'THAT DESERT IS OUR COUNTRY'
Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali
(1946-1996)

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To my parents, Corrie Brand-Pels, Ben Brand, and Sembeau Lecocq
One of the major problems encountered in time travel is not that of accidentally becoming your own father or mother. There is no problem involved in becoming your own father or mother that a broadminded and well adjusted family can’t cope with. There is also no problem about changing the course of history - the course of history does not change because it all fits together like a jigsaw. All the important changes have happened before the things they were supposed to change and it all sorts itself out in the end.

The major problem is quite simply one of grammar, …

Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*
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In Mali, I would have been nowhere, if my ‘older sisters’ Mama Alghaliya ouled Mohamed and Maghniyya ouled Mohamed had not opened their hearts, minds and houses to me in Bamako and Menaka, and still nowhere without the lessons of my ‘mothers’ Takhnouna and Fitou. Although the voices of these and other women are not explicitly heard in this book full of men, the rough, fast-track education they gave me and the backgrounds they explained to me form the solid basis of this work. I would have been lost if my friends Ibrahim ag Litny and Cheick ag Baye had not pointed me in some directions.
I would have been stuck in Kidal without the support and lectures of 'ustâd Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, and the quiet afternoon conversations with my friend Sidi Moussa. I would still think Gao was a dull and uninteresting place, if local historian Lamine ag Bilal had not helped me in finding all these interesting interlocutors, including himself, and if it wasn’t for Ahmed Landji who lodged me with the kindest of Algerian hospitality.

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The Archives Nationales du Mali were more than a work place, they were quite close to a kind of home, thanks to the kindness and help of Dr. Aly Ongoiba, Timothé Saye, Abdoulaye Traoré, and Alia Baby, who are an example of efficiency and service to the archivist’s trade.

May all those I have not named take no offense, knowing that I do know what they did for me. No acknowledgement is complete without the disclaimer: all errors in this work are mine and mine alone.
A note on spelling and used terminology

This history focuses mainly on Kel Tamashq 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. In order not to bother the reader further, I have made use of a rather rough transcription, largely following 'common' French spelling of these terms, especially since the pronunciation of most terms varies among Tamashq dialects. The pronunciation of the transcription used follows below. All French administrative functions and terms have been left untranslated, with the exception of tribu, which has been translated with 'tribe'; chef de tribu, translated as 'tribal chief'; and Soudan français, known in English as French Sudan. I have used the latter term 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, whereas region should be read as in English.

Writing a history of a place as unmapped as northern Mali involves great difficulty in spelling place names. Many places in northern Mali are spelled in a variety of ways. I have used the English spelling for those few places for which it exists, such as Timbuktu and Segu. For many others, I have used one spelling throughout the text, but I have left the spelling of these names in sources unchanged. Many Tamashq place names start with /In/, followed by a noun. To avoid confusion, I have connected /In/ to the following noun, e.g. In-Taykaren, instead of In Taykaren.

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, (except when indicating the prophet 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.

\begin{itemize}
  \item $a$ as in blah (open, clear a)
  \item $\dot{a}$ long open
  \item $e$ as in verb
  \item $\dot{e}$ long open
  \item $i$ as in bit
  \item $\dot{i}$ long open
  \item ou the French ou
  \item $ue$ as e in get
  \item $g$ as in get
  \item $gh$ as the Parisian r
  \item $h$ as in ham
  \item $j$ as in French jeu
  \item $kh$ as the Spanish xota
  \item $q$ as the Arabic qaf (glottal k)
  \item $r$ as the Scottish rolling r
  \item $sh$ as in ship
  \item $t$ as in take (slightly more palatal)
  \item $th$ as in English the
  \item 'a' and hamza both pronounced as Cockney bottle
\end{itemize}
Introduction
An account of my research

This thesis sets out to provide answers to a series of seemingly simple questions which have obsessed me since 1994. My original question was – what took place in the Adagh n Ifoghas in 1963?

The Adagh n Ifoghas is a small range of low mountains appended to the south-western edge of the central Saharan Hoggar mountains. The mountains are called Adagh n Ifoghas after part of its inhabitants. The Ifoghas are a Kel Tamasheq clan, and Adagh n Ifoghas literally means ‘mountains of the Ifoghas’ in their language, Tamasheq. The Kel Tamasheq are better known as the Tuareg, but in this thesis they will, for the most part, be referred to as they refer to themselves – Kel Tamasheq, ‘the people speaking Tamasheq’.¹ The Ifoghas are the leading clan of a larger group of 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’ and refer to its inhabitants as Kel Adagh, ‘the people of the mountains’. In their 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 South-East, by the flat and treeless Tilemsi plain to the South and South-West and by the Timetrine plain to the West and North-West. Most of these areas are seen as part of the Kel Adagh living space. The areas beyond, the Azawagh valley and Air mountains to the East, the Hoggar mountains and Touat plain to the North, and the Niger Bend to the South, 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.

On a political map of the world, the Adagh is situated in the North-Eastern 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 savannah. 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 to the South.

¹ Exceptions are made when I quote sources. /Kel Tamasheq/ is a general plural. The masc. sing. is /Ou Tamasheq/, fem. sing. /Tou Tamasheq/. For the sake of simplicity these will not be used. A single person will be referred to as /a Kel Tamasheq/, in full realisation of the grammatical abhorrence. /Tamasheq/ simple means /the language/, but I will use /Tamasheq/ as adjective as well.
Mali and its neighbouring countries
Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/mali.jpg
I came to my original question – what happened in the Adagh in 1963? – while researching events taking place in the same area in the 1990s. In June 1990, a group of Kel Tamasheq started an armed revolt against the Malian state. To anybody taking an interest in these events, it quickly became clear that the rebellion was not an isolated event, but had its roots in a previous rebellion which had taken place in 1963, when the Kel Adagh revolted against Mali.

Previous research and writing on the 1963 rebellion of the Kel Adagh amounts to two publications and one unpublished manuscript. The latter was written in 1977, by the Dutch anthropologist Ab Leupen, based on a few newspaper sources. The first published article on the rebellion was by Cheick ag Bay, a Kel Adagh himself, and Rachid Bellili, an Algerian historian, and appeared in 1986 in *Awal*, a journal for Berber studies. The article was largely based on informal research by Cheick ag Bay. The second was by historian Pierre Boilley who, in 1994, defended his *Thèse d'état* on the history of the Kel Adagh from 1893 to 1992, and this was published in 1999. His research was well-founded and his chapter on the 1963 rebellion provided new information and insights, but it remained unsatisfactory, even to himself. My questions were left unanswered, and my curiosity remained unabated.

The original question, although remaining important throughout my research, led to other questions which became just as important to me. The first was of course ‘Why did this 1963 revolt take place?’ The second question was, ‘How exactly are the first rebellion of 1963 and the second rebellion of 1990, connected and why is this first rebellion so important in explaining the second?’

**Before, during and after ‘the field’**

These three questions guided me in constructing a theoretical framework in which to place the answers I hoped to find. Before starting research, I had the following general ideas: As I wanted to focus on the 1963 rebellion in the Adagh, I expected to work mostly with oral history sources. I assumed that archive material on the subject would either not exist or be unaccessible. However, I also suspected that causes and origins should be sought in the colonial period, as the rebellion broke out so shortly after independence.

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4 Boilley, P., *Les Kel Adagh. Un siècle de dépendances, de la prise de Tombouctou (1893) au Pacte National (1992)* (Thèse de doctorat d’histoire, Université Paris VII 1994). A book based on this thèse d’état was published as Boilley, P., *Les Touaregs Kel Adagh. Dépendances et révoltes: du Soudan français au Mali contemporain* (Paris 1999). The book differs mostly from the thèse in lacking the useful and extensive annex to the manuscript. As the book is widely available, I will mostly refer to it. I will refer to the original thèse only when I use material from its annex.
The Malian regime at the time had made accusations that France had instigated the Kel Adagh revolt in 1963. From what I knew about the causes and origins of this second rebellion, I expected that more or less the same causes and origins would form the basis for the first rebellion – a desire for independence based on a feeling of exclusion and ethnic sentiment leading to separatism, a topic much in vogue in the early 1990s. As for the connection between the two rebellions, I had come to understand that the second rebellion was a kind of revenge for the failure of the first one. With these ideas, and many others on Tamasheq society, I left for ‘the field’.

I started in December 1997 in Mali’s capital Bamako with a first round of research lasting until April 1998. During office hours, I worked in the Archives Nationales du Mali, where I read the Malian newspapers of the 1960s and colonial records dating from 1946 until independence, from the Kidal, Menaka, Goundam and Gourma Rharous administrative Circles. The rest of my time was spent making contacts in the Tamasheq community in Bamako, working on my Tamasheq language skills and interviewing people. My contacts were mostly limited to functionaries and the Tamasheq intellectual upper class (partly because my research permit did not allow me to formally interview other people). Two things struck me in my conversation partners. The first was that, while a number of these had not been in favour of the rebellion of the 1990s, while others had been actively involved, these opposing political stances did not bring a hostile atmosphere between exponents of both sides when they were together. However, and this is the second thing that struck me, they were bound together in a shared hostility towards non-Kel Tamasheq Malians which was rather overtly expressed between them.

One could conclude, as I did, that this proved the idea that ethnocentric sentiments took over in a hostile environment. However, it slowly dawned on me that this was not the case. Hostile feelings towards the former ‘enemy’ (or even the former ally in the case of those not in favour of the rebellion) were expressed in a discourse with pronounced racialist overtones. I tried to dismiss the idea that my interlocutors might be inspired by racialism, as that brought me feelings of unease. After all, I liked these people (I still do), even those among them known as notorious rebel fighters. As a researcher, I was intellectually prepared to deal with ethnocentrism, but as a person, I was not able to deal with racism, which is one step beyond.

In October 1998 I left for northern Mali for an extensive period of fieldwork lasting until July 1999. For logistical reasons, I spent most of my research time in the city of Kidal. To those people who asked me about the reasons of my stay, I made it quite clear what I was doing there – I was a researcher, interested in history and particularly interested in the history of Alfellaga, as I knew the first rebellion to be known. I reckoned that, as Kidal is a small town (8,000 inhabitants maximum during the cold and dry seasons), the word about the reasons of my stay would spread. It did, but reaction to my honesty was shock and retreat. Most people simply did not want to talk about this subject in detail, although they did appreciate my
interest. In the meantime, I made an attempt to gain access to the local archives of the Kidal Cercle – the most important administrative unit in colonial and independent Mali – which I obtained after three weeks. The Cercle archives were in an excellent state of conservation, although extremely chaotic, and, contrary to my low expectations, I found a small number of rather rich files on Alfelliaga, the 1963 rebellion.\(^5\)

These files, as well as other files from the period of the first Malian regime after independence, gave me a rare insight into the thinking of Mali’s administration towards its subjects and with regards to its political ideas, which were key in understanding both the Malian reaction to revolt in 1963 and the causes of its outbreak in the first place. The idea that the Kel Tamashq today are living through a period of recolonisation, an idea notably defended by Claudot-Hawad and Boilley, became evident before my eyes in concrete policy reports.\(^6\)

As my research progressed, and as I managed to talk to more people, I came to understand that ideas on race and racialism, rather than ethnicity in general, were shaping discourses on the causes and origins of the first rebellion, as, to some extent, they were shaping ideas on the reasons for the second rebellion.\(^7\) The subject of race could no longer be discarded.

Once back home, a different story than I expected emerged. Rereading material about the second rebellion, especially Malian newspapers from the 1990s, it struck me that not only Tamashq discourse on the rebellion was sometimes framed within a racist discourse, but ideas of their Malian adversaries were informed by racial notions as well. The Keita administration in the 1960s viewed the Kel Tamashq primarily as ‘white nomads’ and both their ‘whiteness’ as well as their nomadic existence were seen as potentially, if not actually, problematic. During the second rebellion, the members of the Ganda Koy vigilante movement in particular attacked the Tamashq rebels on the basis of their skin colour. As we shall see in chapter VIII, they did so primarily to attract the lower castes of Tamashq society to their cause in a common struggle against the ‘white invaders from the desert’ who had made life in the North so insecure during the four years of rebellion prior to the creation of the Ganda Koy movement. Conversely, even during my fieldwork, my ‘white’ Tamashq interlocutors were still called ‘red skins’ or ‘red ears’ by the kids in the streets of Bamako.

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\(^5\) The archives are, however, rather disorganised. No real classification or repertory system exists and papers of all kinds were stacked together in drawers and file-maps, sometimes with a name or number on it, sometimes without. Thus, I have not made an attempt to describe where I found documents as I do not regard descriptions as ‘the third yellowish file with 1976 written on it, in the second drawer on the left in the desk in the corner of the Commandant du Cercle’s office’ a valid archive code. I will refer to material from this archive with ACK – Archives de Cercle de Kidal.


\(^7\) On this subject see, Lecocq, B., ‘Fieldwork ain’t always fun. Open and hidden discourses on fieldwork’ *History in Africa, a journal of method* 29 (2002), 273-82.
In short, the history I present here focuses on different themes than expected. Most important are Malian and Tamasheq nationalism and ethnicity; race, stereotypes and preconceived images; and their influence on political practice; and the influence of historical discourse in Tamasheq and Malian politics. Most of these subject can be grouped together under the header ‘how Tamasheq politics works’. I will use the rest of this introduction to present each subject.

**Nationalism and ethnicity**

Enough has probably been written on the subjects of ethnic groups and nations, ethnicity, ethnocentrism, nationalism, ethno-nationalism and whatever other term invented, to physically demarcate the borders between all existing ethnic groups using the paper spent in this prolific production. It is not my intention to discuss all different existing schools of thought on the subject. I simply present my ideas on both subjects through the works which have most influenced my own thinking.

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.

Nations and ethnic groups or *ethnies* – a term first taken from the French by Anthony Smith for want of a proper English noun – are social political bodies. Nationalism and ethnicity are ‘ideologies’, ideas giving cohesion to the nation or *ethnie*, the glués which hold them together and separate them from other, similar groups.

In the introduction to their *History and ethnicity*, Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin argue that ‘ethnic groups and nations are of the same stock’ and that therefore ‘it is no more than a tautology to say nations have ethnic origins (a tautology, however, that is thoroughly and interestingly explored by Smith)’. Indeed, nations and ethnic groups are highly similar. In *The ethnic origins of nations*, referred to by Chapman et al., Anthony Smith ascribes the following properties to an *ethnie* – a collective name, a shared myth of origin, history, and culture, a geographical territory associated with the group (but not one in which they necessarily live) and a feeling of solidarity and ‘belonging’. Indeed, many of these traits are also seen as properties of a nation.

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The choice between one term or the other – ethnie or nation – therefore sometimes seems to be arbitrary. In most literature, the various social polities of the indigenous Americans are indicated as nations, not only in recent ‘politically correct’ literature, but also in source material. However, as soon as one sets foot in Africa, there is no longer any question of nations, but of ethnic groups. Yet, it is assumed that these African ethnies and the native American nations share certain organisational traits in both being originally ‘pre-modern’ (whatever that is), pre-industrial, small scale, and decentralised (segmentary, acephalous) as a polity. In the African context, ‘nation’ is reserved to denote the ‘modern’ social political bodies inhabiting the post-colonial state. With ‘state’ is meant, of course, the organisational and administrative body within a delimited territory.

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 Mande, Bambara, Songhay, Fulbe, Kel Tamacheq etc., but there is no Mande or Tamacheq nation. These are labelled ‘ethnic groups’. 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.

This political distinction between nation and ethnie 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.’

Here, Gellner seems to fall into the trap of nation and state congruency, but 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 ‘nation-state’.

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

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social (and or economic) polity. However, the distinctions between them, fine as they may be, are important.

It should by now be clear that what I will describe as the ideology of nationalism in this thesis 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.\textsuperscript{11} 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. 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 achieved. In fact, within the Malian state, two nationalisms and two nations strove for different goals. This is a problem that beset many African states at the beginning of their independent existence, and it remains a problem for some. In the 1950s, Ashanti nationalism competed violently with the ‘official’ Ghanaian nationalism of Nkrumah’s CPP.\textsuperscript{12} The Biafran war is an all-too-known example of an aborted attempt at secession, while the equally known case of Eritrean independence from Ethiopia in 1993 is the only example in Africa of a succesful war of liberation and competing national ideologies on the same territory.

An important aspect of the ‘official’ or state-created national image and language is its ‘crudeness’, its uniformity all over the world and a certain interchangeability. As Benedict Anderson has remarked, its success as an ideology lies exactly in that fact that it can be copied. Ethnicity, although similar, is another organisational idea, another imagined community, with its own symbolism, language and criteria of participation. What is important in ethnicity is not that it is expressed through symbols, language and criteria of participation as such, but their substance in the

\textsuperscript{11} Anderson, B., \textit{Imagined communities} (2nd ed., London 1991). Anderson explains the concept of official nationalism in chapter 6 (Official nationalism and Imperialism), 83-111. However, for full understanding of the use I make of the term and its content, one should connect Anderson’s chapters 6 and 8 (Patriotism and Racism), 141-154.

\textsuperscript{12} Allman, J., \textit{The quills of the porcupine - Asante nationalism in an emergent Ghana} (Madison 1993).
case of each ethnic group, which makes each ethnic ideology unique in itself.

An even more important aspect of national ideas and images, derived from the former, is a certain discretion in adhesion, in ‘belief’ if you like, of the individual members. The proof of ethnic membership lies in recognition of behaviour. In ethnicity, group membership is perceived to be less voluntary. The language of ethnicity is more subtle and flux. Ethnic markers can change and only sometimes they can be acquired. This makes inclusion and exclusion more a matter of identity-building through education, seen as ‘natural’, than of registration in administrative state registers and observation of certain nationalist ‘rituals’.

To return to Ernest Gellner’s ideas on what nations and, in a way, nationalism are, he proposed to look at nations starting from two definitions:

1. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.
2. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation.\(^{13}\)

Although the emphatic ‘if and only if’ employed seems to imply that the two definitions are mutually exclusive, both definitions are equally valid and actually work simultaneously. The differences in meaning between both definitions is that:

a) people, here including both scholars, politicians and the general audience, recognize definition 1 to be constantly working and definition 2 to be only sometimes and more deliberately working,
b) for political reasons only, definition 1 is often seen as defining an ethnic group while definition 2 is seen as defining the nation,
c) they both describe two elementary components of nationalism as ideology.

To illustrate all these examples, think of a Kel Tamashq with three different passports (they exist), who speaks French (the national language of Mali) and Arabic (the national language of Algeria and Libya) while all the time remaining Kel Tamashq as he speaks Tamashq as his mother tongue and has acquired a particular understanding of the world that makes him Tamashq. This has not withheld him from being educated in the Algerian national school system, defending the Libyan cause as a Libyan soldier, participating in Malian politics, while being a member of the Tamashq nationalist movement and longing to have a Tamashq passport.

The ‘crude’ image and symbolic language of nationalism in general and of particular nation-states in practice, are often derived from or based on the specific, more refined language, culture and symbolic language of an

\(^{13}\) Gellner, op. cit., 7.
ethnic group or nation, which is the same thing after all. Thus, as I argue in chapters I and II, Malian nationalism – which decides in a way who is Malian and who is not, and what it should feel like to be Malian – has been effectively constructed (although of course not entirely) on already existing sentiments and images of what it is to be Mande or Bambara, the two main ‘ethnic groups’ inhabiting Mali. Thus, the more subtle language and image of ethnicity could be made instrumental as a basis for creating the cruder Malian nationalist language and image. The modern Malian nation was imagined to have reconquered the political independence, more or less congruent with the political territory, of pre-existing Malian polities – the Mali empire and its successor states (including the Songhay empire). The independence of Mali on 22 September 1960 aroused feelings of satisfaction for reinstalling congruency between nation and polity in Gellner’s terms, or so it was presented.

But nationalism and ethnicity are nevertheless, not the same thing. 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 things 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’, ‘ethno-nationalism’ – a term often used to define the political aspirations of nations intent on seceding from the state(s) they currently live in – or other terms.14 The Kel Tamasheq efforts to obtain their national independence will be referred to as Tamasheq nationalism, indeed making it equal to Malian nationalism and the creation of the Malian nation.

Race

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 my use of race and racism throughout this thesis are categories of discourse and distinction, used by some of the players in this story to explain and justify their actions. From its beginnings in the late 1940s onwards, 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 primary characterisations of ‘the other’. Let me first briefly sketch racial ideas as held in the local setting of northern Mali.

During the phase of colonial conquest, the French saw the Kel Tamasheq and Moors only as a problem and as people inferior to the

14 For an overview of all terms and categories of political aspirations and ethnicity, see Gurr,T., B. Harrff, *Ethnic conflict in world politics* (Boulder & Oxford 1994).
French. Therefore ‘extermination of these two nations [peoples] by all means at our disposal’ could still be considered an option to pacify the Sahara.\textsuperscript{15} After colonial conquest and pacification, France had no other interest in the Sahara than to keep the peace at the lowest costs possible. Therefore, a system of indirect rule was put in place where the tribal chiefs of leading clans were appointed by the French. A positive appreciation of these clans was therefore necessary. This positive appreciation was partly developed along racial lines of thought. To the colonial administration, Tamasheq society consisted of two ‘races’ as in the colonial ideas on race and its contents based on Social Darwinism.

What the French called ‘white’ corresponded with the Tamasheq shaggaran, the colour of the free but not the noble. But the French officers, and many after them, thought white/shaggaran to be the colour of nobility. Hence, especially after the virtual extinction of the imoushagh or highest nobles after the 1916 uprising under Firhun ag Elinsar, French racial perceptions of Tamasheq society led to a gradual reappraisal of skin colours, with shaggaran winning in importance and ‘black’ becoming more and more stigmatised as the colour of slaves.

The colonial conquerors saw the upper strata of Tamasheq society as ‘white’ and, according to some, even of European descent. They have been portrayed among other things as the descendants of the Vandals, lost crusaders or even a Caucasian-populated sunken Atlantis.\textsuperscript{16} The lower strata of Tamasheq society, the slaves and casted craftsmen, were seen as racially black, ‘Sudanese’. Thus, in colonial European presentations of African history, the Kel Tamasheq elite was presented as an ‘alien invader’ who had subdued an indigenous African population, an image that would resurface at various times after independence. In a way, Kel Tamasheq society and its historical ‘white’ origins, in the colonial mind, mirrored colonial images of the colonial project itself – ‘whites ruling blacks’. This may have been at the root of the later positive appreciation of Tamasheq society by French colonial rulers.

To the Malian administration, 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. As we shall see in chapters I and II, in the 1950s and in the first years after independence, the 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 USRDA elite, the Kel Tamasheq had been colonial favourites because of their ‘whiteness’, which had given them a misplaced superiority complex.

\textsuperscript{15} Lieutenant Colonel, Lieutenant Gouverneur du Soudan B. Audéoud, Rapport politique 1898. Kayes, le 20 septembre 1898. This document was retrieved during research prior to SHAT’s reorganisation. The old code was SHAT AOF Soudan Carton 6. It is now most ilkley SHAT SH191, but this is not certain.

As for the Kel Tamasheq themselves, Tamasheq concepts of race have slightly more sophisticated nuances, but they are nevertheless important in classifying people. Indeed, like all other people, the Kel Tamasheq make distinctions between people on racial appearance. Three skin colours are perceived: *kooual*, black; *shaggaran*, red; and *sattéfèn*, greenish or shiny black. It is also true that social status is connected to skin colour in Tamasheq society. *Kooual* is the colour of the casted craftsmen (*inadan*) and slaves, *shaggaran* is associated with the free but not the noble (*imghad* and *ineslenmen* groups) and *sattéfèn* is the colour of nobility. When it comes to outsiders, these are not primarily divided on a racial basis. The immediate neighbours are labelled according to more or less appropriate ethnonyms – Arabs (*Araben*) and Songhay (*Ihaten*). While Europeans are generally referred to as *Ikuftar*, infidels, Southern Malians are known as *Bambaraten*, Bambaras. However, the more generic and racial term *koouân nin* ‘blacks’ or even *iklan*, slaves, were in use during my research. Then again, this might very well have been a result of the latest rebellion, which pitted the Kel Tamasheq against all other Malians, ending in a full-scale conflict in which racial discourse was used on both sides to indicate the other (see chapter VIII).

Nevertheless, from colonial times onwards, the idea of ‘whiteness’, translated with *shaggaran* in Tamasheq, crept in, which does not mean that a racial discourse did not exist in Tamasheq or Southern Malian society prior to colonial conquest. On the contrary, the suggestion made by Amir Idris and others might well be true that, in the fifteenth century, European racial discourse developed from North African Arab Muslim discourses on race and blackness.\footnote{Idris, A., *Sudan’s civil war: Slavery, race and formational identities* (Lewiston 2001).} After all, prior to European naval expansion, the Sahel and the Swahili coast were the zones of direct contact between Africans and other peoples, and this contact had for long involved the trade in ‘African’ slaves by ‘Arab’ merchants.\footnote{The slave trade towards the Arab and Mediterranean world is a largely neglected topic of research. The often mentioned participation of the Kel Tamasheq in this trade – which is now a part of their image, and the one they are most keen to lose – is even more obscure. For an overview of research on the topic, see Savage, E. (ed.), *The human commodity - Perspectives on the trans-Saharan slave trade* (London 1992).} Furthermore, the European practice of categorising human beings on racial grounds started in the late 1600s, when François Bernier postulated a number of distinctive categories, based largely on facial character and skin colour, leading to the establishment of a racial hierarchy with the white European at the top and the black African at the bottom. This practice coincided with the take off of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.\footnote{Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin, *Race*, *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts* (London 2000), 198-206.} But racist ideas might well have changed over the colonial period on both sides of the perceived line. They might also have been enhanced under the pressure of changing political situations in the period described here.
Racialist perceptions influencing political and social relations between local populations are not unique to the Tamasheq. The problem extends to the whole Sahel zone from Mauritania to Sudan throughout the described period. Even the Swahili coast had its racial problems in the late colonial and early independence period.20 Jok Madut Jok rightly suggests that race, in Africa as elsewhere, is a constructed and ascribed identity, which is not necessarily based on visible or otherwise accountable differences. Particularly in Jok’s native Sudan, the ‘boundaries between “races” and ethnic groups are not so clear cut, at least to the outsider’.21 The difference between Sudanese Arabs, Shilluk, Dinka and Nuer is cultural, not (so much) physical, which is also the case in present day Mali.

In northern Mali, race is certainly a created identity, ascribed on cultural bases. This becomes evident in the indiscriminate use of terms ‘nomads’ and ‘whites’ by the Government and population in talking about the Kel Tamasheq. Tamasheq and Arab ‘whiteness’ is primarily 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 (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.

Yet, to some extent, Tamasheq ‘whiteness’ is based on the physical appearance of some Kel Tamasheq. Picture books of the Sahara abound with photos of light skinned, preferably blue or green-eyed Kel Tamasheq. These pictures serve to spark Western orientalist imagination, but they can do so because the depicted are indeed recognizably ‘white’ to the Western audience. The idea that they are ‘white’ (and the very idea of ‘being’ in race identity) is, of course, a generalisation. Many Kel Tamasheq only ‘look white’ when compared to ‘black Africans’. In the 1970s, the Kel Tamasheq, seeing themselves as white and related to the Berbers and Arabs of the Maghreb, were confronted with a different opinion on their racial appearance by the very same Berbers and Arabs they thought they were related to. To many Magrebins and, in fact, to many Europeans, the average Kel Tamasheq would be classified as ‘black’.

**Stereotypes**

Throughout this thesis, we will see how constructed stereotyped images and ideas of Tamasheq society, ‘character’ and ‘behaviour’ influenced attitudes and policies towards Tamasheq society by various colonial and

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post-colonial administrators. The stereotypes held by the Malian political, military and administrative elite, from the 1940s to the 1990s, were a mixture of already existing ideas and recollections of historical behaviour by the peoples in contact with the Kel Tamasheq, and stereotypes and ideas created by the colonial imagination and library. I will try to show how stereotypes, and not day-to-day reality and experience, was at the basis of both Malian policies towards the Kel Tamasheq and the Kel Tamasheq attitude towards the Malian Government, as well as the attitude of other Malian populations towards the Kel Tamasheq and vice versa.

If one was to draw a top ten 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 of a veiled and turbaned head, they would quickly recognise them. Cars, camping gear, travel agencies, perfumes, even skiing outfits have been advertised with the image of a Kel Tamasheq, some products even sporting a Kel Tamasheq as their logo. 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 Western 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 we can read in documents from the ancient Middle East, nomad-sedentary relations have been problematic since their beginnings thousands of years ago. 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.

Tamasheq culture has a few characteristics which makes it peculiar in the eyes, not only of the European, but also of the Arab-Muslim culture or of neighbouring African cultures. When visiting Timbuktu, Ibn Battuta already remarked (and scorned) the relative freedom in gender relations which are now seen as almost unique to Tamasheq culture. 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 which 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

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moral superiority of the nomadic Berber tribes over their sedentary Arabised neighbours. Then again, to the surprise and disgust of the post-colonial Malian administrator, it is the Tamashq man who fetches water and firewood, and not the woman. The present-day image of the Kel Tamashq 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 Tamashq and other nomads is not a uniquely European business. The possible role of a colonising power in creating antagonistic and ethnic stereotypes has been aptly described and analysed by Donald Horowitz. His point of departure is that ethnic groups, or social groups in general, attribute qualities to themselves and their surrounding groups in order to satisfy the inherent need to compare self and other and to attain ‘a positive evaluation of the group to which they belong’. The colonial system introduced new labels of categorisation, based on its own perceptions. Such categories were ‘backward’ and ‘advanced’, ‘traditional’ and ‘evolved’, et cetera. These stereotyped criteria provided the basis for colonial policy towards ethnic groups as a whole, including or excluding them from parts of the colonial system. The same stereotyped characteristics could also form the basis of ‘policies of protection’. The ‘traditional way of life’ of certain ‘backward’ groups were seen as worth protecting. In short, this is the creation of the living ‘noble savage’. These colonial stereotypes, according to Horowitz, were ‘enduringly influential’ on post-colonial contacts between ethnic groups or, in this case, between the Kel Tamashq and the Malian state.

On the other hand, the Kel Tamashq too had their preconceived ideas about the Europeans and about their neighbours; their colonial and post-colonial rulers. 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 Tamashq, the European was (and still is) seen as an ethically and morally inferior being as he does not adhere to Islam. However, to some Kel Tamashq in the late twentieth century, the rule of the ‘infidel’ was preferred over that of the ‘slave’. Indeed, to many Kel Tamashq of free origins, ‘black Africans’ were peoples who had long been subjected to Tamashq rule. Ever since the Moroccan invasion and subsequent fall of the Songhay empire at the end of the sixteenth century, the Kel Tamashq 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 Tamashq federations who ruled the Niger Bend and present-day northern Mali and Niger, and its inhabitants, to the borders of the Maacina state, when this was founded, and towards Haussaland and the Sokoto caliphate when the latter was created. In

26 Horowitz, D., Ethnic Groups in Conflict (Berkeley 1985), 144.
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.\footnote{\text{Olivier de Sardan, J.P., Quand nos pères étaient captifs... (Paris 1976).}}

**Tamasheq social political organisation**

This thesis will mainly deal with political problems and debates within Tamasheq society ever since the late 1940s until present. The internal political affairs of this period had a large impact on the organisation and dynamics within the Tamasheq revolutionary movement that arose in the late 1970s, dealt with in chapters V and VI, and the internal struggles and conflicts between the various rebel movements after 1991, dealt with in chapters VII and VIII. This thesis also deals with the way the Malian Government perceived Tamasheq society and its place in the Malian Republic. So, before we can say anything on these matters, 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 Oxbey has rightly put it –

\begin{quote}
'\text{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}'.\footnote{\text{Oxbey, C., \text{"Les allégeances politiques d\’une \"tribu\" touarègue entre deux ex-confédérations (Kel Ferwan, Dakoro; Niger\"}, H. Claudot-Hawad (ed.), \text{Tuaregs et autres Sahariens entre plusieurs mondes. Les cahiers de l\’IREMAM} 7/8 (1996), 170-183, 172.}}
\end{quote}

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 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, variety in political organisation exists. What will be said here is only valid for the Western Tamasheq world included in the Malian Republic. Other groups, in other countries have different experiences both at present as in the recent and more distant past.

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 (infra). The basis for the hierarchical structure of society is a system of social strata referred to as castes. The clans or tewsit (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 tewsit are controversial. During the period described in this thesis, various parties outside and inside Tamashq society wanted to abolish either the hierarchical relationships, or the clans, or both, as social and political structures, while others wanted to enforce their role.

When attempting to describe the workings and organisation of these castes and tewsit, one is confronted with two problems. The first problem is the legacy of colonial observation, describing Tamashq social strata as a ‘feudal’ system, but also as a racialised system or at least one in which race plays an important role. The second problem consists of the colonial and post-colonial administrative meddling in the system, which has resulted in confusion around the content and meaning of the term tewsit. I will first explain the organisation of the Tamashq castes and the resulting description of Tamashq 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 thesis as tribe and fraction, are related to the Tamashq term tewsit, without these three concepts being totally congruent, while many people, administrators, researchers and even The Kel Tamashq alike, think this to be the case.

**Castes and feudalism**

Tamashq society is first of all based on a set of fixed social strata into which one is born. Early French ethnographers described the social organisation as ‘feudal’. At the top of this society stood the imoushagh or noble warriors, referred to as a ‘noblesse d’épée’ and perceived as racially ‘white’. At the bottom were found the ‘black’ iklan or slaves. In between these two groups stood various others. The first group the French discerned were the ineslemen – a group of free or noble (racially ‘white’) people specialised in religious affairs, classified as a ‘noblesse de robe’. The inadan or craftsmen, simply referred to as ‘blacksmiths’, were a second group the French discerned. They were racially ‘black’, but free and placed outside the strict hierarchy. Neither did they not obey the ‘chivalrous’ code of conduct, the temushagha, that seemed to govern the lives of nobles. The imghad formed the third group. This group consisted of free, ‘white’ people who were not noble, but who lived like them. 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 ‘vassals’ to the nobles. This social classification into five groups still form the basis of description of Tamashq 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. Slavery no longer formally exists. The imghad deny any form of actual dependency on the nobles. At most they pay an honorary tribute, the worth of which is trivialised by the giving party (and sometimes even by the receiving party). 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 *shorfia* status (descent of the prophet Muhammad) or the Kel Essuq who are generally connected with religious study such as *fīqh* and therefore called *alfaqiten*, a Berber plural of the Arabic *faqīh*. Not even the meaning of the word *amashegh* – noble – is clear. In present-day northern Mali the term seems to be reserved to denote small groups of Ouïlimiden *tewsiten* of the former ruling elite. They are often referred to as ‘Bajan’s (their leader) *imoushagh*’ or, when speaking French, ‘*les Touaregs*’. Formerly an external ethnonym, the word is now internally used to denote exactly the one group which in Western imagination are ‘The Tuareg’ – the higher class nobles.

It is 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 Tamashq society.

**Another way of categorising**

I would like to propose another way of looking at this hierarchical strata system, 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.

*Free - unfree.* The main categorisation, is between *ellelu* - 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 Tamashq society after abolition, the French had never done anything to change the situation of ‘former’ slaves, thus perpetuating their servitude. Malian politicians made the freeing of slaves and the breaking up of Tamashq ‘feudal relations’ one of its focal points in regional, and even national politics. All this ensures that notions of free and unfree status still exist in Tamashq 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 thesis. It should be noted directly that this divide is not a feature unique to Tamashq society. Other Malian societies know this social divide as well.

*Strong - weak.* The distinction between strong protecting groups or even persons, and weak protected ones, is the most important in this thesis. The Tamashq concepts of strong and weak are *ellelu* (meaning free origins or social independence) and *talaqiw* (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 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 *imoushagh*, and the ‘vassals’ – the *imghad*. In reality, some nobles are classified as *talaqiwīn* – poor or weak, and some vassal groups as *ellelu* – rich or strong
by the Kel Tamasheq themselves. It is arguable whether those people labelled as *talaqiv* have a lower status than those who are not labelled thus. 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. During and after the second rebellion, the internal dynamics of Tamasheq society led to inter-clan violence to alter the hierarchical position of certain *tewsiten*. The reorganisation process was accompanied by a language redefining the social political status of certain groups. Those who were once referred to as *imghad* now referred to themselves as *ellelu* (strong, which they were), which came to be similar to ‘noble’ without using the term *amashegh*. These new statuses were attributed to oneself or by others on the basis of ideas on strength and the ensuing obligation to defend weaker groups. This will be elaborated on in chapters VI, VII and VIII.

*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 are called *temet*, which literally means placenta in Tamasheq. A clan’s lineage ideology can be either patrilineal or matrilineal. In the Adagh and Azawad, lineage ideology is only patrilineal, but in the Niger Bend and the northern part of Burkina Faso, some groups, such as the Udalain and Imededegehen have a matrilineal ideology.\(^{29}\) 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. The prestige generated by a *temet* depends on the ancestors claimed and the amount of known historical personages 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 strict descent. 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 descendants, 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

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subjects within the study of Tamashq 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 Tamashq politics. The etymological meaning of the word *tewsit* is that of a woven mat or a hair plait. A plait starts at the roots of one’s hair, taking various strands together, and intertwining them into a strong whole. A Tamashq 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 *tewseiten* 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 tribe 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 Tamashq alike have used the word to denote various indigenous and administrative organisations in Tamashq society. In these sorts of situations, words like ‘traditional’ or ‘original’ immediately come to mind as useful to discern between what is old, indigenous and Tamashq and what is foreign or new. I will first discuss what the traditional *tewsit* might have been and looked like. 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’ Tamashq 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 ‘traditional’ *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 traditional *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. At present the Kel Tamashq also use the term *tewsit* to denote the administrative units called *fraction* and *tribu*.

As has been said above, 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 the Kel

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30 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., ‘Honneur et politique: les choix stratégiques des Touaregs pendant la colonisation française’, H. Claudot-Hawad (ed.), *Touaregs, exil et résistance* REVMM 57 (1990), 11-49.

Tamasheq are perceived to have a genealogy, such as imghad groups, former slaves and other poor and powerless or tilaqiwin. This does not mean that those without a genealogy are without a tewsit. Slaves were incorporated 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 clan of the free/strong illelan under whose protection they were placed. In fact, often the noble’s real protection only consisted of this incorporation in his tewsit, since it offered incorporation into a social and political structure.

A tewsit is thus a social political group centred around 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 kringroup’. This is possible through the way tewsiten are both split and bundled into ramous, 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 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 tegeze relationships. The aran meddan – which very likely means ‘the male spine’ – are male paternal parallel cousins (female paternal parallel cousins being called tanyatin, and male and female maternal parallel cousins being called aran tidoden – ‘the female spine’). 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 ideological basis of most tewsiten, with the tegeze relation as a supportive relation between tewsiten. Teggeze – literally meaning pelvis – is the relation between sister’s children (sons) and mothers’ brother. This relation entails unrestricted material support and protection to his nephews and nieces by mothers’ brother (called annetma), and protection and loyalty to their uncle by sisters’ children (called tegeze). 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 tegeze. In the eastern part of the Tamasheq world (the Air and beyond), the term tegeze is used to denote a confederation of federated tewsiten. Of course, with cousins

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

33 For the perception and expression of social cohesion through the human body, see; Claudot-Hawad (1990), op. cit. For more detailed schemes of kinship classification, see Nicolaisen, J., I. Nicolaisen, The pastoral Tuareg - Ecology, culture and society (London 1997), 615-53.
being preferential marriage partners, *tegeze* relations also occur within one *tewsit*. This can eventually form the basis of differentiation between *tewsiten* within a *tew*it, 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 Tamashq 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 Tamashq 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.\(^{34}\) (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* which 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.

**Ettebel**

All *tewsiten* are perceived to be incorporated in or at least under the influence of an *ettebel* (pl. *ittebelen*). An *ettebel* is a grouping of clans and ramage groups into 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 *amenokai* 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 federation, called *tegeze* in the eastern Tamashq world. The once powerful Kel Tademekkat federation was dissolved shortly before colonial conquest. A large confederation, such as the Ouillimiden was split in two halves – the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram and the Ouillimiden Kel Denneg in the 18th century.

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 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 Kel Ifoghas federation, which was recognised by

the French as independent from the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram in 1910. Their leader Attaheir ag Illi was promoted to the rank of amenokal, who informally lead the other ramage groups in the Adagh mountains – the Idnan, the Kel Taghliit and the Taghat Mellet, in a confederation called Kel Adagh. At present ittebelen are seen as historical relics in Northern Mali, but, informally, they do exist and have an influence on local politics which is hard to measure.

**Administrative restructuring, from tewsit to fractions and tribes**

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 grouping should be called.

The administration in French Sudan, as colonial Mali was called, was characterised by the colonial administration itself as a 'double system' of French Commandants and 'indigenous traditional chiefs'. The largest administrative unit was the Cercle, lead by a Commandant du Cercle, who could be a military officer or a civil administrator. The Cercle was divided into French created 'indigenous traditional chieftaincies'. Among the nomads, the French had created tribus and fractions – tribes and fractions – as traditional social and now administrative units. At first these tribes and fractions were based on the French comprehension of the tewsit system. The term tribus was believed to be the proper translation of the Tamashq 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 tewsitien, to group them together again into new 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 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 Tamashq of the Commandants de Cercle was limited to the tribal chiefs, the interpreters and the gouniers – the native police force. Hence, the real impact of the administrative reshuffling of the tewsitien into tribes and fractions might have been quite small when it comes to internal social dynamics. The Kel Tamashq only had dealings with their tribe and fraction as far as they had dealings with the administration and their administrative chief. They could still use the tewsit and ittebel system in internal matters. It took devoted Commandants who spoke Tamashq and

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35 I will leave the administrative terms such as Commandant du Cercle untranslated throughout the thesis.
regularly visited the bush to make a real impact on the Kel Adagh social-political system.

**Independence**

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 Tamashq 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 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 spill 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 became the basic unity of administrative, political and economic organisation in nomad societies. Under the USRDA regime, the tribes were completely dissolved as an administrative unit. Their place was left vacant and was only filled by the enlargement of the fractions, which still exist today.

In the 1970s it was members of Tamashq society themselves who sought to abolish both caste and tewsit hierarchy. The *tshumara* culture of Tamashq immigrant labourers in the Maghreb and the *tanekra*, the revolutionary movement preparing the second rebellion, were hotly debating *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 as we shall see in chapters VII and VIII.

The autonomy of the fractions from the tribe and the empowerment of its chiefs, as against the power of the tribal chiefs opened the possibilities for political use of the fractions in internal affairs between *tewstiten* as clans. By installing the fraction and its institutions *de jure*, the procedures and conditions of creation and dissolution became standardised. This totally formal structure made it possible to create, split or bundle fractions 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 du 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 fractions in the Cercle 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.\textsuperscript{36} ‘It won’t be long until everybody is his own fraction’ as one informant cynically observed. These new fractions, created on the initiative of the Kel Tamashiq themselves, partly reinstitute the internal social dynamics of Tamashiq society on clan basis. The new fractions are often rooted in the social and political dynamics within a 	extit{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 Tamashiq social thinking and organisation.

**History and the sources**

This part will deal with the ideas on history that shape the further contents of this thesis. A historical work is always the outcome of the encounter between a historian and his sources. In this case, part of those sources consist 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 Tamashiq thought on history, its sources, circumstances of its production, and the functions of its production.

**Interviews**

My relations to those who could help to produce this history – former rebels – were characterised by both restraint and active engagement. Many were reluctant to speak, since the organisation of the tanekra movement had been formally sworn to secrecy. As one informant put it – ‘you erect a wall around a house to keep the rubbish out’.\textsuperscript{37}

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. Two of these – Azzezen ag Iksa and Keyni ag Sheriff – were former 	extit{Ifulagen} (sing. 	extit{Afuleg}) as the fighters of 	extit{Alfeilaga} are called, but they were not keen on talking much about their experiences, nor did they direct me to former comrades.

Another informant was more talkative. Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, presented to me as ‘the official historian of the Ifoghas clan’, doubled as research assistant and informant on another period crucial to my research – that of the tanekra, the movement that prepared for the second rebellion from 1975 to 1990. Fall had been among the first organisers of the tanekra movement and knew the story – his story – by heart. Working with Fall proved both a pleasure and 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 Fall was also called, and a pleasure as his narratives provided me with a

\textsuperscript{36} *Journal officiel de la République du Mali*, 26/11/1996.

\textsuperscript{37} Interview with Malik ag Sallah. Menaka, 28/04/1999.
basic story. 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 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'.38 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’.39 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 sources

The Kel Tamasheq encountered during this research distinguish four principal forms of historical knowledge constituting the sources of history as a whole: At-tarikh – written history, tinfunen – oral history / narrative, tisiway – poetry, and temtet – genealogical recollection. The Tamasheq appreciation of historical sources seems to be far 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.40 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 tinfunen 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 of 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

38 Shryock, A., Nationalism and the genealogical imagination - Oral history and textual authority in tribal Jordan (Berkeley 1997), 59.

39 Ibidem.

40 See Norris, H., The Tuaregs: Their Islamic legacy and its diffusion in the Sahel (Warminster 1975).
validity of historical discourse. The Arabic word at-tarikh – history – means ‘written history’ in Tamasheq. It is linguistically classified into 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 lvrtan – 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 deployed 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 lvrtan 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, 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 itself. Poems serve as an aide de 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 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.41

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 consciousness 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

41 A good and available example of this, is: Ag Alojaly, Gh., Histoire des Kel-Denneg (Copenhagen 1975), a bilingual Tamasheq-French historical monograph, larded with and based on the poetry of this confederation.
historical moments. Therefore, they are themselves historical end-products, which were used to raise political consciousness.

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. The second corpus was collected by Georg Klute in 1996 and 1998, and was translated with the help of Ehya ag Sidiyenne. 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 to 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 available at the moment I wanted to engage their skills.

**Form and content**

The centrality of individualised history, the exploits of persons, is predominant in all forms of historical production mentioned above. Tamashq communual identity and belonging are imagined, in the sense of Anderson’s work, but the whole of Tamashq society consists of face-to-face communities in close contact with each other. They know of each others 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 intermediary 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. Tamashq 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 Tamashq history is reflected in archive material of the French period and the early Malian administration. French rule in the Sahara was highly indirect. The French Commandants of the administrative units were all military officers until the late 1940s. These men were often of the French nobility, who thought in terms of leaders, army hierarchy and

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43 Klute, G., Die Rebellionen der Tuareg in Mali und Niger (Habilitationsschrift Siegen University 2001).
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 on leadership. The civil servants of the late 1950s largely kept to the military tradition which had set the paradigms of their policy. After independence they were replaced by Malian officers, trained in the French army. 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 – Tamashq 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 thesis**

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 effectively shaped political and social interaction between the Malian state and the Kel Tamashq between the 1940s and 1960s. In their turn, the events that came of it, 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. 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 thesis.

This approach means that I alternate various forms of historical writing in one thesis. While in one chapter I will construct a narrative, in the next (or in the same chapter) I will show how narratives or similar narratives are used as 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 it elsewhere to deconstruct it as explanatory analysis to itself or events described. The underlying idea is that, to me, the means are valid to come to a comprehensive answer to questions.
Structure, logic, ideas on veracity and interpretation are subject to a desire for understanding, an answer, as improvised and temporary as it might be.

The main structure will be chronological, with a few exceptions made. The period at hand roughly starts in 1946, the year France authorised the creation of political parties in its colonies and organised elections. The legitimisation of party politics heralded the late colonial state, inaugurating gradual independence. In this period we can find the bases for later conflicts between the Kel Tamasheq and the Malian state which was shaped during this period. With the discovery of mineral riches in the Sahara, many in France and the colonies supported this idea and propagated it with further help of Saharan leaders. These seeds of discord will be the focus of chapter I.

The plan to unite the Sahara and grant independence to the Kel Tamasheq failed and in chapter II we will look at the relation between state and Tamasheq society during Mali's first Republic under the USRDA party and its leader Modibo Keita between 1960 and 1968. We will see how a Malian national idea was created and how the Kel Tamasheq fitted this idea as a barbarian other who was to be brought into civilisation.

In chapter III we will focus on the relation between state and Tamasheq society in Mali's northernmost region, the Adagh n Ifoghas. We will see how these relations were ruled by mutual distrust and superiority complexes, how the Malian administration managed to further jeopardise already fragile relations which ultimately led to Alfellaga, the rebellion of the Kel Adagh between 1963 and 1964.

This rebellion will be the sole subject of chapter IV. Apart from a narrative on the rebellion and its effects, we will look at the way this period is remembered by the Kel Adagh in particular but also by other inhabitants of northern Mali and what role memories of Alfellaga play in historical discourse and explanations of the present day situation in northern Mali.

The rebellion was not the only disaster hitting the Kel Tamasheq after independence. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Sahara and Sahel were struck by drought, resulting in the death of many cattle and the forced transformation of Tamasheq society. Many young Tamasheq men and women moved from Mali to surrounding countries, particularly the Maghreb, to look for work. These migrant labourers shaped a new culture, the teshumara, touching all aspects of the life of its participants, the ishumar. These changes will be dealt with in chapter V.

In chapter VI, we will discuss the creation and organisation of a political movement by the ishumar or migrant labourers which both sought to change Tamasheq society on the whole and to establish an independent Tamasheq state. The movement, called the tanekra, the uprising, was created in 1974 and finally started the second rebellion in 1990.

In chapters VII and VIII, I will narrate the second rebellion, starting in June 1990 and lasting until March 1996. I have divided the subject over two chapters for the purpose of convenience, but these two chapters form a whole. Therefore, conclusions will only be drawn at the end of chapter
VIII. The rebellion can be divided into four phases. Chapter VII deals with the first and second phase. In the first phase, from June 1990 to January 1991, the Tamasheq military movement managed to defeat the Malian army in a way which, combined with pressure from a democratic movement in the Malian capital Bamako, led the Government to open negotiations. The second phase, from January 1991 to May 1994, is one of intermittent fighting and negotiation between various Malian Governments and the Tamasheq movement, which itself split into various factions on the basis of tewsit competition. In chapter VIII, we will see how internal splits within the movement, the practical refusal of various parties involved in the conflict on both sides (military and politicians) to implement the agreements reached in negotiations and a deteriorating economic and security situation led to a third phase of heavy violence lasting from May to October 1994. From November 1994 to March 1996 a last phase of local collaboration by civic leaders led to the final peace and end to the conflict.

As it seems now, and hopefully for all involved it will stay that way, that will be the end of the story.
I
Creating an antagonistic state
Politics and stereotypes in late colonial French Sudan
(1946-1960)

Introduction

The aim of the first three chapters of this thesis, is to explain why rebellion broke out against the Malian state in the Adagh in 1963. I will argue that this rebellion was mainly the result of attitudes and actions on both sides – Malian Government and Kel Adagh alike – based on preconceived negative stereotypes of ‘the other’, which were centred on race and social (in)equality. These issues will be central throughout this thesis. It will be impossible to fully discover the origins of mutual feelings of contempt expressed through the bias of complexion. However, I will make an effort to locate and sketch their background and their use throughout the period under study, that is, from the late 1940s to the late 1990s. I will do so within the main setting or paradigm of racism itself: stereotypes.

During the late colonial period, extended contacts between the Tamasheq communities of the northernmost part of Mali and their future leaders who were, with few exceptions, from the South, had been very limited. Thus, those involved in the political events could only base their thinking on pre-existing stereotypes of the other. Stereotypical images emerge most rapidly when knowledge of one another is lacking. These stereotyped images are so important in understanding the antagonistic relation between, on the one side, the Malian political elite and the inhabitants of Southern Mali, and on the other side the Kel Tamasheq, that they merit a book in themselves. In this thesis I will make a start with this analysis but, unfortunately, it will not be as thorough as I would like it to be.

The present chapter will focus on the late colonial period, a period characterised by processes leading to formal retreat by the colonial power, while simultaneously making efforts to have itself replaced by a local elite acting in ways favourably looked upon by the colonial power. However, it is also characteristic to the late colonial state that its servants of European origins knew their rule was to be short lived, which had its consequences for their individual and personal efforts in their work. Their success in helping to construct a new indigenous elite and to bring about developments seen as beneficial to the local population depended on the personal motivation of colonial officers.

In Northern French Sudan, the future Republic of Mali, the success in efforts to develop a future political elite varied. While in the Niger Bend and the Timbuktu area, local elites were quick to grasp the new opportunities, their colleagues in the northernmost parts of colony had less

interest in politics. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the Adagh n Ifoghas and parts of the Azawad now look upon the late colonial period as a golden age. Economic circumstances were at their best, due to affluent rainy seasons. Efforts made by the colonial administrators in ‘development’ such as education, gardening and the drilling of new wells were not always understood or appreciated at the time, but are now seen as having been meant to their benefit. I will not try to refute or defend the idea that the late colonial period can be justifiably gilded. In later chapters, I hope to make clear why it is nevertheless seen as such in hindsight by some Kel Tamasheq, notably the Kel Adagh.

