That Desert is Our Country: Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)
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This last chapter will deal with the last two phases of the rebellion from May 1994 to March 1996.

The first part of this chapter will deal with the third phase of rebellion from May to November 1994. This phase has been characterised by Georg Klute as 'unlimited warfare'. First of all, the already divided movements underwent a process of further factionalism and engaged in open violence against each other. The obstruction of the National Pact, and the absence of the state in Northern Mali combined with continued army retaliation, led the movements to reorganise themselves along _tev vit _lines, which then engaged in hostilities over the structure of the Tamasheq political landscape – the position of tribal leaders and the hierarchical position of the clans represented in their respective movements.

The second part of this chapter will deal with a new player in the conflict. The _Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy_ – MPGK, created in April 1994, was a vigilante brigade created in Gao by deserting army officers in reaction to repeated attacks by rebel forces on the villages in the Niger Bend and even on Gao itself. Observers of the conflict between the _Ganda Koy_ and the rebel movements, inside and outside Mali, have argued that it was an 'ethnic conflict'. I argue that _Ganda Koy_ discourses on the rebellion, Malian and Tamasheq society and the _Ganda Koy_ itself, are best explained by looking at the discourse and images used internally, which were based on concepts of 'race' and on fierce 'nationalism'.

Most _Ganda Koy_ attacks and pogroms were directed at those who were visibly Kel Tamasheq or Moor, that is: 'white'. The latter statement explicitly implies that to most Malians, in fact to most people, the Kel Tamasheq are 'white' by definition. Next to racial and stereotypical images, the _Ganda Koy_ used rhetoric on the Malian nation both to justify its actions and to depict the Kel Tamasheq as 'foreign elements'. But contrary to the 1950s and 1960s, the Kel Tamasheq community now had the means to defend itself against these stereotypes: Kel Tamasheq intellectuals countered the _Ganda Koy_'s polemical language.

The third part of this chapter deals with the last phase of the rebellion between October 1994 and March 1996, tracing a gradual return to peace, which was finally concluded on 26 March 1996 with the ceremonial burning of three thousand weapons in the marketplace of Timbuktu.

The 'Flame of Peace' was organised by the Malian Government in collaboration with the United Nations. However, both the conception and
implementation of this peace initiative were the result of local initiatives which emanated from civilian leaders – the tribal chiefs and village heads. I will not linger too long on this last phase of the conflict. Others, particularly within the world of international organisations and NGO’s, have written sufficiently on the subject. I will simply narrate how and under what conditions, generally speaking, peace was brought about.

**Movements and tewsiten**

In Algeria and Libya, the exiled Kel Tamasheq in the tanekra discovered a relative freedom in the reshaping of tewsit hierarchy. The competition over leadership within the tanekra in the 1980s had led to the Tamanrasset war of 1985 described in chapter VI. The possibility of re-establishing hierarchy was furthered by changes in the political and military organisation of society during the 1980s and 1990s which reshaped the idea of the Tamasheq warrior. In previous times, the warrior status of an individual had been linked to his tewsit affiliation. Now, warrior status was determined by participation in the movement during the 1980s, the participation in the Libyan campaigns in Lebanon and Chad and participation in the rebellion itself. Contrary to the civilian population, and despite the retaliation on civilians by the army, these new warriors discovered it could use violence as a means to establish tewsit hierarchy under circumstances that had been missing for more than a century – state absence.

After the first six months of rebellion, the state was absent in Northern Mali. Administrators had been killed or had abandoned their posts, except in the major cities such as Kidal, Menaka and Gao. After the Tamanrasset agreement in 1991, the army withdrew to a small number of posts, also largely situated in the main cities and villages. The number of posts would only decrease after the signing of the National Pact in 1992. Indeed, the army occasionally left its barracks to fight rebel units and more often to terrorise and kill the nomadic population. But crudely put, that was 'all' it did. With this last remark I do not intend to trivialise their actions. It is to say that, on one hand, the army largely influenced peoples’ behaviour through the exercise of violence but, on the other hand, it had no means to directly control or influence developments within Tamasheq society, as it had in previous decades.

This situation of 'independence' or the absence of the state, combined with heavy military repression despite this absence, had a large influence on the reorganisation of the rebel movement along tewsit lines. The atrocities the army committed against the civil population forced the population and the rebels to organise their defence. The concepts of illelan – the strong members of society – and tilaqiwin – the weak members of society needing protection – needed to be reformulated to deal with the developments Tamasheq society underwent. In previous periods, notably in pre-colonial times, strong tewsiten had protected weak tewsiten. In practice, the illelan or noble clans had monopolised violence to the detriment of imghad and other tilaqiwin. During the colonial period, but
particularly during the Keita regime and the years of exile, the *imghad* had become aware of the possibility of a political existence independent from the noble clans. As a large number of rebel fighters were of *imghad* origins, they felt they did not need fighters of *ellelu* origins to protect them and their *tewsit* from the army. However, this reformulation of strong and weak in society on the basis of personal combat skill instead of *tewsit* affiliation meant a fragmentation of protection.

Where one *tewsit* had formerly protected others, this shifted to some extent to groups of individuals protecting others within the same *tewsit*. One of the consequences was the creation of militias based on the structure of a rebel movement and often supporting a name analogous to a rebel movement, but without its political aims. Their existence was legitimised by the need for protection. Such groups were the *Base Autonome du Timetrine* – an Idnan militia, the nameless Daoussahak militia, and the Ifoghas militia created by *amenoka/Intalla ag Attaher*. By accident, the latter had managed to procure a number of weapons from the Malian army, destined to defend himself and his entourage against attacks by the rebels.495 In 1994, his militia, in alliance with the Ifoghas movement MPA would start a campaign to reestablish Ifoghas and chief dominancy within the Tamasheq political landscape of movements, civilians and tribal leaders.

**The fratricidal war, ARLA and MPA**

The division between modernists and traditionalists among the *ishumar* played its part in the development of these new ideas on protection and clan hierarchy as well. Part of the *ishumar* community had been in favour of a revolution internal to Tamasheq society that would lead to the equality of all members of society. The concept of *timgheda* – ‘imghadness’ – came to full development during this third phase of the rebellion. Under the influence of the Ifoghas tribal chiefs, the concept of *tefoghessa* – or ‘ifoghasness’ – also developed in the period at hand, and precisely in reaction to *timgheda*. These conflicts between former *illelan* and *tilaqiwin*, between formerly dominated and former dominators, came especially to the fore in what became known as the ‘fratricidal war’ between the modernist ARLA and the traditionalist MPA in 1994. But it was also present in the conflicts between the MPA and other movements that same year.

In February 1994, members of the ARLA ambushed and killed MPA’s second man Bilal Saloum. Bilal was a Kel Adagh of *bellah* origins and a close friend to Iyad ag Ghali with whom he had fought in Lebanon. Bilal had been a Colonel in the Libyan army, a rank he kept in the MPA. As a *bellah*, Bilal was the exception proving the rule of *bellah* absence within the movements. His high-ranking position within the MPA despite his *bellah* origins was often presented by the MPA as denial of its traditionalist outlook. As a high-ranking MPA officer, Bilal had integrated the mixed patrols created in 1993. In his function of officer and mixed patrol leader,

495 Klute (2001), op. cit., 421.
he toured the Azawad region in search of 'bandits' or renegade rebels. On one of these patrols ARLA members ambushed and killed him. The ARLA attackers took Bilal's weapons, car and body with them. The assassination of Bilal Saloum started the 'fratricidal war' between the ARLA and the MPA.

The MPA demanded from the ARLA to return Bilal's arms, car and body. Failure to fulfil this demand would be taken as a declaration of war. The ARLA sent a mission to fulfil the MPA demand, but this mission was in turn ambushed by the MPA, who disarmed the ARLA fighters and injured their commander. In reaction to the MPA counter-attack, ARLA troops invaded Kidal on 6 March 1994 and kidnapped Intalla ag Attaher, the symbol of Ifoghas dominancy in the Adagh. The kidnapping of their supreme leader was considered an outrage by the Ifoghas and its movement, the MPA. The next day, an MPA unit attacked the ARLA forces, killing three ARLA fighters and capturing a number of their men, among whom their leader Abderrahmane ag Galla. An exchange of hostages was arranged and in April 1994 a treaty was signed to close the ranks of the movements in view of an upcoming meeting between the MFUA and the Government in Tamanrasset.

This did not end the conflict. In July 1994, ARLA fighters belonging to the tewsit Idnan conducted a new attack against the MPA near Tin-Essako. Finally, in August 1994, the MPA and the Ifoghas militia of Intalla ag Attaher, with the logistical assistance of the Malian army, managed to oust the ARLA from its base at Tigharghar. The ARLA fighters were totally evicted from the centre of the Adagh. Those ARLA fighters who belonged to the imghad tewsiten, together with their civilian protégés, sought refuge in the Tamesna plain at the FPLA base at In-Taykaren and the nearby base of Halboubouti. They were still living outside the Adagh at the time of my research. The Idnan members of the ARLA retreated to those areas of the Adagh generally considered to be their territory, notably the Timetrine valley, where they created their own 'movement' the Base Autonome du Timetrine (BAUA). In December 1994, the Idnan fighters of the Base Autonome du Timetrine were forcibly integrated in the MPA. Other former ARLA fighters followed after the signing of a final peace agreement between MPA and ARLA that same month. The effective destruction of the ARLA forces meant a final victory for the Ifoghas in the Adagh, and thus a victory for the conservative elements within the movement. Hierarchy within the Kel Adagh federation was again established with the Ifoghas at the top.

Further factionalism, FPLA, FULA and FNLA

The Kel Adagh were not the only ones to experience factionalism along tewsit lines. The FPLA, starting as a movement of hardliners, suffered under the same problem. In January 1993, two new movements came into

496 'MFUA. La mort du colonel Bilal fait monter la tension', L'Essor, 26/02/1994.
497 'Nord. Le rapt d'Intallah fait monter la tension', L'Essor, 08/03/1994.
existence; the *Front Unifié de Libération de l’Azawad* – FULA, and the *Front National de Libération de l’Azawad* – FNLA. The FULA consisted largely of Kel Intessar inhabiting the western part of the Niger Bend around Goundam. The FPLA headquarters were established at In-Taykarene at the extreme Eastern part of the Niger Bend, under the control of the *tewsit* Chemennamas. In-Taykarene is far removed from the Goundam area. Distance between operational bases and leadership questions led the Kel Intessar to opt out of the FPLA.

The Ishidenharen, Dabakar and Daoussahak *tewsiten*, inhabiting roughly the same area as the Chemennamas, also withdrew from the FPLA, leaving the Chemennamas on their own. The Ishidenharen and part of the Dabakar created the FNLA, setting up its base at Mount Halboubouti in the vicinity of In-Taykarene. The Daoussahak, never having been much involved in the movement anyway, left altogether to form an independent defence militia. The splits along *tewsit* lines within the FPLA cannot be explained along the same ideological lines as the split between MPA and ARLA.

