Introduction

What is *Alfellaga* and what does it mean? In June 1990, a group of Tuareg started an armed uprising against the Malian state. To anybody taking an interest in these events it would quickly become clear that the upsurge had its roots in a previous insurgency that took place in 1963, when the inhabitants of the Adagh n Ifoghas revolted against their inclusion in the Malian state. This revolt is locally known as *Alfellaga* and its narrative history, as well as its local historical interpretation and politization with its consequence in the past twenty years are central to this book. It is also about the contested meanings of decolonisation, independence and nationalism in the desert part of the Republic of Mali.

Answering the main question of this book resulted in formulating other questions, as it goes with scholarly work these days, which became just as important. These questions evolve first of all around the workings of Kel Tamasheq politics. This book hopes in a way to fill the lacuna in knowledge on the recent political events of a remote corner of the world, the inhabitants of which are so widely yet so shallowly known. Then there are the eternal questions all historians ask themselves time and again: How does historical discourse influence the present, and how does the present influence historical discourse? Is the past created in the present or the present in the past? These questions will be dealt with not so much on the level of events, although of course that will be part of the book too, but more on the level of local visions and local workings of history in Tamasheq society and politics. In a way, this book wants to be an ethnography of the local politics of history in the Central Sahara. A history that has a worldwide impact if

only because a number of its actors and eyewitness poets are now world famous musicians who sing the history studied in this book in sport stadiums and concert halls from Sidney, via Paris and London, to Los Angeles. But perhaps also since the Central Sahara has come under attention of those interested in the perceived conflict between 'Radical Islam' and 'The West' and despite their focus on actual geopolitics, most of those interested cannot help but to frame their vision on this supposed 'Clash of Civilisations' in historical terms.[1] But even if this history would not have had any worldwide ramifications at all it would still be interesting, simply because there is no such thing and there cannot be such a thing as an unknown remote corner of the globe.

The Adagh n Ifoghas, where *Alfellaga* took place, is a small range of low Mountains appended to the southwestern edge of the central Saharan Hoggar Mountains. The mountains are called Adagh n Ifoghas after part of its inhabitants, the Ifoghas, a Tuareg clan. Adagh n Ifoghas literally means 'mountains of the Ifoghas' in their language, Tamasheq. Worldwide the people speaking this language are known as Tuareg but unless I quote source material, in this book they will be referred to as they refer to themselves: Kel Tamasheq, 'the people speaking Tamasheq'. Kel Tamasheq is a general plural taken from the female plural. The masculine plural is *imushagh*, a term with a particular meaning fully explained later on: 'noble'. The masculine singular is Ou Tamasheq and the feminine singular Tou Tamasheq, which simply designate individuals, but which are seldom used. For the sake of simplicity these singulars will therefore not be used in this book either. A single person will be referred to as 'a Tamasheq', in full realisation of the grammatical abhorrence. Tamasheq normally means the language, but I will use Tamasheq as an adjective as well. The Ifoghas are the leading clan of a larger group of Kel Tamasheq clans in the Adagh Mountains. Only the Ifoghas call these mountains 'Adagh n Ifoghas'. The other clans in the Adagh simply speak of 'Adagh'—'The Mountains'—and refer to its inhabitants as Kel Adagh, 'The People of The Mountains'. In turn, the Kel Adagh form part of the larger Tamasheq world, which forms part of the North African Berber culture and language group.

On a Tamasheq map of the area, the Adagh is bordered by the Hoggar Mountains to the north, by the sandy plain of the Tamesna to the east, by the Azawad

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[1] Lecocq, B. & P. Schrijver 2007.

valley to the southeast, by the stony and treeless Tilemsi plain to the south and southwest, and by the Timetrine plain to the west and northwest. Most of these areas are seen as part of the Kel Adagh living space. The areas beyond, the Hoggar Mountains and Touat plain to the north, the Azawagh valley and Aïr Mountains to the east, the Aribinda lands in the Niger interior delta to the south, and the land of Shinqit to the west, are not formally part of the Kel Adagh living space, but they do form part of their world as they are inhabited by other Kel Tamasheq groups and by their most direct neighbours: First and foremost the Bidân (also known as Moors) and other Arabs, and the Fulani, who share a nomadic pastoralist culture; second by the Songhay, Dogon, Bambara and Hausa peoples who are sedentary farmers.

On a political map of the world the Adagh n Ifoghas is called Adrar des Ifôghas and it is situated in the Northeastern corner of the Republic of Mali, on its border with Algeria. While Mali's northernmost part, including the Adagh, is situated in the Sahara, its southernmost part, the Mande Mountains, is situated in the more forested part of the West African savanna. This geographical location places Mali in the Sahel zone, neighbouring Mauritania and Senegal to the west; Niger and Burkina Faso to the east; and Ivory Coast and Guinée (Conakry) to the south.

Kel Tamasheq politics

This book deals with political changes and internal debates about political changes within Tamasheq society from the late 1940s to the present. These debates focus on new political structures introduced into Tamasheq society from outside— such as the colonial bureaucratic administration, the post-independence socialist one-party state, nationalism, and multi-party democracy—and their impact on and incorporation into local concepts of politics, the origins of which predate colonial rule. These local concepts—and I try very hard here to avoid the much despised term 'traditional'—are based on concepts of kinship and hierarchy, which have long been misunderstood to be akin to European feudalism, with dire consequences for local political history. So before we can say anything on the political history of Northern Mali we need to have some basic understanding of the principles of Tamasheq social and political organisation, and the ways in which

they have been shaped. The first thing that can be observed about Tamasheq social and political structure is its extreme diversity. As Clare Oxby has rightly put it:

> Scholars have always tried to distinguish "ordered structures" in Tuareg social organisation (. . .) In the end, all attempts to model society fail as one can always find a Tuareg group escaping the rule.[2]

This is not to say that the Tamasheq world does not know social or political unity. The Tamasheq are organised into a number of interconnected social and political constellations, acknowledging each others existence in cooperation and rivalry, and in the idea that they are all part of one culture and one people, the Kel Tamasheq: 'Those who speak Tamasheq'. However, it does mean that within the Tamasheq world, as everywhere else, variety in political organisation exists. What will be said here is only valid for the western part of the Tamasheq world included in the Republic of Mali. Other Tamasheq polities in other countries have different experiences, both at present as in the recent and more distant past.

