That Desert is Our Country: Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)
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VI
Tanekra
The revolutionary movement
(1975-1990)

Introduction

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

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

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

To some extent, I will invert Benedict Anderson’s argument that nations, through ‘primordial’ kinship terms, imagine themselves as old while they are in fact new constructions. In this case, social cohesion of the nation-to-be had always been expressed through kinship ties. However, the Tamasheq nationalists carefully avoided imagining their nation according to these ties as they had always been an obstacle to political unity. Instead of through the language of kinship, national sentiment was expressed primarily through the language of territory.

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Despite nationalist discourse and ideas of territory, concepts of kinship, expressed through the *tewsiten*, kept structuring day to day political practice. Clan affiliation was at the heart of what one informant labelled 'partisme' – the social and political structure of Tamasheq society in *tewsit* hierarchically organised and in constant competition over a better place within the hierarchy. The structure of the *tewsit* system has been extensively described in the introduction. In this chapter we will see how it interfered with the ideology of Tamasheq unity, proclaimed by the *tanekra* movement. Political thinking along clan lines eventually led to the near collapse of the movement in the 'Tamanrasset war' of 1985. In the following chapters, I will show how clan thinking within the movement led to the break-up of the united rebel front in various movements along clan lines.

The second element is the Tamasheq concept *egha* – hatred and revenge. The *tanekra* movement was multiformal in its outlooks and goals. It was, however, kept together through one common sentiment – hatred for Mali and the desire to avenge the wrongdoings of the state in previous decades. *Egha* was not the sole motivation to join the movement but it was the binding factor for all Kel Tamasheq. The movement made explicit use of memories of *Alfellaga* and the feelings of hatred it had left to muster support for the movement among young men.

A third element is the possible legacy of the Keita regime. The political ideas of the Keita regime on social change were partly incorporated in the political ideology of the *tanekra* movement. This incorporation of post-colonial political ideas led to a further division within the movement between lower and upper strata of Tamasheq society, which will return in chapters VII and VIII.

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

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

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

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

The disasters hitting the Kel Tamasheq in the post-colonial period, described in the previous chapters, made it all the more clear to the *ishumar* that Tamasheq independence was necessary. Some of these
calamities would not have struck if independence had been granted to the Kel Tamasheq, or so the Ishumar thought. The Tanekra movement was all about regaining independence, expressed in ideas on territory – akal – and the Tamasheq as a people or nation – temust, or tumast. These concepts found their essential expression in the tanekra slogan akal iyyan, ittus iyyan, temust iyyat – ‘one country, one goal, one people’. A slogan awkwardly similar to the Malian slogan un Peuple un But une Foi – ‘one People, one Goal, one Religion’. Its similarity to the Malian slogan is not coincidental. National slogans all over the world resemble each other. The language of nationalism lacks originality, but this lack is made up for in zeal. The zealously pursued goal was to reunite the Tamasheq nation in a liberated independent country.

Akal, country

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

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

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

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

Nation-states were shaped under conditions of military rivalry between previous polities, challenging each others territorial integrity. Prior to colonial conquest, the territorial integrity of Tamasheq country had never been under threat, and neither had been their political supremacy in it. The French colonial armies had conquered Tamasheq country with a military superiority exceeding that of the defenders and with a speed forestalling Tamasheq attempts to unite in defence — which were made nevertheless. When the French retreated, the Kel Tamasheq made great efforts to regain independence as a unified nation, if need be under French tutelage in the form of the OCRS. This was not achieved and the Kel Tamasheq were faced with the dismemberment of their territory under various other states. Only then was the need first felt to find ways to regain territorial and national independence and it was concluded that this could only be done if all the Kel Tamasheq were united. Within the tanekra movement the idea of akal came to embody the territory of all the Kel Tamasheq on which an independent state was to be created. This idea was already expressed in 1978, at the start of the tanekra, in one of the oldest al-guitara songs —
Friends, hear and understand me
You know, there is one country
one goal, one religion
And unity, hand in hand
Friends, you know
there is only one stake to which you are fettered
and only unity can break it.

The concept of akal did not only come to mean country in the sense of a unified political territory. The concept came to mean ‘fatherland’ in the nationalist sense – a country where one’s ancestors had lived, where history had been acted out, from which one was now driven away, but to which one should return from exile, a fatherland to be loved despite its shortcomings. In al-guitara songs, it was referred to as ‘the desert’ – tenere.

I live in deserts
where there are no trees and no shades
Veiled friends, leave indigo [turban] and veil
You should be in the desert
where the blood of kindred has been spilled
That desert is our country
and in it is our future.

In Tamasheq, tenere – desert – has two meanings, wasteland and solitude. It is the barren land, the sand dunes and empty rocks, the ‘real’ desert where life is impossible. This is in general not where the Kel Tamasheq live. They inhabit the valleys and mountains of the central Sahara where life is possible. The tenere is a threat to physical, mental and social existence. As life is not possible, society or socialised space is not present. Inversely, all space where Tamasheq social life is absent is tenere. The drought had transformed much of Tamasheq social space, where life had been acted out, to a physical and social desert. Physically, because much of the vegetation was destroyed, leaving but barren land, and socially, as the Kel Tamasheq had been forced to flee and therefore could no longer uphold their community. Socially also, as the herds had perished and with them social economic existence as it had been known. The second meaning of tenere is silence or solitude. Those who had to cross the desert or had to dwell in it, notably caravan traders, were

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396 Poem by Intakhmuda ag Sidi Mohamed, 1978. Klute (2001), poem 1, Belalimat (1996), poem 1. In lines 7,8, the poet invokes the idea that the Kel Tamasheq are fettered to a stake, which is customarily done with young goats or animals in lactation. It is an idea of imprisonment.


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

The two meanings of the word *tenere* became intimately linked in exile. The droughts of the 1970s and 1980s had not only shattered Tamasheq existence economically, but the resulting dispersion over West Africa and the Maghreb threatened the very fabric of Tamasheq existence as a community of people. Most seasonal migrants, refugees and *ishumar* stuck together in their diaspora. As Klute argues, within their places of exile, the Kel Tamasheq created a cultural and economic existence that stayed as close to ‘home’ and their previous ways of life as possible. But close to home is not home itself, and *tenere* – desert, is not social space – *akal*.

The droughts and other events had transformed their country into a desert and had shattered Tamasheq society. The fraud committed with relief aid during the droughts, the expulsions in Algeria, the discrimination in Libya and the general lack of welcome in Mali and Niger made one thing clear to the *ishumar* – the Kel Tamasheq had no allies, no exterior help, no welcome, no resources.

'The Kel Tamasheq saw that they were alone. The blacks, even the stupid ones, are supported because they are numerous. They are organised. If a poor country has a problem, the others support it. The same goes for the Arabs. If Mauritania is poor, it is supported by the rich Arabs. The Kel Tamasheq are one group, closed in on itself in the Sahara.'

The Kel Tamasheq were in the desert and in solitude, wherever they were. Under these circumstances, their own country, with all its deficits, took on a sanctified air. It was a desert, but it was their desert. And if they could return there, rebuilding the country and securing Tamasheq social existence, that desert would cease to be one, and would become instead a fertile social space, a home country – *akal n Kel Tamasheq*.

**The nature of society**

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

Caste identity is based on four main behavioural types – that of the noble, the religious expert, the craftsman and the slave. Of these four, only that of the noble seems to have been given a name – *temushagha* or noble behaviour. It is taken that all the Kel Tamasheq, even the former

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400 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.
slaves, aspire to live according to the concept of temushagha.\textsuperscript{401} The proverb ellelu ulhe – 'nobility comes from the heart' (hence not from birth) is often taken to mean that all can acquire nobility and all seek to do so. However, both the existence of separate caste identities and the hegemony of one of them – temushagha – proves the fundamental inequality within Tamasheq society.

At the primary schools founded by the Keita regime in Mali, the idea of equality had been vehemently propagated. This education, together with the events of 1963 in the Adagh left another legacy to the tanekra movement – its hostility towards the tribal chiefs. The Keita regime had depicted the chiefs as colonial feudal lords working against the interests of the labouring Malian masses. Indeed, to many of the Kel Tamasheq, those tribal chiefs who owed their legitimacy to state appointment had grown synonymous with the collection of taxes, the forced education of children and other forms of coercion. To the members of the tanekra movement, the chiefs were part and parcel of what they perceived as the persistence of colonialism under new masters. They thus had to be eradicated, together with the tribal structure they represented and controlled. Interestingly enough, the pre-existing stereotyped views of Tamasheq society held by the Malian administration, which had been at the basis of Malian politics in the 1960s, were now taken over and internalised by members of Tamasheq society.

