That Desert is Our Country: Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)
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IV
Alfellaga
The revolt of the Kel Adagh
(1963-1964)

Introduction

Declaration received from the gourmier Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza

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

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

This chapter has three aims. The first is to give a comprehensive narrative of Alfellaga. The second is to show how Tamasheq concepts of masculinity and warfare determined patterns of warfare during Alfellaga, as well as the military tactics used by the rebels. The third is to show how in Tamasheq historical discourse Alfellaga is intertwined with other historical events and embedded in an explanatory narrative of resistance. This chapter focuses on those topics presented as relevant in Kel Adagh historical discourse – historical continuity of resistance, masculine values of

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

There is one notable exception to following Kel Adagh narrative lines. Kel Adagh informants, both those who lived through Alfellaga and those who participated in the 1990 rebellion, stress the unprepared nature of the first rebellion, its lack of organisation, and its lack of a clearly formulated goal, as compared to the second rebellion. This line of reasoning is in stark contrast with my main archive sources on Alfellaga; the interrogation reports of various captured fighters. From their information at that time, it seems the rebels were prepared and organised to a much larger extent than they are now perceived to have been and that they knew their goal — independence, reached through an armed conflict with the support of Algeria and, if possible, France. The rebels hoped that, by starting their armed uprising, these two powers would come to their aid, as they had promised to do in the previous years. At least, the principal rebel leader, Zeyd ag Attaher, thought these two countries had indeed promised support, which was not the case.

The chapter is divided into five parts. The first part presents a history of Alla ag Albachir, a notorious rebel-bandit in colonial times, which in Kel Adagh historical discourse serves to outline both their reasons for resistance and to present Alfellaga as but one important chapter in a continuing story of revolt. The second part deals with preparations for revolt, the goal and strategy of the rebels and support from inside and outside Tamasheq society. This part is generally downplayed in Kel Adagh accounts. The third part deals with combat itself. I will here focus on Tamasheq masculine ethics of warfare and its code of conduct, which structured and regulated the actions of the rebels. They will be contrasted with the acts of the Malian regular armed forces in the fourth part, which deals with army repression and retaliation on Kel Adagh civilians. This, although not often narrated in detail, is seen as the most important aspect of the revolt. To most Kel Adagh, it was not the fighting between rebels and army, but the heavy army retaliation on civilians which matters in Alfellaga. In the fifth part, I will come back to the question how memories of Alfellaga are given meaning in a continuing story of resistance and struggle for independence, linking it to the second rebellion dealt with in chapters VII and VIII.

A continuum of resistance

When I was discussing the 1963 revolt with Kel Tamasheq, there seemed to be an almost natural connection between Alla ag Albachir and his men, who defied the French authorities in colonial times, and his son Elledi ag Alla, the instigator and one of the main leaders of the 1963 rebellion. This connection is not coincidental. It is made with the explicit aim to create a continuous line of Kel Adagh resistance against foreign rule from colonial times to al-Jebha in the 1990s, via Alfellaga.

Alla ag Albachir was a member of one of the Adagh’s leading clans or tewsiten, the Irayaken. According to Kel Adagh history, the Irayaken had
once headed the Ifoghas, the *tewsit* leading all of the Kel Adagh, of which they are a subgroup. Alla ag Albachir refused to obey all power, both that of the French and that of *amenokal Attaher ag Illi*. Instead, he lived as an outlaw, a social bandit as Hobsbawm would call him, with a number of his relatives, defying French rule and regularly clashing with the forces of order. All a’s activities as outlaw and his widespread popularity as a local hero among the Kel Adagh during his lifetime made him a stain on the prestige and honour of the French administration and their capacity to maintain *la paix française*. Therefore they wanted Alla’s head. The *goumiers* finally caught him in July 1954. According to Tamashiq history, Alla was decapitated after his elimination, and his head was exposed in Bouressa to convince the Kel Adagh of his death. Alla’s story is known in all of the Adagh and beyond.

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

‘Alla ag Albachir was killed by decapitation in a chase, when Elledi was about seven years old. Years later he [Elledi] was at a well with his herd, milking his animals, when a group of soldiers passed. It was a kind of law that when you were at a well and soldiers passed, you immediately had to fill their containers for them. Elledi said he was busy milking his camel and that he would fill their containers after. One of the soldiers said he knew who he was and if he didn’t do it right away they would do the same to him as they did to his father. That is how Elledi knew who had killed his

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

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

The story of continuity of resistance against external rule and the struggle for independence is presented in the most binding grid of Tamasheq historical production – genealogical continuity. First Alla ag Albachir led resistance against France, then his son Elledi led resistance against Mali. By connecting the events surrounding Alla to the events surrounding Elledi, present day Tamasheq historical discourse overcomes an artificial mark in time – independence – which is blurred in a non-stop presence of outside forces to fight against. In this respect, the exploits of Alla ag Albachir serve to reinterpret the Kel Adagh past as one of resistance against French rule, instead of compliance with it.

**Egha**

The story of how Elledi avenges his father introduces an element linking the various periods of resistance – revenge, a shorthand translation of the more complicated Tamasheq concept of egha. The importance of egha as a motive for and in the organisation of resistance cannot be overestimated. Egha, is closely connected to two other important concepts in Tamasheq society – eshik, honour, and takaraket, shame. Egha is a debt one contracts against those who have stained ones honour and who have thus caused one shaming. Both the damaged honour and subsequent shame, and the contracted egha can be either individual or on the collective level of the clan (tewsit). It is important to note that honour can only be stained by those perceived to be on an equal footing with those whose honour is stained – the free and noble.

Until the attack on one’s honour is countered, the contracted debt of egha remains open. It can only be repaid in violent action. In this light we can see the history of Alla ag Albachir and his son Elledi gaining importance. Alla, in a sense, can be seen as repaying the Kel Adagh honour debt of colonial subjugation towards the French. The violation of his body damaged Alla’s honour and through him that of his whole tewsit, the Irayaken, or even all the Kel Adagh. The gouniers who were involved in Alla’s killing then proceeded to insult Elledi by referring to his father’s decapitation, implying they had the same fate in store for Elledi himself. Elledi could do nothing else than to repay this double egha debt – the shame brought upon him and his father. After his arrest in 1964, when asked for his motives for rebellion Elledi answered –

I became a rebel to avenge my father, killed by the French administration, and to personally avenge myself for what the security agents of the Malian security post at Bouressa kept repeating at me – that

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

Alfellaga

In the preceding chapters, I have tried to show that the Kel Tamasheq in general and the Kel Adagh in particular, never wanted to be part of Mali in the first place. After independence came about, all they wanted was their independence from Mali and they were ready to fight for it. The ifulagen made this quite clear to the Malian Government. In October 1963, a mission of USRDA officials and tribal chiefs was sent to negotiate with the rebels. They met with the ifulagen at the wells of In-Tamake. After the members of the mission had explained the grave error in revolting against the Malian state, the rebels replied –

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The rebellion seems not so much directed in favour of but rather against something – Malian rule. As former rebel Bibi ag Ghassi later analysed his actions – We had no ideological concepts that comes with a revolution. We were essentially motivated to save our identity and by the wish to reconquer the independence the French had given to us and which the Malians had confiscated to their own benefit. But what did independence mean? Some hoped France would return to rule their country. The promise made in the 1950s with regards to the OCRS was not forgotten. By starting their armed conflict, the rebels hoped for French intervention on their behalf, which, of course, never materialised. Others opted for inclusion of the Adagh in Algeria, as had already been suggested in the last years of French rule by amenokal Attaher ag Illi. The trips to Algeria made by his son Zeyd ag Attaher in 1961, and again in 1963, to muster Algerian support should be seen in this light as well.

The mere decision taken by a small number of men to start an armed uprising should be seen in the light of their hope for support. From a military point of view, the armed uprising of a few dozen lightly armed men against a few thousand soldiers equipped with tanks, airplanes and heavy artillery could have amounted to suicide if it wasn’t for the advantages the rebels had in their knowledge of the terrain and their partisan-style tactics (infra). But the tactical advantages of the rebels could never make up for their simple lack of men and means. A rebel military victory was out of the question. What then, was the strategic goal of the armed rebellion?

First of all, by waging war on the Malian state, the rebels manifested their discontent with the regime towards that regime and towards the population. Undoubtedly, the rebels hoped for support from other Kel

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

Tamasheq groups, both in Mali and perhaps in Niger, as had been the case during the massive Kel Tamasheq revolts against the French colonial forces in 1916 (in which the Kel Adagh had actually participated on the side of the French). But it seems that the rebels mainly hoped that Algeria state and France would come to their help. This becomes clear from the statements of captured rebel Amouksou ag Azandeheer on the ways the rebels hoped to win their cause –

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

The underlying strategy of the armed rebellion was not based on expectations of a military victory, but on a possible military or diplomatic victory of Algeria and France on their behalf, once the fight and cause of the Kel Adagh had become known to the outside world. Fighting a well-equipped army with so few men and material only served the purpose of fighting itself, in hope for outside reinforcement. This support never materialised. The outside world remained unknowing of the Kel Adagh struggle or kept its knowledge hidden.