The bases of social-political organisation in the western part of the Tamasheq world are twofold. The first is hierarchy. The second is the one social structure all Tamasheq groups have in common: The clan or *tewsit*, which can be seen as quasi kin groups based on a lineage ideology, which varies per clan. The basis for the hierarchical structure of society is a system of social strata referred to as castes. The clans, or *tewsiten* (sing. *tewsit*), are largely based on lineage structures and are partly caste related. The very notions of hierarchy and even the mere existence of castes and *tewsiten* are controversial subjects of debate within Tamasheq society as well as among scholars. Various parties outside and inside Tamasheq society wanted, or still want, to abolish either the hierarchical relationships, or the clans, or both, while others wanted to enforce their role. Knowledge of this particular dynamic in internal Tamasheq social political debates is crucial in understanding all political events ever since the late 1940s, when the existence of the political order shaped by colonial rule was first put into question by Malian politicians and the lower strata of Tamasheq society as described in Chapter 1. When attempting to describe the workings and organisation of these castes and *tewsiten*, one is

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[2] Oxby, C. 1996: 172.

confronted with two problems. The first problem is the legacy of colonial observation, describing Tamasheq social strata as a feudal system in which racial characterisations played an important role. The second problem consists of the colonial and post-colonial administrative meddling in social and political organisation, which has resulted in confusion around the content and meaning of the term *tewsit*. I will first explain the colonial observation and the resulting description of Tamasheq society as feudal. Then I will describe the historical development of the various contents and meanings the word *tewsit* has acquired throughout pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times. I will explain how the French administrative terms *tribu* and *fraction*, translated throughout this book as 'tribe' and '*fraction*', are related to the Tamasheq term *tewsit*, without these three concepts being totally congruent, although many people, administrators, researchers and even Kel Tamasheq alike, think this to be the case.

Tamasheq society is based on a set of social strata into which one is born. Early French ethnographers described the social organisation as feudal.[3] At the top of this society stood the *imushagh* (m. sing: *amashegh*, f. sing: *tamasheq*) or noble warriors, referred to in early colonial ethnographies as a '*noblesse d'épée*' and perceived as racially 'white'. The *imushagh* distinguish themselves by a culture of honour and shame, quite common among the Mediterranean cultures most anthropologists classify them amongst, precisely on the grounds of this particular trait.[4] This culture is called *temushagha*, 'the way of the *imushagh*'.[5] It consists first of all of the knowledge of honour and shame—*eshik* and *takaraket* respectively in Tamasheq—and second in the knowledge of one's *temet*—one's lineage and

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[3] It should be noted that the first explorers and ethnographers of the Kel Tamasheq, such as Barth, Bissuel or Duveyrier, hardly used the term feudal to describe Tamasheq society. They are nevertheless responsible for the introduction of this term which became popular especially among colonial ethnographers/administrators from the 1920s onwards. Barth, H. 1859; Bissuel, H. 1888; Duveyrier, H. 1864.

[4] Behnke, R. 1980; Hart, D. 1981; Peristiany, J., ed., 1966; Peristiany, J. & J. Pitt-Rivers, eds, 1992. In his groundbreaking work *Honour in African History*, Iliffe even excludes North Africa and the Kel Tamasheq from his work as they are part of a supposed Mediterranean culture zone in which, according to most works on honour and shame in this area, honour is bound to female chastity, in contrast to sub-Saharan African cultures where this is not the case. The fact that this is not the case in Bidân and Kel Tamasheq concepts of honour either escapes Iliffe and most other scholars dealing with this subject. Iliffe, J. 2005: 1–3.

[5] Bourgeot, A. 1990, 1995; Claudot-Hawad, H. 1990, 1993, 1993b.

ancestry—which form the basis of political organisation and which are kept closed off from strong political and social mobility through marriage strategies. The first group the French distinguished from the *imushagh* were the *ineslemen* (m.: *aneslim*): A group of free or noble status, racially described as 'white', who specialised in religious affairs. They were described as a '*noblesse de robe*' that stood directly under the *imushagh* in the social hierarchy. Although their primary guidance in life are the tenets of Islam they also adhere to *temushagha*. The *imghad* (m.: *amghid* f.: *tamghid*) formed a third group. This group consisted of free, 'white' people who were not noble, but who tried to live according to the *temushagha*, the noble way of life, with one notable exception: Most *imghad*, but not all, do not have a *temet*, a lineage to which they belong, and which they guard against impurity or political encroachments through endogamous marriage strategies that form the basis of a policy to keep the social strata in place. They were often described as dependent on the nobles for protection and rearing their cattle for them, although neither was necessarily true. However, for these reasons they were referred to as '*vassaux*' to the nobles. The *inadan* (m.: *enad* f.: *tenad*) or craftsmen, generally simply referred to as 'blacksmiths', were another important group the French encountered. They stood out especially in the Timbuktu area and in the Algerian Hoggar and Ajjer, where they performed functions similar to that of the *griot* in other West African societies (sometimes a special subgroup from among the *inadan*, the *aggiwin* performed these tasks). They were racially classified as 'black', but free. Most ethnographers placed them outside the strict social hierarchy they construed for Tamasheq society as they enjoyed certain liberties of behaviour that the slaves—also perceived as 'black'—did not (and neither did other groups in society for that matter) as the *inadan* did not follow the *temushagha* the nobles adhered to. At the bottom were the *iklan* (m.: *akli* f.: *taklit*): The slaves, divided into various subgroups which were all categorised as 'black'. This social classification into five groups still form the basis of description of Tamasheq society by many present-day researchers, although more and more reluctantly so.

Actually, it is not at all clear what it exactly means to be a member of any of these groups nowadays. Slavery was formally abolished in 1905 in French West Africa, and Tamasheq slaves were gradually emancipated since the 1940s, as we will see in Chapter 1. At present, slavery formally no longer exists at all,

although the emancipation process is still incomplete.[6] The *imghad* deny any form of actual dependency on the nobles. At most they pay an honorary tribute, the *tiwse*, the worth of which is trivialised by the giving party, and sometimes even by the receiving party. This does not mean however, that anyone denies their existence as a social category. To the contrary, being *imghad* or not is of the utmost importance in Northern Mali ever since the 1960s, and it gained even more importance during the rebellion of the 1990s as a form of self-ascription. However, what it exactly means to be *imghad* is an issue of hot debate and opinions differ. It is not even clear whether a social group called *ineslemen* actually exists. The exact meaning of the word is 'Muslims' and all Tamasheq are Muslims. True enough, some *tewsiten* are in one way or another connected to a Muslim identity, such as the Ifoghas who claim *shorfa* status (descent of the prophet Muhammad) or the Kel Essuq who are generally connected with religious study such as *fiqh* and therefore called *alfaqiten*, a Berber plural of the Arabic *faqîh*. But the strict hierarchical distinction made between *ineslimen* and other *tewsiten* is difficult to make. At present, the social political meaning of the word *amashegh*—noble— is very unclear. In present-day Northern Mali the term seems to be reserved to denote small groups of Ouillimiden, *tewsiten* of the former ruling elite of the Ouillimiden confederation that ruled Northern Mali in the 19th century. They are often referred to as 'Bajan's (their leader) *imushagh*' or, when speaking French, '*les Touaregs*'. Formerly an external ethnonym, the word is now internally used to denote exactly the one quintessential group imagined to be Tuareg in the global imagery of consumption.