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

The clan system was seen as an abhorrence by most ishumar. They derived their identity from a common experience of marginalisation within their host societies and within Mali and Niger, to which *tewsit* affiliation had no meaning. At the margins of Algerian and Libyan society, the *teshumara* formed a network of men and women who largely depended on trust in each other and their common situation for economic and social survival. Coming as they did from all parts of Mali and Niger, and from all the various *tewsiten*, clan affiliation could not serve as a common factor.

\textsuperscript{401} Bourgeot, A., 'Identité touareg: de l’aristocratie à la révolution', *Etudes Rurales* no.120 (1990), 129-162.
establishing social coherence and group loyalty among ishumar. On the contrary, the constant competition over hierarchy between tewsitén could only sow discord among their ranks. It should therefore be abolished. One of the main rules of the teshumara, was that one should never mention someone’s tewsit affiliation. Only the use of someone’s name or nickname was allowed.

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

‘On the eve of the 21st century we more than ever need to ban the caste system that has undermined our unity for too long. [...] At the risk of repeating ourselves, we insist on certain values which besides conservation deserve special attention. One of those is the political unity of the Tuareg that has suffered so much. [...] One of our greatest misfortunes is that we have never succeeded to form a united front. It is time we understand that the resistance of a broom is proportional to its number of bristles. We should therefore dismiss certain sectarian concepts that honour neither those in their defence nor the Kel Tamajaq as a whole.’

**Temust, nation**

The tanekra movement sought to overcome identity marks and internal distinctions. In order to create unity, a new concept needed to be developed – temust. Etymologically, temust or tumast is a derivation of imas – ‘nature’ or ‘essence’. In the first instance, temust or tumast means ‘identity’ or ‘self’ in Tamasheq. Now, temust came to mean ‘nation’, embodied through Tamasheq unity in culture. The idea of temust was thus first and foremost cultural, but it acquired political meanings later on. Cultural unity was stressed through elements that had always been criteria of unity within the Tamasheq world, notably the Tamasheq language and alphabet, called tifinagh. Kel Tamasheq means ‘those who speak the Tamasheq language’. It was language that had always provided both a common identity and a way to express it. Through this common language and alphabet, a revived Kel Tamasheq nation was imagined – temust n Kel Tamasheq.

‘The foundation of our identity is TAMAJAQ. Our language, the central axis of our society, is the most precious thing we have to preserve. We can lose everything, but if we can save the Tamajaq [language], we save our specificity. Nothing distinguishes a people from another people more than language.’

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403 Ibidem.
New forms of competitive identities

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

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

The idea of a separate code of conduct for *imghad* developed during the second rebellion, when various rebel movements took to fighting each other over political and hierarchical dominance in Tamashq society. But *timgheda* found its origins within *teshumara* culture and the resistance organisation of the 1980s, when a number of the movement’s members questioned the leadership position of the Ifoghas clan within the movement. The main characteristics of ‘imghadness’ were seen to be industriousness, as opposed to the perceived laziness of the nobles, the sense that all the Kel Tamashq are equal and that *temet* – lineage (see introduction) – should be of no importance to ones place in society. This last idea forms an explicit denial of social privilege based on birthright. The industriousness of the *imghad* and the laziness of nobles echoes the writings of Malian administrators during the Keita regime. As I have described in chapter II, in the Adagh, in the relative absence of former slaves (*beilah*), the administration saw the *imghad* as the oppressed class of the ‘labouring masses’. The same idea had now taken hold among the *imghad* themselves. This conflicting view of *imghad* self and noble other would play an important part in the conflicts to come within the movement, starting with the Tamanrasset war of 1985, and continuing throughout the rebellion.

The idea that clans and clan affiliation were at the heart of Tamasheq political discord was not shared by all *ishumar*. Some members of the *tanekra* were of the opinion that the strengthening of the traditional chiefs and traditional values, including the *tewsit* system, was the right answer to the problems besetting Tamasheq society. According to this small minority, Tamasheq society had lost many of its basic values and society had been weakened by colonial meddling in internal affairs. By reinforcing the traditional structure, the power of the chiefs, and reviving religious practices and zeal, Tamasheq society would regain its pre-colonial strength.
Like caste identity, tewsit identity has recently become the focus of essentialist conceptualisations bordering on ideology. This conceptualisation has large impacts on a local or regional scale. A powerful example is the conceptualisation of tefoghessa or 'ifoghasness' – the essence of 'being of the Ifoghas clan'. To some extent, tefoghessa has been developed in reaction to timgheda – 'imghadness' and it is an extension of the idea of temushagha – 'nobility'. Tefoghessa expresses the idea that the Ifoghas clan is one of noble, strong warriors and religious specialists. Their descendance from the prophet Muhammad (the Ifoghas claim shorfa status), their pure adherence to Islam and their historical role as the wise and just leaders of the Kel Adagh federation, would give them the undeniable right to political supremacy in the Adagh and even beyond. I will come back to timgheda and tefoghessa in the next chapters.

One should keep in mind that the problems of Tamasheq society and their answers are presented here from the viewpoint of the educated and the ishumar. These groups saw themselves as having escaped these problems or trying to escape them, while they persisted among those Kel Tamasheq still living their 'traditional' life as pastoralists. Both the discourse about the problems as well as the various discourses about possible solutions are those of an 'enlightened' city-dwelling elite abroad towards the 'disadvantaged' members of their society – the 'people in the bush' back home. Having said this, I should immediately soften this statement. Reflections on the problems of society were not reserved to the new elites. Consider the following part of a poem composed in the early 1980s by a man who was part of neither new elite. He was a simple 'bush dweller'.

There are no friends left to count on
Each for himself and God for all
From the biggest chief to the smallest child
I hope the worthy are blessed
The best for us is righteousness, honour and patience
The wrong path leads to failure
A change is needed or the worst will come
The young say it all, without omission
But it is left in oblivion
Not being serious is an evil
that runs everywhere, grows and spreads
We need a remedy before it hurts us
These are my thoughts on a solution
Where will it be without the respected ones
who know the right choice and banish evil
who don't like the road of lies and banditry
Awful is he who thinks he is superior
who forgets the ties of his mother

404 Part of a poem by Hamayni ag Essadayane, early 1980s. Translated by Lamine ag Bilal and myself.
The poem does not only speak of the wrongs of society, it addresses those who propose a solution, the ishumar – ‘the young say it all without omission’. It is clear the poet has heard the message of the revolutionary-minded, but he is not without reserve towards this message – ‘not being serious is an evil’. The teshumara was not seen as a serious answer to the problems besetting Tamasheq society by all ‘bush dwellers’ for whose benefit the revolution was intended. Many regarded the ishumar with their illegal activities in smuggling and their revolutionary ideas as a possible cause of more problems and condemned their behaviour – awful is he who thinks he is superior, who forgets the ties of his mother.⁴⁰⁵

**Egha, the motor behind the tanekra**

Shame, honour and revenge are topics which most anthropologists working on the Mediterranean region are highly familiar with.⁴⁰⁶ The essence of most writing so far, is that these three concepts are intimately linked. My concern with these topics is their explanatory value as the motor behind political and military action undertaken by the Kel Tamasheq from the early 1970s to the second rebellion in the 1990s. I will first explain what egha means. The concept has a broad range of meanings which are not easily covered with one term or translation. Above I have outlined only a few of the various new political and social ideas which took root in teshumara culture. These various political views and projects were sometimes at odds with each other. Egha was the sole feeling uniting the ishumar in the idea that something had to be done.

Egha is first of all an emotion, or rather a complex set of emotions. These emotions arise from the perceived inability to counter an act against one’s self-esteem, dignity and honour. When an attack against one’s honour can be immediately countered, egha does not arise. The sentiment of egha can be individual in the case of an attack against oneself. But egha can also be felt or be made felt collectively in the case of an attack against a group or an attack against a member of the group that is felt as damaging the group. Egha comprises shame about having lost face or respect, powerlessness towards the perpetrator, and hatred for the perpetrator.