The Daoussahak are both inside and outside the Tamassheq world. They speak their own language and are, strictly speaking, not Kel Tamassheq. However, they were incorporated within the Tamassheq political world as part of the pre-colonial Ouillimiden federation, with a status similar to *imghad*. The Chemennamas, Ishidenharen and Dabakar are *tewsiten* with more or less equal status within the *tewsit* hierarchy. In pre-colonial times, the *tewsiten* within the FPLA were under the protection of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram *imoushagh* (or ‘true’ or ‘highest’ nobles), as were almost all other *tewsiten* in Northern Mali at the advent of French conquest. The Chemennamas are a tribe consisting of a number of fractions, created by the colonial authorities in the 1910s, but also under the sway of the Ouillimiden.\(^{499}\) Their status is comparable to that of *imghad*, which they most likely are. The Dabakar are considered to be on one hand noble or *ellelu*, but on the other hand to be *tilaqiwin* – people under the protection of others – being the Ouillimiden nobles. In the 1960s, Nicolaissen classified the Ishidenharen as somewhere between *ineslemen* (religious specialists) and *imghad*.\(^{500}\) If confronted with their classification as such, the Ishidenharen would fiercely protest, arguing they are nobles almost on a par with the Ouillimiden *imoushagh*.

It was exactly this contest over ascribed status that caused the break-up of the FPLA, a contest that was exacerbated by the fact that the status of most groups was rather unclear to begin with. Most are neither ‘true’ *imghad* nor ‘true’ nobles, but all had formerly been *tilaqiwin*. The Ouillimiden, after their heavily defeated revolt of 1916, had never joined a rebellious movement afterwards, but had instead closely cooperated with the various regimes. Their former *tilaqiwin*, however, had joined the

\(^{499}\) Politique Indigène - Conventions de délimitation passés avec les chefs, cercle de Gao 1907-1910. ANM - FA 2E-76.

\(^{500}\) Nicolaissen & Nicolaissen (1997), op. cit., 579.
tanekra and were active within the rebellion. Therefore, these groups could now effectively claim status as illelan or protectors.

As army repression on civilians went on during the second rebellion, the question of protection became more urgent. Being warriors in the present, defending their kin, their status as tilaqiwin could no longer be accepted. The enormous historical prestige of the Ouillimiden imoushagh did not permit other tewsiten to claim absolute predominance altogether. But the relative hierarchy among them could be argued about. As the Chemennamas claimed leadership position within the FPLA, the other groups opted out as they contested Chemennamas dominancy.501

The movement had begun as a united force, but by mid 1994 all unity was lost, contributing to the general feeling of insecurity in all inhabitants of the North, including the Kel Tamasheq. In the end, tewsit and temet – who you are and who your family is, remained more important than the ideal of temust – the Kel Tamasheq nation.

Masters of the land
The Mouvement Patriotic Ganda Koy

Insecurity, exclusion and the creation of the Ganda Koy

The outbreak of the Tamasheq rebellion immediately provoked strong reactions from the Malian population towards the Tamasheq community, both in the North itself and elsewhere. Already, in August 1990, the houses of the small Tamasheq community in Bamako were pillaged and their inhabitants attacked.502 Hostility towards the Kel Tamasheq in the capital died down at the beginning of 1991, after the signing of the 'Tamanrasset agreement' and the start of the demonstrations leading to the fall of Moussa Traoré in March that year. But in the North, especially in cities like Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao, hostility towards the Tamasheq and Moorish population would only grow over the years.

Attacks from the rebel forces at the villages on the banks of the Niger, such as Djebock, Bamba and others, understandably created resentment, panic and grief over the victims and hatred towards the Kel Tamasheq.

501 Just to complete the account of internecine strife, a few 'minor fights' should be mentioned. The Moorish movement FIAA also underwent a process of internal division. Exactly when is not clear, but the movement ended up in at least two different units. In early February 1993, a small war broke out between FIAA and FPLA when FPLA fighters murdered a FIAA supporter outside Gao. The fight between both movements threatened to become 'international' when Arabs from the Touaji and Almouchakari tribes living in Niger came to the aid of the FIAA in attacking the FPLA forces and the Kel Tamasheq inhabiting the Tamesna plain, and stealing numerous cattle. The Touaji were also suspected of delivering arms to the FIAA. In April 1993, the conflict between FPLA and FIAA ended with a treaty between both movements after FIAA leader Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed threatened to leave the MFUA. In March 1994, the FNLA was ousted from its base Halboubouti by the MPA, after which a number of their fighters forcibly joined this movement. As for the FULA, it seems the movement was dissolved, after which part of its fighters rejoined the FPLA, while others joined the FIAA.

502 'De nouveaux affrontements auraient opposé des commandos de Touaregs et les forces armées', Le Monde. 21/08/1990.
The resulting pogroms against Tamasheq civilians led to avenging counterstrikes by the rebel movements, which often took the form of attacks against commercial and private traffic on the road between Gao and Hombori.

Gao in particular suffered under the rebellion. The rebellion effectively blocked the international trade over the main roads. At the village of Hombori in the Niger Bend, transporters had to halt at night as use of the road was only allowed by daytime. From Hombori to Gao, cars drove in convoys under obligatory army escort which had nevertheless to be paid for. Transport from Algeria to Gao had come to a halt in 1990, and gradually picked up again in 1992. With the conflict between ARLA and MPA in 1994, traffic between Algeria and Gao was again largely disrupted as the main road to Algeria goes through the Adagh. As the Moorish merchants in Gao and Timbuktu had better connections with the rebel movements, they were capable of partly attracting the remaining trade from their Songhay competitors. The main backers and financiers of the Ganda Koy could therefore be found among the wealthier Songhay merchants of Gao. One of the co-founders and main advocates of the Ganda Koy was Ali Bady Maiga, owner of a large transport company, two petrol stations in Gao and head of the local transport union.

‘Transport was cut off by the rebels. To survive, we had to start eating our investment capital. They explained to us they wanted the region to develop, but all they did was attack the sedentary population. The army did nothing. They [the Kel Tamasheq] never thought the blacks would take up arms to fight in the bush. But without a fight, they would never have returned to dialogue.’

Apart from the lack of trading goods and provisions, Gao also suffered under the state of emergency that had been declared in the North in July 1990. It is no wonder that the sedentary population was not sympathetic to the rebellion. The ishumar had never included them in their movement, they had only scarcely included their own people, but they pretended to fight in the interest of the North. Particularly after the signing of the Tamanrasset agreement, the general discourse of the tanekra had changed from a fight for independence to a fight in the interest of all of Northern Mali which had been neglected by the Malian state. However true this neglect may have been for the Adagh and Azawad regions, it had never been the case for Gao or the villages along the Niger. The Songhay population had never felt excluded from Mali.

Particularly after the droughts, development projects had flourished in the Niger Bend. The projects of the Norwegian NGO AEN in the Gossi area, the projected building of a dam near Tossaye, the activities of World Vision, Accord, Oxfam and other NGO’s, had brought hopes for prosperity after the drought. Now these organisations had to retreat from the area.
under the threat of violence from both the rebel forces and the army. In revenge, pogroms were directed against Tamasheq and Arab NGO employees. In May 1992, a crowd at Gossi, headed by an army unit, killed twelve Tamasheq employees of the Norwegian AEN, including its vice-director and the assistant to the director.

Negotiations between the rebel movements and the state in December 1990 leading to the Tamanrasset agreement, and again in November 1991 leading to the National Pact, only included representatives of the rebel movements. Other groups within Tamasheq society were excluded, not to mention delegates from other communities in the North. In April 1993, during a congress organised in Gossi, the MPA leader Iyad ag Ghali pleaded for the inclusion in negotiations of members of civil society, the ‘wise men and traditional leaders’. Fearing growing influence of the chiefs to their own detriment, the MFUA intellectuals rejected this idea, stating that for the moment only the MFUA and rebel movements were valid interlocutors of Tamasheq interests. 504

The end result of all negotiations with the Malian state was that any agreements made seemed to only involve the Kel Tamasheq and Arab communities. This left other communities in the North with a general feeling of exclusion from the National Pact. The creation of the Région Kidal after the Tamanrasset agreement was generally seen as privileging the Kel Adagh. The tax exemptions and special economic status for the North were generally interpreted as tax exemptions for the Kel Tamasheq and Moors and special economic programmes in their favour. The economic reconstruction of the North was interpreted as economic reconstruction of the Kidal region, while the rebellion had caused most economic disruption in the Niger Bend. After the signing of the Tamanrasset agreement the conflict had been relocated to this area, leaving the Adagh in peace, or so the inhabitants of the Niger Bend thought. The strong stress on the integration of rebel forces in the Malian army and civil service, regardless of their qualifications, was seen as excluding other societies of the North and privileging men who had committed all sorts of crimes.

Neither the Tamanrasset agreement nor the National Pact, nor any other agreement made between the MFUA and the government afterwards, met with approval from the other communities in the North. Also, the MFUA and government hardly made any efforts to explain the contents of the National Pact and other agreements to the broader public. Worse still, the National Pact and all agreements made, despite favouring the Kel Tamasheq, had not brought an end to fighting and banditry. On the contrary, it had brought banditry and rebels inside the cities. The Commission du Suivi du Cesser le Feu, the MFUA and the mixed patrols created after the National Pact all had their seats in Gao. Rebel forces and intégrés behaved within the town as victors and occupying forces in the eyes of many inhabitants of Gao.

The last straw for the population of the North came in April and May 1994. On 24 April, a number of rebels to be integrated in the armed forces clashed with regular units of the armed forces in the city of Menaka.

Alkassoum: '24 April 1994, the longest day ever in Menaka. Things have happened the people of Menaka will never digest. That day, there was a meeting about the integration of rebels. They sat there on a dune, the soldiers and the rebels. The rebels killed two soldiers and wounded their Captain. He ran back to the barracks while still being shot at. The whole day long you heard "rrrrt rrrrrt". [...] Ha! During the rebellion, the rebels did as they pleased. They came to Menaka, did their shopping, flirted with the girls, stole things and left. The army did nothing. Ha! That day, we finally had hopes for peace, but two imbeciles blew it all. They even had rented rooms together, the soldiers and the rebels. They had been told not to trust them too well, "those redskins can be up to anything". The rebels stole the guns of the soldiers and shot them. Only when the army came from Anderamboukane did they retreat'.

Tan Mohamed: 'Yeah, always living with terror: "rrrrt rrrrt". Day after day, bullets flying all around you. To be woken up at six, or at one at night. Not from the crowing of the cock, but from the sound of bullets, that is terrible.'