It is only clear that one is born into either group and that these groups stand in a certain hierarchical relation to each other. What that hierarchy looks like or whether it should be there in the first place is another matter which is, as has been said earlier, hotly debated within Tamasheq society.

I would like to propose another way of looking at this system of hierarchical strata, one not based on the old colonial parallel to feudalism. As I see it, the main criteria for classification of the existing groups are the following three oppositions: Free—unfree; strong—weak; and lineage—non-lineage.

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[6] Lecocq, B. 2005.

Free—unfree. The main categorisation is between *ellellu*, free; and *akli*, (former) slave, hence unfree. French colonial politics towards slavery in the Sahara was characterised by a dual attitude. Formally denying its existence in Arab and Tamasheq society after abolition, the French had never done anything to change the situation of former slaves, thus perpetuating their servitude. From the 1940s onwards, Malian politicians made the freeing of slaves and the breaking up of Tamasheq 'feudal relations' one of their focal points in regional, and even national politics. But despite this, notions of free and unfree status still exist in Tamasheq society, and still form the major divide. The issue of social inequality expressed in the existence of a social category of former slaves will play an important part throughout this book. It should be noted directly that this divide is not a feature unique to Tamasheq society. Other Malian societies, or West African societies in general, know this social divide between slaves and free as well.[7]

Strong—weak. The distinction between strong protecting groups or even persons, and weak protected ones, is the most important in this study. The Tamasheq concepts of strong and weak are *ellellu* (meaning of free origins or social independence) and *talaqqiw* (poverty or weakness). It includes ideas on economic and cultural capital, physical and military capacity, and certain character traits. Weak and strong are more or less fixed categories, only slowly changing over time, and applied to whole social political groups, the *tewsiten*, although of course they can also be applied to individuals. The French at first perceived the opposition between weak and strong, poor and rich as a distinction between the nobles, the *imushagh*; and the 'vassals', the *imghad*. In reality, some nobles are classified as *tilaqqiwin*— poor or weak—and some vassal groups as *illellan*, rich or strong. It is arguable whether those people labelled as *talaqqiw* have a lower status than those who are not labelled as such. A poor noble might still be seen as better placed than a strong *amghid* from a noble's point of view or vice versa from an *amghid's* position. After independence, especially from the 1970s onwards among Tamasheq immigrants, the hierarchical position between *tewsiten* became open to negotiation, while its continued existence was a matter of political debate. During and after the second rebellion, the internal dynamics of Tamasheq society led to violent conflict between *tewsiten* to alter their hierarchical position. At the same time occurred

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[7] Rossi, B., ed., 2009.

a shift in terminology used in the selfascription of certain social groups. Those who were once referred to as *imghad* now referred to themselves as *ellellu* (strong, which they were), which came to be similar to 'noble', without using the term *amashegh*. The *imghad* now started to define their way of life as *timgheda*—'the way of the *imghad*'—as in contrast to *temushagha*—'*the way of the imushagh*'— while certain *tewsiten* went even further and defined their way of life as particular to their tribe: *Tefoghessa*, 'the way of the Ifoghas'. These new statuses were based on ideas on strength and the ensuing obligation to defend weaker groups.

Temet—lineage and prestige. The last major opposition is between those who claim a lineage and know their genealogy, and those who do not claim a lineage or do not know their genealogy. Lineage or genealogy is called *temet*, which literally means 'placenta' in Tamasheq. A clan's lineage can be either patrilineal or matrilineal. In the Adagh and Azawad, lineage is only patrilineal, but in the Niger Bend and the Northern part of Burkina Faso, some groups, such as the Udalan and Imededdeghen *imghad* (who have *temet*) are matrilineal.[8] In the Algerian Hoggar, the transfer of political power seems to be only matrilineal, which has been at the basis of much Orientalist speculation on (matriarchal) gender relations in Tamasheq society. Having a *temet* is perceived to be the major characteristic of a noble origin. One of the main functions of keeping and knowing one's *temet* (or, as it is, inventing one that is accepted by other groups), is to accumulate prestige, a criteria on which hierarchy is based, and to keep social and political power within the tribe through endogamous marriage strategies. The prestige generated by a *temet* depends on the ancestors claimed, and on the amount of known historical personae further down the line. It is partly through the *temet* that status and hierarchy are designated to a *tewsit* as a whole. The ideological construct of lineage and genealogy is based more on wider kinship relations than on strict descendance. In Tamasheq kinship terminology, most of ego's ancestors are called 'father' (*abba*) or 'mother' (*anna*), with the notable exception of mother's brother and his male ascendants, who are called mother's brother (*annet ma*). In this way, lineage and descent allow for a larger construction of *tewsit* belonging through an idea of direct descent.

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[8] Guignard, E. 1984.

All criteria presented here as split entities are of course totally interwoven. They are concepts that can be played with and moulded at will in everyday practice where scholarly classification is of no concern. What is presented here concisely is, and will always remain, one of the major subjects within the study of Tamasheq society, because of its enormous complexity and because of social scientists' fascination with classification.

Tewsit

Tewsit is the most important word in understanding the history and contemporary structure of Tamasheq politics. The etymological meaning of the word *tewsit* is that of a woven mat or a hair plait.[9] A plait starts at the roots of one's hair, taking various strands together, and intertwining them into a strong whole. A Tamasheq woman's hair is plaited into three plaits, consisting of a number of smaller plaits. The plaits are partly visible from under her kerchief. This comparison is highly illustrative for the construction and functioning of *tewsiten* and the imbroglio they have become nowadays. Due to the fact that the term is now in use to denote different but related social-political structures—the original clan, but also the *tribu* and *fraction* of modern administration—the meaning and content of the *tewsit* as a social political structure has become hard to define. Researchers, administrators and the Kel Tamasheq alike have used the word to denote various indigenous and administrative organisations in Tamasheq society. In these sorts of situations, words like 'traditional' (alas, it seems unavoidable to use this term) or 'original' immediately come to mind as useful to discern between what is old, indigenous and Tamasheq, and what is foreign or new. I will first discuss what the *tewsit* might have been and looked like in pre-colonial times. Then we will see how and why the French administrators thought it wiser to introduce their own system of social organisation, which they thought was reflecting the 'traditional' Tamasheq system. Finally we will see how in post-colonial times both systems became intermeshed into one inextricable whole in which practically everybody gets lost.

