

A Southern View on the Tuareg Rebellions in Mali

Kassim Kone

Abstract: Since Mali's independence in 1960, the Tuareg, a minority ethnic group, have staged successive rebellions, with the major ones occurring in 1963, 1990, 2006, and 2012. While discussions of "the Tuareg issue" have sometimes led both the Malian and the international press, as well as scholars, to make inaccurate generalizations, it is true that almost all the armed conflicts of the past fifty years in Mali were originated by people of the Tuareg group. Therefore, many of their Malian compatriots hold the Tuareg people responsible for the destruction of life and human rights violations that have taken place since the beginning of 2012. This article focuses on the events of 2012 and their aftermath and explores some social, cultural, and political differences between northern Tuareg and southern Bamana peoples in particular. It asks two specific questions: Is there something about Tuareg society, culture, and politics (i.e., Tuareg identity) that causes an incompatibility with the Mali Republic? And if not, where has the Malian government failed through the successive regimes since independence?

Résumé: Depuis l'indépendance du Mali en 1960, les Touaregs, groupe ethnique minoritaire, ont organisé des rébellions successives, dont les plus importantes ont eu lieu en 1963, 1990, 2006 et 2012. Alors que les discussions de "la question touarègue" ont conduit parfois les maliens et la presse internationale, ainsi que des universitaires, à faire des généralisations inexactes, il est vrai que presque tous les conflits armés de ces cinquante dernières années au Mali ont pour origine le groupe Touareg. Par conséquent, bon nombre de leurs compatriotes maliens tiennent le peuple touareg responsable de la destruction de la vie et des violations des droits de

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l'homme qui ont eu lieu depuis le début de 2012. Cet article se concentre sur les événements de 2012 et leurs conséquences et explore certaines différences sociales, culturelles et politiques entre les peuples Touareg du Nord et Bamana du Sud en particulier. Cet article pose deux questions spécifiques: Y a-t-il quelque chose sur la société, culture et politique touarègue (c'est-à-dire l'identité touarègue) qui est à la base d'une incompatibilité avec la République du Mali? Et sinon, où est-ce que le gouvernement malien a-t-il échoué dans les régimes successifs depuis l'indépendance?

Keywords: Mali; Bamana; Tuareg; Songhay; Azawad; MNLA

The relations between Tuareg populations of northern Mali and southerners in Mali are fraught with difficulties, for a number of reasons. While Malian Tuaregs claim Malian citizenship, some of them also lay claim to origins elsewhere based on both history and geography. In addition, discussions of “the Tuareg issue” as such have sometimes led both the Malian and the international press, as well as scholars, to make inaccurate generalizations (as noted by Rasmussen, this issue). In the armed conflict in Mali that began in 2012, not all rebels, armed bandits, narco-traffickers, or Islamic fundamentalists roaming the Malian Sahara were of Tuareg ethnicity. Neither were all Tuareg groups or individuals rebels. In fact, the great majority of Tuaregs caught up in this conflict are neither rebels nor secessionists nor Islamists. Moreover, there are Tuaregs who fight in the Malian army and who have fallen victim to their fellow ethnic Tuareg. Nonetheless, because almost all the armed conflicts of the past fifty years in Mali were originated by people of the Tuareg ethnic group, many of their Malian compatriots hold the Tuareg people responsible for the destruction of life and human rights violations that have taken place since the beginning of 2012. This article explores some social, cultural, and political differences between northern Tuareg and southern Bamana (Bambara) peoples in particular, based on my personal perspective: that of a southern, Songhay-speaking Bamana scholar who has lived and traveled extensively in the northern regions of Gao and Timbuktu.

The “Tuareg issue” here must be understood in terms of the successive rebellions the Tuareg as an ethnic group have staged in Mali since independence in 1960, the major ones being those of 1963, 1990, 2006, and 2012. The Tuareg are a minority group living in an environment where Songhay, Fulani, Bellah, Moors/Arabs, Sorko/Bozo, Dogon, and Bamana also live. But none of these groups has rebelled against the Mali government, and this difference suggests an important question: is there something about Tuareg society, culture, and politics (i.e., Tuareg identity) that causes an incompatibility with the Mali Republic? If not, where has the Malian government failed through the successive regimes since independence?

The war in the Malian north has been protracted, and it will not be won through arms alone. This most recent conflict should be considered an opportunity to find long-term solutions to a half-century of conflicts, the causes of which are partly ethnic but largely social, political, economic, and

environmental (see Rasmussen, this issue). In fact, the roots of this conflict are centuries old. Both sides—the central Malian government and the Tuareg people, including rebels and loyalists—hold complementary keys to the solutions of the problems, which derive from unresolved ethnic relations, mismanagement of resources, corruption, ineffective policies, and environmental degradation. The conflict that began in 2012 has grown particularly complex because it has become the most internationalized one in Malian history, with the Western world (and its West African allies) aligning itself again the Islamic world along with the intervention of the United Nations, ECOWAS, the African Union, and a multitude of other international organizations.

