs de canton*, this aspect did not arise and I neglected to focus on it myself. It would be strange for Bachar to be the one to collect taxes while living in N'Djaména, so it is likely that a different structure would have been created.

[188] See De Bruijn & van Dijk (1995: 503-6) on the dialectical relation between flexibility and control.

[189] Bachar's current employment is partly a result of Chad's economic decline—he would have preferred a job as a driver for one of the NGOs or other aid organizations based in N'Djaména, but he says there are not that many positions available—and those that exist are usually given to family or friends. It is difficult to get your foot in the door without the right connections. This seems ironic when one remembers that Bachar's extended family had asked him to become their new *chef de canton*, and it shows how relative this connectivity is.

other, informing choices which are either for or against the consensus of the group, the ferīkh, or that of an individual family member. Fission and fusion.

Brothers in *and* at arms: On fission and fusion

This chapter has delved into some of the challenges the Walad Djifir have recently faced in terms of leadership-strife, land use, and the subsequent forming or strengthening of allegiances. Without doing so explicitly, the cases described show the structure and functioning of the ferīkh as a non-isolated unit. The consequences of a very personal tragedy—namely, the accidental death of Harun's son—is simultaneously a communal tragedy with monetary and other implications for the ferīkh and also very much a test of solidarity and social cohesion. This is a test which Hadj Hamdaan and company, in this specific case, failed to pass—according to Bachar and others—and which has resulted in a rift between members of the same *khashim beyt*, ultimately leading to the creation of an opposing *chef de ferīkh,* who is contemplating splitting from Hadj Hamdaan's group and joining another (*opposante*) *chef de canton*. While the events which have led up to this potential divide are probably more numerous than I was able to discover, the result is the same.[190]

Returning first to the case of the death of Harun's son as one illustration of socio-political relations within the ferīkh, we will add to the complexity of family and allegiances. Harun Adoum and Hadj Hamdaan Adoum are in fact brothers, Harun being the youngest son of their father and a different mother. On his own departure to CAR in May 2012, Hadj Hamdaan had refused to acknowledge his younger brother's departure greeting. He had even been rude and told him to go away when he had come to visit him. This action caused their eldest sister much distress. Harun had been able to come up with most of the money owed to the other ferīkh. Hadj Hamdaan had been furious when he discovered Harun had done this without his explicit blessing. In a way, Harun had shown himself as the better man—in the end it is his *own* son whom he will never see again. Members of the *conseil* (Abu Ramla, Djibrine, and Adoum Judah specifically) still agreed with Hadj Hamdaan. When I asked Bachar how a *marabout*, which both Hadj Hamdaan and Abou Ramla are, could agree to this and what the '*grand*' *ferīkh marabout* had to say about it all, he replied that even the *grand marabout* had talked until he was tired ('*il a parler fatigué*'). They would not listen to him. Bachar was greatly affected by the situation and feared it would break up the family.

In the case of Abdoulaye Goudjeh, another kind of injustice lies at the foreground—namely, that of land dis-ownership. The themes of a perceived injustice and calling on certain family members—brothers, if you will—to aid the community's cause seem to run through both case studies. By highlighting the actions of certain individual leadership figures, the non-coherence and unambiguity (see Cordell 1985; Debos 2016) of these actions come to the fore: people are contradictory in nature, interpreting the importance of certain values in different ways. In the case of Harun's son,

[190] Debos (2016: 120) draws a distinction between the effects of actions and the intentions behind them.

the issue has caused a certain divide (fission)[191] among the community. The land issue with Abdoulaye Goudjeh, in turn, has resulted in a feeling of needing to unite. At the level of these leaders, their actions and choices seem to be between 1) protecting the cohesion of the group, and 2) making choices, individual or otherwise, which break the group apart. Interestingly, these almost contradictory reactions can and do exist at the same time.[192]

Traditionally, the idea of fission and fusion in relation to pastoral-nomadic groups has usually been in reference to exactly that: the group. With these case studies, I have wanted to question whether such processes can also take other forms or be discerned at other levels of social organization, borrowing aspects of the human geographer's notion of a 'politics of scale'[193]—or rather, as Brenner would have it, 'a politics of scaling',[194] whereby the process of scaling is one '[…] through which multiple spatial units are established, differentiated, hierachized and, under certain conditions, rejigged, reorganised and recalibrated in relation to one another' (2001: 600). At its most basic, human geographers see scale as a form of hierarchy whereby there is a fluidity of movement across the scales, and the scales themselves should not be seen as fixed entities. We are thus borrowing this notion of 'scale' (see Smith 1996; Marston 2000; Brenner 2001) yet using the actions of individuals and communities to define/construct what the scales themselves are made up of.