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[9] This meaning might be particular to the Tadghaq dialect. H. Claudot-Hawad gives as etymologies for *tewsit*; a wrist; a circular trap; or a woven mat, which conveys the same meaning as a plait. Claudot-Hawad, H. 1990.

The shortest and least inaccurate translation of the *tewsit* into anthropological terms is 'clan'. Other appropriate translations could have been 'lineage group' or 'descent group'. What makes it more complicated is that the *tewsit* can also be seen as a ramage of lineages or clans. That is to say: A grouping of lineages or clans through descent from the same but more distant ancestor, which can be either male or female.[10] At present the Kel Tamasheq also use the term *tewsit* to denote the administrative units called *fraction* and *tribu*. The concepts of *temet*—genealogy—and *tewsit*—clan—are interrelated. Clan and genealogy together form a kinship structure. A *tewsit* consists of all the living members of a lineage, hence the anthropological translation 'descent group'. However, not all Kel Tamasheq are perceived to have a genealogy, such as *imghad* groups, former slaves and other poor and powerless or *tilaqqiwin*. This does not mean that those without a genealogy are without a *tewsit*. Slaves were incorporated into their masters' *tewsit*. Nowadays former slave families can still use their former masters' clan to position themselves socially. *Imghad*, or other socially poor or weak without their proper *tewsit*, were incorporated into the clan of the free/strong *illellan* under whose protection they were placed. In fact, often the noble's real protection only consisted of this incorporation in the *tewsit*, since it offered incorporation into a social and political structure. A *tewsit* is thus a social-political group centred on a free or noble lineage or clan, containing other social categories. In practice a *tewsit* can be seen as a group of people who consider themselves to form one, explaining and justifying their common belonging in kinship terms, which makes it a quasi-kin-group. This is possible through the way *tewsiten* are both split and bundled into ramages, precisely like a plait. A person can therefore belong to more than one *tewsit* at a time. A clan is part of a larger ramage when one ascends in the genealogical tree. This larger ramage, in turn, can also be part of a larger ramage when moving even higher up the genealogical branches. Sub-branching goes a long way.

The relations between *tewsiten* of the same ancestor (*alesel*, from the Arabic *al-Asl*, the root) are expressed in the language of non-lineal kinship structures. The two most important supportive kinship relations in western Tamasheq society

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[10] Terminology according to Schusky, E. 1972.

are the *aran meddan* and the *tegezé* relationships.[11] The *aran meddan*—which very likely means 'the backbone of men'—are male paternal parallel cousins (female paternal parallel cousins being called *tanyatin*, and male and female maternal parallel cousins being called *aran tidoden*—'the backbone of women'). This relation can be extended over various generations, expanding the limits of the group to a fraternal interest group writ large. In the western Tamasheq world, the *aran meddan* relationship forms the ideal basis of most *tewsiten*, with the *tegezé* relation as a supportive relation between *tewsiten*. *Tegezé*—literally meaning pelvis—is the relation between sister's children (sons) and mother's brother. This relation entails unrestricted material support and protection to his nephews and nieces by mother's brother (called *annetma*), and protection and loyalty to their uncle by sister's children (called *tegezé*). This relation, too, can be extended over the generations, when it can be an instrument to invoke support between *tewsiten*, which are seen as related through *tegezé*. In the eastern part of the Tamasheq world (the Aïr and beyond), the term *tegezé* is used to denote a confederation of federated *tewsiten*.[12] Of course, with cousins being preferential marriage partners within the political ideal of *temet* and *tewsit* endogamy, *tegezé* relations also occur within one *tewsit*. This can eventually form the basis of differentiation between *tewsiten* within a *tewsit* (as ramage group), or at least helping the demarcation. The same goes for the *aran meddan* type construction of a *tewsit*. Cross cousins are called *iboubashen*.

   The origins of a *tewsit* can be partly made and unmade at will. There is no exact system, and although the Kel Tamasheq see them as created in historical time, they are therefore often seen by researchers as post-fact creations, which has led many to describe the Tamasheq kinship and clan structure as a segmented lineage system. Paul Pandolfi argues against this description by stating that the making, dissolving and continuous blending of clans is not a form of segmentation, but of internal dynamics and adaptation to new social political and economic situ-

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[11] The relative importance attached to *aran meddan*, *tegezé* or *aboubash* relations differs throughout the Tamasheq world. In the Adagh, the *aran meddan* relation is most important, whereas the Nigerien Kel Ferwan do not even know the term. Among the Kel Hoggar the *tegezé* relation is more important, since it forms the basis of power transmission.

[12] For the perception and expression of social cohesion through the human body see Claudot-Hawad, H. 1990. For more detailed schemes of kinship classification, see Nicolaisen, J. & I. Nicolaisen 1997: 615–653.

ations.[13] The same argument, however, led others to applying the term segmentary system to certain societies in the first place. A second argument is that many *tewsiten* that came into existence after the 1910s were not formed through internal dynamics expressed in kinship relations. They were the result of direct administrative meddling, which will be dealt with below.

All *tewsiten* are perceived to be incorporated in, or at least under the influence of, an *ettebel*, which literally means (war)drum, hence the anthropological translation 'drum group'.[14] An *ettebel* is a grouping of clans and ramage groups forming a political unit under the leadership of one clan or ramage group. The various clans and ramage groups stood in hierarchical relations toward each other. The leader of the *ettebel* as a whole is called *amenokal*, which literally means 'owner of the land'. The symbol of his power is a drum—the *ettebel* (from the Arabic *tobol*, drum)— hence the name. A convenient translation of *ettebel* is federation. The *ettebel* was historically the most important political and military defence group.