Of course, the rebels had greatly misjudged the workings of international politics. Zeyd ag Attaher's diplomatic skills and political experience did not surpass the regional setting of Northern Mali and Southern Algeria through the few contacts he had had with the Algerian FLN and French administrative personnel. From a Kel Tamasheq perspective, where personal contacts in politics are of the highest importance, his judgment of the situation and his chances on support might have been over-optimistic and extremely naive, but not altogether incomprehensible. But in the world of international politics, his expectations made no sense at all. Algerian-Malian relations were characterised by the closests of friendships. France was still contemplating its defeat in the Algerian liberation war and could hardly be asked to risk its nuclear test bases, their last and very important interests in Southern Algeria, in favour of its old but now useless ally. Therefore, the rebels stayed alone in their fight.

279 Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeheer. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.
Men and material

As we have seen in previous chapters, some groups of men had fiercely resisted the incorporation of the Kel Tamasheq in Mali since the 1950s. Some of these men, joined by others, actively prepared for revolt against the Malian state between 1961 and 1963. The deposed amenokal Zeyd ag Attaher had gathered a group of men who shared his idea that the Tamasheq country in general and the Adagh in particular should not form part of Mali. Zeyd was in close contact with Amegha ag Sherif, one of the very few Kel Adagh who had attended French schools. His education completed, Amegha engaged himself in the struggle for Tamasheq independence, which made him suspect of subversive activity. He was arrested and released shortly after in 1960. He then went to Algeria where he found a job at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse in 1962. He managed to bring in other Kel Adagh employees at the base. In return, the employed Kel Adagh gave part of their wages to Amegha which he used to buy weapons in Tamanrasset for the future revolt.280

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

Sidi Alamine ag Cheick, a former gourmier, and his brother Issouf ag Cheick, were at the head of a second group. In January 1963, Issouf broke into an arms depot in Timbuktu and took some guns, ammunition and battle costumes destined for the future uprising.282 With this material the two brothers fled to Algeria, where they joined the others at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse.283 In January 1963 this group of men decided to start an armed revolt, although no date was set. A second reunion was held in the Adagh at Tidjim in June 1963.284 Elledi ag Alla, who had by then taken his revenge on the gourmier Ahiyaya ag Ouarzeza described at the start of this chapter, knew about Zeyd’s presence at Tidjim and joined him there. After he had explained his action to those assembled, it was decided that this was a good moment to start the rebellion.

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

281 Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.
282 Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aguelhoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 14/01/1963. ACK.
283 Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.
284 Ibidem.
disposal, I could calculate that, at most, 250 men were involved during the rebellion. However, the number of ifulagen at any precise point during the rebellion must have been lower. These men lacked sufficient material to fight the Malian forces. Mounted on camels in their flowing indigo robes and armed mostly with outdated rifles they are easy to depict as a hopeless band of warriors of old. However, this picture is besides the truth.

Many of the warriors were not dressed in flowing indigo robes, but in green battle dress. I wondered why the ifulagen spent their resources on obtaining these outfits. An explanation would be that wearing battle dress exemplified the movement’s concern to present themselves as a liberation army. To most Kel Tamasheq, dress is a highly valorised means of expression. Dress should reflect presumed (or desired) status. If the Kel Adagh fighters wanted to present themselves as the rightful army of Tamasheq independence, they had to dress accordingly. Therefore, in keeping with this idea, they adopted a new dress code for combat. Another explanation for wearing French battle dress might have been to make the Malian army think the country was being invaded by French troops, or that at least French troops were supporting the Kel Adagh. Whether this was their intention or not, not surprisingly the Malian officers were quick to believe the French were indeed involved –

‘I have been informed that these fellagas are directed by French units including Clauzel Jean and a certain Bretodeau [Bretaudeau], who formerly served in Timbuktu, Gao and Menaka and who was responsible for Muslim affairs in colonial times’.285

Camels were the only available means of transport all fighters could use. However, they are also highly effective in the Adagh. Part of the Adagh surface is covered with boulder formations or small but sharply broken stones. These terrains can be crossed by camel, but not by cars. The Malian motorised forces were only effective in open terrain and wadis. As for arms, they were easily and cheaply obtained in Algeria where a lively smuggling of light arms existed ever since colonial times. In the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s the most obtainable fire arms were ‘Mausers’ and ‘Bouceta’s’, German and Italian repeating rifles of WWII stocks, and French MAS-36 rifles. By acquiring these cheap and known arms, more men could be armed than if more expensive and harder to handle modern rifles were bought. Nevertheless, the ifulagen were equipped with some more advanced weapons. Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar had managed to ship a small amount of material from Morocco to the rebels in Algeria, consisting of thirty battle dresses, five Egyptian automatic rifles and ammunition.286

285 Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aguelhôc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/8/1963. ACK.

286 Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le Capitaine Diby Silas Diarra, Commandant d’armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/03/1964. ACK.
Support and defiance
The large scale official Algerian and French support the rebels hoped for never materialised, but they did receive some support from these two countries. Algerian support was unofficial and given on the initiative of local Algerian commanders who lacked the means to halt rebel incursion in Algeria anyway. The rebels were therefore allowed to dwell in Algeria, and in some instances *ifulagen* had their wounds treated in Algerian infirmaries. The rebels were allowed to stay at the French nuclear base at Takormiasse, where they had pitched a tent to store their supplies. They received marginal help from the French employees, who sold or gave them ammunition, medication, battle gear and a few privately owned arms. The French doctor present at the base treated some of the wounded.  

But it seems that most material had to be bought on the local markets, especially arms. Evidence of official French or Algerian support is lacking.

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

'There are two groups of Ifoghas: Those who are loyal to Zeyd and those who are loyal to Intalla. To us, who are loyal to Zeyd, Intalla is reprehensible and we formally condemn his position since he does not follow us. We regret that our tribe is divided into two equal groups between Zeyd and Intalla. In fact, we have seen that all the Ifoghas fractions of the South and West follow Intalla while those of the North and East follow Zeyd'.

Intalla was not the only tribal chief who was loyal to the Malian Government. The tribal chiefs were employed to make contact with the rebels and to persuade them to surrender. In October 1963, Intalla, in the company of Bissaada ag Khakad, chief of the Idnan, Hamzata ag Alkassoum chief of the Kel Telbit and Baye ag Atikbel chief of the Telguetrat, were sent on such a mission. Another chief, Kola ag Saghid of the Irayakan, performed similar missions. The actions of these men should be seen in the light of their double-bound position as intermediaries between state and society. It is not at all said that they approved of the actions of either side. Both the rebellion and the repressive counter actions

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288 Questions posées par le Capitaine Diarra, Commandant la C.S.M. et le Cercle de Kidal, au rebelle Amouksou ag Azandeher. Kidal, 04/10/1963. ACK.
of the army went against their interests, which was a peaceful continuation
of existence under any rule. The violence also stirred their feelings as men
and Kel Adagh. Many of the rebels were their close relatives, as were the
victims of repression. The same double-bind as Kel Adagh/Kel Tamashq
and servants of the administration goes for the *goumiers* who were
employed to fight the *ifulagen*, and thus forced to shoot at their own kin.

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

Whenever they could, the *ifulagen* took material from the Malian army.
But as the revolt continued, more and more camels were taken from the
Kel Adagh themselves. The principal victims of these raids on livestock
were *goumiers* and tribal chiefs. With the continuation of the revolt
however, other people suffered losses in animals by rebel raids as well.
Many Kel Adagh contributed means to the rebellion in the form of food,
animals or cloth. Not only necessarily because they were in favour of the
rebellion, but also to avoid being raided by the rebels. Of course, genuine
voluntary contributions were also made.

The rebels’ actions towards the population will not have enhanced their
popularity. As former rebel Bibi ag Ghassi put it – ‘the rest of the
population had sided with the authorities and considered us a bunch of
thieves’.290 A raid on civilian camel herds led by Elledi ag Alla in February
1964 failed since its owners collectively managed to chase the *ifulagen
away.291 Although many joined the rebels in Algeria or in Mali because of
army repression, one cannot uphold that this was always done with
enthusiasm. Many were simply left without a choice.

Another issue is the lack of support for the revolt outside the Adagh.
Pierre Boillely has explained why the revolt was limited to within the Adagh
from a geographical and historical perspective.292 The position of the Adagh
near the Algerian border permitted the *ifulagen* to retreat into Algeria after
attacks. The mountainous landscape of the Adagh gives a second
explanation. The ridges and boulders in the Adagh made pursuit of the
*ifulagen* by the motorised army units difficult. In the more flat and sandy
area of the Azawad this advantage was lost. But both explanations do not
account for the lack of other Kel Tamasheq warriors coming to the Adagh
to join the rebellion in the Adagh itself. Boillely explains the non-

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

290 Interview held by Sidi Mohamed ag Zimrou with Bibi ag Ghassi. n.p., n.d. Courtesy of
Georg Klute.

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

participation of other groups as a result of their memory of military defeat in the period of colonial conquest. Indeed, this explanation is still given today by the Ouillimiden for their non-participation in both post-colonial revolts.