The focus of this chapter lies first on the political processes in French Sudan which ultimately led to the creation of the Malian state. More importantly, we will look at the players in the local political field, their attitude towards imminent national independence, their expectations of the new state and their relations with each other. We will see how the French introduced party politics and elections in French Sudan, how a modern political elite and political parties were created, and how the Tamasheq political elite was involved in these new-style politics. Most Tamasheq leaders with an active interest in the processes of party politics and elections, ignited by the French, were the colonial ‘traditional chiefs’ or tribal chiefs. From the beginning, they had sided with the French-backed ‘chiefs’ party’ – the PSP. This party was decisively defeated in the 1956 elections, but most chiefs were slow to adhere to the winning USRDA, a party profiling itself as socialist and against the power of the traditional chiefs.

Finally, we will look at the international context and the struggle over the Sahara during the late 1950s. The discovery of mineral riches in the Algerian Sahara in 1956, together with the gradual accordance of autonomy and independence to the colonies of the Maghreb and French West Africa (AOF – *Afrique occidentale française*), provoked a political and military battle over Saharan territory involving France, Morocco and the political elites of the AOF. Between 1956 and 1960, various Tamasheq and Moorish leaders in French Sudan actively supported either the French or the Moroccan claims, or both. Their support for these ‘foreign’ claims made them highly suspect in the eyes of the Malian nationalists after independence, who would come to regard them as enemies of the Malian state and ‘vassals’ to the ‘French neo-imperialist cause’. The Malian nationalists then extrapolated their suspicion towards the Tamasheq elite to the society they represented. After independence the Malian Government was in constant fear of a Tamasheq revolt, supported by French forces which were still present in neighbouring Algeria. This will be covered in chapters II and III.

**From French Sudan to the Malian Republic**

**An overview of decolonisation**

Decolonisation in French Africa was a direct consequence of World War II. While French West Africa (AOF) at first sided with Vichy France, French
Central Africa 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. As in World War I, massive African conscription was obtained on the quid pro quo ‘blood for rights’. In his Brazzaville declaration of 1944, de Gaulle promised the colonial subjects a voice in the French and colonial political arena after the war.45

The first steps in this arena were taken with the election of the Constitutional Assembly, which drafted the constitution of the Fourth Republic in 1946.46 French Sudan elected Fily Dabo Sissoko as its Territorial representative, a French-educated chief from Bafoulabé. Simultaneous with the creation of the Fourth Republic, the French Empire was restyled to become the Union française, which meant that the Overseas Territories could create their own assemblies – first called Conseils générales and later Assemblées territoriales – of which half the members could be elected. The task of these assemblies was merely advisory.

In addition to the assemblies, political parties could now also be created, and in October 1946, the first parties saw the light of day in French Sudan: the PSP, created by Fily Dabo Sissoko; the Bloc Soudanais, created by Mamadou Konaté; and the PDS, created by Pierre Molet. The latter two parties fused almost immediately to form the Sudanese branch of the Pan-African RDA, theUSRDA. PSP and USRDA would dominate the late colonial political arena in French Sudan in strongly antagonistic relations.

In 1956, the Overseas Territories entered a new phase towards independence with the adoption of the Loi-Cadre or Loi Gaston Deferre, which provided internal autonomy to the Overseas Territories and ensured their transformation into Republics within the Union française, a French Common Wealth. Meanwhile, colonial subjects would have many of the rights of metropolitan citizens. The Assemblées territoriales were now entirely elected by an expanded electorate. Whereas in 1946, suffrage was severely limited, it had now become universal. The Assemblées territoriales had voting power over the territorial budget, economic policies, in fact all matters excluding defence and the international domain.

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. Referenda to be held in the new

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Republics would be decisive on their membership. Voting in favour of the Communauté française would mean a vote for the status quo. A vote in decline of the Communauté would mean direct independence without French assistance. In September 1958, the referendum took place and its outcome was largely in favour of the Communauté française. In November 1958, the French Sudan was transformed into the République Soudanaise, the Sudanese Republic, member Republic of the Communauté française, with its own Assembly and a Ministerial Cabinet presided over by the Governor, but manned by USRDA members of Sudanese origins.

The creation of the Communauté française and its adhering Republics meant a dissolution of the supra-territorial organisation of AOF.47 But Pan-Africanism was a strong ideological current within the French West African political elite and the dissolution of AOF was a disappointment for most leaders who had hoped that their territories would remain united. The Rassemblement Démocratique Africaine – RDA had been a supra-territorial political party with branches in each territory. The USRDA formed its Sudanese branch. Therefore, a new form of regional integration was looked for; a Francophone West African Federation. The USRDA took a leading role in its shaping.

Within the RDA there were two different opinions on the form federalism should take. The first faction, headed by the USRDA under Modibo Keita and the Senegalese PDS under Leopold Sedar Senghor, advocated a West African Federation of states, independent from France. The second faction, headed by the Ivoirien PDCI-RDA, under Houphouët-Boigny, opted for a West African Federation associated to and in close collaboration with metropolitan France. In December 1958, a Federal Council was held in Bamako. Delegations from French Sudan, Senegal, Dahomey (Benin) and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) voted in favour of the independent federalist option. But victory was heralded too quickly. The Ivoirien president 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 French Sudan and Senegal alone on the road to federal independence.

In February 1959, French Sudan and Senegal formed the Mali federation. Both Republics would preserve their legal existence, but a federal Government and Assembly were to be created in Dakar, holding power over supra-territorial affairs. In June 1960, the federation leaders reached agreement with France over its existence. The Mali Federation declared its independence, but it proved to be short-lived, due to conflicts which arose over the political course of the Federation. Whereas the USRDA 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 USRDA took a stance against French foreign policy, notably on the Algerian war, Senghor’s PDS was more reconciliatory.

47 Based on Gam, P., Les causes de l’éclatement de la Fédération du Mali (Paris CHEAM no 4022 1965).
Personal enmity between Keita and Senghor and a conflict over the presidency over the Federation did the rest. In August 1960, two months after its creation, the Mali Federation was dissolved. Sudanese politicians in Dakar, including Keita, were arrested and put on the train to Bamako. In reaction, the Sudanese Government closed the borders and halted all transport to Senegal. On 22 September 1960, an extraordinary congress of the USRDA declared the independence of the Sudanese Republic under the name Malian Republic. Mali as we know it came into existence.

**The construction of a modern political elite in French Sudan**

It is sometimes observed that the political elite in West Africa consists of three groups – chiefs, teachers and soldiers.\(^{48}\) This simplified view helps to see clearly what happened in the political field in colonial French Sudan and post-colonial Mali. Before World War II, politics, if any, were informal and dominated by the chiefs. During the interbellum, the teachers and other intelligentsia organised cultural associations and literary clubs which were the breeding ground for the Post-War parties. The soldiers, or rather, officers, did not yet exist. In the Post-War period, chiefs and teachers struggled for political supremacy via the newly-installed democratic institutions, a battle won by the teachers. The soldiers were absent, fighting colonial wars for France elsewhere. They took over political power after independence. We will here concentrate on the formation of the political elites of chiefs and teachers in French Sudan and their struggle over power during the last decades of colonial rule.

**Teachers, chiefs and parties in French Sudan, PSP and USRDA**

The PSP dominated political life in French Sudan from its creation in 1946 to elections for the Territorial Assembly in 1956. The PSP was seen as the ‘chiefs’ party’, and had the support of the French colonial administration. Indeed, its uncontested leader Fily Dabo Sissoko was a chief. In 1946 he was the most prominent Sudanese politician and became elected to the Constituent Assembly in Paris.\(^{49}\) Sissoko was in good contact with the French Governor in French Sudan. This connection, next to the PSP’s affiliation to the French SFIO, gained him the active support of the colonial administration. The PSP’s second asset was the support of the Sudanese chiefs, who largely controlled the votes of their following. In return, the PSP strongly advocated the interests and political role of the chiefs in the administrative organisation of French Sudan. Initially, support

\(^{48}\) Schachter-Morgenthau, R., *Political parties in French speaking West Africa* (Oxford 1964). Schachter-Morgenthau explicitly refers to the theme of teachers and chiefs in her dealing with political parties in Mali. The antagonism between both social categories in colonial French Sudan and Mali is so obvious and explicit that almost no narrative on this subject escapes its logic and setting, including this one.

\(^{49}\) Campmas (n.d.), op. cit.
of the colonial administration and the chiefs was enough to ensure the PSP's primacy in Sudanese politics against its only rival, the USRDA.

The USRDA can be seen as the 'teachers' or 'intellectuals' party'. Some of its main leaders, like Mamadou Konaté and Modibo Keïta, were indeed school teachers. Others, such as Madeira Keïta, were civil servants in the colonial administration. Their political education took place in the 1930s when, under the rule of the Front Populaire in France, African intellectuals were encouraged to organise cultural associations. After the War, so called G.E.C's – Groupes d'Études Communistes – were created under the guidance of French communist volunteers, which started the strongly pronounced Marxist orientation in the ranks of the USRDA.\(^{50}\) Although most of its active members were intellectuals and most of its early following came from the urban population, the USRDA profiled itself as a 'people's party' or a 'party for the masses', whose rights they advocated. These characteristics made the party highly suspect in the eyes of the colonial administration.

The USRDA was faced with a multiple task. 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. This could be done by opposing the 'chiefs' party', the PSP. 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 adhering 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 do something to relieve their needs, thus increasing USRDA support. In turn, this meant the USRDA gained more votes when suffrage was extended, this to the anguish of the colonial administration which feared the USRDA's radical Marxist stance.\(^{51}\)

Many of the USRDA 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 USRDA by sending its activists to the countryside. Often, this meant 'the North' as most USRDA activists, if not all, came from the Sudanese Bambara and Mande heartlands. Thus, in 1951 Modibo Keïta was sent as a teacher to Kabara, the harbour of Timbuktu. Awa Keïta, Minister of Social Affairs after independence, was sent as a midwife to Goundam town. 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 Malian masses.\(^{52}\) 'Being banished' and serving in the remote backwaters of the country came to be seen as an emblem of martyrdom and sacrifice to the party. The city-dwelling elite was not used to living in huts in the

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\(^{50}\) Snyder, F., One-party government in Mali - Transition toward control (New Haven 1965).

\(^{51}\) Ibidem.

remote hamlets in the country, and saw doing so as a sign of personal strength and political persistence. As Modibo Keita put it –

‘We speak always 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 by 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’.\(^{53}\)

Overcoming their repugnance for tô and milk reaped its rewards for the USRDA. In 1946, the USRDA lost the elections in all Circles except in Kita, San, and Sikasso. In 1951 it lost Kita but it won both Gao and Bamako – the largest cities in French Sudan – from the PSP. Then, by 1956, the PSP had lost everywhere except Bafoulabé; Nioro; Macina, home of PSP’s second man Mamadoun Dicko; Koutiala; Bougouni; and Goundam, home of the influential Tamasheq chief and PSP delegate Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar. 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 Sudanese politics and after their final defeat in the March 1959 elections, the party was simply dissolved.\(^{54}\)

**Tribal chiefs, party politics and elections**

It has often been observed that the Tamasheq community was not actively involved in the political games of the Post-War period, that they didn’t participate in elections due to lack of understanding and interest, and that none of their leaders, also through lack of interest or understanding, presented themselves for elections.\(^{55}\) This picture is basically true, but it does no justice to the complexities of the political arena in French Sudan and to the differences within the Kel Tamasheq world during that period. First of all, interest in elections and politics was low throughout the Sudanese countryside, which had long regarded politics as a city game. In 1955, only 26% of the total Sudanese population was registered as enfranchised.\(^{56}\) Universal suffrage was not introduced until 1956. But even then, voting percentages in French Sudan were generally

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\(^{53}\) Modibo Keita in, USRDA political report 1955, quoted in; Schachter-Morgenthal (1964), op. cit., 291.

\(^{54}\) Schachter-Morgenthal (1964), op. cit., 279.

\(^{55}\) Billey (1999), op. cit., 272-80.

among the lowest in AOF. 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.

In order to have some idea of nomad participation in elections, let us look at some comparative figures between nomad voters and sedentary voters. The first elections were the elections for the Constitutional Assembly in 1946. In the Cercle Kidal a total of 243 people, or 1.7% of the total population of the area, were registered as voters. Of these 243 people, 158 or 65% of the registered voters used their vote. Of these, 73 were Kel Tamasheq, a slight majority over the 69 voters who were sedentary inhabitants of Kidal city (French and African colonial servants). Also among the voters was the amenokal or paramount chief of the Adagh, Attaher ag Illi himself. Therefore, it cannot be said that those Kel Adagh who had the right to vote, did not make use of this right when they could.

Ten years later the elections for the National Assembly in Paris were held in January 1956. Throughout AOF, the number of expressed votes did not reach 50%. In the Cercle Timbuktu, the number of nomads using their vote was 20%, as opposed to 49% among the sedentary population in the same Cercle. In the Subdivision of Kidal, the number of used votes reached an all time low at 0.6% of the registered nomad voters. Nevertheless, the figures from Timbuktu show that Tamasheq participation was not negligible in other areas. The Tamasheq population of the Cercle Timbuktu had their own political representatives and voted for them. The majority of votes in both elections were cast in favour of the chiefs’ party, the PSP.

In these elections, the Tamasheq were certainly under-represented, but their interest, compared to the general interest for elections in French Sudan, was not as bad as could be expected. Pierre Boily analyses the elections held in Kidal between 1946 and 1956 in full. From the number of Kel Adagh 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

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57 Synthèse politique concernant les territoires d’Outre-Mer et les territoires sous tutelle, Janvier 1956. ANSOM - 1afpol/2238/1. This report notes that tur-nout in the 1956 elections for the territorial assemblies did not exceed 50% in any territory.

58 The following paragraphs are largely based on ANM 7D - Elections, series 18,24,41,57,58,81 and 90.


61 Boily (1999), op. cit., 274.

party politics, show an increase in interest when territorial affairs are concerned.

The difference in the number of used votes can also be explained by the fact that the Kel Adagh had no political representative of their own, and had grown weary of the enormous amount of elections organised by the French, with nothing actually changing. As the amenokal Attaher ag Illi summed it up in that year – 'there are too many elections, he said, and too many taxes'. Yet, as Boiley 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 which was not far below that of their sedentary neighbours. As has been said, interest in elections throughout the Malian countryside was among the lowest in AOF. Additional handicaps to nomad voters were the lack of information on upcoming elections, of ballot boxes and the amount of time needed to arrive at existing ballot boxes. The passive interest in and knowledge of political developments of the Kel Tamasheq is perhaps underestimated so far. In general it can be said that the Kel Tamasheq inhabiting the Niger Bend were more integrated and more active in party politics than those inhabiting the extreme north.

When it comes to the active participation of Tamasheq and Moorish 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 for 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 French Sudan. Second, they did lack interest. Most Tamasheq leaders were tribal chiefs. As their power was directly dependent on French dominance they did not feel the need to invest in this new political opportunity. When they did take an interest, they adhered to the PSP, which promoted their interests. Third, an argument often raised 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 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 much-loved and orientalised Tamasheq 'traditional culture'. In this way the Tamasheq missed one of the most vital links to party politics – education and administrative jobs.

Again, this vision on 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 French Sudan. According to

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Schachter-Morgenthau, in 1947 less than 5 per cent of school-age children were actually attending school. Not until the 1950s were there Sudanese studying abroad and not until the 1950s did the first lycée classes open in Bamako, when the former École primaire supérieure Terrasson de Fougères expanded. In 1961, only 10 per cent of school-age children could find places in class-rooms, and at least 98 per cent of the total population remained illiterate in French.64 Literacy levels will not have been much different among the Kel Tamashq by that time.

One specific Tamashq group, the Kel Intessar, managed to escape these obstacles to political participation. First of all, their living area, the Goundam, was less removed from the political arenas. Second, in the Goundam area and in Timbuktu, elementary schools had been available from an earlier date. Third, from the start of his reign in 1935, their amenokar 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 an école nomade had been honoured and the Kel Intessar were seen as an example of the adequacy of the French mission civilisatrice.65 However, Mohamed Ali found nothing but administrative resistance to his plans for higher education. In 1942 he requested that his younger brother Mohamed Elmehdi be admitted to the William Ponty boarding school 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. He managed to enlist some of his pupils in educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco.66 The few educated Kel Intessar from the école nomade in Goundam would at least rise to administrative posts on lower levels and would join in party politics. We will hear more of these pupils in chapter III and VI.

Despite all these obstacles, Tamashq leaders did participate in party politics from the start. In the first elections for the Territorial Assembly in 1946, we find two Tamashq candidates. Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar presented himself as a PSP candidate. Sidi Mohamed ag Zocka, chief to the Shouakan wan Ataram tribe in Gourma Rharous presented himself as an independent candidate. Sidi Mohamed ag Zocka did not gain enough votes outside his own Cercle to be elected, and he is not heard of again in later elections.67 Mohamed Ali became elected, securing the Goundam and Timbuktu Cercles for the PSP for the years to come. In 1948, he withdrew

64 Schachter-Morgenthau (1964), op. cit., 269.
65 Dossier Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar. ANSOM - 14 MIOM 2276.
himself both as a PSP politician and as chief of the Kel Intessar in favour of his younger brother Mohamed Elmehd. The latter remained active in politics until well after independence, first within the PSP and later within the USRDA.

In the 1951 partial elections for the Conseil général, we find a new PSP candidate from Kel Intessar origins – Hacko ag Ibrahim, a veterinary from Goundam.68 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 1956 he seriously opposed Mohamed Elmehd’s candidacy for the PSP list in Goundam, who was nevertheless elected.69 Thus, two Tamasheq leaders competed in one constituency over parliamentary seats.

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. The support for the PSP only faltered as late as 1958, 1959. By 1958 the PSP had no representatives left in the Assemblée territoriale. Some Tamasheq and Moorish chiefs then went over to the USRDA. Some did so on their own initiative and political insight, such as Intalla ag Ataheh, the youngest son of the amenokal of the Adagh.

Some only did so under strong pressure from the USRDA itself.

Despite formal opposition against the chiefs, the USRDA very well knew their power and influence in the North to be insufficient to do without them. Such was the case with Badi ould Hammoa di, chief of the Moorish Kounta confederation. Badi rallied to the USRDA in 1959, without ever being active in the PSP, after the new Sudanese administration had threatened to dismember his confederation. In his dealings with the USRDA, Badi had long been advised by the Moorish merchant Habib Wafi who had been elected to the Assemblée territoriale for the USRDA in 1956.

The continued support of the chiefs for the PSP would not help their cause against a USRDA bent on their abolition. In the first government installed after the implementation of the Loi-cadre, Madeira Keita, the Interior Minister (Ministère de l’Intérieur et de l’Information, later Ministère de l’Administration Territoriale et de Sûreté) and USRDA left-winger 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.70 The nomad tribal chiefs were kept in place, however, because of their influence over their subjects and their knowledge of the country. At the time, the USRDA 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 as we shall see in chapter II.

White lords and black slaves
Politics and stereotypes in French Sudan

Tamasheq participation in elections did not guarantee their full inclusion in the political world of French Sudan. Despite late attempts to win them to their side, the USRDA kept distrusting both the chiefs and Tamasheq society in general. With few exceptions, all USRDA leaders came from Southern Mali. Their first-hand knowledge and experience of the Tamasheq world was highly limited. Mutatis mutandis, the Kel Tamasheq had little understanding of the urban USRDA elite. The further north, the less contact Tamasheq communities had with people from the south in general. Only those Kel Tamasheq who inhabited the Niger Bend had day-to-day experience of the lives of their sedentary neighbours, but their relations had not always been good. In short, attitudes and policies towards each other were not based on mutual knowledge and contact. When these are lacking, rumour, stereotypes and preconceived images take over.

In this part and in the next chapter, we will examine the origins and basis of the USRDA attitude towards the Kel Tamasheq and, vice versa, the attitude of the Kel Tamasheq towards the (future) Malian Government. These were based on preconceived images and values prevalent within the societies both groups came from. The image the Malian leaders projected on the Kel Tamasheq was partly inherited from their colonial masters, and was complemented with already existing local stereotypes of those people who were in contact with the Tamasheq community in the Niger Bend.

Conversely, the image the Kel Tamasheq had of the USRDA leaders was based on their previous experiences with people from the south. In the case of the inhabitants of the Niger Bend, these were their direct neighbours. In the case of the Kel Adagh, these were based on their few experiences with Southerners present in the north: the convicts sent to Kidal prison, the Southern administrative personnel and a few USRDA activists.

Although this is perhaps not the most obvious choice available, both sides quickly resorted to an image of the other based on racial prejudice. To the USRDA elite, the Kel Tamasheq were primarily white, despite the fact that most Kel Tamasheq in Mali had a dark complexion. Conversely, to the Kel Tamasheq, especially the Kel Adagh, the USRDA elite was primarily black, and the only other blacks known to them were their former captives and the inmates of Kidal prison.

The perception of the USRDA elite on the Tamasheq has been eloquently put down by novelist, Malian civil servant and historian Amadou Hampâté Bâ. In Oui mon commandant!, Bâ gives an account of a meeting in 1916 between the French Commandant du Cercle at Dori and the chief of the Logomaten tribe, Bokar wan Zeidou. The commandant had asked
the chief to pay his taxes in French francs, instead of in kind. Bâ lets Bokar wan Zeidou respond to this demand in the following words–

‘If the Commandant wants me to pay the taxes I owe to France in camels, ostriches, cattle, sheep, goats, millet, rice, butter, or even in captives, I can comply. But if he insists that I give him these cookies he has shown me and which are baked in France, well, it means he wants to fight. I accept! But I warn him: the Tuareg, of which I am one, are in a fight like fish in water! ... Interpreter! Tell the Commandant to look at my arm. It is not less white and not less well-shaped than his. Let him look at my nose: it is not less well-set than his. I am as white as he is ... the only advantage the Commandant has over me, and which allows him to pester me with his "I want this" and "I don’t want that", is that his country is stronger than mine’.\(^71\)

Here we find all the main elements together- the white, warrior chief, ready to sell his slaves to pay his taxes, ready to confront the French Commandant in a duel of honour, and realizing that if it wasn’t for French military superiority, he would have ruled the country. This image of the Tamasheq can be found in many novels, but this quote comes from a Malian former colonial and post-colonial civil servant and distinguished member of the Keita regime. It is an example of the Malian regime’s perception of the Kel Tamasheq. To paint the image at its most colourful and with the broadest of strokes – the Kel Tamasheq were thought of as a bunch of 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 local non-Tamasheq population, until the 1940s it lived in fear that the departure of the French would almost certainly be followed by a renewed period of Tamasheq dominance. This fear reemerged with the outbreak of the second rebellion in 1990 as we shall see in chapter VIII.

As for the perception of and consequent dealings with the USRDA political elite from the Tamasheq side, it was not much better and, in a warped way, complementary to the images held by the former. Consider the following quote, taken by a French officer in Algeria from a few Kel Adagh travellers in 1960 –

‘What can blacks rule over when they are only good to be slaves?’\(^72\)

To paint the picture at its crudest – 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

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\(^71\) Bâ, A., *Oui mon commandant!* (Paris 1994), 172. As Bâ explains, cookies was the name for French silver 5 franc coins.

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 Tamashaq, especially since prior to the French conquest the Kel Tamashaq had commanded them. Furthermore, the Kel Tamashaq leaders feared that the small cultural and economic minority of nomads would be left out of politics and power if they were included in the same state as this vast majority of sedentary Southerners. Again, this image was due to a lack of real contact, except for the populations of the Goundam and Gourma areas, and partly transmitted by the French. However, like the USRDA image of the Kel Tamashaq, Tamashaq fears about the USRDA's intentions contained some truth.

**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 ‘development’ of the colonised. During the phases of colonial conquest and pacification, the Kel Tamashaq put up heavy military resistance with some major successes. This led to a stereotype of noble and fierce warriors once conquest and pacification was complete. The memories of their defeats and troubles in pacifying the Sahara were at the basis of French policy towards the Kel Tamashaq until well in the 1940s, which consisted solely of keeping ‘la paix française’ at all costs.

During the second phase of colonial rule, which can be called the phase of functional administration and exploitation, the Kel Tamashaq 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 Tamashaq culture 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 described 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 ‘white’ nobles on top and ‘black’ slaves at the bottom. It all helped to transform the Kel Tamashaq from real people into the quasi-mythical ‘lords of the desert’.

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 Tamashaq during the third phase of colonial rule, that of ‘development’ during the 1940s and 1950s. The colonial administration saw no problem in transforming and modernizing society in the heartlands of the French Sudan – the Mande and Bambara areas – but its policy was ‘protective’, in Donald Horowitz’ meaning of the term, towards the culture and traditions of Tamashaq society. Hence, the Kel Tamashaq were exempted from forced military conscription, forced labour, and French education, which would destroy their traditional way of life.
This protective attitude was developed by local French administrators. Service in the Sahara attracted a certain kind of men. Their attitude towards the Kel Tamasheq has been nicely evaluated by former Commandant du Cercle Jean Clauzel as ‘a double state of mind with partly contradictory orientations – a preoccupation with surveillance, attraction and sympathy’. 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 in the Tamasheq way of life. It also meant the adoption of what the French thought to be the Tamasheq perception of their neighbours. This perception cannot be described other than at least ‘racial’. The Kel Tamasheq of the Hamito-Semitic race, living their harsh nomadic life in the Sahara, were naturally of a higher order than the black inhabitants of the French Sudan, and saw themselves as their natural lords and masters. This supposedly indigenous view of social and racial relations can be sensed in colonial reports and was then internalised by both the Kel Tamasheq and the Malian administration, as is clearly illustrated in the quotes at the beginning of this chapter.

The process of colonial image-making was completed, and in some cases images were reinforced by events in the formalised political arena of the late colonial period, both in French Sudan and in the wider Saharan area.

**Black slaves, the bellah question**

One of the main prejudices that were held against the Kel Tamasheq, is that they were pro-slavers and slave holders. This prejudice held some truth in the late colonial period, during which the new Sudanese elite formed its opinion of the Kel Tamasheq. Besides being a basis for prejudice, the emancipation of the former Tamasheq and Moorish slaves, the *bellah* and *haratin*, became one of the USRDA’s major campaign themes in the North during the 1950s. In addressing their emancipation, the USRDA 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’.

Formally denying the existence of slavery in Arab and Tamasheq society after its abolition in 1905, the French had never done much to change the social or economic situation of former slaves, thus perpetuating their servitude. This changed with the first election of the *Conseil général* in 1946. Since they were officially free people, slaves had the right to be enfranchised and cast their vote. This was first brought to their attention in the Menaka area by both PSP and USRDA campaigners. They told the *bellah* population that they could elect an African who would certainly advocate their rights to the administration and their former masters. Many slaves managed to reach the ballot box. They interpreted their vote as an

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act of liberation, calling the voting bulletins ‘freedom papers’. The effect of these elections in the Menaka 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 USRDA 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 French Sudan gave the USRDA an argument to put French presence to discussion. 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 Sudanese societies. But continued servitude was (and is) literally most visible among the Moors and the Kel Tamashq. First, the difference in physical appearance between former slaves and former masters was clear to see. Second, in the Sahara, the colonial administration had not created the infrastructure or social devices which had helped to emancipate the slaves in other parts of AOF. There were few villages de liberté, liberty villages, and no labour or army recruitment which had offered slaves the means to leave their masters elsewhere. Pastoral existence and ownership of herds made it difficult for former slaves to leave their masters while remaining in their region of origin. This is particularly 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 Tamashq society was based on political interests. Collaborative groups, such as the Kel Hoggar and the Kel Adjagh, had been allowed to keep their slaves and even acquire some more, while resistant groups, such as the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram and Kel Denneg saw their former slaves being dislocated from their influence.

Thus, the efforts of the USRDA to abolish servitude, the most prominent of all social inequalities, became focused on Tamashq and Moorish society. Another reason the USRDA 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 majority of the nomadic population in the Niger Bend.

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75 For their present persistence, see Mann (2000), op. cit., 220-275.
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 Menaka 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 fractions.\(^7\) These measures were copied by the Gouverneur Générale in Dakar and dispatched as a basis for the emancipation policy of all bellah in 1949.\(^7\)

In the Kidal area, USRDA activists and schoolteachers Amadou Bâ and Cheick Bathily tried to use the ‘bellah question’ to promote the USRDA cause in the late 1950s. Both Amadou Bâ and Cheick Bathily were teachers at the nomad school of the Adagh. As an active USRDA member, Bâ quickly clashed with the French administrators and with the local population which was reluctant to send their children to school in the first place. The same held for Bathily, who was of slave origins himself.\(^8\) The local administration finally managed to get Bâ and Bathily replaced. The USRDA and Bâ did not give up their efforts to win Kidal for the USRDA through the ‘bellah question’ but –

‘The 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, Menaka and perhaps Ansongo. He also visits the camps where he tries to bring up the “servant question”’.\(^8\)

In the Niger Bend, the campaigns of the USRDA 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 USRDA made the bellah question one of its main campaign themes in the Cercle Gao.

‘Even before the start of the electoral campaign [the USRDA] seems to orient its actions on two issues in the central Subdivision: […] A strong


\(^8\) Haut Conseiller, Directurat Général Interi. no. 730 INT/ AP2 aux Gouverneurs Mauritanie, Soudan, Niger, 17/08/1949. ACK.

\(^8\) 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., ‘Récit d’un internement scolaire’, REMMM 57 (1990), 113-21.

\(^8\) Inspection des Affaires Administratives du Cercle de Kidal, 1937-1957. ANM - FR 2D-20/1957.
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.\(^\text{82}\)

An illustrative example of the *bellah* question was the ‘Norben affair’ of 1955 in the Cercle Gourma Rharous.\(^\text{83}\) The Norben are a community of so-called *iklan n eguef* – ‘slaves of the dunes’ – communities of sedentary Tamasheq slaves who practice agriculture and tend the herds of their masters, but who do not live in their masters’ camps. Under the influence of the USRDA campaign, the Norben had claimed that the herds under their custody actually belonged to them and consequently appropriated them. Their former masters, the Kel Gheris fraction, did not accept this behaviour and raided the Norben to reclaim their animals. It came to a trial at the traditional court of Gourma Rharous which ruled in favour of the Kel Gheris. However, the *Commandant du 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 now on. Furthermore he apportioned them more than half of the herds they had appropriated from the Kel Gheris. Thus, the Norben were emancipated, the *bellah* question in Gourma Rharous was solved.

**The slave trade to Mecca**

The USRDA’s interest and the actuality of the problem were accentuated by notorious scandals over slave trade in the 1950s, some of which involved Kel Tamasheq. In 1948 Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, former chief of the Kel Intessar and former PSP senator in the *Assemblée Territoriale*, left to perform the *Hajj* and to travel extensively throughout the Middle East and the Maghreb.\(^\text{84}\) With him travelled some of his family members, who wished to enrol in educational institutions in the Middle East, and also some of his servants. In 1954 one of these servants, called Awad el Djouh, appeared in Niamey, where he posed a formal complaint to the Niamey Chief of Police against his former master. Awad el Djouh accused Mohamed Ali of having sold him in Saudi Arabia as a slave to a Saudi.\(^\text{85}\) The case was brought to trial in Bamako, where it was diverted from its original focus as a slave trade case to a case over working conditions and salary. Obviously, no French politician or administrator wanted this case to become too important or publicly known. The case was judged at the Bamako *Tribunal de Travail*, which in its judgement of 10

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83 Based on Winter (1984), op. cit.

84 Ag Attaher Insar (1990), op. cit.

November 1954 declared itself incompetent to deal with the matter "ratione loci". Awad el Djouh went in 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 de Travail restated its incompetence. In a letter to the Gouverneur of French Sudan, the Gouverneur Général 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 on the social (and political) effects of the judgement he will be called to make."\(^{86}\)

Despite these precautions, the affair became known. In 1956 the Commission on Social Affairs of the Assemblée of the Union française (the case did not make it to the French Senate) held an inquiry into the existence of slave trade in the territories of the Union. The results of the inquiry were published in the Journal Officiel de la République Française, 15 February 1956, and that was the end of it.

The case of Mohamed Ali did not stand alone. In 1957 the Commandant du Subdivision nomade of Tahoua suspected members of the Izawiten tribe who went on Hajj had taken their slaves with them to sell in Mecca. However—

"Abarad, chief of the 1st group, who is in Tahoua these days and who benefitted from a free journey to Mecca last year, which allowed him to visit his subjects [there], freely admits that the white Izawitens have taken their servants with them to Mecca, but contest[s] information according to which the latter are sold. According to him, his people rent out the services of their iklans to subsist."\(^{87}\)

It should be said directly that the Kel Tamasheq were not the only ones in AOF who engaged in a blossoming slave trade to the Arabian Peninsula in the 1950s. Hergé’s famous Tin Tin comic Cokes in Stock was based on these scandals and made them further known among a larger public. The sale of slaves in the 1950s also sparked the interest of the English travel-writer Robin Maugham, who suggested to the British Anti-Slavery Society to investigate the matter. In 1958, Maugham set out to Timbuktu to ‘discover the truth about slavery’. In order to prove his point – that slavery still existed in the Timbuktu area – Maugham was determined to buy and redeem a slave himself. He managed to do so under questionable

\(^{86}\) Gouverneur Général de l’AOF au Gouverneur du Soudan, 24/01/1956. ANM - FN 1E-961.

circumstances. Whatever might have been the case, his account of his travels and acquisition made the press in England. He was received by politicians and generally given quite some attention.

Stories about these cases of slave trade are not unknown in Tamasheq society. One informant said Mohamed Ali has never denied that he sold some of his slaves in Mecca, but that he acted to their benefit. They would have a much better life in Mecca than he could give them in French Sudan. 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.

**White lords, racism**

Another influential stereotypical idea of the Kel Tamasheq is that they are racists, who see themselves as both white and superior to the black population. This stereotype is strongly connected to the stereotype of them as slave holders outlined above. How far this stereotype is valid will be discussed below and in the next Chapter. The point is that 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. The conquerors of the Sahara found a society close to what they had in mind themselves for Africa’s future – whites dominating blacks. However, the persistence of this obsession in the late colonial period is less easy to explain, but is 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. Thus, a circular of the Governor General in Dakar on the bellah question in 1949 still included observations such as –

‘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.’

Whatever its reasons, the image of the ‘white’ Kel Tamasheq and Moors dominating ‘black’ servants persevered. The social and economic emancipation of the slaves was postponed partly for this reason, and only dealt with at the instigation of Sudanese politicians. The stereotype of

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88 Reading his account of the affair, one is left with the impression that the slightly naive Maugham, who made no secret of his interests to the local population, has been made to believe that he had actually bought a slave. The people who proposed the auction might well have set him up, with the consent of all actors involved, except for Maugham of course. Maugham, R., *The slaves of Timbuktu* - A horrifying investigation of the vicious slave-trade in present-day West Africa (2nd. ed. London 1967).

89 Haut Conseiller, Directorat Général Intérieur no. 730 INT/ AP2 aux Gouverneurs Mauritanie, Soudan, Niger, 17/08/1949. ACK.
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 Sudanese political elite could not help but regard certain other 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 Moors have 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, their ‘black’ slaves were enlisted in the colonial armies, which seems to indicate that the exemption of the Kel Tamasheq from conscription was based on racial rather than ethnic characteristics.\(^{90}\)

A second privilege was the exemption of the nomads from forced labour. Indeed, forced labour took a heavy toll in Southern Sudanese societies, and it must have soured the conscripted labourers in the Niger Bend to see their nomadic neighbours exempted.

All these exceptions led many other Sudanese to believe the Kel Tamasheq were the French colonial ‘darlings’. In terms more appropriate to the USRDA, they were the ‘vanguard of French neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism’. This belief was further confirmed by Tamasheq involvement in French and Moroccan attempts to keep or enlarge the latters’ Saharan possessions, to the detriment of the Malian state-to-be.

### International complications

The fear of USRDA leaders for Tamasheq political opposition to their rule would come to a pre-colonial height between 1956 and 1959, when the territorial integrity of the French Sudan came under attack from three sides. First, the French attempted to keep the Sahara French through the OCRS. Second, the Moroccan Istiqlāl party claimed a part of the Sudanese north on historical grounds, supported by claims on a greater Mauritania from a small political party, the third side in the conflict, in French Sudan – the Nahda ar-Wattaniyya ar-Mauritaniyya, or Mauritanian Renaissance Party.

#### The OCRS

The OCRS was an attempt to keep the Sahara French when it became clear that the Sahara would be lost for France after the coming independence of the African territories. French politicians saw this as a great loss since in the late 1950s petrol, natural gas and other mineral riches had been discovered in the Sahara. The idea to unify the Sahara into one territory dates from 1952, when the Senators Pierre Cornet and Pierre July had already proposed to regroup the Sahara into one

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autonomous Région or a Département. Their propositions were voted down in the National Assembly.91

In 1956, the idea resurfaced with more urgency for three main reasons. First, in February 1956, oil was struck in Algeria near the Libyan border and in the northernmost part of the Tamasheq world.92 Five months later, the largest oil well in Algeria until present started spouting its riches at Hassi Messaoud, while natural gas was pumped up simultaneously at Hassi R’mel. At Colomb-Béchar, coal was already mined. Throughout the 1950s, in the Hoggar mountains, various metals were found and in Mauritania, fosfor and iron ore were located. The discovery of natural gas, petroleum and other minerals transformed the Sahara from a worthless stretch of sand and rocks into a potential goldmine. Second, the ongoing war in Algeria was threatening to spread into the Sahara, which would endanger the effective exploitation of this mineral potential. It was believed that 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. Third, 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 1627.93 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-mans-land, to be efficiently exploited and administered.

However, none of these projects had included Mauritania or the Sudanese, 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.\textsuperscript{94} 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 ‘nationalizing the Sahara’, their idea to include the Saharan parts of these territories within the new ‘national Sahara’ met fierce resistance from African politicians.

One problem in the debates about administrative unification was how to delimit the French Sahara.\textsuperscript{95} To the west, north and east, this problem was easily solved. The French Sahara started in the west at the border of 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 Sudanese Republic. Problems arose in the south. First, the leaders of Chad, Niger and French Sudan did not relish the prospect of losing part of their national territory and the potential mineral riches it might conceal. The Sudanese leaders in particular fiercely opposed any territorial and political reorganisation which 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 Sudan started. Here Sudan meant the original Arabic bi lād es-sudān – the ‘land of the blacks’. Both the Moors and the Kel Tamasheq were seen as racially white. Accordingly, it was felt that those areas inhabited by the Moors and the Kel Tamasheq were Saharan, and areas inhabited by the black population were not. This argument was countered by the French opposition to territorial restructuring. They stated that many Moors 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 not end chaos.

Eventually, the project of unifying the Sahara was put in the trusted hands of the Ivoirien 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 Sudanese

\textsuperscript{94} Sahara, administration générale, projets parlementaires et gouvernementaux au sujet de l’organisation du Sahara, 1953-1956. ANSOM - 1affpol/2321/3.

\textsuperscript{95} 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.
leaders who still looked suspiciously on the OCRS as a French plan to annex their Saharan territory. Even in the final debates on Boigny’s project, the Sudanese Senator Amadou Bâ proposed to amend the law that –

‘The organisation of the Saharan regions should in no case lead to the creation of an autonomous territory’.96

After further debate Boigny managed to convince the Sudanese of the good intentions of the OCRS. His legal proposition was accepted and the OCRS was created on 10 January 1957. For the French Sudan this meant the inclusion of the Saharan parts of the Cercles Goundam, Timbuktu and Gao in the new structure.

Suspensions were revived however, by the ensuing creation of a Ministry of Saharan Affairs, headed by Max Lejeune, former secretary of state at the Ministry of Defence. 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, the African politicians were now backed by 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.

Marcel Cardaire and the Cadi of Timbuktu

Fierce defenders of the OCRS existed within the French administration and military services, and also among the Moorish and Kel Tamasheq elite. Of these, two figures in particular stand out – the French intelligence officer in French Sudan Marcel Cardaire, and the influential Moorish notable Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, better known as ‘the Cadi of Timbuktu’.

Of all the officers who served in French Sudan and in the Sahara in the late 1950s Marcel Cardaire was probably the most influential and certainly the best known. An officer in the Colonial Infantry, in 1954 Cardaire was posted in French Sudan where he was integrated in the military intelligence service. Cardaire’s involvement in Saharan affairs took off 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.97 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 he


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 Rgeibat, Tajakant and Berabish tribes, and the Kel Tamashaq thought and acted in interlinking networks of commerce, clan, and family affiliation extending from Colomb-Béchar, through Tindouf to Timbuktu and Agadez. 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 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 existing, or to win their loyalty to the detriment of pan-Arab and Moroccan or Algerian nationalist sentiments. 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 ‘Cadi of Timbuktu’ and principal informant to Cardaire on Saharan matters. Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick was the chief of the Ahel Arouan tribe of the Berabish federation living north of Timbuktu. He was installed as Cadi in Timbuktu in 1932, but had to resign his post in 1935, due to resistance from the local religious elite. Although he was reinstated in his function, he resigned definitely in 1939. Nevertheless he kept using his title of Cadi, and remained involved in the social and political games of the Tamashaq chiefs’ milieu. His main advantage over other Moorish and Tamashaq chiefs was that he could speak, read and write French. Although he did support their policy and was befriended by its leaders (except for Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, who was a bitter enemy), the Cadi never joined the PSP. The Cadi’s finest hour came with the creation of the OCRS.

In 1957, the Cadi 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 1) The inhabitants of the Sahara are full citizens of


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

101 After the PSP’s dissolution, the Cadi 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 (1964), op. cit., 298.
France according to the Loi-cadre of 1956. 2) They have become French subjects by signing treaties with France, and not with the leaders of the independence movements of the South with whom they feel no affiliation. 3) They are white and do not want to be incorporated into a territory or state dominated by blacks. 4) They have their own specific culture and society and do not want to be incorporated into a North African state or territory.

The Cadi 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 Cadi gave an interview to the Parisian monthly Le Télégramme de Paris, in which he explained this 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 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 Sudanese domination. We have the strongest confidence that glorious France will not give us away freely to anyone’.102

This would not be his last letter of petition. From December 1957 to February 1958 the Cadi travelled extensively through the Sahara by military transport supplied by his army and intelligence connections. 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, Caids, Chioouks, the religious leaders, the notables and merchants of Ouargla. In Tindouf, he wrote a third letter of petition, which was signed by the Caids, Kebars, merchants, the Cadi, the Imam, the notables of the Tajakant and Rgebibat. The letter was written in French and Arabic and signed and sealed first by Abdallahi ould Sidi Senhour, Caid of Tindouf, followed by 152 other notables.103 The Cadi also visited the Hoggar and Ajjer areas in Southern Algeria, but apparently the chiefs and notables in these regions saw

102 Le Télégramme de Paris 23 (Decembre 1957), cited in Lesourd, M., Black and White (manuscript, May 1958). Fonds privées, Papiers Lesourd, Carton 1. SHAT - 1K297.

103 Les Caïds, Kebars, Commerçants; le Cadi, l’Imam, les Notables Tajakant et Rgebibat; et tout ceux qui ont soussigné le Monsieur le Président de la République Française, Tindouf 05/02/1958. Fonds privées, Papiers Lesourd, Carton 2. SHAT - 1K297. The letter in French is typewritten as are the names of the signatories. The Arabic version is handwritten, the names of the signatories are in the same handwriting.
nothing of worth in his project and refused to sign a petition. 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. This last letter, the longest, was signed by 276 persons. Clearly, Mohamed Mahmoud was not acting alone. First, he had the help of French officers, who hoped to use the Cadi as the spokesman in a military strategy to unite what was referred to as the ‘Saharan block’ – the Kel Tamasheq and Moors – 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 Cadi’s actions too. Apparently all signatories of the Cadi’s petition received a letter of receipt from the Minister of Saharan Affairs. Finally, the propositions of the Cadi must have struck a cord among the Kel Tamasheq notables, as they did decide to sign the petition.

The effects of the Cadi’s campaign

The Cadi’s actions were regarded with more than suspicion by the Sudanese political elite, who still strongly disapproved of the OCRS. In October 1957 the Sudanese Interior Minister Madeira Keita toured the North in order to see what was happening in the Sudanese part of the OCRS – the Cercles Goundam, Timbuktu and Gao. His reports were alarming to the USRDA. In Gourma Rharous, Kel Tamasheq raided the herds of their former bellah. In Rhergo, a tribal Chief had publicly offended the Conseiller Territoriale for the USRDA Abdoulaye Nock, forbidding him to speak in public and finally challenging him to a sword duel. In the Cercle Goundam, the Kel Tamasheq pillaged the bellah, and Mauritanian Moors entered the territory to campaign for a greater Mauritania (infra). In the cercle Gao, the Kounta Cheick Badi ould Hamoadi campaigned in favour of the OCRS and ‘the separation of whites and blacks’. The Kounta Cheick had already campaigned for more political awareness among the

104 Ibidem.
105 Claudot-Hawad, H. (ed.), Le politique dans l’histoire touarègue. Les Cahiers de l’IREMAM 4 (1993), 133-151. Of all 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 was originating from the Azawad or Adagh. Strangely enough, some of them were Songhay.
Tamasheq and Moors in 1955 but to no avail. Inspired by the Cadi, he restarted his crusade. French reports about his activities and those of other Tamasheq chiefs confirmed USRDA 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 Sudan'.

The Sudanese representatives in France accused the Ministry of Saharan affairs and the OCRS of engaging in racist policies, putting the Saharans against the Southern Sudanese population in order to make the OCRS a political territory after all. The OCRS was directed by a Haute Conseil (High Commission) which acted as a means of control over the Ministry of Saharan affairs and as highest executive organ of the OCRS. At its inaugural session, Allasane Haidara, mayor of Timbuktu and prominent USRDA member, made clear that the Haute Conseil or the Ministry of Saharan Affairs should avoid to make 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 Sudan, Niger and Chad. Certain campaigns of agitation in Sudan lead to believe that this mistake is risked to be made'.

In French Sudan itself the USRDA leaders were well aware of the potential danger of the OCRS and the Cadi’s campaigns in favour of a Saharan Territory. The USRDA leaders therefore counteracted all attempts to put the OCRS into effect on Sudanese territory until the September 1958 referendum on the new French constitution and the creation of autonomous Republics out of the former Overseas Territories. Modibo Keïta would later admit that one of the reasons the USRDA 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 Sudanese 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 nomadic and sedentary African elements. If, by

109 Féral, G., 'Administrations comparées en pays nomade', in; E. Bernus et al. (1993), op. cit., 105-12.


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 Sudan would have had its northern part amputated. 113

But even after the establishment of the Sudanese Republic in November 1958, the USRDA remained reluctant to OCRS projects on Sudanese territory and afraid of nomadic agitation in the North in favour of France. After Malian independence in 1960, the OCRS remained existent in Niger, Chad and Algeria until its independence in 1962. Mali, despite the visible financial and material advantages of the OCRS in Niger and Algeria, formally retreated from the organisation.

Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick, the Cadi of Timbuktu (right), on a boat. Courtesy of Ghislaine Lydon, who received this picture from Mohamed Mahmoud’s family.
Morocco and greater Mauritania

The OCRS project was not the only danger menacing the territorial integrity of the French Sudan or currying favour with Tamasheq and Moorish leaders. Although the direct impact was smaller, troubles in and over Mauritania would to some extend affect the Northern parts of the French Sudan as well. Again, Moorish and Tamasheq leaders of Sudanese origins were involved.

On 2 March 1956 the Kingdom of Morocco became an independent state under the leadership of Sultan Mohamed V. The move to independence had been guided by the nationalist party Istiqlāl. However, many felt that large parts of the country were still under foreign domination. The leaders of the Istiqlāl were divided into two camps. The left wing 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-Aksā – literally the ‘far west’ and here meaning ‘Greater Morocco’. 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 Istiqlāl 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 the French Sudan from the Algerian border at Bordj Mokhtar south-eastwards, via Arouan to Néma at the Mauritanian border of French Sudan. Although these claims were vast, the actual dispute over territories in the 1950s would be concentrated on Mauritania.

Both sides to the conflict – France and Morocco – 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 elites agreed with the Moroccan claims. They were headed by Horman oul Babana, a politician who had helped to found the Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya – the Mauritanian Renaissance Party, better known as ‘the Nahda’. Mokhtar oul Daddah, leader of the Parti du Regroupement Mauritanien (PRM) was the head of the pro-French part of the Mauritanian elite. Both sides tried to convince the chiefs and religious leaders in Mauritania to join their side. The struggle did not stay on the level of propaganda and diplomacy. On 13 January 1957, Mauritania was invaded by the Jaish il Takhrir al-Maghrebiyya or Armée de Libération Marocaine (ALM) – the Moroccan Liberation Army. The ALM fighters had to cross the Spanish Seguier al-Hamra and Rio d’Oro to get to Mauritania. According to French sources, the Spanish authorities let the ALM pass for two reasons. First, they did not have the means to stop them. Second, the Spanish were said to have struck an accord with the Istiqlāl to let the ALM into

114 Obdeijn, H., P. De Mas, Ph. Hermans, Geschiedenis van Marokko (Amsterdam 1999), 150-157.
115 The following paragraphs are largely based on: Affaire politiques, Mauritanie, maintien de l’ordre 1957/1958. AHSOM - 1affpol/2229 and Affaires politiques, Mauritanie, administration générale 1956-1958. AHSOM - 1affpol/2172. Both dossiers are under embargo until 2020.
Mauritania unhindered in exchange for the dropping of Moroccan claims on Sidi Ifni, Ceuta and Mellila, three Spanish enclaves in Morocco. In September 1958, a second army of about 6000 ALM troops stood at the border between Morocco and the Spanish Sahara, ready to invade Mauritania. By that time, the Spanish and French had joined forces and drove the ALM troops out of the Spanish Sahara, back to Morocco. The Moroccans would not return before 1973.

The Moroccans did not pay much attention to their claims on Sudan and Algeria, concentrating all their efforts on Mauritania. The Moorish community in French Sudan, on the other hand, did focus much of their attention on these claims. Some of the Moorish political elite in French Sudan had joined the Mauritanian Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya. This party was originally presided by Horna ould Babana in opposition to Mokhtar ould Daddah’s PRM. The NWM originally stood for a greater Mauritania, comprising the Spanish Sahara and part of the French Sudan.

French Sudan had already lost the area around Nema and Timbedgha to Mauritania in 1944.116 This border change incorporated a large number of Moors in Mauritania who had formerly been under the administration of French Sudan. The Moors who stayed behind in French Sudan were not happy with this. They pleaded that their territory should be included in Mauritania as well.117 With the creation of the Nahda in Mauritania in 1958, a sub-branch of the party was created in French Sudan with sections around Kayes and Nara. Later, local sections were founded in Timbuktu and Gao as well. The 'Sudanese part' of greater Mauritania was claimed by this Sudanese branch, and not by its Mauritanian mother party.

The leader of the Sudanese branch of the Nahda was Bouyagi ould Abidine, a Moor born in 1919 around Timbedgha, the Cercle which French Sudan lost to Mauritania.118 After his education at the Ecole Primaire Supérieure in Bamako he worked for the Post Service. He was stationed first in Gao, then in Nema from where he was transferred to Saint Louis. In 1952 Bouyagi presented himself for the Territorial Assembly elections, but was not elected. He then joined the Nahda. From 1955 to 1958 he was stationed in Bamako. There, right in the den of the Sudanese nationalists, he focused most of his activity in favour of Greater Mauritania. By 1958, with the Franco-Moroccan war in Mauritania at its height, the Nahda under Bouyagi’s leadership had become pro-Moroccan, while maintaining the idea of a greater Mauritania. Thus in the eyes of the Nahda, greater Mauritania equalled greater Morocco and should in all cases include the Moorish inhabited parts of French Sudan.

The Moroccan claims were largely concentrated on Mauritania, but this did not prevent Sudanese politicians and French administrators from

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worrying about the case for a large part of 1957 and 1958. The seriousness of the Moroccan threat was clear from the intensity of the armed conflict in Mauritania. Most ALM fighters, well-armed and well-equipped, were local Moors. Fear arose among the French and the Sudanese elite that the Moors or the Kel Tamasheq from French Sudan would come into contact with the ALM. After all, Bouyagi ould Abidine's Nahda strived for the same goal as the Moroccans and the pro-Moroccan or pro-greater Mauritania Mauritians did. That is, unification of Morocco, Mauritania and parts of French Sudan. Furthermore, his party was only a branch of the Mauritanian Nahda. Therefore, these French and Sudanese anguishes for Nahda - ALM links were not without reason. Many observers, French Commandants, intelligence and army personnel, were apprehensive of a massive Moorish exodus from French Sudan to Mauritania. The Sudanese leaders do not seem to have worried much about the Moroccan claims as much as they did about the French OCRS project. But they will have been well aware of Moorish support for the Moroccan cause, propagated by Bouyagi's Nahda. Bouyagi’s activities will certainly not have taken away Sudanese suspicion towards the Moorish community. In reaction to these threats the USRDA leaders did everything they could to persuade the most influential Moorish chiefs, such as Badi ould Hammoadi, to take their side. To what extent they really were successful cannot be estimated.