The most troubling aspect of this conflict is its geopolitical complexities. The intervention of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its ideological associates—including Ansâr ud-Dîn, the Tuareg Islamist group, Boko Haram, and the Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO), all with agents on the ground—in combination with the fall of the Gaddafi regime and the financing of Islamists by Saudi Arabia and Qatar—has forced Mali onto a global stage it is little prepared for. The involvements of major players such as France, the United States, and Algeria add another dimension to the war. The presence of Islamist and terrorist groups in the region opened the door for U.S. intervention as part of its Global War on Terror, and France, which is seen by most Malians as the main supporter of the MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) (Tinti, 2003), has its own neocolonial and strategic interests at stake.¹ Algeria, which considers northern Mali as its own backyard and has many interests in this conflict because of its own Tuareg population, played the role of mediator in various Tuareg rebellions in the 1990s and 2000s. But I and others in southern Mali do not see Algeria as a fair broker anymore (Boukars 2012), and in general these outside actors have had a negative effect on the conflict, putting undue pressure on the Malian central government and adding more incentives to the various armed Tuareg groups to achieve their goals.

The history of the Algerian involvement in Mali is complex. In 1960 President Modibo Keita asked the French military to leave Malian territory, and the northern Mali military bases they occupied were immediately given to the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) that took Algeria to independence and actually had its headquarters in Gao. In recognition for this assistance, the Algerian regimes of Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumedienne curtailed support for Tuareg rebellions in Mali. Abdoul Aziz Bouteflika, who would become president of Algeria in 1999 and was in his twenties during the Algerian war of independence, was one of the FLN emissaries to the Keita regime. Old-timers like Seydou Badian Kouyaté (2014) recall that Bouteflika's *nom de guerre* was "Abdel Kader Mali." In the 1990s Algeria was battling its own bloody political situation brought about by the stealing of elections won by the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut). But in 2012 the government of President Bouteflika had to be careful both to accommodate and to undermine the country's Muslim groups. The current Algerian government has

to take into account the fact that Islamic parties are taking over in much of North Africa and also that many Islamists engaged in the armed conflict in northern Mali are Algerian nationals. Algeria has also been battling its own “Dirty War,” first against the GIA (Groupes Islamiques Armés) and now the GSPC (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat) through infiltration of these organizations by the country’s secret intelligence service, the DRS (Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité). According to Schindler (2012), the DRS’s practices, which involve creating terrorists and “us[ing] ‘false flags’ incidents and ‘state terrorism’ as fundamental means of control,” continue to this day.

The fact that the 2012 Tuareg-initiated rebellion occupied 650,000 square kilometers of Mali for a whole year was possible only with the assistance of foreign sources, given the logistical requirements that such an occupation required. Funding, food, fuel, medicines, and spare parts for the different armed groups had to come from either Algeria or Mauritania, or both. According to General Yamoussa Camara (2013), the Mali army chief of staff, more than one thousand Tuareg soldiers, many of whom had been trained by AFRICOM, left the Malian National Army to join the various rebel and criminal groups, bringing along the hardware and knowledge at their disposal. Given the sheer size and firepower of the armada acquired by Tuareg from Libya, and given the fact that Malian authorities did not listen to the alarm of the military experts, it can easily be understood why the Malian army held little hope of defending the national territory. The military had not been training for long and the military hardware had not been kept in shape. Thus, according to Camara, the military had a considerable capacity deficiency when the hostilities began.

Though there are many powerful players in the present Malian conflict, the Tuareg remain central. It is Tuaregs that started this war, first the MNLA and then Ansâr ud-Dîn and the multitude of splinter rebel groups that have formed as a result of recurring internal conflicts in Tuareg society and politics. For many southern Malians, the MNLA and other Tuareg rebel fronts are responsible for the disastrous conditions all of Mali has experienced since the onset of this recent conflict, including the economic crisis, destruction of historical sites, and the human-rights abuses of Islamic extremists.

Who Are the Tuareg?

As Rasmussen (1992; this issue) explains, while “Tuareg” refers to various clans that were loosely affiliated by language and culture, the term is rarely used by the people themselves. According to the French ethnographer Bourgeot (2013), Tuareg, which means “God forsaken,” is the name Arabs gave them during their initial contact; Morgan (2014) argues that it is a nineteenth-century invention by explorers and anthropologists that refers to a supratribal group including the Amazigh- and Berber-speaking peoples of the southern Sahara. The Tuareg call themselves “Kel Tamasheq,”

or People of the Tamasheq language (a Berber language in the Afro-Asiatic phylum). A long-held belief that they were the descendants of the Garamantes of the Libyan Fezzan has been contradicted by recent research based on classical genetic markers which supports the conclusion that southern Tuareg (of Mali, Niger, and Burkina) share kinship with the Beja of eastern Sudan and generally have a Eurasian–North African composition to their genetic pool (Pereira et al. 2010). The Tuareg also call themselves “Kel Tagelmust” (People of the Veil), though unlike in most Muslim societies, it is the men, not the women, who wear the veil (Kisangani 2012). In addition to “Kel Tamasheq” and “Kel Tagelmust,” the terms “Imageren” and “Imuhagh” are used in Mali and Algeria, respectively, to mean free people (Bourgeot 2013).