The actions of ferīkh members at these various 'scales'—individual, family, and larger tribe—are framed and also situated within specific geographical and non-geographical spaces; and even though there is a certain fluidity of space, it is 'fundamentally premised on some quite traditional spatial fixities' (Smith 1996: 70). Spatially, there are different levels of interaction and decision making: the level of the family, or brothers even (i.e. Hadj Hamdaan and Harun); the level of the ferīkh (i.e. Hadj Hamdaan, the *conseil,* and the *opposante*); the level of local politics (i.e. the *chefs de canton* of the Misseria Rouges, the Dadjo, and the *opposante*); and the level of national politics

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[191] On fission and kinship structures determining the composition of the splitting up of the village, see Holy (1974: 64-65, 171). Fission, in the context of the Berti of Sudan, is often due to disputes—i.e. loyalty to a certain sheikh over land shortages—or when a village's population has grown and thus the village has had to spread out too much. On historical changes in ethnic affiliation in relation to fission and fusion (group reconfigurations), see Köhler (2016a: 37-38). On discussions of integration, withdrawal, and marginality in relation to the state, see Azarya (1996b: 66-67). In the case of the Walad Djifir, moments of fission are often related to the size or composition of a herd, with ferīkhs splitting up to accommodate the larger numbers of cattle or to allow camels the space they need. In this ethnography, we explore other forms fission may take—not just the physical splitting up of a group but the splitting of opinion and the (re)actions involved. This places the emphasis—of the result of fission and fusion processes—on social relations and the creation of opportunities through the destabilization of existing hierarchies.

[192] See Rosen (2017: 37) referring to Evans-Pritchard (1940: 142-44) on 'the odd contradictions that may arise when two low-level segments are in conflict with one another at one level, but in alliance at some higher level'. See Djama (2010: 108) on the 'balance of power', a structural model of political equilibrium between social groups, '…the members of a kinship group may fight against one another in the course of a conflict but will join forces against another more distant group in genealogical terms'. Here Djama revisits the writings of I.M. Lewis.

[193] These geographical scales are very much socially constructed and primarily linked to capitalism. See Brenner (2001: 599) for some history on the 'politics of scale' notion: 'the notion of a politics of scale denotes the production, reconfiguration or contestation of some aspect of sociospatial organisation within a relatively bounded geographical arena—usually labeled the local, the urban, the regional […]'.

[194] A politics of scaling acknowledges the various 'differentiations, orderings and hierarchies among geographical scales […] their embeddedness and positionalities in relation to a multitude of smaller or larger spatial units within a multitiered, hierarchically configured geographical scaffolding'. (Brenner 2001: 600)

(involving decisions made in colonial times, the working of the justice system, and proving the right to land). We see how various actors, ranging from individuals to families and groups, make different decisions at these different hierarchical levels, and see that perhaps this hierarchy is in the eye of the beholder, as well as dependent on the situation.[195] The interplay between notions of loyalty and security (informing feelings of belonging) seems to impact how people deal with these different levels, whereby one should always leave some wiggle room for the role of pride.

Throughout the negotiation and decision-making processes of the Walad Djifir, multiple spatial units are established (see Brenner 2001: 600). Arguments are made as to where loyalties should lie: with certain individuals due to their lineage or reputation, or with the larger group. There is a certain ambiguity to this process, which brings us back to why this 'politics of scale' approach is useful for understanding how the ferīkh (as space) is socially constructed. Gille & Ó Riain (2002) word it nicely when they refer to Brenner's (1999, 2000) ideas on a 'politics of scale' and the need to show how an understanding of space as socially constructed is positioned within 'the negotiation of the hierarchy and legitimacy of different scales of social action'. This is important in that it reveals

> a destabilisation of the existing hierarchies' spatial scales (…) [and] also opens up opportunities for social actors to develop new combinations of local, national, transnational and global social relations. (Gille & Ó Riain 2002: 278)

Hadj Hamdaan's individual actions have caused some to question his position as leader, while others have even gone against his decisions. At the same time, he is still sheikh, and so not much has changed. His actions, however, have created opportunities for the agendas of those he slighted and who have now decided to join the *opposante*—new combinations of leadership are forming while old patterns of entitlement are sometimes fallen back upon. The allegiance with the Dadjo is another example of shifts in the legitimacy of leadership and the opening up of opportunities. It is socio-historical processes such as these, even if they are unambiguous and perhaps exactly because of this, through which the ferīkh as spatial form 'is established and differentiated as a unit of socio-spatial organisation, activity, conflict, struggle, discourse and/or imagination' (Brenner 2001: 599).

How then can all of this help us understand what the ferīkh as a place and space entails? Smith (1996: 71) argues for the continued importance of fixed spaces and places, explaining how the relationship between the fluidity and fixity of space is itself restructured, though not in a uni-directional manner. The notion of place is therefore not made obsolete but perhaps reinvented at a different scale (ibid. 72). Returning to the case studies, the notion of the ferīkh and all that it stands for is seen to be conceptualized in different ways in different situations (scales), reinforcing what it stands for as opposed to rendering it obsolete. Is the ferīkh, then, as a socially constructed space,

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[195] A description of the Wodaabe of east-central Niger resonates here: 'The personality of a chief is important in attracting followers, but politico-administrative affiliations seem to have been subjected also to highly strategic and opportunistic considerations since long in the region. Political shifts can be occasioned by conflicts internal to the community: A man might change his affiliation because he does not get along with the chief (*arɗo)* he had followed to date, or because he strives himself after political power. In practice, changes in politico-administrative affiliation are often linked to processes of group fission, on the one hand, and to mobility and migration, on the other.' (Köhler 2016a: 173)

one which binds the Walad Djifir together—whether through cohesion (fusion) or friction (fission)? I would say that it is.