So far, the concept of egha does not deviate from common ideas in the anthropology of honour or the role of revenge. It is a way to uphold or restore honour. But egha can be disconnected from honour. In a disconnected perception, crucial to understanding the role and use of egha in the two Tamasheq rebellions, egha only means powerlessness, the

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

restoration of power, and hatred. Let me present an al-guitara song that explicitly deals with Alfellaga, the rebellion of 1963 –

_Nineteen sixty three came, and goes on_
_Its days came, leaving memories_
_It crossed wadis, killing cattle_
_It killed the elderly and newborn children_
_The brave men died_
_Until no one we knew was left_
 Only graveyards and loneliness came of it_407_

The opening verse of the song is the most crucial – *Nineteen sixty three came, and goes on*. The verse links the events of Alfellaga directly to the moment of composition. What goes on is not the fighting, but the memories it invoked, mentioned in line two. The rest of the poem is dedicated to what these memories essentially are – the death of loved ones. What the poem does not invoke is honour. Although many other poems implicitly appeal to the honour of the Kel Tamasheq community, not one does so explicitly. Most poems deal with a situation of powerlessness, the wish to regain control over the future of Tamashque existence through revolutionary action and a hatred for those who have taken away the capacity to control existence –

_We are mangled between the Arabs and the West_
_But even more so by Mali against whom we fight_
_I have a question for my brothers in my nation_
_Consider the situation you are in_408_

_Egha_ can thus be seen as an emotion in itself – hatred and the pain of powerlessness and revenge for any wrong committed, not just a wrong against ones honour.

In chapter IV, I have explained the role of _egha_ in Alfellaga, the 1963 rebellion. It is possible that feelings of _egha_ were not strongly present among the former _ifulagen_ after the rebellion was over. After all, as warriors they had been able to immediately counter the strikes of the Malian army. But it is clear that those who witnessed Alfellaga as victims, and who survived, took strong feelings of _egha_ towards who they saw as ‘the Malians’ or ‘Mali’. These victims were the women and children, who hold feelings of _egha_ but do not have the social means to act out revenge as they cannot wield arms (revenge is in violence only). Many of these children would later join the _teshumara_ and the _tanekra_ movement.

‘[In 1963,] Mali rose in its entirety against the Kel Tamasheq and started to kill people. They killed the camels too, and put everyone in

prison in Kidal. The Kel Tamasheq lived through a war that was really ... a real massacre. And me, I grew up seeing all this, and in my youthfulness I grew a really, really strong hatred [egha]. In those years an incredibly grave obligation fell upon us. It was they who owned us, like hostages. All young people of my age in that period had the same hatred, the same sentiment of being recolonised, and that caused a great feeling of hate in us.\footnote{Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998.}

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

Wrath and revenge have their logic and rationale. The psychologist Frijda has provided some elements of analysis for vengeful behaviour.\footnote{Frijda, N., 'De Lex Talionis: over wraak', \textit{De psychologie heeft zin} (Amsterdam 1993), 159-96.}

Frijda defines revenge as follows –

\textit{'An action aiming to damage a person or social group, in reaction to the feeling that one has been first damaged oneself by this person or social group, with the restriction that the action which damages that person or group is not intended to restore the first damage, or to prevent this first damage from occurring or persisting in direct confrontation, or to gain material benefit.'}\footnote{Frijda (1993), op. cit., 162.}

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

Acts of revenge are not necessarily committed against those who caused the original feelings of wrath. They can be inflicted upon others
who embody the same entity that caused wrath. Thus, the killing of Malian soldiers by the rebels in 1990 avenged the death of their parents killed by the Malian army in 1963.

Of course, revenge provokes new feelings of hatred among those against whom revenge has been taken, which can cause new reasons for vengeance. The Kel Tamasheq are fully aware of this cycle, but it seems to be accepted as inevitable. It is better to avenge and await new actions than to remain passive. Let me here quote some interviews which I hope show the congruence between Frijda’s ideas and those on egha.

Me: What is egha?
Keyni: Egha is when you have fought and you have not made up afterwards, you have not acquiesced, you have not shaken hands. Then, something remains open, that is egha.
Me: It is an open account?
Keyni: Exactly, that's it, a settlement of scores.
Me: Can that take long? Years?
Keyni: Oh yes, sure, more than that.
Me: All your life?
Keyni: Absolutely.
Me: Even several generations?
Keyni: Absolutely. Oh, the Tuareg have too many open accounts. There are always accounts to balance. That happens too much among the Tuareg.
Me: Was 1990 egha?
Keyni: No there was no egha between the Tuareg. Only more recently egha has come between us. But there was definitely egha between the Tuareg and the blacks.
Me: Between the Tuareg and Mali?
Keyni: Absolutely, only between the Tuareg and the blacks.412

On first sight, feelings of egha about Alfellaga and the contracted debt with Mali would be limited to the Kel Adagh and those few groups outside the Adagh who assisted them. It could therefore be argued that the tanekra movement should have been limited to the Kel Adagh if egha was the main explanation for the tanekra and the second rebellion. There are a number of arguments to counter this idea.

First, as we shall see below, the Kel Adagh indeed played a leading role in the tanekra movement for long, and some even considered the tanekra as only their affair, but they were not the only ones involved. At the start of the second rebellion, they did not even form the majority of fighters.

Second, a process of imagining and reification in political discourse had assured that egha over Alfellaga had been extended to all of Tamasheq society. The bloody crushing of Alfellaga by 'Mali' had not only touched those directly involved. It had been an attack on the self-esteem of a large

part of Tamasheq society and by extension, on all the Kel Tamasheq. It had left a feeling of powerlessness with all the Kel Tamasheq. In discussing the memories on Alfellaga in chapter IV, I have introduced Charlotte Linde’s term ‘induced narrative’. This is exactly what happened with stories about Alfellaga among other Kel Tamasheq. Within the tanekra, non-Kel Adagh were confronted with the pain of the Kel Adagh over Alfellaga and, together with its’ stories and poems, made it their own. It was the reifying and essentialist language of nationalism, in which large social bodies and political entities can be represented as almost anthropomorphistic beings, that enabled the collective feeling of egha. In Tamasheq nationalist imagining, egha over Alfellaga was a contracted debt between Tamasheq society and Mali.

Third, Alfellaga was not the only cause of shame, pain and powerlessness. The unfolding of events after the droughts of the 1970s - the lack of governmental cooperation in strategies to counter the effects of drought, and the corruption of civil servants responsible for the distribution of relief aid - was set against the national discourse of the Malian state as one of 'brothers in unity'.

'I listen to Mali. It says: "one People, one Goal, one Religion". I say nothing. I say nothing!'\(^{413}\)

On the contrary, the Kel Tamasheq had the sentiment that they were on their own. In exile after the droughts, the ishumar could compare the wealth of their hosts to that of their countries of origin and their own poverty. Many ishumar came to see their own society as 'backward', in need of education and more modern political organisation. All the problems described above were seen as humiliations and signs of Tamasheq impotence.

'The young Kel Tamasheq had seen that Algeria had its independence, the south of our country [Mali] had its independence. The Kel Tamasheq had not had their independence. They had become the slaves of the blacks. The young Kel Tamasheq had seen that the other countries in the 1960s and 1970s were constructing villages, were modernising, while they remained nomads. That too caused hatred. In the year of the drought, they had seen that they had nothing but themselves to protect them. There was no country that came to their rescue. That too created hatred.'\(^{414}\)

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

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\(^{413}\) Interview with Taghiift. Menaka, 19/04/1999.

\(^{414}\) Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 23/05/1999.
totally secular. Some members did not even agree on the idea of military action. But what they all had in common was a feeling of powerlessness against Mali and Niger. A feeling that Tamacheq society had been robbed of its honour in the public exposure of their distress during the droughts, the forced begging for food in the refugee camps. A feeling of outrage for the massacres perpetrated by the Malian army against civilians during Alfellaga and hatred for the riches of the modern world they somehow could not reach. They had egha, and it bound them together in the tanekra.