As Nomadic pastoralists, the Tuareg and their ancestors have been incorporated into wider political and economic networks since the Arab invasions of North Africa in the seventh century, notably the trans-Saharan caravan trade and the current passage of motorized caravans along the same routes (Pereira et al. 2010). As Arab invaders pushed Tuareg peoples out of their North African lands, many of them ended up in the southern borders of the Sahara. While the Tuareg never formed the complex social structures known as kingdoms or states, Tuareg groups managed to establish confederations and forms of Tuareg stratification in which a minority of Tuareg exploited the labor of a slave majority. Tuareg society was rigidly hierarchical in structure, as Rasmussen has noted (this issue), with its aristocratic warrior class (*imajeren*), which exploited other freeborn Tuareg, and the vassal castes (*imrad*), which in turn exploited the Bellah slaves (*iklan*) at the very bottom.² The only Tuareg who were not subjected to this exploitation of the warrior groups were the caste of Islamic clerics (*ineslemen*) (Mariko 1984). Tuareg society is thus a very hierarchized and rigid social order in which one is born and remains an aristocrat (often light-skinned) or dark-skinned slave (or former slave) (Bourgeot 2013).³

Pillage through violence or the threat of violence has traditionally been a Tuareg way of life. René Caillé, in *Voyage à Tombouctou* (1985 [1830]), reported that with the threat of violence the Tuareg made tributary all their black neighbors and stole from them in the most terrible ways; “They come to Timbuktu to snatch from the people that what they call presents, and that could be more accurately called forced contributions” (vol. 2:228). The relationship between freeborn Tuareg and the descendants of former captives, the Bellah, constitutes a point of contention to this day.

The Bellah in northern Mali speak Tamasheq, the Tuareg language, and also share many aspects of the Tuareg culture. Not all Bellah have historically been Tuareg slaves; those who have never been enslaved are referred to by the Songhay as “Bellah kan shinda koy” (meaning “Bellah who do not have owners”). However the proximity of these Bellah to the Tuareg, their shared language and culture, and the Bellah dependence on the dominant Tuareg polity and economy made them vulnerable to being considered de facto slaves.

According to Sbeyti Ag Akado (Koné 2016), the president of the Malian Association for the Safeguard of Bellah Culture, the term “Bellah” is a deformation of the Arab word “Fellah,” meaning farmer. Historically, he says, black people who lived in the Sahara and moved south as the Sahara dried went from living in a relation of coexistence with the Arab-Berbers to one of domination by the latter, which became exacerbated by Arab-Berber raids of Songhay, Mossi, Senufo, and Dogon, in addition to the slave trade of caravans coming from the south. The Bellah population is the second largest in the Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal regions (after the Songhay), even though it is likely that many are not identified accurately in censuses. Due to their being stigmatized as slaves, many have adopted Maïga, Touré, and Cissé surnames, and Ag Akado thinks that with proper identification the Bellah population might constitute the majority in northern Mali. Given their demographic significance, a true solution to the northern Mali problem cannot be reached without solving the Bellah unrest, especially since they have formed four armed militia groups to defend themselves (Bouctou, MBGM, FACO, and MPFR2; see Koné 2016), just as the Songhay created Gandakoy in 1994 and the Fulani created Ganda Izo in 2008 against Tuareg raids.

Tuaregs and Islam

Tuaregs were exposed to Islam as a consequence of the Arab conquest of the Sahara, and they adopted it as their religion while continuing to follow some of their ancestral religious traditions. Not unlike the adoption and adaptation of Islam by other West African cultures, this conceptual marriage of contradictory ideologies has contributed to the longstanding practice of a tolerant Islam that the Tuareg, and West Africans in general, are known for. Until very recently, extremists were exceedingly rare among West African Muslims. Though all Tuareg claim to be Muslim, Islam is not everyone’s central identity (Lecocq & Klute 2013), and it is only in the last Tuareg uprisings that Islam became the battle horse of the splinter group known as Ansâr ud-Dîn. While the Ansâr ud-Dîn armed movement explicitly endorses Islam, the MNLA movement claims to be secular.

The Koranic naming and inheritance rules (the patrilineal property institution) introduced by Islam have begun to undermine the Tuareg matrilineal system, but most Tuareg groups still combine the Islamic and other forms of property transmission (Rasmussen 1999, 2008). Beliefs and practices that are forbidden in Islam, such as a belief in sorcery and spirit possession, divination rituals, and trances, are still common, and many wear charms for protection. The important role played by women in these religious practices has survived the Tuareg’s embrace of Islam (Gersi 1978). In rural Kel Ewey society, for example, women are the main herbalists while men are Islamic scholars. Women use incantations that include the Koranic blessing “Bisimillah,” and they cure people possessed by spirits of the wild. While Kel Ewey Islamic scholars disapprove of these curing rituals, they do

not forbid them (Rasmussen 1994). According to Rasmussen (2010:620n), “there is much variation in degree of devotion to Islam, and as yet, pan-Islamist reformist piety movements have not attracted many Tuaregs.”