That which causes this cohesion or friction to come about is in part determined by the actions of individuals, such as leaders, and the communal reactions to them. These reactions seem to take place within a certain framework of 'politics'—that is, in reference to what is deemed to create security mixed with a certain pride and sense of being wronged (Holy 1974). The functioning of the ferīkh thus exists through the choices people make and their ideas (perspectives) of how things should be in reference to individual and collective grievances, of wrong and right, and of wants for the future, such as schooling and security for their children.

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So how does the ferīkh, in relation to socio-politics, inform or act as a frame of reference for the Walad Djifir? In answering this question, we see a continuity in historical trends and a fluidity of belonging amidst rupture. The naming of Goudjeh Walad Hamatta as *chef de canton* placed in his hands a certain power to decide over land use and ownership—a power which seems to have been misused by his son (the current *chef de canton*) and which in turn has led to a change in leadership alliance on the part of 'his' subjects. While Koundjaar remains an important historical seat of power for the Misseria Rouges, having jurisdiction over the terrain to which the Walad Djifir feel they belong (al-Habilai), this has not prevented the Walad Djifir from seeking security with a different canton. These dynamics of socio-political strife are not a new phenomena but are characterized by a certain historical continuity. In turn, the interplay between notions of loyalty and security may be interpreted as aspects informing feelings (emotions) of belonging. Contrary to the way fission and fusion is usually used in relation to a nomadic group, this chapter questions its usefulness as a way of analysing similar processes at other levels of social organization. Even though the ferīkh functions as a framework of reference toward which people justify their actions, this does not mean disparities and ambiguity do not exist. There is, one may say, a certain fission and fusion in the way Walad Djifir as a sub-tribe, members of an extended family, and even individuals (leaders and non-leaders) relate to this framework when justifying their decisions.

2.1 Visit to the home of *chef de canton* of the Misseria Rouges in Koundjaar, April 2012. We were invited by Bachar's cousin, who had been raised alongside the current *chef de canton*, and joined by Adoum Judah and Fedellelah.

2.2 Seeking network reception in the home of the *chef de canton* in Koundjaar, April 2012. This building was built over fifty years earlier by Abdoulaye Goudjeh's father. It is a square building with entrances to the front and rear. The traditional building style, using mud, wood, and branches, means that it stays relatively cool during the day—its high ceilings allowing the hot air to rise up and escape through the small window slits under the roof.

2.3 Bachar receiving a phone call from Hadj Hamdaan asking for an update, with the market of Koundjaar in the background, April 2012. It was not a market day, but we had come to where there was a generator so that we could have our phones charged by the man running this as a business. Hadj Hamdaan had to wait for his answer, as Bachar did not feel free to talk openly in public. In addition, neither Adoum Judah or Fedellelah ever spoke with the *chef de canton* directly. Instead, we spent most of the afternoon hanging around, with Bachar and his cousin discussing the land situation and trying to mediate the more fierce reactions of the other two men.

2.4 Kolokos's ferīkh in Fané, March 2012. Kolokos (in green) is the *chef de tribu* and a direct cousin of Bachar and Brahim. Fané is located just north of Bandaro.

2.5 Hadj Hamdaan (middle), his brother Haamid (far right), December 2012. Several others of the ferīkh *conseil* turned up to discuss the land issue. Zaynebah's son Haamid is seen sitting to the right of Hadj Hamdaan. I had just spent a few months in CAR, and little Haamid was evidently eager to hear any news about his mother.

2.6 Harun and Burma working on Hadji Ghali's arm, April 2012. This picture was taken shortly before Hadj Hamdaan and Zaynebah left for Sassileh (CAR). At the time, Hadji Ghali was very upset that Hadj Hamdaan refused to say goodbye to their brother Harun and mend their differences before he left. Here, Harun is using his knowledge of tending to the limbs of his livestock to help his elderly sister, who had fallen and broken her arm.

2.7 Two of the council members at a wedding, March 2013. Al-Hurr, pictured on the right, was one of the men who did not always agree with Hadj Hamdaan's ways and said he was like the weather: hard to predict.

2.8 Abu Ramla, another council member, and *fakir*, March 2014. Abu Ramla was also one of the milder men in the council, supporting Harun's actions and trying to reason with Hadj Hamdaan.

2.9 The new school at Tchoufiou II Arabe, March 2012. The school was an initiative of the parents. The teacher is paid by the parents and offered a home (*kouzi*) and food.

2.10 A second classroom was soon added to the school in Tchoufiou, January 2013

2.11 Parents (men) clearing the grounds before the first day of school, March 2012. Many members of the ferīkh council as well as some other parents helped sweep up and clear any prickly branches so that the children could play outside during recess.

2.12 The village of Tchoufiou II Arabe, May 2012. It houses a mixture of nomadic tents and permanent huts made with bricks and straw roofing.