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

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

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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 Tamashq already examined in the previous chapters, we will here look at yet another important stereotype – that of the Kel Tamashq 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 Tamashq 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.'

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 Tamasheq 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. 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.' 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. A large number of the protesters were arrested. They were not the only ones. Fily Dabo Sissoko and Mamadoun Dicko, the former leaders

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216 For PSP support and its remaining structures after 1960, see Hopkins (1972), op. cit.
217 'Une nouvelle étape dans l'affirmation de la personnalité de notre jeune nation', l'Essor, 03/07/1962.
218 l'Essor, 23/07/1962.
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.\footnote{I’Essor, 27/09/1962.}

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.\footnote{I’Essor, 02-10-1962.} 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.\footnote{The ‘Dogon rebellion’ was first brought to my attention by Dr. Ali Ongolba, 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 - 10T701 (various documents), which is still under embargo.}

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
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 Tamasheq citizens living in the border area were eager to migrate to Niger, much to Malian resentment.

In Mauritania, French troops were still present at the request of the Mauritanian President Mokhtar Ould Daddah, to ensure the new Mauritanian state’s security against unrelenting Moroccan claims on its territory. The Istiqlâl 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 Tamashsheq south, despite efforts made to include the Kel Hoggar and the Kel Ajjer in the ranks of the FLN.225 French rule in the Saharaan part of the country was still strong. French military presence was only on the increase. The development of de Gaulle’s French nuclear strike force started in 1957 with the construction of nuclear test bases in the Hoggar at 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 Clauzel, one of the longest serving French Commandants of the Adagh now served in Tamanrasset, where he would stay until Algerian independence. The presence of Clauzel 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 Tschumy, J., Le bureau de main d’oeuvre 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, Annexue du Tidikelt Hoggar, until unknown date. Affaires politiques, Mauritanie, administration générale 1958. ANSOM - 1affpol/2172/5. 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 Touat. 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 Groupe

ment Nomade du Timetrine (GNT), was second lieutenant Mohamed ag Mohamed Alhadi – nicknamed Zoulbeya – 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 *goumi* 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.  

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 lets us be commanded by Muslims because of our understanding and our unity. [...] We are very happy to see our enemies (the French) leave the country. The chiefs of the nomad committees wish you a long life, Mister President, while presenting you with this letter to tell you that we Malians, we have only found our freedom through 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.'

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 –

'Ve 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

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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.

231 Lettre de Mohamed Ayoul ag Mohamed, Fraction Kel Kaoukoraï, Tribu Kel Intessar, à Monsieur le Président et Secrétaire Général de la République du Mali. Niafunke, 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.

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'.

If it wanted to integrate the French-educated Kel Tamasheq, the Malian Government had no other option than to recruit Kel Intessar. They were the only Kel Tamasheq tribe with a substantive number of French-educated members, thanks to the efforts made in this respect by their former amenokal Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar. But Mohamed Ali was suspected of anti-Malian sentiments. From his place of exile in Morocco he had furthered the cause of a Tamasheq state, or inclusion of Tamasheq country in the Maghreb states. Besides, Mohamed Ali and most Kel Intessar, like most other Kel Tamasheq, 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 Tamasheq 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 [la 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

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222 Lettre (anonymous Kel Intessar) à Secrétaire Général de la Jeunesse et du Sport. Tombouctou, 28/11/1961. 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 \textit{takaraket} - shame, which stains honour - \textit{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 Ayou 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 Zeïni 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 Ayou’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 Sillas 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 Tamasheq from the days of colonial conquest – the Tamasheq warrior.

**Les guerriers du sable**

If there is one mythical name attached to the Kel Tamasheq, it is that of ‘les guerriers du sable’ – the warriors of the sand. The stereotype of the fierce Tamasheq warrior is perhaps the most long-standing of all orientalist visions of Tamasheq 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 Tamasheq are to the French. This stereotype was constructed even before colonial conquest. Explorers travelling through Tamasheq country, like Gordon Laing or Alexandrine Tinne, did not live to tell their story. Those who did, like Henry Duveryier, were heralded as great heroes for their mere survival. Where in other parts of Africa the murder of European explorers would be avenged by sending in the troops, this did not happen when it came to the Kel Tamasheq, in fear of their military power.