**Conclusion**

In 1946 a new and last phase in the colonial history of French West Africa began, which can be labelled as 'late colonialism'. France prepared for its retreat from AOF by gradually extending more rights and liberties to its colonial subjects. The main rights and liberties discussed in this chapter were the creation of political parties, the right to vote and the right to participate in debates on the legal shape of the French empire.

During this process, political elites were created or transformed. These elites consisted mainly of French colonial servants of two kinds – French-educated lower rank personnel and colonial chiefs. Another characteristic of the new political elite was that it consisted mostly of inhabitants of the Sudanese heartlands; the Mande and Bambara regions. The inhabitants of the northern part of French Sudan, the Moors and the Kel Tamasheq, were less well represented, but not absent. It is often argued by scholars and some Kel Tamasheq alike that the Moors 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 its part in the new politics, but they placed their bets on the wrong horses.

French Sudan consisted of a number of different cultural and political spheres on a north-south axis. One can safely say that the further apart geographically, the less contact these spheres had. When true interaction is lacking, ideas and attitudes towards each other are mostly informed by stereotyped images. The stereotyped image the USRDA leaders had of the Kel Tamasheq and Moors was that they were white, feudal, pro-slavers and
colonial "darlings". The image the Kel Tamasheq and Moors had of the Southern USRDA 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. These mutual images, especially those of the USRDA elite towards the Kel Tamasheq, confirmed by contemporary events, were the basis of political actions on both sides.

The Kel Tamasheq involvement in the slave trade to Saudi Arabia in the 1950s and collaboration in attempts to incorporate Northern French Sudan in other territories or states, confirmed the stereotype of them as white pro-slavers and 'vassals of French neo-imperialism'. The USRDA’s stress on the ‘bellah question’ during their election campaigns and their attempts to curb the power of the chiefs, confirmed their stereotyped image of black or ‘foreign’ usurpers of power and destroyers of Northern society. Of course, in the eyes of the former slave population – the majority of the Kel Tamasheq in French Sudan – this stereotype did not apply. But to the political elite and the ‘common’ Kel Tamasheq of free descent, these events were threatening and the stereotype was a valid one.

Of course, these mutual stereotypes were made up of more complex elements than those described in this chapter. This will be the focus of the following two chapters. We will see that, after independence, these other elements also influenced or even directly shaped political and administrative attitudes and actions towards each other. Thus, a spiral of negative images and actions which started in the late-colonial period described here, led to open revolt in the Adagh in 1963; the subject of chapter IV.
II
The nomad problem
The Malian nation-state and the Kel Tamasheq
(1960-1968)

Introduction

On 22 September 1960 the Mali Republic proclaimed its independence as a state. However, in part, both the state and the Malian nation had yet to be created. At its birth, Mali lacked qualified personnel and economic means to ensure an independent existence as a state. Furthermore, those structures in place were based on a capitalist system, while the USRDA envisioned Mali’s future on a Marxist basis. Industry had to be created, as well as infrastructure and, above all, new social relations between Malians who were still ‘mentally colonised’. Despite the lack of material and personnel, the Malian political leaders were optimistic about Mali’s bright future. Like almost all African leaders after independence, they had aspirations and ambitions which James Scott has labeled ‘high-modernism’.

In the first part of this chapter, I will describe how in the early 1960s Mali was ‘imagined’, to use Benedict Anderson’s increasingly popular term. In his work, Anderson concentrates on the question how and on what basis a nation is imagined. But the questions ‘who imagines’ and ‘which community is imagined as national’ are pertinent. The success of national ideas over other imagined communities, pre-existing nations or ethnic groups, religious loyalties et cetera, depends in part on the direct attractiveness and applicability of the national idea and the purposefulness, charisma and determination of its creators in instilling the image on their subjects. I will argue that the Malian leaders had certain images of what Malians were like, who, according to this image, already fitted the ‘Malian’ picture and who, in their eyes, needed to change in order to become Malian.

In the second part we will examine who the Malian leaders imagined not to be Malian, why not and how, in their ideas, this should change. In essence, the Malian political elite constructed the Malian national idea and myth largely on the basis of the historical and cultural concepts of Mali’s largest ethnic groups, the Mande and Bambara. By imagining Mali as Mande or Bambara, the national idea was directly applicable to a large part of the nation. The necessary ‘primordial ties’, the feelings of natural belonging and the imaginary timeless ancientness of the nation were thus already in place. However, the Kel Tamasheq and Moors were seen as not yet Malian and indeed did not see themselves as Malian either.

119 Scott, J., Seeing like a state – How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed (New Haven 1998).

120 Anderson (1991), op. cit.
I will describe the relations between the Malian Government and the Kel Tamasheq during the whole period of the first Republic under Modibo Keita’s USRDA. I argue that the Malian administration saw the Kel Tamasheq at best as a ‘barbarian other’ it set out to ‘civilise’, or at worst as ‘a problem’ it tried to solve. As in the previous chapter, we will pay particular attention to the impact of existing stereotypes and pre-conceived images of policies and their outcome in Northern Mali. The stereotypes dealt with here are those of the lazy anarchist nomad, slavery and feudalism, an irrational pastoral mode of production and nomadic existence itself. This set of ideas and stereotypes was referred to by the Malian administration as ‘the nomad problem’.

I will bypass the revolt in the Adagh in 1963-1964, which is the subject of chapter IV, and the period directly before the revolt, which will be dealt with in chapter III. Nevertheless, I ask you to keep in mind that in these following chapters, I will try to argue that most of the images and ideas of the regime described in this chapter provoked an atmosphere of fear and distrust among local administrators, and also that policies described here created distrust and resentment among the Kel Tamasheq, which contributed to the rebellion in 1963.

Creating Mali

History, future, culture, socialism and Mande

In 1960, the idea of a Malian nation was not yet deeply rooted in the people. 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 French Sudan had been a long, calm and gradual process, taking shape in its last years through cooperation between the USRDA and the administration, which, after the defeat of the PSP in 1956, had come to accept the inevitability of USRDA power.

Second, the aspirations of the Sudanese political elite had not been to create a nation-state, but to create a Pan-African socialist federate political union. Their efforts to build this Pan-African political unity 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 Sudan had to go on as a nation-state. The idea of a federal political entity had foreclosed a strong national identity. According to former Ministers Mamadou Golo, one of the main USRDA ideologists, and Moussa Keita, Modibo Keita’s younger brother and former Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, only at that moment did the Sudanese political leaders realise they had to inspire a national idea within what was now the
Malian Republic. And even then, the idea of Pan-Africanist federalism was not discarded. The new Malian constitution included the possibility of a "total or partial abandonment of national sovereignty in favour of federation."

Constructed or not, a Malian national sentiment exists today, 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 possible symbols with which a feeling of national unity and identity created. These included a rich history with which to create a national historical myth; a host of traditions 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 USRDA regime. The list is not exhaustive and neither is the treatment of these elements presented below. For the purpose of clarity and brevity, I will limit myself by dealing with only the most substantial elements of Malian national identity.

The glorious past

The territory of present day Mali has a rich and largely documented history, either through oral traditions or written in Arabic by local Muslim scholars. The oldest cities of West-Africa, such as Djenne, 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 nation-state’s 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 – 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 area (Cheick Ahmed Lobbo) and the Futa Toro (el-Hajj Umar Tall) in the 18th and 19th centuries. This is, in short, how Mali’s national history is

121 Interviews with Mamadou Golo, former Minister of Information, Bamako 18-01-1998; and Moussa Keita, former Minister of Youth and Sports, Bamako 10-01-1998.

122 Constitution de la République du Mali, titre X: De l’unité africaine.
presented to young Malians in the national educational history curriculum.\textsuperscript{123}

But these histories are known even to those who have not had formal education. It can be said that in Malian societies, history forms the basis of social and cultural life. The history of the founding of the Mali empire by Sunjata Keïta forms the basis of explanation and justification of Mande social, cultural and political organisation. The Sunjata epic serves to explain the relation between various Mande family groups (\textit{djammuw}), villages and social strata. Without knowledge of this epic, a Mande simply cannot function socially or culturally.\textsuperscript{124} To a lesser extent, the same can be said about the Songhay and their empire, the Fulbe and their Jihadi states and the Bambara kingdoms, which are presented in national myth (and much scholarly work) as the rightful heirs to the Mali empire. The importance and function of history in Tamashq society has already been discussed in the Introduction.

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 Keïta regime did its utmost to do so. By giving the Republic the name of its adopted medieval predecessor -- the Mali empire, the Mali Republic presented itself as its rightful heir, and also as the rightful heir to its succeeding kingdoms. Modibo Keïta, namesake to the founder of this empire, Sunjata Keïta, was without a doubt to any Malian mind a descendant of the great imperial family and implicitly presented himself as such.\textsuperscript{125} Sunjata's alleged device 'Rather death than dishonour' was taken up by the new nation.\textsuperscript{126} It was sported on a large banner in parliament the day Mali proclaimed its independence. 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 standards of living, and it had created the opportunity to reunite most of the areas formerly included in the Mali empire and succeeding small kingdoms into a new state.\textsuperscript{127}

The historical foundation of the Malian national myth is first and foremost based on the all important living history of the Mande and


\textsuperscript{125} Cutter, Ch., \textit{Nation-building in Mali: Art, radio, and leadership in a pre-literate society} (PhD Political science UCLA 1971).


\textsuperscript{127} Snyder, (1965), op. cit.; and Campmas (n.d.), op. cit.
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’.128

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 Jihadi states, the glorious past of Timbuktu founded by the Kel Tamacheq, as well as Samory Touré’s empire and the Sikasso kingdom of Ba Bemba all found their place in the national myth, and not without reason. As Mamadou Golo, former Minister of Information and the Keita regime’s main ideologist explained –

‘Nationalism is the awareness to belong to a nation and to conserve this identity, which is shaped in a rich history. All Malian ethnies have had the experience of state rule, to have been ruled and to have ruled. This experience excludes tribalism in national sentiments’.129

The socialist option and the bright future

The Malian proclamation of independence was preceded by a speech by Modibo Keita, which made it clear that the Malian Republic would ‘take the socialist option’. However, Mali’s socialist option was ‘derived from Malian realities, grafted on successful experiences elsewhere’.130 Malian Socialism was, like the policies of many other African regimes, described as ‘African Socialism’. The regime envisioned the development of the country through socialist plan economy, strengthening the agricultural sector while at the same time constructing a complementary industrial sector and supportive state enterprises almost from scratch.

The first five-year-plan was launched in October 1961. 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 Iljouchnis, two Antonovs and three DC 3’s, which maintained regular national and international flights.131 All this ensured a modern industrial and socialist appearance for the new country.

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129 Interview with Mamadou Golo, former Minister of Information. Bamako, 18-01-1998.
Since Mali was essentially a rural society, social and economic policy remained based on the village as the primary social and economic unit. 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 credits, modern equipment (ploughs, artificial fertilizer, improved seeds) and, most of all, education.

Material means for this project were desperately lacking. 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. Once this process was successful, economic production would rise automatically, or so the regime thought. Snyder argues 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. Changing politics would automatically mean changing the economical system.

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. 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. 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 USRDA, 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. These distortions in Malian society had to be uprooted. Negative attitudes, created by colonialism, such as greed, individualism, selfishness and feudalism had to be stamped out. The

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133 Based on Snyder (1967), op. cit.; and Jones, W., 'The rise and demise of socialist institutions in rural Mali', *Geneve-Afrique XI*, 2 (1972), 19-44.

134 Snyder (1965), op. cit., 98.

135 Snyder (1967), op. cit., 86.

136 Ibidem, 89. Incidentally, these ascribed national character traits were exactly those the colonial administration had used to describe Mande character.

new regime stimulated access for the modern, young and disadvantaged groups – women, members of the lower castes and former slaves – into the traditional village decision making structures, which had so far 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 USRDA.¹³⁸

This then, would propel the nation forward both economically and morally. This process of mental transformation was called ‘intellectual decolonisation’.¹³⁹ It was first and foremost directed towards those parts of the population who had enjoyed an advantageous position in society under colonial rule – the bureaucrats, the merchants, the elders and the nomads.

**Mandefication, the Malian nation as a Mande nation**

How far Malian national identity was perceived to be ‘Mande’ or ‘Bambara’ is a pertinent question. Most elements used in Malian nationalist discourse and identity-building were taken from Mande culture and history. 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 reinstalled. 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 fledgling Republic. The imaginary glue holding the various peoples of the country together consisted of frequent reference to Sunjata’s empire building – an ‘official nationalism’ in Anderson’s meaning of the term *par excellence*.¹⁴⁰ Certain Mande social structures, such as the village young mens’ associations known as *tonw*, were conscripted into ‘the Revolution’ and became the vectors of modernity. In this way, Malian national culture was Mande culture, 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, music, song and dance. Frederick Lamp discusses the function of similar artistic groups in neighbouring socialist Guinea. He argues that the theatrical troupes in Guinea 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’.¹⁴¹ A similar situation has been described by Cutter for the Keita regime’s

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¹³⁸ Ernst (1976), op. cit., 83-85.
¹³⁹ Snyder (1967), op. cit., 87.
¹⁴⁰ Anderson (1991), op. cit., 83-111.
cultural policies through 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 and its local administrators, national folklore
largely meant Mande and Bambara music, song and dance. This is
recollected with some bitterness by most Kel Adagh who lived through this
period. The troupe artistique of Kidal was forbidden to sing in Tamasheq,
but had to learn and perform Bambara songs instead (see chapter III).142
The Kidal artists were not the only ones to experience this cultural
exclusion. Afel Bocoum, a Songhay 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’.143

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

**Mali’s mission civilisatrice**

**Controlling and transforming the nomads**

As has been said, the new regime was essentially positive about Mali’s
future. This positivism and belief in the national capacity stood contrary to
social and economic realities in Northern Mali.144 As far as the new regime
was concerned, the colonial administration had done nothing to improve
economic or social conditions in their Saharan territories. Bakary Diallo, the
first Malian governor of the Gao region, then comprising all of Northern
Mali, briefly summed things up in his opening speech to the second
regional social economic conference in Gao in 1962 –

‘Towards the nomads, the colonial regime has entailed a prejudicial
policy, of which the consequences are now fully visible. The colonial
maniacs, in love with exotism, wanted to preserve the nomads for
anthropologists, berberofile ethnographers and orientalist scholars

142 Ag Litny, I., Systemes educatifs et société touarègue - les Kel Adagh du nord du Mali
(Mémoire EHESS, Paris 1992), 151.

143 Inlay booklet in Afel Bocoum, Alkibar (World Circuit Production 1999, WCD 053).

144 This paragraph is based on the notes of the Conférence régionale des cadres politiques,
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. Nothing has been tried and it is impossible to uphold the sketchy and cowardly attempts made, the results of which are, except in Goundam, zero everywhere.  

The first problem the regime perceived, was the size of the region, adjacent to four foreign countries (Mauritania, Algeria, Niger and Upper Volta) with permeative borders, which the nomads used to their advantage by crossing these borders for economic reasons seen as counter to national interest. The export of livestock, without paying export taxes was seen as unpatriotic. The second problem was the constant insufficiency in cereal production for local consumption. Cereals had to be imported from the neighbouring countries, as had other primary goods. Again, most imports escaped government control. The last, but certainly not the smallest problem was –

‘... the existence of an ethnic minority of Tamasheq and Arabs (white and black) we call the Nomads, coexisting with black sedentary populations over whom they held political supremacy after the destruction of the Songhay empire by the Arab invasion of the XVIth century. [...] 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 which we, in reference to the colonial regime, will call the Nomad problem’.  

The ‘Nomad problem’ can be summarised as follows – the irrational pastoral mode of production and illegal export of livestock, deficits in cereals and primary goods and the non-existence of agricultural practice among the Kel Tamasheq, a lack of formal education, the existence of traditional chiefs, the continued servile state of former slaves and, last but certainly not least, nomadic existence itself. It is not exaggerated to surmise that the Keita administration saw the Kel Tamasheq and Moors as a kind of ‘barbarian other’. The new Malian administration would change all this. 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. In other words, to transform the mental state of the nomad from a lazy contemplative pastoralist into that of a rational sedentary ranch farmer. The regime was convinced

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145 Transcript of speech by Gouverneur de la Région de Gao, Conférence régionale des cadres politiques, administratifs, août 1962. AMATS - dossier no 6.

146 Ibidem.
agriculture was possible in the Sahara, that the Kel Tamasheq could and should be sedentarised and take up farming and ranching, instead of wandering and counting their heads of cattle. Schools had to be created, slavery was to be abolished and feudalism was to be crushed. This ambitious project came down to one thing: to do what the French had omitted – truly administering and ruling the Kel Tamasheq.

**Livestock production and pastoralism**

As we have seen above, the Keita Government had embarked on a rather ambitious scheme of modernisation and industrialisation in its first five year plan. This plan had to be financed by an extraordinary growth rate of economic production in the primary sector – dryland farming, fishing and livestock exports. The targeted growth rate was fixed at 11% annually. Even before independence, livestock had been Mali’s main export product. The country was the largest exporter of cattle in West Africa. 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 million 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’. 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 water points in the dry season, tsé-tsé flies and other parasites, epidemics and animal diseases (boneblack, pneumonia, rinderpest, etc ...), pastures outside the 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’.

The new administration was quick to note that an increase in livestock production could only be realised with an increase in water resources augmenting the effective exploitation of pasture. However, since the Government reserved most of its investments for the creation of a secondary sector, not much money was left to improve hydraulic conditions. Budgeted investment in agriculture was set at 25.6% of the total budget. Only 1.55% of this 25.6% was reserved for ‘cattle’. This investment had resulted by 1964 in the deepening of 16 seasonal wallows,

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148 Cissé, (1964), op. cit.


150 Ibidem, 12.

151 Jones (1976), op. cit., 119.
5 explorative drills for new wells, 12 veterinary posts and 12 vaccination corrals.\textsuperscript{152} By 1967 this ‘impressive result’ was augmented with 26 new wells in the \textit{Cercles} Gao and Niafunké, the deepening of 20 others in the \textit{Cercle} Nara, and a campaign against rinderpest.\textsuperscript{153} It is easy to imagine that these investments were insufficient to overcome the problems outlined above.

\textbf{Control over export}

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 payed, but these could be easily circumvented by lack of border control. Since Mali had remained in the CFA franc-zone, currency exchange was no problem. This changed suddenly on 2 July 1962, when Modibo Keïta announced 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. This 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 live stock 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.

\textbf{Ifoghas pay no tax}

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 \textit{ex ante} in the national newspaper \textit{l’Essor} on 20 February, 1962.

‘Cattle is, 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 which the other categories of

\textsuperscript{152} Cissé, (1964), op. cit.

\textsuperscript{153} Cissé, M., \textit{Le Mali dans les relations internationales} (Paris CHEAM no. 4239 1967).
contributors and they can, without much inconvenience, contribute about 3% of their riches in tax, and sometimes even less.¹⁵⁴

Officially the new tax rates on livestock were effective on 1 January 1962, but came into effect in the 1963 budget. The rise of the cattle tax in 1963 is often 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%. Coming after years of stability since the small increase in 1956, the dramatic effect of this increase was greatly enhanced.

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 1 to 3, I have calculated the number of animals (by species) per taxable head of the population in the various Cercles 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 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 higher in the Region, we cannot say the Kel Adagh were hit the hardest by the tax increase.

The Cercle Kidal ranks third in the classification of possible tax revenues. Stockbreeders in Gourma Rharous and Menaka 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 Menaka was not much lower than in Kidal in the first place. Despite being hit less hard than Kidal, the Cercle Ansongo still shows a dramatically higher amount of cattle tax to be paid than the last five Cercles – Bourem, Diré, Goundam, Gao and Timbuktu. Yet, the Kel Tamasheq and other stockbreeders in these three hard hit Cercles – Ansongo, Rharous and Menaka – did not rise in revolt.

Second, the total amount of cattle in all of the north amounted to 513,748 heads. The total amount of cattle in all of Mali advanced by Cissé was 4,200,000.¹⁵⁵ Hence, only twelve percent of all cattle could be found in the North. The vast majority of Malian cattle herds could be found in the Mopti Region. 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 civil duty and loyalty to the tax-imposing state.


¹⁵⁵ Cissé (1964), op. cit.
The third and perhaps strongest argument against tax increase being the main incentive for revolt in the Adagh can be found in a Tamasheq poem –

‘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’.\textsuperscript{156}

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 Mali 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 Kidal Cercle for the running fiscal year, with regional and national taxes for the fiscal years 1966 and 1965 still not fully collected.\textsuperscript{157} Ifoghas paid no tax.

\textsuperscript{156} Nicolaisen & Nicolaisen, (1997), op. cit., 581.

\textsuperscript{157} Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1967; Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois d’avril 1967; and Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de mai 1967. ACK.
### Table 1: cattle tax in French Sudan and Mali 1955-1963 in FM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>cattle</th>
<th>asses</th>
<th>horses</th>
<th>camels</th>
<th>sheep/goat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-1962</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### Table 2: Numbers of livestock & budgeted cattle tax revenues per Cercle. **Région Gao 1963**

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

Source: Région de Gao, Budget regional 1963, taxe sur le bétail. ACK.
### Table 3: Regional head tax. Région Gao 1963

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

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 4: Average number of heads of livestock per taxable head of population and average amount of cattle tax to be paid sum total in Gao Région 1963.

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

Based on: Tables 2 and 3
Idle nomads

In livestock production, like 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 Tamashq and Moors were seen as essentially idle and anarchist. The idea of the idle nomad is older than the Bible. Ancient Babylonian texts already convey the notion that the nomads surrounding the kingdom were lazy, anarchist and dangerous.158 The idea of the lazy and anarchist nomad was reinvigorated in colonial times by both administrators and scientists alike.159 In their turn, scientific and colonial ideas about contemplative pastoralism and nomad anarchy informed the Keita regime’s policy in the north.

Most 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. ‘Cattle are their dearest possession and they gladly risk their lives to defend their herds or to pillage those of their neighbours’.160

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.161 That these ideas are basically false and the described attitudes non-existent does not make this perception less vivid.162

Beside this laissez faire attitude in stock-breeding itself, nomads are often accused of having a laissez faire attitude in general. The nomad is

158 On nomad - sedentary relations in the ancient Middle East, see Klengel, H., Zwischen Zeit und Palast: die Begegnung von Nomaden und Sesshaftem im alten Vorderasien (Leipzig 1972).


161 The fact that in many African societies cattle form the main investment for sedentary farmers, to the point of becoming nomads, is overlooked. Haaland, G., ‘Economic determinants in ethnic processes’, Barth, F. (ed.), Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture difference (Oslo 1969), 58-73.

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’. The idea that ‘free 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.

**Nomad anarchy**

Besides as being lazy, nomads are perceived as being anarchist. 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.

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, the freedom of the individual is bound by hierarchy. 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 nomadism 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 nomadic existence that is disturbing for the sedentary mind. In sedentary societies social order is created through the appropriation of space. In village-based Mande

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163 Evans-Pritchard (1940), op. cit., 16.


society, social relations are regulated on the structure of the village. Social positions are reflected in spatial organisation, age and land tenure, which on their turn are reflected in the local tale of origin, and the local version of the Sunjata epic. 166 ‘Who you are’ is partly defined by ‘where you are’ and ‘whose land you are on’.

This does not hold for nomadic societies. Tamashq society knows but one ‘owner of the land’, the amenokal, and his tenure is as symbolic as his estate is enormous. 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. Tamashq 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 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 ‘who you are related to’.

This fundamental difference in spatiality might well explain why sedentary governments (and there exist 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.

**Sedentarisation policies**

Since the Keita regime based its financial investments in the industrial sector on increasing revenues in the primary sector, a growth in cattle exports had to be achieved. This growth, so the USRDA economy planners thought, would come only through a change in the mentality of the population. In the case of the nomads, not only their mentality had to change, but their whole way of life needed to be transformed. 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, existent 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

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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, cumulating 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 Bouressa, where the wadi Telabit and the proximity of the Tigharghar mountains with their more permanent water sources made sedentary life less hazardous. The most western Arrondissement of Tin-Essako was rightly seen as totally unsuitable for sedentary life, since the Tamesna plain has no permanent or even temporary water sources. Even if some Kel Adag settled in villages, this was only on a temporary basis. To the annoyance of the administration, nomads would settle in the village during the dry season, cultivating small gardens, only to leave again after the rainy season had started. As Commandant du 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." 165

Nevertheless, some nomads settled for at least part of the year. Places like Aguelhoc, Bouressa, 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 Aguelhoc counted 122 inhabitants. 166 Kidal town grew from 460 inhabitants in 1960 to 1,945 inhabitants in 1967. 167 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, in the seven existing Arrondissements, there lived a total of 15,489 people, of which 3,544 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 Adag were the gourmiers 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

167 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois d’août 1967. ACK.

168 Arrondissement d’Aguelhoc, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de mai 1967. ACK.

169 Rapport du Commandant du Cercle de Kidal sur le problème d’eau face à la sédentarisation dans l’Adrar, 02/06/1967. ACK.
origins. In Tessalit there lived 808 town dwellers, of which the majority is likely to have been of Algerian origins.  

Other indications of the partial and forced sedentarisation of nomads are found in both administrative reports and the collective memory of the Kel Adagh – the practice of ‘human investment’, or *fasobara* as it was called in Bambara, and the creation of the Service Civique – a para-military force of agricultural labourers, recruited parallel to the army.  

Since the Malian Government lacked resources to develop the country, it tried to cut labour costs in the construction of new buildings by demanding the population to work with ‘national fervour’ on construction sites in their spare time. Much attention was given to these ‘chantiers d’honneur’ in the media and in administrative reports, since they were not only meant to create new buildings, but also to install a sense of civil duty in the Malian population. From these sources one gets the impression that nearly every administrative building in the Kidal area built after independence has been built through *fasobara*. The ‘human investments’ already caused much resentment during the Keita regime, and have left bitter memories. To many Malians, the practice of *fasobara* resembled too closely the much hated forced labour under French rule, despite this being denied by the Keita regime.  

The Service Civique, organised into brigades, has very likely been installed in the Adagh as well on a small scale (*infra*). Many Malians closely associated the Service Civique with the so-called deuxième portion under French rule – a means to tap the labour forces of youths who were not conscripted for military service. The deuxième portion remained existent until 1950, four years after the abolition of forced labour in AOF.  

However, to the Kel Adagh and the other Kel Tamasheq, both the practice of forced labour and the deuxième portion had been unknown since they had been exempted from forced labour and military recruitment of any kind in colonial times. To them, *fasobara* and the Service Civique were entirely new state demands which they were reluctant to fulfill. What made things worse from a Tamasheq perspective, was that the regime forced women to work on the sites as well. In traditional Tamasheq culture, women of free descent do not work. Women are only responsible for putting up the tents (which are theirs) and cooking. Labour is provided by the house slaves. If they are absent, men and boys fetch firewood and

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170 Répertoire des villages 1974, Région de Gao. ACK.  
172 For Malian feelings about *fasobara* during the Keita regime, see Hopkins, N., *Popular government in an African town, Kita, Mali* (Chicago 1972), 160-63. For the official point of view, see Koury (1964), op. cit., 68-69.  
water, tasks that in a Mande household would be women’s labour. This was much to the contempt of Southern administrators.

‘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 nomad man.’ 174

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 III), concentrating the civil population – especially the women – in urban centres. This is still remembered 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’. 175

The fact that women were forced to work was not the only source of resentment. What men held especially against the human investments, was the idea to work under the supervision of people they regarded as mere slaves –

‘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’. 176

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 centre town Kidal – a large, walled, leveled terrain with a terrace, a basketball field and soccer posts, has been constructed in this way as well. Ironically and perhaps to erase the bad memory, construction of this much used public space is now attributed to... the Kel Adagh’s own ‘colonial darling’, Jean Clauzel.

174 Rapport de synthèse de fin d’année 1972 de l’Adjudant Mamadou Traoré, Chef d’Arrondissement de Tin-Essako no 007\SC\A.TKO. ACK.
175 Conversation with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.
176 Message RAC 11/01/1962. ACK.
Horticulture

What were settled nomads supposed to live from? The vegetables and potatoes they were supposed to grow in horticultural schemes.

In September 1958 a Sudanese delegation headed by Modibo Keita payed a ten day visit to Israel on the invitation of President Golda Meir.\(^{177}\) The delegation visited the Kibutzes in the desert, which would make a lasting impression. In those days the miracle of the Israeli socialist democracy and its accomplishments in desert farming served as an example to many and 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 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 Adagh and Azawad areas. At present a small number of shrub-like orange trees in Menaka 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, Tessait and Aguelhoc, each consisting of twelve people. These brigades were very likely to have been a variety of the Service Civique mentioned above.\(^{178}\) 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 (infra). The brigades were responsible for most of the agricultural production in the Adagh in the last years of the Keita regime.

Besides these brigades, collective gardens were created at each school, at army bases, in each village and for some fractions. Special gardens were created for women’s groups.\(^{179}\) Dates, potatoes, wheat, maize, tomatoes and tobacco were planted, and sometimes harvested. At the local economic conference of Gao in 1965 Commandant du Cercle Diarra outlined a bright and optimistic picture of horticultural results in the Adagh.

\(^{177}\) Affaires politiques, Soudan, Administration générale: évolution politique (rapports, télégrammes officielles, presse) 1958-1959. ANSOM - 1afpol/2188/3.

\(^{178}\) Ag Mohamed, A., *Les possibilités agricoles dans le cercle de Kidal* (Bamako ENSUP 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*.

\(^{179}\) Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 16-18.
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'.

This presentation of horticultural results by the new regime in the Adagh is likely to have been exaggerated and over optimistic. 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 practised since the foundation of these towns. In the case of Tessait and Kidal, date palm groves and tobacco gardens had been erected and owned by Moors well before colonial conquest. 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 du Cercle Clauzel in the early 1950s had all failed miserably due to lack of local interest. 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. In this way, the former idle wandering nomads could be transformed into Malians.

But growing vegetables and eating them are two different matters. Thus, the administration was not only concerned with the horticultural endeavours of the sedentarised nomads, but also with their consumption of their own products.

'During this month [February 1967] the consumption of vegetables has increased considerably, as well as the consumption of potatoes, which

180 Typescript of speech by Commandant du Cercle Diarra at the 7ème conférence régionale, Gao 22 au 24 août 1966. (n.d.) ACK.

181 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, Mission du transsaharien - Notice sur le Sahara soudanais, Rapport géologique et hydrologique (Paris 1925), 10. According to Ag Mohamed, agriculture was stamped out by the colonial administration, which was afraid the nomads would settle. Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 16.

shows an unprecedented engagement in agriculture of all social classes in the Cercle'.

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. This policy seems to have borne 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 Diarra as ‘the Adagh’s most revolutionary act’. 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 in riverain Bourem. At the regional conference in August 1966, Commandant du Cercle Muphtah ag Hairy from Bourem outlines the following situation for his Cercle –

‘We heed ourselves here 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 cooperations 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 important operations’.

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

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183 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1967. ACK.
185 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1967. ACK.
186 Rapport du Cercle de Bourem, présenté à la 7ème conférence régionale, Gao 22 au 24 août 1966. ACK.
practised horticulture in the Cercle. This number probably consisted mostly of administrative and military staff.\textsuperscript{187}

After the fall of the Keita regime, the Traoré regime quickly decided to stop all efforts in forced sedentarisation and agriculture in the Sahara.\textsuperscript{188} 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.\textsuperscript{189}

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 forced them to settle down in the provisional refugee camps. Some of them probably remembered the days in which sedentarised nomads were helped by the administration to grow vegetables, which they could sell to stay alive. Cynically enough, demands made in the 1970's by some spokesmen of the community to be equipped with farming material, were not at all heeded.\textsuperscript{190}

**Feudalism, the chiefs’ question**

Before independence, the oppressors of the masses were, of course, the French colonialists, but they were backed by the traditional chiefs, who were integrated in the colonial system. Therefore, in order to ensure the successful emancipation of the people, the chiefs had to be eliminated. This administrative and political elimination of the chiefs could start the moment the USRDA 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.\textsuperscript{191} However, the nomadic tribes and their chiefs had been maintained. At that moment, dissolving the power of the Tamacheq chiefs was thought to be unwise, since they still effectively controlled a population hostile to incorporation in the Malian state, just as these chiefs themselves were partly hostile to that same state.

Officially, the tribes were dissolved as an administrative entity in 1960. Their place in local society and administration was taken over by the fraction.\textsuperscript{192} What happened was that former tribes were now referred to as fractions, and fractions were officially referred to as ‘sub fractions’ (*sous*...)}

\textsuperscript{187} Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 17.


\textsuperscript{189} Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 19.

\textsuperscript{190} Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 28-29.

\textsuperscript{191} Ernst (1976), op. cit., 93.

\textsuperscript{192} This is based on the knowledge that the Mali administration wanted to abolish the tribes, and a document stating the abolishment of the tribe Taghat Melle by decree no 537/DI-2 of 10 August 1960, dated 07/03/1962, signed by the Governor of Gao. ACK.
fractions). Unofficially however, the tribes, the fractions and their chiefs were still used by local administrators.

The fraction chiefs were now directly appointed by the Commandant du Cercle. The tasks of the fraction chief were largely extended, surpassing even the tasks the tribal chief 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 and the protection of crops and herds, and the administration of his fraction.

However, the fraction chiefs were also seen as feudal oppressors. Their power could be checked or undercut by the fraction councils (conseil de fraction), who were elected by the fraction members. These fraction councils were already inaugurated in 1957 and legally installed in 1959. 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 cooperations and the rural brigades would remain dead letters of modern economics in nomad territory.

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. 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 Interior Minister 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

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


population get the impression that these traditional ranks are tolerated against their interests.\textsuperscript{196}

In the field, this double attitude was just as visible. On one hand, local administrators in the Cercle Kidal were (or pretended to be) convinced of USRDA-cum-Marxist doctrines prescribing the abolition of social inequality, and hence of the chiefs. On the other hand, those administrators knew perfectly well that they needed the chiefs to access the people. Despite the increase in staff since colonial times, the administration was still too short-handed to effectively control the North. The chiefs were a welcome extra manpower who knew the population and the area, which the Southern administrators 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.

From the scarce material available on the subject, it seems the administration resorted to the simple tactic of not officially replacing deceased tribal chiefs. Thus when Attaher ag Illi, amenokal of the Adagh died in 1962, he was not officially replaced by either of his sons as amenokal of the Adagh. Informally however, Attaher was replaced by his son Intalla. Whereas his father held an official and classified rank with according remuneration in the colonial administration, Intalla only held an informal position as figurehead and representative between the masses and the administration.\textsuperscript{197}

In 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 service during the rebellion were reinstalled.

'In fact, these auxiliaries of the administration were put aside and therefore provoked difficulties in the execution of administrative orders amongst 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'.\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{196} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{197} Attaher ag Illi was the highest ranking and best payed traditional chief in Northern Mali after Kounta cheick Badi ould Hammoudi. Cheffere, Correspondence et Divers : 1918-1961. ANM FR 2E-258.

\textsuperscript{198} Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de janvier 1965. ACK.
In January 1967, Commandant Diarra went even further, proposing to the Gouverneur in Gao, "... considering the services rendered by INTALLA, and those which we still might expect him to render, it is recommendable to install him 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."  

Diarra’s proposal was blocked by Interior Minister Madeira Keita. Nevertheless, not having an official position as tribal chief, Intalla was referred to as such by the administration and was financially rewarded for his activities. In November 1967, Commandant du Cercle Diarra proposed to recompense Intalla, '[...] who is the sole [chief] to render some service, by according him, with retrospective effect from 1 January 1967, a monthly recompensation of ten thousand francs, that, without officialising him as a tribal chief, will encourage him to serve with relative loyalty'. The ten thousand francs proposed as recompensation was the same amount of money Intalla had earned as assistant tribal chief to his father in colonial times.

Chiefs who did not collaborate faced a totally different fate. At the same time Diarra proposed to recompense Intalla for his services, three other chiefs were hit hard for not collaborating. In February 1967, Hamzata ag Alkassem of the Kel Telabit, Ebeug ag Elmouack of the Taghat Meliet 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 and Bégui ag Rabidine of the Iforgoumoussen and Ibotenaten, dwelling in the Cercle Menaka at that moment but also resisting the education of girls, escaped with most of their tribes to Algeria before any measures could be taken against them. 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.

**Feudalism, the bellah question revisited**

Having defined and eliminated the chiefs as the ‘upper-class oppressors’, now the most oppressed of all Malian social strata, the slaves, were to be emancipated as quickly as possible. In the early 1960s, slavery was still believed to exist in Mali despite the USRDA’s campaigns over the bellah question in the 1950s. One of the major objectives of the

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199 Commandant du Cercle de Kidal à Gouverneur de Gao. Kidal, 06/01/1967. ACK.


201 Extrait de la revue mensuelle du mois de mars 1967 de l’Arrondissement nomade Tidarmene, Cercle Menaka. ACK.

202 Commandant du Cercle de Kidal à Gouverneur de Gao. Kidal, 15/12/1967. ACK.
Government in the North was to end this state of affairs. But as has been observed above, slavery did not so much exist legally, as it did psychologically and socially. Former slaves who had wished 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 played a bigger role both for the colonial administration and the USRDA. However, the same can not 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. In 1962 the Governor of Gao, writing to Commandant du Cercle Kidal Mohamed Najim, 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 for 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 ATTHER. A political education is needed, since it is necessary that, at the end of the day, the population itself understands the necessity to liberate 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 to emancipate the bellah should not form an occasion for them to manifest their discontent beyond reason'.

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 mentioned above, or through appointing allotments in Kidal to the few slaves who settled in the town. A second measure was the creation of bellah fractions. But even this process was slow. The evidence on the creation of special bellah fractions is scarce, but this does not mean they were not created. The first mention of the creation of a bellah fraction in the Kidal area by the Malian Government dates from 1966. The procedure was invested with some ceremony by Commandant du Cercle Diarra who 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

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204 Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal. Gao, 02/06/1962. ACK.
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. 205

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.206

In addition to the measures mentioned above, 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 conscient 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 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 on 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.’207

Clearly, the Malian regime did its utmost to civilise the ‘barbarian nomads’, but with how much success and just how much they felt they belonged to a nation will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

On 22 September 1960, the Malian Republic embarked on its course of material and mental decolonisation and development through socialist

205 Notes of speech written by Commandant du Cercle de Kidal. Kidal, 07/05/1966. ACK.
207 Arrondissement d’Aguehoc, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois d’août 1964. ACK.
revolution. To do so, a Malian state and nation had to be constructed and imagined.

Most contemporary outside observers of the new regime and its efforts in nation-building were at least mildly critical of its programme and assumptions in effecting it. The most often ventured critique is that the regime was too idealistic in its view of village life and the increase in production possible after modernisation of village structures on a socialist basis.206

In its attempts to modernise the country and its societies, in the creation of the Malian nation, the new regime perhaps overstressed politics, as Snyder 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’.209 In the same vein, I have argued that politics and state control during the Keita regime held pre-eminence over economic development. In control and in policy, the creation of patriotism and thus a Malian nation were pre-eminent.

As a basis to imagine a Malian nation, the regime used the rich history of the area they controlled, naming the country after one of Africa’s most important medieval empires and presenting itself, if not as a direct continuation of this empire, then at least as its rightful heir. Other elements used were cultural, taken from the heartland of the new state, the Mande and Bambara areas, such as the tonw or young men’s associations, or the folk music and dances performed by the troupe Aristikies. These, together with a positive stereotyped image of the Mande as a people, were used to bolster economic growth through ‘mental decolonisation’. The consequence was that the nation was not just imagined as Malian, but even more specifically, as Mande. But the Malian leaders’ wish for state control and their image of the nation along Mande lines proved incompatible with these same leaders’ ideas about and images of potential members of that nation – the Kel Tamasheq.

In the second part of this chapter, I have explored the incompatibilities between the new regime and Tamasheq society between 1960 and 1968, focussing mainly on Adagh society with some reference to the Niger Bend. If mutual understanding and cooperation between government and society in Mali’s sedentary South were at a low, they were simply non-existent in the nomadic North. Policies in the North were primarily based on the positive stereotyped image of the Mande as the Malian nation, and the negative stereotyped images of the Kel Tamasheq as a ‘savage other’ in need of social and economic development. This stereotyped image was based on what was perceived as structural social inequality, ‘feudalism’, an irrational pastoral mode of production, a lack of patriotism and nomadic existence itself.

209 Jones (1972), op. cit., 32.
The administration set out to forcibly alter Tamashq society. On the economic and material level it tried to do so through attempts to control cattle exports, and through sedentarisation and horticultural programmes. With regard to attempts to alter Tamashq social structure, it can be concluded that the Malian regime wavered in its policies and attitudes towards its main subjects of policy – the tribal chiefs and the former slaves. Despite all rhetoric, in practice nothing much was or could be done either against the chiefs or in favour of the former slaves. Although evidence is scant, it can be concluded that these policies all failed miserably from the point of view of the regime.

The USRDA leaders envisioned Mali’s future in the best traditions of ‘high modernist’ ideology, which James Scott has defined 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’.\(^{210}\) When combined with three other conditions, a good and thorough administration of nature and society, an authoritarian state willing and able to use all its coercive power to realise its high modern plans, and a weak civil society, high modernist ideology could lead to enormous tragedies in state-initiated social engineering. As an illustration, Scott put forward the Tanzanian Ujamaa revolution under Nyerere. It seems that Scott’s model and predictions are entirely fitting in the case of Mali, as they fitted most African postcolonies.

Although Modibo Keita’s Mali cannot be compared to Nyerere’s Ujamaa in scale, it could certainly be compared in intention. Modibo Keita’s first five year plan would propel Mali forward in the world, perhaps not with a great leap, but at least with a firm step. 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.

Even the rebellion in the Adagh in 1963 can be seen as proof of Scott’s ideas. Conditions one to three for a socially engineered disaster were present in Keita’s Adagh, but condition number four – a prostrate and weak civil society was not. Scott, rightly and rather evidently predicts that when a state has a high modern ideal and is willing to use brute force to put it into effect, these plans might be frustrated by a strong civil society with its own agenda, practices and vested interests. This was undoubtedly the case in the Adagh prior to the 1963 rebellion.

It was only after the rebellion, when the resistance of civil society was broken, that the Keita regime could fully deploy its high modern ideals. Scott remarks 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’. This was the case in the Adagh where Commandant du Cercle Diby Sillas Diarra and his men were determined to create a model Malian society from the once unruly and anarchist Kel Adagh. Of course, his policies failed, but high modernism is first and foremost an ideology, ‘a faith that borrowed the legitimacy of science and technology’ as Scott put it. It was rhetoric and not action, and in these respects, Diarra and his men excelled. As we shall see in later chapters, USRDA rhetoric on modernity and even on the backwardness of Tamasheq society would make an impact on Tamasheq society itself.

211 Ibidem.
212 Ibidem.
III

Fear and loathing in Kidal
State-society relations in the Adagh and elsewhere
(1960-1962)

Introduction

Having generally discussed the relations between the state and the Kel Tamasheq during the whole Keita period in Chapter II, I will now concentrate in this Chapter on relations between state and Kel Adagh society between 1960 and 1963. These were crucial years in a crucial area of the new state. With the coming of independent socialist Mali, relations between the state and the Kel Adagh changed dramatically. This change was one of the main causes of the 1963 revolt. In turn, this revolt dominated relations between state and society in the Adagh, and possibly the wider Tamasheq world in Mali, until the outbreak of the 1990 rebellion.

It has been argued by Pierre Boilley and some Tamasheq politicians that the Kel Adagh did not know or understand what independence would mean and what Mali was. Pierre Boilley argues 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 what sort of situation these elections would lead.\(^\text{213}\) 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. The author explicitly states that the Kel Tamasheq did not know independence would come. ‘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 ignored, to hear the word ‘independence’ pronounced.’\(^\text{214}\)

I will argue that this argument does not hold true when examined in detail. Not only the Kel Adagh elite, but also the average Kel Adagh knew that independence was imminent and that Mali was the incarnation of this independence. However, they hotly debated whether or not they wanted to be part of this new state and if so, under what conditions. This debate within Kel Adagh society went on even after the establishment of the Malian state, the outcome of which will be described in chapter IV.

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

\(^{213}\) Boilley (1999), 283-84.

as a people under the sway of French neo-colonialism, unhappy with their inclusion in the Malian state, and therefore liable to rebel. In addition to the stereotypes of the Kel Tamasheq already examined in the previous chapters, we will here look at yet another important stereotype – that of the Kel Tamasheq as fierce and fearless warriors. 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.

The political situation in the Adagh was further complicated by the more general national and international setting. Nationally, I will argue, the new regime was not sure of its total command of the newly independent country. It 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. A second complicating factor was the presence of the Algerian Liberation Army – FLN – in the Adagh.

In the first part of this chapter, the national and international setting for state - Kel Adagh relations will be outlined. In the second part of this chapter, these relations will be presented and analysed within the context of the rebellion that was brewing.

The setting

The troubled relations between the Kel Adagh and the Malian Government between 1960 and 1962 cannot be seen without looking at both the national and international context in which they were set and in which they were totally entangled. I will briefly sketch both before I bring up the subject of state - Kel Adagh relations.

Resistance and control, the Keita regime and Malian society

As I have argued in chapter II, in 1960 the Malian national idea still had to be created, but not only the nation lacked substance. In part, the state had to be created too. In 1960 Mali, there was almost no infrastructure. The tarmac road nowadays connecting Bamako to Gao did not exist. Overland from Bamako it took about a week to arrive in Kidal. Electricity, telephone, transport, all means a modern government relies on to perform its functions were desperately lacking in all outer parts of Mali. Reading the official newspaper /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.

Naturally, this did not enhance the state’s capacity to control the country, and control is what it wanted. Ironically, the solution to the problem of communication and government of the remote areas was found
in allowing local governors and administrators a measure of freedom 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’. 215

The leaders of the regime were quick to realise that several interest groups in the country could still effectively oppose their policies and that even parts of the population were not necessarily happy with the state-of-affairs. Two events in 1962 brought home to the regime that they did not fully control the country – the Dioula riots of July and the exodus of the Dogon and Kel Tamashque to Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) in November.

Despite its dissolution after the 1959 elections, support for the PSP was still strong in Mali and not all of its party structures had dissolved. 216 The merchants, or Dioulas as they are locally called, who had been active USRDA supporters in the 1950s, spreading the message of the USRDA in the countryside, were highly suspicious of the USRDA’s projects for a state-planned and controlled economy. In time, the party dismissed them as petty bourgeois allies who were no longer functional or needed. But their informal network of information, support and export trade would be hard to break.

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 of national sovereignty’. 217 Secondly, the new currency served to control private imports and exports from and to neighbouring countries, and thus against Dioula livelihood.

On 20 July 1962, a protest was organised by the Dioula community in Bamako. Slogans such as ‘long live France’, ‘down with the Malian Franc’ and ‘down with Mali and its government of infidels’ were apparently shouted. 218 A large number of the protesters were arrested. They were not the only ones. Fily Dabo Sissoko and Mamadoun Dicko, the former leaders

216 For PSP support and its remaining structures after 1960, see Hopkins (1972), op. cit.
of the PSP, who had not joined the rally, were arrested as well. On 24 September a ‘popular trial’ commenced against the protesters. They 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 officials like Max Lejeune and Marius Moutet, an indication of French support for an antinational conspiracy to topple the Keita Government, plotted by Sissoko.219

The tribunal announced its verdict on 1 October 1962. Seventy-seven merchants received sentences ranging between one year imprisonment to twenty years of forced labour in Kidal prison. The main defendants, Fily Dabo Sissoko, Mamadoun Dicko and Kassoum Touré (the organiser of the rally) received death sentences. Modibo Keita changed the verdict to life sentences of forced labour in the Kidal area.220 Clearly, the Keita regime wanted to eliminate two adversaries at once – the merchants and the former PSP leaders – who could still pose a political threat to the young regime.

Resistance against the regime was not over. 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 USRDA. At first, the regime reacted calmly. Modibo Keita, Minister of Finance Attaher Maiga, and 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 responded by sending two motorised commando units, one to Hombori and Gossi and one to Douentza, to prevent the flight of the population. Although hampered by logistical and equipment difficulties, through intimidating actions, such as test-firing weapons in certain Dogon villages the army was able to at least partly stop the exodus. At least one serious clash resulted in a significant loss of lives, when people from the Bandiagara region heading for the border were blocked by government agents. An estimated fifty civilians died in this clash. After the events at Hombori and Gao, Modibo Keita ordered certain villages to be razed and the ringleaders to be imprisoned in Kidal or Menaka.221

Although probably the largest forms of organised protest before the 1963 rebellion in the Adagh, these were not the only forms of resistance against the Keita regime. More passive forms such as non-payment of tax, non-adherence to the USRDA, disregard for communal fields and


220 /Essor, 02-10-1962.

221 The ‘Dogon rebellion’ was first brought to my attention by Dr. Ali Ongoiba, director of the ANM. My search for information on this totally unknown event has been unfruitful, since possible informants denied its existence. Further research in this matter is highly recommended. I am greatly indebted to Gregory Mann for communicating me the information above, which he found during research at the SHAT archives. The material can be found in dossier SHAT - 107701 (various documents), which is still under embargo.
disobedience to government instructions where commonplace. 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 city-dwellers with no small amount of contempt for the ‘villagers’. The elite was determined to ‘develop’ the population, even against its own will, but it was well aware of the possible resistance and took no half-measures against them.

However, one could develop the paradoxical argument that the USRDA needed resistance in order to overcome it and consolidate the Malian nation and its control over it. From their perspective, the history, ideology and organisation of the USRDA meant that it needed enemies both outside and inside the country. In colonial times, the USRDA had two main adversaries – colonialism and the PSP. It had defeated both by consolidating its unity and following rigorous party discipline. 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.

### International complications, the French and the FLN

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 – the organisation for Saharan development so much resented and feared by Malian politicians – which resulted 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 Tamashq 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 Istiqlāl had not given up its idea to unite Mauritania with Morocco. French camel-mounted troops patrolled the country to prevent renewed Moroccan invasions similar to those of 1957 and 1958. The reality of this threat was proved by various smaller attacks against Mauritanian

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223 Snyder (1965), op. cit.
officials throughout 1960 and 1961. French troops were also employed against smaller pro-Moroccan uprisings within Mauritania during those years in the Hodh and the former French Sudanese Cercle Nema (see chapter I).224

In Algeria the war of independence had still not reached the Tamashque south, despite efforts made to include the Kel Hoggar and the Kel Ajjer in the ranks of the FLN.225 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 test force started in 1957 with the construction of nuclear test bases in the Hoggar at In-Ekker, Reggane and Takormiasse. These bases were constructed mostly by locally recruited workers, since Northern 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.226 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 Musulmans, had been transferred to the Algerian South.227 Claizel, one of the longest serving French Commandants of the Adagh now served in Tamanrasset, where he would stay until Algerian independence. The presence of Claizel and other former colonial officers who had served in French Sudan seems to have inspired distrust of French intentions in the Malian administration up North (infra). Would they stay in Algeria, uninterested in the Malian North, or would they take the occasion to spark unrest and rekindle the OCRS fire within the Adagh?

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 in the Adagh near Tessalit. At its height between 1957 and 1960, it lodged about 150 air force men.228 After independence in 1960, the base remained in French hands, like three other military bases did, until the summer of 1961. From February 1961 onwards, an FLN training camp was installed next to this French air base.

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226 Tschumi, J., Le bureau de main d’œuvre d’Adrar (Sahara) (Paris CHEAM no. 3937 n.d.). The first base was built at Reggane in 1957, were above ground test explosions were carried out in 1960. The second base was constructed at In-Ekker, were below ground test explosions took place. The third base was built at Takormiasse.

227 From 1958 onwards, Marcel Cardaire, former head of the Administration des Affaires Musulmans in Soudan français, was stationed in Southern Algeria, Annexe du Tidikelt Hoggar, until unknown date. Affaires politiques, Mauritanie, administration générale 1958. ANSOM - 1afpol/2172/S. Under embargo.

228 Rapports des tournées dans le Cercle de Kidal. ANM - FN 1E-1227.
The USRDA 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. The names of the FLN commanders in the Adagh are still known to many Kel Adagh, especially since they were no small names. The current Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika was based in Mali, and so was Franz Fanon who was responsible for contact between the FLN and the Malian Government.

The FLN members in Mali were furnished with Malian passports and presented themselves locally as merchants of the Algerian Touaï. 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 themselves.

The French occupants of the Tessalit air base knew of the existence of their FLN neighbours. 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. This is what the local administrators seem to have feared the most - the active meddling of the French army in Northern Mali through the local population. The Kel Adagh also knew about FLN presence in the Adagh as they had been contacted by their representatives (notably Franz Fanon) and they tried to exploit these contacts, as we shall see below. A nerve-racking situation indeed for a young government anxious to control all of its population and fearing it might not be able to do so.