On 13 May 1994, a group of armed rebels entered the city of Gao and tried to steal a car parked outside the main mosque when Friday prayer came to an end. The rebels killed the driver and a bystander who tried to prevent the theft. When the outraged congregation leaving the mosque tried to apprehend the assailants, they fled but two were captured. Subsequently the congregation brought the two victims of the rebels in procession to Gao hospital, where they delivered the two bodies, and then started to lynch the two apprehended rebels. However, the lynching party was surprised by comrades of the lynched rebels who opened fire and entered the hospital. Firing from inside the hospital on the crowd and in its halls on the hospitalised patients, the rebels killed eleven people. The clash between rebel and army soldiers and the massacre in the Gao hospital were the events which sparked off Ganda Koy activity.

**The Ganda Koy solution**

Ganda Koy had a clearcut solution to the problems of the North and a clearcut goal: protecting the sedentary populations from rebel attacks and

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505 Conversation with Alkassoum, *bellah* man, and Tan Mohamed, *bellah* woman from Menaka. Menaka, 24/03/1999. According to Kel Tamasheq spokesmen in Menaka, most shooting came from the side of the army. They accused the army of having taken the occasion to attack the houses of Tamasheq citizens. During the fight four people were shot dead, two more died of shock, twelve people were injured and five shops were looted. 'Lettre ouverte à son excellence Monsieur le Président de la République' 12/05/1994, signed by notables of Menaka. *Nation* no 41 (Bamako 21/06/1994).

banditry and chase the ‘white nomads’ from the land of the Songhay. According to its adherents, the army did not or could not provide security in the North. *Ganda Koy* would do so in its place. Protection of the sedentary population would be delivered at all prices and *Ganda Koy* adherents did not make a secret about what this price was –

‘Fellow citizens of the North, let us sweep away all nomads from our villages and cities, even from our barren land! Tomorrow the nomads will install themselves there as dominators. Black sedentary peoples, from Nioro to Ménaka, let us organise, let us take up arms for the great battle that awaits. Let us send the nomads back to the sands of the Azawad. The existing social balance cannot be modified. The social economic problems of the North need to be solved for all citizens without discrimination. Why are there development projects for the nomads? Why are there army posts for the nomads? Why are there seats in parliament for armed rebel-bandits? Because they took up arms and killed? That is inadmissible. The Gandakoye movement is born. Signed without us, the [National] Pact is against us. The realities in the North show this. We should create insecurity for the nomads as they have created it for the sedentary populations.’

In this quote from a *Ganda Koy* pamphlet, we find almost all reasons for the creation of the movement, as well as its basic interpretation of the Tamashque rebellion and society: insecurity, exclusion, racism, nomadic versus sedentary existence, nationalism and economics. Insecurity has been dealt with above. In the following paragraphs, the remaining motives will be examined closer.

**The army**

Although part of the *Ganda Koy*’s founders were civilian inhabitants of Gao, its most prominent leaders were a number of army officers, members of the elite airborne division or ‘red berets’. The military commander of the *Ganda Koy* was Captain Abdoulaye Mahamahada Maiga, a red beret of Songhay origins who deserted on 9 May 1994, together with Lieutenants Lamine Diallo, Abdoulaye ‘Blo’ Cissé and part of their company. These men would form the core of the *Ganda Koy*, leading most attacks against the Arab and Tamashque populations in the months to come. They did so in uniform, and perhaps with the help of comrades who had not deserted. Even the desertion of Captain Maiga and his men is questionable. They might well have been authorised to do so by their superiors.

The army had for long been dissatisfied with the way the government dealt with the rebellion and its leniency towards renegade rebels and the MFUA. Some officers still believed a military victory against the rebels was possible, despite their resounding defeats in 1990. Even if Maiga and his men had really deserted, their unit made no effort to catch them.

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The general public in Mali approved of Maiga’s actions as well and created support organisations in Bamako and elsewhere. Active financial support for the Ganda Koy even came from the vast Songhay commercial networks stretching to Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, and from the indigenous Songhay community in Niger. Rumours had it the Ganda Koy fighters were provisioned in arms by the dissatisfied part of the Malian army.

**Unlimited warfare**

The Ganda Koy followed strategies similar to the Tamasheq rebels. Like the rebels, they made use of ‘technicals’ for transport and attacks. In addition to fighting vehicles, the Ganda Koy made use of boats to patrol and control the riverain villages. Like the Tamasheq rebels, they made use of the environment the Songhay were used to and improved the fighting tactics the Songhay knew. In pre-colonial times, Songhay pirates and riverborne raiding parties had been as much feared on the banks of the Niger as Kel Tamasheq raiders had been in the desert. Like the Tamasheq rebels, the Ganda Koy set up a base at an island in the Niger river near the village of Fafa. On 26 May, the Ganda Koy struck its first blow at the village of Tacharane, killing nine Kel Tamasheq.

Hearing about the attack at Tacharane, the Commission du Suivi du Cesser le Feu started an investigation, headed by MFUA and FIAA leader Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed. Zahaby quickly discovered that the attack had been launched by boat from the Ganda Koy riverain base at Fafa. Leading a mixed patrol, mostly consisting of his own FIAA fighters, Zahaby went to Fafa and attacked the Ganda Koy base on 4 June. The Ganda Koy fighters fled, leaving most of their possessions behind. Among these were documents which proved the implication of Ganda Koy fighters in the massacre at Léré in 1991, that had cost the lives of fifty Moors. In turn, Zahaby’s patrol was attacked on its way back from Fafa by an armoured car of the Malian armed forces. In the ensuing fight, the mixed patrol managed to put the armoured car out of action, but it costed the life of Boubacar ould Sadeck, FIAA’s military commander.

The next day, in retaliation to Zahaby’s action, seven integrated rebels had their throats cut by members of their unit at the army post of Gourma Rharous. The day after, integrated rebels and FIAA fighters retorted by attacking the army post and prison at Niafunké, killing nine men and
stealing two cars, while simultaneously attacking the village of Tonka.\textsuperscript{513}

One day later, 10 June 1994, most integrated rebels had deserted, with the exception of integrated MPA members. The leaders of the various movements, often staying in Gao or Bamako, returned to the bases. Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed, until then a negotiating moderate, became one of the most hardline military leaders, commanding the until then rather peaceful FIAA from its base at Almoustarat. His colleague Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine returned to the FPLA base at In-Taykaren. Negotiations and the similitude of peace provided by the National Pact mirage came to an end. What followed were the most bloody months the rebellion had witnessed.

These first days of violence and the nature of the \textit{Ganda Koy} were decisive for what followed. As the first encounters had been between \textit{Ganda Koy}, the army and members of the FIAA, it was the latter movement, which had until then remained in the background, which took the lead in fighting the \textit{Ganda Koy}. Proof that the deserted soldiers forming the \textit{Ganda Koy} had been among the ‘butchers of Léré’ in 1991 resolved FIAA determination to avenge actions by the \textit{Ganda Koy} against their kin.\textsuperscript{514} Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed, the main MFUA spokesman and one of the most outspoken intellectuals within the movement, became Mali’s ‘public enemy number one’. Zahaby’s ‘treason’ of the National Pact and the reopening of hostilities provoked army support for the \textit{Ganda Koy} to a point where it became unclear if attacks were committed by the deserted men of Captain Maiga or by regular troops.

The \textit{Ganda Koy} consisted mostly of soldiers and fighters of Songhay origins inhabiting the villages and cities at the banks of the Niger. Therefore, most attacks made by the \textit{Ganda Koy} were concentrated at the Kel Tamashq and Moorish population living in these cities and villages. Many Kel Tamashq of the Niger Bend had settled after the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, often creating villages of their own. These sedentarised Kel Tamasheq had not been part of the \textit{teshumara} as they had stayed in Mali and neither had they been part of the \textit{tanekra}.

All of Northern Mali was engaged in the war, but most victims fell in the riverain villages and camps in a spiral of attacks and counter-attacks. After the first week of fighting between movements, the attacks changed in nature. Both sides in the conflict now concentrated on civilians. If the \textit{Ganda Koy} and the army attacked Tamashq and Moorish camps and villages, the FIAA and FPLA would respond in attacking Songhay villages. The number of victims on both sides grew larger with every attack as the conflict dragged on.

On 12 June the army killed between 26 and 60 Kel Tamasheq and Moorish in the vicinity of Anderamboukane. The next day, the \textit{Ganda Koy} and regular army units attacked a nomad camp between Niafunké and


\textsuperscript{514} The revenges by the FIAA should not be seen as \textit{egha}, because vengeance followed directly on attack.

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Léré, killing an estimated 25 inhabitants. The same day and the day after, pogroms in Timbuktu ended the lives of around 75 Kel Tamasheq and Moorish inhabitants of Timbuktu. Most of the victims belonged to the city elite of merchants and administrators. Simultaneously the Ganda Koy ambushed a caravan on its way back from the Taoudenit salt mines, killing 60 caravan drivers. On 19 June, the Ganda Koy killed 160 inhabitants of a refugee camp near the village of Ber and in the village itself. In that month alone, an estimated 450 people died under Ganda Koy attacks. Those who managed to flee the killings wrote desperate reports to the outside world—

‘About ethnic cleansing in Timbuktu city and vicinity
Date, 15 June 94
Crimes committed by the Malian army and Ganda Koy movement and vigilante brigade – commanded by Lieutenant Abdoulaye Cissé called Blo and Sabre Kouyta and Chabone Barka and Casounté and Hamidou Mahamane Siréy – and commander of red berets sent to Timbuktu on 29 May. AEM 26 of the Malian army has made an airlift 2 flights/day for 14 days and [on] each flight 55 persons [from] the red berets and the paratroopers and their material [arrive]. On their arrival [they are] deployed in the northern neighbourhood – east and centre town. Instead of going to their barracks they are quartered in Arab and Tamasheq houses and their Headquarter is in the Badjindé neighbourhood (neighbourhood in centre of Timbuktu) so they do not have a mission order which [is signed by the] local commander nor the governor of Timbuktu. [...] They have transformed the city of Timbuktu into their Head Quarter to massacre the Tamasheq and Moors and the notable groups pay these soldiers. [for] Each Tamasheq or Arab, they get 200,000 CFA. [for each] Individual killed. The house of each killed person is looted if he is sedentary and if he is a nomad his animals are confiscated. All valuable objects are seized. Bracelets, rings, shoes, boubous – etc – Their bodies are thrown to the vultures or on the dunes for the wild animals [...].’

These and other messages were collected by Amnesty International and other organisations but, despite reports written by these organisations, without much consequence on the ground. The reports might have made headlines in the Western press (‘Mysterious Timbuktu, scene of ethnic clashes’...) but except for French international radio station RFI, the world was too absorbed by the Rwanda genocide to notice anything else going on in Africa.