The Tuareg and Their Immediate Neighbors

As discussed above, the most demographically important Tuareg neighbors in northern Mali are the Songhay, followed by the Bellah and the Fulani. The Songhay call themselves *Sɔŋɛyɔɔɛyɔ* (*Sɔŋɛy*: Songhay ethnicity; *ɔɔɛyɔ*: people), *koyirabɔɔɛyɔ* (city people; *koyira*: city/town; *ɔɔɛyɔ*: people) or *isabɔɔɛyɔ* (river people; *isa*: river). As the latter two names suggest, the Songhay see themselves as proprietary of land (*ganda*) or *bangu* (territory), with preferred settlements on the banks of the river or other water sources. The outside of the city (*sajo*) and the bush (*ganji*) are considered the domain of nomadic people, *Fulān* (the Fulani), *Larabeyi* (Arabs), and *Surugubɔɔɛyɔ* (Tuareg people). The Songhay refer to all nomadic people as *ganjibɔɔɛyɔ* (*ganji*: bush/wilderness), a term that also can have the negative connotation of “uncivilized,” and in general it seems to apply more to the Tuareg than to the Arab or Fulani people, many of whom are sedentary or semi-nomadic.

The language of the Songhay is Mande in origin, probably more of Suninke stock than Maninka as supported by culture, linguistics, and history. The Songhay share family names like other Mande, though there is one main Songhay patronym, Mayiga, which Suninke claim is the counterpart of the Suninke clan name, Marega. The other prominent Songhay patronym, Ture, is borne by people who claim patrilineal ancestry dating back to the Moroccan invasion of 1591. Ture is also a Suninke and Malinke patronym. All Songhay groups share joking relationships with ethnicities belonging to the greater Mande circle, and they have forged similar relationships with Moors and Arabs, allowing them to diffuse conflicts before they escalate.

Although the Songhay and Tuareg cultures have borrowed heavily from each other linguistically and culturally, such borrowing has not translated into the common ground that usually results from centuries of proximity and cohabitation. Unlike other Malians, for example, the Tuareg do not share conventionalized joking relationships with the other ethnic groups. Even Islam has not been able to build a bridge between Tuareg and southern Malians. In many ways, the lack of such cultural connections between Tuareg and Malians of the south makes the place of the Tuareg in greater Mali even harder to define than their practice of nomadic pastoralism—although this characteristic is undoubtedly the most salient in terms of the Tuareg relations with their neighbors.

Current Tuareg demands for sovereignty and their own national territory would be difficult to actualize, given that they are a nomadic people living in many modern African nations and therefore with murky claims to a single territory. Tuareg people reside in Morocco, Mali, Niger, and

to lesser extent Algeria, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and, until the demise of Muammar Gaddafi, Libya. Baryin (2013), for example, writes that many people in the Malian town of Kidal have dual citizenship and live on one or the other side of the Mali–Algeria border depending on political, environmental, and economic contexts. Historically, the Tuareg have moved freely across borders that were set by French colonization and reinforced by independent African nations. In fact, the regions the Tuareg inhabit in Mali were at one time or another part of the Ghana, Mali, and Songhay Empires of which modern Mali is an heir. McIntosh (1998) suggests that by the last millennium BCE various groups speaking mutually intelligible dialects related to the earliest form of Suninke lived in the Mema, Azawad, and surrounding regions.

Violence or the threat of violence on the part of the Tuareg is not a new phenomenon. During colonial times France had to quell several Tuareg rebellions (Mariko 1984). The 1990s through the mid-2000s saw a gradual increase in firearm possession among the Tuareg, as well as the Fulani and Arab groups, along with intertribal fighting and raids. This combination of formal democracy in Mali and armed combat was thus sarcastically labeled “demokalashi” (i.e., democracy and Kalashnikovs) (Lecocq & Klute 2013:428). Several local civil society movements with military wings have arisen in the so-called Azawad territory to respond to the Tuareg uprisings and work to disprove Tuareg claim to this territory, including the Songhay movement Gandakoy (*ganda koy*: landowner in Songhay) and the Fulani Ganda Izo (“child of the land” in Songhay).⁴ As these names suggest, these groups insist that the Tuareg are not an autochthonous people. For the Songhay in particular, the notions of land ownership cannot be divorced from their memory of the Songhay Empire that covered the regions now called Azawad. The Songhay think that they are not only the occupiers, but also the traditional owners, of much of the land over which the Tuareg roam. Gandakoy was created in May 1994 as a self-defense militia when the Songhay and other non-Tuareg groups felt that the government was not doing enough to protect them against Tuareg. According to Salliot, this self-defense movement “denounced the National Pact for peace signed in April 1992 and roundly condemned the armed gangsters and racists of the Tuareg rebellion and the waiting game played by the State” (2010:39).⁵ Ganda Izo was created in 2008 with the objective, according to its founder, Seydou Cissé, of “maintaining social stability in the region” and to ensure justice rather than immunity for malefactors (McGregor 2012:8).