Federations could rise and fall. They could be made and dissolved, depending on the strength of dominant groups in the political field. They could also combine in an even larger unit, the confederation, called *tegezé* in the eastern Tamasheq world. The once powerful Kel Tademekkat confederation was dissolved shortly before colonial conquest. In the 18th century, the large confederation of the Ouillimiden split in two halves: The Ouillimiden Kel Ataram; and the Ouillimiden Kel Denneg. During the phase of colonial pacification, roughly between 1900 and 1920, the French military administration enhanced the internal process of creating and dissolving federations. Federations that posed threats to French rule, such as the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram and the Ouillimiden Kel Denneg, were dissolved. Loyal collaborating clans were promoted to the rank of a federation, which might lead a French recognised confederation. This was the case with the Ifoghas federation in the Adagh, which was recognised by the French as an *ettebel* independent from the Ouillimiden Kel Ataram in 1910. Their leader Attaher ag Illi was promoted to the rank of *amenokal*, who informally led the other ramage groups in the Adagh Mountains—the Idnan, the Kel Taghlit and the Taghat Mellet—in a confederation called Kel Adagh. Although it might well be

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[13] Pandolfi, P. 1998: 204–205. See also Bernus, S. & E. Bernus, eds, 1986.
[14] The term was first coined by Johannes Nicolaisen. Nicolaisen, J. 1963a, 1963b; Nicolaisen, J. & I. Nicolaisen 1997.

that the Ifoghas perceived themselves as independent from the Ouillimiden prior
to French conquest, it is secretly known that this was not the case. However, the
Ifoghas present themselves today as having had their own *ettebel* since the late 19th
century, prior to French arrival, which, according to their own version of history,
only helped to have their independence finally recognised by their neighbours. At
present *ittebelen* are seen as historical relics in Northern Mali but, informally, they
do exist and have an influence on local politics that is hard to measure.

It is clear that the flexibility and interchangeability of the social-political system
outlined above would get on the nerves of French colonial administrators. Most
colonial administrators dealt with this problem in the same way: They decided
for themselves who belonged together and what that group should be called. The
administration in *Soudan Français* was characterised by the colonial administra-
tion itself as a double system of French *Commandants* and locally recruited *Chefs
Traditionels*. The largest administrative unit was the *Cercle*, lead by a *Comman-
dant de Cercle*, who could be a military officer or a civil administrator. The *Cercle*
was divided into *Subdivisions*, also headed by a *Commandant*, and into parallel
French created *chefferies coutumiers*, traditional chieftaincies. In sedentary soci-
eties, these were the *cantons* and *villages*, each headed by a chief, the *Chef de Can-
ton* being placed over de *Chefs de Village*. Among the nomads, the French had
created *tribus* and *fractions*—tribes and *fractions*—as 'traditional' social and now
administrative units, with both headed by a chief, and the *tribu* regrouping the
fractions. At first these tribes and *fractions* were based on the French understand-
ing of the *tewsit* system. The term *tribus* was believed to be the proper transla-
tion of the Tamasheq *tewsit* as a larger ramage group, for example the Ifoghas.
Fraction was seen as the proper translation of the term *tewsit* as a clan, for exam-
ple the Irayakan *tewsit* within the *tewsit* Ifoghas. It then slowly evolved into a
system based on French politics of control. *Commandants* could merge or split
tewsiten to group them together again into new *tribus* or *fractions*. The creation of
tribus and *fractions* should not however be seen as a one-way process dictated by
French administrators. Their administrative grouping and regrouping often took
place on the demand of, and effected under the influence of, the chiefs. In the
end, the connection with the pre-colonial *tewsit* system was almost totally sev-
ered when dependent groups were regrouped into *fractions*, detached from their
original *tewsit*. Until the late 1930s, the communication and dealings with the

Kel Tamasheq for the *Commandants de Cercle* was limited to the tribal chiefs, the interpreters and the *goumiers*—the native police force. Hence, the real impact of the administrative reshuffling of the *tewsiten* into tribes and *fractions* might have been quite small when it comes to internal social and political dynamics. The Kel Tamasheq only had dealings with their *tribu* and *fraction* insofar as they had dealings with the administration and their administrative chief. They could still use the pre-colonial *tewsit* and *ettebel* structures in internal matters. It took devoted *Commandants* who spoke Tamasheq and regularly visited the bush to make a real impact on the Kel Adagh social-political system.

After independence, the new Malian administration set out on an active policy to modernise society and to undo parts of the administrative colonial heritage. Like the French had done before them, but this time based on Marxist theory, the new regime concluded that Tamasheq society was feudal. In order to change this, the 'feudal lords'—the traditional chiefs—had to be ousted, and the still existing servile social relations between former slaves and their former masters had to be totally abolished. Paradoxically, part of the pre-existing colonial structure was now formalised by law in order to change the system. The new regime believed that in traditional pre-colonial African society, the village had been the center of social-political and economic organisation and it therefore proclaimed the village to be the basic unit of Malian political, economical and administrative organisation. Parallel to the village, the *fraction nomade* became the basic unit of administrative, political and economic organisation in nomad societies. However, the tribes that had stood over the *fractions* in colonial times were completely dissolved as an administrative unit. Their place was left vacant and was only filled by the enlargement of the *fractions*, which still exist today. But as the regime quickly discovered, it could not effectively govern without the assistance of the tribal chiefs, who were informally kept in place. The autonomy of the *fractions* from the tribe and the empowerment of its chiefs, as against the power of the tribal chiefs, that took place in the 1960s, opened the possibilities for political use of the *fractions* in internal affairs between *tewsiten* as clans. In the 1970s the *Teshumara* culture of Tamasheq immigrant labourers in the Maghreb, and the *Tanekra*, the revolutionary movement preparing the second rebellion, were hotly debating the existence of *tewsit* and caste hierarchy. While a majority of the members seemed to have been strongly against hierarchy and the *tewsit* system, a

minority was in favour of strengthening its existence. Eventually, this minority would win the debate with the active help of the tribal chiefs and the passive help of the community, but this struggle is not over yet. In the 1990s finally, the *fraction* and its institutions were democratised and the procedure for their creation or dissolution formalised in law. This new democratic structure made it possible to create, split, or bundle *fractions* on the initiative of others than the chiefs and *Commandants*. The main requirement to form a new *fraction* is one hundred potential members who agree upon a designated chief and elect among themselves a *fraction* council (often consisting of the initial organizers of the new *fraction*). The potential chief and his councillors can then request the necessary administrative forms from the *Commandant de Cercle*, fill them out and submit their demand. This procedure became very popular shortly after the second rebellion and still is today. In 1960 there were 64 *fractions* in the *Cercle of Kidal*, a number that had been more or less stable since the 1940s. In 1974 there were 65, in 1996 their number had almost doubled to 114.[15] 'It won't be long until everybody is his own *fraction*' as one informant cynically observed. These new *fractions*, created on the initiative of the Kel Tamasheq themselves partly reinstitute the internal social dynamics of Tamasheq society on clan basis. The new *fractions* are often rooted in the social and political dynamics within a *tewsit* as clan (instead of as *fraction*), which, despite all French and Malian efforts, and despite the efforts of the *Tanekra* movement, has largely remained the basis of Tamasheq social thinking and organisation.