In reprisal for *Ganda Koy* attacks and pogroms, the FIAA and FPLA started a campaign of counter-terror. On 1 July 1994, the FIAA attacked the villages of Bintangoungou, Biragoungou and Tenenkou, killing eight people. The village Soumpi followed with twelve victims. On 17 July, rebels attacked the road between Niono and Nampala. In return, the army killed seventeen Kel Tamasheq in Nampala itself the same day. The worst FIAA attack came on 25 July at the village of Bamba. That day was market day in Bamba. The well-visited market is held at a crossroads. Camel mounted FIAA elements approached the market from all four roads and simply opened fire, leaving forty market shoppers dead.517

**The turning point massacre**

In October 1994, the Moorish movement FIAA executed a planned attack on the army base at Gao and the *Ganda Koy* leaders of the town. On 20 October 1994, FIAA fighters attacked the army post at Ansongo, forty kilometres from Gao, with the purpose of drawing troops from the Gao garrison to Ansongo, which it did. On the evening of 22 October, the FIAA attacked Gao itself. In an attempt to draw the soldiers out of their barracks, a number of fighters entered the city at night, shooting at random, setting fire to two petrol stations belonging to *Ganda Koy* founder Ali Bady Maiga, destroying a pharmacy and shooting at the barges at the Niger river. Another unit laid in ambush to intercept the Malian soldiers when they left the camp. However, the soldiers remained in their camp only to come outside when the FIAA fighters aborted their attack under the assault of an assembled *Ganda Koy* crowd.

The next day, pogroms against the few remaining Moors and Tamasheq in Gao followed. A crowd of inhabitants of Gao and soldiers left for the nearby village of Inelfiss founded by the Tamasheq *tewsit* Kel Essuq Kel Takailalt. This village of *ineslemen* or religious specialists served as a *zawiya* or religious centre of the Qâdiriya sufi brotherhood. The inhabitants, mostly Kel Essuq Kel Takailalt, had settled of their own accord to promote religious learning and to practice agriculture. The village head, leader of the *zawiya* and tribal chief Mohamed Anara ag Hamadou was among the most respected Muslim scholars and civil community leaders of the region. Many inhabitants of Gao had sought his advice on religious matters. Nevertheless, on the accusation of having given hospitality to the FIAA unit the evening before their attack, the enraged crowd killed Mohamed Anara and fifty other villagers, while the Malian soldiers stood and watched.518

The FIAA attack and the revenge of the Gao population left 38 ‘black’ Gaois and 180 ‘white’ Gaois dead.519 The attack at Gao and the massacre of the Kel Essuq *zawiya* and the ‘white’ population of Gao was the last of


its kind. It more or less directly led the Songhay and Tamasheq civilian population to wonder what was happening to their communities. The object of the FIAA attack had been to force the Malian Government back into negotiations and acceptance of the National Pact, recently abandoned by the government under popular pressure as unworkable since it did not account for the sedentary population. The FIAA wanted to show the Malian Government, army and the Ganda Koy that even the larger cities of Mali were not safe from rebel attacks and that the military capacity of the movement had not withered away. In this respect the attack was partly successful.

The inhabitants of Northern Mali, 'black sedentary' as well as 'white nomad' realised that neither the army, nor the rebel movements nor the Ganda Koy could or would protect and defend them. On the contrary, only attacks and spiralling violence could be expected. In realising this danger and the situation the population found itself in, the chiefs of the tewsiten and the village chiefs of the Cercle Bourem, and representatives of the Ganda Koy signed a peace treaty of their own in November 1994. The local Bourem treaty arranged mutual protection, abstinence from violence and especially access to pastures, water and land tenure, irrespective of the National Pact and other engagements between state and rebel movements.520 This local peace treaty on local initiative meant the beginning of the establishment of a lasting peace. As for the Ganda Koy's motives to join in signing this treaty -

'The blind retaliation against our white-skinned brothers should end. Distinction should be made because not all that glitters is gold. One should not forget that the national army is unacquainted with the terrain. Thus, a white can catch a white. They know who the bandits are [...] Meanwhile, the Ganda Koy should assign itself the task to protect the population against armed bandits and to stop indiscriminate reprisals against the "whites".521

The return of stereotypes

The coming of the Ganda Koy led to a renewed discourse on race, racism, and nationalism within Malian society on the whole and particularly in the North. This discourse was fed with arguments taken from the stereotyped images of Tamasheq society I have discussed in previous chapters. But contrary to the 1950s and 1960s, the Kel Tamasheq community now had the means to defend themselves against these

520 'Un accord de paix entre Ganda Koy et Touaregs à Bourem', Le Tambour, 29/11/1994. The concerned fractions were the Takarangat Koual, Takarangat Shaggaran, Targuiguit Koual and - Shaggaran, Kel Ghela, Inheren, Kel Tangabo, Ibogholiten, Kel Titadialet and Ahel Sidi Alamine Foulane (Moors). Most of the concerned fractions are 'river Idnan'- Idnan inhabiting the area south to the Adagh towards the Niger river. The concerned villages were Bourem Djindo, Baria, Karabassane, Bia, Moudakane, Dengha, Ouani, Tondibi, Hâ, Bourem, Maza, Konkoron and Hawa.

stereotypes held in Mali. Tamasheq intellectuals not only conducted negotiations with the Malian Government, some of them were also engaged in returning the *Ganda Koy* polemics against the Kel Tamasheq community.

The stereotyped image of Tamasheq society rested on a few features: a hierarchically organised society where race is connected to rank; the existence of slavery; a nomadic society; and a certain warrior culture. These features were appreciated differently in different phases of the colonial and post-colonial periods, with an essentially negative appreciation in independent Mali. But however different the appreciation of the image might have been, it always served the same purpose, a purpose it serves all around the globe: creating other and self, with strong emphasis on 'other'. In all periods concerned, the Kel Tamasheq served as an 'uncivilised' other in Mali, who had the indecency of viewing themselves as superior. With the start of the rebellion, these negative stereotypes resurfaced to be developed by the *Ganda Koy* from a discourse on the 'uncivilised other' into a discourse on the 'life-threatening other' who should be exterminated.

Self and other are concepts limited and operationalised by shifting boundaries. The concept of ethnic or group boundaries is well-developed, but a few comments should be made. The general idea on ethnic or other boundaries between groups is that they are seen as in flux or permeable. Identity is created in dialogue, and is negotiable. True as this might be, the boundaries of identity, self and other are created or negotiated in context and these contexts can vary.

A few parameters of context can be discerned. The first is the scale of the group to be identified. One can safely say that the larger the category to be 'othered', the more general and essential the stereotype applied to it. Nuance is lost as the group to identify becomes larger. The second is the nature of relations between groups, in relation to the size of the groups involved. These can vary from friendly jokes swapped at the bar after a successfully concluded deal, to curses hurled together with handgrenades in wartime. I do not think I surprise anyone by saying that in a context of war, the boundaries of identity between these groups are no longer permeable. They are raised with barbed-wire with defence lines on both sides. It is also plainly obvious that the more hostile relations between groups are, the more the image of the other becomes hostile and reduced. It is not only negative, it is almost void. This process of stronger essentialising and the drawing of fixed boundaries of self and other, followed by a nuancing of images and the reopening of boundaries when the opposing parties felt the need for reconciliation, can be seen at work in the discourse accompanying the conflict between the *Ganda Koy* and the Kel Tamasheq.

The *Ganda Koy*'s problem was on what stereotype and criteria the construction of the Kel Tamashaq other should be focused. Tamasheq

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society is heterogenous and so are the other societies of the North. Apart from the Kel Tamasheq, Moors and Songhay, the North is inhabited by the Fulbe, Bambara, Dogon and Bozo. Nevertheless, one thing was relatively clear: The rebellion, and thus the problems of the other inhabitants of the North, had been organised and started by the Kel Tamasheq and Moors from the northernmost part of Mali, the Adagh and Azawad. From these groups, only the upper strata of society had been involved. The rebels could thus easily be ‘othered’ on criteria applicable to these groups only.

The first was their racial appearance, their ‘whiteness’. Most Ganda Koy discourse focused on the Kel Tamasheq as a white people. Historical discourse on the relations between the Songhay and the Kel Tamasheq played an important part as well. The Kel Tamasheq were not only portrayed as white, but especially as pro-slavers who had enslaved the Songhay in pre-colonial times. Ideas about Tamasheq racism and practices of slavery resurfaced in Southern Mali with the rebellion. In May 1992, the Ivorian journalist Venance Konan tried to find the reasons for the rebellion while travelling in Mali. Although he may not have found them, the quotes from his interviews give a rare insight into the thinking of the average Malian on Tamasheq society and its divisions between blacks and whites, masters and slaves. His own words too might give an impression of what the average West African intellectual might have thought on the same issues –

"From Saint-Louis to Addis Ababa, there runs a line above which people are white and feel different and superior to blacks. How often has one not heard Moroccans, Tunisians and Algerians say "you Africans". The peoples to the north of this line, one should not hide it, have always been and, in some cases, still are pro-slavers. The Tuareg today still have black slaves. In Bamako, they have told me various stories about the relations between Tuareg and blacks and between Tuareg and their slaves. Masters who break the arms of disobedient slaves, bella slave students obliged to serve them... [...] Seydou Boiré, a geographer who lived for a long time in Tamasheq country gave me a rather instructive case: "One day, we drank tea with a Tamasheq chief. And he said to us, as if it was the most normal thing in the world, that it was his dream to bridle a black man and to ride him as a horse"."523

The Ganda Koy interpreted the Tamasheq rebellion as an attempt to regain control over the Niger Bend and its inhabitants on a basis of their racial superiority. The author of Ganda Koy’s pamphlet ‘La Voix du Nord no 00’, gave this explanation for the outbreak of revolt in clear terms.

"Not one armed rebel-bandit claims the Azawad, but he seeks recognition of the right to dominate black peoples. [...] The armed rebels-bandits are racists, slave-drivers; they consider all blacks as slaves, as

inferior beings. Even their intellectuals hold these ideas. They refuse to live together with blacks. At best they tolerate blacks'.

Statements of the same kind were made by *Ganda Koy* spokesmen in the national newspapers.

'Again, it will never be said in the records of history that the Songhay people (they exist) have meekly accepted to being delivered, their hands and feet bound, to the slave-drivers of the desert, spurned straight from medieval obscurity; pro-slavers since they are only driven to this so called Tuareg rebellion by feudal, slave-driving, racist motives, and low mercantile considerations'.