Organising the tanekra, a narrative

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

The beginnings of the Tanekra movement

Alfellaga, the first rebellion, ended in the summer of 1964. Three of its most important leaders, Zeyd ag Attaher, Ilyas ag Ayyouba and Elledi ag Alla, were imprisoned, while three others had managed to escape to Algeria – Younes ag Ayyouba, Amegha ag Sherif and Issouf ag Cheick. Requests by the Malian authorities for their extradition fell on deaf ears. Contrary to later waves of refugees, most Kel Adagh who had fled to Algeria during Alfellaga obtained Algerian citizenship. During the early 1970s, or perhaps already in the 1960s, Issouf ag Cheick and Amegha ag Sherif were contacted by the Algerian secret services which regarded both men as of possible use in the future and therefore should be monitored.415 Both Issouf ag Cheick and Amegha ag Sherif obtained jobs within the Algerian administration, which permitted them to help those Kel Adagh who came to Algeria after the end of Alfellaga and during the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s.

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

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415 The contacts between Issouf ag Cheick, Amegha ag Sherif and the Algerian secret services were confirmed by archive material in Kidal and various interlocutors. However, stories about the tanekra abound with secret services and agents, betrayal and individual projects.

416 After a few initial years of imprisonment, the captive rebel leaders had been put under house arrest in Bamako. They were allowed to leave their house on certain days, but they were not to leave Bamako. Personal Communication by Dr. Jeremy Swift. Leiden, October 1994. This house arrest was part of the programme for national reconciliation set up by the Traoré regime.
Algeria, where he was welcomed by his former brothers in arms Issouf and Amegha. Shortly after Elledi’s arrival, a meeting was held in Ouargla at the house of Amegha ag Sherif. The meeting was attended by a few young Kel Adagh in exile in Algeria and the former leaders of Alfellaga. The main issue was the continuation of the struggle for independence from Mali for both the Kel Adagh and the Kel Tamasheq in general. This meeting can be seen as the informal foundation of the tanekra movement. At this stage, no formal structure existed yet. Leadership was informally held by the former leaders of Alfellaga; Younes ag Ayyouba, Elledi ag Alla, Amegha ag Sherif and particularly Issouf ag Cheick. The main decision taken at this initial meeting, was that a new rebellion should be organised in an unspecified future, and that the Kel Tamasheq should be made aware of their situation. To these men, the situation was one of erguson with Mali.

It was not taken for granted that all ishumar or refugees would have a political understanding of their situation. Therefore they needed to be made aware. The verb used in Tamasheq to describe the process of raising awareness is sefham – to make understand, from the Arabic fahima, to understand. In French the verb sensibiliser and its noun sensibilisation are used. This process was first undertaken by the few men who decided to renew the resistance movement in 1975. Their message was soon spread to others by those they had made aware. Awareness was created by invoking the memories of Alfellaga and exposing the current situation the Kel Tamasheq found themselves in. The concept of erguson was then put in the context of the current situation. Consider the following excerpt from an interview with Sallah, a cousin to Younes ag Ayyouba, one of the leaders of Alfellaga and one of the first organisers of the tanekra.

Me: Why did you enter the Libyan army?
Sallah: Because my uncle had enturbanned me. My uncle had sent me. I was very young. The army is a sort of kindergarten, right? To make the army spirit enter your mind and body.
Me: And what did you think of that, that he sent you to Libya?
Sallah: (Thinks for a long time) I thought better death than dishonour. A wound heals, but evil does not heal. If a bullet passes through (points at his leg), it will heal, but [the memory of the death of] parents does not heal.

Clearly, Younes ag Ayyouba had invoked memories to Sallah of what had happened to Sallah’s family during Alfellaga. Sallah’s ‘grandfather’ (uncle’s grandfather) Mohamed Adargajouj had been executed by the Malian army in Kidal. Sallah had been ‘enturbanned’ by his uncle, which means his uncle was responsible for Sallah’s education as a man of honour. By dressing Sallah with his first turban, Younes ag Ayyouba had bestowed

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to restore some of the wrongs done by the Keita regime. In 1978 Zeyd ag Attaher and the last remaining rebels were formally tried and sentenced to death. They were not executed. Instead, they were immediately liberated under the same national reconciliation programme.

209
male honour upon Sallah, which could not be upheld when the egha of the family had not been paid.\textsuperscript{417}

If a person was perceived to be receptive to the message, and many were, those who were seen as trustworthy were recruited. The new recruit had to swear an oath on the Qur'an that he would do anything in his power to further the cause and that he would not betray the secret existence of the movement. Breaking this oath would mean death through the swelling and exploding of ones intestines. Secrecy was of the highest importance. In fact, the tanekra movement was obsessed with secrecy and riddled with rumours about secret agents of all kinds who would betray the movement and arrest its members. These rumours were not unfounded.

What did the tanekra look like and what did its members do in these early days? Those sworn in raised further consciousness and money and recruited new members. Ranks were informal or non-existent. Leadership was in the hands of a few respected men, such as the former ifulagen and a few early younger recruits. Meetings between members were informal and could hardly be distinguished from simple meetings between friends or ishumar parties, the zahuten described in the previous chapter. But during these informal meetings, many items were discussed.

As has been said before, tanekra and teshumara were not uniform. One cannot speak of one tanekra or one teshumara movement, but of a number of them. Nigerien ishumar had their own networks and their own plans. Dissidents or opponents of the Malian and Nigerien regimes from other walks of life could also be found in Libya. Here I present the story from the perspective of a Kel Adagh-centred tanekra, with other groups joining them at various times. But a variety of different stories could be told from different perspectives.

Within the tanekra, many different opinions were brought forward. There were those members within the movement, even in these early days, who were not in favour of armed uprising. There were those who were in favour of the inclusion of other social groups in Northern Mali apart from the Kel Tamasheq, such as the Daoussahak, the Moors, the Fulbe and the Songhay. Notably the Daoussahak were in favour of this option. One of the main leaders of the tanekra, former afuleg Younes ag Ayyouba, was a Daoussahak. Others were even against the inclusion within the movement of the Kel Tamasheq outside the Adagh. These issues were all hotly debated. In the end, those in favour of inclusion of Kel Tamasheq other than Kel Adagh won their plea and from the late 1970s onwards, recruitment of members from other clans and federations accelerated. But the idea that other groups should be included was largely ignored, except for the Daoussahak and Moors. Exclusion went even so far that very few former slaves joined the movement.

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

Another activity in which the ishumar engaged was education. The members of the tanekra soon felt they lacked forms of education that could help them in analysing the social political situation the Tamasheq world found itself in. They also felt a lack of educated members who could further the movement’s cause. Primarily directed to action, the movement felt a need for ‘politicians’. Therefore, tanekra members sought contacts with those who were educated. In the first instance, these were sought among the ‘pupils’ of Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, whom we have already met in previous chapters. A number of the Kel Intessaar who had been put through the Libyan educational system by Mohamed Ali in the 1940s and 1950s still resided in Libya. These however, refused to join the movement for fear of losing their privileged positions within Libyan society.

A number of Kel Tamashaq who had been educated in Mali and in Algeria were co-opted in the movement. These men were involved in contacts with the Algerian and Libyan authorities and, later, in the peace negotiations with the Malian state. Some of them, like Abderrahmane ag Galla, Cheick ag Bay, Ibrahima ag Litny and Acherif ag Mohamed would become influential leaders of the movement.

The tanekra in the late 1970s should be seen as a network of like-minded men, who travelled from job to job, from town to town. Those ishumar who at one moment lived in Libya, could live in or travel to Algeria, or to their families in Mali, at another. One should not look at the movement as ‘based’ at a location. Structures remained in flux until the 1980s when they became more fixed.

The Mouvement de Libération de l'Azawad

In late May 1976, a second meeting was organised in the Algerian town of Adrar. At this meeting a name for the movement was established - Mouvement de Libération de l'Azawad. The Azawad is a wide valley formed by two large wadis, the Azawad and Azawagh, which flow between the Adagh and the Air mountains on the right bank of the river Niger, in which they end. This valley was seen as the heartland of the Kel Tamashaq. By extension, Azawad became synonymous to akal n Kel Tamashaq, the country of the Kel Tamashaq. From the choice of this name it is clear the movement, although then still dominated by the Kel Adagh, sought to incorporate other Kel Tamashaq in their plans, something the ifulagen of 1963 had largely failed to do. The name Azawad can be found in the names of practically all the rebel movements coming into existence after the outbreak of rebellion in Mali and in Niger, even when they were not based in the Azawad.