However, some Kel Tamasheq from outside the Adagh had joined the ifulagen. Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyouba were Daoussahak, a group which had never been part of the Kel Adagh. One of the main political leaders was Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, former amenokal of the Kel Intessar. Some of his men did most likely join the ifulagen. Besides these leading persons, a number of others had joined the ifulagen from Bourem, Ansongo and the Menaka areas. We cannot estimate the total number of people from outside the Adagh who participated in the revolt, but they were most likely a minority within the movement. Nevertheless, they were there.

**Organisation**

The ifulagen were organised into several units, fluctuating in size between twenty and thirty men, and shifting in leadership depending on the occasion. Often, only half the unit consisted of fighters. The other members, unarmed and in civilian dress, served as scouts who contacted people for news on army movements. As the rebellion progressed, new groups of men rallied collectively under the leadership of one of their own and operated as a new unit. Sometimes units merged to direct a general attack on an army post or column.

The ifulagen had divided the Adagh into three zones of operation from North to South, but this division into zones was not taken too strictly. In each zone, around thirty men were active. The first zone consisted of the Timetrine, a more plain-like area west of the actual Adagh mountains. Operations in this zone were generally led by the brothers Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick. The second zone went from Mount Tigharghar and Mount Doriet to Bouressa and southward to Kidal. Here, operations were led by Elledi ag Alla and Ikhloou Saloum. The third zone extended from Mount Ouzzzein southwards, where operations were led by Azzezeen ag Ikxa and Mohamed ag Amane.

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

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

294 Ibidem.

295 This tentative conclusion can be drawn from the available data on tewsit affiliation and unit membership, which is far from complete. See annex, table of rebels.
Alfeliaga in this zone. Azzezen ag Iksa, a Telgetghat, led operations in the Ouzzein area, but he did so together with Mohamed ag Amane, an Arayak. The Timetrine is an area generally inhabited by the Idnan, the tewsit to which belong Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick who led operations in this area. The group around Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick operating in the Timetrine was significantly smaller than the groups around Elledi ag Alla and Azzezen ag Iksa, fifteen men at most. A second explanation for the smaller amount of operations in the Timetrine is the nature of the area. The Timetrine is more easily accessible by motorised vehicles than the mountain areas of the Adagh, which are therefore more dangerous. Subsequently, most clashes took place in the other zones and not in the Timetrine.

Operations were planned at the rebel base at Takormiasse in Algeria. Most planned attacks consisted of raids on camel herds or fixed army posts. Units were composed, mounts, arms and ammunition were distributed, and routes to take to Mali and back to Algeria were discussed. The road to take depended on information, on the presence of Malian forces (to attack or to avoid), and the situation at the wells the ifulagen used to take in water. The units mostly travelled by night, spending the day in hiding while scouts were sent out to gather information. Ambushes on encountered army columns were decided upon on the spot. It was a general tactic to only attack small forces disadvantaged by the terrain. When a rebel was captured, the planned operation was cancelled in fear of the captured rebel disclosing the plan of attack. Operations in Mali were kept as short as possible, followed by retreat into Algeria where the rebels were safe from the Malian forces.²⁹⁶

**Aqqa, or the rules of conflict**

**Interlude, the Malian army**

The basic unit of the Malian army was the Compagnie de Commandos Autonomes - CCA.²⁹⁷ Each CCA consisted of one command section, four commando units of about sixty men each, an artillery unit, about forty vehicles and five armoured cars. In all, ten CCA's were created. These units formed the core of the Malian Armed Forces, complemented with a separate tank squadron, an airborne squadron, and several paramilitary organisations. The former colonial military goum units of Timbuktu and the Adagh were transformed into the Groupes Nomade d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie - GNIG - of around fifty men. In May 1963, the 8th and 10th CCA were stationed in the Adagh, together with the GNIG14 under Lieutenant Mohamed 'Zulbeyba' ag Elhadi. Thus, at the start of the

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

²⁹⁷ This paragraph is entirely based on: Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.
rebellion, two CCA’s and the GNIG14 were stationed in the Adagh, around 650 men in all.

In the first months of the rebellion, only the GNIG14 and the local *goum* forces were employed against the rebels. By August 1963, it was clear that the *goum* forces could not suppress the rebellion. Therefore, the 8th CCA was employed as well. Shortly after, the 10th CCA became active. Soon, forces employed in the Adagh were on the increase.

By the end of September 1963, three units from the 1st CCA stationed at Segu were in the Adagh as well. Two new units were created especially for service in the Adagh – an artillery unit and the *Commando Saharien Motorisé* – CSM, under the command of Captain Diby Sillas Diarra. The CSM consisted of about four hundred men. It had more vehicles at its disposal than the average CCA, and five armoured cars.

In October 1963, the 2nd, 3rd and 6th CCA were sent up North as well. Two airplanes were sent to Kidal to evacuate troops and wounded men to Gao. Thus, in October 1963, an average of 2,200 men, 35 armoured cars, 2 airplanes and an assorted number of heavy arms were fighting rebel forces numbering about 200 men at most.

By March 1964, the amount of troops and material deployed in the Adagh had dropped. The 1st, 3rd and 8th CCA were retreated, but the 2nd and 6th CCA and the CSM were strongly reinforced with another twenty armoured cars from the Bamako based tank squadron. In all, army presence in the Adagh still amounted to about 1,500 men, 40 armoured cars and around 160 vehicles (trucks, jeeps, fuel trucks, et cetera). To keep men and material rolling, 200,000 litres of fuel and food for a 1,000 men for 3 months were shipped to Kidal as well.

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

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

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

The (relatively) enormous amount of men and material employed by the Malian armed forces could not bring the rebellion to an end. First of all, cars were highly ineffective in large parts of the Adagh. Most of the Adagh consists of very rough terrain, sharp rocks and boulders and sudden steep climbs. The rough terrain demobilised the vehicles, which were under constant repair and spare parts were lacking. Logistical problems in the transport of water for the troops and fuel for the vehicles further hampered the mobility and effectiveness of the Malian army.

The Adagh consists of a number of important mountain ranges separated by wadis and valleys. Most clashes took place in three of these mountains – Mount Tigharghar, Mount Doriet to the west of Mount Tigharghar, and Mount Ouzzzein. This landscape is ideal for ambush tactics. It is especially advantageous when fighting motorised forces. The relatively flat and sandy wadis are the only suitable terrain for cars which had great trouble on the stony surface of these mountains. The wadis are generally closed in by boulder formations, sand dunes or low, but steep mountains. The Malian army’s largest weapon was basically an armoured personnel carrier equipped with heavy machine guns, but with an open top. It was not difficult for the ifulagen to shoot at the soldiers inside from their high ground position.

The ifulagen did not suffer from the disadvantages of motorised vehicles. Their camels had far less difficulty with the stony surface of the Adagh. After attack, the camel mounted ifulagen could easily retreat over the rocks into the mountains where the heavy armoured cars, truck and jeeps were unable to follow them. Lack of water and fuel supplies did not hamper them in retreat the way it hampered the Malian army. Of course, this advantage was lost when the rebels had to fight the equally camel-mounted goum forces. In fact, the only unit the rebels feared, was the GNIG14 – the goum unit, mounted on camels and armed with the same MAS-36 rifles the ifulagen used.

The attacks of the ifulagen against the Malian forces were therefore mostly directed against the camel herds of the goum forces to deprive them of their means of combat and pursuit. In August 1963, a group of about fifty ifulagen under Sidi Alamine ag Cheick and Ikhlou Saloum raided the goum camels at Bouressa, capturing 25 animals. A second and third raid at the goum herds of Kidal led by Sidi Alamine and near Tin-Zaouaten led by Elledi ag Alla were just as successful. As well as raiding the goum herds, the rebels also ambushed army patrols.

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

298 Chef d’Arrondissement d’Aguelhoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/08/1963. ACK.
299 Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Alla par le capitaine Diby Silas Diarra, Commandant d’armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/04/1964. ACK.
300 Based on; Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.
Between 17 and 19 September 1963, a prolonged skirmish took place around the wells at Arli and Djourmel in the wadi Ouzzein at the edge of Mount Ouzzein. The rebels managed to cause serious damage to the army. Ten wounded soldiers had to be evacuated by airplane to Gao. A second skirmish took place at Arli at the end of September; again the Malian forces counted three wounded. But the most important result of this encounter was the defection of nineteen goumiers to the rebel side, taking their mounts, personal arms and a heavy machine gun (which they knew how to operate) with them. On 11 October 1963, a fight took place at the west side of Mount Tigharghar. The rebels were pursued and retreated to Mount Doriet where the cycle of skirmishes and retreats was continued until the pursuing Malian units had to give up for lack of water. In November 1963 a similar skirmish took place at the wadi Taghlit, which is surrounded by mountains at two sides. Here, the ifulagen managed to destroy an armoured car. One soldier was killed and five more were wounded.