**Fear and loathing in Kidal**

**The Keita regime and the Kel Adagh (1960-1962)**

The Keita administration was well aware of the precariousness of its relations with the Kel Adagh and its negative image in the area. Its actions in the area were intended not to disturb the peace and to create a more

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229 The following is based on: 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.
positive image of itself. The tribal chiefs were maintained in place, so as not to upset relations (see chapter II). Local administrators were partly recruited among the Kel Tamasheq and the Moors. These local commanders actively sought to inspire confidence in the population. Politically loaded issues, such as the emancipation of former slaves were handled with care.

**Rapprochement and estrangement, the administrators**

The top ranking civil and military commanders to serve in the Adagh were chosen from what came closest to the local population. The *Commandant du Cercle* Kidal, Mohamed Najim, was half Moor, half Tamasheq. The *Chef de Poste* Tessalit, Mohamed Mahmoud, was a Moor. The commander of the Kidal *goum* Mohamed Belkacem was a Kel Adagh. The commander of the main army platoon in the area, the *Groupement Nomade du Timimine* (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 partly the same way the French had done. On each patrol they made, they took with them such luxury items like medicines, tea and sugar to distribute as presents in the visited camps. Another way to gain popularity was the elimination of predatory animals which 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, 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 strategy to place members of the local educated administrative elite in command was not followed throughout all Tamasheq areas, to the discontent of those excluded. Particularly the educated and politically active Kel Intessar resented not being placed in functions of responsibility. In August 1961, Zeini ag Hamouta, a Kel Intessar school teacher in Timbuktu wrote a letter to Interior Minister 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.\footnote{230}

In November that year, Zeïni’s protest was joined by Mohamed Ayoul ag Mohamed, a Kel Intessar of the Kel Doukouray fraction, 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 let 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 agreement on good terms. We inform you that for our brothers, the Malians, that is to say – our Sudanese commanders, we are always ready to obey their orders and we are willing and ready too, for all that Mali needs. [...] We see they [the commanders] 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 commanders [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 commander [chef]. Our Sudanese 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 they 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. Neither do we want our country to be like the Congo or like the disagreement between the Algerians and the French.\footnote{231}

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

\footnote{230} 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.

\footnote{231} Lettre de Mohamed Ayoul ag Mohamed, Fraction Kel Kaoukorai, Tribu Kel Intessar, à Monsieur le Président et Secrétaire Général de la République du Mali. Niafunké, 26/11/1961. ACK.
with the disappearance of patronage. Well, the acts of our sedentary brothers in the Niger Bend towards the nomads are in many respects not interesting. The nomads do not participate in the politics of their subsections. 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 manifested daily.\textsuperscript{232}

The letters and their authors received ample attention from their respondents who sent copies of them 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 on their part.’\textsuperscript{233}

If it wanted to integrate the French-educated Kel Tamasherq, the Malian Government had no other option than to recruit Kel Intessar. They were the only Kel Tamasherq tribe with a substantive number of French-educated members, thanks to the efforts made in this respect by their former amenokal Mohamed Ali ag Ataheer Insar. But Mohamed Ali was suspected of anti-Malian sentiments. From his place of exile in Morocco he had furthered the cause of a Tamasherq state, or inclusion of Tamasherq country in the Maghreb states. Besides, Mohamed Ali and most Kel Intessar, like most other Kel Tamasherq, had supported the PSP in colonial times. They had only rallied to the USRDA in a rather late phase of decolonisation. 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 their amenokal Mohamed Elmehd – Mohamed Ali’s younger brother – was integrated in the USRDA, Malian leaders felt that Kel Intessar could not be trusted. Writing about Mohamed Najim’s functioning in Kidal in July 1960, future Governor Bakary Diallo neatly reveals the administration’s attitude to the incorporated Kel Tamasherq administrators –

‘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 mind [à psychologie Berbère] 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

\textsuperscript{232} Lettre (anonymous Kel Intessar) à Secrétaire Général de la Jeunesse et du Sport. Tombouctou, 28/11/1961. ACK.

\textsuperscript{233} Ministre de l’Administration Territoriale Madeira Keita à Gouverneur de Gao et aux Commandants des Cercles Gao, Ansongo, Bourem, Kidal, Menaka, Tombouctou, Gourma-Rharous, Goundam, Diré. No2/MIITCA, 05/12/1961. ACK.
African officer, capable of accomplishing the administrative and political tasks needed in this nerve-racking region of our state.\textsuperscript{234}

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. First of all, 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 ‘Sudanese 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. Zeini and the third unknown writer (perhaps the very same Zeini?) present things even more bluntly – the sedentary/black politicians and commanders in Tamasheq country are ‘racist usurpers’ and so are other Malian politicians who block the Kel Tamasheq intellectuals access to politics and administration.

Second, to some extent the petitioners place themselves outside Mali. They speak of exclusion by the state and oppression by ‘Sudanese’ administrators and politicians – ‘regional congresses work under boycott’. They have no access to state functions and politics – there are no nomad delegates, no Ministers, no ambassadors. Access to the Malian nation-state has been denied. This implicit positioning outside Mali 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 Sudanese commanders’. The Sudanese [black] commanders are Malians since they represent the state instead of the excluded Kel Intessar, and the state is what Mali is to him.

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 Najim is a good administrator, he should be replaced by an African. Diallo’s opinion that Najim is not an African tallies with contemporary ideas on the extra-continental origins of ‘white Africans’ such as Arabs and Berbers, and thus their implicit ‘otherness’. The Kel Tamasheq have a different, Berber mind. They are unintelligent but cunning and anarchist – ‘illegality and

\textsuperscript{234} Commandant du Cercle Gao, Rapport de la tournée effectué du 4 au 10 Juillet 1960 dans la Subdivision de Kidal. ANM - FR-1E-24. Then Commandant du 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 Gao, the Subdivision Kidal became Cercle Kidal and the Postes became Arrondissements.
irregularity’ – and one needs someone to know this mind in order to control them. The accusation by the Kel Intessar that the Sudanese do not know their character is here fully acknowledged, but in reverse mode. Whereas Mohamed Ayoul judges the Sudanese commanders to have no shame or honour like the Kel Intessar have, Diallo judges the Kel Tamasheq to be simply stupid and unruly.

Second, the Kel Tamasheq have been ‘spoiled’ and influenced by colonial administrators – ‘who accustomed them to illegality and irregularity’ and, through this influence, they are neo-colonial allies. Remember Diallo’s speech cited in chapter II – ‘The colonial regime has entailed toward the nomads, a prejudicial policy, of which the consequences are now fully visible.’ However, there are exceptions (Najim) and the regime could not function without them, since ‘Africans’ do not know the Tamasheq frame of mind, as has been made explicit by both Diallo and Zeini and Mohamed Ayoul. The exceptions are the educated Kel Tamasheq, but even they had better be under surveillance since their education can serve them also to express anti-national sentiments, as seen in the letters of our Kel Intessar petitioners. Mohamed Ayoul’s reference to the situation in Congo and Algeria, situations of war and anarchy, are easily read as subtle threats by those willing to.

Therefore, despite Najim’s ‘eminent service’, he has to be replaced by an African as soon as possible. The duality of Bakary Diallo’s attitude lies in his opinion that the African who should replace Najim should be ‘cultivated’, something Najim undoubtedly was. By cultivated, I suspect Diallo meant ‘knowing the Berber mind and being superior to it’. 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 a ‘civilised African’ Diby Sillah Diarra, who stayed in command until 1967. The Kel Tamasheq and the ‘Sudanese’ did not know each other and acknowledged their mutual lack of understanding in a discourse on the other, but also in messages to each other. Hence, stereotypes could take over. The future development of their relations would not improve this state of affairs.

Fear

All material I have collected pertaining to this short but crucial period, points to the idea that the relations between the Malian administration and the Kel Adagh were fed by rumours. Nothing seems tangible, everything depends on hearsay, misinterpreted statements, shreds of information and fear on both sides. The administration feared the local chiefs – Attaher, Intalla and Zeyd – and French actions against Mali as French troops were still present in the neighbouring countries. They feared the FLN forces present at its territory too, as they contacted the Kel Adagh for unknown

reasons. The Kel Adagh feared what Socialism might bring, and what Mali would entail. The effect of these fears and rumours were enhanced by one stereotyped image of the Kel Tamashq from the days of colonial conquest – the Tamashq warrior.

**Les guerriers du sable**

If there is one mythical name attached to the Kel Tamashq, it is that of ‘les guerriers du sable’ – the warriors of the sand. The stereotype of the fierce Tamashq warrior is perhaps the most long-standing of all orientalist visions of Tamashq society, renewed through photo reportage of the last rebellion. What the Zulu and Maasai are to the British colonial stereotype of warrior tribes, the Kel Tamashq are to the French. This stereotype was constructed even before colonial conquest. Explorers travelling through Tamashq country, like Gordon Laing or Alexandrine Tinne, did not live to tell their story. Those who did, like Henry Duveryer, 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 Tamashq, in fear of their military power.

During the phase of conquest, the Kel Tamashq put up more than fierce resistance. In 1881 the second mission Flatters was totally annihilated by the Kel Hoggar despite superior French armament. In 1893 the Bonnier expedition was defeated near Timbuku by the Tengueregif under their amenokal Cheiboun. In 1896 Lieutenant Hourst travelled the land of the Ouillimidien Kel Ataram. He estimated their fighting powers at 20,000 men and, therefore thought it unwise to even try to conquer their land.236 He proved to be right in the short term when in 1897 a coalition of Kel Intessar, Kounta, Ouillimidien and Tengueregif besieged Timbuku for two days after having defeated a French squadron at the Niger. Almost no Moorish or Tamashq federation surrendered without heavy opposition. The Kel Adagh and the Kel Ajjer, who did not resist conquest militarily, did not, in their own opinion, surrender either. They had merely signed an alliance with the French (the Kel Ajjer), or had obeyed religious prescriptions forbidding *Jihad* against a stronger military opponent (the Kel Adagh).

The French conquest did not end combat between the French and the Kel Tamashq.237 The first to contest French power in 1913, were their first allies, the Kel Ajjer. In 1916 their example was followed by practically all Tamashq federations, except the Kel Adagh and the Kel Hoggar. In April 1916 the Ouillimidien 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 Zeldou and the Ouillimidien Kel

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236 Hourst (Le lieutenant de Vaisseau), *La mission Hourst* (Paris 1898), 200.

Denneg under _amenokal_ Elkhurer. In 1917 the Kel Aïr rose under Kaocen ag Gedda. They were joined by those Ouillimiden Kel Denneg who had survived their resistance against the French in 1916. Kaocen’s army, well-equipped with field canons and machine guns, first besieged Agadez for nearly two months. This tactic proved to be unsuccessful and Kaocen quickly changed his strategy. His army kept defying French troops in guerilla warfare until 1920.

Moorish 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_ Hammoaddi, another part under Abidine ould Sidi Mohamed el Kounti resisted French rule in alliance with the Rgebhat of the Western Sahara. Until 1927 Abidine’s men successfully attacked the Aïdagh and Mauritania from their base in the still unacquainted Drâa valley.238

The stereotype of the desert warrior also 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 as resulting from the respect and sympathy of the ‘victorious warrior for the honorably defeated warrior’.239 All the French asked in Saharan affairs, was to keep peace at any price.

The suspicion of Tamasheq rebellious action under colonial rule sometimes culminated in outright paranoia. This is well illustrated by the situation in Gourma Rharous at the start of World War II.240 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 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 Irreguenaïr tribe.

In April 1940, a _goumier_ noticed that a blacksmith of the Igoudarinen tribe was repairing lances and that a slave was repairing a shield. On the basis of these rumours the chief of the Igoudarien 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 du cercle_ Gourma Rharous had become so paranoid, that a gathering of chiefs under presidency of Cheiboun, _amenokal_ of the Tengueregif and victor over the French column.

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239 Dupuis (1960), op. cit., 25.

Bonnier in 1893, was directly taken as a sign the French were ‘under the threat of revolt similar to that of 1916’.241

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 are also informing us about local sentiments towards them –

’If the French leave, we will ask God to disappear with them. We do not want to be ruled by the Tuareg. […] If it was 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”’.242

Clearly, not only the French administration still saw the Kel Tamasheq as rebellious warriors and pillagers, the local population did so as well.

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 Allia ag Albachir, Inalaghya ag Dida and Ahmed wane Garew, were hunted down systematically. 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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The French and the FLN

French military presence in Algeria was steadily increasing after 1960. The Malian administration feared French intervention in Northern Mali. After all, Jean Clauzel, former Commandant du Cercle Kidal now served in Tamanrasset as did other Saharan officers who had served in French Sudan. Moreover, the French were still a military presence in the Adagh at their air base at Tessalit. In collaboration with Clauzel, they might well take action. 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. Zeini ag Hamouta's assurance that the OCRS chimera had been chased from the Kel Tamasheq minds seems not to have been shared by the Malian leaders. Or was this nightmare still a priority in their own minds? In October 1960 Interior Minister 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 Moors might have been sent from Senegal through Mauritania, in order to spread subversion in the Malian Republic. The elements concerned have served a long time in the Sahel and speak Moorish 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 fire arms, explosives and radio transmitters and receivers' \(^{243}\)

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 Efeligis 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

Tessaïlit. The Efeling leaders are numerous in Mali, especially in Kidal and Tessaïlit). [...] 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.244

Upon this declaration, Touhaya was arrested and sent to Kidal for further questioning. He would eventually join the rebellion in 1963. Suspicions and rumours about foreign actions were not limited to the French. The FLN presented another source of rumour based 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 Gao region. It concerns the Algerian military stationed at Kidal, Tessaïlit, Aguel-Hoc and Anefis. It seems these Algerian nationals, whom we consider to be real brothers, are distributing arms to all the nomads in the GAO region, Circles and arrondissements cited above. They are staging an anti-Malian campaign amongst 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'.245

Zeyd’s travels to Algeria

In the summer of 1961, Zeyd ag Attaher, oldest son of amenokal Attaher ag Illi, paid a long visit to the Algerian Hoggar. During this visit, Zeyd met with various officials of all kinds. The commander of the Oasis territory Colonel Nivaggiioni came from Ouargla to Tamanrasset, the Nigerien Minister of Nomadic Affairs Moudour Zakara – one of the responsible politicians for continued Franco-Nigerien cooperation within the OCRS – came from Niamey and Baye ag Akhamouk, amenokal of the Kel Hoggar and Zeyds official host, came as well. The four of them had talks. Zeyds visit was (not without reason) regarded with suspicion by the Malian regime. 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

244 Déclaration de Touhaya ag Bacrine à Chef de Poste Tessaïlit, n.d. (September 1961). ACK. It is unclear who exactly Touhaya meant with ‘efelings’. They could be either of two parties: the FLN or the Kel Effele, the Ifohas fraction to which the family of the amenokal belongs. In both cases, rumour had it that France would attack Mali, either to support their former allies [Kel Effele] or to attack their enemies [the FLN] now believed to be in power in the Adagh.

the word that he carries a message in which Zeyd informs you of the impending bombardment of the Cercle Kidal by the French forces.246

The nationalisation of cattle

Rumours and messages of 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. As we have seen in chapter II, the Malian Government planned to increase its revenues through livestock production. 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 which was only partly understood.

In October, 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. The matter was brought forward to Commandant du Cercle Mohamed Najim by Zeyd ag Attaher and a delegation of Ifoghas notables. 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.247 To counter the rumour, Minister of Finance Attaher Maiga and Modibo Keita himself toured the Northern regions 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.248

The effects

In this climate of fear and distrust, small incidents could possibly be blown out of proportion into a blazing rebellion. Consider the following incident. In May 1960 – a few months before independence – a gounier collecting taxes had an argument with a certain Inadjelim ag Ebanzen, a notable of the Iforgoumoussen tribe.249 During the argument Inadjelim drew his sword in anger, upon which the gounier either shot him in the thigh or killed him on the spot. In any case, he did not survive the

246 Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aquel’hoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal. 01/09/1961, no 44/CF/AA. ACK.

247 Chef d’Arrondissement de Tessait à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal. 27/08/62, Confidentiel no ..//AT/CF. ACK.


249 Télégramme officielle du Subdivision de Kidal à Chef de Subdivision de Kidal à Tessait, no 351/Ki. 16/05/1960. ACK.
incident. The *goumier* was not punished for his action, although inquiries were made about his actions.\(^{250}\) In the following days however, a delegation of Ifoghas complained to *Commandant du Cercle* Mohamed Najim about the action and the ways in which tax collections were carried out. The Ifoghas accused Najim of wanting to collect the taxes ‘by the bullet’.\(^{251}\) 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.\(^{252}\) 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’.\(^{253}\) 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 Menaka. Besides these *goumiers*, the new Republican Guard of the three nearest *Subdivisions* at the Niger river were sent north.\(^{254}\)

The prevalence of rumours, panicky reactions and blown-up 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 Tamashq 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 Tamashq, 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 Zoubeyba as commandants of the *goum*, 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.

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\(^{250}\) Bâ Baba à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal. n.d. ACK.

\(^{251}\) Régnier (1960), op. cit. 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.

\(^{252}\) Based on letters Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/05/1960 and 26/05/1960. ACK.

\(^{253}\) Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/05/1960. ACK.

\(^{254}\) Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 26/05/1960. ACK.
Understandably, USRDA fear of ‘French neo-colonialist’ attacks on Mali ran high. The accusation of French plotting in Dakar during the break-up of the Mali federation, the presence of French troops in Mauritania, Niger and Algeria, and the indirect accusation of a French conspiracy during the Dioula riots of July 1962 can be seen in that light. It is revealing that Madeira Keïta himself believed in the possibility of French subversion in the Sahara as we have seen 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 this argument would be taken seriously by Maïga and his superiors. What the message shows is a concern for a possible FLN - Kel Tamasheq alliance based on racist notions held by the administration and the Kel Tamasheq alike.

Loathing
The Kel Adagh point of view on independence
(1960-1962 - present)

So far this has 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. This single essence is apparent in the following short lecture I received.

[Finally, after much efforts, I was talking to Moussa Baswish. A man, I had been told by others, who knew much about local history. He had studied abroad, he was a true intellectual. 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 oud Cheick al-Tumbukti, 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 unity 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 to soon. It was Elledi who, at Timeouine, took the gun of the gourmiers 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.]

There you are. It is not so much the shortness 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 their own independence. And if they were to be part of Mali, then under specific conditions – in a federation, which to Moussa, now as then, should mean a kind of home rule, under Islamic law.

Bitterness

Although this is still hard to believe for those who are brought up with an African historiography in the service of nation-building, which is still much prevalent these days, and which depicts colonial times as the epitome of an African nightmare, the Kel Adagh now see colonial times as better days. Pre-colonial times were bad times for the Kel Adagh. Most have learned to remember the days when the Kel Adagh were raided and dominated by their Kel Hoggar and Ouillimiden Kel Ataram neighbours. French rule ended both these affairs. 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. Only under colonial rule did the Kel Adagh gain renown and status as warriors within Tamasheq society.

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 Rgeiba’. The French Commandant

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Charles Lecocq and a small army headed by amenokal Attaher ag Illi managed to end the raids in a decisive battle at Boceyat in 1928.\textsuperscript{256} The story of Boceyat allows the Kel Adagh to establish themselves as fully-fledged warriors. That this was done with French help is not forgotten.

After the end of the Rgeibat war, peace and prosperity reigned in the Adagh. This prosperity culminated in the late 1940s and 1950s. The rainy seasons were good and there was abundant pasture. 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 ‘modern education’ is the only hope of ensuring their survival as as a people. This calls for a historical reappraisal of French efforts in education within Tamasheq society and historical discourse. More importantly perhaps, communication and relations between the French administration and the Kel Adagh improved. Commandant Jean Clauzel – 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.\textsuperscript{257} His love is returned with at least affection. Many older people I interviewed presumed I knew Clauzel and inquired about his well-being. Clauzel’s name brought them memories of better days.

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. Not only to the discontent of those chiefs who had cooperated in the creation of the OCRS, but also to that of the average Kel Adagh. In June 1960 some Kel Adagh nomadising in Algeria asked a French officer ‘why have we been said to vote “yes” for de Gaulle and to remain French, and now you have left and have given the “tabou” (command) to the blacks’ and ‘why did France leave while neither she nor we desire this?’. The Kel Adagh held a grudge against the French in 1960 and the French transfer of power to the USRDA is still seen as treason from their side. This treason is now part of historical discourse, as Moussa Baswish has made clear.

**Deceived by Mali**

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

\textsuperscript{256} For a full narrative account of the Rgeibat war against the Adagh, see Boilley (1999), op. cit., 101-151.

\textsuperscript{257} For Clauzel’s memories of his service in the Sahara, see his autobiographical novel *L’homme d’Amekessou* (Paris 1998).
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 Maiga 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 [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 search our independence and not to command you or to command anyone. No one who will go to Mënaka to command the Ouillimiden in Mënaka. There will be no one going to Badi the Kounta to command in his place. That is unthinkable, we cannot consider this. There is no [black person] who can go to Attaher in Kidal to command in his place. All we want is to separate Islam 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 said: "We will go back to tell them this". "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 mehari troops [the goun] and the ettebel [the tribes]. We were occupied by functionaries, while the meharists were only loyal to France. And indeed, things have been changed by the blacks."\(^{258}\)

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\(^{258}\) 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 oulde 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 (1999), op. cit., 299-300. Boilley links this account to Mohamed Mahmoud oulde Cheick’s petitions discussed in chapter I.
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, 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’.

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 population of Mali had a 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’ 256 Second come concepts on the mentality and ways of thinking perceived to be ‘slavish’. Considering the Tamasheq concept tayite – ‘intelligence, or mind/competence regulating behaviour’ – Berge has argued that Kel Tamasheq see the status of ‘free’ or ‘slave’ as naturally determined and not as cultural constructs. 261 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. We have seen and will see again that

259 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/5/1999.
260 I realise that this is a harsh statement. One could long argue 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.
261 Berge, G., In defence of pastoralism. Form and flux among Tuaregs in Northern Mali (PhD thesis Anthropology, Oslo University 2000), 204-205.
the Malian south regarded the Kel Tamasheq as both ‘primitive’ and ‘white’ as well. 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 race antagonism occurred in all of the Sahel. Chad has been ravaged for decades by a civil war between the Arab and Tubu FROLINAT and the regular, southern based army. In Mauritania, ‘white’ Moors drove ‘black’ riverain Mauritaniains across the Senegal river, while neighbouring Senegal did the same with Moors on its territory in 1989, and again in 2000. In Sudan, in the 1980s and 1990s, even at present, ‘white’ Arab tribes such as the Baggara and Rizeiqat, armed by and under protection of the state, raid 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. Of course, Niger had its own Tamasheq rebellion in the 1990s, which had a partly common history with the rebellions in Mali (although race seems to be a less important factor in Niger than in Mali).

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 Sheriff’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. A treaty of submission had already been signed between France and the Kel Adagh before the armies of colonial conquest had even set foot in the Adagh.

Today as in 1960, Kel Adagh politicians see their confederation as in principle a politically autonomous unit which can agree on political alliance with others in consent to its leaders. They had surrendered to the French on certain conditions. This idea of mutual consent and equality between parties in signing a treaty is not unique to the Kel Adagh. Charles Grémont argues that in negotiating Ouillimiden surrender to the French in 1903, their amenoka Fihrun held the same view. A similar view on agreement between the state and the Kel Tamasheq is visible in the letters of the Kel Intessar quoted above. As Mohamed Ayoul ag Mohamed wrote to Modibo Keita: ‘...we Malians, have only found our freedom through agreement on good terms’.

262 Jok (2001), op. cit.

263 Bolley (1999), op. cit., 66-82.

The Kel Adagh elite 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. That this idea was prevalent among the Kel Adagh elite is illustrated in Bakary Diallo’s account of his talks with Attaher ag Illi during his tour of the Adagh in June 1960, already quoted above.

‘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 large group of Ifoqhas 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 to 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. 265

Of course 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, Diallo replied, the government knew of the large diversity within the country and wished to respect this diversity, but 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 remarked to Attaher. Thus, of course, in the eyes of the state, no promises about autonomy were ever made.

But the Kel Adagh, at least today, regard things differently. These broken promises 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 shapes historical discourse –

[From a conversation with M. We were discussing the Kel Tamasheq attitude towards the French. M. 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. Perhaps I am a racist. [...] In any case, I would never marry a Bambara or a Dogon or a Bobo. If I was to marry a black woman it would be a Songhay. They have the same culture, the same origins, only they have been heavily degenerated. I am not like the others who say we should make peace with the South, that they are good people and who marry their women. I admit being stateless, like the gypsies, an ‘apatride’. I am neither Malian nor Algerian, just an ou Tamasheq, inhabitant of the great Sahara’.266

The chiefs question

In late 1962 or early 1963 Attaher ag Illi, amenokal of the Kel Adagh died. His two potential heirs - Attaher’s sons Zeyd and Intalla – employed different political tactics in their contest for the position of amenokal. The debate among the Kel Adagh on who should succeed Attaher brought to light different opinions on Mali. Intalla and Zeyd had opposing opinions on the Malian administration. Intalla was in favour of cooperation with the Malian authorities. Zeyd 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 sons 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, who had been a member of the USRDA since 1958, was highly favoured by the administration. Former colonial French and Malian administrators, and the Kel Adagh alike 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 Malian regime meant however, that he was disfavoured by the Kel Adagh themselves as the new amenokal, despite his other 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 [14 July parade]. 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

266 Interview with M. Kidal, January 1999. M. has agreed with his statements going on paper. Given the content I have judged it wise to keep him anonimical.
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: "Zeyd nenagh d Intalla wan kufar" – our Zeyd and Intalla the Frenchman. That's how we called him then – Intalla the Frenchman.267

The impression of Zeyd by all parties is just as unanimous as that of Intalla. Zeyd was seen as less fit as a chief, less authoritative, amiable but loose-headed and not in favour of cooperation with the Malian regime. 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. Zeyd’s visit to Algeria in 1961 and his subsequent talks with the French commander and the Nigerien Minister of Nomadic Affairs was interpreted by all sides as a sign of his opposition to Malian rule. Indeed, Zeyd did not conceal his dissatisfaction with Malian rule 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, both before and after the latter's death, the main topic was not their suitability for chieftaincy, but their respective sides on the question of Malian governance. 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 Qur'an 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 this way he should have said so earlier. [...] That is the most

267 Conversation with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 08/06/1999.
important thing today. It is not about language, not about culture, not about money, but about skin colour. Whether you are black or red.²⁶⁸

Both parties had their supporters. However, support for Zeyd, and thus against Mali, was highest. Zeyd could count on the support for his case by Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, who remained in contact from his place of exile in Morocco. Other supporters on his side were Amegha ag Sherif and his group of early dissidents. 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 –

‘Attaher has said he will never accept the rule of the blacks. He wants the same tobo [rulers] as Bey [ag Akhamouk, amenokal of the Algerian 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’.²⁶⁹

In the end, Kel Adagh discussions on who should succeed Attaher were closed in Zeyds 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 to rule in favour of Intalla, whom they appointed as the new amenokal. 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.

Conclusion

Both Pierre Boilley and some Kel Tamasheq political activists suggest that the Kel Adagh had no idea what Mali embodied at the time of its establishment. I hope by now to have made clear that this proposition does not hold true. The Kel Adagh knew what ‘Mali’ was and discussed whether or not its government would be acceptable through the discussion about the succession to the deceased amenokal Attaher ag Illi. The Kel Adagh political elite itself discussed whether Malian rule was acceptable at all and if so on which terms. This discussion was not unique to the Kel Adagh. On a more moderate level it featured among other federations, such as the Kel Intessar or the Kounta, as well.

²⁶⁸ Conversation with Mohamed ag Intalla. Kidal, 23/05/1999.
The discussion on the question of independence presumed that the Kel Adagh had a choice between acceptance or refusal of inclusion in Mali. Debates on acceptance of inclusion focused on the nature of the state – whether or not it would be governed according to the principles of Islam, whether or not the state would grant regional autonomy and whether or not the Kel Tamashq could share in power.

Those in total disfavour of acceptance centred their arguments on concepts of race and culture inherent in Tamashq society. The old equation ‘blacks are slaves’ had not given way to a more sophisticated point of view. That the majority of the local administrators in the Adagh were not ‘black’ but Kel Tamashq or Moors from inside and outside the Adagh did not alter this vision. The Kel Adagh chiefs knew that the USRDA political elite were pulling strings in Bamako. They had occasionally met these men, when visiting the area.

The second reason for this dislike was the fear of what USRDA politics might bring. This is well-expressed in the rumours around the nationalisation of cattle and the incidents around the collection of taxes.

Perhaps the most important reason for discontent, and at the same time the most indirect and hardest to distill, was the continued OCRS chimera. The Kel Tamashq had been promised, and not merely by low-ranking French politicians, to have their own state, even if it was to be in an undefined future. Zeyd’s visit to Tamanrasset in 1961, his ensuing talks with Colonel Nivaggioni and Nigerien Minister of Nomadic Affairs Moudour Zakara and his subsequent demand for arms and support in his struggle are the clearest indication that the hope for an independent, or at least non-Malian, Tamashq existence had not been given up. Dissatisfaction with the outcome of their perceived ‘negotiations’ about state presence and the form of rule, the hope of French or FLN support for their cause and a continued wish for independence, finally led to an open armed revolt in the Adagh in May 1963.
IV
Alfellaga
The revolt of the Kel Adagh
(1963-1964)

Introduction

Declaration received from the goumier Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza

“We had left for Timiaouène 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 Bouressa that we are here’. This happened in the wadi Atelaf this morning 15/5/63.”

By stealing the gun and equipment from the goumier Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza, Êledi ag Alla and Touteka ag Effad started what is now known in the Adagh as Alfellaga – ‘the rebellion’. In the rest of Mali, the 1963 rebellion is generally called ‘the first Tuareg rebellion’, an appropriate name since a second rebellion followed in 1990. The two rebellions are intimately linked in practice, ideology and historical memory. In Kel Adagh historical discourse, emphasis is put on a continuing line of resistance against ‘foreign’ domination stretching from the colonial period, via Alfellaga to al-Jebha, the rebellion in 1990.

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…

270 Déclaration recueilli auprès du milicien Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza, n.d. [15/05/63]. ACK.
honour and combat, the fighting itself, and especially the suffering of the population under the repression of the Malian army.

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, as compared to the second rebellion. This line of reasoning is in stark contrast with my main archive sources on Alfellaga; the interrogation reports of various captured fighters. From their information at that time, 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 these two countries had indeed promised support, which was not the case.

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. 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 which matters in Alfellaga. In the fifth part, I will come back to the question 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 chapters VII and VIII.

**A continuum of resistance**

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 the 1963 rebellion. 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 teссit leading all of the Kel Adagh, of which they are a subgroup. Alla ag Albachir refused to obey all power, both that of the French and that of amenokal Attaher ag Illi. Instead, he lived as an outlaw, a social bandit as Hobsbawm would call him, with a number of his relatives, defying French rule and regularly clashing with the forces of order.271 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 gourmies finally caught him in July 1954. According to Tamashq history, Alla was decapitated after his elimination, and his head was exposed in Bouressa to convince the Kel Adagh of his death.272 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 colonial system. 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’.273 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 in a chase, when Elledi was about seven years old. Years later he [Elledi] 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 he knew who he was and if he didn’t do it right away they would do the same to him as they did to his father. That is how Elledi knew who had killed his


272 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 Tidjen 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 - 1a9pol/2197/14.

father. He wanted to revenge his fathers death. He wanted to kill his assassins, both the Tamashq – because there were Tamashq among the killers – and the others. He wanted to kill them all without exceptions. This revenge was what the revolt of Kidal was.274

The story of continuity of resistance against external rule and the struggle for independence is presented in the most binding grid of Tamashq 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 Tamashq historical discourse overcomes an artificial mark in time – independence – which is blurred in a non-stop presence of outside forces to fight against. In this respect, the exploits of Alla ag Albachir serve to reinterpret the Kel Adagh past as one of resistance against French rule, instead of compliance with it.

**Egha**

The story of how Elledi avenges his father introduces an element linking the various periods of resistance – revenge, a shorthand translation of the more complicated Tamashq concept of egha. The importance of egha as a motive for and in the organisation of resistance cannot be overestimated. *Egha*, is closely connected to two other important concepts in Tamashq society – eshik, honour, and takaraket, shame. *Egha* is a debt one contracts against those who have stained ones honour and who have thus caused one shaming. 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 violent action. 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 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 himself. Elledi could do nothing else than to repay this double *egha* debt – the shame brought upon him and 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 Bouressa kept repeating at me – that

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274 Conversation with S. Paris 09/01/1996.
if I did not stay quiet I would be slain like my father had been. [...] I have but my personal motives cited above.”

Alfellaqa

In the preceding chapters, I have tried to show that the Kel Tamasheq in general and the Kel Adagh in particular, never wanted to be part of Mali in the first place. After independence came about, all they wanted was their independence from Mali and they were ready to fight for it. The ifulagen made this quite clear to the Malian Government. In October 1963, a mission of USRDA officials and tribal chiefs was sent to negotiate with the rebels. They met with the ifulagen 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 enchained in front of our women and children. There also is 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’.

If this message was conveyed by the rebels as it is presented here, it surpasses a mere wish for independence from Mali. As I argued in chapter III, 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 –

275 Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Silas Diarra, Commandant d’armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/03/1964. ACK. Statements made during interrogation are a source to be dealt with suspiciously. Often, torture was involved. According to Michel Vallet, a former French colonial officer still serving in Southern Algeria during Alfellaqa, commander Diby Silas Diarra had been trained in torture techniques in the French colonial army while serving in Indo-China. The statements made might very well reflect what his interrogators wanted to believe and hear.

276 Dicko, Proces verbal de compte rendu de mission. n.d. (+/- 30/10/1963). ACK.
'The reasons are numerous, but the main ones are:

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

- 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.

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

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

- The Malian gendarmerie mistreats us irrespective of whether they are wrong or right.'

The rebellion seems not so much directed in favour of but rather against something – Malian rule. As former rebel Bibi ag Ghassi later analysed his actions – We had no ideological concepts that comes 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.278 But what did independence mean? Some hoped France would return to rule their country. The promise made in the 1950s with regards to the OCRS 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 to Algeria made by his son Zeyd ag Attaher in 1961, and again in 1963, to muster Algerian support should be seen in this light as well.

The mere decision taken by a small number of men to start an armed uprising should be seen in the light of their hope for support. From a military point of view, the armed uprising of a few dozen lightly armed men against a few thousand soldiers equiped 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

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

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 (in which the Kel Adaghad actually participated on the side of the French). But it seems that the rebels mainly hoped that Algeria state and France would come to their help. This becomes clear from the statements of captured rebel 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, as we do from the French. But we also expect Algeria to arbitrate between us and Mali when the moment comes'. 270

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 hope for outside reinforcement. This support never materialised. 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 Attaheer’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 over-optimistic 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 closests 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.

270 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.
Men and material

As we have seen in previous chapters, some groups of men had fiercely resisted the incorporation of the Kel Tamashq in Mali since the 1950s. Some of these men, joined by others, actively prepared for revolt against the Malian state between 1961 and 1963. The deposed amenoka/Zeyd ag Attaheer had gathered a group of men who shared his idea that the Tamashq 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, Amegha engaged himself in the struggle for Tamashq independence, which made him suspect of subversive activity. He was arrested and released shortly after in 1960. He then went to Algeria where he found a job at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse in 1962. 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.280

Zeyd’s group was not limited to the Kel Adagh. Contact was kept with Mohamed Ali ag Attaheer Insar, who encouraged and supported Zeyd’s plans. In Zeyd’s following were also Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyoubou, the sons of the very wealthy Ayyoubou ag Mohamed Adargajouj, the chief of the Daoussahak, a tribe living in the Tamesna who are not part of the Kel Adagh. With their help and money, Zeyd bought about thirty rifles in the Tamanrasset area from a Frenchman working there.281 The rifles were hidden until the start of the revolt.

Sidi Alamine ag Cheick, a former gomijer, 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 costumes destined for the future uprising.282 With this material the two brothers fled to Algeria, where they joined the others at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse.283 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 1963.284 Elledi ag Alla, who had by then taken his revenge on the gomijer 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.

The initial group of about ten men around Zeyd ag Attaheer grew rapidly. Still, the number of ifulagen was never high. From all data at my

281 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.
282 Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aguelhoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 14/01/1963. ACK.
283 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.
284 Ibidem.
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 easy to depict 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. I wondered why the ifulagen spent their resources on obtaining these outfits. An explanation would 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. Therefore, in keeping with this idea, they adopted a new dress code for combat. Another explanation for wearing French battle dress might have been 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 Bretudeau [Bretaudeau], who formerly served in Timbuktu, Gao and Menaka and who was responsible for Muslim affairs in colonial times’.285

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 small but sharply broken stones. These terrains can be crossed by camel, 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 colonial times. In the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s the most obtainable fire arms were ‘Mausers’ and ‘Bouceta’s’, 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 equiped with some more advanced weapons. Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar had managed to ship a small amount of material from Morocco to the rebels in Algeria, consisting of thirty battle dresses, five Egyptian automatic rifles and ammunition.286

285 Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aguelhoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/8/1963. ACK.
286 Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Silas Diarra, Commandant d’armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/03/1964. ACK.
Support and defiance
The large scale 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 rebels were therefore allowed to dwell in Algeria, and in some instances they had their wounds 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, 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. 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 favourable to 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 the supporters of Zeyd 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 factions of the South and West follow Intalla while those of the North and East follow Zeyd.’

Intalla was not the only tribal chief who was 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. Another chief, Kola ag Saghid 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


288 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.
of the army went against their interests, which was a peaceful continuation of existence under any 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 same double-bind as Kel Adagh/Kel Tamasheq and servants of the administration goes for the gourniers who were employed to fight the ifulagen, and thus forced to shoot at their own kin.

The chiefs were highly mistrusted by the ifulagen. After all, they were servants of the Malian Government. One of the first victims of the rebellion on the 'Malian' side was Enawnaq, the chief of the Irreguenaten who was shot by Elledi ag Alla for collaborating with the Malian army. But they were also mistrusted by the Malian army. They were thus under double threat when they contacted rebels, even if this was by order of the Malian officers.289

Whenever they could, the ifulagen took material from the Malian army. But as the revolt continued, more and more camels were taken from the Kel Adagh themselves. The principal victims of these raids on livestock were gourniers 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 only 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'.290 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.291 Although many joined the rebels in Algeria or in Mali because of army repression, one cannot uphold that this was always done with enthusiasm. Many were simply left without a 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 geographical and historical perspective.292 The position of the Adagh near the Algerian border permitted the ifulagen to retreat into Algeria after attacks. 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 both explanations do not account for the lack of other Kel Tamasheq warriors coming to the Adagh to join the rebellion in the Adagh itself. Boilley explains the non-

289 Le Sous-Lieutenant Mohamed ag Mohamed Elhadi, Commandant du GNIIG de Tarkint au chef d’escadron Commandant la gendarmerie Nationale du Mali à Bamako. 10/02/64. ACK.


291 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de mars 1964. ACK.

participation of 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 their non-participation 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, former amenokal of the Kel Intessar. Some of his men did most likely join the ifulagen. Besides these leading persons, a number of others had joined the ifulagen from Bourem, Ansongo and the Menaka areas.293 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, fluctuating in size between twenty and thirty men, and shifting in leadership depending on the occasion. Often, only half the unit consisted of fighters. The other members, unarmed and in civilian dress, served as scouts who contacted people for news 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 had divided the Adagh into three zones of operation from North to South, but this division into zones was not taken too strictly. In each zone, around thirty men were active. The first zone consisted of the Timetrine, a more plain-like area 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 Doriét to Bouressa and southward to Kidal. Here, operations were led by Elledi ag Alla and Ikhlu Saloum. The third zone extended from Mount Ouzzzinein southwards, where operations were led by Azzezen ag Ikse and Mohamed ag Amane.294

The division into zones and units and the assumed leadership in each zone, is striking. It is logical that units were led by those who were most familiar with the area and that other unit members should be familiar with the terrain as well, but it seems unit composition was partly organised according to tewsit affiliation.295 The area between Mount Tigharghar and Mount Doriét, Bouressa and Mount Ouzzzinein is where most Irayakan live. Elledi ag Alla and Ikhlu Saloum, both Irayaken, led operations during

293 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.

294 Ibidem.

295 This tentative conclusion can be drawn from the available data on tewsit affiliation and unit membership, which is far from complete. See annex, table of rebels.

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**Afellaga** 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 tevkit to which belong Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick who led operations in this area. The group around Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick operating in the Timetrine was significantly smaller than the groups around Elledi ag Alla and Azzezen ag Iksa, fifteen men at most. A second explanation for the smaller amount of operations in the Timetrine is the nature of the area. The Timetrine is more easily accessible by motorised vehicles than the mountain areas of the Adagh, which are therefore more dangerous. Subsequently, most clashes took place in the other zones and not in the Timetrine.

Operations were planned at the rebel base at Takormiasse in Algeria. Most planned attacks consisted of raids on camel herds or fixed army posts. Units were composed, mounts, arms and ammunition were distributed, and routes to take to Mali and back to Algeria 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 were sent out to gather 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.296

**Agga, or the rules of conflict**

**Interlude, the Malian army**

The basic unit of the Malian army was the Compagnie de Commandos Autonomes – CCA.297 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, ten CCA’s were created. These units formed the core of the Malian Armed Forces, complemented with a separate tank squadron, an airborne squadron, and several paramilitary organisations. The former colonial military gourm 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. Thus, at the start of the

296 Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Silas Diarra, Commandant d’armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/03/1964. ACh.

297 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.
rebellion, two CCA’s and the GNIG14 were stationed in the Adagh, around 650 men in all.

In the first months of the rebellion, only the GNIG14 and the local goun forces were employed against the rebels. By August 1963, it was clear that the goun 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 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 were shipped to Kidal as well.

**Table 5: Number of Malian forces employed in the Adagh during Alfellaga**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Vehicles</th>
<th>Combat vehicles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1963</td>
<td>CCA8 / CCA10 / GNIG14</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1963</td>
<td>3 units CCA1 / CCA8 / CCA10 / GNIG14 / CSM / Artillery</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1964</td>
<td>CCA2 / CCA6 / CCA10 / GNIG14 / CSM / Tanks battalion/ Artillery unit</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>40 airplane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.
Raids, skirmishes and ambuses

The (relatively) enormous amount of men and material employed by 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 army.

The Adagh consists of a number of important mountain ranges separated by wadis and valleys. Most clashes 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 these mountains. The wadis are generally closed in by boulder formations, sand dunes or low, but steep mountains. The Malian army’s 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 position.

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 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 the way it hampered the Malian army. Of course, this advantage was lost when the rebels had to fight the equally camel-mounted gourm forces. In fact, the only unit the rebels feared, was the GNI G14 – the gourm unit, mounted on camels and armed with the same MAS-36 rifles the ifulagen used.

The attacks of the ifulagen against the Malian forces were therefore mostly directed against the camel herds of the gourm 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 Ikhilou Saloum raided the gourm camels at Bouressa, capturing 25 animals.\textsuperscript{298} A second and third raid at the gourm herds of Kidal led by Sidi Alamine and near Tin-Zaouaten led by Elledi ag Alla were just as successful.\textsuperscript{299} As well as raiding the gourm herds, the rebels also ambushed army patrols.

The rebel ambushes did not take the form of ‘hit and run’ actions.\textsuperscript{300} Rather, series of protracted skirmishes, retreats and pursuits took place.

\textsuperscript{298} Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aguibloc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/08/1963. ACK.

\textsuperscript{299} Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le capitaine Diby Silas Diarra, Commandant d’armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/04/1964. ACK.

\textsuperscript{300} Based on; Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.
Between 17 and 19 September 1963, a prolonged skirmish took place around the wells at Arli and Djourmel in the wadi Ouzzain at the edge of Mount Ouzzain. 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; again 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 Taghit, which is surrounded by mountains at 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 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 repeating 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. Makhamad 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 [for the army] 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 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 [army] 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 which was following. 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. Since 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. [...] That day, I had a Mauser of quality. 301

Makhamad wan Daghada’s account exemplifies some Tamasheq concepts on war and masculinity – ruse, patience, trust in God and bravery in fight. He explains with great detail how the itilagen set up a well-prepared trap for the Malian army. A ditch to immobilise the vehicles was dug and covered and trenches were dug to hide the fighters from vision. 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, Makhamad shows that trust in God will be rewarded. Combat is engaged and at this point ruse is abandoned for bravery. Makhamad gets up from his trench, despite heavy enemy fire and the warnings of his comrade, and thus manages to kill two enemies. 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.

Wadi Ibdalan, a typical Adagh landscape: a forested wadi, embanked by rock-formations (background) and, in this case, a sand dune (foreground). January 1999.
War, honour and codes of conduct

Like everywhere else, warfare is controlled and regulated in Tamassheq 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’. Aqqa is a raid intended to avenge an attack on the honour of the group received 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 oneself.

As we have seen above, only those who are on equal footing can stain honour and can therefore be subject to a *aqqa* counter attack. This excludes women, children, slaves and craftsmen. Religious groups should also be excluded from a *aqqa* attack. The principal object of an *aqqa* attack is not to kill victims, but rather to capture the attacked group’s 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 should not, and the main aim of a *tewet* attack is not to restore or gain honour, but to acquire booty. A third form of warfare is *akafal*, which has been described as ‘barbarism against barbarism’ by both Claudot-Hawad and Berge. While *aqqa* and *tewet* attacks are only carried out against people seen as on an equal footing with the attackers and is 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 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 [the 1990 rebellion] remind you of it? Are things better at present in your opinion?

Makhamad wan Daghada: They are two different wars which 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; that of Elledi, that of Azzezen, and that of Didari wan Ibelouten. 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 gournier of the Idrane 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 gournier 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 gournier 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, Ikhlaou 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.  

Makhamad 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 in 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 gourm units of Kidal and the GNIG14, probably without announcement and with the aim to loot which made them tewet attacks. A first successful raid was held around Bouressa. A second raid was held at Farar, near Kidal, where the ifulagen captured forty camels of the Kidal gourm. Many more raids would follow. The raids had a tactical value. Not only did they provide means for the ifulagen themselves – well-trained


304 Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aquelhoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/08/1963. ACK.

305 Bolton (1999), op. cit., 326.
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 goum’s camels also adhered to the rules of aqqa – they were intended to restore honour.

As we have seen above, the sole objective of Elledi ag Alla in his action starting 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. Ikhlo 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 was also in revenge (egha) for the stained honour of Elledi and Ikhlo 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, which 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’.306

The language used is one of 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, 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 by the ifulagen. However, by August 1963 it was clear to the Malian Government that the goum and the GNIG14 alone could not end the rebellion. Therefore the ‘regular forces’ of the Malian army 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 gourmiers 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. At the end of September 1963, after (or during) a battle between the rebels and the army at the wells of Arli in the wadi Ouzztein, a group of nineteen gourmiers defected to the rebels. The methods applied by the Malian army 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 army 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 tewsit affiliation.

With the change in tactics by the Malian forces, the tactics of the ifulagen altered similarly. The camel herds of the gourm forces were no longer the sole focus of raids. The tribal chiefs, who were used by the administration 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 left the code of conduct of ‘civilised warfare’ as it was known in the Adagh. The concept of aqqa was no longer valid. The later attacks on all and sundry by the rebels ascribe to what in Tamashq is called akafal – ‘barbarism against barbarism’. On one hand, akafal means war against non-Kel Tamashq, 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 hand, akafal is the lawlessness imposed by barbarism. In a war were the adversary is not Kel Tamashq, which does not know the internal martial code of conduct and behaves accordingly brutal, one has no other option than to react similarly in order to survive.

307 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 at an unknown date.

308 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.

Diby’s oven, repression

The unsanctity of borders

After operations in Mali, the ifulagen retreated into Algeria. If they had raided camels, they needed to get them to Algeria to sell them. The ifulagen stocked their supplies in Algeria as well, at the French base at Takormiasse. A unit only took enough material with them for a short time and had to return to equip itself. A last but certainly not the least reason for retreat into Algeria, was that they were relatively safe there from the pursuing Malian army. 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 army the right to pursue the rebels in Algeria as far as necessary.310

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. Third, not only the rebels suffered under the Malian incursions. The Kel Adagh who had fled to Algeria to escape the violent reaction of the Malian forces, were confronted with the Malian forces as well, who considered the refugees as rebel accomplices.

In February 1964, the Malian army first pursued rebels in Southern Algeria. On 15 February 1964, a group of ifulagen engaged the Malian army at Mount Tikiane.311 The rebels retreated further into Algeria, leaving five of their men dead and one captured. In a second skirmish at Agedem, just over the Algerian border, the rebels left three of their most valuable fighters in combat and two captured.312 Those Kel Adagh who had fled to Algeria to escape the persecutions of the Malian army fell victim as well. In November 1963, more than 400 cows and 250 camels were massacred together with their herdsmen at the wells of In Ouzzeil, a few hundred kilometres into Algeria.313

The forbidden zone

As the ifulagen were hard to track down, the army retaliated on the Kel Adagh civilians, whom they viewed as accomplices and potential rebels. On

310 It is unclear on which date this agreement was signed, or whether an agreement was signed at all or on what level.
311 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.
312 Déclarations des deux rebelles rendus avec leurs armes le 10 juillet 1964 au chef de tribu Bissadad - II/ Declarations du nommé Bilal ag Indialal, fraction Taghat Melet, Tribu Ebeug. ACK.
313 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c. See also, Bollée (1999), 333.
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 (zône 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 (zônes de regroupement) south and west of Kidal and around administrative posts and army bases at Aguelhoc, Telabat, Bouressa and Tessalit. The rest of the Adagh remained a ‘forbidden zone’.314

It is not clear to what extent the population was informed on either of these policies. We have to keep in mind that villages were almost non existent. The only Kel Adagh who lived in Kidal were the gomiers and their families. Nevertheless, the population was mostly to be found in the ‘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’:315

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.

314 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.

315 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements 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’. 316

A third and most chosen 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. 317 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 to come back to Mali. By then, most of those who had preferred to return to Mali had already done so. The army responded to the flights 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 at the bank of the Niger and the base camp of the GNIG14, was evacuated to the south on rumours that they planned to flee to Algeria. 318

To those Kel Adagh who remained in the forbidden zone, life must have been hell. The army poisoned wells throughout the Adagh since the rebels depended on wells to provision themselves, but so did the local population. The army systematically shot herds and herders 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 (but they died of poisoned water, and were imprisoned under life-threatening circumstances). Instead, they were taken to villages in the regrouping zones such as Kidal, Tessalit and Bouressa 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!’ 319

This sounds more innocent than it was for at least some of these women. First of all, in Tamasheq concepts of work, class and gender, noble women should not carry out manual labour. Although the Kel Adagh are not seen as noble in the strict sense within Tamasheq paradigms of

316 Rapport d’interrogation, Arrondissement de Tessalit, Cercle de Kidal, 08/02/1964. ACK.
317 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de décembre 1963. ACK.
318 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.
nobility, many families tried to live up to noble values. Even for those women who did perform tasks, fabricating clay bricks was a totally alien occupation which struck them as utterly humiliating. Second, many Kel Adagh women successfully lived according to the Tamasheq standards of beauty – extreme obesity brought about by force-feeding from the start of adolescence.320 These women were physically unable to perform any form of hard labour and greatly suffered under the forced effort. Third, and 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 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 Keita who insists on marrying her despite her irregular situation. It is most important to consider that the presence of this woman in Tesselit is harmful to Mister Mallet Keita’s family and risks producing grave consequences in the future, since the man adamantly insists on making her living in his house without entering into a legal marriage contract'.321

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 Allilaga. Her husband imposed his marriage proposal by killing most of her male relatives in front of her eyes. 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 equal 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 – 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 plea for the liberation of their womenfolk. In April 1964, a group of returned Kel Adagh families in Tesselit asked for the return of their imprisoned women and children upon meeting with a political delegation touring the area.322


321 Chef d’Arrondissement de Tesselit à Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aguellhoc, 25/02/1965. ACK.

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 – starting a fight in the hope for external support – had failed, the fate of Zeyd ag Attafer’s mission to Algeria to explicitly demand Algerian support will certainly have done so. As we have seen in chapter II, Zeyd’s visit to Algeria in 1961 was indeed intended to ask both French and FLN support for his cause – freeing the Adagh from Malian presence. As the Kel Adagh believe it now, representatives of the FLN had promised to deliver support as soon as Algeria had become independent. A support that failed to materialise as the rebellion progressed.

In the autumn of 1963, Zeyd ag Attafer decided to contact the Algerian Government to remind it of its promise to support his cause. 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. 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 Ayyoub 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.