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

The political construct of the nation-state appeared too strong to be countered. In the 1980s *ishumar* from both Mali and Niger found each other in diaspora in Algeria and Libya. Both 'Kel Mali' and 'Kel Niger' joined the movement and entered the training camps provided by the Libyan army. In order to counter the identity determined by the respective states, a new one was invented in the early 1980s – Kel Nimagiler, a garble of Mali and Niger. Ironically, the names of both states were taken to indicate the unity of all *ishumar* opposing these states.

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

Some other important decisions were made in 1976 in the city of Adrar and embedded in the rules of the movement. The coming war against Mali would be one without peace. The ultimate goal was total independence. The beginnings of an organisation were set up. The *ishumar* world was divided into geographical sectors: Ouargla; Ghardaia; Adrar; Tindouf; Timeaouine, Djanet and Libya; and Mali. In each sector one of the attendants of the meeting would be responsible for the organisation of the movement. This person would control finance, be responsible for raising consciousness and be the main contact person for the movement's members in his sector. The treasury of each sector was funded by a kind of tax. Those sworn in would henceforth contribute part of their monthly earnings to the *tanekra* organisation. At first, their money served to pay for travel, helping out needy comrades, and for some material. Later, the money was used to buy cars and military equipment, which was to be kept in hiding until the moment the uprising would start.

**POLISARIO**

Despite the sworn secrecy, outside forces were informed about the existence of the *tanekra* movement. The Algerian 'secret services' were in contact with the initial leaders of the movement, the former leaders of *Alfelliaga*. In the first years after the creation of the *tanekra*, the Algerian authorities proposed to its leaders that the *ishumar* would be recruited in

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418 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, May 1999.

419 Nigerien Kel Tamashiq were not yet included at this stage, but might have had their own networks and organisation.
the POLISARIO, the movement fighting for the Liberation of the Seguiet al-
Hamra and Rio d'Oro, or Western Sahara.

Until 1974 this area remained formally under nominal Spanish
administration, which was restricted to some coastal towns. However, in
1973, King Hassan II of Morocco had organised the occupation of the
northern part of the Western Sahara in the famous 'Green March', in
agreement with Mauritania, which took the southern part. Mauritania
withdrew, after which Morocco occupied the remaining part. All this to the
discontent of the inhabitants of the Western Sahara, the Arab Rgeybat,
Tajakant and Tekna federations. Their spokesmen had previously
negotiated independence with Spain. After the Moroccan occupation, the
West Saharan independence movement POLISARIO, together with a
substantial part of the Rgeybat and Tajakant population, withdrew to the
Algerian town of Tindouf. With Algerian support, they organised a well-
equipped and trained army which at first strongly defeated Moroccan
occupation forces, but with a heavy loss of life.

These lost lives could now be replaced with fresh troops – the members
of the Kel Tamasheq tanekra. The Algerian secret service proposed to the
tanekra leaders that their men could join POLISARIO. This offer might
have provided a welcome way to gain military experience, but after hot
debate, it was declined. The main reason for refusal was that the Kel
Tamasheq felt they had nothing to do with either Morocco or the Western
Sahara. Their fight was with Mali only. A second reason might have been
that the Kel Adagh and the Rgeybat of the Western Sahara and Drâa
valley shared a history of enmity, dating from the Rgeybat raids in the
Adagh in the 1920s. A third reason given for the refusal to join
POLISARIO, was that the younger members of the tanekra did not trust
the motives of the former ifulagen in sending their men to this movement
as recruits –

'I went to Tamanrasset, where I found Ibrahim ag Agellokelok with his
group. They explained to me that, in fact, Issouf [ag Cheick, tanekra and
Alfellaga leader] had not been honest, he works with the Algerian secret
services, that the secret services had betrayed Issouf and that Issouf
betrayed us. [...] Algeria needed men, they spoke to Issouf and Issouf said
that O.K., he had men and could provide them, so that he could receive a
commission or an important job'.

A first conflict within the tanekra movement was born only shortly after
its creation – the conflict between generations. The former ifulagen, the
leaders of the 1963 revolt, had assumed power within the movement on
the basis of their prestige of 'veteran freedom fighters'. But their relations
with the Algerian state disqualified them in the eyes of the marginalised

420 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998. Young men like
Ibrahim ag Agellokelok and Fall were not the only ones to disagree on tanekra engagement in
POLISARIO. Both Keyni ag Sherif and Amegha ag Sherif stated that most former ifulagen within
the tanekra refused to engage the movement in the Western Saharan conflict.
ishumar. The conflict would later develop other dimensions as well, notably one between rival tewsiten or clans. This generational conflict had its impact on historical discourse and appreciation of actions later on. Former ifulagen complained to me during our talks that the younger men had no respect for them and had no esteem for their actions in 1963.

'We only had this problem with the youngsters who went to Libya, because Libya has played an important part in this. It tried to sort of brainwash them. It first tried to divide them to control them better for its own purposes. [...] They told them 'the old men have a colonial mind. You should no longer take into account what they say. You should be revolutionary. You should no longer take these men into account'.'

This was admitted by former ishumar who stated that Alfellaga could not be compared to their own actions. The ifulagen had lacked a clear political goal, a revolutionary spirit, military skills and tactics. Without wanting to take sides or defend anyone, I hope to have made clear in previous chapters that the latter accusations are ungrounded. The workings of the first Tamashq and Moorish politicians in the 1950s, the actions of the ifulagen and those of the ishumar generation form a continuity of resistance against outside interference in Tamashq society and a wish for independence. That this wish took various shapes and was reformulated according to the historical situation of the moment does not change this. Continuity in resistance is also a powerful historical discourse for most Kel Tamashq. 'Alfellaga d quatre vingt-dix harrat iyyan ghas' – 'Alfellaga and 1990 are one and the same thing' was a remark made by many of my interlocutors, regardless of their walk in life. But this perceived similarity could not prevent internal conflict.

Libya
originally set up and centred in Algeria, the tanekra movement would gain strength in Libya. The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as the country is officially called, is rich in one particular source – oil, but severely lacks another – labour. The country's population roughly amounts to 5,250,000 inhabitants, which includes an estimated 500,000 African immigrants. The latter are desperately needed to make up for the shortages in labour. In the late 1970s a large number of ishumar preferred working in Libya to working in Algeria, as chances for employment and wages were higher. In Libya, the tanekra movement would gain momentum in the early 1980s.

One thing should be made clear from the start. The Libyan leader Qadhafi and the Libyan secret services supported the Tamashq national movement, but the Libyans never did so with the same goal as the

Tamasheq movement had in mind – a Tamasheq nation-state. As the Algerians before them in the 1970s, Libya intended to use the tanekra for its own ends – as fighters in its army or in its own international adventures in Chad and Lebanon, and as a trump card in its own regional politics, notably towards Niger. When no longer needed, the Libyan authorities dropped the tanekra movement or actively worked against its existence. But where the Algerians had failed to use the tanekra in its POLISARIO adventures, the Libyans succeeded in agreement with the tanekra itself.

The tanekra activists knew very well they were being used, but looked upon Libyan support as a chance to receive military training and combat experience and to organise their own movement. Contrary to some popular belief, Libya never provided the movement with arms or supported it actively when hostilities finally broke out in Mali or in Niger. The only remaining support was the use the movement could make of training camps on Libyan territory.

From 1979 onwards, contacts between tanekra members and representatives of the Libyan authorities would lead to the establishment of a more formally structured movement. At the end of 1979, through the intermediacy of a few Malian Moors, the Libyan representatives of the tanekra met a Libyan researcher at the Libyan Research Centre for Saharan Affairs. This researcher, Mohamed Saïd al-Qashât had previously been a Libyan contact with POLISARIO.

During the 1980s al-Qashât would cooperate with a number of Tamasheq intellectuals and tanekra members. The result of this cooperation was the publication of a book in 1989 entitled at-Tawâriq, 'arabu s-Sahrâ'i l-Kubrâ’ – The Tuareg, Arabs of the Great Sahara. This book is one of the very few widely distributed books on the Kel Tamasheq they read themselves. Although the book has a highly folkloristic content, it does mention the fights of the Kel Tamasheq against colonial occupation, including a small chapter on what was then the most recent struggle – Alfellaga. The book is in some respects a source of nationalist inspiration. However, the book is not the most important contribution al-Qashât made to the Tamasheq cause. His most valuable asset was his connection to the Libyan authorities, which resulted in structural support of the Libyan Jamahuriyya to the tanekra organisation.