The encroachment of the Tuareg on territories farther south from their original home territory began when they took advantage of the political chaos created by the Moroccan invasion of 1591 and moved into areas along the Niger River and northernmost lakes. Conflict between the Tuareg and Fulani people—who, like the Tuareg, are a nomadic group—has intensified since the eighteenth century as Tuareg have encroached more and more into the northern Macina region as well (McIntosh 1998). The name of the Fulani movement, Ganda Izo, implies their claim of citizenship by

birth, not by ownership of territory, since many of the Fulani groups have abandoned herding for other economic pursuits following decades of drought in the region. “Gandakoy” implies title to the land as its aboriginal inhabitant.

The Songhay royal title of Suni, or Soni, may have evolved from the word *Suninke*, meaning pagan warrior. Askia Muhammad, who overthrew his cousins to establish his own dynasty, is reported to be of the Sila or Ture patronym, and therefore of Suninke stock. Many early northern towns may have been established by Suninke people during or before the advent of the Ghana Empire. Geographical place names and studies of archaeology and historical linguistics in the Malian north support a Suninke/Mande presence in this region that predates any important Tuareg presence or influence. For example, in the Timbuktu region a major landmark, Lake Fagibine (from Suninke *fagi*: lake; *bine*: black) in the Goundam region still bears its original Suninke name.

On the other hand, historical linguistics supports a Tuareg claim on Timbuktu. Timbuktu began as a salt depot seven kilometers from the river Niger. The well-known story is that salt traders coming to sell their salt and buy goods from the south would leave much of their cargo around the hut of an old slave woman by the name of “Boktu,” and “Tin Boktu (“Boktu’s place” in Tamasheq) became the name of the city when it was founded at the late eleventh century. Thus Timbuktu’s Tuareg links are to a major extent derived from its location on one end of the trans-Saharan route that Tuareg dominated. The founding of Timbuktu took place four hundred years after the founding of Gao, which then became part of the Mali Empire between 1275 and 1300. Timbuktu came under the influence of the Mali Empire around 1324–25 under Mansa Musa, who then built the Jingareyber mosque and the Maadugu Royal Palace there between 1325 and 1327 (Cissoko 1975). The demise of the Soso Empire in 1235 might also have made many Suninke migrate north to areas around Timbuktu, Jenne, and Gao, where they already had long-established ethnic relatives. Thus Timbuktu has always had a multiethnic population that included many southerners, especially those who were learned or sought education. Mohamed Bagayogo, Ahmed Baba’s teacher, and Mahmoud Kaati, the author of the *Tarikh al Fattash*, were certainly of Suninke stock.⁶

Ethnicity and Race

The Tuareg were the last major group in Mali to continue to practice slavery long after the French colonization of the West Sudan, and this practice still survives in some ways. When the French colonial administration tried to free both vassal and slave groups in the Sahara, Tuareg nobility regarded their plan as an act of the devil brought to them by French infidels and contrary to the teachings of the Koran. The amenokal (*amenokal*, or tribal chief) of the Kel Dinnik, speaking to an assembly of Tuareg from various segments of the confederation in 1946, said “What kind of fraternity can exist

between lions, hyenas, jackals, cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats? God has created us the same way he has created and established hierarchy among animals” (Mariko 1984:36).

Rasmussen, in her many ethnographic studies of the Tuaregs of Mali and Niger, describes Tuareg society as one that is stratified into nobles, tributary groups, blacksmiths, and former slaves. Her work sheds light on the nuances in the relationships between the various strata and the ways in which these subtleties make the stratification less than completely rigid. Joking and familiarity, fictive kinship, the progressive evolution of the status of the former slave in the master’s family, and the linguistic and cultural absorption of these groups contribute to the relaxation of clientage and tribute relationships (see Rasmussen 1992, 1999, and this issue; see also Nicolaisen 1997). Tuareg society is very complex, and the relation between color and rank in the strata is sometimes ambiguous. Tributary people are currently considered “pale” in skin tone, while nobles sometimes refer to themselves as “white” and call former slaves “black,” even though some nobles have a dark complexion due to extensive intermarriage. The color attributes are therefore ambiguous, even if the racist concepts of “black” and “white” have not been totally removed from the overall relations between many Tuareg and their former slaves as well as between Tuareg and southern Malians.

In precolonial times it was the southern populations that were victims of Tuareg slave raids. The captured people became owned, and former slaves were considered the metaphorical “children” of their owners. This fictive kinship may have helped ease some of the tensions and contradictions in Tuareg society, although it had no legal status (Rasmussen 1999). And although former slaves, since the 1980s, have begun to reject and oppose the hierarchical and paternalistic relations of their former masters—to deny tribute to the nobles and to resist honoring the requests of former owners based on past privilege (see Rasmussen 1992 and this issue)—these tensions still exist. The system, based on one group’s producing goods and services for another, is decaying, but the ideology is still alive. According to Meillassoux (1991:73), the institution of slavery depends on a “*continuity of slave relations,*” a constantly renewed relation of exploitation and domination between social groups” that is “*reproduced organically and institutionally*” in such a way as to preserve the sociopolitical organization of slavery” (emphasis in original). Gunvor Berge (2000) argues that for the Tuareg, “the status of ‘free’ and ‘slave’ are naturally determined and not social or cultural constructs” (quoted in Lecocq 2005:204–5). To a large extent this system is perpetuated through the racist construction of “otherness” which connects the status of slave to “somatic traits (ugliness, heaviness) and character traits (stupidity, laziness, shiftiness) . . .” (Meillassoux 1991:75)