The second element of *Ganda Koy* othering discourse, was Tamassheq and Moor social organisation. The societies of the Adagh and Azawad, be they Moorish or Tamassheq, were hierarchical, hence feudal, and especially nomadic. I will not enter into details of the image of the nomad here as I have done so elsewhere. Let me simply say that the idea of the lazy, anarchist, unattached nomad who should be sedentarised and civilised was as alive in 1994 as it had been under Modibo Keita. Analysing the problems of the North, an anonymous administrator in Gao gave his view of Tamassheq society and its problems –

'We have already mentioned nomadic existence. It was long deformed by the Western, particularly the French, press. One brings to mind the pride of the "blue men of the desert" in support of the Tuareg lobby. With regards to this subject, the picture presented by a European development worker who lived in Kidal for a year speaks volumes: "It is true that the Tuareg are proud, but proud of what? Everything but of work which they think is debasing. Rather, they are proud to beg, steal and kill". There is evidence that gardening yields high profits in Kidal. The Tuareg are accustomed to gifts and it is rare to find Tuareg who think that, in lack of livestock, they could commit themselves to agriculture or other forms of production'.

Set in a language of reason and analysis, we rediscover all stereotypes of nomad unproductivity and the type of character nomadic existence produces: laziness, deceitfulness and bloodthirstiness. Hence, they should be converted into civilised (read sedentary) citizens practising agriculture. Apparently, the thoughts of administrators on Tamassheq society had not much changed since the days of Modibo Keita.

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Where the Kel Tamasheq had not been able to provide an answer to the essentialising stereotypes of othering during the 1950s and 1960s, they now had the means to defend themselves in words. Freedom of press in Mali ensured that not only the *Ganda Koy* or the government could be heard. The Kel Tamasheq also had a sympathising press. The newspapers *l'Union; Nouvel Horizon;* and *Ataram, le vent du Nord* ensured that those who were interested could read a different story. Particularly *l'Union* and its editor-in-chief Houdaye ag Mohamed ardently exposed the atrocities committed by the *Ganda Koy* and offered a platform for Tamasheq intellectuals of the more radical movements to counter the accusations made. In an interview with *Nouvel Horizon* in September 1994, Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine aired his grievances about the image of the Kel Tamasheq in no uncertain terms.

`From Modibo Keita to Alpha Oumar Konare passing from Moussa Traoré to General Amadou Toumani Touré, the Tuareg question has caused the flow of much blood, ink, sweat and tears, without ever being fully understood by the national opinion. Because the Tuareg have always been treated by certain compatriots as nationless. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as pro-slavers. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as separatists. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as invaders. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as strangers. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as racists. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as outlaws. Because the Tuareg have been constrained by certain compatriots to become eternally on the move. Because the Tuareg have always been considered by certain compatriots as "the darlings" of the Western and Arab countries.'^{527}

Iyad ag Ghali, remaining outside the conflict in the Niger Bend, was often interviewed by the newspapers *l'Essor* and *Les Echos*, which tended to be more government-supporting, in which he could give his views on the reasons and origins of the conflict. From the fall of Moussa Traoré in March 1991, and the signing of the National Pact in April 1992, to the renewal of hostilities in May 1994, the rebellion was not presented as a separatist movement in the Malian press. On the contrary, the *tanekra* had been presented as concerned with the improvement of the living conditions in

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the neglected North on the whole and bringing about the fall of Moussa Traoré’s dictatorial regime. Thus, instead of nationless traitors and dictators, the rebels had been worthy sons of the fatherland in helping to bring democracy about. Iya d ag Ghali was prone to underline this interpretation of ‘his rebellion’ in 1990.

‘It is certain that the start of the movements’ fight has played an important role in bringing democracy by weakening the dictatorial regime. In its days, the MPA had formulated the problems of the North in terms of social, political, economic and cultural demands’.

The reconciliatory stance made by the Malian press, confirmed by Iya d ag Ghali, backfired in 1994 when the promises of the National Pact were not delivered. Many Southern intellectuals and politicians blamed the movements for demanding a special political and economic status for the North. The MFUA’s unyielding stance towards the implication of the National Pact, despite Southern resistance and the impossibility of meeting all demands, were seen as unpatriotic in comparison to their patriotic attitude in bringing about the fall of Traoré. The Kel Tamasheq had suffered under Traoré, but so had all Malians and the honour of getting the credit of Traoré’s fall should suffice as extra compensation. The idea that the rebellion had been about separation after all resurfaced. Ethnic and racial motives regained ground, not only among the Ganda Koy but also among the Southern political elite.

‘If we put aside the suspicion of “disqualifying” secessionist intentions of certain rebel movements, we should recognise the merit of the armed revolt of the Azawad in starting the struggle leading to the fall of the decadent regime in Bamako. [...] By giving themselves an essential and distinct ethnic appearance, while sharing practically the same living conditions with other Malians who have never been consulted, nor associated, nor incorporated, the suspicion of pigmentary difference as a vehicle for secession reemerges’.

The bellah question, a short reprisal

Othering and conflict emphasise not only the essential features of the enemy, but also of the originating group. The Ganda Koy could claim essential traits which were opposite to the Kel Tamasheq rebels. They were ‘black’ and sedentary, and they lived along the banks of the Niger. The emblem of the Ganda Koy consisted of a pirogue boat, crossed with a hoe and a harpoon, representing the Niger, sedentary life and defence. These traits were shared by the bellah community of the Niger Bend, the iklan n eguef or slaves of the dunes. Despite being part of Tamasheq

society and culture, many bellah participated in the Ganda Koy, which is less surprising than it seems. Elsewhere, I have described the differences between the bellah and the free Kel Tamasheq in their experience of the period between the 1950s and 1990s. The independence struggle brought them emancipation. Alfellaga did not concern them. The droughts brought them hunger and exile too, but to different places in Africa. Barely any bellah were part of the teshumara or tanekra and their community suffered just as hard under rebel attacks as the others. In June 1994, bellah intellectuals attempted to create a special bellah movement, the Mouvement pour l'éveil du Monde bellah. This movement never came off the ground. Most bellah simply joined the Ganda Koy. But the attempt to create a movement and the reasons invoked in the article announcing its birth, do give an insight in the reasons why bellah joined the Ganda Koy.

'Considering the reigning climate of distrust between white and black in the North, between integrated rebels and the FAS [Malian Armed Forces]; considering that the few erring bellah (there are less than 10) who found themselves in the rebellion have been killed, in a cowardly way, by the "red", the assassination of Colonel Bilal Saloum by the "imghad" of the ARLA forms a notorious example; considering that the Songhay have created the Ganda Koy movement; considering that the Malian Government and people have been let down by the manipulators of the [National] Pact (commissaire au Nord and Malian rank of the MFUA); considering that thousands of bellah have been removed from their land by the rebels and armed bandits; considering the marginalisation of the bellah community [...] The Mouvement pour l'éveil du Monde Bellah [...] Informs the national and international opinion that a bellah is different from a Tuareg and that a Haratin is different from a Moor (Arab). The Mouvement pour l'éveil du Monde Bellah fights against the new "Western apartheid" which the MFUA and the Commissaire au Nord want to put in place in Northern Mali: a white, armed minority, controlling power and economic means to the detriment of the Malian state and people, and dominating a black majority'.

Due to army repression and some results made by the movements in negotiating with the state, the rebel movements attracted more recruits. Most of these new recruits either joined in search of protection, or because there was something to gain. With the rising animosity against 'white' Kel Tamasheq, many had no choice. Either they fled, joined or fell victim to pogroms. The bellah community suffered less under pogroms, but in their

531 'Les Belahs réclament une gestion partagée du Pacte National', Le Républicain, 01/06/1994. The Commissariat au Nord mentioned here is an inter-Ministerial office, created under the National Pact, to implement its social and economic terms.
Many bellah had become internally displaced people within Mali as they had felt forced to leave their homesteads. Few had the chance to integrate into the movements. Their fate was cruder than that of the refugees outside Mali (as the latter at least had some support from international organisations), while simultaneously being excluded from the rebel forces.

Pre-existing animosity towards their former masters also made many bellah join in the repression of white Kel Tamasheq by the army and the Ganda Koy. When the army attacked the Kel Tamasheq and Arab community in Léré in 1991, many bellah joined in, guarding the survivors who were more or less interned outside the village for more than a year.

‘The bellah took our possessions, engaged in trade in our place, set up shops almost everywhere in the South, killed our cattle. Others lived with our herds in the bush. They also killed people in the bush and looted their camps. During the last dry season, we had neither access to the wells, nor to the market because of the problems (i.e. between the Malian army and the rebels). The bellah were charged to survey us. Some we knew, others we didn’t. At night, military vehicles patrolled to prevent our escape. They threw stones at us when we tried to leave’.

Racial motives were used by the founder of the Mouvement pour l’Eveil du Monde Bellah as well as the tanekra had largely excluded the bellah community from its actions. Finally, the bellah, like most other inhabitants of the North, rejected the National Pact. They felt excluded from its stipulations and saw it as nothing but a privilege of their former masters.

Support for the Ganda Koy by the bellah community and the racial view of the problems of the North by the bellah themselves meant that, on one hand, Ganda Koy discourse could not be simply anti-Kel Tamasheq. To this day, most bellah see themselves as part of the Kel Tamasheq community, but as second-rank citizens. On the other hand, opting for racial discourse had become less problematic and the only option left to other the Kel Tamasheq accused of supporting or joining the rebellion.

Despite the failure of the Mouvement pour l’Eveil du Monde Bellah and the integration of bellah in the Ganda Koy, bellah political organisation did come off the ground with the founding of a regional political party in Menaka – the UMADD. The Menaka Cercle has a large bellah population, next to a large ‘free’ Kel Tamasheq population. The UMADD is often seen as ‘the bellah party’, although many of its adherents come from the imghad population of the Cercle. Its two main leaders belong to the tewsit Ishidenharen, one of which is of bellah origins. During the communal

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532 It has to be noted that Kel Tamasheq of bellah origins also fell victim to pogroms in Bamako, if it was known that they were Kel Tamasheq.

elections of 1999, the UMADD managed to gain 10 of 21 seats in the
Menaka council, thus forming a political force to be reckoned with.

**Ganda Koy nationalism**

The rebellion had been instigated to achieve Tamasheq independence. This posed a threat to the existence of the Malian nation-state. Therefore, nationalism became an important feature of the Ganda Koy. To justify its existence, it claimed that it defended the nation in ardent patriotism against people who, it was argued, did not want to be Malian and in fact were not Malian. It is significant that the Songhay movement quickly changed its name from simply *Ganda Koy* to *Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy*. As most nationalist discourses in wartime, that of the *Ganda Koy* was directed foremost against the enemy, instead of in praise of the own nation, which in this case meant that the negative stereotypes of the Kel Tamasheq and Arab communities played an important part as well. After being attacked by the FIAA in June 1994, the inhabitants of Niafunké wrote an open letter to the Malian press to complain about their fate and to strengthen their resolve to find a solution.