An ethnography of historical research

A historical work is always the outcome of the encounter between a historian and his sources. In this case, part of those sources consists of the historical discourse and memory of the actors and eyewitnesses of the presented events. These actors and eyewitnesses have informed the present writer from the point of view of their historical culture. Thus, it is necessary to be aware of their way of producing

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[15] Journal officiel de la République du Mali, 26/11/1996.

historical discourse, and the notions that inform this production. Therefore, I will give here an outline of Tamasheq thought on history, its sources, circumstances of its production, and the functions of its production.

My relations to those who could help to produce this history were characterised by both restraint and active engagement. During fieldwork in Northern Mali, I made contacts with a number of people I hoped to use as key informants and who could perhaps lead me to others. Some these were former *ifulagen* (m. *afuleg*), as the fighters of *Alfellaga* are called, but they were not keen on talking much about their experiences, nor did they direct me to former comrades. I have not even been able to meet the leaders of *Alfellaga* as one of them, Zeyd ag Attaher, had already died before I arrived in Mali, while the other, Elledi ag Alla, was reticent to meet me. Many former rebels of the 1990s were reluctant to speak too, since the organisation of the rebel movement had been formally sworn to secrecy. As one informant put it, 'you erect a wall around a house to keep the rubbish out'.[16] Yet I did find one man who doubled as key informant and as fieldwork assistant in Kidal, the capital of the Adagh. Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall, presented to me as 'the official historian of the Ifoghas clan', doubled as research assistant and informant on a period that is crucial in this book: That of the *Tanekra*, the movement that prepared for the second rebellion from 1975 to its outbreak in 1990. Fall had been among the first organisers of the *Tanekra* movement and knew the story—his story—by heart. Working with Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall proved to be a pleasure, but sometimes a handicap when meeting other people. A handicap as it blocked access to some categories of informants who were not too keen on the ideas of 'the Ifoghas Minister of Propaganda' as he was called outside his own clan, and a pleasure as his narratives provided me with a basic story and a deepened understanding of how Tamasheq history works. When my attempts to have people discuss the subjects I was interested in failed, I often offered to recount what I presumed to know. I then told the history according to Mohamed Lamine ag Mohamed Fall. More often than not people reacted to this version in exclaiming '*bahuten ghas dihadagh!*', 'those are nothing but lies!'

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[16] Interview with Malik ag Sallah. Ménaka, 28/04/1999.

The relations between those who construe events in Tamasheq historical pro-
duction are shaped by what Andrew Shryock calls 'a community of disagree-
ment'.[17] During my fieldwork, Tamasheq society was in a phase of high political
polemics, based on *tewsit* affiliation. And, like the tribal world of the Jordanian
Balga described by Shryock, 'In a community defined by polemic, dissensus must
be preserved (...) if tribal names are to retain their significance'.[18] The narrative
I gave to potential informants was either too general to fit the narrative of their
own *tewsit*, or it was too close to that of another *tewsit* to be acceptable. Thus, all
information given (with a few remarkable exceptions) is coloured by the polemi-
cal relations between certain *tewsiten*. Indeed, I doubt that many of my informants
would agree entirely with the story as I present it below, simply because the role
of their own *tewsit* is absent or presented in a way which conflicts with their own
vision. If there is one concept that lies at the heart of Tamasheq historical dis-
course, it is that of the fundamental incompleteness of narrative, since there is
always a voice being left out. On the other hand, it is not completeness that mat-
ters so much, as does the vision presented in historical discourse.

The Kel Tamasheq encountered during this research distinguish between four
main forms of historical knowledge constituting the sources of history as a whole:
At-tarikh, written history; *tinfusen*, oral history or narrative; *tisiway*, poetry; and
temet, genealogical recollection. The Tamasheq appreciation of historical sources
seems to be not far removed from common views on history in Western culture
and, indeed, from concepts held by some professional Western historians, which
is probably due to the fact that the Kel Tamasheq have a long-standing tradition
of literacy in Arabic.[19] The literacy rate has increased in the last fifty years when
some Kel Tamasheq became educated in French as well. Some forms of oral
literature, like poetry, are highly regarded as historical sources, but most forms
of *tinfusen*, stories or oral history, were discarded as unreliable. I do not know
to what extent this was the case a few generations ago, but I imagine that this
is a process linked to the increase in literacy. As far as they are available, books
constitute a source of historical knowledge presented as such, and used as a
final argument reinforcing the validity of historical discourse. The Arabic word

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[17] Shryock, A. 1997: 59.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Norris, H.T. 1977.

at-tarikh—history—means 'written history' in Tamasheq. It is classified in two categories. Historical products written in Arabic are called *kitaban*, the Arabic word for book put in Tamasheq plural. Historical products written in French are called *livrtan*, the French word for book put in Tamasheq plural. Regardless of language, most value and credibility is given to these written historical works and many of my informants deplored their lack of availability or access to them. Some of my informants referred to articles or books written by local scholars (sometimes themselves), or the works written by foreign researchers. Some of them also referred to the local archives as *livrtan* of great value. One of the more frustrating moments of my fieldwork occurred when one of my informants asked me, 'Why don't you go to France? There are many books and archives there. We don't know anything about our history. France is where you can find it all'. *Tinfusen* (f. *tanfust*) means 'stories' or 'oral narrative' in general, a large category ranging from folkloristic tales, jokes, and the narrating of anything from important events to what one did yesterday. The exact meaning of *tanfust* depends on its contents. In this respect, a *tanfust* might be historical discourse itself, or the stories passed on by others on which one bases one's own interpretation. *Tinfusen* are perceived to be untrue due to their changing nature. One can tell a story in one way, only to tell it differently the next time. Written texts and poetry are perceived to be fixed, unchanging, and hence more 'true'. *Tisiway* (f.s.: *tasawit*) means poetry. Poems dealing with historical subjects are highly valued as both sources of history and as historical discourse itself. Poetry is, however, not a form of historical narrative. Poems serve as an *aide-mémoire*, emphasising other historical genres. The events dealt with are presented very concisely. It is more a reference to events, than an account of them. What makes a poem valuable is the argument, vision or feeling expressed, which can be debated or taken as an example in other forms of historical production. Fragments of poetry are often used to illustrate what has been said, or as a fundament to build one's own narrative on.[20] The *Teshumara* movement and its successors have been very prolific in the domain of poetry and song writing. Most poems and songs reflect upon the social-political situation the *ishumar* found themselves in, and upon the social-political conditions of the Tamasheq world outside the *Teshumara*. The aim of the poets was to raise