Both colonial politics and French racial discourse contributed to the reinforcement of the ideology of racial stratification, particularly the assumption that manual labor was a nonwhite activity. “The Tuaregs are too proud to cultivate the land like slaves,” said one nineteenth-century observer

(Daumas 1857:143). According to the French Governor General's 1949 circular on the "Bellah question,"

It is a striking observation that populations living in servile conditions are to be found in the Saharan and Sahelian zones of West Africa, where all attempts at liberation are blocked by particular difficulties: The existence of a nomad population of white race which, for historical reasons . . . can hardly be forced to perform manual labour. . . . (Quoted in Lecocq 2010:100)

The French colonialists exempted the Tuareg population from forced labor and military conscription (Lecoq & Klute 2013) and turned a blind eye on Tuareg use of Bellah slaves as the basis of their economy (see Kisangani 2012).

This racial ideology remains part of political life in Mali today, as well as in much of Mauritania and other northern African regions. Members of the Tuareg nobility still associate manual labor with servile status (Rasmussen 2010) and use the terms "black" or "slave" interchangeably to denote those who are not "their kind of people" (Lecoq 2010:101). The fact that the people they are referring to are themselves Muslims has not completely eradicated this practice. Even in the late twentieth century, some Tuareg preferred the rule of European "infidels" (perceived as morally and ethically inferior because they are not Islamized) to that of the black "slaves" (Lecoq 2010:88). According to an anecdotal report, a Tuareg *amenokal*, speaking through his interpreter, once referred to then President Moussa Traoré (1968–91) as his "Bellah" ("Tell my Bellah that we need wells to water our livestock"). Until recently, in fact, many Arab, Moor, and Berber emigrés from Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia residing in the U.S. preferred to be considered Middle Easterners rather than Africans. It wasn't until the administration of George W. Bush and the so-called War on Terror that it seemed more politically expedient to call oneself African, at least in the United States.

In the context of preindependence politics, racial overtones exacerbated the tension and suspicion between the southern politicians of the French Sudan (present-day Mali) and the Tuareg and Moor leadership of the north. The political party that took Mali to independence, the US-RDA, under the leadership of Modibo Keita, collided with the Tuareg society for several reasons, including the issue of race. According to Lecocq (2010), as independence loomed on the horizon in North and French West Africa, and after the discovery of minerals in southern Algeria, a regional scramble for the Sahara began among France, Morocco, and Mauritania. France wanted to dominate a French Sahara, while Morocco and Mauritania laid claims to part of the French Sudan. Several Tuareg and Bidân (Arabic-speaking Moor) leaders sided with various protagonists, thus becoming suspect in the eyes of Malian nationalists. The Qadi (Shari'a magistrate) of Timbuktu, in a campaign to avoid living in a free French Sudan, argued

that they were white and did not want to be incorporated in a state where blacks would constitute the majority. Throughout the 1950s the Tuareg tribal chiefs' continued to trade Bellah slaves in Saudi Arabia, another problem that the new Malian administration would have to deal with.

In 1905 a French presidential decree had abolished the sale and gift of persons, but did not abolish slavery, the ownership of people, as such in African colonies. The decree also did not end the clandestine trade in slaves in eastern areas where Tuareg (and Songhay) held slaves (Klein 1998). The US-RDA had campaigned over the "Bellah question" in the 1950s, and the Keita government still believed that slavery had not been eradicated in the early 1960s (Lecocq 2010). In 1961 a Malian envoy to Mecca discovered a Tuareg slaver with a company of thirty-one slaves, mostly men and children, and had him arrested by the Saudi police. President Keita addressed a formal letter to King Ibn Saud on the slave trade activities of Tuareg dealers, which was made public. This prompted King Abdullah Faisal, King Ibn Saud's successor, to officially abolish slavery in Saudi Arabia in 1962 (Lecocq 2010).

Tuareg are not the only ethnic group that engaged in enslaving other groups, and they are not the only groups in Mali that may be accused of racism. Nevertheless, while descendants of slaves in many Malian societies are still stigmatized, many of them enjoy more freedom among the populations that previously owned them compared to the Bellah in Tuareg society. By the same token, Tuareg are denounced by black southerners in Mali as racist, while Moors and Arabs generally do not receive such denunciations. But it also cannot be denied that the Malian armies committed atrocities on the Tuareg people during the Tuareg armed uprisings of the 1960s and the 1990s, including against innocent unarmed civilians. Thus the colonial racial discourse and unequal treatment of the so-called "blacks" and "whites," and Tuareg and southerners' perceptions of each other, have all coalesced to exacerbate a situation that was terrible from the beginning. Needless to say, Tuareg and southerners need to learn to coexist peacefully. As Sampson asserts, coexistence does not have to be a matter of reconciliation, dialogue, or mutual regard, it is simply "the absence of violence" (2003:182).