‘Faced with this situation and total abandonment by the government, we, the inhabitants of Northern Mali, are faced with a choice between three solutions: A. To accept being the slaves of the Tuareg rebels. In fact, this is one of their principal aims. The Tuareg culture and mentality has always made them feel racially superior to others. Therefore, they have never taken up productive work and will never do so. They only put effort into bedding their big breasted women and robbing decent people who gain their livelihood by the sweat of their backs. B. To abandon our land to the profit of the nomads. This hypothetical option would permit them to reach their goal: the creation of a Tuareg state, based on the use of ethnic blacks for chores and productive labour. Historically, the land in question has been owned and tended by the Bambara kingdom of Segu, the Peulh empire of Macina, the Mali empire and the Songhay empire [...]. In our history, there has never existed a Tuareg empire or kingdom. C. To defend our fatherland by all means.’

In nationalist war rhetorics, the other is not just the other. Rather, it is an invading other from outside. Most rebels had been involved in the *tashumara* and *tanekra*, which meant they had lived in exile outside Mali for a long period. This was put forward as a sign that the rebels were not even Malian. After the FIAA attack on Gao in October 1994, passports were found on the bodies of killed FIAA attackers. These Malian passports were issued in Tamanrasset and N’djameña, which led the pro-Ganda Koy press to conclude that Zahaby ould Sidi Mohamed’s FIAA had hired

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Algerian and Chadian mercenaries, despite evidence to the contrary – although issued abroad, the passports were Malian.535

Rhetoric on ‘the other’ was balanced by a discourse extolling the virtue of the Malian nation. This nationalist discourse was built on the same elements as those put forward in the 1950s and 1960s to construct the Malian nation – history, fraternity, honour, dignity and labour. The sole missing element was a bright future. Indeed, in wartime, the future hardly looks idyllic. In the quote above, we find all elements together.

The Ganda Koy strongly invoked the glorious Malian past. Unsurprisingly, most attention was paid to the medieval Songhay empire and its leaders, the Askia dynasty. The emphasis on the history of the Songhay empire as an example to the present-day Malian nation should also be seen as countering the emphasis placed on Mande history and historical importance in the official Malian historiography. The Ganda Koy stressed that it should not be forgotten by the Malian South, which remained indifferent towards the problems of the North, that the Songhay were Malians and equally important to the creation of the Malian nation as the Mande. To a large extent, Ganda Koy nationalist discourse countered the Mandefication of Mali.

But other empires, kingdoms and heroes were invoked too, including Ghana, Mali, Cheick Ahmad Lobbo, El-Hajj Umar Tall and Samory Touré. Surprisingly, the Kel Tamasheq heroes Cheiboun, amenokal of the Tengueregif and victor over the French conqueror Bonnier, and Firhun ag Elinsar, amenokal of the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram, were included also. With regards to the latter, it was stressed by many bellah that, despite being amenokal, he was black and therefore must have been of slave origins. (The colour differences made within Tamashq society, which reserved sattefen or greenish black to the imoushagh, was apparently exchanged for a ‘colour scheme’ only including ‘white’ nobles and ‘black’ slaves.) However, in contrast to the importance of the Songhay empire and other medieval empires in forming the Malian nation, the Ganda Koy stressed there had never been an ‘empire of the Azawad’. The Kel Tamasheq had thus not contributed to the shaping of the Malian historical nation. Despite the virtues of Firhun and Cheiboun in resisting French conquest, the Kel Tamasheq remained outsiders.

**Historical discourse, cultural concepts and reconciliation**

At the end of 1994, especially after the FIAA attack at Gao of October, it became clear to the Ganda Koy as well that a military solution could not be found for the North. Thus, the Ganda Koy became a party in the peace process initiated at the Pact of Bourem. From then on, historical discourse was invoked to reconcile the warring parties. Whereas in early 1994, the Ganda Koy stressed the otherness of the Kel Tamasheq and the historical difference between Songhay and Kel Tamasheq, now the common history and origins of the two peoples were presented –

‘Even legend has cursed war between Songhay and Tuareg. Everyone who travels the river Niger knows the two stones called the Targui and the Songhay. According to legend, they were two warriors of the same mother. The one had a Tuareg father, the other a Songhay father. During ethnic troubles each was ready to defend his father’s side. Despite their mother’s tears, they were ready to attack each other. God changed them into stones looking at each other without ever touching’.536

Another element used in normalising relationships was the concept of senankuya: Joking relationships between cousins or ethnic groups. Like in Tamasheq society, Mande social relationships are largely based on hierarchies and inequalities. These hierarchies and inequalities are mostly expressed through age or generation and kinship relations, such as they are justified in the Sunjata epic or like epics in the Bambara culture area. The social inequality between group members is the fundamental principle of day-to-day social interaction between individuals.537 However, they cannot form the basis of interaction between groups at large or total strangers. This handicap has been overcome by the institution of the joking relationship or senankuya. Joking relationships allow the denial of hierarchy, through the ritualised exchange of standardised jokes and insults. Non-hierarchical relations exist on the family level between cross cousins, grandparents and grandchildren. On the level of the larger social group, they exist between certain families, who are thus perceived as having a cousin relationship. This is then extended towards members of other social groups with the same family name or djammu, who are therefore seen as actual family. 538 The equality created between social groups through these joking relations is seen as primarily preventing violence and bloodshed.

Originally used within social groups and between adjacent ethnic groups on a small scale, senankuya was now, in the later days of the rebellion, and especially after the end of the rebellion, taken up to form the basis of inter-ethnic relationships within the Malian nation-state at large. As a traditional denial of hierarchy and the expression of equality, senankuya relations were highly functional in stressing the equality of the nation’s members and member groups. The most cited example to prove the existence of senankuya relations between ethnic groups, is that between the Bozo fishermen and the Dogon, whose elaborate senankuya excludes both bloodshed and intermarriage.539 All ethnic groups, it was postulated,

539 The idea that joking relationships could inform the relations between ethnic groups in Mali was expressed in several interviews I had with members of the former Keita and Traoré regimes. The idea that it directs relations between members of different ethnic groups was
stood in *senankuya* relations, putting them on equal footing within the nation. Thus, *senankuya* is said to exist between the Kel Tamasheq and the Dogon, between the Fulbe and craftsmen in general (as an extension between Fulbe and their own casted craftsmen), between the Bambara and the Somono (which are a kind of casted, but ethnified Bambara fishermen), et cetera.

The equality between ethnic groups through *senankuya* relations, involving elaborate ritual insults and duties of mediation in dispute was invoked to reconcile the disrupted nation which should include the Kel Tamasheq. On 30 May 1994, evaluating the progress in the implication of the National Pact after a fresh round of negotiations with the MFUA, and warning against ethnic war after the creation of the *Ganda Koy*, president Konaré explicitly brought *senankuya* relationships into play to stress national unity –

‘If nothing else, we have to prove ourselves worthy of this rich and living history of the people who invented and instituted the "senankuya", an alliance of totemic fraternity as sacred, if not more sacred, than consanguinity’.  

After the end of the conflict in 1996, *senankuya* would play an important role in both explaining the conflict and in reconciliation. In 1999 the Malian cineast Cheik Oumar Sissoko released the magnificent movie *La Genèse*. The movie is inspired by the biblical Genesis – chapters 23 to 37 – which tells the story of the brothers Jacob the pastoralist and Esau the hunter, and Hamor the farmer. Most attention is paid to the conflict between Hamor and Jacob over the raping and kidnapping of Jacob’s daughter Dinah by Hamor’s son Sichem (Genesis 34:1-31). The movie is explicitly set in a Malian context. It was shot on location in Hombori and Ansongo, two villages which suffered under the conflict. Jacob and his family wear Tamasheq clothes (topped with Fulbe hats) and live in Tamasheq tents. Hamor and his family wear the traditional attire of Mande farmers. After the scene of revenge on Hamor’s village by Jacob’s sons for kidnapping their sister, a long scene of about twenty minutes follows. This scene depicts how both parties, presented in the film as cousins, are reconciled by concluding a *senankuya* pact to stabilise their peaceful relationship after war. As Sissoko explained the subject of his film –

‘I wrote the script of this film about fratricide five years ago [i.e. in 1995], and it shows what is happening in my country right now, in the southwest and in the northeast. Something like one hundred and fifty people died recently in a conflict between the Soninke and the Fulani.‘

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brought home to me during various formal and informal conversations. Literature on the subject seems to be non-existent. The debate on the issue of joking relations as a means to overcome ethnic antagonisms is extended by Ndiaye (1993), who argues that joking relations could serve as a basis for new pan-African international relations.

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There are also conflicts between Arabs and Maures and in the area around Gao. [...] In the film, you have peasants and farmers. They live together for centuries. They know each other very well, and they share many things. But because they know each other so well, they also have many reasons to hate each other. In the film, like right now in Mali and across Africa, they are choosing to focus on these. Why? They share customs, they marry together. But because of poverty, because of money, there is all this jealousy and envy and ultimately fratricide.\footnote{Interview with Cheikh Oumar Sissoko by Ray Privett, 03/01/2000. Online at http://www.britannica.com/magazine/article?content_id=252652&pager.offset=30}

The final road to peace
November 1994 - March 1996

In November 1994, the situation in the North slowly grew towards peace. This last phase in the conflict was concluded on 26 March 1996, a date chosen for its national significance as the Traoré regime had fallen on 26 March 1991. That day, the conflict in the North was officially ended with a highly symbolic ceremony: the burning of around three thousand weapons, handed over by the various movements, at the marketplace of Timbuktu. This ‘Flame of Peace’ was organised by the Malian Government in collaboration with the United Nations, notably UNIDIR (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research) and the Malian UNDP office.

I will not linger too long on this last phase of the conflict. Others, especially within the world of international organisations and NGO’s, have written sufficiently on the subject.\footnote{The most elaborate writings are ag Youssouf & Poulton (1998), op. cit., and Lode, K., Synthèse du processus des rencontres intercommunautaires du Nord du Mali (d’Août 1995 à Mars 1996) (Stavanger 1996), on whose writing this last part of the chapter is based.} I will simply narrate how and under what conditions, generally speaking, peace was brought about.

To put it briefly: peace was bought for a relatively small sum of money, in comparison with amounts spent on other peace operations organised by the same or similar organisations. That this could be done is due to the extreme state of impoverishment Northern Mali found itself in after four decades of war and drought. Even during the major part of my fieldwork in Northern Mali, three years after the end of the war and the start of economic reconstruction, it was not uncommon to meet people who owned nothing but the clothes on their body, a few rags to construct a tent, and a pot to cook in. In the 1950s, one was not considered rich in the Adagh unless one owned a herd of 500 head of cattle, in the 1990s one was considered extremely lucky if one owned a herd of 50 camels.