The creation of the FPLSAC

In 1980, the organisation of the tanekra came in stronger currents. A first contact between the tanekra and the Libyan authorities was made through Mohamed al-Qashât. But other contacts were made with the Libyan army. The organisation also came in contact with other dissidents, such as Nigerien Arabs and Kel Tamasheq ishumar, Nigerien Sawabists – an outlawed Nigerien opposition party, and the survivors of the aborted Nigerien coup d'état of 1976. In their turn, many of these dissidents were in contact with either Mohamed al-Qashât or the Libyan army.

In September 1979, about seventy delegates of all these informal opposition networks gathered in the Libyan city of El Homs under the aegis of Mohamed al-Qashât, to discuss their various projects and to weld them
together into one movement. The congress of El Homs resulted in the creation of – al-Jebha ash-Sha’biyya li Taghrir as-Sahara’ al-Kubra al-‘arabiyya al-Wasta: the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Greater Arab Central Sahara, which is known by the French acronym FPLSAC. At the head of this movement a number of Nigerien Arabs and Kel Tamasheq were elected. The presidency fell to Limam Chafi, a merchant of mixed Moorish and Tamasheq descent, based in Niger and Mauritania who had allegedly been involved in the aborted coup d’état in Niger in 1976, and who did not have much standing or reputation among the ishumar. Military matters were delegated to a certain Hassuna Jafari, a Nigerien Arab. Hassan Faraji, a Malian Moor who had integrated the tanekra at an early stage, was responsible for development. The Libyan authorities furnished the movement with an official office in Tripoli.

Two things stand out in the creation of the FPLSAC. First, the name of the movement speaks of the Arab Central Sahara. No reference is made to the Kel Tamasheq. Second, leadership and dominance within the movement was given to the Nigerien Arabs and not to the Malian Kel Tamasheq. One can first of all see a Libyan logic behind this structure. Libya borders with Niger and not with Mali. The dominance of Nigerien elements within the FPLSAC can be explained through the interest Libya had in influencing the policies of its direct southern neighbour.

Libyan interests in the movement were in furthering a pan-African-Arab cause which fitted with the Libyan international politics of the moment.423 In the 1970s Libya had promoted the pan-Arab cause in trying to unify the Jamahuriyya with a number of other Arab states – Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Morocco among others. These unifications all ended without ever being very effective. Qadhafi now turned to sub-Saharan Africa, but without forgetting the Arab element. His aim was to unify African countries, starting on the common base of geography (Africa), religion (Islam) and language (Arabic). The presence of a large number of Arab peoples in Africa could unify the Arab and African world. The FPLSAC, explicitly referring to the presence of Arabs in Sub Sahara Africa can be seen in the light of this policy.

The FPLSAC was not only endowed with a political bureau. Military training camps were opened to the members of the movement as well. In the 1980s, Libya hosted several liberation movements, the best known being the IRA, the ANC and several Palestinian groups. In theory, each group had its own camp under Libyan auspices, but in practice the Libyans provided infrastructure, material and food only. A first training camp for the Kel Tamasheq, called camp an-Nasr, was created in December 1980 near the village of Ben Walid (therefore the camp was also known as Ben Walid). By March 1981 the camp lodged an estimated 2,700 recruits. When the camp was closed in late 1981, an estimated 4,000 recruits had received basic military training. In the camps, cooking for the recruits was done by Tamasheq women, but also by Sudanese and other Africans.

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Instruction was provided by some Libyan officers, but also by Palestinians and Lebanese. Instruction involved personal arms, unarmed combat and mostly physical endurance through long marches. On a voluntary basis, recruits could take evening classes in literacy, history and revolutionary instruction, mostly through Qadhafi’s *Green Book*. The camps were not only a male experience. In early 1981, a second camp was opened, *muhayyim Badr*, which lodged the families of the recruits.

**Lebanon**

By the end of 1981, the camp at Ben Walid was closed. Various reasons for this closure can be put forward. Pierre Boilley has inscribed the logic of the closure within the international setting of Libyan politics. Qadhafi’s involvement in the Chadian conflict and the Aouzou problem, together with the involvement of the Nigerien Kel Tamasheq in the *tanekra*, notably the former leaders of the 1976 coup attempt, had deteriorated his relations with Niger, leading to diplomatic rupture in 1981. The subsequent attacks of Kel Tamasheq commandos in Mali at Fanfi and the uranium mines of Arlit in Niger (*infra*) further damaged strained relations. Finally, in 1982, Libya stopped its support for the Kel Tamasheq and perhaps other African movements in view of the 19th OAU summit, which Qadhafi intended to host.424

My Kel Adagh informants also placed the closure of the camp in an international context, but did not fail to link it with their own activities. According to Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, the camp was closed for the following reason. In January 1981, the FPLSAC executive office met with Elledi ag Alla and Issouf ag Cheick, the leaders of the *tanekra* movement in Algeria. Elledi and Issouf proposed to ask the Algerian Government to start the war of liberation from Algerian territory. To this end, they wrote a formal request to the Algerian Government, which was transmitted by the Libyan authorities in the movement’s name. The Algerian Government refused and threatened to break its relations with Libya if the Libyans would not stop their support for the movement.

Camp an-Nasr was closed down at the end of 1981. The recruits were presented with a number of options: return to Mali or Niger, stay in Libya as migrant workers, enroll in the regular Libyan army (as Libyan nationals) or enlist for training and combat in Lebanon with the Palestinian forces.

An estimated five hundred recruits chose the last option.425 They were first sent to Syria for intensive training. Arriving in Damascus, about three hundred recruits backed out. They had either become fearful of what lay ahead of them, or, as one informant (who had left) stated, because they had not been informed about where they were going and why they were going there in the first place when they joined the group.426 They

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425 This is one version of enrollment in the Palestinian forces in Lebanon. Others stressed that the Kel Tamasheq were sent to Lebanon without their prior knowledge or consent.

presented themselves at the Algerian embassy and asked for repatriation to Algeria, which was arranged. About two hundred fighters remained in the Middle East. They were first trained in the use of heavy arms, armored vehicles and tanks, and then sent to Lebanon, where they joined various Palestinian units.

'We had accepted our enrollment in the Palestinian revolution. We accepted it. Five hundred people had signed documents for this in Libya. We left with five hundred people on a military aircraft to Syria, where the Palestinian bases were. We were with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command. Its Secretary General: Ahmed Jibril. We stayed there until we had finished our training in heavy arms: tanks, howitzers, Katyushas 40 and 12 calibers, Russian 130 mm howitzers, Russian tanks, machine guns, anti-aircraft missiles, American cannons that shoot tanks, caliber 106. We did heavy arms and rockets, anti-vehicle mines and anti-personnel mines. Five hundred combattants. We were divided. Three hundred were discouraged and asked for their return to Algeria. The Secretary General Ahmed Djibril accepted this. They returned to Algeria, to Tamanrasset. After six months they were discharged. We stayed there, me and my friends Iyad, Latfi, Abdurahman, we stayed in the war. We were divided into groups of twenty, thirty, forty, ten, between the movement's posts at the Israeli Lebanese border. From the start of the war until the end of the war, we stayed.™

To those veterans of the Lebanese period, their enrollment in the Palestinian movement had nothing to do with loyalty to Qadhafi, sympathy to the Palestinians or hatred for Israel. To them, it was only a chance to gain further military skills and combat experience, needed for their own fight to come with the Malian army. After their training, the fighters were based in Beirut or in the Bekaa valley, where they served mostly at air defence units, together with other Libyan volunteers –

Eight days we suffered
F-16 flew here, it shot, we shot
We had arms but we were few
The Minta roared like thunder
Six SAM launchers were erect
They were bombed, F-16 flew over
This is no affair for a boy who says
he studied history and pretends to know
Friends, I give you the news
F-16 is hot as hell fire
Hey, he who has one million Dollars
should buy an F-16 and hide it
until the day we battle all Africans together\(^{428}\)

The Lebanese experience would end rather well for the involved ishumar. In June 1982, Israel launched operation Peace for Galilee, which would end the military presence of the PLO in Southern Lebanon. With their withdrawal came an end to tanekra presence in the Middle East as well. The Tamashq battalion returned to Libya. In their Lebanese adventure, they had lost one man in battle, and five had been taken prisoner by the Israelis. They were eventually released and returned to Libya as well. In return, the two hundred Lebanon veterans had gained military skills and tactical knowledge that would be of great value in the rebellion to come. On their return, these two hundred men would gradually take over the movement in Libya and Algeria, providing leadership to the restructured tanekra movement.