A Southern Sedentary View of Nomads and Nomadic Life

Although the Malian southern populations are heterogeneous—more so, in fact, than those of the north—the south tends to be perceived by much of northern Mali as monolithic. Until recently, most northerners referred to any person coming from the south as Bamana, though the region also includes people of Bobo, Minianka, and Senufo ethnicity. Nevertheless, the majority of southerners do belong to the Mande group, which consists of the Jula, Malinke, Mandinka, Kuranko, Suninke, and many other ethnicities. Bamana are sedentary agriculturalists. The Bamana society is patrilineal and stratified, with individuals born into higher- and lower-status

groups (see Hoffman, this issue). The Bamana nobles (*hɔɔn*) are traditionally landowners/farmers, and political leaders, and warriors. The artican castes (*nyamakala*) are the blacksmiths (*numu*), leatherworkers (*garanke*), musicians, bards, and oral historians (*jeli*), and descendants of slaves and former slaves (*woloso*), who currently are free of bondage. This division of people into separate castes, often signified by the patronym, has been reinforced by endogamy.

A particularly important characteristic of Bamana culture is the concept of *fadenya* (or *badenya*), which can be compared with the Tuareg concepts of *esuf* and *ehan*. In Tuareg society *esuf* represents a deep sense of individualism—the individual’s possibilities for action in and for society. Such actions take place in nondomesticated, wild space. As Lecocq explains,

Esuf is a complex term in Tamasheq. It stands for the unknown, the wilderness and solitude. The sentiment of solitude can be caused by the experience of being alone. . . . It also stands for space that still has to be conquered from nature to be made habitable and social The conquering of this space is a confrontation with the unknown. . . . One has to experience *esuf* as one has left socialized space. . . . (2009:10–11)

According to Casajus (1987, 1989), Claudot-Hawad (1993), J. Nicolaisen (1961), and Rasmussen (1995, 2008), *esuf* denotes “the wild” or “solitude,” a remote space far from home, but it also represents a state of mind, a place where a possessed person’s soul travels and a source of great suffering. Its “wild” aspect is conceptually opposed to the sheltering, protecting home space and sense of community spirit known as “the tent,” or *ehan*. Nevertheless, the meaning is fluid, as Rasmussen (2008) (drawing on the work of other scholars, e.g., Al-Koni 2002; Dayak 1996; Ag Assarid 2006) explains.⁷ For Al-Koni, the desert, as *esuf*, is a refuge from evil men and a home space under siege. Ag Assarid portrays it, the desert is a harsh learning environment but one that promises silence, peace, liberty, and protection. *Esuf* has been defined further as “an incurable disease, a kind of painful nostalgia, an insidious pain that gets the soul into a spin, a never-ending sadness due to want” (Baryin 2013:87). It is, in Rasmussen’s summation,

an interior, abstract state of mind, as well as an external and sometimes literal geographic space, which moves dynamically in response to psychosocial stresses, collective and personal, long-standing and emerging, as lost persons and groups cope with uprootedness and turmoil, and attempt to anchor floating personal and cultural identities at critical junctures in life.” (2008:611)

The Mande notion of *fadenya*, by comparison, is also both a geographic and a mental space, but it represents fierce individuality and competitiveness rather than social harmony. Every sphere of human activity involves *fadenya*, as the individual is constantly competing with others, and when

there is no one to compete with, one has to outdo oneself. Fadenya, therefore, has both positive and negative connotations, since individual goals may either benefit the collective interest or collide with it. In the latter sense it is “associated with centrifugal forces of social disequilibrium: envy, jealousy, competition, self-promotion . . .” (Bird & Kendall 1980:15). But in the positive sense fadenya, especially insofar as it is associated with danger and the confrontation with danger, may benefit both the individual and society. As the Bamana proverb says, “*Saya be kungo, malo be so*” (Death is in the bush, shame is at home). While the home represents safety, it also represents shame. Fadenya means courageously confronting the wild and, if one is successful, subduing it, thereby achieving fame for the individual but also, potentially, benefits for the larger collective. In this way behavior that looks antisocial may in the final analysis be altruistic.

Individual antisocial behavior is thus sometimes permitted among the Bamana when the collective benefit is deemed to outweigh the social costs. In contexts of social, political, and economic ruptures, for example, this kind of individual behavior is thought to sustain the necessary balance between the individual and society. For the Mande, such equilibrium depends on a balance between the rivalry and competition that are implied by *fadenya* (which means, literally, father-childness) and *badenya* (mother-childness), with the latter connoting “submission to authority, stability, cooperation . . .” (Bird & Kendall 1980:15). The individual and the group, according to this conceptualization, are not understood as polar opposites, but rather as two axes that intersect: “On the *fadenya* axis actions are oriented toward individual reputation and renown. On the *badenya* axis they are oriented toward the total set of rights and obligations provided by the social groups to which the actions are affiliated” (Bird & Kendall 1980:15). To counter the actions of an individual who embarks on fadenya that does not benefit society, the Mande may use various forms of social pressure or even physical intervention, including violence, or else they simply hope that the person fails in the enterprise or self-destructs. Another cultural response is to rely on the influence of badenya and hope that community spirit, in the end, will influence the individual and blunt the force of fadenya. Thus the concept of badenya is an emotional and a forceful way to bring the individual back into the fold of community.

