That Desert is Our Country: Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)
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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 Gologo, 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

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

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 Keita 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 (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 Tamasheq 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 Keita 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 Keita, namesake to the founder of this empire, Sunjata Keita, was without a doubt to any Malian mind a descendant of the great imperial family and 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{123} Guilhem, M., S. Toe, Précis d'histoire du Mali, 5e et 6e années du cycle fondamental (Paris 1963); and République du Mali, Institut Pédagogique National, Histoire 6e année (Bamako 1994).


\textsuperscript{125} Cutter, Ch., 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'.

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 Tamashaq, 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 Gologo, 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'.

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'. 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 Iljouchins, two Antonovs and three DC 3's, which maintained regular national and international flights. All this ensured a modern industrial and socialist appearance for the new country.

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129 Interview with Mamadou Gologo, 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.\textsuperscript{132} The plan’s programme for agricultural and rural modernisation, the \textit{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.\textsuperscript{133} 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.\textsuperscript{134}

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.\textsuperscript{135} 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.\textsuperscript{136} 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.\textsuperscript{137} 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


\textsuperscript{133} Based on Snyder (1967), op. cit.; and Jones, W., ‘The rise and demise of socialist institutions in rural Mali’, \textit{Geneve-Afrique XI}, 2 (1972), 19-44.

\textsuperscript{134} Snyder (1965), op. cit., 98.

\textsuperscript{135} Snyder (1967), op. cit., 86.

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

\textsuperscript{137} For the regime’s vision of pre-colonial and colonial Malian society, see Kouyaté, S., \textit{Les dirigeants africains face à leur peuple} (Paris 1964), 23-40.
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.  

This then, would propel the nation forward both economically and morally. This process of mental transformation was called ‘intellectual decolonisation’. 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*.

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’.

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.
141 Lamp, F., 'Dancing the hare; appropriation of the imagery of Mande power among the Baga', Jansen, J., C. Zobel (eds.), *The younger brother in Mande* (Leiden 1996), 105-15.
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 Mandé 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 Tamaisheq, but had to learn and perform Bambara songs instead (see chapter III). 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'.

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. 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

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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, administratifs, août 1962. AMATS - dossier no 6.
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.\(^{145}\)

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'.\(^{146}\)

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

\(^{145}\) Typescript 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.\(^{147}\) Even before independence, livestock had been Mali’s main export product. The country was the largest exporter of cattle in West Africa.\(^{148}\) 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’.\(^{149}\) 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’.\(^{150}\)

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’.\(^{151}\) This investment had resulted by 1964 in the deepening of 16 seasonal wallows,

\(^{147}\) Jones, W., *Planning and economic policy: socialist Mali and her neighbours* (Washington 1976), 126.

\(^{148}\) 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 Cercles Gao and Niafunké, the deepening of 20 others in the Cercle Nara, and a campaign against rinderpest.\textsuperscript{152} It is easy to imagine that these investments were insufficient to overcome the problems outlined above.

**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 Keita 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.

**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 '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'.

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 Tamashéq 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. 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.

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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'.  

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.  


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<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>
<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>Totals</td>
<td>513,748</td>
<td>86,860</td>
<td>11,243</td>
<td>77,031</td>
<td>1,593,265</td>
<td>291,382,250</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 Tamasheq 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. The idea of the lazy and anarchist nomad was reinvigorated in colonial times by both administrators and scientists alike. In their turn, scientific and colonial ideas about contemplative pastoralism and nomad anarchism 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.’

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

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

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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 – it's 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. Tamasheq 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. Tamasheq groups might have the right to use certain areas first, or they might ‘own’ a well they have dug, but they cannot simply forbid others to cross this area or 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 payed 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 Adagh 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.’

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.168 Kidal town grew from 460 inhabitants in 1960 to 1,945 inhabitants in 1967.169 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 he 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 Adagh were the gouniers 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

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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. \(^{170}\)

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. \(^{171}\)

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. \(^{172}\)

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. \(^{173}\)

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 fulfil. 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 Kouyaté (1964), op. cit., 68-69.