Rebel attacks intensified at the start of 1964. On 18 January 1964, a group of ifulagen attacked the village of Tessalit. They were guided by Najim ag Sidi, a goumier who had served at the post. Since the army had accused him of being a rebel accomplice, he had defected and joined the rebels. The raid was very successful. Attacking at night, the rebels managed to break into the Tessalit arsenal, taking with them fifty arms, twenty of which were modern Czech repeating rifles. With this new equipment a total of about eighty ifulagen, divided into five units were active in the Adagh throughout that month. On 29 January 1964, this group staged a well-prepared ambush at the Tin-Tedjnouten Pass, which is now seen as the rebels finest moment. The fight ended with the death of the commanding officer of the army unit involved, Lieutenant Konimba. About fifty rebels took part. Makhamad wan Daghda recounts that day –

'We arrived late in the afternoon. Our chiefs, Sidi Alamine and Magdi, called us and Sidi Alamine told us, El Khader and me, that he thought we had better wait [for the army] in the canyon and dig a ditch. He explained that if we dug a hole and covered it up as a trap, any vehicle falling into it would overturn. Once this was done, we should wait attentively and in the event of an alert we should retreat, in different groups, behind the hills. [...] If there were many vehicles, we should let the first one pass since the men looked like the ground [were hidden] and the enemy could not suspect anything. Magdi, who died in this ambush (and who is the father of Bachir who you probably know), called us, El Khader, Aghmadou and myself, to ask us to go to the opposite hill to dig trenches. That's all. We went to the hill where we stayed until the morning. [...] We spent the night there and during afternoon prayers, Atiyoub served as Imam. After prayers, someone ventured it was Atiyoub who withheld the [army] vehicles from arriving. Everyone asked Atiyoub to do something to make the vehicles come. Atiyoub stood up from where he was praying, turned to the group and said to them: "Is that all you want"? He wore a burnous which he started to flap around. Immediately someone said he heard the
sound of a motor. The opinions on this were divided until everyone saw a dust cloud. We directly dispersed and when the vehicles arrived, some of us were on the hills and others were in the canyons. The first vehicles that arrived were a Zil [truck] transporting soldiers, a Land Rover and a tank. The vehicles followed each other, the Land Rover first, the tank after it and the Zil brought up the rear. El Khader and me, we hid behind the rocks. We immediately opened fire and the tank, which was hit, had turned around. [...] When the tank was hit and turned around, many of us said to ourselves that it was returning to Kidal, while really it had retreated to join the Zil which was following. It took a good number of soldiers from the Zil on board while the rest had to march towards our positions. Like a cow from which one tries to take away its calf, the furious tank attacked us. The sustained fire of our fighters seemed to have no effect. The tank fired until it killed two of our men. We were greatly upset by this loss. I stood up to observe the tank at close hand and Inkatouf signalled to me that I should hide from the tank’s fire. Looking from above, I saw the heads of the soldiers lined up like melons inside the tank, which was not closed. Since the tank was open, its occupants were well-visible. I aimed my rifle and I took two down. One of the tank soldiers immediately shouted to his chief and the tank withdrew and stayed immobile until the evening. [...] That day, I had a Mauser of quality.\(^\text{301}\)

Makhamad wan Daghada’s account exemplifies some Tamasheq concepts on war and masculinity – ruse, patience, trust in God and bravery in fight. He explains with great detail how the _ifulagen_ set up a well-prepared trap for the Malian army. A ditch to immobilise the vehicles was dug and covered and trenches were dug to hide the fighters from vision. The trenches are not explained as a means of protection, but as a way to lure the army into advance without suspicion. Then they sat in wait for the army. When it arrived, the fighters had to withhold fire until the first vehicle had passed. Before the fight, after normal prayers, the men invoked God’s help in the fight to come. In fact, they longed for combat and invoked divine assistance to make the enemy appear. At that moment, the army arrived and was subsequently defeated. In this way, Makhamad shows that trust in God will be rewarded. Combat is engaged and at this point ruse is abandoned for bravery. Makhamad gets up from his trench, despite heavy enemy fire and the warnings of his comrade, and thus manages to kill two enemies. These four concepts are most important when actual combat is engaged. However, in how to wage war and on whom, other concepts and rules are involved.

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

Like everywhere else, warfare is controlled and regulated in Tamasheq society. The regulating principles however, are of a different nature than in most European approaches. Warfare is not about territorial conquest, but about people, material and honour, with the latter forming the main classifying principle. A first form of warfare is *aqqa*, which Hélène Claudot-Hawad translates as a ‘countering movement’ or ‘counter attack’.\(^\text{302}\) *Aqqa* is a raid intended to avenge an attack on the honour of the group received by one or more of its members. It is thus the way in which *egha* is acted out. But *aqqa* is regulated through rather strict rules, the breaking of which does not lead to repaying *egha*, but in further staining one’s honour oneself.

As we have seen above, only those who are on equal footing can stain honour and can therefore be subject to an *aqqa* counter attack. This excludes women, children, slaves and craftsmen. Religious groups should also be excluded from an *aqqa* attack. The principal object of an *aqqa* attack is not to kill victims, but rather to capture the attacked group’s herds and possibly its slaves (which could be captured but not killed and who were often released for ransom afterwards). The raid is most successful if the attackers can capture their bounty without a fight, but if combat is engaged, then only the enemy’s able-bodied warriors should be involved. ‘Civilians’ (women, children, religious personae and craftsmen) should be left unharmed.

A second form of warfare is called *tewet*. More or less the same rules as in *aqqa* are applied, with two main differences – an *aqqa* attack should be announced to the adversary while a *tewet* attack should not, and the main aim of a *tewet* attack is not to restore or gain honour, but to acquire booty. A third form of warfare is *akafal*, which has been described as ‘barbarism against barbarism’ by both Claudot-Hawad and Berge. While *aqqa* and *tewet* attacks are only carried out against people seen as on an equal footing with the attackers and is bound to certain rules and goals, *akafal* is war against outsiders who are not seen as on equal footing. In *akafal* there are no rules, honour is not at stake, only defence and booty.

The *ifulagen* tried to apply concepts of honourable conduct in warfare. Non-combatants should not be harmed in the fighting itself and a minimum of civil behaviour and warrior conduct was still expected from the Malian forces, as becomes clear from the following account by Mohamed wan Daghada.

‘Interviewer: You, who have experienced the conflict of 1963, does the present one [the 1990 rebellion] remind you of it? Are things better at present in your opinion?’

Makhamad wan Daghada: They are two different wars which do not resemble each other at all. The first conflict, which was ours, was played

out in broad daylight. [...] As soon as they brought me the news [of a skirmish near a camp], we took to the road, at night, and we travelled all night to arrive. In the early morning, we were joined by other groups; that of Elledi, that of Azzezen, and that of Didari wan Ibelouten. I told the group that the soldiers were very close to the camps and in those conditions we could not attack them. The others replied they agreed and that we should warn the soldiers. I went to look for two women, Badaweise and her little sister Tichya – the mother of this young man – whom I asked to go and warn the soldiers. I told the women to go and tell them there was a group of men with bad intentions and that they should leave. Badaweise went to see them and she called aside a gomier of the Idnan tribe who is called Mohamed wan Kharam Kharam, to whom she said: "Today, I have seen a group of men who do not belong to you and who are scary". The gomier asked her who they were and the women replied that it was a large group from which she knew no one and which prepared for attack. The gomier asked: "What are we going to do... Should we run away"? The women replied that no, they should not flee. While Mohamed – the father of this young man – and myself took positions, surrounding the enemy, one of ours, Ikhlou Saloum opened fire and the fight started immediately. The firing had alerted the people in the camp who fled. Combat went on until the destruction of one of the vehicles of the enemy. They had wounded men too, which forced them to fight in retreat'.

Makhamad wan Daghada makes clear that his war does not resemble the second rebellion at all. His war was fought in broad daylight in open combat (apparently in contrast to the behaviour of the new generation of fighters), and after announcement. He makes clear that he and his fellow ifulagen made sure no civilians fell victim in the fight if they could help it. They would not fight the Malian army in the vicinity of camps. Thus, he first went to the camp to warn the inhabitants and then had a message sent to the Malians soldiers to invite them for combat elsewhere. This message was passed through the intermediary of a woman to whom, the ifulagen trusted, no harm would be done. Only then the ifulagen engaged in combat, leaving time for the civilians to bring themselves in safety.

In the first months of the conflict, the main aims of attack also followed the rules of aqqa and tewet. The ifulagen primarily raided the camel herds of the goum units of Kidal and the GNIG14, probably without announcement and with the aim to loot which made them tewet attacks. A first successful raid was held around Bouressa. A second raid was held at Farar, near Kidal, where the ifulagen captured forty camels of the Kidal goum. Many more raids would follow. The raids had a tactical value. Not only did they provide means for the ifulagen themselves – well-trained

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304 Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aguelhoc à Commandant du Cercle de Kidal, 20/08/1963. ACK.
305 Boilley (1999), op. cit., 326.
mounts for their fighters and livestock to be exchanged for weapons – it also deprived their adversaries of their means of warfare. But the raids on the gourm's camels also adhered to the rules of aqqa – they were intended to restore honour.