In the same period the ground was laid for the arrest of Mohamed Ali ag Attafer 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 Tlemcen. The area was Algerian territory, but Morocco claimed it on historical grounds. The conflict was resolved with the help of Modibo Keita, whose diplomatic skills and international prestige made him a valid intermediary. In return for his help, Morocco arrested and expelled Mohamed Ali ag Attafer Insar in March 1964.

323 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 (1999), 318.

324 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.

325 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.

326 The date of Mohamed Ali’s expulsion is based on: Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alli par le Capitaine Diby Silas 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 current in the Adagh and elsewhere in the Tamasherq world.
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, in Algeria. Elledi was perhaps not the most important military leader, as he admitted himself, but as the son of a famous rebel against France and the instigator of the conflict, his prestige and renown was greater than of any other combatant. After his arrest and severe torture, Elledi was given the option between collaboration or direct execution. He chose the former. Thus, the Malian army was able to make further arrests within the network of rebels in Mali.
Captured rebel leaders Zeyd ag Ataheer (middle), Ilyas ag Ayyouba (left), and messenger Mohamed Ali (right) are paraded through Kidal. On the left, in shorts, probably Commandant du Cercle Diby Sillas Diarra. Source: Archives du Cercle de Kidal.
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 figure 3, 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 which men express through their veil, draping it as a shawl expresses utter defeat and distress.\textsuperscript{327} 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.\textsuperscript{328} 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 in all of the 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.’\textsuperscript{329}


\textsuperscript{328} Apparently, since he was unveiled, no one recognised the portrait. Claudot-Hawad, H., ‘Visage voilé’ (1993), 29-43, 32.

\textsuperscript{329} Interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994.
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

1°/ 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

2°/ ALGERIA PURSUES YOU AND ARRESTS YOU AT ITS BORDERS TO HAND YOU OVER TO MALI

3°/ 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 WHICH MALI OFFERS YOU WILL MEAN:

NAPALM BOMBS
CANONS
MACHINE GUNS DESTROYING YOU IN ONE DAY

4°/ 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 ARMY330

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 at its disposal with which it toured the regrouping zone in May 1964. The film shown featured Modibo Keita and the Algerian president Ben Bella embracing each other as proof that the rebellious Kel Adagh could not count on Algerian support for their struggle.331

330 Flyer found in ACK.
331 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements 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 Kidal Cercle 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 the pit and covered with sand. In the same way, meat and bread are cooked in the Sahara, something that cannot escape the attention of those who know this story. To those who understand Bambara, the ‘pun’ on this form of execution and the man who invented it is as apparent as it is macabre. In Bambara, *dibi* means ‘grilled meat’.

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.\(^{332}\) 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 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*’.\(^{333}\)

On 25 March 1964, Sidi Haïballa ould Abidine, a venerated Kounta *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 *ifbalagen* to protect them from bullets, which he denied having done. No proof was found against Sidi Haïballa or his son Sidi Mohamed. On the latter it was even noted that ‘*despite the accusations against him, the concerned has always informed us [on the whereabouts of the ifbalagen] in the western sector*’.\(^{334}\) Nevertheless, Diarra thought that since Sidi Haïballa had done nothing to prevent the rebellion and had not used his influence to stop the rebels in their actions, 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-‘adhha*’, the most important celebration in Islam.

Chiefs who did not collaborate with the army were shot as well, like Ayyoubag Mohamed Adargajo – chief of the Daoussahak and the father of Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyoub. Ayyoub, who lived in the Cercle Menaka, 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 the local leaders were executed. In February 1964, the army ‘discovered intelligence networks’ in and around Kidal, Telabit

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\(^{332}\) Cercel de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1964. ACK.

\(^{333}\) Ibidem.

\(^{334}\) PV d’écoute concernant Sidi Mohamed ould Sidi Haïballa, 18/03/1964. ACK.
and Aguelhoc amongst the population held in the regrouping zones. This was taken as a pretext for summary executions among the regrouped population.\textsuperscript{335}

**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 [Mali] 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.`\textsuperscript{336}

Within the ranks of the \textit{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 return to Mali to unconditionally surrender to its authorities since they knew that those who had been taken prisoner had not been killed.\textsuperscript{337} Elledi, Zeyd and others were still alive. In May and June 1964, INTALLA AG ATTAHER toured the Adagh west of Bouressa to persuade the \textit{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, in total, forty-eight men gave up the fight.\textsuperscript{338} The remaining fighters were mostly men of the first hour such as SIDI ALAMINE and ISSOUP AG CHEICK, AZZEZEN AG ISSOUP and Ikhlaou Saloum.

Not all rebels gave up the fight immediately, despite the hopelessness of their situation. In June 1964 the group around SIDI ALAMINE and ISSOUP AG CHEICK was spotted in the Timetrine by the GNIG.\textsuperscript{339} 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.\textsuperscript{340}

\textsuperscript{335} Cercle Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1964. ACK.

\textsuperscript{336} Interview with Amegha ag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994.

\textsuperscript{337} Déclarations des deux rebelles rendus avec leurs armes le 10 juillet 1964 au chef de tribu Bissaada - I\textsuperscript{er} Déclarations du nommé Salia ag Bakarine, fraction Imerade INTALLA. ACK.

\textsuperscript{338} Compte rendu de la mission d'INTALLA au Commandant la C.S.M., n.d. [July 1964]. ACK.

\textsuperscript{339} RAC message: Origine Commandant GNT télégramme officiel à Commandant BSE. Info Base GNT - Commandant le 10e CCA - Telabat; and RAC message: Gouverneur de Gao 26/00h télégramme officiel à Commandant du Cercle Kidal NR 37/Chiffré/BSE; and Réponse au télégramme officiel de 26/6/64 à 1820h; and RAC message: Commandant du Cercle Kidal télégramme officiel à Gouverneur de Gao no 18/chif/Cercle. ACK.

\textsuperscript{340} RAC message: Lieutenant Cissoko télégramme officiel à Commandant la C.S.M., 29/7/64. ACK.
His brother Issouf ag Cheick fled to Algeria with the rest of the survivors.\textsuperscript{341} With Sidi Alamine’s group out of action, rebel military activity came at a low.

On 15 August 1964, the Malian Government officially declared the rebellion vanquished in the national newspaper \textit{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 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.

The 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 – Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence Mamadou Diakité, Governor 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 gourmiers and the various CCA units paraded through Kidal. Flowers were placed at the monument for the dead, followed by the ceremony of the flag, after which the regimental flag of the Bataillon Sahélien de l’Est was hoisted. A minute silence was twice observed in memory of ‘the valiant builders of the Malian nation who fell here in defence of national unity and integrity’.\textsuperscript{342} The forty captured rebels who were present were symbolically unshackled and pardoned for their actions. 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 Malian Republic’.\textsuperscript{343} 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 difference between its children. But it is necessary that they remember, and I am sure everybody will remember’.\textsuperscript{344} About this, Keita was absolutely right.

\textbf{Remembering the terror}

The fact that those Kel Adagh who lived through the events of 1963-1964 would remember them vividly needs no explanation. However, almost all of those who are likely to have witnessed the events were reluctant to

\textsuperscript{341} RAC message: 28/7/64 FM Commandant la gendarmerie de Tarkint télégramme officielle au Commandant la C.S.M. ACK.

\textsuperscript{342} ‘Kidal a célébré la fête nationale avec un éclat particulier’, \textit{L’Essor Hebdomadaire}, 28/09/1964.

\textsuperscript{343} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{344} Ibidem.
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 (tengelt). Emotions should be restrained to preserve dignity. All this is quite impossible when invited to tell a tale of horror. Also, I must admit I had great 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'.

Nardy’s story was not only told because of his and my presumed origins (many people thought I was French too, or at least I was a European, an identity I shared with Nardy). To those who told it, somehow, it was an outstanding example of the barbarousness of the Malian army – the killing of the innocent and the non-adherence to the rules of warfare. 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 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 in the Adagh.

The imprisonment of women and children in the towns and the labour they were forced to carry out is another source of bitter recollection. In Kel Adagh memory, many of the arbitrary acts committed against the

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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 Elmoack in 1967, described in chapter II, is now remembered as having taken place during the rebellion as well. In this way, 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 importance 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 army –

‘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 off 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 accustomed to it. When the army found a herd [makes a shooting gesture] they gunned them down. They killed many animals, camels and goats’. 346

The extermination of herds and the destruction of the environment, the poisoning of wells and the cutting down of trees by the Malian army is even presented as a direct cause 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’. 347

Alfellaga is not only remembered by those who lived the events. Poems have been composed about them and they are referred to in the songs of the tanekra – the movement of young men and women preparing the rebellion of 1990. These songs and poems are known throughout the Tamashiq 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 gourmiers – 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

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 Bouressa and commander of the goum. The ‘silly hats’ refers to the caps worn by Malian soldiers, compared to the Tamasheq veil and turban — the eghewid. The veil conveys certain concepts of honour and proper behaviour. For an adult man not to wear a veil is to be naked and without honour. 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 touched 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 Menaka, 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 Dauussahak from the Menaka area, explained that — ‘If one told the scientific truth, one would give paternity of Alfellaga to the Dauussahak. In 1962, it was fair and square with Ilyas ag Ayyouba’s money that the rebellion took place with the Ifochas in Kidal’.

That Younes ag Ayyouba and his brother Ilyas were most likely the only two Dauussahak involved in Alfellaga is less relevant to Albachir. Their involvement justifies a claim to early resistance and participation in later events for his own tewsit. Thus, even outside the Adagh, continuity between Alfellaga and the second rebellion is assured along the genealogical lines of the tewsit.

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348 Part of a poem by Akhmudan ag Meddi.
349 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.
Just how widespread stories about Alfellaga are, becomes clear from a conversation I had in Menaka with Almoustapha, a young Songhay man from Gao. Almoustapha knew I was a historian, and asked me the reasons for the second rebellion. I answered I didn’t know and asked for his opinion. He gave me his “very 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 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”.

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 du Cercle Diby Sillas Diarra wanted to shoot the passing merchant echoes similar stories about the injustice and power of the Commandants du 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 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’. This is brought about by what she calls ‘non-participant narrative’ – ‘an oral story told to someone not present at the events narrated’. 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 colonial officers from his own family. We see here

352 Ibidem, 609.
how various non-participant narratives have been blended into a new whole with the aim to appropriate historical events and their significance for non-Kel Tamasheq – the outbreak of the second rebellion. This being said, the parallel drawn by Almoustapha would not be denied by the Kel Adagh, who see Malian rule as a continuation of colonial dominance. In chapter VI, I will discuss the causes and effects of narrative induction on non-participants of Alfellaga.

Conclusion

In May 1963, years of tension between the Malian administration and the Kel Adagh came to a head in what is now known as Alfellaga, the first Tamasheq revolt against the Malian state. Although small groups of men had actively prepared for an uprising from 1960 onwards, the rebellion started with a seemingly unlinked incident. Elledi ag Alla avenged his father Alla ag Albachirs and his own dishonour.

An outsider with an inclination to dissect 'factual events' from historical discourse could easily discard the connection made 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.

Historical continuity between Alla ag Albachir and his men and Alfellaga is created through the most binding framework of Tamasheq historical narrative; individual action and genealogy. 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. 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 not been rebellion, 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.

Historical discourse is also shaped by cultural perceptions. The most important cultural frameworks for Alfellaga are eshik, honour; takaraket, shame; and, especially, egha, revenge. In Tamasheq historical narrative, Elledi’s revenge on the gourmiers who stained his fathers honour and his own, serves as a metaphor for the honour the Kel Tamasheq lost under foreign domination. By framing the events surrounding Alfellaga in a discourse on lost honour and shame, the Kel Tamasheq give meaning to and motivation for their suffering while presenting its solution – revenge in violent action.
In turn, violence is regulated through honour and shame as well. In the first months of Alfellaga, the rules of honourable warfare – aqqa – were upheld. These rules shaped both the rebels’ military actions and their retrospective thoughts about the conflict. When it became clear however that the Malian army was not fighting according to these rules, they were abandoned for the rules of aqafal – non-honour bound warfare.

In the coming two chapters we will see 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 army 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.

But cultural explanations only frame the shape and content of historical discourse. They do not represent in themselves the deeper motivation for Alfellaga. As I hope to have made clear, the reason for revolt and the main motivation for the most active ifulagen was a wish for independence from the Malian state.

The reason why the rebels chose for military action to attain this goal, despite being outnumbered and outgunned by the Malian army, lies in their rather naive hope for international support for their cause. By starting the rebellion, so it was thought, support would materialise, as had been promised by both France and the FLN in the years prior to the rebellion. However, the rebels had gravely misjudged their chances. Their struggle remained only theirs, fought in obscurity, without international attention. In chapters VII and VIII, we will see how the rebels of 1990 had learned a valuable lesson from their predecessors – do not fight without making sure the rest of the world knows. Of course, the second rebellion was fought in an era in which means of communication were vastly expanded, which was not the case during Alfellaga.

The question arises whether we should see Alfellaga as an expression of Tamacheq nationalism. The answer to this question depends on whether or not one is prepared to see nationalism disconnected from étatism.

Without a doubt, the ifulagen wanted independence for the Kel Tamacheq 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. 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 Tamacheq.

In chapter VI we will see how Tamacheq ideas on independence developed rapidly along the lines of ‘Western’ political reasoning and its relation to the concept of the nation-state. However, the new lines of political reasoning would not mean a break with local political thought. Instead, they were firmly embedded in local perceptions and in historical reasoning. The experiences of Alfellaga would be both literally and figuratively instrumental in the shaping of what was needed to bring Tamacheq independence about.
The revolution in Tamasheq society
(1970-1990)

Introduction

‘In this still untamed Sahara – among the camel herdsmen, young Koranic students, government officials, and merchants now anticipating a more peaceful and prosperous future – we were seeking rhythms of life unbroken since the time of Muhammad, 1,300 years ago’.  

When the Tamashque rebellions in Mali and Niger ended in the second half of the 1990s, reporters and journalists set out to find the unchanging character of Saharan life, ruled by tradition and age-old ways. But of course, each and every one of them knew already that the ‘veiled blue men of the desert’ no longer drive caravans, but four wheel drives; that their feet are no longer scorched by burning sand as they wear trainers; that their mysterious eyes are no longer visible above their veil as they wear sunglasses; that, in short, the Kel Tamashque have been as much touched by modernity, in the layperson’s use of the word, as the next person.  

This chapter will be devoted to a description of the radical changes Tamashque society went through between the 1950s and 1980s. From the perspective of this study, all transformations described are necessary to understand and analyse a change in political ideas ultimately leading to the Tamashque rebellions in Mali and Niger in the 1990s. Participants of the Malian rebellion often refer to it as ‘the revolution’. However, it can be argued that the revolution took place before the rebellion, and consisted of the changes described in this chapter.

This revolution is mainly the change from a rural society to an urban society, and from an economy based on 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 is also the change 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 brought about shifts in gender relations, cultural forms of expression, education, and politics. In this chapter, we will focus on economic, social and cultural changes.

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353 Webster, D., ’Journey to the heart of the Sahara’, National Geographic 195-III (March 1999) 6-33, 11.

354 I am fully aware of the ongoing debate in social science on the subject of modernity. However, I feel no inclination to join this discussion here. Modernity in this thesis will not be narrowly defined or dealt with as a subject of research. It will be used in the everyday sense of the word, where it generally means the same things as in social science, but without making an issue of it.
Changes in and discussions on political perceptions will be dealt with in chapter VI. However, it were the radical changes in all other aspects of life that triggered and fed the debate on the need for social and political changes within the Tamashq world itself and in its relations to the states they were living in. As old modes of production vanished, old modes of social and political organisation needed to be adapted.

The changes described were essentially the reaction of the concerned individuals to economic and social circumstances, forced upon them by the droughts which struck the Sahara and Sahel in the 1970s and 1980s, which destroyed their pastoral mode of existence. The Tamashq name for the new social and cultural way of life they developed in this period is telling in its economic origins. It is called teshumara, a Tamashq derivative of the French chômage – unemployment. The adherents to this new way of life were called ishumar (sing. ashamor) – unemployed.

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 Tamashq world, this meant migration outside the Tamashq world, since no economic options outside pastoralism existed within the community. An ashamor would travel between jobs, during which period he was unemployed. As the number of people looking for jobs outside the pastoral realm and outside the Tamashq world grew, the teshumara became more than an economic way of life. It became a culture in itself.

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. Attention will be paid to the changes in economic existence, urbanisation and sedentarisation, gender relations and cultural expressions, notably a new musical and poetical genre called al-guitara. I will show that the changes in Tamashq societies in this period were far from homogenous. Various routes led to various new ways of life. Therefore, lastly, I will present alternative roads to the teshumara, and their relationship to it.

**Teshumara**

The first ishumar, the orphans of the Adagh

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, former chief of the Kel Intessar tribe, travelled the Middle East with a few of his tribe’s youths, to have them educated abroad (see chapter II). There was a second wave of migration in the late 1940s when some Kel Tamashq moved permanently to Saudi Arabia where a large Tamashq community still exists. A third movement from another place of origin occurred in the late 1950s, when a small number of Kel Tamashq migrated from French Sudan 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: In-Ekker, Reggane and Takormiasse. And finally a fourth migration of importance took place during and after Alfellaga, when 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 four disparate groups would form the first nucleus of what would become a large Tamasheq diaspora after the drought in the 1970s and 1980s.

The most important group of ishumar, however, were those Kel Adagh born between the late 1950s and early 1960s. The major legacy of Alfellaga was 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 revolutionary movement described in chapter VI.

A number of these orphans migrated to Algeria with their families, but about 400 of them were kept in boarding schools in Mali. Whereas other children were allowed to visit their parents during the holidays, the 400 ‘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 feelings.

Education generally took off in the Tamasheq world under the Keita regime. Whereas in 1948 the total number of students in all of Northern Mali amounted to 272, this number reached 828 in 1968 in the Cercle Kidal alone. 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 Bambara were allowed. The Mandecification described in chapter II 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 their nomadic origins and their parents’ revolt. In addition to the Pioneers, the troupe artistiques, folk groups performing theatre, songs and dances, played an important educational role.

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355 Tschumy, J., Le bureau de main d’oeuvre d’Adrar (Sahara) (Paris CHEAM no. 3937 n.d.).

356 Commandant du Cercle de Kidal à Gouverneur de Gao, 09/06/1966. Objet: demande de maintien de la cantine scolaire pour enfants sans parents. ACK.

357 The following is largely based on: ag Litny, I., Systèmes éducatifs et société touarègue: Les Kel Adagh du nord du Mali (Mémoire de diplôme EHESS 1992).

358 Ag Litny (1992), op. cit., 133 and 156.
role. These *troupes artistiques* had a uniquely Southern repertoire of Bambara songs and dances. 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, *Commandant du Cercle* Kidal, was of the opinion that in this way, the Kel Adagh children would get to know their country and appreciate the efforts made in their education by the party.

**Economic background to the teshumara – the droughts**

The late colonial period was a golden age in Tamacheq material culture and prosperity. This was largely owing to climatological conditions. Rainfall in the 1950s was more than abundant, pastures increased and so did the number of livestock. During the 1960s, this favourable trend reversed, slowly developing towards a catastrophic period of drought in the early 1970s reaching its peak in 1973.

As the details of climatology, ecological impact and such like have been well-covered elsewhere, I will here just briefly sum up the cycle of devastating effects. 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. One can imagine that 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 which could replace the falling lactation yields of the undernourished herds.

But conditions were not normal. First of all, transhumance was more strictly monitored by the authorities in the years after Alfellaga than they 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 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

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359 For detailed analysis of the economic and ecological impact of the droughts on pastoral existence in Northern Mali and Niger, see: ag Foné (1979), Boilley (1999), de Bruijn & van Dijk (1999), Glantz (1976), Spitzer (1993) and Swift (1977). My information here has largely been taken from Boilley (1999) and Glantz (1976).
droughts of 1947 and 1914. 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 livestock left to sell. The result of this disastrous course of events was an estimated livestock loss of eighty percent of their herds and a massive exodus of Kel Tamasheq seeking refuge elsewhere.

Taking the ‘normal’ course of migration towards the Azawad, many inhabitants of the Adagh and the Azawad ended up fleeing without livestock to Niger. There, they roamed the streets of Niamey and populated a Red Cross refugee camp called Lazaret. In 1975, an estimated 13,000 Kel Tamasheq still inhabited this camp, although by then the worst was over. Others took the road to Algeria, where they populated refugee camps at the border towns of Timiaouene and Bordj Mokhtar, where an estimated 12,000 Kel Tamasheq sought help. Some moved on to Tamanrasset and other cities in Southern Algeria, where they were helped by their relatives who had fled during *Alfella*ga. Others went to the South of Mali, and from there to cities throughout West Africa, as far away as Abidjan. 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.

The number of people who died in this catastrophe cannot be estimated, but they undoubtedly were many. As far as misery can be measured, the famine in the Sahel was estimated to have been worse than those in war-torn Nigeria and Bangladesh in the 1960s. Most victims were children who, weakened by malnutrition, died of seemingly innocent diseases like measles. Undernourishment, oedema, diarrhoea and cholera did the rest.

The drought of 1973 meant a near total collapse of the pastoral economy in Northern Mali. Anything that was left was then taken 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 identically devastating pattern repeated itself.

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361 Swift (1979), however, reports that Algerian merchants residing in Gao still bought livestock for export to Algeria in the early 1970s.


363 Ag Liby (1992), op. cit., 162.

Political background to the teshumara

The political background to the teshumara can be found in the outcomes of Alfeliaga and the droughts. The outcomes of Alfeliaga have been dealt with in chapter II and will be dealt with further in chapter VI. I will here limit myself to the political events and effects of the droughts within Mali, Algeria and Libya on the Kel Tamashq community.

The Kel Tamashq were not the only ones to suffer under Modibo Keita. As I have shown in chapter II, the economic policy of the regime was a failure. In 1967, the Malian Franc was devaluated and relinked to the West African CFA Franc, 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 agitation of the Milice Populaire and the Brigade de Vigilance; two armed para-military forces under command of the USRDA party. 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.

The various crises highlighted the internal division within the USRDA between ‘moderates’ and Marxist ‘hardliners’, that had always existed. Modibo Keita had started his political career as a ‘moderate’, but had gradually developed towards the left side of the party. 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 policies. To purge party and state of incompetents 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, a group of young army officers calling themselves the Comité Militaire de la Libération Nationale – CMLN – staged a coup d’état. Modibo Keita and his principal ministers were imprisoned and sent, ironically, to Kidal prison.

Let me finish this story from a Kel Adagh point of view. 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

365 Based on Sanankoua, B., La chute de Modibo Keita (Paris 1990).
367 See Campmas, op. cit.
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 liberty’. The caravans were halted, children were sent back to school, business remained as usual.

For *Commandant du Cercle* Diby Sillas Diarra, the coup d’état had a salutary effect. He was promoted to *Gouverneur* of the *Région* Gao. His promotion would not last long. The reign of suspicion characterizing the last days of the Keita regime had been inherited by the officers of the CMLN. In August 1969, Diarra and a few fellow officers were accused of plotting against the state. He was tried and sent to the prison camp of Taoudenit at the very northern edge of Mali. Effectively, Taoudenit functioned as a death camp. The inmates were forced to work in salt mines with only 30 minutes of rest a day. They drank only salted water, were undernourished and underclothed and deprived of medication. Diarra’s last breath was kicked out of him by his guards on 22 June 1972. Despite the fact that none of them witnessed these events, Diarra’s arrest, deportation and death are still remembered with some glee by the Kel Adagh.

At first, the takeover by the CMLN, under the leadership of Lieutenant Moussa Traoré, had some positive effects. The USRDA was abolished, the *Brigades de Vigilance* and the *Milice Populaire* were disarmed and disbanded. International confidence in the country was restored, despite the fact that the new regime had announced it would not drastically alter the political course. However, private enterprise and commerce were restored, in the hope of attracting new foreign capital. Borders were opened for outside investment but also for Malian inhabitants who wanted to travel. The re-opening of the borders was enthusiastically welcomed by young Kel Tamacheq, who left for Algeria in search of employment.

But soon old habits crept back in, which could only be expected as most of the administrative personnel remained in place. The economy remained stagnant. The Malian economy was opened to foreign investment, but existing state enterprises remained state-owned, curbing foreign investment. Import and export of certain primary goods, notably petrol and cotton, remained a state privilege easily exploited by those in control. Corruption mounted, centred around an in-group, the core of which was composed of officers around Moussa Traoré, his family and in-laws. Traoré’s wife Mariam and her relatives, generally known as le clan de Madame, predated even more on state revenues than the officers themselves.

The mounting corruption and its devastating effects soon became apparent to the Kel Tamacheq, when the drought of the 1970s was at its height. Their cattle perished, their means of existence disappeared, the Kel

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368 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de novembre 1968. ACK.

369 Samaké, G., *Le chemin d’honneur* (Bamako 1992). Samaké was one of the accused officers and one of two to leave Taoudenit alive.
Tamasheq in Mali and Niger could do nothing else than flee to the neighbouring countries, or to the cities and villages further south. Here they were at first left to their own devices. The sedentary populations at the banks of the Niger and further south had food problems of their own. By 1972 the drought refugees concentrated around the towns and villages had become veritable refugee camps.

By then, it had dawned on governments and international agencies that a disaster was taking place in the Sahel. Relief aid was organised, but largely ineffectively.\(^{370}\) The bureaucracies of agencies such as FAO and USAID were highly ineffective and unprepared. They reacted too late and inadequately. 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 Sahel. These problems, of course, went unnoticed by the Kel Tamasheq. But other problems were noticeable. 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.

When relief food arrived, it passed from the hands of the providing agencies into the care of the local authorities who were in charge of its distribution. The result, under the heavily corrupted Traoré regime was twofold. First of all, large portions of the offered foodstuffs were not freely distributed as was intended, but sold by functionaries at local markets at high prices. Second, relief goods that were freely distributed were 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 [sic] 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,…`\(^{371}\)

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. Their accounts may have been scant, but not necessarily incorrect. For *le Monde* reporter Philippe Decreane, the amount of corruption and governmental non-cooperation, and the misery in the refugee camps surrounding Timbuktu he witnessed, led him to conclude that the Malian Government was carrying out a deliberate genocide on the Kel Tamasheq.\(^{372}\) As relief workers were generally denied access to the refugee camps and as Decreane could not help but see the sales of relief aid in the markets of the North, his version of events may have had some basis in fact. Similar conclusions and impressions of existing ‘traditional enmities between nomadic and sedentary populations’ were reached by the CDC commission cited above.

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. It can also not be denied that the relations between state and Tamasheq society had been strained from the start, to say the least. The drought and its effects on the Kel Tamasheq might not have been unwelcome to the Traoré regime at the time. Finally, the accusations made by Decreane, even when they were incorrect, very likely express 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 permanently, even after the drought was over.

In their countries of exile, in Algeria and Libya but also in Niger and Nigeria, the migrants were struck by the comparative, or even absolute wealth of their new surroundings. But even on their travels within Mali the differences between North and South were visible. Southern Mali was, in their eyes, green and fertile, better developed and wealthier. This could only lead to the conclusion that the Malian state was totally incompetent and corrupt in dealing with the North. However, the riches of the countries of exile were unaccessible to the *ishumar* and other Kel Tamasheq refugees. And whenever the host states could, they tried to expel the unwelcome Kel Tamasheq.

Already in the late 1960s, the Algerian local authorities had discussed the possibility of sending back those Kel Adagh who had fled from *Alfeilaga*. At the time, a number of these Kel Adagh had volunteered to return, as the effects of the drought were already being felt 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, who closely monitored the returnees.\(^{373}\) In 1974 and again in 1983, haphazard returns of drought refugees were

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\(^{372}\) Bolliey (1999), op. cit., 378-82.

\(^{373}\) Cercle de Kidal, Revue des événements du 2ème trimestre 1970. ACK.

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organised in Niger as well as in Algeria.\textsuperscript{374} 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 was 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.\textsuperscript{375} 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 \textit{ishumar} were confronted with Libyan racism and discrimination. At the Libyan border, many \textit{ishumar} were arrested and molested. As immigrant workers, only the lowest jobs were open to them. In the streets, they were insulted. Legal papers remained hard to get, which kept the \textit{ishumar} in Libya in a precarious illegal situation.

\textbf{The life of the \textit{ishumar}}

It can be said that the \textit{teshumara} was a direct consequence of the droughts of 1973 and 1984. As it left the Kel Tamasheq without livestock, they had to look for other ways to survive and organise their lives. The droughts reshaped Tamasheq existence in the most drastic way possible. By force and overnight, Tamasheq life changed from rural and pastoral to urban and wage-earning. Particularly among the educated Tamasheq elite, 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 die a pastoralist.’\textsuperscript{376}

As no new means of existence could be found in Mali, many stayed in their places of exile in Algeria, Libya, Niger and the rest of West Africa. Another solution was found, as elsewhere in Mali, in a seasonal migration towards cities to look for temporary jobs. In Mali, this seasonal trek is known as \textit{l’exode}. Young Tamasheq men looked for employment in sectors that were at first totally alien to them. Employment was found in various occupations, such as salaried herdmanship, agriculture in the oasis towns of the Sahara, the guarding of villas (notably those of expatriates),

\textsuperscript{374} Klute (2001), op. cit., 214.

\textsuperscript{375} Ibidem, 217.

construction work and masonry, car mechanics and even fishery. Most jobs were temporary, and many moved from town to town, from job to job. Later on, this plethora of jobs was completed with military service in Libya, which will be dealt with extensively in the next chapter.

A more profitable, but far more dangerous occupation many ishumar took up, was trafficking between Algeria, Mali and Niger. The Algerian state subsidised basic goods, such as flour, bread, sugar, oil, tea, dates and petrol. This price policy meant that these goods could be acquired cheaply in Southern Algeria, whereas they were often lacking in Mali and Niger. These goods were bought in Algeria and transported southwards, 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.\textsuperscript{377} 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.\textsuperscript{378}

A third benefit of this trafficking was that the remaining inhabitants of Northern Mali and Niger were provided with basic products, unavailable in the state run shops at home, for reasonable prices. Most ishumar would spend the money earned on luxury items, such as watches, stereos, sun glasses or other signs of modernity. Others would save their money and invest it in more trafficking, buying cars to facilitate transport. Or they would set up legal businesses in Algeria, if they had access to the Algerian administration to obtain the necessary papers. This latter option was open to those Kel Adagh who had fled to Algeria during Alfeilaga, and who had taken up Algerian citizenship, which was offered to them at the time. Many ishumar varied their economic existence, taking up jobs as herdsman or gardeners, moving on to masonry, saving some money, which would then be invested in smuggling. The experiences in trafficking consumer goods which so 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.

Except for those Kel Tamashq who found employment as salaried herdsmen in Algeria or Libya, all jobs were to be found in cities. It should be emphasised that not only young men migrated from the Tamashq homelands. Most Kel Tamashq 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

\textsuperscript{377} Due to the failure of Modibo Keita’s planned economy, the Malian Franc was first devaluated and relinked to the CFA Franc in 1967 and then abolished in 1984 when Mali re-entered the CFA franc zone.

\textsuperscript{378} Ag Ahar, E., ‘L’initiation d’un ashmar’, H. Clauidot-Hawad (ed.), Touaregs, exil et résistance REMMM 57 (1990), 141-153, 144. E. Ag Ahar is an alias for the Tamashq poet Hawad, who wrote this article in interview style. However, his statement is no less valid of ishumar practices.
moved to look for work. Young women also travelled to the cities of Southern Algeria looking for a better life. They often travelled alone. The mobility and independence of Tamashq women made many Algerians look disfavourably upon the refugees. Particularly the Kel Hoggar, the Kel Tamashq 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.379

In the Southern Algerian city of Tamanrasset a whole new shanty town arose after the drought, inhabited by the Malian Kel Tamashq. It was called Tahaggart-shumara, which would translate as ‘unemployed in the Hoggar’ – the Algerian mountain range in which Tamanrasset was situated. Similar neighbourhoods arose in Djanet, Adrar, and in Libyan cities, such as Ghat and Ghadames. Tamanrasset was the main destination in Algeria for the Malian Kel Tamashq. Djanet was the main destination for the Nigerien Kel Tamashq. In Libya, there was a mix of all communities. In these neighbourhoods the teshumara developed. To the Kel Tamashq, city life is characterised by a number of traits – salaried employment discussed above, 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 indeed. A Tamashq tent is open at least to one side, often more, giving a view over the vast plains or mountains. Tamashq 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. I have never seen Tahaggart-shumara, but I can imagine it to be as the newer neighbourhoods of the city of Kidal. Houses are square, wattle and daub constructions, with a flat roof. They are also relatively small. The house is surrounded by a large walled court. Within the court is a toilet in one of the corners of the court walls, and 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, clothes et cetera, 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, but it developed into a space similar to the one described. Although at present many Kel Tamashq 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. \(^{380}\)

The Intekoua neighbourhood in Kidal. November 1996.

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. In chapter II, I have described the failed efforts made by the administration to get the Kel Tamasheq to eat vegetables. It can only be the irony of history that the ishumar now adopted what they had at first refused. 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 with a thesis entitled ‘Les possibilités agricoles dans le Cercle de Kidal’. His well-researched 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 de Kidal. In fact, these possibilities exist and their exploitation is necessary to save thousands of human lives.’\textsuperscript{381}

In a way, Acherif pleaded for the reintroduction of the agricultural endeavours of the Keita regime described in chapter II, which he might well have witnessed. His plea fell on deaf ears both at government level and at the level of external development aid. However, some Kel Tamasheq inhabiting the Niger Bend did settle and take up gardening to some extent. The second drought of the 1980s brought more and more effective relief aid to the Niger Bend. Many NGO’s such as the Norwegian AEN set up lasting and large scale development projects. However, to many of these NGO’s, development can only be brought to sedentary people. In reaction (but also on their own accord), some Kel Tamasheq in the Niger Bend constructed villages and took up gardening and farming.

\textsuperscript{381} Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 41.
Not only dietary habits changed. Clothing habits changed as well. Most women stuck to their customary dress: a wrap-around skirt and a long veil wrapped around the body with an attached head-scarf. Their face remained unveiled, to the contempt of many other inhabitants of Southern Algeria. 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* – the male turban and veil. In Tamashq culture, the *eghewid* is the main symbol expressing male honour, dignity and pride. The customary *eghewid* is a complex, multi-layered wrapping of various cloths, which can be as long as twenty metres or more. In general, the less amount of the face visible, the more a man is preserving his honour. To a Tamashq, 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 bigger a man’s turban, the greater his age, wealth and standing. 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. The length of this cloth was reduced considerably to about four metres, which expressed their chosen status as young and irresponsible men, but also the loss of honour Tamashq 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. The mouth was carefully exposed, instead of covered, as a reminder of the loss of honour Tamashq society had undergone in the last decades: a lost rebellion; two droughts forcing them into exile and mendicancy, 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 their moustache and grew beards in accordance with the prescriptions of the prophet Muhammad. Some *ishumar* even went further. They entirely gave up wearing an *eghewid*, even in the presence of women.

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. In pastoral society, the tent and

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382 For detailed presentations of veil and turban and related concepts of honour, see Claudot-Hawad, H., *Visage voilé* (1993); and Rasmussen, S., *Veiled self, transparent meanings*, *Ethnology* XXXII-2 (1991), 101-17. Claudot-Hawad remarks that the *mulagen* of 1963 also wrapped their turban in a chaotic way, to express their status as rebel.

383 At present, a reverse trend is visible. Many former *ishumar*, walking around unveiled in their younger days, took to wearing the *eghewid* again after the end of the rebellion. This might well be an indication of a general sense of reinstated honour.

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, 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. In pastoral society, the bride price is paid by the future husband and his relatives 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 Tamasheq society, virginity is not highly prized. In contrast to most of the surrounding cultures, Tamasheq female sexual conduct or purity is not related to group or masculine honour. Extra-marital affairs are only a cause of shame when a woman becomes pregnant out of wedlock. 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.385

A last, notable change 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'.

Two young ishumar, Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall (right) and Iyad ag Ghali (left) have their picture taken. Somewhere in Libya, late 1970s. Courtesy of Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall.
**Al-guitara**

The evenings in Tahaggart-shumara were regularly enlivened with parties called *zahuten* – from the Arabic *zahu*: distraction.386 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 in a style generally called *tindé*.

*Tindé* is perform a female performance. From a mortar and two pestles, an improvised drum is made, the *tindé*, played by a woman. Another woman will sing to the rhythm, improvising the lyrics as she goes. More women sit around the drum and singer, accompanying drum and song with handclapping. A famous singer of these early days of the *teshumara*, was Lalla, a young Kel Adagh woman. Her house in Tahaggart-shumara attracted many *ishumar*. She sang traditional songs, as well as songs which treated the life of the *ishumar*. These songs were taped on cassettes and copied for those who were not present.

Another new phenomenon was the introduction of *aggiwin* in Kel Adagh and Azawad culture. The *aggiwin* can best be compared to the West African *griots*: musicians of caste origins, who recite oral histories and sing family praises to those who pay them to do so. The *aggiwin* originally came from the Timbuktu area where they had for long been part of Tamasheq culture, but they were previously unknown in the Adagh and Azawad. The *ishumar* spent fortunes on these *aggiwin*, but by the late 1970s their activities were condemned as anti-revolutionary. In that same period, a new musical genre came into existence: *al-guitara*.

Contrary to *tindé*, *al-guitara* is an almost uniquely male genre developed by *ishumar* in Libya and Algeria.387 In these countries, but also in the Malian *groupes artistiques*, the *ishumar* became familiar with guitars (from which the style derives its name), and rock music. The first to make *al-guitara* music were a few Kel Adagh men from the *tevsiit* Irreguenaten, notably Ibrahim ag Alkhabib, nicknamed Ibraybone. Ibraybone started his musical career playing a self-made instrument out of a plastic jerrycan and some strings. But soon he would learn to play the electric guitar. He was joined by other now famous artists such as Inteyedin, Keddu ag Osad, Mohamed ‘Japonais’ ag Itla, Sweyloum and Abenneben. Together these men formed a band called Kel Tinariwen – “Those from the deserts”. They were accompanied by some background vocalists and an improvised jerrycan-drums. Musical inspiration came from the virtuous solos of Jimmy Hendrix and from the simple clear chord schemes of Dire Straits. Despite these influences, *al-guitara* developed into an original sound with strong influences of local musical genres. However, sound remained long subordinate to message. This message was one of reflection on Tamasheq existence. It developed from a ‘bluesy’ perspective on misery into a call for

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386 Based on Belli & Dida (1993), op. cit.
387 Based on Belalimat (1996), op. cit.
active revolution to all the Kel Tamasq. The first known song dates from 1978. It reflects the misery of Tamasq existence –

*The world changes, we sit in ruins.*[^388]

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.*[^389]

In the coming decades, the music from the band Kel Tinariwen or its individual members would accompany all major stages of the teshumara and tanekra resistance movement, as well as the rebellion and its various stages. But the Kel Tinariwen had no monopoly on poetical expression. It is open to all members of Tamasq 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.

**Alternatives to the teshumara**

Above, I have outlined some of the most important economic, material and cultural aspects of the teshumara. It should be strongly emphasised that the teshumara was not uniform, and not the only form of modernity open to the Kel Tamaq. 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 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 Tamasq 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 Tamasq who moved to the cities of coastal West Africa had different influences transforming their way of life. The Malian Kel Tamasq 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 Tamasq culture such as the teshumara, even if it did develop, could hardly be expressed. Naturally, cultural influences were different as well. Kel Tamasq women in West Africa soon adopted local clothes and fashions, contrary to their kinswomen in the Maghreb.


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. Those Kel Tamasheq who considered themselves as ‘white’ were, in Libya, now confronted with a contrary opinion on their physical appearance. 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 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. They were often compared to and treated in ways similar to the Gypsies in Europe. 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 we shall see in the next chapter.

A second difference with regards to caste origins is related to attitudes to work. As I have described elsewhere, manual labour was an abhorrence to the Tamasheq nobility. Having lost their herds, some apparently even preferred starvation to taking up manual labour. This happened, of course, only in a few exceptional cases, but the noble Kel Tamasheq nevertheless saw constraints with regards to professional occupations. These should be as close as possible to their previous ways of existence. Herding, guarding houses, driving, smuggling and, later, military service were acceptable. Construction work, gardening or other forms of manual labour were not. This was different from the Kel Tamasheq of the protected strata of society; imghad and former slaves. The latter, not constricted by any social code of conduct, or no longer feeling these restrictions, could take up any profession. At present, a large community of former Tamasheq slaves are successful fish retailers in Abidjan, an unimaginable occupation for other Kel Tamasheq.

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, the so called ineslemen, who came particularly from the tewsit Kel Essuq. 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’an. Some even managed to gain positions of considerable prestige and wealth.

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390 Personal communication by Annemarie Bouman, who is conducting research among Kel Tamasheq of slave origins in Burkina Faso and Niger.
The religious path did not only lead to Mecca and Medina. During colonial times (and probably even before), a number of Kel Tamamšeq had travelled to Egypt, where they studied at the prestigious Al-Azhar university. This institution linked the Kel Tamamšeq with developments in the wider Muslim world and the new directions of Muslim thought in the 19th and 20th century, which were known in colonial times as Wahabism, a term which has recently resurfaced to denote ‘fundamentalist Islam’.

The majority of Ishumr was confronted with developments in the Muslim world as well as their Maghreb diaspora. Although it should be said that the Teshumara has a profoundly worldly character, some Ishumr were nevertheless influenced by Muslim ways of thinking. The Kel Ađah, who until the 1980s formed the majority of Ishumr, had always been renowned in the Tamamšeq world as pious and learned Muslims. Their piety and Muslim learning had originally given them their status and place in the overall hierarchy of the Tamamšeq 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 Tamamšeq 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 Tamamšeq to study further, as this would alienate the Kel Tamamšeq from their natural environment and life as a pastoralist. As late as 1955, Claude Blanguernon, a school director in Tamanrasset whose task it was to educate the Kel Tamamšeq wrote –

‘I do not believe it to be necessary to bring the Tuareg to a high level of education … this will not be beneficial 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’.391

This changed in independent Mali. Inside and outside the Ađah and Azawad, the number of Tamamšeq 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 Tamamšeq soldiers on the security of the state.

A number of Kel Tamamšeq pursued higher education outside Mali, mostly in Algeria but sometimes as far away as Khartoum, Nouakchott or France. The educated could join the civil service or they could offer their services to Western NGO’s, which abounded in Northern Mali after the droughts. These Kel Tamamšeq also lived in cities, were exposed to new

cultures and ways of thinking, new consumer goods, new cultural expressions and forms of organisation. But the outcome would be totally different from the teshumara experience. Whereas the ishumar developed a more and more radical political outlook, calling for revolution and independence, the educated Kel Tamasher had a far more moderate standpoint with regards to the state, but a far more radical outlook on the necessary changes within Tamasher society itself.

As I have said, teshumara and education were not, however, mutually exclusive. On one hand, a part of teshumara ideas evolved around education (see chapter VI) and many ishumar in Algeria and Libya attended schools in their host countries. But the educational efforts of the ishumar were hard to sustain due to their illegal, migratory existence. Besides, their education was in Arabic (which accounted for part of the Muslim influences within the teshumara), whereas those educated in Mali were instructed through French. This greatly hampered communication on intellectual matters. Both groups simply used other terms and vocabulary to express themselves.

On the other hand, a number of educated Kel Tamasher 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 semi-legality, discrimination, expulsions and the other teshumara experiences. A number of these educated 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 Tamasher 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

The nicknames tagged onto the educated by their ishermar counterparts are revealing. They were called the ‘ondit’ or ‘entoucas’, after the French expressions on dit que and en tout cas they often employed even when speaking Tamashed.393 They were accused of having knowledge, but not using it for the benefit of the Kel Tamashed, or even of outright betrayal to the Tamashed cause. Finally, they were accused of being acculturated, a strange accusation that could easily be inverted. On their part, the educated reproached the ishermar for being ignorant of the realities of the world, uncivilised and pursuing an irrelevant cause. Changing society was necessary, but not along the vague and half-conceived ideas of the ishermar. The educated, in turn, called the ishermar ‘mazbuten’ from their favourite Arabic expression mazbut – ‘right’, ‘OK’.394

The animosity between both groups would reach a head during the rebellion, when the rebels had no choice than 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 ishermar and the educated I have entered the arena of political debates within Tamashed society. They are the focus of chapter VI – tanekra.

**Conclusion**

In the second half of the twentieth century, Tamashed society underwent dramatic changes. In the late colonial period and under the Keita regime in the 1950s and 1960s, the Kel Tamashed actively resisted changes forced upon them by external political powers. But changes caused by the ecological disasters of the 1970s and 1980s could not be circumvented. The two great droughts ruined Tamashed pastoral existence, the basis of social and economic life. In reaction to these droughts, young Malian and Nigerien Kel Tamashed joined a diasporic community in the Maghreb, West Africa and beyond, which had already been created from the 1940s onwards.

In these countries, the Kel Tamashed were faced with living conditions very different from their own. Tents in the Saharan mountains and plains were abandoned for houses in cities. A pastoral subsistence and trade economy was changed for wage labour, smuggling, white collar work and, later, military careers. In reaction to these new living conditions, Tamashed culture changed considerably. With wages and urban dwellings came new consumer goods. Gender relations changed as a result of new ways of living and under the influence of dominant host cultures. New styles of cultural expression, music and poetry developed. Dietary habits changed as well.

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393 Belalimat (1996), op. cit., 75.
394 Conversation with Moussa ag Keyna. Leiden, 04/10/01.
Although most changes in cultural patterns were reactions to drastically different living conditions, it should not be said that change was only a forced reaction. Especially the young Kel Tamasheq in the Maghreb consciously changed their behaviour, expressing the upheaval within Tamasheq society. This explicitly developed culture became known as teshumara, ‘the way of the unemployed’. Conscious of their own perilous situation and that of their kin, and realizing that Tamasheq culture as they knew it was not suitable for the situation they found themselves in, the ishumar actively thought about, debated, and sought solutions to the problems of their community.

These solutions became more and more political in outlook during the 1980s. Cultural changes and the reflections on social, economic and political upheaval gave birth to a nationalist movement proclaiming revolution in Tamasheq society. However, while political revolution was preached, the real revolution had already taken place. Where Modibo Keita had unsuccessfully tried to instigate revolution through coercion, the Kel Tamasheq now sought his goals themselves – namely a revolution in social relations, in economics and in nomadic existence.
VI
Tanekra
The revolutionary movement
(1975-1990)

Introduction
In 1974, after ten years of detention, former rebel leader Elledi ag Alla managed to escape from prison in Bamako. Travelling by truck, he reached Ouargla Algeria where he was welcomed by his former comrades Amegha ag Sherif, Younes ag Ayyouba and Issouf ag Cheick. The four men probably had a lot to discuss, but only one subject would have global resonance: Will we, or will we not continue our fight for independence? For them, the answer was affirmative. The decision made by these four determined veterans of the first rebellion would reach its outcome in June 1990, when a small group of young Kel Tamashiq men proclaimed the start of a Tamashiq revolution to establish an independent Tamashiq state.

Central to this chapter is the creation of the formalised nationalist movement that prepared for this 1990 rebellion. This movement is generally referred to by the Malian Kel Tamashiq as tanekra – the uprising.

Three elements will be central in the description and analysis of the tanekra movement. The first element is the concept of ‘nation-state’. There was no way the movement could sidestep the political construct of the nation-state in their thinking with regards to the political future. Whereas the Kel Tamashiq community could be imagined – in Benedict Anderson’s meaning of the term – as a community of people related by (fictive) blood ties, the movement chose to imagine the nation as a community bound by territory. This eventually worked counter-productive to the movement’s viewpoint. Having started as a union between the Kel Tamashiq from Mali and Niger in the 1980s, the movement ended up divided between the Malian and Nigerien Kel Tamashiq. Moreover, both these groups had strong divisions within themselves before the decade was through.

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. In this case, social cohesion of the nation-to-be had always been expressed through kinship ties. However, the Tamashiq nationalists carefully avoided imagining their nation according to these ties as they had always been an obstacle to 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*, kept structuring day to day political practice. Clan affiliation was at the heart of what one informant labelled ‘*partisme*’ – the social and political structure of Tamashq society in *tewsiten* hierarchically organised and in constant competition over a better place within the hierarchy. The structure of the *tewsit* system has been extensively described in the introduction. In this chapter we will see how it interfered with the ideology of Tamashq unity, proclaimed by the *tanekra* movement. Political thinking along clan lines eventually led to the near collapse of the movement in the ‘Tamanrasset war’ of 1985. In the following chapters, I will show how clan thinking within the movement led to the break-up of the united rebel front in various movements along clan lines.

The second element is the Tamashq concept *egha* – hatred and revenge. The *tanekra* movement was multiform in its outlooks and goals. It was, however, kept together through one common sentiment – 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 Tamashq. The movement made explicit use of memories of *Alfellaaga* 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. This incorporation of post-colonial political ideas led to a further division within the movement between lower and upper strata of Tamashq society, which will return in chapters VII and VIII.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will sketch the political ideals, thoughts and concepts of the *tanekra* movement. In the second part, I will describe its organisation and internal struggles.

**The *tanekra* political perception of the world**

I will here sketch the most important issues for the *ishumar* – the nature of the nation-state and the nature of their society, concepts of nation and country, education and intelligence, social equality and inequality, and the position of the Kel Tamashq in the world. Ideas about these questions were expressed in *al-guitara* songs and poetry. They are also the main topics of the few written documents the movement left behind during this period and in the early days of the rebellion. Finally, I will describe the one binding element that drove the movement and kept it together despite its internal disagreements, *egha* – hatred and the need for revenge.

**One nation, one goal, one people**

The disasters hitting the Kel Tamashq in the post-colonial period, described in the previous chapters, made it all the more clear to the *ishumar* that Tamashq independence was necessary. Some of these
calamities would not have struck if independence had been granted to the Kel Tamasherq, or so the ishumar thought. The tanekra movement was all about regaining independence, expressed in ideas on territory – akal – and the Tamasherq as a people or nation – temust, or tumast. These concepts found their essential expression in the tanekra slogan akal iyyan, ittu iyyan, temust iyvat – ‘one country, one goal, one people’. A slogan awkwardly similar to the Malian slogan 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 lack is made up for in zeal. The zealously pursued goal was to reunite the Tamasherq nation in a liberated independent country.

**Akal, country**

The Tamasherq pronoun ‘Kel’ literally means ‘those of’ or ‘those from’, which is the first part of many group names. The Tamasherq world covers a number of regions, all having their own dialect and singularities in social and political organisation. These regions are often the territories of the various federations in which the Kel Tamasherq were politically organised. The Kel Ajjer still inhabit and previously ruled the Ajjer mountains and part of the Libyan Fezzan. The Kel Hoggar inhabit and ruled the Algerian Hoggar mountains. The Kel Adagh inhabit the Malian Adagh n Ifoghas, named after the ruling Kel Adagh clan, the Ifoghas. The Air mountains are inhabited by the Kel Air, with their rather unique political system: the Agadez sultanate with various ‘officials’ ruling the federations within it. The Azawad and Niger Bend, finally, are inhabited by the Kel Tademekkat and Ouillimidien confederations. Each confederation dominated at least its own area and often those of others at one moment or another.

In the 1960s, the internal division into regions was overshadowed by a new geographical delimitation – that of the new nation-states. In present day Tamasherq, national belonging has crept into ideas of identity, despite efforts to counter its influence. The pronoun ‘Kel’ is now not only used to indicate specific social political groups internal to Tamasherq space, but also to denote ones belonging to a nation state: Kel Alger, Kel Libya, Kel Mali, Kel Niger – those of Algeria, Libya, Mali and Niger. The tanekra movement sought to counter this thought in developing the idea of their country – akal.

“Akal means earth, ground and political territory. In the latter meaning it could indicate the territory of an ettebel or 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 Tamasherq; akal n Kel Tamasherq. In this meaning too, it had political connotations. Akal n Kel Tamasherq meant the country where the Kel Tamasherq rule. This idea can be taken in two ways. It can mean the whole territory where Kel Tamasherq exercise some form of political power. It can also mean a part of the Tamasherq country where a federation or confederation exercises power, independent of other parts of the Tamasherq world.
Scholars studying Tamasheq society have long argued whether or not a Tamasheq country ever existed as a political unity. Those in defence of the idea that Tamasheq country forms a political unit focus on the argument of one coherent Tamasheq political space, a communal conception of politics played out in a given territory – that in which the Tamasheq lived. In other words, political unity lies in common social cultural concepts of politics within a given space. Those refuting Tamasheq geo-political unity focus on the lack of central political authority in the Tamasheq world, with a form of power over all Tamasheq country (thus bypassing the Agadez sultanate). In other words – the Kel Tamasheq had never created a central (nation) state.