During the phase of conquest, the Kel Tamasheq 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 Timbuktu by the Tengueregif under their amenokal Cheiboun. In 1896 Lieutenant Hourst travelled the land of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram. He estimated their fighting powers at 20,000 men and therefore thought it unwise to even try to conquer their land. He proved to be right in the short term when in 1897 a coalition of Kel Intessar, Kounta, Ouillimiden and Tengueregif besieged Timbuktu for two days after having defeated a French squadron at the Niger. Almost no Moorish or Tamasheq 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 Tamasheq. The first to contest French power in 1913, were their first allies, the Kel Ajjer. In 1916 their example was followed by practically all Tamasheq federations, except the Kel Adagh and the Kel Hoggar. In April 1916 the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram under their amenokal Firhun ag Elinsar rose against the French in the Azawad. They were followed by the Logomaten under amenokal Bokar wan Zeidou and the Ouillimiden Kel

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Denne gg under amenokal Elkhurer. In 1917 the Kel Air 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 guerrilla 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 Hammoodi, another part under Abidine ould Sidi Mohamed el Kounti resisted French rule in alliance with the Rgeiba of the Western Sahara. Until 1927 Abidine’s men successfully attacked the Adagh and Mauritania from their base in the still unpacificed 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 cumulated 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 Ansattafr fraction of the Irreguenaten tribe.

In April 1940, a gournier noticed that a blacksmith of the Igouadaren tribe was repairing lances and that a slave was repairing a shield. On the basis of these rumours the chief of the Igouadaren tribe, Ouedan ag Baber, was arrested and relieved from command on charges of plotting a rebellion. Reports were written, asking for reinforced military presence in the area. By 1942, the French Commandant du Cercle Gourma Rharous had become so paranoid, that a gathering of chiefs under presidency of Cheiboun, amenokal of the Tengueregi and victor over the French column


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

Bonier in 1893, was directly taken as a sign the French were 'under the threat of revolt similar to that of 1916'.

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".'

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 Alla ag Albachir, Inalaghén ag Dida and Ahmed wane Egawé, 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 neocolonialism’ could not be trusted. Zeïni 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.’

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

‘I came back definitively to my country which is Mali, because I heard the Europeans at Tamanrasset say a war will break out between the French and the Malians to keep the Efelings leaders in power in Mali. Yesterday night, upon leaving Timiaouene, I left [I saw] two aeroplanes which brought arms and ammunitions to the base. [...] Upon our arrival at Tamanrasset, commander Clozé [Clauzel] and Captain Dogare [Godart] received us and invited us to tell them on Mali, that they would each give us 10,000 metropolitan francs. Moussa and I gave them some information (here is what we said to those two French officers, Mali is poor, we die of famine, there is no grain, we eat the excrements of donkeys, there is no work, there are some Malian soldiers who occupy the French air base at

The Efeling leaders are numerous in Mali, especially in Kidal and Tessalit. [...] In my presence, Captain Dogare has sent Agaly ag Boubacar to Kidal to inquire what is happening in Mali. Agaly ag Boubacar returned saying to the Captain that Mali does no longer exist and that the Efelings rule from now on.\footnote{Déclaration de Touhaya ag Bacrine à Chef de Poste Tessalit, 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 Ifoghas 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.}

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 the circumscriptions of the Gao region. It concerns the Algerian military stationed at Kidal, Tessalit, 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.\footnote{Sous-Lieutenant Abidin e Maïga, Commandant le compagnie de gendarmerie de Gao, à Commandant de gendarmerie nationale du Mali, Bamako. Gao, 18/04/1962. Objet: Activité algérienne dans circonscription région Gao. ACK.}

### Zeyd'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 Nivaggioni 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 Zeyd's official host, came as well. The four of them had talks. Zeyd's 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
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 Hammoodi, 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 gourmier 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 gourmier 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’Aguél’hoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal. 01/09/1961, no 44/CF/AA. ACK.