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[20] A good and available example of this is: Ag Alojaly, G. 1975.

political awareness within the Tamasheq world, along the lines of their own thoughts, which were not by definition shared by all Kel Tamasheq. Hence, the relations underlying the (re)construction of events in historically loaded political discourse was one of 'informed' towards 'non-informed'. *Teshumara* poetry is not only the result of relations contemporary to their production. Many poems evoke historical moments. Therefore, they are themselves historical end products, used to raise political awareness. I have collected a corpus of poetry myself but, due to unfortunate circumstances, most of this corpus remains untranslated and thus closed to me. Luckily enough, more competent people in this respect have done similar work. With few exceptions, I will make use of two unpublished corpuses of poetry. The first was collected in 1995, mostly from the mouth of the composers themselves, by Nadia Belalimat and translated with the help of Moussa ag Keyna, himself a poet of the *Teshumara*.[21] The second corpus was collected by Georg Klute in 1996 and 1998 and was translated with the help of Ehya ag Sidiyene.[22] These poems were collected largely in a similar fashion to my own collection and are similar in content as well. The two people that helped translate both corpuses were exactly those I had hoped to engage in the translation of my own corpus, simply because they are the best ones normally available. But alas, they were not.

The centrality of individualised history, the exploits of persons, is predominant in all forms of historical production mentioned above. Tamasheq communal identity and belonging are imagined, in the sense of Anderson's work, but the whole of Tamasheq society consists of face-to-face communities in close contact with each other. They know of each other's existence, stories and particular exploits. The role of the physical environment is related to this. In times of scarcity, it is vital to be able to leave one's territory and dwell on that of neighbours. In this particular environment, knowing people, and the relation to them over space as well as time, is essential to survival. It is easier to remember the historical relation one has to a particular *tewsit* through the intermediary of some of its most renowned members than through knowing all of them personally. Second, the renown of individuals spreads out to their descendants and living kin. Tamasheq society is essentially hierarchical. The hierarchy is not only based on caste status,

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[21] Belalimat, N. 1996.
[22] Klute, G. 2001.

but within a *tewsit* on the value and consequent prestige of its members. One factor in acquiring status or keeping it is to have legendary personalities in one's genealogy. In this way, the history of a person reflects the history of a *tewsit* at a given moment, and their current status is partly derived from it.

The individuality of Tamasheq history is reflected in archive material of the French period and early Malian administration. Apart from oral sources of all kinds, this research is based on a set of archival sources from a number of archives. Although I have collected a large body of relevant data in the *Archives Nationales du Mali* in Bamako and at the *Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer* in Aix-en-Provence, the most important archive collections I consulted come from four rather obscure and sometimes less accessible archives. After some efforts, I managed to gain access to the Archives du Cercle de Kidal in Kidal itself, kept in the then-vacant office of the *Commandant de Cercle*. It is largely thanks to local administrators of Kel Adagh origins who knew and supported my endeavours that I gained access to this collection, which contained an important file on *Alfellaga*, on which I base part of my narrative in Chapter 4. This material is supplemented with a substantive report written by the French intelligence service, the Service de Documentation Espionage et Contre Espionage (SDECE), who observed *Alfellaga* from their bases in Algeria (without giving any indication on possible support from their side), that I found back in the Centre d'Histoire et d'Etudes des Troupes d'Outre Mer in Fréjus France. This archive holds a set of copies from the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre in Paris, which is still under embargo, but which is freely available in Fréjus. Material on the late colonial period, especially on the Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (OCRS) and its effects on local politics, were found first of all in the Archives of the Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Sûreté (now Ministère de l'Adminstration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales) in Bamako, to which I was granted access by then Minister of the Interior Colonel Sada Samake. Last, but certainly not least, I have been able to make use of a substantive body of documents from the Archives du Cercle de Goundam, which have been generously put at my disposal by Bruce Hall. Without these, this book would not have been possible.

French rule in the Sahara was highly indirect. The French *Commandants* in the North were all military officers until the late 1940s. These men were often from the French nobility, who thought in terms of leaders; army hierarchy; and French

prestige. They only had contact with the appointed chiefs and their helpers, and then only when they went on inspection and tax collecting tours. Their reports reflect this. Most reports deal with tax collection, the functioning of the chief, his actions, and disputes over leadership. The civil servants of the late 1950s largely kept to the military tradition that had set the paradigms of their policy. After independence they were replaced by French-trained Malian administrators and army officers, who had previously been their subordinates. It is striking to see the resemblance between early Malian administrative reports and the reports of French *Commandants*. This individualistic approach to events from all sides, both Tamasheq and administrative, will be mirrored in this work. If all sources available deal with individuals, it is more than logical that the stories narrated and the examples given will do likewise. One can consider a history as a case to be presented and analysed to the benefit of scholarly endeavours undertaken outside its original milieu. One could also see it as a presentation of the way a community looks at its existence and presents itself in time. If the latter option is taken, one should incorporate elements of historical production and presentation indigenous to the history told. I will try to strike a balance between both approaches.

A reader's guide to this book

The work presented here is a history, and presented as such, but it shares borders with anthropology. The two extreme visions on both disciplines have it that history asks how the past shapes the present and that anthropology asks how the present shapes the past. The general idea at present is that both visions meet half-way. This study is no exception to the rule. I will try to argue both ways. Discourses on the past are shaped in the present, but simultaneously discourses on the past shape an idea of the present and therefore a possible future. I will argue that preconceived stereotyped images of each other, most of which were of a particular racial nature, effectively shaped political and social interaction between the Malian state and the Kel Tamasheq between the 1940s and 1960s. In turn, the events that came of it—*Alfellaga*, the 1963 rebellion—were remembered and interpreted in a specific historical discourse, which served to muster support for renewed armed resistance against the Malian state since the 1970s. Thus,

historical discourse both serves to explain events and to justify an intended course of events, but it also shapes reactions to events and thus events themselves. It is this interaction between idea and action in Tamasheq and Malian politics that will form the heart of this book. This approach means that I alternate various forms of historical writing in one book. While in one chapter I will construct a narrative, in the next (or in the same) I will show how narratives or similar narratives are used as an explanation or justification of a certain point of view. Where, in one part, I will use interviews as reference material in the construction of discourse or event, I will use them elsewhere to deconstruct it as explanatory analysis to itself or events described. The underlying idea is that, to me, these analytical, argumentative and editorial means are valid if it is one's goal to come to a comprehensive answer to a question, and that is exactly my intention. Although history, as all human sciences, is involved in asking questions, I am somehow convinced that it should also be about giving answers. Structure, logic, ideas on veracity and interpretation, are subject to a desire for understanding, for an answer, albeit an improvised, incomplete, sometimes even incoherent and always temporary one.