As we have seen above, the sole objective of Elledi ag Alla in his action starting the revolt was to restore the honour of his family. He wanted to erase his honour debt with the gourmiers, who had dishonoured his father. Other ifulagen too had their honour at stake in the events around Alla ag Albachir. Ikhloou Saloum had been part of Alla’s band for a while before becoming a gourmier himself. Since the gourmiers were able-bodied warriors par excellence, and on an equal footing with the ifulagen as free men, they were legitimate targets for aqqa. Hence, the raids on their animals was also in revenge (egha) for the stained honour of Elledi and Ikhloou Saloum (and many others) in the mutilation of Alla ag Albachir’s body by the gourmiers.

Individual gourmiers were raided for their own animals as well. Still, the values of honourable warfare were upheld. In November 1963, a group of ifulagen attacked the camp of a certain Akly, which lodged the gourmier Sidarmor ould Mini. At first, the ifulagen wanted to kill Sidarmor, but after the intervention of Akly and his wife they spared his life and only took his arms, clothes (in humiliation) and camels. The leader of the group then told Sidarmor –

‘We wanted to make you suffer the same ordeals to which our people are victim. We will not give you back this gun, which would be employed against us. You say you want peace, we don’t want it. [...] We have no fear. Day and night we will be everywhere. We have no need to hide ourselves and don’t you think we will not come back. Even if you go to the river we will follow you there’.306

The language used is one of honour and bravery. The ifulagen insist that they fight in the open and will continue doing so. Instead of killing the adversary, his life is spared, and he is left in humiliation to get the message across. The ifulagen ‘invite’ the gourm to battle in the open – they have no reason to hide – and will find their adversaries wherever they go. The fight is between equals, who are dealt with as such.

Until August 1963, only the gourm and the GNIG14 pursued the rebels. Thus, only attacks on valid adversaries were made by the ifulagen. However, by August 1963 it was clear to the Malian Government that the gourm and the GNIG14 alone could not end the rebellion. Therefore the ‘regular forces’ of the Malian army were sent in. All parties involved until that moment, the ifulagen, the gourmiers and the Kel Adagh in general were quick to learn that the new adversary would not fight by the rules. Women and religious persons were arrested or killed, and so were men

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who had not participated in combat. Wells were poisoned and cattle were killed.

It therefore comes as no surprise that many *goumiers* deserted the Malian forces to join the *ifulagen*. One of the first to do so was Azzezen ag Iksa. Having first fought against the *ifulagen* he would become one of their main military leaders and the last to surrender his arms. At the end of September 1963, after (or during) a battle between the rebels and the army at the wells of Arli in the wadi Ouissein, a group of nineteen *goumiers* defected to the rebels. The methods applied by the Malian army went against their ethics as warriors and their feelings of belonging to the Kel Adagh. After all, the people under attack were 'their people' and the people who attacked them were not. Moreover, the Malian army attacked the wrong people – the civilians instead of the warriors. That the southern Malian officers had no high opinion of their effectiveness will not have helped to sustain their loyalty either, in contrast with the *ifulagen* who knew with whom they were dealing. Concepts of *egha* and subsequent *aqqa* 'counter attacks' do not exclude feelings of respect or *tewsit* affiliation.

With the change in tactics by the Malian forces, the tactics of the *ifulagen* altered similarly. The camel herds of the *goum* forces were no longer the sole focus of raids. The tribal chiefs, who were used by the administration to talk the rebels into surrender, were raided as well. Above all, even the herds of the 'civilian' population in and outside the Adagh were now targeted. The indignation of the fighters about the atrocities of the army on one hand and their own 'plundering' on the other hand seem to be in striking contradiction. But by that stage, the Malian forces had clearly left the code of conduct of 'civilised warfare' as it was known in the Adagh. The concept of *aqqa* was no longer valid. The later attacks on all and sundry by the rebels ascribe to what in Tamashq is called *akafa* – 'barbarism against barbarism'. On one hand, *akafa* means war against non-Kel Tamasheq, which this clearly was. In these wars, honour was not at stake and could therefore not be damaged by one's own actions. Therefore, no pardon or rule was necessary. On the other hand, *akafa* is the lawlessness imposed by barbarism. In a war were the adversary is not Kel Tamasheq, which does not know the internal martial code of conduct and behaves accordingly brutal, one has no other option than to react similarly in order to survive.

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307 After the end of the rebellion, Azzezen ag Iksa stayed in Algeria. In January 1971, he returned to Mali where he symbolically surrendered his gun. He was sent to Bamako where he was released under the National Reconciliation Act proclaimed by Moussa Traoré at an unknown date.

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

Diby's oven, repression

The unsanctity of borders

After operations in Mali, the ifulagen retreated into Algeria. If they had raided camels, they needed to get them to Algeria to sell them. The ifulagen stocked their supplies in Algeria as well, at the French base at Takormiasse. A unit only took enough material with them for a short time and had to return to equip itself. A last but certainly not the least reason for retreat into Algeria, was that they were relatively safe there from the pursuing Malian army. This changed considerably when the Malian forces obtained the right to pursue the rebels, or whoever was perceived as such, on Algerian territory. When and how exactly is still not clear, but between November 1963 and February 1964 Mali and Algeria concluded an agreement according the Malian army the right to pursue the rebels in Algeria as far as necessary.\(^{310}\)

The Malian right of pursuit in Algeria proved to be dramatic. First of all, it made clear to the rebels that their strategy, starting the conflict in the hope that Algeria would come to their aid, would not work out. Second, the main tactic of the rebels, retreat into safety behind the Algerian border, was now seriously undermined. Third, not only the rebels suffered under the Malian incursions. The Kel Adagh who had fled to Algeria to escape the violent reaction of the Malian forces, were confronted with the Malian forces as well, who considered the refugees as rebel accomplices.

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

The forbidden zone

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

\(^{310}\) It is unclear on which date this agreement was signed, or whether an agreement was signed at all or on what level.

\(^{311}\) Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.

\(^{312}\) Déclarations des deux rebelles rendus avec leurs armes le 10 juillet 1964 au chef de tribu Bissaada - II/ Declarations du nommé Bilal ag Indialal, fraction Taghat Melet, Tribu Ebeug. ACK.

\(^{313}\) Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c. See also, Boilley (1999), 333.
27 September 1963, the army decided to try to cut the rebels off from their support by declaring the Adagh north to Kidal a forbidden zone (zone interdit). This meant that all of the Adagh was forbidden territory for its inhabitants since Kidal is situated at the southernmost limit of the Adagh. Anyone found in the area was considered a rebel and could be shot on sight. But evacuating all the Kel Adagh to the utmost south of the Adagh was unfeasible. In January 1964, the policy was probably reformulated. The population was now to be concentrated in so called regrouping zones (zônes de regroupement) south and west of Kidal and around administrative posts and army bases at Aguelhoc, Telabit, Bouressa and Tessalit. The rest of the Adagh remained a 'forbidden zone'.

It is not clear to what extent the population was informed on either of these policies. We have to keep in mind that villages were almost non existent. The only Kel Adagh who lived in Kidal were the gourmiers and their families. Nevertheless, the population was mostly to be found in the 'inhabitable' parts of the Adagh – the wadis, which were accessible to army vehicles. In December 1963, a campaign was organised to inform the population on

'[...] the social policy of our Party and at the same time their proper interests. In general, the nomadic populations, following the psychological political work of our troops and the call to the rebels by our head of State, divide themselves between two opposing groups, in opinion as well as on the ground. The first group, and by far the most numerous, underwent the dynamic actions of our officers who are in charge of their political education, whereas the second group, situated in Algeria, has remained under the influence of the propaganda of the rebels, to whom they are, explicitly or not, accomplices.'

Thus, part of the population knew about the new measures. But knowing about them and being able to comply with them are two different matters. The concentration of the population would cause tremendous difficulties in the allocation of sufficient water and pastures to support the herds in such small areas as those designated by the army. Thus, those Kel Adagh who knew about the 'forbidden zone' were faced with the choice between complying and watching their herds perish within the regrouping zones, or risking their lives and those of their livestock by staying where they were.

'Question – Why did you flee from the soldiers when you saw them? They had to shoot your mounts to arrest you.'

314 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c. The idea that this policy was slightly altered in January 1964 is based on: Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle du mois de février 1964. ACK, which speaks of a zône de regroupement to the south and west of Kidal.

315 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de décembre 1963. ACK.
Reply – We fled from the soldiers because at the last party meeting at Tessalit [...] we had been warned that the sector is forbidden, that all those who go to that zone will be killed. So, when we crossed the soldiers in that sector, we tried to flee from the soldiers to head back to Tessalit, but unfortunately our camels were shot and we were arrested by the soldiers.  

A third and most chosen option was to escape to Algeria. The ifulagen too knew about the 'forbidden zone' tactics and responded by trying to escort as many people as they could out of the Adagh on their way to Algeria. Thus, in December 1963, around 400 families and their herds fled to Algeria to escape persecution. Many more would follow. By the end of the conflict, an estimated 5,000 of a total population of no more than 20,000 Kel Adagh had installed themselves in Southern Algeria with no intention to come back to Mali. By then, most of those who had preferred to return to Mali had already done so. The army responded to the flights by pursuing and killing those on their way to Algeria (or even those already in Algeria), or by evacuating even more people to its zones of control. In January 1964, the population of the area around Tarkimt, almost at the bank of the Niger and the base camp of the GNIG14, was evacuated to the south on rumours that they planned to flee to Algeria.