²⁴⁷ Chef d’Arrondissement de Tessalit 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 Tessalit, no 351/Ki. 16/05/1960. ACK.
incident. The *goumier* was not punished for his action, although inquiries were made about his actions.\footnote{Bá Baba à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal. n.d. ACK.} 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'.\footnote{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.} 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.\footnote{Based on letters Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/05/1960 and 26/05/1960. ACK.} 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'.\footnote{Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/05/1960. ACK.} 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.\footnote{Gouverneur de Gao à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 26/05/1960. ACK.}

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 Tamaseq 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 Tamaseq, contact between state and society in colonial times had mostly run through intermediaries – interpreters, chiefs and *goumiers* who spoke some French. When the language barrier was removed, the culture barrier remained. With the appointment of Mohamed Najim and Mohamed Mahmoud as administrators, and the promotion of Mohamed Belkacem and Zoulbeyba as commanders of the *goum*, both the language and cultural barrier had fallen. It is therefore all the more surprising that communication, so helpful in countering rumours and smoothing misunderstandings, was entirely lacking. It can only be explained by unwillingness on the side of at least a part of the Kel Adagh to see the government and its representatives as valid interlocutors, and unwillingness on the side of the new regime to see the Kel Adagh as anything other than unruly and unintelligent nomads.
Understandably, 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 Keita 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 racialist 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, Félix Éboué and De Gaulle.
Moussa: Exactly. And what happened in 1957?
Me: The OCRS.
Moussa: Exactly, the OCRS. 1963 comes from the failure of the OCRS, which was instigated by Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Cheick al-Tumbuki, 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 indeed. 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 Rgeibat'. 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 Boceya in 1928. The story of Boceya 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.

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 “tobol” (command) to the blacks’ and ‘why did France leave while neither she nor we desired 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 Sheriff 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

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

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 Maïga and Anyi Doungouy and others were waiting for them. The people there were informing them and they were curious to know why the French had received only them. They repeated to them what the French had said. [The Kel Tamasheq chiefs] told [the black delegates that] [the French] had proposed [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 Ménaka to command the Ouillimiden in Ménaka. 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 gourm] 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.\footnote{Conversation with Ameghag Sherif. Brussels, October 1994. It is not clear which petition Amegha is referring to. It could be the September 1958 referendum, the petitions by Mohamed Mahmoud ould Cheick or an entirely new one. Interestingly enough, Amegha has developed a kind of standard narrative about these events. Amegha gave a very similar account to Pierre Boilley, see Boilley (1999), op. cit., 299-300. Boilley links this account to Mohamed Mahmoud ould 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’. 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. 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

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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 Mauritians 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.\(^\text{262}\) 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.\(^\text{263}\)

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 \textit{amenokal} Fihrun held the same view.\(^\text{264}\) 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: ‘\ldots\textit{we Malians, have only found our freedom through agreement on good terms}.’

\(^{262}\) Jok (2001), op. cit.

\(^{263}\) Boilley (1999), op. cit., 66-82.

\(^{264}\) Grémont, Ch., \textit{La conquête coloniale et la révolte de Fihrun (1893-1916)} (Mémoire de maîtrise Sciences Sociales, Université Paris X Nanterre 1995), 44-45.
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 Ifoghas surrounded us already and conversations were struck up on various subjects. [...] The Kel Effele notables expounded their ideas on the future organisation of the state which can be summarised as follows: 1) - Primacy of education through Arabic over education through French - 2) - An equitable place within state organisms and the administration 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’.  

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

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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 nenegh 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 Kei 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.\textsuperscript{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 tobol [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.'\textsuperscript{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.

\textbf{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 acceptabel 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.

\textsuperscript{268} Conversation with Mohamed ag Intalla. Kidal, 23/05/1999.

\textsuperscript{269} Regnier (1960), op. cit., 10.
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 Tamasheq could share in power.

Those in total disfavour of acceptance centred their arguments on concepts of race and culture inherent in Tamasheq 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 Tamasheq 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 Tamasheq 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. Zeyds 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, Tamasheq 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.