Indeed, it is hard to detect a moment prior to the tanekra nationalist movement in which Tamasheq society formed one totally coherent political entity with one paramount leader in a way similar to a (nation) state. First of all the question should be asked whether or not one should judge political or territorial unity solely on the basis of nation-state criteria. Political unity has never been the prerogative of nation-states or indeed other state forms as those in defence of Tamasheq political unity argue. But if one does apply nation-state criteria as a litmus test for political unity in the Tamasheq case, a few observations can be made.

Nation-states were shaped under conditions of military rivalry between previous polities, challenging each others territorial integrity. Prior to colonial conquest, the territorial integrity of Tamasheq country had never been under threat, and neither had been their political supremacy in it. The French colonial armies had conquered Tamasheq country with a military superiority exceeding that of 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 nation, if need be under French tutelage in the form of the OCRS. This was not achieved and the Kel Tamasheq were faced with the dismemberment of their territory under various other 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 the Kel Tamasheq were united. 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

The concept of akal did not only come to mean country in the sense of a unified political territory. The concept came to mean ‘fatherland’ in the nationalist sense – a country where ones 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’ – tenere.

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

In Tamasheq, tenere – desert – 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 tenere 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 tenere. 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 tenere is silence or solitude. Those who had to cross the desert or had to dwell in it, notably caravan traders, were

396 Poem by Intakhmuda ag Sidi Mohamed, 1978. Klute (2001), poem 1, Belalimat (1996), poem 1. In lines 7,8, 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.


398 Based on Casajus, D., La tente dans la solitude, la société et le mort chez les Touaregs Kel Ferwan (Cambridge 1987).
confronted with this silence. Enduring tenere – silence or solitude, an absence of social structure – is one of the harshest experiences a Kel Tamasheq could endure.

The two meanings of the word tenere 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 to ‘home’ and their previous ways of life as possible. But close to home is not home itself, and tenere – desert, is not social space – akal.

The droughts and other events had transformed their country into a desert and had shattered Tamasheq society. The fraud committed with relief aid during the droughts, the expulsions in 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, it is supported by the rich Arabs. The Kel Tamasheq are one group, closed in on itself in the Sahara.'

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 Kel Tamasheq.

**The nature of society**

The nation-state was not the only problem the teshumara perceived as an obstacle to Tamasheq existence. Society itself needed to be changed as well. The major issues were the caste and clan systems and the position of the chiefs.

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 seems to have been given a name – temushagha or noble behaviour. It is taken that all the Kel Tamasheq, even the former

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400 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.
slaves, aspire to live according to the concept of *temushagha*. The proverb *ellelui 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. However, both the existence of separate caste identities and the hegemony of one of them – *temushagha* – proves the fundamental inequality within Tamasheq society.

At the primary schools founded by the Keita regime in Mali, the idea of equality had been vehemently propagated. This education, together with the events of 1963 in the Adagh left another legacy to the *tanekra* movement – its hostility towards the tribal chiefs. The Keita regime had depicted the chiefs as colonial feudal lords working against the interests of the labouring Malian masses. Indeed, to many of the Kel Tamasheq, those 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.

*Tewsit* or clan identity is connected to caste identity. One's identity is first and foremost derived from one's *tewsit* and it is to this social group that one is loyal. *Tewsiten* are grouped together in federations and confederations – *ittebelen*. The federation was the main political unit in pre-colonial Tamasheq society. These federations were in constant competition over power, derived from the number of clans, people, and economic wealth (herds) the federation was made up of and controlled. In establishing power, hierarchy is essential. Thus, the federations were in constant competition over hierarchical status. The clans within one federation also competed over their internal hierarchical position within the federation. Hierarchy is important even within a clan, where members are in competition over their social position. Like caste identity, *tewsit* identity can be a large bone of contention among the Kel Tamasheq. It is performe a definition of self being in competition with outsiders, and it is therefore no basis for communal belonging on a larger scale.

The clan system was seen as an abhorrence by most *ishumars*. 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.

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establishing social coherence and group loyalty among ishumar. On the contrary, the constant competition over hierarchy between tewsit could only sow discord among 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.

Tamasheq intellectuals engaged in the study of Tamasheq society. They developed the idea that ‘tribalism’ or the political competition between federations, clans and castes, had foreclosed political unity in the face of colonial conquest. It also foreclosed political unity, social change and the amelioration of Tamasheq existence at present.

‘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.’

Temust, nation

The tanekra movement sought to overcome identity marks and internal distinctions. In order to create unity, a new concept needed to be developed – 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 – temust n Kel Tamasheq.

‘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 [language], we save our specificity. Nothing distinguishes a people from another people more than language.’

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403 Ibidem.
New forms of competitive identities

While on one hand the tanekra consciously sought to overcome internal social differences, on the other hand, it created new concepts that furthered differences between social groups. As I have said before, teshumara culture and the tanekra movement were not homogenous. Discussion on various topics resulted in various concepts which were often at odds with each other.

It remains to be analysed whether the assumption that all the Kel Tamasheq aspire to behave as nobles or become noble – temushagha – is founded. As I have explained in Chapter V, the cultural and social habits of former slaves had profound advantages during the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. Not restrained by temushagha, the noble code of conduct, the former slaves could take up any job and therefore assure their immediate economic survival. Another indication for the waning of temushagha as an ideal role model is seen in the recent conceptualisation of timgheda – the behaviour of an imghad – a free but not noble Tamasheq.

The idea of a separate code of conduct for imghad developed during the second rebellion, when various rebel movements took to fighting each other over political and hierarchical dominance in Tamasheq society. But timgheda found its origins within teshumara culture and the resistance organisation of the 1980s, when a number of the movement’s members questioned the leadership position of the Ifoghas clan 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 temet – lineage (see introduction) – should be of no importance to ones place in society. This last idea forms an explicit denial of social privilege based on birthright. The industriousness of the imghad and the laziness of nobles echoes the writings of Malian administrators during the Kelta regime. As I have described in chapter II, in the Adagh, in the relative absence of former slaves (bellah), the administration saw 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 would play an important part in the conflicts to come within the movement, starting with the Tamanrasset war of 1985, and continuing throughout the rebellion.

The idea that clans and clan affiliation were at the heart of Tamasheq political discord was not shared by all ishumar. Some members of the tanekra were of the opinion that the strengthening of the traditional chiefs and traditional values, including the tewsit system, was the right answer to the problems besetting Tamasheq society. According to this small minority, Tamasheq society had lost many of its basic values and society had been weakened by colonial meddling in internal affairs. By reinforcing the traditional structure, the power of the chiefs, and reviving religious practices and zeal, Tamasheq society would regain its pre-colonial strength.
Like caste identity, tewsét 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’. To some extent, tefoghessa has been developed in reaction to timgheda – ‘imghadness’ and it is an extension of the idea of temushagha – ‘nobility’. Tefoghessa expresses 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. I will come back to timgheda and tefoghessa in the next chapters.

One should keep in mind that the problems of Tamasheq society and their answers are presented here from the viewpoint of the educated 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 ‘traditional’ 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 to 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.

404 Part of a poem by Hamayni ag Essadayane, early 1980s. Translated by Lamine ag Bilal and myself.
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 *tshumara* was not seen as a serious answer to the problems besetting Tamasheg 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.*

**Egha, the motor behind the tanekra**

Shame, honour and revenge are topics which most anthropologists working on the Mediterranean region are highly familiar with. 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 Tamasheg 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 which are not easily covered with one term or translation. Above I have outlined only a few of the various new political and social ideas which took root in *tshumara* 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_ 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 ones self-esteem, 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.

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 Tamasheg rebellions, _egha_ only means powerlessness, the

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405 Here, ‘the ties of his mother’ refers to the matrilineal relatives – the *iboubashen* or matrilineal cousins (and patrilineal cross cousins), to whom one owes both economic support and absolute loyalty.

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*  

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*

*I have a question for my brothers in my nation*

*Consider the situation you are in*

_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 ones honour.

In chapter IV, I have explained the role of _egha_ in Alfellaga, the 1963 rebellion. It is possible that feelings of _egha_ were not strongly present among the former _ilulagen_ 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 who 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 as they cannot wield arms (revenge is in violence only). Many of these children would later join the _tushumara_ 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

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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 [egha]. 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”.

*Egga* as an emotion can be reified. The debt remains open until an act of revenge has been carried out. The best translation of *egga* as a reified emotion is probably wrath or ire. In this concrete meaning, *egga* had the power to unify all the Kel Tamasheq, or at least the politically active ones, in a movement intending to settle its debt with Mali in kind. They did this in 1990, after fifteen years of preparation.

Wrath and revenge have their logic and rationale. The psychologist Frijda has provided some elements of analysis for vengeful behaviour.\(^4\)

Frijda defines revenge as follows –

> 'An action aiming to damage a person or social group, in reaction to the feeling that one has been first damaged oneself by this person or social group, with the restriction that the action which damages that person or group is not intended to restore the first damage, or to prevent this first damage from occurring or persisting in direct confrontation, or to gain material benefit.' \(^4\)

According to Frijda, revenge has social as well as personal functions and benefits. Socially, the first benefit is to restore a perceived imbalance in power, which uplifts perceived powerlessness. The second is to deter the wrongdoer from committing new acts which would cause feelings of pain and humiliation. The emotional benefit of revenge is the easing of the pain caused by wrath. By inflicting pain in violence, the avenger redresses harm with harm. One’s feelings of pain or memories of the moment these feelings were caused are not gone. After revenge, they can be set against the feelings of the other. A victim imagines his vanquisher to have feelings of victory and power. Through revenge these imagined feelings are balanced by the imagined powerlessness, distress and pain the victim of revenge now suffers. To some extent the roles of victim and vanquisher have been exchanged. Revenge does not undo acts, but it changes their significance from painful memory to relief in the idea that the pain is now shared with the adversary.

Acts of revenge are not necessarily committed against those who caused the original feelings of wrath. They can be inflicted upon others

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\(^4\) Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998.


\(^4\) Frijda (1993), op. cit., 162.
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. Let me here quote some interviews which I hope show the congruence between Frijda’s ideas and those on egha.

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?
Keyni: Absolutely, only between the Tuareg and the blacks.412

On 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 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 self-esteem of a large

part of Tamasheq society and by extension, on all the Kel Tamasheq. It had left a feeling of powerlessness with all the Kel Tamasheq. In discussing the memories on Alfeillaga in chapter IV, I have introduced Charlotte Linde’s term ‘induced narrative’. This is exactly what happened with stories about Alfeillaga among other Kel Tamasheq. Within the tanekra, non-Kel Adagh were confronted with the pain of the Kel Adagh over Alfeillaga 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. In Tamasheq nationalist imagining, egha over Alfeillaga was a contracted debt between Tamasheq society and Mali.

Third, Alfeillaga 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. It says: “one People, one Goal, one Religion”. I say nothing. I say nothing’.413

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 own 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’.414

The various currents within the tanekra movement did not agree on various political issues and goals. Some were in favour of the tewisit system and the role of the chiefs. Others were vehemently against it. Some envisioned a Tamasheq state on Islamic principles. Others were

413 Interview with Taghlift. Menaka, 19/04/1999.
414 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.
totally secular. Some members did not even agree on the idea of military action. But what they all had in common was a feeling of powerlessness against Mali and Niger. A feeling that Tamashiq 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 Alfelliaga and hatred for the riches of the modern world they somehow could not reach. They had egga, and it bound them together in the tanekra.

Organising the tanekra, a narrative

Above, I have roughly outlined the teshumara political outlook on their society and the problems it faced after independence. In this part, I will show how these political ideas were put into practice in the organisation of the tanekra movement – the organisation that started to prepare for a military uprising in 1975. It will also show how some ideas were never put to practice. The movement has never been able to successfully overcome the internal political dynamics of Tamashiq society which hampered its political clout – the competition over political dominance through tewsit affiliation.

The beginnings of the Tanekra movement

Alfelliaga, the first rebellion, ended in the summer of 1964. Three of its most important leaders, Zeyd ag Attaher, Ilyas ag Ayyoubi and Elledi ag Alla, were imprisoned, while three others had managed to escape to Algeria – Younes ag Ayyoubi, Amegha ag Sherif and Issouf ag Cheick. Requests by the Malian authorities for their extradition fell on deaf ears. Contrary to later waves of refugees, most Kel Adagh who had fled to Algeria during Alfelliaga obtained Algerian citizenship. During 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 should be monitored. 415 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 Alfelliaga and during the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s.

At the end of 1974, Elledi ag Alla, one of the two most prestigious leaders of Alfelliaga, managed to escape from Bamako, where he had been kept under house arrest. 416 Travelling by truck, Elledi managed to reach

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415 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.

416 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. Personal Communication by Dr. Jeremy Swift. Leiden, October 1994. This house arrest was part of the programme for national reconciliation set up by the Traoré regime
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 Sheriff. 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 for both the Kel Adagh and the Kel Tamashq in general. This meeting can be seen as the informal foundation of the tanekra movement. At this stage, no formal structure existed yet. Leadership was informally held by the former leaders of Alfellaga; Younes ag Ayyouba, Elledi ag Alla, Amegha ag Sheriff and particularly Issouf ag Cheick. The main decision taken at this initial meeting, was that a new rebellion should be organised in an unspecified future, and that the Kel Tamashq 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 Tamashq to describe the process of raising awareness is setham – to make understand, from the Arabic fahima, to understand. In French the verb sensibiliser and its noun sensibilisation are used. This process was first undertaken by the few men who decided to renew the resistance movement in 1975. Their message was soon spread to others by those they had made aware. Awareness was created by invoking the memories of Alfellaga and exposing the current situation the Kel Tamashq 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.

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. Sallah’s ‘grandfather’ (uncle’s grandfather) Mohamed Adargajou had been executed by the Malian army in Kidal. Sallah had been ‘enturbanned’ by his uncle, which means his uncle was responsible for Sallah’s education as a man of honour. By dressing Sallah with his first turban, Younes ag Ayyouba had bestowed

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To restore some of the wrongs done by the Keita regime. In 1978 Zeyd ag Attaher and the last remaining rebels were formally tried and sentenced to death. They were not executed. Instead, they were immediately liberated under the same national reconciliation programme.
male honour upon Sallah, which could not be upheld when the *egha* of the family had not been paid.417

If a person was perceived to be receptive to the message, and many were, those who were seen as trustworthy were recruited. The new recruit had to swear an oath on the Qur’an 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 ones 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. What did the *tanekra* look like and what did its members do in these early days? Those sworn in raised further consciousness and money and recruited new members. 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, the *zahuten* described in the previous chapter. But during these informal meetings, many items were discussed.

As has been said before, *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 could also be found in Libya. Here I 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 could be told from different perspectives.

Within the *tanekra*, many different opinions were brought forward. There were those members within the movement, even in these early days, who were not in favour of 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 Moors, 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 the Kel Tamasheq outside the Adagh. These issues were all hotly debated. In the end, those in favour of inclusion of Kel Tamasheq other than Kel Adagh won their plea and from the late 1970s onwards, recruitment of members from other clans and federations accelerated. But the idea that other groups should be included was largely ignored, except for the Daoussahak and Moors. Exclusion went even so far that very few former slaves joined the movement.

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417 Interview with Mohamed Sallah ag Mohamed. Bamako, 18/01/1998. Eventually, Sallah would leave the movement before rebellion broke out, as he was against the idea that the movement would fight for Tamashq independence only, and not for all the peoples in Northern Mali. This idea was not accepted by other *tanekra* members.
This exclusion is largely explained by fear of betrayal. The consequences of this exclusion would become apparent during the rebellion and after, when the rebels could not count on support outside their own networks. In the later phase of the conflict, Fulbe, Songhay and even former slaves would turn against the rebellion in the vigilante movement supported by the army, the Ganda Koy (see chapter VIII).

Another activity in which the ishumar engaged was education. 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 to action, the movement felt a need for ‘politicians’. Therefore, tanekra members sought contacts with those who were educated. In the first instance, these were sought among the ‘pupils’ of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, whom we have already met in previous chapters. A number of the Kel Intessar who had been put through the Libyan educational system by Mohamed Ali in the 1940s and 1950s still resided in Libya. These however, 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 were co-opted in 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.

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.

The Mouvement de Libération de l’Azawad

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 right bank of the river Niger, in which they end. This valley was seen as the heartland of the Kel Tamasheq. By extension, Azawad became synonymous to akal n Kel Tamasheq, the country of the Kel Tamasheq. From the choice of this name it is clear the movement, although then still dominated by the Kel Adagh, sought to incorporate other Kel Tamasheq in their plans, something the ilulagen of 1963 had largely failed to do. The name Azawad can be found in the names of practically all the rebel movements coming into existence after the outbreak of rebellion in Mali and in Niger, even when they were not based in the Azawad.

But why Azawad (Tamasheq country) Liberation Movement and not, for example, Temust (Tamasheq nation) Liberation Front? I would argue that
the name chosen is an indication that territoriality loomed large in *tanekra* thinking. The importance of territory and space was inscribed on the movement through the logic of the existing nation-states Mali and Niger. At the heart of the problem of Tamashq unity lay its division between various nation-states, and the *tanekra* sought to overcome this division through independence from the ‘colonising’ states.

The political construct of the nation-state 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 respective states, a new one was invented in the early 1980s – Kel Nimagitel, a garble of Mali and Niger. Ironically, the names of both states were taken to indicate the unity of all *ishumar* opposing these states.

Only when the rebellion had already broken out and the movement was totally divided along *tewsit* lines, did one newly created Nigerien movement refer to the Tamashq nation in its name – *Front de Libération Temust*, FLT. By then, the idea of unity of all the Kel Tamashq over national borders had been totally abandoned in favour of organisation along clan lines. Thus, the idea of ‘nation’ needed to be invigorated.

Some other important decisions were made in 1976 in the city of Adrar and embedded in the rules of the movement.418 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; Ghadaia; Adrar; Tindouf; Timeaouine, Djanet and Libya; and Mali.419 In each sector one of the attendants of the meeting would be responsible for the organisation of the movement. This person would control finance, be responsible for raising consciousness and 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 monthly earnings to the *tanekra* organisation. At first, their money served to pay for travel, helping out needy comrades, and for some material. Later, the money was used to buy cars and military equipment, which was to be kept in hiding until the moment the uprising would start.

**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 initial leaders of the movement, the former leaders of *Allalagalga*. In the first years after the creation of the *tanekra*, the Algerian authorities proposed to its leaders that the *ishumar* would be recruited in

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419 Nigerien Kel Tamashq were not yet included at this stage, but might have had their own networks and organisation.
the POLISARIO, the movement fighting for the Liberation of the Seguieit 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. However, in 1973, 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, after which Morocco occupied the remaining part. All this to the discontent of the inhabitants of the Western Sahara, the Arab Rgeyat, 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 Rgeyat and Tajakant population, withdrew to the Algerian town of Tindouf. With Algerian support, they organised a well-equipped and trained army which at first strongly 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 Kel Tamashaq tanekra. The Algerian secret service proposed to the tanekra leaders that their men could join POLISARIO. This offer might have provided a welcome way to gain military experience, but after hot debate, it was declined. The main reason for refusal was that the Kel Tamashaq 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 Rgeyat of the Western Sahara and Drâa valley shared a history of enmity, dating from the Rgeyat raids in the Adagh in the 1920s. A third reason given 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 Agelokelok with his group. They explained to me that, in fact, Issouf [ag Cheick, tanekra and Alfellaq leader] had not been honest, 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’.420

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 assumed power within the movement on the basis of their prestige of ‘veteran freedom fighters’. But their relations with the Algerian state disqualified them in the eyes of the marginalised

420 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, Kidal, 27/12/1998. Young men like Ibrahim ag Agelokelok and Fall were not the only ones to disagree on tanekra engagement in POLISARIO. Both Keyni ag Shenf and Amenega ag Shenf stated that most former ifulagen within the tanekra refused to engage the movement in the Western Saharan conflict.
ishumar. The conflict would later develop other dimensions as well, notably one between rival tewsitien or clans. 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 youngsters 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 control them better 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".421

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 ungrounded. The workings of the first Tamashq and Moorish politicians in the 1950s, the actions of the ifulagen and those of the ishumar generation form a continuity of resistance against outside interference in Tamashq society and a wish for independence. That this wish took various shapes and was reformulated according to the historical situation of the moment does not change this. Continuity in resistance is also a powerful historical discourse for most Kel Tamashq. ‘Alfellaqa d quatre vingt-dix harrat lyyan ghas’ – ‘Alfellaqa 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 perceived similarity could not prevent internal conflict.

Libya

Originally set up and centred in Algeria, the tanekra movement would gain strength in Libya. The Great Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriyya as the country is officially called, is rich in one particular source – oil, but severely lacks another – labour. The country’s population roughly amounts to 5,250,000 inhabitants, which includes an estimated 500,000 African immigrants.422 The latter are desperately needed to make up for the shortages in labour. In the late 1970s a large number of ishumar preferred working in Libya to working in Algeria, as chances for employment and wages were higher. In Libya, the tanekra movement would gain momentum in the early 1980s.

One thing should be made clear from the start. The Libyan leader Qadhafi and the Libyan secret services supported the Tamashq national movement, but the Libyans never did so with the same goal as the

Tamasheq movement had in mind – a Tamasheq nation-state. As the Algerians before them in the 1970s, Libya intended to use the tanekra for its own ends – as fighters in its army or in 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 adventures, the Libyans succeeded in agreement with the tanekra itself.

The tanekra activists knew very well 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 some popular belief, Libya never provided the movement with arms or supported it actively when hostilities finally broke out in Mali or in Niger. The only remaining support was the 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 intermediacy of a few Malian Moors, the Libyan representatives of the tanekra met a Libyan researcher at the Libyan Research Centre for Saharan Affairs. This researcher, Mohamed Sa’id al-Qashât had previously been a Libyan contact with POLISARIO.

During the 1980s al-Qashât would cooperate with a number of Tamasheq intellectuals and tanekra members. The result of this cooperation was the publication of a book in 1989 entitled at-Tawâriq, ‘arabu s-Sahrâbi 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 – Alfelâga. 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.

**The creation of the FPLSAC**

In 1980, the organisation of the tanekra came in stronger currents. 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 Taghrir as-Sahara’ al-Kubra al-’arabiyya al-Wasta: the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Greater Arab Central Sahara, which is known by the French acronym FPLSAC. At the head of this movement a number of Nigerien Arabs and Kel Tamasheq were elected. The presidency fell to Limam Chafi, a merchant of mixed Moorish 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 Moor 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 was given to the Nigerien Arabs and not to the Malian Kel Tamasheq. One can first of all see a Libyan logic behind this structure. Libya borders with Niger and not with Mali. The dominance of Nigerien elements within the FPLSAC can be explained through the interest Libyan Libya had in influencing the policies of its direct southern neighbour.

Libyan interests in the movement were in furthering a pan-African-Arab cause which fitted with the Libyan international politics of the moment. 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-Saharan 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 presence of a large number of Arab peoples in Africa could unify the Arab and African world. The FPLSAC, explicitly referring to the presence of Arabs in Sub Sahara Africa can be seen in the light of this policy.

The FPLSAC was not only endowed with a political bureau. Military training camps were opened to the members of the movement 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 created 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 in late 1981, an estimated 4,000 recruits had received basic military training. In the camps, cooking for the recruits was done by Tamasheq women, but also by Sudanese and other Africans.

Instruction was provided by some Libyan officers, but also by Palestinians and Lebanese. Instruction involved personal arms, unarmed combat and mostly 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_. The camps were not only a male experience. In early 1981, a second camp was opened, _muhayyim Badr_, which lodged the families of the recruits.

**Lebanon**

By the end of 1981, the camp at Ben Walid was closed. Various reasons for this closure can be put forward. Pierre Boilley has inscribed the logic of the closure within the international setting of Libyan politics. Qadhafi’s involvement in the Chadian conflict and the Aouzou problem, together with the involvement of the Nigerien Kel Tamasesq in the _tanekra_, notably the former leaders of the 1976 coup attempt, had deteriorated his relations with Niger, leading to diplomatic rupture in 1981. The subsequent attacks of Kel Tamasesq commandos in Mali at Fanfi and the uranium mines of Arlit in Niger (infra) further damaged strained relations. Finally, in 1982, Libya stopped its support for the Kel Tamasesq and perhaps other African movements in view of the 19th OAU summit, which Qadhafi intended to host.424

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 executive 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.

Camp an-Nasr was closed down at the end of 1981. 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.425 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.426 They

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425 This is one version of enrollment in the Palestinian forces in Lebanon. Others stressed that the Kel Tamasesq were sent to Lebanon without their prior knowledge or consent.

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, armored vehicles and tanks, and then sent to Lebanon, where they joined various Palestinian units.

'We had accepted our enrollment 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 calibers, Russian 130 mm howitzers, Russian tanks, machine guns, anti-aircraft missiles, American cannons that shoot tanks, caliber 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 Djabril accepted this. They returned to Algeria, to Tamanrasset. After six months they were discharged. We stayed there, me and my friends Iyad, Latfi, 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'.

To those veterans of the Lebanese period, their enrollment in the Palestinian movement had nothing to do with loyalty to Qadhafi, sympathy to the Palestinians or hatred for Israel. To them, it was only 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 –

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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

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. With their withdrawal came an end to tanekra presence in the Middle East as well. The Tamasheq battalion returned to Libya. In their Lebanese adventure, they had lost one man in battle, and five had been taken prisoner by the Israelis. They were eventually released and returned to Libya as well. In return, the two hundred Lebanese veterans had gained military skills and tactical knowledge that would be of great value in the rebellion to come. On their return, these two hundred men would gradually take over the movement in Libya and Algeria, providing leadership to the restructured tanekra movement.

Restructuring the movement
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 consider the FPLSAC to represent 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. From their archives, a few documents on the structure of both FPLSAC and the organisation in Lebanon survived, which were captured by the Israeli army during operation Peace for Galilee.⁴²⁹ From the documents, it becomes clear that the organisation in Lebanon had gained organisational strength and that it had disconnected itself from the defunct FPLSAC. From the years in Lebanon until after the outbreak of the rebellion in 1990, the movement’s leadership was mainly in the hands of those Kel Adagh who had fought in Lebanon.

⁴²⁹ A selection from these archives, including a small number of documents on the Tamasheq movement, were published. Israeli, R., PLO in Lebanon: selected documents (London 1983), documents 56, 57, 58.
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 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 in Mali and at the uranium mines at Arlit in Niger. Whereas the attackers at Fanfi were largely unarmed, those at Arlit had guns.\(^{430}\) Both attacks failed and a number of the assailants were arrested and interrogated, which to some extent exposed the existence of the Kel Tamasheq network. The result was a diplomatic breach between Libya and Niger, the closure of the FPLSAC office at Tripoli and the arrest of some of its members.

In March 1983, two new training camps were opened in Libya for Kel Tamasheq recruits – camp Ithnâh Mars and camp ar-Rawd, both in the vicinity of Tripoli. This time, the camps were explicitly open only to Nigerien Kel Tamasheq, but many Malian Kel Tamasheq joined under false identities. The trainees were employed by the Libyan army in the Chadian conflict. The ongoing Libyan military intervention in Chad provided another training for a large number of Kel Tamasheq *ishumar*. 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.

Upon their return to Libya, the Lebanon veterans started almost from scratch with a new organisation. A number of the veterans integrated the newly established training camps Ithnân Mars and ar-Rawd, where they were responsible for organisation and part of the instruction. These camps would remain functional until after the outbreak of the rebellion in 1990, and they would remain under Tamasheq control.

The recruits who entered these new camps and who served as soldiers 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 created movement, which was now called *al-Jebha li Takhrîr ash-Shimâl al-Mali* – the Liberation Front of Northern Mali.\(^{431}\) The movement’s leader, Iyad ag Ghali, and a number of his comrades had moved back to Algeria and Mali. With the money raised among the Kel Tamasheq soldiers, cars were bought, with which the members 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.

\(^{430}\) Interviews with Fituk. Menaka, 30/03/1999; and Alhadi Alhaji, courtesy of Nadia Belalimmat who conducted this second interview.

\(^{431}\) Interview with Taghilif. Menaka, 19/04/1999.
However, despite the organisational efficiency of the Lebanon veterans, the movement was hampered by internal divisions and treason undermining the effective organisation of the tanekra.

**Hierarchy and the tewsit problem**

Ishumar narrative 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. 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 Tamashq in one national movement, in practice this unity was not reached at all.

What foreclosed unity between all the Kel Tamashq was a substratum of older political practices within Tamashq society – the wish for hierarchy and the validation of group affiliation through confrontation. Unity had to be reached under the aegis of one group. But which group that should be remained constantly open to dispute, leading to open friction and even conflict between factions based on tewsit affiliation.

A first divide, on national grounds, became apparent with the creation of the FPLSAC in 1980. The official dominancy of Nigeriens and Arabs within the FPLSAC, as well as the name of the movement itself, were looked upon disfavourably by many Kel Adagh tanekra leaders, a number of which distanced themselves from the FPLSAC. Discontent with the FPLSAC was particularly strong among the Lebanon volunteers, who restructured the tanekra during their stay in Lebanon and upon their return to Libya. As the volunteers in Lebanon wrote to their Palestinian superiors –

> ‘At the congress of el-Homs, at which the [FPLSAC] 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’.

The majority remained within the FPLSAC, contending with the Libyan instigated Nigerien and Arab dominancy, on the grounds that a movement

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and support was better than nothing. However, the seeds of ‘factionalism’ were sown.

The tanekra started out as a movement of Kel Adagh looking for a way to uplift egha and to rekindle the rebellion started in 1963. From the beginning, a small number of Kel Tamashq from other clans or federations had joined. However, leadership remained firmly 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, often of timghad origins, contested Kel Adagh supremacy within the movement. They did so on the basis of a gradually developing concept of timgheda or ‘limghadness’, and on the basis of the revolutionary idea developed within the movement on the equality of all men and the dysfunctionality of the clan system. If all men are equal and the clans should be abolished, then why should leadership remain in the hands of men from one particular tewsit?433

‘There were problems, there were constraints. We, Iyad and the others, we wanted the Kel Adagh Kel Tamashq 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 Tamashq, because it was us, it was our job to revolt and we believed the other Kel Tamashq would not agree with that and that they thought it concerned them as well, that it concerned all. To us, it was the Kel Tamashq of the Adagh who were most concerned’.433

The Tamanrasset war

But internal friction was not limited to Malian and Nigerien nationals or between members of different Malian tewsit 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 members of the Iddan and Ifoghas tewsit. In Kel Adagh historical narrative, the history of Iddan-Ifoghas animosity is now presented as complicated and dating from the early days of colonial history. The Ifoghas form the largest tewsit within the Adagh, followed by the Iddan. At the advent of colonial conquest, both tewsit held a precarious power balance, which was upset when the colonial administration gave preference and political power to the Ifoghas. Their leader was made amenoka1 over the federation and therefore held power over the tribal chiefs of other tewsit. 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.

433 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998.
The existence of an Ifoghas federation is not denied by the Idnan, but it is denied 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 this ettebel was denied its legitimate power by the French in preference of the Ifoghas. In short, the struggle over power within and over the Kel Adagh federation is presented to date back at least two centuries. This power struggle came to the fore in the 1980s with respect to leadership within the tanekra. In reading the following interview excerpt, one has to keep in mind that of the four initial leaders of the tanekra – the former ifulagen Issouf ag Chelick, Amegha ag Sherif, Younes ag Ayyouba and Elledi ag Alla – the two most important were Idnan. Their power and intentions were challenged by younger men of the movement, notably those of Ifoghas descent.

‘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 Timiaouine, 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’.434

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 or ‘executions of traitors’ were committed that year.435 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 dominance within the movement of various currents and especially between various tewsiten. Despite all ideals, discourse and rhetoric on ‘one country, one goal, one

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434 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998. Idnan interlocutors were less inclined to elaborate on this episode.

435 Bourgeot (1990), op. cit.
people’ unity was far from established. Among the *ishumar* as among their less revolutionary inclined kindred, *tewsit* prevailed over *temust*.

**The later years of the *tanekra***

The chaos and factional conflicts of the mid 1980s resulted in various splits within the movement, and in private initiatives by its’ prominent members. The Nigerien members of the movement reorganised themselves on the basis of their region and common nationality in the *Front Populaire pour la Libération du Niger* – FPLN. In March 1983, Libya opened training camps for this movement – camp Ithnân Mars and camp ar-Rawd near Tripoli, but these camps were largely staffed and run by the restructured Malian *tanekra*. In 1984, the FPLN was provided with a new camp near the city of Waw al Kabir. In this camp, the Nigerien did form the majority and thus the division between the Kel Mali and the Kel Niger was finally established, the Kel Nimagiler did no longer exist.436

Within the Malian movement, now called in Arabic *al-Jebha li Takhrîr ash-Shimâl al-Mâli*, the Liberation Front of Northern Mali, generally referred to as *al-Jebha*, general dissent and private initiatives abounded, due to the internal friction between *tewsiten*. Particular members from outside the Kel Adagh federation, distrustingly the aims of the Kel Adagh, organised into separate groups and started to procure arms at the Libyan border with Chad.437 The ongoing conflict in Chad and the high turnover of weaponry provided the local arms markets with ample supply in Kalachnikovs and ammunition.

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, having already been renewed in 1983. The movement now also spread to Mali. Small groups of *ishumar* returned to Mali and settled in and around Kidal, Gao and Menaka. Weapons were bought and hidden in Mali for the moment rebellion would break out.

Nevertheless, the conflicts between *tewsiten* had resulted in a more or less formalised division of the fighters into units based on *tewsit* affiliation. The fighters were grouped in three battalions. The Kidal battalion consisted of Kel Adagh. The Menaka 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 army and administration 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 of the movement with Libyan and Algerian services, and their respective contacts with the Malian and French 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.38 The Malian security forces also arrested the larger part of the Kidal battalion put in place over the previous year. By luck, the Menaka battalion was spared, but it was sparsely armed. The movement now had to choose between starting preparations all over again, or attacking. The latter option was chosen. On 27 June 1990, the Menaka battalion successfully attacked several posts of the army and the administration in the Menaka area. The second rebellion had begun.

**Conclusion**

The tanekra movement is perhaps the best possible proof of the Tamasheq dogged pursuit of a goal which was originally set in the late 1940s – the establishment of an independent Tamasheq state. From 1975 until 1990, the movement prepared an underground army, raised funds and tried to create a political and administrative elite to realise this goal. Originally, the movement was led by the very same men who had made earlier attempts to establish Tamasheq independence – the small French-educated elite of the 1950s, represented by Amegha ag Sherif and Younes ag Ayyouba, and the leaders of Alfellaga represented by the same two men, together with former military leaders Issouf ag Cheick and Elledi ag Allia. The link between the first and the second rebellion, through the tanekra movement, is twofold. First, these four men form the actual or physical link. Second, there is the link in political thinking and in cohesion through the historical discourse on the first rebellion as a source of egha – a reified focus of hatred for the Malian state and the strongly felt need to avenge the unfortunate ending of Alfellaga. As with the link between Allia ag Albacher and Alfellaga discussed in chapter IV, the link between Alfellaga and the tanekra is framed in Tamasheq historical narratives of genealogy and individual action.

Besides links creating a continuity in Tamasheq nationalism there are also notable ruptures. First of all, the perception of the goal and the political situation of the world they lived in was far more developed in the tanekra than it was with the men who led Alfellaga. Nationalism was but a vague concept to the Ifilagen of 1963. It was there, but it was not conceived as nationalism. The tanekra movement deliberately developed a Tamasheq national idea through the reworking of the concepts of country

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38 'Etat d'urgence à Gao', Les Échos, 28-09-1990.
(akal) and nation (temust). Thoughts of what this nation looked like and how society should be reformed to be better prepared for independence were hotly debated.

It is striking to see how the idea of the equality of all men, which met with resistance when propagated by the Malian administration in the 1960s, was now incorporated into theory. In practice however, this idea kept clashing with older notions of inequality and clan affiliation. Stranger still was the adoption and internalisation of pre-existing stereotypes of Tamasheq society first held by the French and Malian administrations – the feudal nature of Tamasheq society, their ignorance and lack of education, the role of the tribal chiefs, and nomadic anarchy.

However, the new elan of Tamasheq thoughts on independence could not outdo an older political concept – the social political organisation on the basis of clans or tewsit. The ishumar discarded (fictive) kinship ties as a basis upon which to imagine the nation, as the clan system had always foreclosed national unity. Instead, the tanekra focused on territory as its main image of the Tamasheq nation. But in both ideas, the political construct of the already existing nation-states could not be escaped. In the end, Kel Tamasheq from Mali and Niger went their separate ways in separate movements and revolts. Territorial or even national unity was foreclosed before attempts to establish it were even made. These attempts made in Mali – the second rebellion between 1990 and 1996 – will be the subject of the last two chapters.
VII
_the Tamasheq rebellion
(1990-1993)

Introduction

On 28 June 1990, a group of armed fighters attacked the army barracks
and the Arrondissement office in Tidaghmen, in the Cercle Menaka.
Simultaneously, another group of fighters ambushed a convoy of four cars
belonging to the American NGO World Vision. These actions were the start
of what is now known in Mali as ‘the second Tuareg rebellion’, or ‘the
problems of the North’. They were the result of almost two decades of
organisation and preparation in exile in Libya and Algeria by the tanekra
movement.

The rebellion would last until March 1996, when the conflict was
ceremoniously ended with ‘the Flame of Peace’, the burning of around
three thousand weapons, handed in by the rebel fighters, at a Timbuktu
marketplace. This six year period will be presented and analysed in the
following two chapters.

One can discern four different but partly overlapping phases in the
conflict, the first two of which will be dealt with in this chapter. The last
two will be dealt with in the next chapter. 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 army, inflicting it a series of
military defeats. This period will be covered in the first part of this chapter.
In January 1991, a second phase started, which lasted until 1994. This
three year period can best be characterised by confusion, factionalism and
constant negotiation and 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 the next
and final chapter, the third and fourth phases of the conflict will be
described and analysed. I have spread the four phases over two chapters
for simple reasons of convenience. Therefore, conclusions on the rebellion
will be drawn at the end of the last chapter only.

One of the main aims of this thesis is to show the workings of
contemporary Tamasheq political life and organisation. Therefore, much
attention will be paid to the internal processes the rebel movement
underwent during the second rebellion. 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, and,
finally, reunification through coercion during the last phase of the conflict.

As in the previous chapters, we will find a number of key groups in the
political landscape of the Kel Tamasheq – the ishumar, the intellectuals,
and the tribal chiefs. These three 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 Tamashq society and those who were in favour of strengthening the existing structure of society.

Within the movement, the various opinions on its goals were expressed in various break-ups, violent conflicts and renewed alliances. The reaction of the Malian Government, army and population oscillated between violent outbursts on the one hand, and reasoned discussions on on what the rebellion was about and who the rebels were on the other hand.

In the six years the rebellion lasted, all issues which have been central throughout this thesis were played out in violent and magnified ways. Within the movement, discussions and conflicts centered on the desirability and realisation of a Tamashq nation-state, and on the nature of Tamashq 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 other results – the inescapability of clan thinking, structure and hierarchy, and the primacy of (fictive) kinship over imagination of a nation on a territorial basis. Within the context of the Malian nation-state, its government and its inhabitants, the Tamashq rebellion provoked a revival of the Malian national imagination and the return of stereotyped images of self and other, of Malian and Kel Tamashq. 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.

These political divisions were expressed in the various rebel movements which came into existence after the revolt broke out. Many of these movements also coincided with various clans in Northern Mali. The story told here is one of factionalism, alliances and various political currents. In order to prevent confusion, I will here shortly present the main movements and the differences which created them.
**Table 6: An overview of the movements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Date of creation</th>
<th>Political motivation</th>
<th>Tewstiten involved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanekra</td>
<td>1980's and at the start of the rebellion: tanekra, al-Jebha and ath-Thawra After outbreak of rebellion: MPLA, MLT and FPLA</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>All those involved in the tanekra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPA</td>
<td>January 1991, during the negotiations of the Tamanrasset agreement</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Mostly Ifoghas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIAA</td>
<td>January 1991, during the negotiations of the Tamanrasset agreement</td>
<td>Underlining Moorish participation</td>
<td>Moors of all clans, some Kel Tamasheq, mostly Kel Intessar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Date of creation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| BAUA                           | August 1994, after the   | Protection of tewsiten                                    | Idran
Base Autonome Unifié de l'Azawad                     | military conflict between MPA and ARLA
                                                        | No strong presence                                       |
| FNLA                           | January 1993              | Protection of tewsiten                                    | Ishidenharen, Dabakar, Daoussahak
Front National de Libération de l'Azawad                 | No strong presence                                       |
                                                        |                           |                                                           | Kel Intessar
                                                        |                                                           | No strong presence                                       |
| FULA                           | January 1993              | Protection of tewsiten                                    | Kel Intessar                                           |
Front Unifié de Libération de l'Azawad                     |                           |                                                           | No strong presence                                       |
| MFUA                           | December 1991             | Negotiating with the Malian state Regroup all movements   | All, and yet none
Mouvements et Fronts Unifiés de l'Azawad                 |                           |                                                           | Intellectuals                                            |
| MPGK                           | April 1994                | Defending the sedentary population of the North           | Songhay and other sedentary population of the North
Movvement Patriotique Ganda Kay                             |                           |                                                           | Kel Tamasheq bellah                                       |
The ‘real’ rebellion
June to December 1990

The first days
The start of the rebellion was originally planned for the year 1992 or 1993. Nevertheless, some men and material had already been moved to Mali in 1989. Three battalions had been created: the Kidal battalion, the Menaka battalion and the Gao battalion. However, the Malian army 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 Menaka 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 Menaka battalion, based in the village of Ikadewan. Upon arrival in Ikadewan, Iyad ag Ghali was accused of treason by the men of the Menaka battalion and nearly executed. After convincing the Menaka battalion of his good intentions and diverting execution by his comrades, Iyad and the Menaka 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 fourth of July, the celebration 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 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 Menaka battalion at Ikadewan. The next day, 28 June 1990, the Menaka battalion came into action, attacking the administrative posts and military camp in Tidaghmene. At the wells of Tejerert, four cars belonging to the NGO World Vision were taken over. In Menaka, the same NGO, as well as the Italian organisation Zoonconsult lost eight more cars. The next day, the administrative posts at Ikadewan were attacked. The attacks were successful in their aim – seizing matériel, 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.\footnote{Nous, Touaregs du Mali... (Paris 1990).} After their successful attacks the rebels retreated to Mount In-Taykaren, a solitary mountain at the southern edge of the Tamesna plain in the northern part of the Cercle Menaka. The rebels even left a note for the Malian army indicating where they could be found, and inviting them to combat.

The first six months

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 Tin-Essako was attacked, leaving three soldiers and one rebel dead. On 16 July, the rebels attacked the gendarmerie at Tarkint. And thus it continued: 28 July, the military post at Abeibara was attacked; 11 August, the military post at Tin-Zaouaten; 15 August those at Tadjoujemet; 17 August, those at Telabit; 25 August, a military convoy near In-Ekker was ambushed. In September, attacks on the military posts at Abeibara, In-Tedeyni, and In-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.\footnote{Based on ag Baye, ‘Chronologie des événements liés à la Rébellion Touarègue au Mali’ (chronologie Cheick), in annex Klute (2001), op. cit.; Boilley (1999), op. cit., 446-47; Klute (2001), op. cit., 440-41.}

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 Tarkint, all the attacked military posts were situated in the Adagh, near the border with Algeria, the same region of combat as during Alfeleiga. 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 matériel – weapons, ammunition, petrol, cars and food – as these were still severely lacking and the number of rebels had increased over the weeks. In the first few months of rebellion, 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 modern 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 of their number compared to the losses of the Malian Army.\footnote{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 (2001). These figures are highly in favour of the rebels and...} The Malian armed
forces, present in the Kidal area with around 500 soldiers, were completely on the defensive and no match for the rebels. Contrary to the Tamashiq fighters who had years of training and combat experience in guerilla warfare in Lebanon and Chad, the Malian soldiers had hardly any training and no combat experience to mention.\textsuperscript{444} The heavy and slow material employed in the Adag by the Malian forces – armoured cars and artillery – were no match for the fast and agile four-wheel-drive vehicles used by the experienced Tamashiq drivers.

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, mounted with heavy machine guns and rocket launchers, and transporting an independently operating fighter unit of around twelve men.\textsuperscript{445} Thus, one could think both sides were equally disadvantaged but this was not the case. The rebel drivers were all former ishumar smugglers who knew every small track navigable by car. The Malian soldiers, both in 1963 and in 1990, did not know these tracks and easily got lost when leaving the main roads.

A second difference in experience was the 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 Tamashiq fighters were trained to aim and shoot at single enemies. In addition, the Tamashiq fighters were trained and experienced in man-to-man combat with personal arms. The first attacks at Menaka and Tidaghene were made with a highly restricted number of rifles, and mostly by men armed with knives and traditional swords. To this form of fighting, in which the Tamashiq excelled, the Malian soldiers had no answer.

A last, but not the least important element in favour of the rebels that should be mentioned is the 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, even an acutely felt necessity to fight, were not considered relevant. The opposite goes for the Tamashiq fighters. The ishumar did not fight for a salary, but for a cause; the

\textsuperscript{444} After Alteliga, Mali had fought one four-day war with its neighbour Burkina Faso between 25 and 29 December 1985. A ceasefire was signed before most troops had arrived at the front.

\textsuperscript{445} The name ‘tecnical’ is derived from the name of a Russian heavy machine gun, which was first used on all terrain vehicles by Somali fighters. The technique of tecnicals is not new or unique to the Tamashiq fighters, who had first learned their use in Chad, where the troops of Goukouni Wedey and Idriss Deby made use of them.
liberation of the Tamasheq country 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’.

**Bases**

After the attack at Menaka and Tidaghmene, the rebels left messages for the army indicating their location at Mount In-Taykaren. This message was almost an invitation to come and do battle, an invitation which was repeated over the radio at the conquered gendarmerie post at Tarkint. In-Taykaren is a monolith at the edge of the Tamesna plain near the village of Tejereret. It can only be accessed through a small number of wadis which originate in this mountain, passing through a number of gorges and which for the remainder are banked by ‘fields’ of short, sharp pieces of stone and such like, which 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 or ‘valleys’ surrounded and cross-cut by ridges and heaps of large boulders. This terrain formed the first of a series of ‘bases’ the rebels set up. A second base was put in operation at Essali near Bouressa in the Adagh a few weeks later. A third one was located at Mount Tigharghar, a place that had served as a ‘base’ for the honour bandit Alla ag Albakhir in the 1940s and 1950s, and for the ifuliger in 1963. In the later stages of the rebellion, the number of bases would be around fifteen throughout Northern Mali.

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 or strategic location served as a base. Only the outer edges and passages would be defended if necessary, but they could be abandoned to take 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 meetings points. Most matériel inside the bases was buried or left in small caves.

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446 Interview with Baye ag Alhassan. Menaka, 01/04/1999.

447 Bolley (1999), op. cit., 507.
In creating these bases the rebels had four main aims. First of all, they served as places where the rebels could hide men and matériel. Second, by making the location of the bases known to the army, the rebels hoped to avoid repression of 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 strategical lessons from their ifulagen predecessors.

In chapter IV, I have described how the fighting tactics of Alfaelaga followed the logic of Tamasheq ethical warfare – agqa. We have seen that ifulagen judged their fight to be different from the second rebellion in ethics. However, the ethics of the ishumar in warfare were just as much informed by Tamasheq war ethics and honourable conduct. The ishumar saw themselves as the new illelan – the strong protectors of society who should defend the tilaqiwin, the weak. By staying in the neighbourhood and offering sites of protection, the rebels ascribed to their perceived ellelu status in taking measures to protect the weak and dependent. We will come back to this subject in the next chapter.

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 mentioned above to come and fight at In-Taykaren. On 17 July 1990, a large section of the Malian army arrived at In-Taykaren to fight the rebel forces. The army employed four hundred infantry and artillery units armed with truck mounted rocket launchers at the ‘siege’ of In-Taykaren. After four days of shelling, the infantry assault was easily countered by the unharmed rebels. 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 of this kind was enough to cause the retreat of the army, which lost forty men. The operation was repeated at the end of July and beginning of August, with an even more disastrous effect. Despite hundreds of shells being fired at In-Taykaren in a week, the following infantry attack failed again, leaving a hundred Malian soldiers dead on the field.448 A similar attack at the rebel base of Essali near Bouressa was equally unsuccessful. Here, the rebels simply left the base for the surrounding mountains, only to return when

448 Nous, Touaregs du Mali... (Paris 1990).
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.

Inversely, the Malian army quickly found out 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 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 managed to enter the camp, engaged in close combat with the Malian soldiers and finally dispersed the Malian forces in panic before the rebels retreated. Afterwards, rebels claimed to have killed more than a hundred soldiers at Toximine, whereas they suffered a loss of fifteen men. This might be slightly exaggerated, but the Malian army probably lost at least forty men.\textsuperscript{449}

After ‘Toximine’, the morale of the Malian army was deflated, just as the morale of the rebels was boosted. Although the number of Malian army victims looks impressive, it did not amount to more than fifteen percent of the total present forces, whereas the rebels lost a third of their unit. But nevertheless, to the Malian army, ‘Toximine’ proved that the regular army was no match to the guerillas and that a quick military end to the rebellion could not be reached. Instead, negotiations had to be opened. To the rebels, Toximine brought 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, in general, one can safely say that the second Tamashaq rebellion was never defeated militarily by the Malian forces.

In short, it can be concluded that the first six months of rebellion were highly successful from the perspective of the rebels. Starting their uprising two years earlier than planned, with only a few dozen fighters and no material to mention, the rebels quickly gained the upper hand over the Malian armed forces in North-Eastern Mali. It was not their strategy to occupy terrain, except for their own logistical bases (which could, however, be temporarily left to the enemy when necessary). The tactics used were classical guerilla techniques of hit and run actions, aimed to confuse and tire the enemy. The methods and means used were perfectly adapted to the terrain and so were the fighters themselves. More importantly the method worked. In the end, the Malian army retreated to the main villages of North-Eastern Mali, leaving the desert to the rebels. Many smaller army posts were entirely abandoned. The defeats of the Malian army, combined with the troublesome situation the regime found itself in at the capital

\textsuperscript{449} Klute (2001), op. cit., 480-486.
Bamako, led president Moussa Traoré to decide that negotiations with the rebels were necessary.

**The ‘confused’ rebellion**

**January 1991 - February 1994**

**The start of negotiations, Moussa Traoré’s perils**

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. The initiative was undertaken by the Traoré regime. The Tamashaq 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 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 UDPM party over which he presided. But the one-party state was as undemocratic and oppressive as its predecessor under Keita and the non-party dictatorial rule of Traoré previous to his civilian restyling. In 1990, the democratic movement gained momentum. Possibly under the influence of the Tamashaq 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’.*450* A few days later, the student union *Association des Etudiants et Éléves Maliens – AEEM* – was born. In the same month, two covert political parties were founded; the *Comité National d’Initiative Démocratique – CNID*, followed one week later by the *Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali – ADEMA*, headed by Alpha Oumar Konaré, the later President of the Republic. The already existing national labour union *Union National des Travailleurs 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 put aside.*451*

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A view on the interior of the base at In-Taykaren. April 1999.

The FPLA logo at the centre of the In-Taykaren base. April 1999.
The build up of pressure in Bamako, together with the demoralizing defeats of the army by the Tamashq rebels, led to the opening of negotiations between the regime and the rebels. Probably, Moussa Traoré hoped to calm the North down as quick as possible, in order to have troops and attention free to deal with the democratic movement in the South.

The reasons of the rebels 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 sounding 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 because of strategical reasons, it was impossible to continue the fight longer than six months’.

The Tamanrasset agreement

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, the modernist current within the tanekra movement had always been in favour of the abolition of tribal chiefs and other hierarchies in Tamashq 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’. Intalla ag Attaheer, 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

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453 Declaration made by the Malian fraction chiefs and Tuareg ranks of the Gao region, 12/09/1990. Personal archives. The signing chiefs were all from the Kidal, Gao, Menaka and Bourem Cercies, with the exception of Ehya ag Nokh, chief of the Immeddegheren.
during Al Fel laga. Nevertheless, the government decided to send these chiefs to contact the rebels. The meeting was indecisive as the government delegates had no mandate to accept or refuse the rebel demands.

In December 1990, negotiations between the tanekra and the government were reopened, leading on 6 January 1991 to the signing of a ceasefire and declaration of intent to continue negotiations for final peace. 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 Tamashq from Mali. Moreover, the movement used Southern Algeria as its 'hinterland' where they releated 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 near rivals – France and Libya. In previous chapters, I have described how Algerian implication in the creation of the tanekra movement was with an eye to use the tanekra for its own regional politics. To some extent, the Algerian state now reappr the ‘benefits’ of its earlier involvement.