Restructuring the movement
The FPLSAC episode had as its only salutary effect the training of a large number of Kel Tamasheq soldiers. But most of the Mallian and Nigerien ishumar, especially those who had volunteered for Lebanon, did not consider the FPLSAC to represent their cause. In Lebanon, the ishumar had maintained an organisation of their own, in close contact with Palestinian hosts of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. From their archives, a few documents on the structure of both FPLSAC and the organisation in Lebanon survived, which were captured by the Israeli army during operation Peace for Galilee.\(^{429}\) From the documents, it becomes clear that the organisation in Lebanon had gained organisational strength and that it had disconnected itself from the defunct FPLSAC. From the years in Lebanon until after the outbreak of the rebellion in 1990, the movement’s leadership was mainly in the hands of those Kel Adagh who had fought in Lebanon.


\(^{429}\) A selection from these archives, including a small number of documents on the Tamashq movement, were published. Israeli, R., *PLO in Lebanon: selected documents* (London 1983), documents 56, 57, 58.
During the early 1980s, the tanekra movement in Libya and Algeria remained divided and loosely structured. Treason and internal mistrust had fractured the fragile FPLSAC structure. Limam Chafi, its Secretary General, had been arrested in Algeria. The Malian Government had been informed of the existence of the movement, notably by a premeditated strike in Mali and Niger by a small group of ishumar in 1982. These men, apparently on their own initiative, had attacked an administrative post at the village of Fanfi in Mali and at the uranium mines at Arlit in Niger. Whereas the attackers at Fanfi were largely unarmed, those at Arlit had guns.430 Both attacks failed and a number of the assailants were arrested and interrogated, which to some extent exposed the existence of the Kel Tamasheq network. The result was a diplomatic breach between Libya and Niger, the closure of the FPLSAC office at Tripoli and the arrest of some of its members.

In March 1983, two new training camps were opened in Libya for Kel Tamasheq recruits – camp Ithnân Mars and camp ar-Rawd, both in the vicinity of Tripoli. This time, the camps were explicitly open only to Nigerien Kel Tamasheq, but many Malian Kel Tamasheq joined under false identities. The trainees were employed by the Libyan army in the Chadian conflict. The ongoing Libyan military intervention in Chad provided another training for a large number of Kel Tamasheq ishumar. Again, the Libyans used the Kel Tamasheq for their own political intentions. The ishumar were fully aware of this, but they did not mind. Their gain was military experience and the creation of a well-trained army of their own.

Upon their return to Libya, the Lebanon veterans started almost from scratch with a new organisation. A number of the veterans integrated the newly established training camps Ithnân Mars and ar-Rawd, where they were responsible for organisation and part of the instruction. These camps would remain functional until after the outbreak of the rebellion in 1990, and they would remain under Tamasheq control.

The recruits who entered these new camps and who served as soldiers in the Libyan campaigns in Chad, received a salary of 30,000 Libyan Dinar. One third of this salary was handed over to the organisation of the newly created movement, which was now called al-Jebha li Takhrir ash-Shimâl al-Mali – the Liberation Front of Northern Mali.431 The movement's leader, Iyad ag Ghali, and a number of his comrades had moved back to Algeria and Mali. With the money raised among the Kel Tamasheq soldiers, cars were bought, with which the members toured Northern Mali to find new recruits. These were amply available, due to the second drought that struck Mali and Niger in those years. The disaster of 1973 repeating itself on a smaller scale, paired with the same problems of unequal aid distribution and corruption, gave ample proof to the Kel Tamasheq of the need to topple the Traoré Government and to break loose from Mali.

430 Interviews with Fituk. Menaka, 30/03/1999; and Alhadi Alhaji, courtesy of Nadia Belalimat who conducted this second interview.

431 Interview with Taghlift. Menaka, 19/04/1999.
However, despite the organisational efficiency of the Lebanon veterans, the movement was hampered by internal divisions and treason undermining the effective organisation of the tanekra.

Hierarchy and the tewsit problem

Ishumar narrative about the years of preparation in exile are rife with secret services and secret agents of unspecified kinds, mostly from Algeria and Libya. Most of these vaguely defined outside forces are called in when historical gossip and stories of distrust and treason are told. They are often the supporters or instigators of quarrels and outright fights between various ishumar factions. They serve as an explanation for a development that still puzzles and embitters many former organisers of the tanekra – why was there so much infighting, discord and outright hostility within the movement? Whereas in theory the tanekra strove towards the unity of all the Kel Tamasheq in one national movement, in practice this unity was not reached at all.

What foreclosed unity between all the Kel Tamasheq was a substratum of older political practices within Tamasheq society – the wish for hierarchy and the validation of group affiliation through confrontation. Unity had to be reached under the aegis of one group. But which group that should be remained constantly open to dispute, leading to open friction and even conflict between factions based on tewsit affiliation.

A first divide, on national grounds, became apparent with the creation of the FPLSAC in 1980. The official dominancy of Nigeriens and Arabs within the FPLSAC, as well as the name of the movement itself, were looked upon disfavourably by many Kel Adagh tanekra leaders, a number of which distanced themselves from the FPLSAC. Discontent with the FPLSAC was particularly strong among the Lebanon volunteers, who restructured the tanekra during their stay in Lebanon and upon their return to Libya. As the volunteers in Lebanon wrote to their Palestinian superiors –

‘At the congress of el-Homs, at which the [FPLSAC] organisation was founded, the selected representatives did not represent the people, neither in their personalities, nor in their targets. And it happened that they did not listen to the representatives of the people, despite what they said as members of the executive office. As an example of this: the person that was appointed as general secretary of the organisation was not present at this congress and was not known among the people, nor among its representatives’.

The majority remained within the FPLSAC, contending with the Libyan instigated Nigerien and Arab dominancy, on the grounds that a movement

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and support was better than nothing. However, the seeds of ‘factionalism’ were sown.

The tanekra started out as a movement of Kel Adagh looking for a way to uplift egha and to rekindle the rebellion started in 1963. From the beginning, a small number of Kel Tamamshq from other clans or federations had joined. However, leadership remained firmly in the hands of the Kel Adagh, but it was contested from the 1980s onwards, especially after the opening of the two new training camps in 1983. While leadership in the newly restructured movement and within the camps rested in the hands of Lebanon veterans of Kel Adagh origins, a substantial number of the new recruits came from other clans form the Azawad or, to a smaller extent, from the Timgad area. These new recruits, often of imghad origins, contested Kel Adagh supremacy within the movement. They did so on the basis of a gradually developing concept of timgheda or ‘imghadness’, and on the basis of the revolutionary idea developed within the movement on the equality of all men and the dysfunctionality of the clan system. If all men are equal and the clans should be abolished, then why should leadership remain in the hands of men from one particular tewsit?

‘There were problems, there were constraints. We, Iyad and the others, we wanted the Kel Adagh Kel Tamamshq to do it all. When I speak of the Adagh, at the time, we had an idea. That is to say that we believed it to be a work for the Adagh people. This work did not even concern the other Kel Tamamshq, because it was us, it was our job to revolt and we believed the other Kel Tamamshq would not agree with that and that they thought it concerned them as well, that it concerned all. To us, it was the Kel Tamamshq of the Adagh who were most concerned’.433

The Tamanrasset war

But internal friction was not limited to Malian and Nigerien nationals or between members of different Malian tewsit or social groups with a different status. Within the Kel Adagh leadership of the tanekra, friction and fighting occurred as well on various levels. The most strenuous conflict was between members of the Idnan and Ifoghas tewsit. In Kel Adagh historical narrative, the history of Idnan-Ifoghas animosity is now presented as complicated and dating from the early days of colonial history. The Ifoghas form the largest tewsi within the Adagh, followed by the Idnan. At the advent of colonial conquest, both tewsit held a precarious power balance, which was upset when the colonial administration gave preference and political power to the Ifoghas. Their leader was made amenokal over the federation and therefore held power over the tribal chiefs of other tewsit. The Ifoghas at present contend they had held formal power well-before the arrival of the French. They had created an ettebel or political federation in the early 19th century.