To those Kel Adagh who remained in the forbidden zone, life must have been hell. The army poisoned wells throughout the Adagh since the rebels depended on wells to provision themselves, but so did the local population. The army systematically shot herds and herdsmen to keep them out of rebel hands. For those in the regrouping zones life was not much better. Women and children were not deliberately executed (but they died of poisoned water, and were imprisoned under life-threatening circumstances). Instead, they were taken to villages in the regrouping zones such as Kidal, Tessalit and Bouressa where they were put to work.

'I was lucky, because the army did not kill women at the time, tss tss, no no. They only put them in prison, to make bricks and all that. Building things. But they didn't kill women and children. Only men. There were many people who died, eh?'.

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

316 Rapport d'interrogation, Arrondissement de Tessalit, Cercle de Kidal, 08/02/1964. ACK.
317 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de décembre 1963. ACK.
318 Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.
nobility, many families tried to live up to noble values. Even for those women who did perform tasks, fabricating clay bricks was a totally alien occupation which struck them as utterly humiliating. Second, many Kel Adagh women successfully lived according to the Tamasheq standards of beauty - extreme obesity brought about by force-feeding from the start of adolescence.\(^2\) These women were physically unable to perform any form of hard labour and greatly suffered under the forced effort. Third, and not unsurprisingly, many women had to endure physical and sexual harassment by their guards. Some were forced into marriage or concubinage since their husbands or male relatives were (presumed) rebels, prisoners, or dead.

'I have the honour to send you Atakora Oueled Sikema, originating from your Arrondissement, for the following reasons: [...] In fact, the concerned is at present under the threat of the knife of one of the co-wives of the gendarme Mallet Keita who insists on marrying her despite her irregular situation. It is most important to consider that the presence of this woman in Tessalit is harmful to Mister Mallet Keïta's family and risks producing grave consequences in the future, since the man adamantly insists on making her living in his house without entering into a legal marriage contract'.\(^2\)

The forced marriages were unbearable in many ways. First of all, some of these women were already married or engaged, but with their husbands and male relatives away or dead, they had no choice but to accept their situation. I once heard a story about the Kel Adagh wife of a former officer who served in the Adagh during Alfellaga. Her husband imposed his marriage proposal by killing most of her male relatives in front of her eyes. Second, in Kel Adagh society, as in all Tamasheq societies, monogamy is the norm. To these Kel Adagh women their status as co-wife must have been equal to being a concubine, a position previously only held by women of slave origins. Her new role as wife to a non-Tamasheq also brought her tasks she was unaccustomed to performing - pounding grain, fetching firewood, and sweeping the compound. Sometimes the (non)marital situation even grew dangerous as the above quote shows.

Imprisoning women had the effect the authorities desired. Many families returned from their exile in Algeria to plea for the liberation of their womenfolk. In April 1964, a group of returned Kel Adagh families in Tessalit asked for the return of their imprisoned women and children upon meeting with a political delegation touring the area.\(^2\)


\(^{2}1\) Chef d'Arrondissement de Tessalit à Chef d'Arrondissement d'Aquelhoc, 25/02/1965. ACK.

The arrest of the leaders

If the Malian right of pursuit on Algerian territory had not made it clear to the rebels that their strategy – starting a fight in the hope for external support – had failed, the fate of Zeyd ag Attaher’s mission to Algeria to explicitly demand Algerian support will certainly have done so. As we have seen in chapter II, Zeyd’s visit to Algeria in 1961 was indeed intended to ask both French and FLN support for his cause – freeing the Adagh from Malian presence. As the Kel Adagh believe it now, representatives of the FLN had promised to deliver support as soon as Algeria had become independent. A support that failed to materialise as the rebellion progressed.

In the autumn of 1963, Zeyd ag Attaher decided to contact the Algerian Government to remind it of its promise to support his cause.323 He travelled to Tamanrasset, where he asked to meet the governor. During the meeting, Zeyd requested to speak to the Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella and to be provided with transport to Algiers. The request was granted, but Malian diplomacy had been ahead of Zeyd. On 28 September 1963, the Malian Chief of Staff Abdoulaye Soumaré had visited Algiers to speak with the authorities about the uprising.324 Soumaré managed to convince the Algerian authorities of the necessity of arresting Zeyd or other rebels when they presented themselves. At their arrival in Colomb-Béchar, Zeyd and his companion Ilyas ag Ayyouba were arrested. The car in which they travelled turned around and drove them to Tessalit. There they were put on an airplane to Kidal where they arrived on 1 November.325

In the same period the ground was laid for the arrest of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar who had lived in exile in Morocco since the 1950s. Again, international relations worked against the rebels. In October 1963, Morocco was at war with Algeria over the border area around Tlemcen. The area was Algerian territory, but Morocco claimed it on historical grounds. The conflict was resolved with the help of Modibo Keita, whose diplomatic skills and international prestige made him a valid intermediary. In return for his help, Morocco arrested and expelled Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar in March 1964.326

323 The following is based on three interviews with Amegha ag Sherif, Brussels, October 1994; Bamako 08/02/1998; and Bamako, 10/02/1998. For a similar account, based on the reminiscence of the same witness, see Boilley (1999), 318.

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

325 Boilley (1999), 338. 15 November is given as the date of Zeyd’s arrest in Algeria in Mali, Tableau des forces armées et forces publiques du Mali au 1er mai 1964. CHETOM - 15 H 77-2c.

326 The date of Mohamed Ali’s expulsion is based on: Interrogatoire du prisonnier rebelle Eladi ag Aila par le Capitaine Diby Silas Diarra, Commandant d’armes et du Cercle de Kidal, 13/04/1964. ACK. The explanation that his arrest and expulsion to Mali are linked to Modibo Keita’s intervention in the Moroccan - Algerian conflict is current in the Adagh and elsewhere in the Tamasheq world.
After the expulsion and arrest of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar another more major blow was struck to the *Ifulagen* - the capture of Elledi ag Alla by Malian forces on 9 March 1964 at Intachara, in Algeria. Elledi was perhaps not the most important military leader, as he admitted himself, but as the son of a famous rebel against France and the instigator of the conflict, his prestige and renown was greater than of any other combatant. After his arrest and severe torture, Elledi was given the option between collaboration or direct execution. He chose the former. Thus, the Malian army was able to make further arrests within the network of rebels in Mali.
Captured rebel leaders Zeyd ag Attaher (middle), Ilyas ag Ayyouba (left), and messenger Mohamed Ali (right) are paraded through Kidal. On the left, in shorts, probably Commandant du Cercle Diby Sillas Diarra. Source: Archives du Cercle de Kidal.
Psychological warfare

The arrested leaders were used in a campaign to demoralise both the supportive population and the remaining fighters. Zeyd ag Attaher and Ilyas ag Ayyouba were paraded through Kidal and the Adagh in a campaign of public humiliation. As is visible in figure 3, Zeyd’s veil was draped around his neck as a shawl. Ilyas ag Ayyouba does not wear a veil at all. In those times, nothing was more humiliating and dishonourable for a man than to show his face in public. If Zeyd had had to walk the streets with his pants around his ankles, the effect would not have been greater. But Zeyd was not simply unveiled. In the elaborate language of honour which men express through their veil, draping it as a shawl expresses utter defeat and distress.\(^\text{327}\) The same fate was bestowed upon Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar. His picture was taken while he was unveiled and shown in the Adagh and elsewhere.\(^\text{328}\) Thus the Malian forces wanted to make sure the message came through, and it did –

‘And what did Mali do? This is what the Tuareg have never been able to digest. They undressed them, Zeyd and Mohamed Ali, and they exposed them in all of the Tamasheq country as if to say: “here are the men you counted on”. They did this in Goundam, they did this in Timbuktu, in all of the country. The soldiers spat on them, they undressed them ... undressed them. This is what the Tuareg could never digest. They were the most respected among men. Doing something like that is like killing someone’s soul.’\(^\text{329}\)

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

To those who could not witness the public exposure of the leaders, the army wrote a note, which was dropped by airplane over the Adagh –

LAST WARNING TO THE REBELS

1º/ YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM YOUR FAMILIES
YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM YOUR PEOPLE
YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM YOUR LEADERS
YOU ARE CUT OFF FROM THE WHOLE WORLD

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

3º/ YOU STILL HAVE A LAST CHANCE – THAT IS TO SURRENDER YOURSELVES WITH YOUR ARMS AT THE NEAREST MILITARY POST WITHIN THE NEXT 48 HOURS
MISSING THIS LAST CHANCE WHICH MALI OFFERS YOU WILL MEAN:

NAPALM BOMBS
CANONS
MACHINE GUNS DESTROYING YOU IN ONE DAY

4º/ ZEID AG ATTAHER AND HIS MAIN COLLABORATORS HAVE BEEN IN OUR HANDS SINCE 10 DAYS AGO

450 REBELS WERE ARRESTED BY ALGERIA AND HANDED OVER TO MALI

LONG LIVE MALI
LONG LIVE THE MALIAN ARMY

The message could not have had a large impact, as almost none of the Kel Adagh could read French. But other means where employed as well to convince the population and the rebels of the hopelessness of their struggle. The army had a mobile cinema at its disposal with which it toured the regrouping zone in May 1964. The film shown featured Modibo Keita and the Algerian president Ben Bella embracing each other as proof that the rebellious Kel Adagh could not count on Algerian support for their struggle.331

330 Flyer found in ACK.
331 Cercle de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de mai 1964. ACK.
Diby’s oven

Worst of all the means employed in this ‘psychological war’, were the totally random executions of both the population and leading personae in the Adagh. Opposite the commander’s office in Kidal, on the other side of the wadi, is a low rocky ridge. Within the ridge is a sand filled recess, which some refer to as ‘Diby’s oven’ after the Commanding officer of Kidal Cercle Diby Sillas Diarra. A pit was dug in this recess, which was filled with blazing embers. Executions took place at the edge of this pit, after which the body was thrown in the pit and covered with sand. In the same way, meat and bread are cooked in the Sahara, something that cannot escape the attention of those who know this story. To those who understand Bambara, the ‘pun’ on this form of execution and the man who invented it is as apparent as it is macabre. In Bambara, dibi means ‘grilled meat’.