The first negotiations between rebels and tribal chiefs had been between Kel Tamashq. Thus Tamashq could be spoken, which was not the case during the negotiations which started in December 1990. Negotiations now had to be partly conducted in French. This meant that the ishumar had to rely on the Tamashq intellectuals who were sympathetic to the movement. These intellectuals, 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 ‘realistic’ 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 of 6 January 1991 showed a radical stance from the tanekra side. The Tamanrasset agreement consisted of a ceasefire, stipulating the mutual transfer of prisoners of war; the army’s gradual withdrawal from the north and transfer of

454 Unfortunately, a group of soldiers disarmed and molested the chiefs when they presented themselves to the Commandant du 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. Attahe 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. Poulton, E-R., I. ag Youssouf, *A peace of Timbuktu: Democratic governance, development and African peacemaking* (New York & Geneva: United Nations Publication 1998), 93.

455 From the side of the government, the negotiators most likely included Sikay ag Ekawel, Rhissa Rhatou, Issa Ongolba (former right hand to Diby Sillas Diarra) and a number of tribal chiefs. 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. Their delegation was headed by Iyad ag Ghali.
administration to civil servants; the withdrawal of the rebel forces to their bases; the possibility for the fighters to integrate in the Malian army and the creation of commissions to monitor the application of the agreements made. Next to the ceasefire, a document was signed which guaranteed a certain amount of autonomy to the North in the following key formulation –

‘The two parties have agreed that the populations of the three regions 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.’

The Tamanrasset agreement was never fully applied, 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. In 1998 and 1999, many 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 ‘intellectuals’. After ‘Tamanrasset’ the second phase of the rebellion started. The Tamashiq movement, united in the first six months of fighting, split internally over the goals of the rebellion.

**Kel Tamasheq and Moors, MPA and FIAA**

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 Tamashiq 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. Slowly, consensus was reached with the name Front Populaire de Libération de l’Azawad – FPLA.

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 Moorish members of the movement. The Moors feared that their contribution to the movement might be underestimated and that they would be left out of negotiations with the Malian authorities, despite sharing the problems of...
their Tamasheq ishumar colleagues. The problem was solved by creating a separate movement, with its own name, to represent the Moorish section within the movement. The FIAA was nevertheless represented by the paramount leader of the movement, the Tamasheq Iyad ag Ghali.\textsuperscript{457} The creation of the MPA, both the name and the movement it came to represent, is more complicated.

\textbf{‘Moderates’ and ‘hardliners’, MPA and FPLA}

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 \textit{Front Populaire de Libération de l’Azawad} (FPLA), a name the movement had sometimes used previous to the Tamanrasset agreement. Where the creation of two movements during the negotiations in Tamanrasset – one Kel Tamasheq and one Moorish – 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 chiefs who were the envoys of the Malian Government in October 1990 –

\textit{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’AZAWED - MPA (not having any territorial demands) ...}\textsuperscript{458}

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

\textsuperscript{457} It is in fact unclear whether or not Moorish representatives were present during the Tamanrasset negotiations. One informant even stated that the Moors 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 Moorish representative was present. However, during the later phases of the rebellion, the FIAA and its representatives would play crucial roles.

\textsuperscript{458} \textit{Procès verbal de la rencontre entre délégations à Tamanrasset du 10 au 12 octobre 1990.}, in \textit{Boolley} (1994), op. cit., annex, B26-36.
Government to find a lasting solution to the painful situation, stressed the necessity to preserve national unity and Malian territorial integrity.\textsuperscript{459} The formulation speaks for itself and needs no explanation. On behalf of the MPA and FJAA, Iyad ag Ghali – ‘accentuated the principal reasons that led his movement to take up arms against its country’.\textsuperscript{460}

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 nation-state, and thus abandoning Tamashq nationalism. If the initial talks between the movement and the envoys of the government in October 1990 must have been hard to accept for many fighters, the end result of the Tamanrasset agreement was unacceptable to a number of hardliners. These hardliners remained within the FPLA.

Being confronted with this hard line within the movement, Iyad ag Ghali and other moderates carried on negotiating under the name MPA – \textit{Movement 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 ‘Movement’. 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.

\textit{We have created [the FPLA] after the failed treason of the Azawad people [by the MPA] and we have called it the Front Populaire de Libération de l’Azawad, in reaction to what is called \textquoteleft the Tamanrasset agreement\textquoteright 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}.\textsuperscript{461}

**FPLA, diverging interests relocate the conflict**

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 army took place in the Adagh. This changed after the Tamanrasset agreement in January 1991. The military campaign launched by the FPLA


\textsuperscript{460} Ibidem.

in February 1991 was concentrated on the Azawad plain and the villages at the banks of the Niger. From there, the attacks spread further south and west, towards the Région 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 which 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 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. Their amenokal, Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar and his younger brother Mohamed Elmehdi had been among the most politically active Kel Tamasheq in the 1940s and 1950s. Mohamed Ali had also been involved in organising and supporting Alfellaga. The Chemennamas, Ishidenharen and Dabakar fractions 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 fractions we should look at the history of the movement and to the Tamanrasset agreement.

**Movements and tewsit**

As we have seen in virtually all previous chapters, 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. However, their leadership within the movement was contested.

Particularly after the second drought of the 1980s, the number of non-Kel Adagh had risen within the movement. The new recruits were mostly from the Chemennamas, Ishidenharen, Dabakar and other fractions 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 Menaka battalion. The negotiations at Tamanrasset again proved Kel Adagh leadership. The majority of negotiators on behalf of the movement were Kel Adagh, with Iyad ag Ghali signing the treaty.
As I have noted elsewhere, leadership and hierarchy among **tewsiten** and fractions form the core of Tamacheq 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 advanced as a second reason for the division between the Kel Adagh and the other Kel Tamacheq. 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 word this mutual agreement, a rather strange formulation was used in the agreement.

‘The two parties have agreed that the populations of the three Northern regions will freely administer their regional and local affairs …’

At the time, Northern Mali was administratively divided into only two regions; Timbuktu, the VIth region, and Gao, the VIIth region, which included the Adagh or Kidal **Cercle**. In Tamanrasset, what had been arranged for, was the promotion of the Cercle Kidal to a fully fledged VIIIth region. The Tamanrasset agreement speaks of three regions as if the **Région** Kidal was already existent. The new **Région** would come into *de jure* existence in August 1991, but *de facto* with the Tamanrasset agreement. Thus, the Kel Adagh had not only opted to remain part of Mali, but to do so apart from the other Kel Tamacheq 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** Kidal since this would leave the Kel Tamacheq in the ‘old’ **Région** Gao a smaller minority against a majority of Songhay and other sedentary populations.

**Modernists, traditionalists, illelan and imghad – MPA and ARLA**

In the introduction and in chapter II, I have described to what extent the French and Malian administrations controlled the internal social political dynamics of Tamacheq society. Under colonial rule, the dynamic hierarchical structure of **tewsiten** had been altered through an effective

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463 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).
ban on raiding and the restructuring of tewsiten into fractions and tribes which could be made and unmade at will. At the same time, the colonial administration’s racial perspective on Tamashaq society had led to the relative rise in status of less noble or imghad groups, on the basis of their ‘whiteness’. The rise in status and political consciousness of the lower strata of society had been furthered by the Malian administration under Modibo Keita on different grounds. The Keita administration had favoured the bellah and imghad – the weak or tilaqwin – over the ilielan or nobles.

In contrast, the imghad were under-represented in the leadership of the tanekra and bellah were almost entirely excluded from the movement. Leadership within the movement was claimed by the Ifoghas.

’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 other side of reality is that the other tribes exist and that they are more numerous than the Ifoghas.’

In November 1991, those groups excluded from leadership within the Kel Adagh movement MPA founded the ARLA. From its moment of creation, the ARLA was joined by the majority of all the Kel Adagh fighters, thus creating a divide between the Ifoghas and the other Kel Adagh. The MPA now represented a minority movement of ‘moderate’ Ifoghas. As a consequence, the ARLA was able to oust the MPA from the Tigharghar base, the most strategic location in the Adagh. The MPA was now seen as the Ifoghas movement, whereas the ARLA stood for the other Kel Adagh. The existence of the ARLA was mostly justified in its approach to the revolution within Tamashaq society.

As has been argued elsewhere, the teshumara and tanekra were not only meant as a nationalist movement against the Malian state. The ishumar felt a need to reform Tamashaq society as well. This reform should lead to the equality of all the Kel Tamashaq, the abolition of caste structures and tewsit hierarchy. Chiefs had to be abolished and democracy should prevail. Unsurprisingly, the strongest advocates of this internal restructuring of society could be found among groups disadvantaged within ‘traditional’ Tamashaq society – the imghad, bellah and lower-placed ilielan tribes such as the Idnan. Also to no surprise, ideas on equality and democracy were strongest among the intellectual elite of the ishumar. These were generally also of imghad origins, as they had put up less resistance against education and had been favoured by the Keita regime. The secretary general of the ARLA, Abderrahmane ag Galla had been educated at Bamako’s institutions of higher education before joining the tanekra, as was another founder of the ARLA, Ibrahim ag Litny.

It is hard to evaluate the impact of the revolutionary rhetoric and administrative practices of the Keita regime on the Kel Adagh, but they had undoubtedly had an influence. As I argued in chapters II and VI, the

Keita administration had especially accentuated the liberation of the *bellah* by creating separate *bellah* fractions. But in the absence of a large *bellah* population in the Adagh, the uplift of the ‘labouring masses’ had been largely concentrated on the *imghad*. These also not being numerous in the Adagh (the *illelan* Ifoghas form half the Adagh population), the administration had to some extent included the other *illelan* tribes of the Adagh – the Idnan, Taghat Mellet and Ibotenaten – in its idea of the class of ‘oppressed masses’. The *ishumar* from these *tewsiten* were most concerned with the internal social revolution, which led to the full development of the previously discussed concept of *timgheda* or ‘imghadness’, and to the creation of the ARLA.

*Timgheda* postulated the virtues of the *imghad* over the *illelan* as being more concerned with equality, being more industrious and being more Berber. The *illelan*, particularly those of the Adagh, were seen as feudal, lazy and Arab since they stressed the importance of their lineage and being descendants of the prophet Muhammad.

Naturally, the more ‘conservative’ Ifoghas, notably the ruling families, fiercely objected to these social projects. In their turn, they developed the *tefohessa* concept, or ‘Ifoghasness’. The *tefohessa* idea was developed by *ishumar* intellectuals from the Ifoghas *tewsit*, which included 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 who are seen by some as “outdated” remain the pillars of society until the contrary is proven. They remain as unavoidable to the movements as they are to the administration. First of all, it was they who 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 [tewsiten or movements]. Personally, I believe their role to be fundamental in installing a definite peace and that is what we most need these days.’

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. Hardliners and modernists begged to differ.

**The fall of Moussa Traoré and the advent of democracy**

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, the democratic movements CNID and ADEMA organised several

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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. In alliance, the trade union 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 which continued over the next days. The army was employed against the demonstrators, leading to several hundred deaths. The riots ended in a coup d'état against Traoré on 26 March by Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré, commander of the airborne division. Moussa Traoré and his wife Mariam were arrested. After 31 years, dictatorship and single-party rule came to an end.466

The new 'strong man', Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré, did not act alone. He immediately formed a Conseil pour la Reconciliation National (CRN), including representatives of all the democratic movements in Mali (which, at that point, excluded the Tamashq rebels). 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 join his post in the army. All this, so he promised, would be done within nine months. Touré did what he promised to do. In May 1991, the former associations CNID and ADEMA were transformed into political parties. In January 1992, a new constitution was adopted, followed in February by elections for parliament and president in which Touré, as promised, did not participate. On 6 June 1992, 14 months after he took power, Touré stepped down in favour of Mali’s first democratically elected President, Alpha Oumar Konaré. Mali started its third Republic. However, for Touré to organise his democratic tour de force, a lasting peace in the North was necessary.

The National Pact

In order to appease the tanekra, Touré offered place to two representatives of the Tamashq movement in his interim government and he assured that the Tamanrasset agreement would be respected.467 However, the Tamanrasset agreement was ‘only’ a cease-fire which had

466 Traoré and his wife were tried for crimes against humanity and for economic crimes. They received the death penalty in the first case, which was transferred to a lifetime sentence, which was also the penalty in the second trial. At the end of his term in 2002, President Konaré has pardoned and released the Traorés.

467 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 Erif an lDnna 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 Tamashq movements and society in the Malian state. Poulton & Youssouf (1998), op. cit., 61.
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, on 11 April 1992, only days before the presidential elections.

The National Pact has never been fully applied. The significance of the National Pact lies in the road leading to it, and the consequences of its structural non-application on the internal development of the rebel movement, Tamashq society in general and their relations with the Malian state. It led to two years of structural negotiation by a group of men 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.

In order to build democracy in Mali, and especially to discuss on which grounds it should be based, Touré organised a National Conference (*Conférence Nationale*) 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 one hand, the principle 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. Decentralisation would become a key term in further negotiations. Indeed the Malian state finally applied decentralised administration in 1999; three years after the end of the rebellion, and mostly because by then the term ‘good governance’ had replaced ‘democracy’ as a key demand by donor countries.

The National Conference agreed on the need for a solution to the rebellion and a majority of delegates agreed this should be peaceful. A series of meetings took place between the rebels and the Malian Government in Algiers between January and March 1992. Mediation was provided by the Algerian Government and two independent mediators – the Frenchman Edgar Pisani, director of the *Institut du Monde Arabe* in Paris (and personal counsellor to France’s President Mitterand); and
Ahmed Baba Miské – a dissident Paris-based Mauritanian politician. These led to the signing of the National Pact on 11 April 1992.

**MFUA, ishumar and intellectuals**

Negotiations leading to the National Pact started in December 1991 in the Algerian 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 who the Malian government should negotiate with. By December 1991, the once united tanekra had become divided into four movements – MPA, FIAA, FPLA and ARLA. Under pressure of 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.

The creation of the MFUA and its role in conducting negotiations meant a shift in importance within the movements from the *ishumar* towards the intellectuals. The MFUA’s first secretary general and spokesman was Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed, the newly elected political leader of the FIAA. Before Zahaby entered the FIAA, he had been consultant to the AEN, the Norwegian Church development organisation which ran large projects in the Niger Bend. Zahaby was a typical intellectual.

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468 The first round of meetings took place between 22 and 24 January, the second between 12 and 15 February and the last between 15 and 25 March 1992. The Miské-Pisani mediation was unsuccessfully aborted before these rounds took place. Their intervention would be the last French attempt at mediation in the conflict.
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. Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed, military and political leader of the FPLA had refused to sign the National Pact, condemning it as yet another attempt to sell Tamasheq independence in exchange for some small privileges. Nevertheless, the FPLA signed the National Pact, under the signature of Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine, also a former employee of the Norwegian NGO AEN and a relative to FPLA leader Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed.

‘Describing himself as a man of peace, Zeidane explains he left his post with the AEN project in Gossi only in 1994. In June 1991, three months after the fall of the dictatorship, Zeidane decided to take a trip into the desert to see the state of the population, and to find out why the cycle of attacks and reprisals was still continuing. [...] Early in 1992, he persuaded Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed, leader of the FPLA to meet the Malian Government delegation. 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.’

Zeidane most likely meant it all well. But 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 _asharmor_ of the first hour. The FPLA therefore continued its attacks against the Malian army. Its fighters also engaged in a new tactic – attacking the road linking Bamako, via Mopti and Gossi to Gao. Most ambushes were carried out in the vicinity of Gossi, where Zeidane had been working with the AEN, a clear sign that the FPLA did not like Zeidane’s interference.

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Leaders and fighters
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 and movements’ top brass were often housed in luxurious villas and hotels in Bamako, while the fighters were still living on a military diet and sleeping on the rocks of Tigharghar or In-Taykaren. Despite long protracted negotiations no result was made. The Malian Government was reluctant to meet new demands and promises already made were never fulfilled, which led the ‘common’ fighters to look with mounting suspicion on the intellectuals of the MFUA, and to accuse them of selling out the Tamasheq cause to meet their own interests. But distrust of the ishumar also rose from the side of those fighters who had only joined the rebellion after its outbreak and who did not share the ishumar experiences in Algeria, Libya, Lebanon and Chad. The result of waning discipline and morale in the rebel bases was the temporary desertion of many fighters, who started for themselves, attacking merchant convoys, tourists and villages. These attacks were quickly denounced by both the Malian Government and the MFUA members as being ‘acts of banditry’, having nothing to do with the rebellion, since it was being solved politically. 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 lose what they thought they had won in negotiations. However, many of these ‘acts of banditry’ were seen by the rebels as a mere continuation of the fight. In the end, the difference was blurred between ‘regular’ rebel attacks on military goals as a sign of discontent with the peace process and ‘banditry’ by rebel deserters.

Konaré’s constraints
The ‘problems in the North’ as the Tamasheq rebellion was referred to after the signing of the National Pact, was far from the only problem facing the Malian Republic and its President Alpha Oumar Konaré.470 The total lack of implementation of the National Pact after its signing, which ultimately led to the intensification of the conflict in 1994, was not only due to remaining insecurity in the North, as the Government argued. Implementation of the National Pact was severely hampered by a plethora of problems, a lack of funding and outright political hostility from the side of the opposition parties and even government members in Bamako, leaving no space for political or diplomatic manoeuvring to Konaré and the MFUA. The problems which the Malian Governments had to face during 1993 and 1994 merit a book of their own. With the benefit of hindsight,

470 Unless indicated, the following section is based on Manley, A., Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report: Mali (London 1st quarter 1993 to 4th quarter 1994).
the successful Malian transition to democracy and political stability in the 1990s is little short of a miracle.

Konaré’s Government was founded on the sole ADEMA party in 1992, under the leadership of Prime Minister Younoussi Touré. The Touré Government was replaced by one under Abdoulaye Sekou Sow in April 1993, which included the CNID and the (refounded) USRDA. Less than a year later, Sow was replaced by Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. The latter managed to stay in charge until 1999. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita’s stable Government could and should have led to a more stable and governable country if it wasn’t for political boycotting from the side of opposition parties. These regularly sent their supporters to the streets to riot and protest against virtually everything the government proposed. Part of the opposition clientele was organised into various pressure groups, the most important of which were the AEEM, the students union; the ADVR, Association de Défense des Victimes de la Répression; and the ADIDE Association des Diplômés Initiateurs et Demandeurs d'Emploi.

The AEEM, the students union, made demands for student grants far exceeding the government’s financial capacity. Student protests in April 1993 led to the burning down of several educational institutions, government buildings including the National Assembly, and the fall of the Younoussi Touré Government.

The ADVR, Association de Défense des Victimes de la Répression, was an association working on behalf of the victims of the March 1991 uprising against the Traoré regime and their bereaved. The ADVR demanded a financial recompensation from the government for each ‘martyr of 26 March’, amounting to CFA 15,000,000 for the relatives of those who lost their lives in the revolt and a monthly stipend of CFA 200,000 for those who had been wounded. In March 1993, the government met these demands by allotting CFA 10,000,000 for each ‘martyr’ and a monthly stipend of CFA 100,000 to the wounded. A similar fund to compensate the victims of the rebellion had been installed under the National Pact. However, this fund remained empty and payments were never made.

The ADIDE – Association des Diplômés Initiateurs et Demandeurs d’Emploi, probably the best organised employment pressure group in Africa, took regularly to the streets to demand jobs. Falling state revenues and IMF austerity measures led to a ban on recruitment within the army and civil service, and a salary cut of fifty percent for the remaining civil servants in September 1993. In the eyes of the ADIDE, rebel demands for the insertion of even a few hundred of their own in the civil services and a few thousand within the army and security forces, with acceptance determined on the basis of being Kel Tamashq rather than qualifications, were intolerable. But then, in the eyes of the rebel negotiators, so was the


creation of a thousand temporary jobs for ADIDE adherents by the Konaré Government in March 1993.

Pressure groups in Bamako, by threat and implementation of riot and arson, demanded money from the government, but there was none. From its predecessor, the Third Malian Republic had inherited an international debt surpassing its financial capacities, an economy in shambles and one of the most corrupted civil administrations in West Africa. Furthermore, the new government faced great difficulty in tax collection (as ever) and falling export revenues. The price of cotton, Mali’s main export, fell throughout the early nineties. Revenues from Mali’s second largest export, livestock, fell as well, as one of its main production areas was the North. To top these financial problems, the CFA franc underwent a fifty percent devaluation in January 1994. The Malian Government depended for more than a third of its budget on international donor money and credits. However, the donor countries and agencies keeping Mali financially alive were reluctant to finance Mali’s democratisation and the National Pact. As Poulton & ag Youssouf rightly point out, ‘no foreign government was willing to invest in peace. Probably, they did not believe that the election process would truly bring Mali to democracy.’

The (non) application of the National Pact (1992-1993)

Far more elaborate than the Tamanrasset agreement, the National Pact consisted of six clauses, various subclauses and a total of 86 paragraphs. The National Pact dealt with six main issues. I will here briefly describe these issues, implications and (non) application. As I have said above, the interest of the National Pact only lies in its non-application and the effects thereof on relations between state, rebels and society. Its non-application finally led to the outburst of what Klute has labelled ‘unlimited warfare’ in early 1994.

I: Special social economic and administrative status for the North

The idea reflects the weakened intent of the rebels to gain a form of autonomy for the Kel Tamashq within the framework of the Malian state. 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 ‘De la consecration de la solidarité et de l’unité nationale dans le Nord du Mali’. The idea of autonomy to the North was tacitly reshaped into administrative decentralisation of the state. Not only in the North, but in all of Mali. Ironically, the decentralisation process started first in the Southern regions of Mali, before being applied in the North. Only in June 1999 were local elections held in the four Northern regions for the positions of mayor and council members of the Communes (counties) embodying the decentralised state. Nevertheless, these elections were enthusiastically received. These were the first elections ever in Mali where the Kel

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Tamasheq could elect a Kel Tamasheq representative of their own choice into power.

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 never applied formally and was more or less informally dropped as a demand by the MFUA with new rounds of negotiations. However, as in the decades before, tax collection in the north remained a futile effort.

III: **The creation of two special funds to reconstruct the North**

The first fund, the *Fonds de développement et de réinsertion*, was meant to support former rebels financially in their efforts to enter civilian life once the conflict was settled. The second fund, the *Fonds d’assistance et d’indemnisation aux victimes du conflit*, 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 reintegration 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 of the Malian armed forces**

The reaction of the army to the rebellion was at first very similar to the options chosen during Alfaïaga. The tactic of installing a ‘forbidden zone’ in which everyone present would be considered a rebel 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’.\(^{474}\) Further measures to the same effect were taken. By the end of July 1990, the state of emergency was declared in all of Northern Mali, as was a curfew after 11pm.\(^{475}\) Transport by four-wheel-drive vehicles was forbidden, as this was the rebels’ chosen means of transport.\(^{476}\) Trucks needed special

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\(^{476}\) Boilley (1994), op. cit., annex *Transcriptions de messages radio de l’armée malienne (Documents provenant de la serviette du sous-lieutenant Diawara Gollé, commandant du poste de Bouressa. Saisie par les combattants touaregs après le succès de leur attaque du 9 août*
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.

In order to extinguish the rebellion, civilians were interrogated and executed. When these executions made the Malian and European press, they were often ascribed by the authorities as committed by '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 campaign, similar to the reign of army terror during Alféllaga, to undermine civilian support for the rebellion and to discourage the fighters. Spokesmen for the Tamasheq and Moor civil population accused the Malian army of having started a campaign of ethnic cleansing in the Région Timbuktu in July 1990, entitled Kokadjé in Bambara, which indeed means 'cleaning'.

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 stop civilian support. The largest 'cleaning operation' took place at In-Abalan, near Tin-Essako in July 1990, where the army killed an estimated 94 nomads. The ghastliness of these executions were in accordance with methods applied during Alféllaga as well. On 29 July 1990, a unit of airborne soldiers passing 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. An anonymous witness in a Le Monde article of 15 August 1990, states 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'.

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1990, 841-45.

477 'Les réfugiés touaregs au Burkina', Liberté no 3, 1992. Kokadjé - 'to wash thoroughly' in Bambara - 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 Bambara speaking soldiers as well in a stroke of soldiersque humour about democracy.

478 Nous, Touaregs du Mali... (Paris 1990).


Estimates of the number of civilians killed by the army during the first two months of rebellion alone range between 125 and 262.\(^{481}\) The estimated number of civil victims on both sides in the conflict made by Klute, ranges between 2,500 and 3,500. However, the number of Tamashaq civilians killed was ten times the number of sedentary victims.

**Table 7:** Estimated number of civilian victims, June 1990 - October 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confirmed Tamashaq victims</th>
<th>Unconfirmed Tamashaq victims</th>
<th>Confirmed Sedentary victims</th>
<th>Unconfirmed Sedentary victims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,374</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Klute (2001), annex Opferzahlen (Mali).

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, Menaka, 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

As army repression grew, more and more people saw themselves with no other choice than to either flee or join the rebel forces in their bases. 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, Tin-Zaouaten en Timiaouen, 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 which lasted until 1994.

The rebellion continued after ‘Tamanrasset’, but the stage of fighting was replaced to the Tamesna, the Azawad and the Niger Bend. The renewed hostilities provoked 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-Niére. In June 1991, the number of refugees reached about five thousand.\(^{482}\) By October,

\(^{481}\) The number of 125 is advanced in *Le Monde*, 15/08/1990. The number of 262 is advanced in ‘chronologie Cheick’. Klute estimates the number of civilians killed in the first months at 181. Klute (2001), annex Opferzahlen (Mali).

this number had increased by a factor of six.\textsuperscript{483} 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 ten to thirty thousand.

The conflict reached its high point in mid 1994 with the advent of the sedentary Ganda Koy movement (infra). The Ganda Koy had as one of its main objectives to chase the Tamasher and Arab populations from cultivable land in the Niger Bend. They were utterly successful. By the end of 1994 the number of refugees in Mauritania reached an estimated seventy thousand, with two thousand new arrivals a week in August 1994.\textsuperscript{484} 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 one hundred and sixty thousand.\textsuperscript{485}

The refugees were not accorded 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 hundred 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 In-Guezzam during the whole of 1992, without any further assistance.\textsuperscript{486} In 1992, the UNHCR had freed a budget of 4 million US dollars to support the refugees in Mauritania. Unfortunately, a quarter of this budget had to be spent on transport from Nouakchott to the camps at the Mali-Mauritanian border.\textsuperscript{487}

In response to the National Pact clause on refugee repatriation, the UNHCR freed a budget of 3.5 million US dollars. The various NGO's occupied with aid to the refugees set up a programme to facilitate repatriation. A series of granaries destined 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 hardline movement FPLA did not respect the National Pact, and neither did the army.\textsuperscript{488}


\textsuperscript{486} ‘Camps des refugies, l’entasement’, Algerie actualité, 21/10/1992.


\textsuperscript{488} Poulton & ag Youssouf (1998), op. cit., 65.
In May 1993, the FPLA agreed to adhere to the National Pact. 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.489 A project was set up to repatriate 12,000 refugees from Algeria between July and December 1993. In May 1993, a “pilot project” repatriated 468 refugees. Upon arrival in Mali, these almost immediately returned to Algeria. In August a second group of 1,000 was sent home, and these too had returned to Algeria by November as the sites of reinstallation in Mali had been destroyed.490 The project was aborted and no new attempts to return the refugees were seriously undertaken until the effective ending of the conflict in 1995.

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 as well. Food remained a problem as relief rations 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 Moorish 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.

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 and, especially, from which movement. The internal quarrels over the number of men who could enter the Malian army from each movement even contributed to the creation of new movements, such as

489 ‘am: la pessaire’, Algerie actualité, 21/10/92. Much of the smuggling and car theft was executed by Algerians and could also be connected to the rise of the FIS and GIA in the same period. Many former Tamasheq rebels counter the accusations made by stating that the presence of their armed forces, together with the local authorities successfully blocked FIS and GIA presence in the South.

the FULA and FNLA, out of the FPLA. The members of the Tewsiten which adhered to these new movements – Ishidenharen, Dabakar, Daoussahak and Kel Intessar – felt they had been cheated on by the more numerous Chemennamas when it came to proposals of who would be integrated and who would not.

On 11 February 1993, almost a year after the initial signing of the National Pact, the Malian armed forces finally integrated a total of 640 rebels from the four main movements. These men were deployed in three so-called ‘mixed patrols’ of regular army soldiers and integrated rebels. Matériel was provided by the Algerian and Malian state, and partly by the movements. These mixed patrols formally fell under the command of Algerian officers. Also formally, responsibility for the mixed patrols was in the hands of the Commission du Suivi du Cesser le Feu – CCF, also provided for in the National Pact, and manned by MFUA members. However, the mixed patrols were, again formally speaking, part of the Malian army. In practice, control over the mixed patrols was totally unclear and so was their deployment. To some extent, the mixed patrols formed an extra army, half within the Malian system and half within the movements, that could be tactically and politically played out by all politicians in the Northern Malian field. For long, the creation of the mixed patrols and the CCF were the only measures of the National Pact to be applied, to the dissatisfaction of a number of different groups: the rebels, who wanted more; the army who wanted less integration and more combat against the rebels; the Malian 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’.491

In 1994, hostilities in the north would reach a climax, starting with troubles over the integrated rebels. In April 1994, a group of integrated rebels clashed with regular army units in the city of Menaka, ending with the desertion of the integrated rebels, taking their cars with them. In May 1994, a few rebels tried to steal a car in the centre of Gao, killing two bystanders. The rebels were apprehended and lynched. When the lynching mob took their own victims (the two bystanders killed by the rebels) to Gao hospital, they were surprised by a group of armed rebels who opened fire, leaving eleven people dead. Rightly or not, the attackers were said to be intégrés, which resulted in the lynching of more intégrés by army soldiers in garrisons in the North when the news about the ‘Gao massacre’ spread. Those intégrés who had not already done so, subsequently deserted, taking cars and arms with them. These events all directly contributed to the renewed violence in the North that is the subject of the next chapter.

Despite the resistance from the side of the army against the integration of rebels and the general disapproval of the Malian public on the same

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491 Ag Youssouf & Poulton (1998), op. cit., 65.
issue, the MFUA kept insisting on rebel integration. In May 1994, after the
clashes in Menaka and Gao, a new round of negotiations was opened
between the MFUA and the Malian Government about the implementation
of the National Pact. The discussions were entirely focused on the number
of rebels who would qualify for army integration. MFUA leader Zahaby ould
Sidi Mohamed, eager to get results, claimed the number of rebels totalled
10,000. He demanded integration of 3,000 men into the army, and
development projects leading to reinsertion in civil society for another
4,000. The Malian negotiators congratulated Zahaby for having an army
twice the size of the Malian armed forces and asked him how he managed
to feed them all.492

The insistence on the integration of rebels in the Malian armed forces
from the MFUA side 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. Many Kel Tamasheq got the impression the rebellion had
never been about the problems of the Kel Tamasheq, but only about the
ishumar and the intellectuals within the MFUA demanding jobs, to the
detriment of the safety of the Tamasheq civilians. More over, many rebels
got the same impression. The revolutionary music of the teshumara, al-
guitara, found a new source of inspiration: the division and treason within
the movement.

\[
I \text{ live in hard times} \\
\text{In which kinship is untwined} \\
\text{In which my maternal kin hates me} \\
\text{When you have nothing left, they sell you} \\
\text{With the heavy burden you carry} \\
\text{you support no one} \\
\text{Nothing is done together} \\
\text{The world cries like young animals} \\
\text{which leave the tent to drink} \]

492 Ibidem, 70.
This last chapter will deal with the last two phases of the rebellion from May 1994 to March 1996.

The first part of this chapter will deal with the third phase of rebellion from May to November 1994. This phase has been characterised by Georg Klute as 'unlimited warfare'. First of all, the already divided movements underwent a process of further factionalism and engaged in open violence against each other. The obstruction of the National Pact, and the absence of the state in Northern Mali combined with continued army retaliation, led the movements to reorganise themselves along teutsit lines, which then engaged in hostilities over the structure of the Tamashq political landscape – the position of tribal leaders and the hierarchical position of the clans represented in their respective movements.

The second part of this chapter will deal with a new player in the conflict. The Mouvment Patriotique Ganda Koy - MPKG, created in April 1994, was a vigilante brigade created in Gao by deserting 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 Tamashq 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'.

Most Ganda Koy attacks and pogroms were directed at those who were visibly Kel Tamashq or Moor, that is: 'white'. The latter statement explicitly implies that to most Malians, in fact to most people, the Kel Tamashq are 'white' by definition. Next to racial and stereotypical images, the Ganda Koy used rhetoric on the Malian nation both to justify its actions and to depict the Kel Tamashq as 'foreign elements'. But contrary to the 1950s and 1960s, the Kel Tamashq community now had the means to defend itself against these stereotypes: Kel Tamashq intellectuals countered the Ganda Koy's polemical language.

The third part of this chapter deals with the last phase of the rebellion between October 1994 and March 1996, tracing a gradual return to peace, which was finally concluded on 26 March 1996 with the ceremonial burning of three thousand weapons in the marketplace of Timbuktu.

The 'Flame of Peace' was organised by the Malian Government in collaboration with the United Nations. However, both the conception and

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implementation of this peace initiative were the result of local initiatives which emanated from civilian leaders – the tribal chiefs and village heads. I will not linger too long on this last phase of the conflict. Others, particularly within the world of international organisations and NGO’s, have written sufficiently on the subject. I will simply narrate how and under what conditions, generally speaking, peace was brought about.

**Movements and tewsit**

In Algeria and Libya, the exiled Kel Tamasheq in the tanekra discovered a relative freedom in the reshaping of tewsit hierarchy. The competition over leadership within the tanekra in the 1980s had led to the Tamanrasset war of 1985 described in chapter VI. The possibility of re-establishing hierarchy was furthered by changes in the political and military organisation of society during the 1980s and 1990s which reshaped the idea of the Tamasheq warrior. In previous times, the warrior status of an individual had been linked to his tewsit affiliation. Now, warrior status was determined by participation in the movement during the 1980s, the 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 it could use violence as a means to establish 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, Menaka 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 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 illelan – the strong members of society – and tilaqiwin – 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 tewsit had protected weak tewsit. In practice, the illelan or noble clans had monopolised violence to the detriment of imghad and other tilaqiwin. 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 ellelu origins to protect them and their twehit from the army. However, this reformulation of strong and weak in society on the basis of personal combat skill instead of twehit affiliation meant a fragmentation of protection.

Where one twehit had formerly protected others, this shifted to some extent to groups of individuals protecting others within the same twehit. One of the consequences was the creation of militias based on the structure of a rebel movement and often supporting a name analogous to a rebel movement, but without its political aims. Their existence was legitimised by the need for protection. Such groups were the Base Autonome du Timimoun – an Idnan militia, the nameless Daoussahak militia, and the Ifochas militia created by amenokal Intalla ag Attaher. By accident, the latter had managed to procure a number of weapons from the Malian army, destined to defend himself and his entourage against attacks by the rebels.495 In 1994, his militia, in alliance with the Ifochas movement MPA would start a campaign to reestablish Ifochas and chief dominancy within the Tamasheq political landscape of movements, civilians and tribal leaders.

**The fratricidal war, ARLA and MPA**

The division between modernists and traditionalists among the ishumar played its part in the development of these new ideas on protection and clan hierarchy as well. Part of the ishumar community had been in favour of a revolution internal to Tamasheq society that would lead to the equality of all members of society. The concept of timgheda – ‘imghadness’ – came to full development during this third phase of the rebellion. Under the influence of the Ifochas tribal chiefs, the concept of tefoghessa – or ‘ifoghasness’ – also developed in the period at hand, and precisely in reaction to timgheda. These conflicts between former illela and tilajwiw, 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. But it was also present in the conflicts between the MPA and other movements that same year.

In February 1994, members of the ARLA ambushed and killed MPA’s second man Bilal Saloum. Bilal was a Kela 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,

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495 Klute (2001), op. cit., 421.

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he toured the Azawad region in search of 'bandits' or renegade rebels. On one of these patrols ARLA members ambushed and killed him. The ARLA attackers took Bilal's weapons, car and body with them. The assassination of Bilal Saloum started the 'fratricidal war' between the ARLA and the MPA.

The MPA demanded from the ARLA to return Bilal's arms, car and body. Failure to fulfill this demand would be taken as a declaration of war. The ARLA sent a mission to fulfill 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 kidnapping of their supreme leader was considered an outrage by the Ifoghas and its movement, the MPA. 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 Gallla. 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 Tin-Essako. Finally, in August 1994, the MPA and the Ifoghas militia of Intalla ag Attaher, with the logistical assistance of the Malian army, managed to oust the ARLA from its base at Tigharghar. The ARLA fighters were totally evicted from the centre of the Adagh. Those ARLA fighters who belonged to the jinghad tewsi, together with their civilian proteges, sought refuge in the Tamesna plain at the FPLA base at In-Taykaren and the nearby base of Halboubouti. They were still living outside the Adagh at the time of my research. 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, the Idnan fighters of the Base Autonome du Timetrine 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. 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.

Further factionalism, FPLA, FULA and FNLA

The Kel Adagh were not the only ones to experience factionalism along tewsit lines. The FPLA, starting as a movement of hardliners, suffered under the same problem. In January 1993, two new movements came into

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496 'MFUA. La mort du colonel Bilal fait monter la tension', L’Essor, 26/02/1994.
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 In-Taykaren at the extreme Eastern part of the Niger Bend, under the control of the tewsit Chemennamas. In-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 tewsen, 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 In-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 Tamashqe 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 tewsen with more or less equal status within the tewsit hierarchy. In pre-colonial times, the tewsen within the FPLA were under the protection of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram imoushagh (or ‘true’ or ‘highest’ nobles), as were almost all other tewsen in Northern Mali at the advent of French conquest. The Chemennamas are a tribe consisting of a number of fractions, created by the colonial authorities in the 1910s, but also under the sway of the Ouillimiden.499 Their status is comparable to that of imghad, which they most likely are. The Dabakar are considered to be on one hand noble or ellelu, but on the other hand to be tilaqiwin – people under the protection of others – being the Ouillimiden nobles. In the 1960s, Nicolaissen classified the Ishidenharen as somewhere between ineslemen (religious specialists) and imghad.500 If confronted with their classification as such, the Ishidenharen would fiercely protest, arguing they are nobles almost on a par with the Ouillimiden imoushagh.

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 tilaqiwin. 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 tilaqiwin, however, had joined the

499 Politique Indigène - Conventions de délimitation passés avec les chefs, cercle de Gao 1907-1910. ANM - FA 2E-76.
tanekra and were active within the rebellion. Therefore, these groups could now effectively claim status as ilielan 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 tilaqiwin could no longer be accepted. The enormous historical prestige of the Ouillimiden imoushagh did not permit other tewsitien 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.501

The movement had begun as a united force, but by mid 1994 all unity was lost, contributing to the general feeling of insecurity in all 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.

Masters of the Land
The Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy

Insecurity, exclusion and the creation of the Ganda Koy

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. Already, in August 1990, the houses of the small Tamasheq community in Bamako were pillaged and their inhabitants attacked.502 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 Moorish population would only grow over the years.

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.

501 Just to complete the account of internecine strife, a few ‘minor fights’ should be mentioned. The Moorish 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 Sidd Mohamed threatened to leave the MFUA. In March 1994, the FNLA was ousted from its base Halloboubouli 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 resulting pogroms against Tamasheq civilians led to avenging counterstrikes 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 Moorish 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 financiers of the Ganda Koy 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 Maiga, owner of a large transport company, two petrol stations in Gao and head of the local transport union.

‘Transport was cut off by the rebels. 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’.

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. 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 NGO’s, had brought hopes for prosperity after the drought. Now these organisations had to retreat from the area.

503 'Ganda Koy, ou la revanche des paysans', Le Monde, 31/01/1996.
under the threat of violence from both the rebel forces and the army. In revenge, pogroms were directed against Tamashq and Arab NGO employees. In May 1992, a crowd at Gossi, headed by an army unit, killed twelve Tamashq 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 Tamashq 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 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 Tamashq interests.504

The end result of all negotiations with the Malian state was that any agreements made seemed to only involve the Kel Tamashq and Arab communities. This left other communities in the North with a general feeling of exclusion from the National Pact. The creation of the Région Kidal after the Tamanrasset agreement was generally seen as privileging the Kel Adagh. The tax exemptions and special economic status for the North were generally interpreted as tax exemptions for the Kel Tamashq and Moors and special economic programmes in their favour. The economic reconstruction of the North was interpreted as economic reconstruction of the Kidal region, while the rebellion had caused most economic disruption in the Niger Bend. After the signing of the Tamanrasset agreement the conflict had been relocated to this area, leaving the Adagh in peace, or so the inhabitants of the Niger Bend thought. The strong stress on the integration of rebel forces in the Malian army and civil service, regardless of their qualifications, was seen as excluding other societies of the North and privileging men who had committed all sorts of crimes.

Neither the Tamanrasset agreement nor the National Pact, nor any other agreement made between the MFUA and the government afterwards, met with approval from the other communities in the North. Also, the MFUA and government hardly made any efforts to explain the contents of the National Pact and other agreements to the broader public. Worse still, the National Pact and all agreements made, despite favouring the Kel Tamashq, had not brought an end to fighting and banditry. On the contrary, it had brought banditry and rebels inside the cities. The Commission du Suivi du Cesser le Feu, the MFUA and the mixed patrols created after the National Pact all had their seats in Gao. Rebel forces and intégrés behaved within the town as victors and occupying forces in the eyes of many inhabitants of Gao.

504 Congrès MPA. Société civile: un passage de temoin controverse, L'Essor, 14/9/93.
The last straw for the population of the North came in April and May 1994. On 24 April, a number of rebels to be integrated in the armed forces clashed with regular units of the armed forces in the city of Menaka.

Alkassoum: ‘24 April 1994, the longest day ever in Menaka. Things have happened the people of Menaka will never digest. That day, there was a meeting about the integration of rebels. They sat there on a dune, the soldiers and the rebels. The rebels killed two soldiers and wounded their captain. He ran back to the barracks while still being shot at. The whole day long you heard “rrrrrrrrrrrr”. [...] Ha! During the rebellion, the rebels did as they pleased. They came to Menaka, did their shopping, flirted with the girls, stole things and left. The army did nothing. Ha! That day, we finally had hopes for peace, but two imbeciles blew it all. They even had rented rooms together, the soldiers and the rebels. They had been told not to trust them too well, “those redskins can be up to anything”. The rebels stole the guns of the soldiers and shot them. Only when the army came from Anderamboukanè did they retreat’.

Tan Mohamed: ‘Yeah, always living with terror: “rrrrrrrr”. Day after day, bullets flying all around you. To be woken up at six, or at one at night. Not from the crowing of the cock, but from the sound of bullets, that is terrible’.  

On 13 May 1994, a group of armed rebels entered the city of Gao and tried to steal a car parked outside the main mosque when Friday prayer came to an end. The rebels 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 rebels in procession to Gao hospital, where they delivered the two bodies, and then started tolynch the two apprehended rebels. However, the lynching party was surprised by comrades of the lynched rebels who opened fire and entered the hospital. Firing from inside the hospital on the crowd and in its halls on the hospitalised patients, the rebels killed eleven people. The clash between rebel and army soldiers and the massacre in the Gao hospital were the events which sparked off Ganda Koy activity.

The Ganda Koy solution

Ganda Koy had a clearcut solution to the problems of the North and a clearcut goal: protecting the sedentary populations from rebel attacks and

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505 Conversation with Alkassoum, bellah man, and Tan Mohamed, bellah woman from Menaka. Menaka, 24/03/1999. According to Kel Tamashq spokesmen in Menaka, most shooting came from the side of the army. They accused the army of having taken the occasion to attack the houses of Tamashq citizens. During the fight four people were shot dead, two more died of shock, twelve people were injured and five shops were looted. ‘Lettre ouverte à son excellence Monsieur le Président de la République’ 12/05/1994, signed by notables of Menaka. Nation no 41 (Bamako 21/06/1994).

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 prices and Ganda Koy adherents did not make a secret about what this 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 Niør to Mēnaka, let us organise, let us take up arms for the great battle that awaits. 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 Gándakóye 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’

In this quote from a Ganda Koy pamphlet, 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 economics. Insecurity has been dealt with above. In the following paragraphs, the remaining motives will be examined closer.

The army

Although part 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 military commander of the Ganda Koy was Captain Abdoulaye Mahamahada Maiga, 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 perhaps with the help of comrades who had not deserted. Even the desertion of Captain Maiga and his men is questionable. They might well have been authorised to do so by their superiors.

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 Maiga and his men had really deserted, their unit made no effort to catch them.


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The general public in Mali approved of Maiga’s actions as well and created support organisations in Bamako and elsewhere. Active financial support for the Ganda Koy even came from the vast Songhay commercial networks stretching to Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, and from the indigenous Songhay community in Niger. Rumours had it the Ganda Koy fighters were provisioned in arms by the dissatisfied part of the Malian army.

**Unlimited warfare**

The Ganda Koy followed strategies similar to the Tamasheq rebels. Like the rebels, they made use of ‘technicals’ for transport and attacks. In addition to fighting vehicles, the Ganda Koy made use of boats to patrol and control the riverain villages. Like the Tamasheq rebels, 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 riverborne raiding parties had been as much feared on the banks of the Niger as Kel Tamasheq raiders had been in the desert. Like the Tamasheq rebels, the Ganda Koy set up a base at 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 du Suivi du Cesser le Feu started an investigation, headed by MFUA and FIAA leader Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed. Zahaby quickly discovered that the attack had been launched by boat from the Ganda Koy riverain base at Fafa. Leading a mixed patrol, mostly consisting 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 which proved the implication of Ganda Koy fighters in the massacre at Léré in 1991, that had cost the lives of fifty Moors. 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 costed the life of Boubacar ould Sadeck, FIAA’s military commander.

The next day, in retaliation to Zahaby’s action, seven integrated rebels had their throats cut by members of their unit at the army post of Gourma Rharous. The day after, integrated rebels and FIAA fighters retaliated by attacking the army post and prison at Niafunké, killing nine men and

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511 ‘Comment fut demantelée la base de Gandakoy à Fafa’, Union, 21/06/1994.

stealing two cars, while simultaneously attacking the village of Tonka. 513 One day later, 10 June 1994, most integrated rebels had deserted, with the exception of integrated MPA members. The leaders of the various movements, often staying in Gao or Bamako, returned to the bases. Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed, until then a negotiating moderate, became one of the most hardline military leaders, commanding the until then rather peaceful FIAA from its base at Almoustarat. His colleague Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine returned to the FPLA base at In-Taykaren. Negotiations and the similitude of peace provided by the National Pact mirage came to an end. What followed were the most bloody months the rebellion had witnessed.

These first days of 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. 514 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’. Zahaby’s ‘treason’ of the National Pact and the reopening of hostilities provoked army support for the Ganda Koy to a point were it became unclear if attacks were committed by the deserted men of Captain Maiga 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. Therefore, most attacks made by the Ganda Koy were concentrated at the Kel Tamasheq and Moorish population living in these cities and villages. 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 testumara 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 on civilians. If the Ganda Koy and the army attacked Tamasheq and Moorish camps and villages, the FIAA and FPLA would 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 Moorish in the vicinity of Anderamboukane. The next day, the Ganda Koy and regular army units attacked a nomad camp between Niafunké and

514 The revenges by the FIAA should not be seen aseya, because vengeance followed directly on attack.
Léré, killing an estimated 25 inhabitants. The same day and the day after, pogroms in Timbuktu ended the lives of around 75 Kel Tamasheq and Moorish 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 caravan drivers. On 19 June, the Ganda Koy killed 160 inhabitants of a refugee camp near the village of Ber and in the village itself. 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
Date, 15 June 94
Crimes committed by the Malian army 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 army 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 (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 Moors 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 […]‘.

These and other messages were collected by Amnesty International and other organisations but, despite reports written by these organisations, without much consequence on the ground. The reports might have made headlines in the Western press (‘Mysterious Timbuktu, scene of ethnic clashes’) 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 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 worst 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 market shoppers dead.517

The turning point massacre

In October 1994, the Moorish movement FIAA executed a planned attack on the army base at Gao and the Ganda Koy leaders of the town. On 20 October 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 Maiga, destroying a pharmacy and shooting at the barges at 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 Moors and Tamasheq in Gao followed. A crowd of inhabitants of Gao and soldiers left for the nearby village of Inelfiss founded by the Tamasheq tevissi Kel Essuq Kel Takailalt. This village of this neslmen or religious specialists served as a zawiyah or religious centre of the Qasr al-rawjiyya sufi brotherhood. The inhabitants, mostly Kel Essuq Kel Takailalt, had settled of their own accord to promote religious learning and to practice agriculture. The village head, leader of the zawiyah 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 and watched.518

The FIAA attack and the revenge of the Gao population left 38 ‘black’ Gaois and 180 ‘white’ Gaois dead.519 The attack at Gao and the massacre of the Kel Essuq zawiyah and the ‘white’ population of Gao was the last of

its kind. It more or less directly led the Songhay and Tamashq civilian population to wonder what was happening to their communities. The object of the FIAA attack had been to force 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, army and the *Ganda Kay* 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 Kay* could or would protect and defend them. On the contrary, only attacks and spiralling violence could be expected. In realising this danger and the situation the population found itself in, the chief of the *tewsitien* and the village chiefs of the *Cercle* Bourem, and representatives of the *Ganda Kay* signed a peace treaty of their own in November 1994. The local Bourem treaty arranged mutual protection, abstention from violence and especially access to pastures, water and land tenure, irrespective of the National Pact and other engagements between state and rebel movements.\(^{520}\) This local peace treaty on local initiative meant the beginning of the establishment of a lasting peace. As for the *Ganda Kay*’s motives to join in signing this treaty –

> ‘The blind retaliation against our white-skinned brothers should end. Distinction should be made because not all that glitters is gold. One should not forget that the national army is unacquainted with the terrain. Thus, a white can catch a white. They know who the bandits are [...] Meanwhile, the *Ganda Kay* should assign itself the task to protect the population against armed bandits and to stop indiscriminate reprisals against the “whites”.\(^{521}\)

**The return of stereotypes**

The coming of the *Ganda Kay* 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 Tamashq society I have discussed in previous chapters. But contrary to the 1950s and 1960s, the Kel Tamashq community now had the means to defend themselves against these

\(^{520}\) ‘Un accord de paix entre Ganda Kay et Touaregs à Bourem’, *Le Tambour*, 29/11/1994. The concerned fractions were the Takarangat Kould, Takarangat Shaggaran, Tanquit Koul and - Shaggaran, Kel Ghela, Inheren, Kel Tangabo, Ibogholiten, Kel Titidialelet and Ahel Sidi Alamine Foulane (Mouns). Most of the concerned fractions are ‘river Idan’- Idan inhabiting the area south to the Adaghi towards the Niger river. The concerned villages were Bourem Djindo, Bara, Karabassane, Bia, Moudakane, Denga, Ouani, Tondibi, Hâ, Bourem, Maca, Konkoron and Hawa.


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stereotypes held in Mali. Tamasheq intellectuals 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.

The stereotyped image of Tamasheq society rested on a few features: a hierarchically organised society where race is connected to rank; the existence of slavery; a nomadic society; and a certain warrior culture. These features were appreciated differently in different phases of the colonial and post-colonial periods, with an essentially negative appreciation in independent Mali. But however different the appreciation of the image might have been, it 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, 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 and operationalised by shifting boundaries. The concept of ethnic or group boundaries is well-developed, but a few comments should be made. 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.

A few parameters of context can be discerned. 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. 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 handgrenades in wartime. I do not think I surprise anyone by saying that in a context of war, the boundaries of identity between these groups 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 are, the more the image of the other becomes hostile and reduced. It is not only negative, it is almost void. This process of stronger essentialising 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

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society is heterogenous and so are the other societies of the North. Apart from the Kel Tamasheq, Moors 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 Moors 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 a 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 pro-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 pro-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 Boiné, 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.”’

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 no 07’, 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’.\textsuperscript{524}

Statements of the same kind were made by \textit{Ganda Koy} spokesmen 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.\textsuperscript{525}

The second element of \textit{Ganda Koy} othering discourse, was Tamasheq and Moor social organisation. The societies of the Adagh and Azawad, be they Moorish or Tamasheq, were hierarchical, hence feudal, and especially nomadic. I will not enter into details of the image of the nomad here as I have done so elsewhere. Let me simply say that 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.\textsuperscript{526}

Set in a language of reason and analysis, we rediscover all stereotypes of nomad unproductivity and the type of character nomadic existence produces: laziness, deceitfulness and bloodthirstiness. Hence, they should be converted into civilised (read sedentary) citizens practising agriculture. Apparently, the thoughts of administrators on Tamasheq society had not much changed since the days of Modibo Keita.

\textsuperscript{524} Anonymous I, "Extrait du no 00 de La Voix du Nord: organe de combat des peuples sédentaires" (n.p. n.d.).


\textsuperscript{526} "Pourquoi une rébellion touarègue au Mali?", \textit{Le Républicain}, 14/12/1994.
Where the Kel Tamasheq had not been able to provide an answer to the essentialising stereotypes of othering during the 1950s and 1960s, they now had the means to defend themselves in words. Freedom of press in Mali ensured that not only the *Ganda Koy* or the government could be heard. The Kel Tamasheq also had a sympathetic 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 Konare passing 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 pro-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 become eternally on the move. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as “the darlings” of the Western and Arab countries’.”