433 Interview with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. Kidal, 27/12/1998.
The existence of an Ifoghas federation is not denied by the Idnan, but it is denied that it had power over the Idnan. Some Idnan even argue that they had made their own ettebel - the drum, symbol of political power - shortly before French arrival, but that this ettebel was denied its legitimate power by the French in preference of the Ifoghas. In short, the struggle over power within and over the Kel Adagh federation is presented to date back at least two centuries. This power struggle came to the fore in the 1980s with respect to leadership within the tanekra. In reading the following interview excerpt, one has to keep in mind that of the four initial leaders of the tanekra - the former ifulagen Issouf ag Cheick, Amegha ag Sherif, Younes ag Ayyouba and Elledi ag Alla - the two most important were Idnan. Their power and intentions were challenged by younger men of the movement, notably those of Ifoghas descent.

"In 1985, Algeria started to understand what was happening. Algeria still worked with Issouf and they asked Issouf: "you told us that you were the leader of all the Kel Tamasheq and now we see that the movement develops more and more". Issouf told them: "That is because of the Ifoghas. They are stronger than I am, I cannot command them". The Algerians asked him what to do. He replied that they should be weakened and to weaken them, all their leaders should be arrested. The rest would be weak. They arrested about eighty men among the leaders. The soldiers burned all the houses at Tamanrasset, at Timiaouine, at Djanet, the houses of the Ifoghas. They started to beat people up and to arrest the Ifoghas or their parents. The Ifoghas left for Libya and for other countries. That was in October 1985. It continued until August 1986."  

This is generally known as the 'Tamanrasset war', after its main location in this Algerian town. The story is here presented from an Ifoghas point of view, and the allegations made at the address of the Idnan should be seen in this light. What is clear, however, is that during 1985 a large number of Ifoghas and other Kel Tamasheq in Tamanrasset were arrested. Also, a small number of murders or 'executions of traitors' were committed that year. In 1986, the Algerian Government forcefully expelled about 6,000 Malian Kel Tamasheq and another 2,000 Kel Tamasheq from Niger to their respective countries. Perhaps these expulsions too can be seen in the light of the ongoing conflicts between ishumar in Algeria, which threatened the security in Tamanrasset and other Algerian cities.

Whatever the facts may have been, the story is now interpreted in the context of the ongoing struggles for power and dominance within the movement of various currents and especially between various tewsiten. Despite all ideals, discourse and rhetoric on 'one country, one goal, one
people’ unity was far from established. Among the *ishumar* as among their less revolutionary inclined kindred, *tewsit* prevailed over *temust*.

**The later years of the tanekra**

The chaos and factional conflicts of the mid 1980s resulted in various splits within the movement, and in private initiatives by its’ prominent members. The Nigerien members of the movement reorganised themselves on the basis of their region and common nationality in the *Front Populaire pour la Libération du Niger* – FPLN. In March 1983, Libya opened training camps for this movement – camp İthnân Mars and camp ar-Rawd near Tripoli, but these camps were largely staffed and run by the restructured Malian *tanekra*. In 1984, the FPLN was provided with a new camp near the city of Waw al Kabir. In this camp, the Nigerien did form the majority and thus the division between the Kel Mali and the Kel Niger was finally established, the Kel Nimagiler did no longer exist.

Within the Malian movement, now called in Arabic *al-Jebha li Takhrîr ash-Shimâl al-Mali*, the Liberation Front of Northern Mali, generally referred to as *al-Jebha*, general dissent and private initiatives abounded, due to the internal friction between *tewsiten*. Particulary members from outside the Kel Adagh federation, distrusting the aims of the Kel Adagh, organised into separate groups and started to procure arms at the Libyan border with Chad. The ongoing conflict in Chad and the high turnover of weaponry provided the local arms markets with ample supply in Kalachnikovs and ammunition.

Despite dissent within the movement, the organisation slowly gained strength. The number of trained fighters with ample combat experience steadily increased until the return in 1986 of the Tamasheq units who had fought in Chad in the Libyan campaigns. In 1987, the movement was again renewed, having already been renewed in 1983. The movement now also spread to Mali. Small groups of *ishumar* returned to Mali and settled in and around Kidal, Gao and Menaka. Weapons were bought and hidden in Mali for the moment rebellion would break out.

Nevertheless, the conflicts between *tewsiten* had resulted in a more or less formalised division of the fighters into units based on *tewsit* affiliation. The fighters were grouped in three battalions. The Kidal battalion consisted of Kel Adagh. The Menaka battalion consisted of fighters from that area. A third battalion, the Gao battalion, consisted of fighters from the surroundings of Gao city. Members of these battalions, as well as part of the movement’s leadership positioned themselves in their respective areas.

However, the Malian army and administration had remained on alert with regards to the movements of the *ishumar* in Mali. The failed attacks in Mali and Niger in 1982 and the attack in Niger in 1985, together with

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constant cases of treason within the movement, had made the Traoré regime aware that something was planned. Possibly, contacts of the movement with Libyan and Algerian services, and their respective contacts with the Malian and French services had contributed to Malian knowledge of the movement. On 9 April 1990, the regional security service in Gao arrested a member of the organisation. After interrogation he admitted to membership of the *tanekra* movement. On 23 May 1990, the arrest of seven other members and the capture of an arms deposit further damaged the movement's plans. The Malian security forces also arrested the larger part of the Kidal battalion put in place over the previous year. By luck, the Menaka battalion was spared, but it was sparsely armed. The movement now had to choose between starting preparations all over again, or attacking. The latter option was chosen. On 27 June 1990, the Menaka battalion successfully attacked several posts of the army and the administration in the Menaka area. The second rebellion had begun.

**Conclusion**

The *tanekra* movement is perhaps the best possible proof of the Tamasheq dogged pursuit of a goal which was originally set in the late 1940s – the establishment of an independent Tamasheq state. From 1975 until 1990, the movement prepared an underground army, raised funds and tried to create a political and administrative elite to realise this goal. Originally, the movement was led by the very same men who had made earlier attempts to establish Tamasheq independence – the small French-educated elite of the 1950s, represented by Amegha ag Sherif and Younes ag Ayyouba, and the leaders of *Alfellaga* represented by the same two men, together with former military leaders Issouf ag Cheick and Elledi ag Alla. The link between the first and the second rebellion, through the *tanekra* movement, is twofold. First, these four men form the actual or physical link. Second, there is the link in political thinking and in cohesion through the historical discourse on the first rebellion as a source of *egha* – a reified focus of hatred for the Malian state and the strongly felt need to avenge the unfortunate ending of *Alfellaga*. As with the link between Alla ag Albachir and Alfellaga discussed in chapter IV, the link between *Alfellaga* and the *tanekra* is framed in Tamasheq historical narratives of genealogy and individual action.

Besides links creating a continuity in Tamasheq nationalism there are also notable ruptures. First of all, the perception of the goal and the political situation of the world they lived in was far more developed in the *tanekra* than it was with the men who led *Alfellaga*. Nationalism was but a vague concept to the *ifulagen* of 1963. It was there, but it was not conceived as nationalism. The *tanekra* movement deliberately developed a Tamasheq national idea through the reworking of the concepts of country

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(akal) and nation (temust). Thoughts of what this nation looked like and how society should be reformed to be better prepared for independence were hotly debated.

It is striking to see how the idea of the equality of all men, which met with resistance when propagated by the Malian administration in the 1960s, was now incorporated into theory. In practice however, this idea kept clashing with older notions of inequality and clan affiliation. Stranger still was the adoption and internalisation of pre-existing stereotypes of Tamasheq society first held by the French and Malian administrations – the feudal nature of Tamasheq society, their ignorance and lack of education, the role of the tribal chiefs, and nomadic anarchy.

However, the new elan of Tamasheq thoughts on independence could not outdo an older political concept – the social political organisation on the basis of clans or tewsit. The ishumar discarded (fictive) kinship ties as a basis upon which to imagine the nation, as the clan system had always foreclosed national unity. Instead, the tanekra focused on territory as its main image of the Tamasheq nation. But in both ideas, the political construct of the already existing nation-states could not be escaped. In the end, Kel Tamasheq from Mali and Niger went their separate ways in separate movements and revolts. Territorial or even national unity was foreclosed before attempts to establish it were even made. These attempts made in Mali – the second rebellion between 1990 and 1996 – will be the subject of the last two chapters.