One more thing should be said about this last phase and what followed. Although I entirely focus here on the road to peace, this does not mean the road of violence was completely abandoned. During the last months of 1994 and throughout 1995, violence occurred, but more and more sporadically, and with a decreasing number of victims. The larger and best
part of the local arsenal was not handed over. At the moment of writing, these arms are still used in ‘arranging’ local conflicts over hierarchy, land, water and other political issues, even with regards to what is considered ‘national politics’.

**Local pacts and rencontres intercommunautaires**

The first step towards peace was taken on 20 November 1994 with the signing of a local treaty between the fraction chiefs and village leaders in the Cercle Bourem, under the auspices of the Ganda Koy. The agreement made focused on daily relations between nomadic and sedentary inhabitants of the Cercle. The Bourem Pact formally regulated practices which had been natural prior to the conflict. The sedentary population and the Ganda Koy would give access to the village markets and the watering sites for the herds at the banks of the Niger, which had been denied during the rebellion. New to the agreement was that, contrary to practices over the last years, the village heads and the Ganda Koy would offer protection to the nomads. In return, the nomads would abstain from stealing animals belonging to the village inhabitants, would not carry arms when entering the villages and would warn the villagers of upcoming rebel attacks. The latter arrangement would effectively prevent attacks by rebels or renegades, as the fractions of the Cercle would certainly know of upcoming actions. With this agreement, the fractions of the Cercle Bourem explicitly denied support for the rebel forces. The Bourem Pact also provided for the creation of a committee to oversee its implementation, analogous to the committees created through the National Pact.\(^{543}\) This committee would play a key role in promoting similar local agreements between fractions and villages in the area throughout 1995, which were included in the Bourem Pact, and the peace agreements between the movements.

The initiative for peace thus came mainly from the civil population, but most rebels too had grown weary of conflict. After six years of fighting, all parties were simply exhausted. Those *ishumar* who had fought for an ideal in 1990, had seen nothing of it. Unity was far from being attained, the movements only fought among each other, and Tamasheq independence had been ruled out by the more pragmatic leaders.

‘You know, of all the fighters who had been trained in Libya, perhaps only twenty percent understood the goal. The others had understood nothing, they just went along. With the Kel Tamasheq, there is this thing we call teylelil: *if there is one who has a goal, the rest follow automatically. Without knowing what the goal is, without thinking. That is teylelil. But we are also jàhil [ignorant, anarchists]. Give a jàhil a gun and the gun controls the man, not the man the gun*.\(^{544}\)

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\(^{544}\) Interview with Lamine ag Bilal. Gao, 20/06/1999.
Fighters who had joined after the outbreak of revolt in fear of their lives and desiring to see their kin protected had come to realize that the protracted fighting only brought further insecurity. As one former rebel formulated his experience of the rebellion in 1995 – 

'I was in Libya in 1990. One day, I killed a reptile. A Libyan officer approached me and asked me why I had killed it. Before he went away, he said to me: the reptile you just killed is more Libyan than you are. We started the rebellion. As time passed, the massacres between Malians began. There came a moment when we, the rebels, symbolised terror... Many Malians had enough of it; they wanted nothing to do with us. Then, I remembered the Libyan reptile and I started to fear that one day I would be considered less than a reptile in my own country'.

Reuniting the movements

As his leaders had done before him, this former rebel saw himself explicitly as a Malian. The idea that the Kel Tamasheq could be something else than Malian had given way to more pragmatic aims, but pragmatic leaders and intellectuals who had negotiated for as much autonomy and economic privilege as possible had been faced with a structural non-application of the National Pact and most other agreements made afterwards – outright hostility towards the National Pact culminating in the actions of the Ganda Koy, the total break-up of the rebel movements, and their incapacity to control their men. A new frame for resolving the conflict was needed.

The initiative to end internal conflicts and to reunite the movements, by force if need be, came from the MPA and the FPLA. It is awkward that the movement representing the one tewsit which had been most involved in preparing the revolt – the Ifoghas – and the movement representing the hardline secessionists – the FPLA – would have the main initiative among the rebels to end the fight and to give up independence. Throughout 1994, the MPA, with the help of the Malian army and the Ifoghas militia led by amenoka/Intalla ag Attaher, had fought the ‘dissident movements’. The conflict between MPA and ARLA had been militarily settled in favour of the MPA. After defeating the ARLA, the MPA successfully attacked the Idnaan militia BAUA and the FPLA dissidents of the FNLA. After forcefully integrating BAUA and FNLA fighters in their ranks, or at least annihilating the fighting power of these movements, the MPA directed itself against the FIAA, with active support from the Malian army. In November 1994, the army and MPA forces successfully attacked the FIAA basis at Assid El Biat. The attack and conquest of the base was filmed and broadcast on Malian TV.

545 'Sites de cantonnement de Bourem - Kidal - Menaka. Le triomphe du patriotisme', Les Échos, 10/02/1996.

546 'Démantèlement de la base rebelle de Assid El Biat', Le Malién, 28/11/1994. In fact, the FIAA, knowing of this attack, had already evacuated most men and material before the attack was launched.
However, despite military success, the ARLA and other movements remained existent and could pose a new threat to the MPA. Therefore, a final peace agreement was signed between the MPA and ARLA through the mediation of FPLA leader Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine on 15 December 1994.\(^{547}\) The agreement was also signed by the FPLA itself and was placed explicitly under the umbrella of the Bourem Pact between the inhabitants of the Cercle Bourem. By giving supervision over the agreement to civilian leaders of the Bourem community, the movements acknowledged that further initiatives for peace should come from civil society. But although civilian leaders could further peace and trust among the various communities, they could not enforce peace and reconciliation between the movements. Luckily, the latter did so themselves.

The agreement between ARLA, MPA and FPLA implicitly stated that the three movements would together fight 'renegade rebels' and 'bandits', i.e., the FIAA. Throughout 1994, the FIAA had taken the lead in fighting the Ganda Koy in ever more brutal action. In order to gain support, FIAA leader Zahaby oul Sidi Mohamed had toured the surrounding countries. In 1994, rumours circulated that Zahaby, who spent much time in Algiers, had sought and gained the support of the Algerian FIS. All this ensured that the FIAA was as much of a threat to the other movements as to the Ganda Koy.

In the weeks prior to the formal treaty between the MPA, ARLA and FPLA, the MPA and FPLA had reached an informal agreement with the Ganda Koy to fight the FIAA together.\(^{548}\) This informal agreement was followed by a formal treaty between the FPLA and the Ganda Koy on 11 January 1995. Like the treaty between ARLA, MPA and FPLA, this treaty between Ganda Koy and FPLA was placed under the auspices of the Bourem Pact. Besides signing the treaty with its sister movements, FPLA leader Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine also came to terms with the Malian army. On 11 December 1994, the Malian army agreed to the reinsertion in its ranks of those FPLA fighters who had integrated into the army under the provision of the National Pact, but who had deserted after the outbreak of hostilities in May 1994.\(^{549}\) Finally, in June 1995, Zahaby oul Sidi Mohamed stated that the FIAA would from now on adhere to the National Pact, which in diplomatic terms meant he gave up the fight against the Ganda Koy and the other movements. Thus, peace between the movements and isolation of the last refractory movement FIAA led to a climate in which civilians could start to reconstruct relations among the various communities of the North.

The reconstruction of relations of trust and cooperation between civil societies in Mali was just as necessary as those between movements. By 1994, it was not only the rebel movements and the Ganda Koy who held arms. Small arms abounded in Northern Mali. In the Niger Bend, pastoral

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\(^{548}\) 'Le nord renaît', Le Démocrate, 06/12/1994.

and sedentary communities largely depended on each other in daily life. The nomad population depended on the farmers’ agricultural production for supplies in grain. In return, the farmers depended on the nomads for manure and the sales and transport of their surplus products, and they often put their own cattle into the care of nomad families. These relations had been disrupted during the conflict. Relations between sedentary and pastoral communities were not the only ones damaged by the conflict. Due to the absence of the state and analogous to the conflicts between the movements, many Tamasheq and Moorish tribes and fractions had engaged in hostilities between themselves over pasture, wells, and internal hierarchy.

To reinstall trust, so called *rencontres intercommunautaires* were organised by leaders of the communities involved. The first of these had resulted in the Bourem Pact. A second meeting was held at the end of March 1995 at Aglal, close to Timbuktu, to reconcile the communities in the Niger Bend. A third was held in September 1995 at M’bouna near lake Faguibine, to pacify the surrounding area. By then, the NGO community inside Mali, notably the Norwegian AEN, had become an active supporter of these meetings and helped in financing and organisation of these meetings. From October 1995 to March 1996, the AEN and other NGO’s supported the organisation of 37 meetings.550

The *rencontres intercommunautaires* would become a necessary and institutionalised part of Northern Malian regional politics after the official end of the conflict. During my fieldwork in 1999, two large meetings took place at In Tedjedit and Tahabanat, to reconcile the disputes between the Kel Adagh and the fractions in the *Cercle* Menaka. Besides reconciliation, the meetings also served to reestablish power balances between those groups who participated and organised the meetings. The meetings were organised on the initiative of local powerbrokers – fraction chiefs, the heads of local NGO’s and powerful former rebels. Agreement on the location of the meeting was crucial as the place of the meeting was significant to the political issues involved. The meeting at In Tedjedit took place exactly on the border between the *Région* Kidal and the *Cercle* Menaka. Its main issue was reconciliation between the Kel Adagh and the ‘Kel Menaka’. The organisers sought the financial support of foreign NGO’s who often provide means of transport and money to buy the necessary food for the participants – rice, sheep, goats, tea and sugar. Invitations to all communities involved are then extended, as well as to the local administration (often also involved in the organisation) which often formally presides over the meeting. The meeting involves extensive discussion between representatives of all *tew siti n*, often by mouth of the chiefs or religious leaders. Subjects discussed are development, disarmament of the various *tew siti n* in the region, banditry, and land and water tenure. Discussion is complemented by festivities, such as camel races, dance parties, and concerts.

International aid for the peace process

Supporting the *rencontres intercommunautaires* was not the only activity the international NGO community engaged in. A major contribution was made by UNIDIR and UNDP in organising the disarmament of the rebel movements, including the *Ganda Koy*, and their integration in the Malian army or in civil society. Most important in the reconciliation between the *Ganda Koy* and the MFUA movements was that the latter agreed to integrate into the *Ganda Koy* within the National Pact. More prosaically put, *Ganda Koy* fighters could integrate into the Malian armed forces under the provision of the National Pact. This meant the *Ganda Koy* gave up its resistance against the Pact. It was now no longer seen as privileging the nomads and therefore ‘directed against the sedentary population of the North’.