On 16 February 1964, the army executed the venerated marabout Sidi Mohamed Embakoua ag Oumayyata who had studied with Cheick Baye al-Kounti, the most important Kounta cheick in Northern Mali in the first quarter of the 20th century. In the 1940s it was Embakoua who had replaced the descendants of Cheick Baye as the spiritual leader of the Ifoghas. His execution struck the Adagh with terror as was intended. Commandant Diarra was of the opinion that ‘the spectacular sanctions applied against the agents of subversion would have the merit of discouraging duplicity and complicity in all their forms’.

On 25 March 1964, Sidi Haïballa oul Abidine, a venerated Kounta cheick and one of the most influential religious leaders in the Adagh was arrested and interrogated. He was accused of having made charms for the ifulagen to protect them from bullets, which he denied having done. No proof was found against Sidi Haïballa or his son Sidi Mohamed. On the latter it was even noted that ‘despite the accusations against him, the concerned has always informed us [on the whereabouts of the ifulagen] in the western sector’. Nevertheless, Diarra thought that since Sidi Haïballa had done nothing to prevent the rebellion and had not used his influence to stop the rebels in their actions, he was guilty by compliance and a rebel himself. The public execution of Sidi Haïballa and his son Sidi Mohamed caused tremendous grief. That year, the Kounta in the Adagh and elsewhere, in mourning for his death, did not celebrate ‘aid al-‘adhhâ’, the most important celebration in Islam.

Chiefs who did not collaborate with the army were shot as well, like Ayyouba ag Mohamed Adargajoj – chief of the Daoussahak and the father of Younes and Ilyas ag Ayyouba. Ayyouba, who lived in the Cercle Menaka, was arrested and sent to Kidal, where he was executed on the grounds that his sons were rebel leaders and that he himself had furnished camels to them. But not only the local leaders were executed. In February 1964, the army ‘discovered intelligence networks’ in and around Kidal, Telabit

332 Cercel de Kidal, Revue mensuelle des évènements du mois de février 1964. ACK.
333 Ibidem.
334 PV d’écoute concernant Sidi Mohamed oul Sidi Haïballa, 18/03/1964. ACK.
and Aguelhoc amongst the population held in the regrouping zones. This was taken as a pretext for summary executions among the regrouped population.335

**The last months**
The arrest of the main leaders, the executions and the imprisonment of the population did provoke a drop in morale among the fighters.

'So, after what I've said before - the psychological work they [Mali] had done by showing the chiefs Mohamed Ali and Zeyd through all the villages - many men abandoned their arms. They returned. Many returned to Algeria. There were few fighters left with sufficient means.'336

Within the ranks of the *ifulagen* two options prevailed. One group supported abandoning the fight and seeking refuge in Algeria under the protection of either the French at their military bases, or under protection of the Algerian Government. The largest group however opted for return to Mali to unconditionally surrender to its authorities since they knew that those who had been taken prisoner had not been killed.337 Elledi, Zeyd and others were still alive. In May and June 1964, Intalla ag Ataher toured the Adagh west of Bouressa to persuade the *ifulagen* to surrender. Intalla's efforts were intended to gain the confidence of the rebels he encountered, but some came to him to surrender on their own initiative. Those who did were disarmed and remained with Intalla to convince others to surrender as well. The tours were successful as, in total, forty-eight men gave up the fight.338 The remaining fighters were mostly men of the first hour such as Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick, Azzezen ag Ikasa and Ikh lou Saloum.

Not all rebels gave up the fight immediately, despite the hopelessness of their situation. In June 1964 the group around Sidi Alamine and Issouf ag Cheick was spotted in the Timetrine by the GNIG14.339 After a long, drawn out pursuit through the Timetrine the group was finally tracked down. On 27 July, Sidi Alamine ag Cheick was killed on the run.340

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335 Cercle Kidal, Revue mensuelle des événements du mois de février 1964. ACK.


337 Déclarations des deux rebelles rendus avec leurs armes le 10 juillet 1964 au chef de tribu Bissaada - I/ Déclarations du nommé Salia ag Bakarine, fraction Imerade Intalla. ACK.

338 Compte rendu de la mission d'Intalla au Commandant la C.S.M., n.d. [July 1964]. ACK.

339 RAC message: Origine Commandant GNT télégramme officielle à Commandant BSE. Info Base GNT - Commandant le 10e CCA - Telab't; and RAC message: Gouverneur de Gao 26/00h télégramme officielle à Commandant du Cercle Kidal NR 37/Chiffré/BSE; and Réponse au télégramme officielle de 26/6/64 à 1820h; and RAC message: Commandant du Cercle Kidal télégramme officielle à Gouverneur de Gao no 18/chi/Cercle. ACK.

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

On 15 August 1964, the Malian Government officially declared the rebellion vanquished in the national newspaper \textit{I'Essor}. To the few readers of the paper, the news of the end of the rebellion was probably more shocking than the news of rebellion in the first place. The announcement was the third article ever written in the Malian press on the revolt and the first to call it a rebellion.

The victory was celebrated in Kidal on 22 September 1964, on the third national independence day. The festivities were attended by Mali's military top brass – Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence Mamadou Diakité, Governor of Gao Bakary Diallo, and the commander of the \textit{Bataillon Sahélien de l'Est} Bokar Sada Diallo, next to all the officers in command of the administration and the army in the Kidal area. The \textit{goumiers} and the various CCA units paraded through Kidal. Flowers were placed at the monument for the dead, followed by the ceremony of the flag, after which the regimental flag of the \textit{Bataillon Sahélien de l'Est} was hoisted. A minute silence was twice observed in memory of 'the valiant builders of the Malian nation who fell here in defence of national unity and integrity'.\textsuperscript{342} The forty captured rebels who were present were symbolically unshackled and pardoned for their actions. The message conveyed in this military symbolism was Malian victory. A victory over 'a feudal society, convinced of the rule of the strongest, an anarchist society without attachments and without sedentary spirit, a society relishing adventure, a society of hate and complexes which the French administration had left to the Malian Republic'.\textsuperscript{343} In his speech, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence Mamadou Diakité passed on a message from Modibo Keita who pardoned 'all those who, understanding their error, had laid down their arms. They may thus consider themselves to be free citizens in all respects in a Mali that makes no difference between its children. But it is necessary that they remember, and I am sure everybody will remember'.\textsuperscript{344} About this, Keita was absolutely right.

\textbf{Remembering the terror}

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{343} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{344} Ibidem.
speak about them. Some of them simply said they were not in the Adagh at the time, which could be true given both the massive retreat of the Kel Adagh into Algeria during those years and the Malian tactics of the regrouping zones. But other reasons for silence are more likely. Tamasheq speech is bound by honour. One should measure one’s words and preferably speak in a concealing language (*tengelt*). Emotions should be restrained to preserve dignity. All this is quite impossible when invited to tell a tale of horror. Also, I must admit I had great difficulties in pressing further when confronted with reluctance to revisit the events I was interested in. The fact that I was a stranger could also have played a large part in form and content of (non-)communication. However, those who had witnessed *Alfellaga* and wanted to speak about the subject, invariably told me the story of Paul Ahmed Nardy ‘the Frenchman’. Nardy was actually of mixed Algerian and French origins. After independence, he stayed in Mali where he worked as administrator of the customs service in Gao. He was, rightly or not, accused by Commandant Diby Sillas Diarra of being the head of the resistance movement’s information network in Gao. Nardy was arrested in March 1964,

‘[...] but he had nothing to do with the revolt, he was an innocent type. He was imprisoned together with my older sister who survived. They let him die of thirst. He asked someone to moisten the tip of his veil so he could have some water, but it was refused. When he died after three days there was a bright light on the spot were he was, like a lamp. Only it wasn’t a lamp, it was a miracle. That was because he was a good Muslim and a perfectly innocent man. He had nothing to do with the rebellion. They only killed him because he was French, and they thought he had spied for the rebels. He was a brave person’.345

Nardy’s story was not only told because of his and my presumed origins (many people thought I was French too, or at least I was a European, an identity I shared with Nardy). To those who told it, somehow, it was an outstanding example of the barbarousness of the Malian army – the killing of the innocent and the non-adherence to the rules of warfare. As mentioned above, in the Tamasheq concept of honourable war – *aqqa* – certain social categories should be left unharmed – women, children, the free unprotected craftsmen, religious groups (*ineslemen*), and strangers. Nardy fitted the last two categories. He was a Frenchman who had converted to Islam and he was apparently reputed for his piety. He was certainly not the only victim of the Malian forces who, according to the rules of *aqqa*, should have been left unharmed. The public execution of the Adagh’s men of religion still provokes resentment in the Adagh.