Iyad ag Ghali, remaining outside the conflict in the Niger Bend, was often interviewed by the newspapers *l’Essor* and *Les Échos*, 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 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

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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’.528

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 implication 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 pigmentary difference as a vehicle for secession reemerges’.529

**The bellah question, a short reprisal**

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 which were opposite to the Kel Tamasheq rebels. They were ‘black’ and sedentary, and they lived along the banks of the Niger. The emblem of the Ganda Koy consisted of a pirogue boat, crossed with a hoe and a harpoon, representing the Niger, sedentary life and defence. These traits were shared by the bellah community of the Niger Bend, the iklan n eguef or slaves of the dunes. Despite being part of Tamasheq

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society and culture, 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 independence struggle brought them emancipation. Alfella 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.530 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 (commissaire au Nord 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 (Arab). The Mouvement pour l’éveil du Monde Bellah fights against the new "Western apartheid" which the MFUA and the Commissaire au Nord 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'. 531

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, joined or fell victim to pogroms. The bellah community suffered less under pogroms, but in their


531 ‘Les Belahs réclament une gestion partagée du Pacte National’, Le Républicain, 01/06/1994. The Commissariat au Nord mentioned here is an inter-Ministerial office, created under the National Pact, to implement its social and economic terms.
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 crueler 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 white Kel Tamashq by the army and the Ganda Koy. When the army attacked the Kel Tamashq 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 (i.e. between the Malian army 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.

Racial motives were used by the founder of the Mouvement pour l’Eveil du Monde Bellah as well 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 of their former masters.

Support for the Ganda Koy by the bellah community and the racial view of the problems of the North by the bellah themselves meant that, on one hand, Ganda Koy discourse could not be simply anti-Kel Tamashq. To this day, most bellah see themselves as part of the Kel Tamashq 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 Tamashq 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 Menaka – the UMADD. The Menaka Cercle has a large bellah population, next to a large ‘free’ Kel Tamashq population. The UMADD is often seen as ‘the bellah party’, although many of its adherents come from the imghad population of the Cercle. Its two main leaders belong to the tewsit Ishidenharen, one of which is of bellah origins. During the communal

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532 It has to be noted that Kel Tamashq of bellah origins also fell victim to pogroms in Bamako, if it was known that they were Kel Tamashq.

elections of 1999, the UMADD managed to gain 10 of 21 seats in the Menaka council, thus forming a political force to be reckoned with.

**Ganda Koy nationalism**

The rebellion had been instigated to achieve Tamashq independence. This posed a threat to the existence of the Malian nation-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 the own nation, which in this case meant that the negative stereotypes of the Kel Tamashq and Arab communities played an important part as well. 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.`

In nationalist war rhetorics, 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 even Malian. 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

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Algerian and Chadian mercenaries, despite evidence to the contrary – although issued abroad, the passports were Malian.535

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 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, 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, El-Hajj Umar Tall and Samory Touré. Surprisingly, the Kel Tamashq heroes Cheiboun, aminokal of the Tengueregif and victor over the French conqueror Bonnier, and Firhun ag Elinsar, aminokal of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram, were included also. With regards to the latter, it was stressed by many bellah that, despite being aminokal, he was black and therefore must have been of slave origins. (The colour differences made within Tamashq society, which reserved sattifon or greenish black to the imoushagh, was apparently exchanged for a ‘colour scheme’ only including ‘white’ nobles and ‘black’ slaves.) 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 Tamashq 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 Tamashq remained outsiders.

**Historical discourse, cultural concepts and reconciliation**

At the end of 1994, especially after the FIAA attack at Gao of October, it became clear to the Ganda Koy as well that a military solution could not be found for the North. Thus, the Ganda Koy became a party in the peace process initiated at the Pacte of Bourem. From then on, historical discourse was invoked to reconcile the warring parties. Whereas in early 1994, the Ganda Koy stressed the otherness of the Kel Tamashq and the historical difference between Songhay and Kel Tamashq, now the common history and origins of the two peoples were presented –

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‘Even legend has cursed war between Songhay and Tuareg. Everyone who travels the river Niger 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.’

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, such as they are justified in the Sunjata epic or like epics in the Bambara culture area. The social inequality between group members is the fundamental principle of day-to-day social interaction between individuals. However, they cannot form the basis of interaction between groups at large or total strangers. This handicap has been overcome by the institution of the joking relationship or senankuya. 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, grandparents and grandchildren. On the level of the larger social group, they 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 djamimu, 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, in the later days of the rebellion, and especially after the end of the rebellion, 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 cited 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. All ethnic groups, it was postulated,


539 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 directs relations between members of different ethnic groups was
stood in *senankuya* relations, putting them on equal footing within the nation. Thus, *senankuya* is said to exist between the Kel Tamashq 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 Tamashq. 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’.  

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 cineaest Cheik Oumar Sissoko released the magnificent movie *La Genèse*. The movie is inspired by the biblical Genesis – chapters 23 to 37 – which tells the story of the brothers Jacob the pastoralist and Esau the hunter, and Hamor the farmer. Most attention is paid to 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 which suffered under the conflict. Jacob and his family wear Tamashq clothes (topped with Fulbe hats) and live in Tamashaq 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. As Sissoko explained the subject of his film –

‘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.

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 (1993), who argues that joking relations could serve as a basis for new pan-African international relations.


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There are also conflicts between Arabs and Maures and 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.

The final road to peace
November 1994 - March 1996

In November 1994, the situation in the North slowly grew towards peace. This last phase in the conflict was concluded on 26 March 1996, a date chosen for its national significance as the Taoré regime had fallen on 26 March 1991. That day, the conflict in the North was officially ended with a highly symbolic ceremony: the burning of around three thousand weapons, handed over by the various movements, at the marketplace of Timbuktu. This 'Flame of Peace' was organised by the Malian Government in collaboration with the United Nations, notably UNIDIR (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research) and the Malian UNDP office.

I will not linger too long on this last phase of the conflict. Others, especially within the world of international organisations and NGO's, have written sufficiently on the subject. I will simply narrate how and under what conditions, generally speaking, peace was brought about.

To put it briefly: 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 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, 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 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.

One more thing should be said about this last phase and what followed. Although I entirely focus here on the road to peace, this does not mean the road of violence was completely abandoned. During the last months of 1994 and throughout 1995, violence occurred, but more and more sporadically, and with a decreasing number of victims. The larger and best


542 The most elaborate writings are ag Yousouf & Poulton (1998), op. cit., and Lode, K., Synthèse du processus des rencontres intercommunautaires du Nord du Mali (d' Août 1995 à Mars 1996) (Stavanger 1996), on whose writing this last part of the chapter is based.
part of the local arsenal was not handed over. At the moment of writing, these arms are still used in ‘arranging’ local conflicts over hierarchy, land, water and other political issues, even with regards to what is considered ‘national politics’.

Local pacts and \textit{rencontres intercommunautaires}

The first step towards peace was taken on 20 November 1994 with the signing of a local treaty between the fraction chiefs and village leaders in the \textit{Cercle} Bourem, under the auspices of the \textit{Ganda Koy}. The agreement made focused on daily relations between nomadic and sedentary inhabitants of the \textit{Cercle}. The Bourem Pact formally regulated practices which had been natural prior to the conflict. The sedentary population and the \textit{Ganda Koy} would give access to the village markets and the watering sites for the herds at the banks of the Niger, 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 \textit{Ganda Koy} would offer protection to the nomads. In return, the nomads would abstain from stealing animals belonging to the village inhabitants, 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 fractions of the \textit{Cercle} would certainly know of upcoming actions. With this agreement, the fractions of the \textit{Cercle} Bourem explicitly denied support for 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.\footnote{This committee would play a key role in promoting similar local agreements between fractions and villages in the area throughout 1995, which were included in the Bourem Pact, and the peace agreements between the movements.}

The initiative for peace thus 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 \textit{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, and 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 \textit{teyelle}: if there is one who has a goal, the rest follow automatically. Without knowing what the goal is, without thinking. That is \textit{teyelle}. But we are also \textit{jâhil} (ignorant, anarchists). Give a \textit{jâhil} a gun and the gun controls the man, not the man the gun.’\footnote{\textit{Un accord de paix entre Ganda Koy et touareg à Bourem’}, \textit{Le Tambour}, 29/11/1994.}

\footnote{Interview with Lamine ag Bilal. Gao, 20/06/1999.}
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.'  

Reuniting the movements

As his leaders had done before him, this former rebel saw himself explicitly as a Malian. The idea that the Kel Tamashq 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 frame 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. It is awkward that the movement representing the one tewsit which had been most involved in preparing the revolt – the Ifoghas – and the movement representing the hardline secessionists – the FPLA – would have the main initiative among the rebels to end the fight and to give up independence. Throughout 1994, the MPA, with the help of the Malian army 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 the fighting power of these movements, the MPA directed itself against the FIAA, with active support from the Malian army. In November 1994, the army and MPA forces successfully attacked the FIAA basis at Assid El Biat. The attack and conquest of the base was filmed and broadcast on Malian TV.

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546 ‘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.
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.\textsuperscript{547} The agreement was also signed by the FPLA itself and was placed explicitly under the umbrella of the Bourem Pact between the inhabitants of the Cercle Bourem. 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. But although civilian leaders could further peace and trust among the various communities, they could not enforce peace and reconciliation between the movements. Luckily, the latter did so themselves.

The agreement between ARLA, MPA and FPLA implicitly stated that the three movements would together fight ‘renegade rebels’ and ‘bandits’, i.e., the FIAA. Throughout 1994, the FIAA had taken the lead in fighting the Ganda Koy in ever more brutal action. In order to gain support, FIAA leader Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed 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.\textsuperscript{548} 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 army. On 11 December 1994, the Malian army agreed to the reinsertion in its ranks of those FPLA fighters who had integrated into the army under the provision of the National Pact, but who had deserted after the outbreak of hostilities in May 1994.\textsuperscript{549} 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. Thus, peace between the movements and isolation of the last refractory movement FIAA 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. By 1994, it was not only the rebel movements and the Ganda Koy who held arms. Small arms abounded in Northern Mali. In the Niger Bend, pastoral

\textsuperscript{547} ARLA - MPA: Signature d’un accord de paix’, Amawal, 27/12/1994.

\textsuperscript{548} Le nord renait!’, Le Démocrate, 06/12/1994.

\textsuperscript{549} ARLA - MPA: Signature d’un accord de paix’, Amawal, 27/12/1994.
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 cattle 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 analogous to the conflicts between the movements, many Tamasheq and Moorish tribes and fractions had engaged in hostilities between themselves over pasture, wells, and internal hierarchy.

To reinstall trust, so called *rencontres intercommunautaires* 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 Agenal, close to Timbuctou, 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 organisation of these meetings. From October 1995 to March 1996, the AEN and other NGO’s supported the organisation of 37 meetings.\(^{550}\)

The *rencontres intercommunautaires* would become a necessary and institutionalised part of Northern Malian regional politics after the official end of the conflict. During my fieldwork in 1999, two large meetings took place at In Tedjedit and Tahabanat, to reconcile the disputes between the Kel Adagh and the fractions in the *Cercle* Menaka. Besides reconciliation, the meetings also served to reestablish power balances between those groups who participated and organised the meetings. The meetings were organised on the initiative of local powerbrokers – fraction chiefs, the heads of local NGO’s and powerful former rebels. Agreement on the location of the meeting was crucial as the place of the meeting was significant to the political issues involved. The meeting at In Tedjedit took place exactly on the border between the *Région* Kidal and the *Cercle* Menaka. Its main issue was reconciliation between the Kel Adagh and the ‘Kel Menaka’. The organisers sought the financial support of foreign NGO’s who often provide means of transport and money to buy the necessary food for the participants – rice, sheep, goats, tea and sugar. Invitations to all communities involved are then extended, as well as to the local administration (often also involved in the organisation) which often formally presides over the meeting. The meeting involves extensive discussion between representatives of all *teweiten*, often by mouth of the chiefs or religious leaders. Subjects discussed are development, disarmament of the various *teweiten* in the region, banditry, and land and water tenure. Discussion is complemented by festivities, such as camel races, dance parties, and concerts.

\(^{550}\) Lode (1996), op. cit., 54.
International aid for the peace process

Supporting the rencontres intercommunautaires was not the only activity the international NGO community engaged in. A major contribution was made by UNIDIR and UNDP in organising the disarmament of the rebel movements, including the \textit{Ganda Koy}, and their integration in the Malian army or in civil society. Most important in the reconciliation between the \textit{Ganda Koy} and the MFUA movements was that the latter agreed to integrate into the \textit{Ganda Koy} within the National Pact. More prosaically put, \textit{Ganda Koy} fighters could integrate into the Malian armed forces under the provision of the National Pact. This meant the \textit{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 organisation of the integration of former rebels into the Malian armed forces and into civil society was put into practice along the lines of a proposal made by UNIDIR consultant Lieutenant-General de Graaf. On the initiative of President Konaré and as part of a more general study on this topic in West Africa, de Graaf and his team had studied the possibilities of halting the spread of small 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.\footnote{551}{Graaf, H., de, \textit{Sahara-Sahel advisory mission report} (unpublished document, n.p., n.d.), courtesy of Lt.-Gen. (Ret.) de Graaf, who kindly gave me his personal archives.} These circumstances had come in July 1995, when de Graaf undertook a second mission, parallel to the Round Table conference of Timbuktu, held between 15 and 18 July 1995.

The Round Table Conference of Timbuktu united the Malian Government, the MFUA and \textit{Ganda Koy} and the international donor community.\footnote{552}{Unless indicated, based on: Republique du Mali, \textit{Rencontre Gouvernements-Partenaires sur le Nord-Mali: Version provisoire 7 Juin 1995} (unpublished document, n.p., n.d.), courtesy of Lt.-Gen. (Ret.) de Graaf.} The aim of the conference was to allocate money for the reconstruction of Northern Mali and the ending of the conflict. During the five years the conflict had lasted, donor countries and NGO’s had made various promises to contribute financially to peace. In addition, money which had been reserved for projects in Northern Mali had accumulated in wait of better days. In all, during the Timbuktu Round Table, an estimated $150,000,000 was promised to contribute to the reconstruction of the North when lasting peace was established. This was large boon indeed which greatly helped to appease the warring factions. A last, but certainly 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.

De Graaf’s plan for disarmament 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 or $1 a day for personal expenses.\textsuperscript{553} In other words, their arms and peacefulness were bought.

Four of these cantonnement camps were created at Bourem, Léré, Kidal and Menaka. The camps were under the command of regular army officers. The camps were 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 in civilian life.\textsuperscript{554}

The cantonnement started in November 1995 and lasted until February 1996. In all 2,902 fighters entered the cantonnement camps.\textsuperscript{555} 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 ensure ‘real’ peace among the various communities of the North and, occasionally, serve to engage violently in political affairs. As one informant, a prominent Kidal politician, put it in June 1999 – ‘sometimes we do certain things to show that, despite democracy, there is always the possibility of “demokalachi” in Kidal.’ The mixture of democracy and Kalachnikovs he outlined remained a reality in Northern Mali. The peace of Timbuktu remains, at the time of writing, an armed peace between communities distrusting each other and the state.

The absence of skilled fighters and the newest weapons could not temper spirits in 1996 and indeed, peace was finally established in the North. On 26 March 1996, 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 elite of Malian politics, the MFUA and the international community. 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 \textit{Ganda Koy}, dissolved. The rebellion was over.

\textsuperscript{553} ‘Léré: La paix est cantonnée’, \textit{Les Echos}, 03/02/1996.

\textsuperscript{554} poultou & ag Youssouf (1998), op. cit., 115. The costs of these bonuses amounted to $3,000,000, provided by Canada, Norway, the Netherlands and the US.

\textsuperscript{555} 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 \textit{Ganda Koy} followed close with 811 men or 28%. The FPLA could integrate, 453 of its men or 16% of the total number of intègrés. ARLA and FIAA were the losers with 260 and 288 men respectively, or 9% and 10% each.
Conclusion

From its beginnings in June 1990 to its end in March 1996, the rebellion went through four phases. After a bad beginning in June 1990, in which their network was largely dismantled by the Malian security forces, the rebels successfully launched a military campaign that dealt decisive blows to the Malian army, and forced the Traoré regime to open negotiations. The start of negotiations in December 1990 marked the beginning of a second phase. This phase, lasting roughly until the beginning of 1994, was characterised by constant negotiations, low-key but steady military activity from both sides and, mostly, political confusion. While the Malian state underwent a transition from dictatorship to multi-party democracy, the rebels became internally divided on the content of their demands and on political issues internal to Tamasheq society. This protracted phase of insecurity and confusion finally led to a fourth phase of renewed large scale violence between rebel movements and the creation of a new party in the conflict – the Ganda Koy. After half a year of extreme violence, the conflict entered a final phase – a slow but gradual peace process on the initiative of local civilian leaders, the tribal chiefs and village heads.

Break-ups within the once united movement had various reasons. Opposing ideas on the aims of rebellion was one reason. Moderates, opting for inclusion within the Malian state, were separated from hardliners striving for independence. A second reason for separation was a difference of opinion on the second goal of the tanekra movement and the rebellion – the transformation of the Tamasheq political landscape from one in which clan affiliation, the hierarchy among clans and caste decided on the social political status of an individual, to one in which equality and personal achievement would be decisive. A third reason for separation can be found in the role the fighters attributed to themselves within society – that of the protectors of the weak. The retaliations by the Malian army on the civilians led the fighters to reorganise their movements along clan lines to effectively protect their own ‘weaker’ kin, or ‘their’ civilians.

Yet, the effects of the break-up of the movement into various factions had effects opposite to those intended. The FPLA, uniting the hardliners within the movement, broke up along clan lines over questions of internal hierarchy between adhering clans. The ARLA intended to abolish the importance of clan affiliation, regional and caste divisions into social relations. But the effect was that only those Kel Adagh who did not belong to the Ifoghas adhered to the movement. Tamasheq outside the Adagh did not join, making regional divisions even stronger. The armed hostilities between ARLA and MPA resulted in the break-up of the ARLA, which ensured the further dominance of the Ifoghas within the Adagh.

The break-up of the movement into smaller militias which intended to protect the civilians, led to internal military conflicts which only endangered the civil population. Furthermore, the general attitude of the Tamasheq fighters towards non-Tamasheq civilians and their internal conflicts, led to the creation of a new movement of Songhay and bellah inhabitants of the north, the Ganda Koy. This last movement created
during the conflict, led to heavier repression of the civil population and the return of stereotypes and racism, along with a strong Malian nationalist discourse.

Nationalism and racism, rather than ethnicity, played an important role for all parties involved in the rebellion. The tanekra movement was inspired by nationalist ideals. During the tanekra, the concepts of the Tamashiq nation and its homeland had been elaborated. In June 1990, the rebels set out to create political space for both. The different views among various currents within the rebel movement on the amount of space desired and the forms this space could take, inside or outside the Malian nation-state, drove the first wedge into a united movement. The wedge only became bigger as negotiations about the form and size of Tamashiq space, both within the movement and with the Malian state, dragged on.

As violence between currents within the movement grew, nationalist discourse changed or hardened at both ends of the spectrum. Paradoxically, moderates among the Ifoghas – the tribe which had taken the fore in the creation of a Tamashiq nationalist movement – ended up negating their separatist intentions and went as far as to explain rebel activity in a Malian national interpretation of recent history. This vision of the rebellion was first developed by southern Malian politicians in an attempt to save the nation’s integrity, but it was swiftly adopted by representatives of the MPA.

On the side of the government, national unity and integrity remained the only approach to rebel demands. Proposals suggesting forms of Tamashiq autonomy were all discarded by governments succeeding Moussa Traoré. The compromise with rebel demands was found in decentralisation, applied to the administration of the whole country. Ironically, the decentralisation process was started in the four ‘Southern’ administrative Régions, and was only applied in the four northern Régions in 1999.

Discourse on inclusion and exclusion in the Malian nation and the image of the Kel Tamashiq 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 Tamashiq 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 Tamashiq ‘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 Tamashiq from the Malian nation and depiction of the Kel Tamashiq as foreign, was largely based on discourse on race and racism. By accusing the Kel Tamashiq of being ‘white pro-slavers’ and as ‘Qaddafi’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 Tamashiq society that were not ‘white’, the bellah or former slaves who could join the Ganda Koy ranks.
Stressing the stereotype of the white Kel Tamasheq as pro-slavers found justification in the adherence of former Tamasheq slaves within the Ganda Koy. Not without reason, the bellah developed a discourse of exclusion from the rebellion; the assassination of the one high-ranking rebel of bellah origins by colleague rebels served to prove the point. Indeed, the bellah had been largely and conspicuously absent within the tanekra. In developing a nationalist and racial discourse, the Ganda Koy managed to avoid the pitfall of ethnic discourse, which would have excluded the bellah from the Ganda Koy as well, since they still formed part of Tamasheq society, despite denial of the latter by prominent bellah spokesmen. From their side, rebel spokesmen rightly accused the Ganda Koy of developing a racist and national discourse of the Kel Tamasheq other, and denied it by stressing the positive consequences of their rebellion – the end of dictatorship in Mali and the establishment of a multi-party democracy.

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 measure 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 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 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.
Some conclusive remarks

I began the introduction saying that this thesis is an attempt to answer a few simple questions of a ‘factual’ nature. These could be summarised as ‘why was there a violent conflict between the Malian state and its Tamashq and Moorish inhabitants’? I started this research expecting answers and subjects to be limited and the questions to be answerable within the then so popular frame of ‘ethnicity’. Perhaps I was too enthusiastic in asking such a broad question and only looking at such a small range of explanations. As was to be expected and as it should be, I came away from ‘the field’ knowing that things were more complex. A question of this nature does not lead to one clear-cut answer which can be formulated within the scope of one specific theme in social science. The conflict had many reasons and various causes, but one all-encompassing answer can be given. Throughout this thesis I have argued that the conflict found its origins in a Tamashq desire to regain political independence which had been lost after French colonial conquest.

The conflict was also 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 nationalism; and about political and social developments within Tamashq society. As I tried to do justice to the complexity of the history told and the questions and issues raised throughout the preceding chapters, I do not think it worthwhile or even possible to shortly summarise them all here. Instead, I will concentrate on the few issues that struck me most.

Nationalism and the state

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 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 retrace the Saharan borders – culminating in the French-Moroccan war over Mauritania between 1957 and 1958 – while further north-west, a ferocious colonial war of independence ravaged Algeria. In this geo-political configuration, the Moors and the Kel Tamashq were both figuratively and literally at centre-stage as inhabitants of the Sahara. In this period the bases for a future conflict were laid.

Most striking about this period is the fact that the multifarious political projects in which the Kel Tamashq and Moorish political elite engaged were all more or less directed against something: Kel Tamashq and Moorish incorporation in Mali. The OCRS sought to keep the Sahara under French tutelage, which precluded Tamashq and Moorish independence. The Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya sought to incorporate the Moorish and (partly) Tamashq inhabited parts of Mali in either Mauritania or Morocco. Even those leaders who participated in party politics and elections in French Sudan, did so in an attempt to curb the political power
of the ‘southern’ political elite. In this period, Tamasheq nationalism was only formulated as a negative nationalism. It was about what they did not want to be – Malian – with hardly any idea what they did want to be, except Kel Tamasheq.

When in 1960, French Sudan became independent as the Republic of Mali, the various political adventures of the Kel Tamasheq elite had made them highly suspicious in the eyes of the Malian leaders, who feared a Tamasheq rebellion with the support of French troops still present in the region. The Kel Tamasheq attitude towards their incorporation within the new state was, in the eyes of the Malian political elite, as threatening as before independence. The Kel Tamasheq made demands about government and administration which can be summarised as a demand for virtual autonomy: No state interference in internal affairs; administrators should be Kel Tamasheq or Moor; tribal leaders were to keep their power; Arabic education should be equal to French education. These demands do show a certain contempt for the Malian leaders from the side of the Kel Tamasheq and Moors. Such mutual fears and contempts, combined with no small amount of prejudice from both sides, and small personal conflicts exaggerated in rumour, could only lead to the Malian fear of revolt becoming a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. Indeed, in 1963, the wish not to be Malian led a small group of Kel Adagh men to start an armed uprising which was bloodily supressed by an anxious and inexperienced new regime. Although it was only partly clear what the rebels wanted, it was clear what they did not want – to be part of a state ruled by black Africans. Only in the 1970s and 1980s was a more positive Tamasheq nationalism created which made clear what it wanted – an independent Tamasheq state.

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 young Kel Tamasheq migrant workers who shaped both this national idea and the political movement that would fight for it. The first characteristic is that a people which organised society and politics on the basis of fictive kinship ties, based its nationalist ideal on territorial notions. The desert they had fled during the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s was nevertheless imagined as a possibly fertile national space. There were 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 tewsitenn – 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. Nevertheless, the idea of a Tamasheq country to be united proved just as ineffective and was abandoned rather quickly. The Kel Tamasheq indigenous to Algeria and Libya, the Kel Hoggar and the Kel Ajjer federations, 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 the nation states they sought to overthrow – Mali and Niger. The fact that they garbled the names of Mali and Niger to form their own name as a political entity shows how strongly the idea of the existing nation-states was engraved on their minds.

The second characteristic 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 USRDA had sought to curb the power of the tribal chiefs, which had been created or strengthened during the colonial period, and to promote the interests of the lower strata of society – the bellah, or former slaves, and imghad, or free non-nobles. Although these policies had not been successful, they had formed a major cause for the discontent and subsequent violent rebellion of the Kel Adagh in 1963.

Now, only a decade later and 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 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 from the tribal chiefs of the Bourem Cercle, the power of the tribal leaders was even strengthened at the expense of the revolutionaries. The failure of the movement to incorporate the bellah as a social group would eventually lead them to join the Ganda Koy, a vigilante movement which sought to end the Tamasheq rebellion through counter-violence.

**Race and stereotypes**

As I noted in the introduction, in a way, the conflict between the Malian state and the Kel Tamasheq and Moors forms part of a problem that haunts all of the Sahel, a problem often seen by foreign experts as one of ethnicity, but locally phrased in terms of race.

Perhaps the most interesting side to the racial aspect of the conflict between the 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, pro-slavery 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 discourse 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’.557 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’.557

Racialism is the construction of social groups and identities on the basis of perceived (or imagined) physical characteristics. One belongs to a race when oneself and/or others say so on the basis of one’s physical appearance.

Throughout this thesis, 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 which members 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 an ‘ideology’ forming 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’.558 In these definitions, race is not a subcategory of ethnicity. One can imagine members of various racial backgrounds to be members of the same nation and this is indeed the case in Tamashaq society.

The Kel Tamashaq are perceived both by themselves and by the Malian government to be racially divided. The Kel Tamashaq themselves discern three types: koual, black; shagaran, red; and sattefer, greenish black. Each type roughly corresponds with a certain social group within society, but none of these groups is seen as non-Kel Tamashaq. However, the colonial administration, the Malian administration of the 1960s, as well as the Ganda Koy movement of the 1990s only saw two ‘racial’ categories of Kel Tamashaq – white and black. But regardless of whether one

556 Ashcroft et. al (2000), op. cit., 204.
557 Ibidem, 205.
distinguishes between two or three categories, one distinguishes racial differences within one and the same society, or nation or ethnic group. Whether the white and black (or red or green) racial types can be seen as ethnic subgroups is arguable. Although there seems to be a tendency for the former Tamasheq slaves to see themselves as a distinctive group within Tamasheq society, with some racial overtones next to the main social reasons (being discriminated against as slaves), it seems this process of sub-ethnic differentiation is hardly on its way. However, 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 thesis, in chapters IV and VI in particular, 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 which prepared for the second rebellion. 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 will not link these two rebellions to a third 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 youngsters has taken up egha will be clear when they grow to adulthood. Their future actions are then dependent on the social political circumstances. In the wake of the second rebellion and partly as a result of this rebellion, Mali is undergoing a process of democratisation and decentralisation. The communal elections of June 1999 were the first ever in which the Kel Tamasheq could vote other Kel Tamasheq into power at a local level. The rather bitter and intense struggle for votes between some of the candidates indicates the enthusiasm for this relative form of political independence. In a way, one could say that the Kel Tamasheq rebels have won, or at least that they haven’t lost the fight they started in 1990. All people I spoke to in Northern Mali realised that it is now the Kel Tamasheq community itself that is responsible, hence empowered, for its future, and feelings of empowerment and egha are mutually exclusive.
Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift beoogt antwoord te geven op de concrete vraag naar de oorsprong en oorzaken van het conflict tussen de Malinese staat en haar bewoners in het noorden van het land: de Kel Tamasheq, beter bekend als Toareg, en de Moren. De vooronderstelling van dit onderzoek was dat het conflict te verklaren viel binnen het theoretisch kader rond het begrip etniciteit. Het onderzoek leerde dat een dergelijk conflict niet te verklaren valt binnen een nauw omschreven sociaal-wetenschappelijk theoretisch kader. Voorzover het mogelijk bleek een eenduidig antwoord te geven op de gestelde vraag naar de oorzaak van het conflict, bleek de verklaring eerder te liggen in ideeën over nationalisme dan in theorieën over etniciteit. Om het simpel te formuleren: de oorzaak van het conflict tussen de Malinese staat en de Kel Tamasheq en Moren in dit land ligt besloten in de niet aflatende wens van de Kel Tamasheq en Moren om hun prekoloniale politieke onafhankelijkheid te herwinnen. Beloften over onafhankelijkheid, die in de vijftiger jaren waren gedaan door de vertrekkende koloniale macht Frankrijk, zijn hierbij van grote invloed geweest.

Het conflict werd verder gevoed door: conflicten over de concrete invulling van het begrip staat en de aard en inhoud van staatsmacht; racistische vooroordelen en stereotype beelden van ‘zelf’ en ‘ander’; sociaal-politieke ontwikkelingen binnen de Kel Tamasheq- en Morese samenleving die hebben geleid tot de creatie van een eigen nationalistische identiteit die concurrente met de Malinese nationale identiteit.

Nationalisme en de staat

Na de Tweede Wereldoorlog veranderden de internationale verhoudingen op wereldwijde schaal met drastische gevolgen voor de koloniale rijken van West-Europa. In Frans West-Afrika en de Maghreb leidden deze veranderingen tot de creatie van een nieuwe locale politieke elite, lokale politieke partijen en de geleidelijke overdracht van politieke en bestuurlijke macht aan deze nieuwe elite door de Franse machthebbers. Halverwege de vijftiger jaren werden in de Franse Sahara diverse grondstoffen ontdekt, waarvan aardolie en aardgas de belangrijkste waren. Door deze ontdekking veranderde de Sahara van een waardeloze hoop zand in een potentiële goudmijn. Deze ontdekkingen leidden tot pogingen van alle betrokken partijen in het dekolonisering proces om de grenzen te verleggen tussen de verschillende koloniale gebieden - waarvan toen al vaststond dat onafhankelijkheid slechts kort op zich zou laten wachten - en de gebieden waarvan Frankrijk hoopte dat zij onder Frans gezag of invloed zouden blijven (voornamelijk Algerije). Deze conflicten vonden hun hoogtepunt in de door Frankrijk gecreëerde Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (O CRS) - een poging om alle Saharauwe gebieden te verenigen in een nieuwe Franse kolonie die onttrokken zou worden aan het dekolonisering proces; de Frans-Marokkaanse oorlog om Mauritanië; terwijl het bezit van de Sahara ook een belangrijk strijd punt was in de Algerijnse bevrijdingsoorlog. In deze geo-politieke conflicten waren de
bewoners van de Sahara, met name de Kel Tamasheq en Moren, belangrijke spelers. Terwijl deze conflicten voor de Moren uiteindelijk uitmondden in de creatie van een eigen staat - Mauritanië - bleven de Kel Tamasheq, ondanks Franse toegevingen, verdeeld over verschillende staten. Deze periode vormt de basis voor het latere conflict tussen Kel Tamasheq (en de Moren in Mali) en de Malinese staat.

Het meest opvallende in deze periode is dat de verschillende geo-politieke projecten waarin de Kel Tamasheq en Moren betrokken waren, gericht waren tegen een situatie: de incorporatie van de Kel Tamasheq en Moren in de Malinese staat. Het OCRS project beoogde de Sahara onder Franse voogdij te houden, hetgeen echte onafhankelijkheid voor de Moren en Kel Tamasheq uitsloot. De *Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya* - een door Moren opgerichte politieke partij in Mauritanië en Mali - streefde naar opname van het door Moren bewoonde noorden van Mali in hetzij Mauritanië, hetzij Marokko. Die leden van de Tamasheq en Moorse politieke elite die deelnamen aan partijpolitiek in Mali, deden dat met het oogmerk om de macht van zuidelijke politici in het noorden te verkleinen.

In deze periode was het nationale sentiment van de Kel Tamasheq negatief vorm gegeven. Het was in eerste instantie anti-Malinees, met weinig aandacht voor wat de Kel Tamasheq dan wel zouden moeten of kunnen zijn (Mauretaans, Marokkaans, Frans of onafhankelijk).

Toen in 1960 de Franse Soedan onafhankelijk werd onder de naam 'Republiek Mali', hadden de verschillende politieke avonturen van de Tamasheq elite hen hoogst verdacht gemaakt in de ogen der Malinese machthebbers. Deze vreesden voor een gewapende opstand van de Kel Tamasheq met steun van Franse troepen die nog in de aangrenzende staten aanwezig waren. In de ogen van de Malinese leiders was de houding van de Tamasheq elite naar de nieuwe staat toe net zo bedreigend als voor de onafhankelijkheid. De Tamasheq elite stelde schriftelijk en mondeling eisen aan de Malinese regering die eenvoudigweg neerkwamen op autonomie voor de Kel Tamasheq: geen staatsbemoeienis in interne aangelegenheden; ambtenaren in noord Mali dienden van Tamasheq of Moorse afkomst te zijn; de macht van de stamhoofden diende onverkort gehandhaafd te blijven; en onderwijs in het Arabisch diende gelijk te staan aan onderwijs in het Frans. Deze eisen tonen zowel de minachting van de Tamasheq elite voor de nieuwe machthebbers, als hun naïef gebrek aan inzicht in de nieuwe politieke verhoudingen en hun plaats daarin. Dit wederrzijds heersende minachting en het wantrouwen, gecombineerd met al langer bestaande stereotype beelden over en weer die tot uiting kwamen in een racistische obsessie voor huidskleur bij beide partijen, leidde ertoe dat de Malinese angst voor een Tamasheq opstand uitkwam.

In 1963 kwam een kleine groep mannen van de Kel Adagh stam in opstand tegen hun onvrijwillige incorporatie in Mali. De opstand werd bloedig onderdrukt door het nog onervaren maar overenthousiaste bewind dat geen enkele aantasting van haar gezag dulde. Hoewel het slechts gedeeltelijk duidelijk was wat de opstandelingen nu wilden, was het geheel duidelijk wat zij niet wilden: deel zijn van een staat geregeerd door zwarten. Pas in de zeventiger en tachtiger jaren werd er een meer positief
Tamasheq nationalisme en nationaal gevoel geschaten dat uiting gaf aan de wens van veel Kel Tamasheq: een onafhankelijke Tamasheq staat.

Het Tamasheq nationalisme en nationale identiteit zoals deze in de zeventiger en tachtiger jaren werden verbeeld door de ishumar, de Tamasheq gastarbeiders in Algerije en Libië die de nationalistische beweging oprichtten en in de jaren negentig voor onafhankelijkheid vochten, heeft een aantal interessante aspecten. Het eerste is dat zij is gebaseerd op ideeën over grondgebied en een ‘vaderland’, terwijl de Kel Tamasheq nomadisch zijn en hun maatschappelijke verbondenheid nu juist vorm geven via (fictieve) verwantschapsideologie: de clans en stammen (beiden tewsit genaamd in het Tamasheq). Ondanks de droogtes die de Sahel en Sahara teisterden in de jaren zeventig en tachtig, werd dit Tamasheq ‘vaderland’ voorgesteld als een vruchtbare bodem voor een eigen natie-staat. Deze voorkeur voor ‘bodem’ boven ‘bloed’ als voornaamste medium voor een nationaal idee werd nu juist gekozen door de Tamasheq nationalisten, omdat de (fictieve) verwantschapsideologie tot dan toe een obstakel had gevormd voor politieke en nationale eenheid.

De sociaal-politieke structuur van de Tamasheq maatschappij, opgedeeld in stammen en clans (tewsit), bleef de nationalistische beweging dan ook ernstig hinderen, aangezien de leden elkaar de macht in de beweging bleven betwisten op basis van de diverse elkaar beconcurrerende tewsit. Deze interne machtsstrijd begon halverwege de jaren tachtig, om voort te duren to na het einde van het gewapende conflict met de Malinese staat.

Het idee van een Tamasheq vaderland als basis voor een nationalistische beweging bleek echter ineffectief. De Tamasheq stammenconfederaties waarvan het leefgebied zich op Algerijns en Libisch grondgebied bevindt – de Kel Ajjer en Kel Hoggar – hebben nooit deel uitgemaakt van de nationalistische beweging. De Kel Tamasheq, waarvan het grondgebied zich in Mali en Niger bevindt, groepeerden zich in de jaren tachtig in een nationalistische beweging, maar deze beweging viel snel na haar oprichting uiteen op basis van de al bestaande statistische indeling, waarna Malinese en Nigerijnse Tamasheq nationalisten ieder hun eigen weg gingen. Hoewel beide bewegingen uiteindelijk een gewapende opstand begonnen tegen hun respectievelen staten, kwam van samenwerking tussen beide bewegingen nooit iets terecht.

Een tweede aspect van het Tamasheq nationalisme is dat de nationalistische beweging bepaalde hervormingen van de Tamasheq samenleving voor ogen stond, die haar voorgangers, de Tamasheq politieke elite uit de jaren vijftig en zestig, nu juist actief hadden bestreden. Het USRDA regime trachtte de macht van de stamhoofden te breken, terwijl zij de positie van de voormalige slaven en andere lagere strata van de Tamasheq maatschappij had getracht te verbeteren. Hoewel niet het belangrijkste motief voor de opstand van 1963, speelde deze zaak toen wel degelijk een belangrijke rol. Echter, een decennium later hadden de Tamasheq nationalisten en revolutionairen dezelfde sociale doelen als de USRDA. Naast hun politieke doel om hun land van ‘vreemde overheersing’ te bevrijden, wensten zij de interne hiërarchie af te schaffen.
Uiteindelijk zou ook dit tweede doel van de nationalistische beweging, om de feodale stamhoofden af te schaffen, niet gehaald worden. Na de ‘broedertwist’ tussen de concurrerende rebellenbewegingen MPA en ARLA in 1994, en in het bijzonder na het lokale vredesinitiatief van de stamhoofden van Bourem in oktober 1995, werd de machtspositie van de stamhoofden op sociaal en politiek niveau alleen nog maar versterkt ten koste van de nationalisten. De nalatigheid van de nationalistische beweging om voormalige slaven in haar rangen op te nemen, leidde ertoe dat deze sociale groep zich juist wendde tot de Ganda Koy: een burgermilitie die met hulp van het Malinese leger tegen de Tamasheq rebellen vocht.

**Racisme en stereotypen**

Het conflict tussen de Malinese staat en de Kel Tamasheq en Moren wordt deels gevormd door een probleem dat de hele Sahel raakt. Dit is een probleem dat door academische specialisten vaak beschreven wordt binnen het theoretisch kader van de term etniciteit, maar dat lokaal vaak raciaal wordt geformuleerd.

Misschien wel het interessantste aan het hele conflict tussen de Malinese staat en de Kel Tamasheq is dat beide partijen even geobsedeerd waren door het begrip ‘ras’ en dat beide partijen een racistische dimensie aan het conflict gaven. Men kan gerust stellen dat de opstand van 1963 de uitkomst was van de relaties tussen twee verschillende politieke elites, die waren gebaseerd op werderzijdse achterdocht en negatieve wederzijdse stereotyperingen. Het USRDA-regime zag de Kel Tamasheq als blanke, anarchistische, feodale, luie, nomadische slavendrijvers die nog beschafte dienden te worden, terwijl de Tamasheq politieke elite hetzelfde regime zag als een stel zwarte, oncompetente, onbetrouwbare, vermoeide slaven die de macht probeerden te grijpen. Deze wederzijdse stereotype ideeën doken weer op tijdens het hoogtepunt van de tweede opstand in 1994. In dat jaar beoogde de burgermilitie Ganda Koy de ‘zwarte sedentaire’ bevolking te beschermen tegen de ‘blanke nomadische’ bedreiging van de nationale eenheid.

Op een theoretisch niveau kan men zich afvragen of racisme geen subcategorie is van etniciteit. Het antwoord hierop is afhankelijk van de betekenis en definitie die men beide termen toekent. Tot aan de jaren zeventig bleef het begrip ‘ras’ een belangrijk analytisch concept dat gebruikt werd in een betekenis die lijkt op de huidige betekenis van het concept ‘etniciteit’.\(^{559}\) Om met Ashcroft *et alia* te spreken –

\[^{559}\text{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}

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\^{559}\text{Ashcroft et. al (2000), op. cit., 204.}
Racialisme (of racisme) is de constructie van een sociale groep of identiteit die is gebaseerd op vermeende fysieke karakteristieken van individuen. In dit proefschrift heb ik aangegeven dat er een congruentie bestaat tussen de sociale categoriën ‘etnie’ en ‘natie’: sociaal-politieke groepen van een dusdanige omvang dat niet alle leden elkaar kennen, hetgeen betekent dat het een gedeeltelijk verbeeld de sociale groep is waarvan de leden elkaars lidmaatschap erkennen op basis van bepaalde deels imaginaire karakteristieken. Het verschil dat gemaakt wordt tussen een etnie en een natie is een politieke keuze die gelieerd is aan de idee dat de begrippen natie, nationalismes en staat inherent en onlosmakelijk verbonden zijn, hetgeen tot uitdrukking komt in de samenstelling natie-staat die, terecht of niet, wordt gebruikt ter beschrijving van vrijwel alle politieke erkende staten. Ik heb ook aangegeven dat ik ethniciteit (en niet nationalismes) zie als de ‘ideologie’ die de etnie of natie bijeen houdt, terwijl ik, met Gellner, nationalismes zie als ‘primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’.

In al deze definities is ‘ras’ geen subcategory van etniciteit. Men kan mensen die men als ‘raciaal verschillend’ ziet toch verbeelden als leden van dezelfde natie of etnie. Dit is, ondanks de sociale ongelijkheden, het geval in de Tamasheq maatschappij, waar voormalige slaven als ‘raciaal zwart’ worden verbeeld en voormalige meesters als ‘raciaal wit’, maar waar niemand wil ontkennen dat deze sociale en raciale groepen deel uitmaken van dezelfde etnie of natie: de Kel Tamasheq.

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List of terminology

French and Tamasheq when unindicated, Arabic: (Ar.), Songhay: (Son.), Bambara (Bam.) masculin singular: (m.s.) masculin plural: (m.pl.) feminin singular (f.pl.) feminin plural (f.pl.) only used to indicate people.

*aboubash* (m.s.) *iboubashen* (m.pl.)
*tabbasht* (f.s.) *tiboubashen* (f.pl.) - cross cousins
*aqdh* - mountain area in northern Mali
*aq* - son of
*aggiwin* - praise singers, bards
*‘aṣid al-‘adhā* (Ar.) - feast of the sacrifice
*‘aṣid al-fitr* (Ar.) - celebration at the end of Ramadan
*aqafal* - warfare without rules
*akal* - earth, ground, country, territory
*Alfaqi* - specialist in fiqh or Muslim law
*Affellaga* - first Tamasheq rebellion in Mali
*al-Guitara* (Ar.) - musical genre of the teshumara
*al-Jaish li Takhrir al-Maghrebiyya* (Ar.) - Moroccan Liberation Army
*al-Jebha* (Ar.) - 'the front', the second rebellion and the movement preparing it
*al-Jebha li Takhrir ash-Shimāl al-Mali* (Ar.) - the Liberation Front of Northern Mali
*al-Maghreb al-Aksā* (Ar.) - the far west', Greater Morocco
*amasheq* (m.s.) *imoushagh* (m.pl.) *tamasheq* (f.s.) *timushaq* (f.pl.) - noble
*amenoka* (m.s.) - 'owner of the land', leader of a federation or ettebel
*amghid* (m.s.) *imghad* (m.pl.)
*tamghid* (f.s.) *timghaden* (f.pl.) - free non-noble
*annetma* - mother's brother

*aqqa* - attack to restore or gain honour
*Arab* - Arabs
*aran meddän* - male patrilineal parallel cousins
*aran tiddären* - male and female matrilineal parallel cousins
*at-tarrīkh* (Ar.) - History, in Tamasheq written history
*ath-Thawra* (Ar.) - The revolution
*Azawad* - wadi in south-eastern Mali, Tamasheq country in rebel discourse
*bellah* - (former) slaves
*bilād es-Sudān* (Ar.) - sub-Sahara Africa
*boubou* - male Muslim dress
*Brigade de Vigilance* - para military movement under the Keita regime
*Canton* - administrative unit in AOF
*Cercle* - administrative unit in AOF and Mali
*cheick* (Ar.) - leader among the Moors
*Commandant de Cercle* - administrative head of a Cercle
*Conseil de Fraction* - fraction council
*Morocco*
*Conseil de Fraction* - fraction council
*djammw* (Bam.) - patronyms
*egha* - hatred and revenge
*eghewid* - male turban and veil
*ellelu* (m.s.) *llelan* (m.pl.)
*tellelut* (f.s.) *tellelan* (f.pl.) - free, strong or noble status
*entoutcas* - nickname of the Tamasheq intellectuals by the ishumar
*eshik* - honour, restraint
ettebel - drum, symbol of power of the federation, also called ettebel
exode - annual seasonal migration from the countryside to the cities in search of work
fasobara (Bam.) - forced labour
fiqh (Ar.) - Muslim law
FLN - Forces de Libération Nationale, Algerian National Liberation Army
fraction - nomad administrative unit
Ganda Koy (Son.) - 'Masters of the land', Songhay and Bellah vigilante brigade
gandoura (Ar.) - thin burnous
goum - camel mounted military police force
goumier - military policeman
Gourma - Niger Bend
Hajj (Ar.) - pilgrimage to Mecca
Haratin (Ar.) - Moorish (former) slaves
Ifulaguen (m.pl.) afuleg (m.s.) - a fighter in Alfellaga, the first Tamasheq rebellion
Ihaten - Songhay people
iklan (m.pl.) aklil (m.s.) taklit (f.s.) tiklitan (f.pl.) - slave
Iklan n eguef - 'slaves of the dunes', sedentary slave communities
Ikufr (m.pl.) Akafer (m.s.)
Takafert (f.s.) Tikufrin (f.pl.) - 'infidels', 'Westerners' (Takafert, also French language)
imelen - white, not used to indicate 'white people'
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 standing and occupation
ishumar (m.pl.) ashamor (m.s.) tashamort (f.s.) tishumarin (f.pl.) - 'unemployed', those of the teshumara subculture
jâhil (Ar.) - ignorant, anarchist
Jihad (Ar.) - holy war
kokadjet (Bam.) - term to describe 'ethnic' cleansing
koual - black, also used in Tamasheq to indicate 'black' people
Malinke - Mande language
Mande - culture area in West Africa
Marabout - Muslim mystic or religious specialist
mazbut (m.s.) mazbuten (m.pl.) - colloquial Ar. 'OK', nickname given to the ishumar
Milice Populaire - para military brigade under the Keita regime
Nahda al-Wattaniyya al-Mauritaniyya (Ar.) - Mauritanian Renaissance Party
ouïil (Ar.) - son of
ouïlou - daughter of
senankuya (Bam.) - joking relationship
sattefen - 'greenish black', also used in Tamasheq to indicate people of that particular 'colour'
safham - to make understand
Service Civique - conscription alternative to military service under the Keita regime
shaggaran - red, 'white' people
shorfa (Ar.) - descendent from the prophet Muhammad
sous fraction - administrative unit
Subdivision - colonial administrative
takaraket - (knowledge of) shame
talaqiw (s.) tilaqwin (pl.) - poor, weak
tanekra - 'the uprising', movement preparing the second Tamasheq rebellion
tanyatin - female paternal parallel cousins
tefoghessa - 'being Ifoghas', Ifoghas culture
Targui - singular of Tuareg
tayite - intelligence, understanding
tegze - pelvis, confederation, sister's children, relation between mother's brother and sister's children
temet - placenta, lineage, genealogy
temushagha - 'being amashegh', culture of the imoushagh
temust / tumast - social identity, nation
tenere - emptiness, 'desert', 'fatherland'
tengelt - allusive language
Territoire des Oasis - colonial administrative region in Southern Algeria
teshumara - 'being unemployed', Tamashq youth culture of the Maghreb cities
tewet - attack to gain booty
tewsit - descent group, fictive kingroup, clan, tribe
teyilell - followsome behaviour	tifinagh - Tamashq alphabet	tikonin - nonsense	timgheda - 'being imghad', imghad culture
tindé - drum, musical genre	tinflusen (pl.) tanfust (s.) - oral history, story	tisawis (pl.) tasawit (s.) - (oral) poetry
tō (Bam.) - millet porridge
tonw (Bam. pl.) - village associations
Touat - Region in South-West Algeria
zahuten - ishumar parties
zawiya - Lodge of a sufi brotherhood
Sources and Bibliography

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, and the Archives du Cercle de Kidal (ACK) in Kidal. 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, and the Centre de l’Histoire et des Études des Troupes d’Outre Mer (CHETOM) in Fréjus.

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-20 - Inspection des Affaires Administratives Kidal 1937-1957.
FR 7D - 18,24,41,57,58,81 and 90 - Elections.
FN 1E 1227 - Rapports des tournées 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


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 (dérogaion) 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.

During my research, the Service Historique de l’Armée de Terre (SHAT) underwent a restructuring of its repertoire and classification system. For this research the most important series are the series 5H - Inventaire provisoire, Afrique Occidentale Française (A.O.F.). The series starts with 5H, followed by the file-box number (carton). The series starts with AO F in general, followed by series on the various Territories within AO F 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 oul Cheick, the Cadi 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 du 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 du Cercle was unoccupied during my research stay, I have received permission to search the archives from acting Commandant du Cercle and Premier Adjoint Marc Dara, with the support of His Excellency Eghlese ag Foni, Haut Conseiller du VIIIème Région de Kidal. This permission was not put to paper.

Two other archives have been used less extensively in this research: the archives of the Ministère de l’Administration Territoriale et de Sécurité 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 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, containing material from the Ministère de l’Intérieur et de l’Information (as AMSAT was then called) under Madeira Keita on the USRDA’s policies towards the OCRS and the Kel Tamashq. From the CHETOM archives, I have also used one file: CHETOM 15 H 77-2 - Mali, armée nationale 1964, a document, probably originating from the French Military Intelligence Services, on the organisation of the Malian army. The document in question was updated yearly, and 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 Alfella. I from 1963 to 1964.

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, where they are accessible. However, one needs to know the original CHEAM archive code to demand the material. I do not know if the original CHEAM repertorium can still be consulted. CHEAM documents used are listed as unpublished manuscripts, giving the original CHEAM code between brackets.

**Interviews**

Over the years I have had numerous talks, discussions, and interviews in various forms with many Kel Tamashq and other Malians and Nigeriens. All have contributed to my understanding of Tamashq society and the problems described in this thesis. I will here only list those interviewees I have cited.

Amegha ag Sherif, one of the leaders of Alfella, 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).


Alkassoum and Tan Mohamed, two bellah, temporarily employed as researchers at SNV project Minika. Menaka, 24/03/1999.
Almoustapha Maiga, Songhay, temporary researcher (ecologist) for SNV project Minika. Menaka, 24/03/1999.

Bay ag Alhassan. One of the veterans of the Tamashiq 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.

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 at present 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 Tamashiq 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 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 (unknown date) 1999, and 08/06/1999.

Mohamed Sallah ag Mohamed, Daoussahak, cousin to Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyouba, two of the leaders of Alfellaqa 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 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.


S., Tamasheq woman, who wished to remain anonymous. Paris 09/01/1996.

‘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).

Takhnoua, a Tamasheq woman living in Bamako. Takhnoua took care of Alfellaqa leaders Zeyd ag Attaheer and Elledi ag Alla during their imprisonment in Bamako. Bamako, 08/02/1998.

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http://www.britannica.com/magazine/article?content_id=252652&paggeroffset=30

Map -
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/mali.jpg
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All persons are alphabetically ordered on their first name. All organisations are alphabetically ordered on their acronym, with their full name given after. The Arabic prefix al or el to names is taken as integral part of this name in the spelling most commonly used for this name, i.e. el-Hajj Umar Tall (Arabic), Alkurer (Tamashq).

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