The organisation of the integration of former rebels into the Malian armed forces and into civil society was put into practice along the lines of a proposal made by UNIDIR consultant Lieutenant-General de Graaf. On the initiative of President Konaré and as part of a more general study on this topic in West Africa, de Graaf and his team had studied the possibilities of halting the spread of small arms in Northern Mali and the disarmament of the movements in 1994. They concluded that no action could be undertaken until a larger degree of security had been established.551 These circumstances had come in July 1995, when de Graaf undertook a second mission, parallel to the Round Table conference of Timbuktu, held between 15 and 18 July 1995.

The Round Table Conference of Timbuktu united the Malian Government, the MFUA and *Ganda Koy* and the international donor community.552 The aim of the conference was to allocate money for the reconstruction of Northern Mali and the ending of the conflict. During the five years the conflict had lasted, donor countries and NGO’s had made various promises to contribute financially to peace. In addition, money which had been reserved for projects in Northern Mali had accumulated in wait of better days. In all, during the Timbuktu Round Table, an estimated $150,000,000 was promised to contribute to the reconstruction of the North when lasting peace was established. This was large boons which greatly helped to appease the warring factions. A last, but certainly most important measure, was the creation of the FAR-Nord; a fund to finance peace in the North or, better put, to finance the disarmament and integration of the former fighters.

De Graaf’s plan for disarmament essentially consisted of the creation of special sites in the North where fighters who wished to integrate into the Malian armed forces or civil society could present themselves and hand over their weapons. In return for their arms, the fighters would be


registered in the integration projects, with the assurance that they would either integrate into the army, or would be financially assisted in setting up a civilian life. In the meantime, they would stay in the camps, where free food, clothes and basic army training were provided, as well as an entry bonus of 20,000 CFA and 600 CFA or $1 a day for personal expenses.\textsuperscript{553} In other words, their arms and peacefulness were bought.

Four of these cantonment camps were created at Bourem, Léré, Kidal and Menaka. The camps were under the command of regular army officers. The camps were financed by the Malian state as a sign of its commitment to establishing peace. In return, the FAR-Nord programme would finance the more expensive bonuses for the handing over of arms in the camp, the financing of training of integrated fighters and the financing of projects to reinsert the remaining fighters in civilian life.\textsuperscript{554}

The cantonment started in November 1995 and lasted until February 1996. In all 2,902 fighters entered the cantonment camps.\textsuperscript{555} However, most of the cantoned men had not been core-members of the movements and most of the arms they presented were outdated models. The best fighters and arms never reached the camps. A number of these fighters would later form well-equipped tribal militias, their weapons in hiding, which ensure ‘real’ peace among the various communities of the North and, occasionally, serve to engage violently in political affairs. As one informant, a prominent Kidal politician, put it in June 1999 – ‘sometimes we do certain things to show that, despite democracy, there is always the possibility of “demokalachi” in Kidal’. The mixture of democracy and Kalachnikovs he outlined remained a reality in Northern Mali. The peace of Timbuktu remains, at the time of writing, an armed peace between communities distrusting each other and the state.

The absence of skilled fighters and the newest weapons could not temper spirits in 1996 and indeed, peace was finally established in the North. On 26 March 1996, the conflict was ceremoniously ended in burning the weapons presented by the cantoned fighters at Timbuktu’s main market. The ceremony was attended by the elite of Malian politics, the MFUA and the international community. Piled up with fire wood and poured over with petrol, the weapons burst into fire for the last time. While the arms burned, FPLA leader Zeidane ag Sidi Alamine proclaimed the movements united in the MFUA: MPA, ARLA, FIAA, FPLA and Ganda Koy, dissolved. The rebellion was over.

\textsuperscript{553} ‘Léré: La paix est cantonnée’, Les Echos, 03/02/1996.

\textsuperscript{554} Poulton & ag Youssouf (1998), op. cit., 115. The costs of these bonuses amounted to $3,000,000, provided by Canada, Norway, the Netherlands and the US.

\textsuperscript{555} The distribution of these fighters over the different movements showed which movements had won and which had lost in the internal struggle for power. Most fighters, 1,092 or 37%, came from the MPA. The Ganda Koy followed close with 811 men or 28%. The FPLA could integrate, 453 of its men or 16% of the total number of integrés. ARLA and FIAA were the losers with 260 and 288 men respectively, or 9% and 10% each.
Conclusion

From its beginnings in June 1990 to its end in March 1996, the rebellion went through four phases. After a bad beginning in June 1990, in which their network was largely dismantled by the Malian security forces, the rebels successfully launched a military campaign that dealt decisive blows to the Malian army, and forced the Traoré regime to open negotiations. The start of negotiations in December 1990 marked the beginning of a second phase. This phase, lasting roughly until the beginning of 1994, was characterised by constant negotiations, low-key but steady military activity from both sides and, mostly, political confusion. While the Malian state underwent a transition from dictatorship to multi-party democracy, the rebels became internally divided on the content of their demands and on political issues internal to Tamasheq society. This protracted phase of insecurity and confusion finally led to a fourth phase of renewed large scale violence between rebel movements and the creation of a new party in the conflict – the Ganda Koy. After half a year of extreme violence, the conflict entered a final phase – a slow but gradual peace process on the initiative of local civilian leaders, the tribal chiefs and village heads.

Break-ups within the once united movement had various reasons. Opposing ideas on the aims of rebellion was one reason. Moderates, opting for inclusion within the Malian state, were separated from hardliners striving for independence. A second reason for separation was a difference of opinion on the second goal of the Tamekra movement and the rebellion – the transformation of the Tamasheq political landscape from one in which clan affiliation, the hierarchy among clans and caste decided on the social political status of an individual, to one in which equality and personal achievement would be decisive. A third reason for separation can be found in the role the fighters attributed to themselves within society – that of the protectors of the weak. The retaliations by the Malian army on the civilians led the fighters to reorganise their movements along clan lines to effectively protect their own ‘weaker’ kin, or ‘their’ civilians.

Yet, the effects of the break-up of the movement into various factions had effects opposite to those intended. The FPLA, uniting the hardliners within the movement, broke up along clan lines over questions of internal hierarchy between adhering clans. The ARLA intended to abolish the importance of clan affiliation, regional and caste divisions into social relations. But the effect was that only those Kel Adagh who did not belong to the Ifoghas adhered to the movement. Tamasheq outside the Adagh did not join, making regional divisions even stronger. The armed hostilities between ARLA and MPA resulted in the break-up of the ARLA, which ensured the further dominance of the Ifoghas within the Adagh.

The break-up of the movement into smaller militias which intended to protect the civilians, led to internal military conflicts which only endangered the civil population. Furthermore, the general attitude of the Tamasheq fighters towards non-Tamasheq civilians and their internal conflicts, led to the creation of a new movement of Songhay and bellah inhabitants of the north, the Ganda Koy. This last movement created
during the conflict, led to heavier repression of the civil population and the return of stereotypes and racism, along with a strong Malian nationalist discourse.

Nationalism and racism, rather than ethnicity, played an important role for all parties involved in the rebellion. The tanekra movement was inspired by nationalist ideals. During the tanekra, the concepts of the Tamasheq nation and its homeland had been elaborated. In June 1990, the rebels set out to create political space for both. The different views among various currents within the rebel movement on the amount of space desired and the forms this space could take, inside or outside the Malian nation-state, drove the first wedge into a united movement. The wedge only became bigger as negotiations about the form and size of Tamasheq space, both within the movement and with the Malian state, dragged on.

As violence between currents within the movement grew, nationalist discourse changed or hardened at both ends of the spectrum. Paradoxically, moderates among the Ifoghas – the tribe which had taken the fore in the creation of a Tamasheq nationalist movement – ended up negating their separatist intentions and went as far as to explain rebel activity in a Malian national interpretation of recent history. This vision of the rebellion was first developed by southern Malian politicians in an attempt to save the nation’s integrity, but it was swiftly adopted by representatives of the MPA.

On the side of the government, national unity and integrity remained the only approach to rebel demands. Proposals suggesting forms of Tamasheq autonomy were all discarded by governments succeeding Moussa Traoré. The compromise with rebel demands was found in decentralisation, applied to the administration of the whole country. Ironically, the decentralisation process was started in the four ‘Southern’ administrative Régions, and was only applied in the four northern Régions in 1999.

Discourse on inclusion and exclusion in the Malian nation and the image of the Kel Tamasheq as Malian or foreign was fully developed by the Ganda Koy, which can be seen as the vox populi about the rebellion. Starting with a depiction of the Kel Tamasheq as never having belonged to the Malian historical nation and of the rebels as foreign mercenaries, Ganda Koy discourse changed towards inclusion of the Kel Tamasheq ‘cousins’ within the Malian nation through mythical history and the concept of senankuya – joking relationships – as the process towards peace began in November 1994.

Exclusion by the Ganda Koy of the Kel Tamasheq from the Malian nation and depiction of the Kel Tamasheq as foreign, was largely based on discourse on race and racism. By accusing the Kel Tamasheq of being ‘white pro-slavers’ and as ‘Qaddafi’s Arab mercenaries’ they were depicted as foreign elements seeking to dominate the indigenous Malian population. By stressing the rebels’ ‘whiteness’, the Ganda Koy managed to develop an othering discourse excluding those elements of Tamasheq society that were not ‘white’, the bellah or former slaves who could join the Ganda Koy ranks.
Stressing the stereotype of the white Kel Tamasheq as pro-slavers found justification in the adherence of former Tamasheq slaves within the Ganda Koy. Not without reason, the bellah developed a discourse of exclusion from the rebellion; the assassination of the one high-ranking rebel of bellah origins by colleague rebels served to prove the point. Indeed, the bellah had been largely and conspicuously absent within the tanekra. In developing a nationalist and racial discourse, the Ganda Koy managed to avoid the pitfall of ethnic discourse, which would have excluded the bellah from the Ganda Koy as well, since they still formed part of Tamasheq society, despite denial of the latter by prominent bellah spokesmen. From their side, rebel spokesmen rightly accused the Ganda Koy of developing a racist and national discourse of the Kel Tamasheq other, and denied it by stressing the positive consequences of their rebellion – the end of dictatorship in Mali and the establishment of a multi-party democracy.

The violence in the north between rebel movements, the Ganda Koy and the army led to a state of general insecurity for all inhabitants of the north, which brought civic leaders from all groups involved, notably the Kel Tamasheq and the Songhay, to undertake measure to improve security conditions irrespective of the state or the movements. A local peace agreement on the initiative of tribal leaders and village heads in the Cercle Bourem would finally form the blueprint for a constructive peace process. The movements’ leaders, realising the loss of support for both their own negotiations with the state and their violent encounters with each other, ended up joining this peace initiative at the instigation of tribal leaders, which strengthened the latter’s position within society as the rightful mediators between state and society, bypassing the rebels and thus dealing a final blow to initiatives to change Tamasheq society.