\(^{173}\) Bogosian (2000), op. cit.
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'.

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!".

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."

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.

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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. 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 arid countries. It showed that fertilizing the desert, growing citrus fruits and cereals, even in sufficient quantities for export, was possible after all. The Malian visitors were equally impressed. However, they forgot one 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, Tessalit and Aguelhoc, each consisting of twelve people. These brigades were very likely to have been a variety of the Service Civique mentioned above. 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. 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.

"After the one hundred percent conclusive experience of more than 15 posts spread over the Cercle, of the quantitatively and qualitatively satisfactory harvests at Kidal, Tessalit, Aguelhoc and Telabit, we formally affirm that at the conclusion of his education and initiation, the nomad of our circonscription ceases to be the symbol of misery and razzias, because

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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 Tessalit 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

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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 transafricain - 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.\textsuperscript{183}

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.\textsuperscript{184} 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’.\textsuperscript{185}

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, \textit{Commandant du Cercle} Muphtah ag Hairy from Bourem
outlines the following situation for his \textit{Cercle} –

‘\textit{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’.\textsuperscript{186}

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

\textsuperscript{183} Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1967. ACK.

\textsuperscript{184} Interview with former Lt. Samaké. Bamako, 03/11/1998.

\textsuperscript{185} Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1967. ACK.

\textsuperscript{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}

\textbf{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 \textit{Loi-Cadre} came into effect in 1956. By 1958, the \textit{Cantons} – the administrative unit under the rule of a chief in sedentary areas – and the \textit{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 Tamasheq 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' (\textit{sous fractions}).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{187} Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 17.
\item \textsuperscript{188} Vallet, M., \textit{Les populations nomades du Sahara} (Paris CHEAM no. 4374 1970).
\item \textsuperscript{189} Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 19.
\item \textsuperscript{190} Ag Mohamed (1977), op. cit., 28-29.
\item \textsuperscript{191} Ernst (1976), op. cit., 93.
\item \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 Mellet by decree no 537/DI-2 of 10 August 1960, dated 07/03/1962, signed by the Governor of Gao. ACK.
\end{itemize}
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.\footnote{Loi No. 59-6/AL, modifiant l'ordonnance No. 43 du 28 Mars 1959, portant organisation des villages et des conseils de village. ACK.}

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.\footnote{Barate, C., 'Administration locale et socialisme dans le Mali independant', Revue juridique et politique Cooperation et indépendance no 3 (1977), 1035-1056.}

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'.\footnote{Ministère de l'intérieur et de l'information: Circulaire à mm. les Commandants de Cercle de Gao, Goundam, Tombouctou, et les Chefs de Subdivisions de Bourem, Ansongo, Kidal, Menaka, Gourma-Gharous, concernant le rôle des chefs traditionels défini par la loi 59-63 du 30 décembre 1960, portant organisation des fractions et créant des Conseils de fractions. Bamako 06/02/1961. ACK.}

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...`
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.197

In 1964, at the height of the rebellion, the policy towards the chiefs was at its most incoherent. Officially, the chiefaincies 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'.198
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 Mellet and Bissaada ag Ghakad of the Idnan protested against the forced education of girls and their inclusion in the Milice Populaire, which they believed to be against Islam. Two other chiefs, Oumayata ag Sidi 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

199 Commandant du Cercle de Kidâl 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 Kidâl 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 Tamashaq 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.203 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 ATTAHER. 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'. 204

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

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.”

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.

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 at the honourable sites of human investment. Most of them, having hardly passed the doorsteps of obscurantism, barely gaining conscience of belonging to a nation, having just shed a state of irresponsibility, are almost blinded by the eternally radiant perspectives of our socialist option: Socialism. On the triumphant march towards the goals of Socialism they progress like the others. Stumbling from time to time, but nevertheless progressing.”

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
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.

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’. 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 troupes artistiques. 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 Tamasheq 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 Tamasheq 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’.

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'.²¹¹ 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.²¹² 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.