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

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345 Conversation with Keyni ag Sherif, Kidal, n.d.
population and their chiefs after the rebellion are now placed within the context of the rebellion or they are believed to have taken place in those days. The arrest and humiliation of Bissaada ag Khakad, Hamzata ag Sidi and Ebeug ag Elmoack in 1967, described in chapter II, is now remembered as having taken place during the rebellion as well. In this way, the whole Keita period is seen as not only one of great suffering, but also one of continued resistance and rebellion. It is as if Alfellaga did not take place between 1963 and 1964, but between 1960 and 1968 – from the coming of Mali to the coup d’état by Moussa Traoré.

The importance of Alfellaga as a time of great suffering stretches even further, and is connected to later catastrophes. Not without reason, the poverty of the Adagh after the rebellion is blamed on the destruction of herds by the Malian army –

'Before Alfellaga the Adagh was rich. There were no Tuareg beggars. There were many camels. There were people who had never tasted grain. They only lived off milk, dates and meat. Only after Alfellaga did they learn to eat rice. The soldiers brought rice, since there were no herds left. The women did not even know how to swallow this rice. They were not accustomed to it. When the army found a herd [makes a shooting gesture] they gunned them down. They killed many animals, camels and goats'.

The extermination of herds and the destruction of the environment, the poisoning of wells and the cutting down of trees by the Malian army is even presented as a direct cause for the drought of the 1970s – 'Before Alfellaga, the Adagh was green. All the wadis were covered in trees. The army cut them down and that brought the drought'.

Alfellaga is not only remembered by those who lived the events. Poems have been composed about them and they are referred to in the songs of the tanekra – the movement of young men and women preparing the rebellion of 1990. These songs and poems are known throughout the Tamasheq world. Poetry is the main vehicle of historical knowledge. One stanza in particular was recited to me in and outside the Adagh. It compares French and Malian rule. Even the men who epitomised the bad side of French presence – the gourmiers – are now remembered with some fondness when compared to their Malian counterparts –

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This particular stanza was recited to me twice in the Adagh and twice outside the Adagh by different people on different occasions. ‘Sidi’ Ongoiba served as second Lieutenant in the Adagh during the rebellion, and afterwards as Chef d’Arrondissement at Bouressa and commander of the gourm. The ‘silly hats’ refers to the caps worn by Malian soldiers, compared to the Tamasheq veil and turban – the əghewit. The veil conveys certain concepts of honour and proper behaviour. For an adult man not to wear a veil is to be naked and without honour. Later generations and other groups not only know of the events through poems and songs. Some witnessed certain events as children, others heard stories about it from parents or relatives.

Stories about Alfellaga have spread beyond the Adagh. Today they are relevant knowledge of history for all the populations of Northern Mali. Alfellaga is seen as the origin of the second rebellion, which touched all Northern Mali. Thus, stories about Alfellaga have been incorporated in an explanatory narrative on the second rebellion. Those from outside the Adagh involved in the second rebellion will stress not only the continuity between the two revolts, but if possible even the participation of non-Kel Adagh in Alfellaga. Informants of the tewsit Ishidenharen residing in the Cercle Menaka, insisted that at least fourteen of their men had joined Alfellaga. They could mention one by name – Bahoni, the father of Moussa ag Bahoni, one of the most important Ishidenharen leaders of the second rebellion. Albachir, a Daoussahak from the Menaka area, explained that – ‘If one told the scientific truth, one would give paternity of Alfellaga to the Daoussahak. In 1962, it was fair and square with Ilyas ag Ayyouba’s money that the rebellion took place with the Ifoghas in Kidaf’. That Younes ag Ayyouba and his brother Ilyas were most likely the only two Daoussahak involved in Alfellaga is less relevant to Albachir. Their involvement justifies a claim to early resistance and participation in later events for his own tewsit. Thus, even outside the Adagh, continuity between Alfellaga and the second rebellion is assured along the genealogical lines of the tewsit.

348 Part of a poem by Akhmudan ag Meddi.

349 Interview with Albachir. Bamako, 24/01/1998. Ilyas and Younes ag Ayyouba had sold part of their father’s herds to finance the purchase of arms in Algeria before the start of the rebellion.
Just how widespread stories about Alfellaga are, becomes clear from a conversation I had in Menaka with Almoustapha, a young Songhay man from Gao. Almoustapha knew I was a historian, and asked me the reasons for the second rebellion. I answered I didn’t know and asked for his opinion. He gave me his "very personal opinion".

'Among other things, it has to do with taxes. In the French period taxes were levied arbitrarily. Those who could not pay their taxes were put in the sun from eight in the morning to nightfall, or they were beaten. With independence we thought these shameless practices would come to an end. Unfortunately there was the "famous", or rather infamous leader of Kidal after independence – Diby Sillas Diarra. He caused a complete massacre. He killed many people in Kidal. Those who could not pay their taxes were instantly executed. [...] One day Diby passed a merchant on the road. Diby drew his pistol to shoot him. Do you know why he wanted to shoot him? Because in walking by, the merchant had caused dust to fall on him. Only with the greatest effort could Diby’s following withhold him from killing the man. "Very well, [Diby said] I shall not kill him, but when I have drawn my pistol I cannot holster it without shooting. Bring me a donkey so I can fire the bullet meant for the merchant on that animal".

Like the Kel Adagh, but with different arguments, Almoustapha draws an immediate parallel between French colonial rule, Malian rule in the Adagh under the Keita regime, and the reasons for the second rebellion. The explicit line of reasoning is not only a good example of created continuity over time, but the story told is also a good example of a particular colonial genre. The reason why Commandant du Cercle Diby Sillas Diarra wanted to shoot the passing merchant echoes similar stories about the injustice and power of the Commandants du Cercle under French colonial rule. Almoustapha thus invokes a parallel between colonial times and newly independent Mali. However, the beating of passers-by for lack of respect was uncommon in the Adagh, but not in Almoustaphas home, the Cercle Gao. The way in which Almoustapha creates a parallel between colonial and Malian rule is an example of what Charlotte Linde has called ‘narrative induction’, which is ‘a process of being encouraged or required to hear, understand, and use someone else’s story as one’s own’. This is brought about by what she calls ‘non-participant narrative’ – ‘an oral story told to someone not present at the events narrated’. Almoustapha’s example shows that appropriated narratives will be transformed in ways to fit a historical experience closer to the narrator. Undoubtedly, he will have heard stories of wicked Colonial officers from his own family. We see here


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

**Conclusion**

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

An outsider with an inclination to dissect ‘factual events’ from historical discourse could easily discard the connection made in a way similar to ones disconnecting Gavrillo Princip’s assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand from the real causes of the First World War. But history does not work that way. Historical narratives are produced at a specific moment, under specific circumstances in a specific cultural context. When I conducted my research, Tamasheq society was recovering from the second rebellion between 1990 and 1996. Years of renewed resistance against the state are part of the circumstances creating the link between resistance in colonial times, Alfellaga and the second rebellion.

Historical continuity between Alla ag Albachir and his men and Alfellaga is created through the most binding framework of Tamasheq historical narrative; individual action and genealogy. Elledi’s father Alla ag Albachir had been, in Eric Hobsbawm’s terms, a social bandit who refused to obey French colonial and Tamasheq power. But in Kel Adagh political historical narrative, his actions serve to redefine Kel Adagh history under colonial rule from one of compliance with, to one of resistance against foreign rule. Although Elledi ag Alla’s goal had not been rebellion, he soon became the rebellion’s most prestigious leader. Tamasheq historical discourse now explicitly interprets his avenging action as a political act. The event that triggered the rebellion is seen as a continuation of resistance against foreign domination.

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

In the coming two chapters we will see how Alfellaga is linked to the rebellion of the 1990s in ways similar to those linking Alla ag Albachir to Alfellaga. Memories of the brutal repression of Alfellaga by the Malian army described in this chapter are vital elements in explaining the preparations and outbreak of the second rebellion. In this historical link, the same explanatory elements are used; individual action, genealogical continuity and revenge.

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

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

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

Without a doubt, the *ifulagen* wanted independence for the Kel Tamashaq nation. But their concept of independence was framed in visions on leadership, political order and the structure of society as they had come to know it through French colonial rule. Only the reasoning of political science and, for want of a better term, ‘Western’ political concepts, explicitly link ‘nation’ to ‘state’. The exact contents of these concepts were then still largely alien to most Kel Tamashaq.

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