The first chapter of this book will discuss decolonisation, independence and nationalism in late colonial *Soudan Français* through a narrative history on party politics and the creation of the Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes (OCRS). The period at hand starts in 1946, the year France authorised the creation of political parties in its African colonies and organised elections for local representative bodies. This heralded the late colonial state and the first irreversible steps toward gradual independence. However, the discovery of mineral riches in the Sahara in the mid-1950s made many in France reluctant to grant full independence to the Saharan possessions. The idea to keep the Sahara under continued French rule was propagated among the Saharan political elite and, suprisingly perhaps at first sight, further promulgated with the ardent support of some of them, against the strongly expressed will of the West African political elite. However, French claims to the Sahara were also opposed by the newly independent Moroccan Sultanate, which claimed large tracts of the Sahara as part of the historical Sultanate, a vision supported by yet other politicians in the Sahara. These were the first seeds of a nascent and multivoiced Saharan nationalism, in opposition to a slowly evolving Malian nationalism.

The second chapter will discuss the role of stereotypes in colonial and postcolonial rule in Africa and especially the role of racial stereotypes and racism in the wider Sahel and Sahara, but especially in Northern Mali. These subjects will be presented through a short history of the construction of stereotypical images and racial categories as part of colonial policies and through a narrative on late colonial and post-colonial politics in Northern Mali regarding slavery in Tamasheq society: The so-called 'bellah question' and the possible existence of a network of Tamasheq slave traders shipping slaves to Mecca.

In the third and fourth chapters we will look at the relation between state and society in the early post-colonial period, through a narrative and analysis of Malian rule over Tamasheq society during Mali's first Republic between 1960 and 1968. The arguments brought forward in these chapters are twofold. The first is that different colonial and postcolonial experiences led to different appreciations of colonial dependence and national independence, which are now expressed in local historical narratives. The second is that decolonisation and independence led to competition over power between old and new political elites, which could be expressed in competing expressions of nationalism. While the first part of this contention is widely known and accepted, the second is less well known. In Northern Mali, this competition found many forms of expression during the precarious shift in powers between old and new political elites. The lack of actual control of the new political elite in Mali was hidden to themselves and to the outside world under a discourse of high modernism, which James Scott roughly defined as a firm belief in the malleability of society under the right rule.[23] Yet, their anxieties about their real lack of power in the North came quickly to the fore in their dealings with local political elites, and the contestations these made to their power. The main rival elites were the tribal chiefs, who successfully managed to retain the position as mediator between state and society they had occupied in the colonial period, and the Western educated évolués of Tamasheq origins, who were excluded from administrative office precisely because of the racialised stereotypical views discussed in Chapter 2. These issues will be the focus of Chapter 3. Sometimes the conflict between rival political elites expressed in rival forms of nationalism escalated into violent conflict. Such

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[23] Scott, J. 1998. See also Bähre, E. & B. Lecocq 2007.

was the case in late colonial Ghana/Ashanti and Morocco/Rif, in post-colonial southeast Nigeria/Biafra, in south Congo/Katanga, in post-colonial Zanzibar, and in post-colonial Northern Mali. Chapter 4 will provide a simple comprehensive narrative of *Alfellaga*: the first armed rebellion of the Kel Tamasheq against their inclusion within Mali between May 1963 and August 1964. Apart from a narrative on the rebellion and its effects, we will look at the present-day politics of historical memory and narration of these events among the Kel Adagh in particular, but also by other inhabitants of Northern Mali.

Chapter 5 will deal first of all with the rapid and tremendous transformations in Tamasheq economy, society and culture in the 1970s and 1980s. I will present a comprehensive narrative of the formation of a cultural movement giving shape to a new Tamasheq way of life in an altered world: *Teshumara*. This will form the background to a discussion of the transformation of Tamasheq politics from within, leading to the creation of a formal nationalist movement, the *Tanekra*, which gave shape to continued Tamasheq aspirations of independence. I will especially focus on the role of historical narrative and its politicization in the formation of this nationalist movement, arguing that induced narratives of revolt, injustice, oppression, and suffering, as well as Tamasheq concepts of honour and shame, hatred and revenge, were instrumentalised in the construction of nationalist sentiments that found their expression in the rebellion of the 1990s. However, although the movement could shape a common nationalist project, it remained internally divided on other political and social issues, especially the desirability of a social hierarchy and lineage-based politics as expressed in the *tewsiten*.

In the final Chapter 6, I will present a narrative of the second Tamasheq rebellion, starting in June 1990, up until March 1996. All the issues discussed in the previous chapters will rise to the fore during the different phases of this rebellion. The rebellion took place in a generally turbulent period in Malian history in which dictatorship was replaced with democracy. Both the democratisation and the Tamasheq rebellion led to an upsurge in Malian nationalism that found its expression partly in the resistance against any compromise with the Tamasheq nationalist rebels. These competing nationalisms finally led to a full blown ethnic conflict locally perceived as a civil war, or an ethnic conflict cloaked in a nationalist discourse of true Malians against alien nomad invaders. All the stereotypical

racist images and discourses discussed in Chapter 2 return to an even more prominent place than they had in the 1960s. But as the Tamasheq rebels were militarily superior to the Malian Armed Forces, compromise had to be reached. This, however, brought the internal divisions within the Tamasheq nationalist movement to light, which led to schisms on the basis of both national and social political ideals, and the politics of lineage and *tewsiten*.

In the end, the question arises whether the conflict was still a nationalist one or whether internal political issues were more important. This question will implicitly be answered in the Epilogue to this book that deals with the period from the final peace between Mali and the Kel Tamasheq in 1996 to the present.

It is perhaps a bit contrarian to present a book on precisely its discontents in a year in which half the continent celebrates half a century of national independence. So be it. This is as good a moment as any other to read on these subjects. Giving it more weight by placing it in a narrative of celebration would in fact counter all analysis in this book.