Tuareg society does not have a structural equivalent of badenya.⁸ Although the concept of ehan may seem similar, it appears to represent a much smaller scale of sociability—similar to what the Bamana refer to as *babonda* (literally mother’s room, or the relationship among children of the same mother). Tuareg culture, therefore, lacks this sort of calming influence, and as many scholars and other observers have often noted, “disharmony and enmity between different Tuareg groups and individuals [have] always existed” (Morgan 2014). These social fractures are thought to contribute to the multiple rebellions staged by the Tuaregs and their frequent conflicts with the central Malian government.⁹ Historically, Tuareg agreements with the government have never been binding for long, and every rebellion has

generated splinter rebel fronts led by individuals or groups that are dissatisfied with their share of the state spoils. For the Bamana, the fact that alliances among Tuareg groups form only to instantly disintegrate and realign elsewhere is perceived as a form of anarchy (Lecocq 2010).

Lecocq (2010) argues, however, that what the Bamana perceive as anarchy comes mostly from a sedentary group's misunderstanding of nomadic social and political organization. Nomadism is not just an economic behavior; it also underlies Tuareg political life, in which federations wax and wane and frequent and swift political mutations make it impossible for government interlocutors to intercede and resolve conflict. A half-century ago, for example, Intallah Ag Attaher, the patriarch of the Ifoghas, a Tuareg clan, and his brother, Zeyd Ag Attaher, fought on opposite sides of the 1963 rebellion, the former siding with the central Malian government and the latter with the rebels (Morgan 2014). Even since 2012 we have seen a number of such fractures: the splintering of the CPA (Coalition du Peuple pour l'Azawad) from the MNLA under the direction of the former external relations director of the MNLA, Ibrahim Ag Mohamed Assaleh; and now the formation of a coalition of the MNLA, HCUA, and MAA, which calls itself the Coordinating Committee of the Belligerent Groups of Azawad (Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad 2014). Walther and Tisseron (2015) describe the region as "a battleground for rebels, terrorists and traffickers, [where] armed groups split and coalesce unpredictably, change names as new opportunities arise, and morph into transient coalitions between tribal and ethnic groups [mostly Tuareg and Arab]." The leadership of Kidal is an example of this problem. In 2013 Intallah Ag Attaher and his two sons formed three different rebel fronts against the French, Malian, and other African armies, with each one engaged in a well-known stratagem to take advantage of the pending state spoils that have been part of peace settlements in the past.

From a Mande perspective this kind of unboundedness, allowing a small group of people or an individual to make independent decisions, is difficult to comprehend. For the southern Bamana, nomadic life is, in a sense, the very basis for mistrusting nomads. But in many ways these shifting alliances can be viewed as pragmatic responses to the hard environmental and existential conditions that are a fact of Tuareg life. As Lecocq (2010:91) explains,

Pastoral nomadic societies are organised along the lines of expanding lineages. . . . A member of a given society organised along these lines is prone to see [the individual] as part of ever larger bodies of organisation, which forms a whole at the top level. . . . This up-side-down look at the nomadic societies earned them the label "segmentary societies". . . [and the notion that they were] fragmented, scattered, unbound. . . . Indeed, nomadic social organisation leaves room for decisions on the smallest level necessary for the optimal exploitation of the scarce resources in their environment, but this does not mean anarchy.

Whereas the Bamana say that “shame is at home”—particularly if one does not venture forth to tame the wilderness for the sake of community’s well-being—the Tuareg say that “houses are the graves of the living” (Miller 2013). The nomadism of the Tuareg, their continuous pitching and unravelling of tents, is a way of life that rests on freedom of movement and the availability of large open spaces. Bamana jokingly call the Fulani pastoralists, who are also nomads, “bugu turu ni bugu jensen” (pitch and dismantle huts), suggesting that a nomadic group cannot be trusted because they are shifty, constantly on the move. Under ideal environmental conditions frictions between nomadic peoples and agricultural sedentary ones either do not arise or are usually short in duration. But the successive droughts in the Sahel since the early 1970s have contributed to the straining of the relationships between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers.

The conflicts between the nomadic Tuaregs and sedentary agriculturalists are also magnified by the inability of the central government to bring about their resolution. Because of the atomized nature of Tuareg society, governing the Tuareg amounts to management at the micro-level, which is beyond the resources of the Malian state even in matters such as population censuses and the collection of taxes. The mistrust might be expected to be emphasized by the migrations of the Tuareg, whose nomadic life take them across national borders. Saraceno (2015:348), citing Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1950), adds that the horizontal segmentation of the heterogeneous Tuareg (and also Moor) societies and the absence of a single recognizable authority weakens these groups politically because they are unable to act cohesively as one entity. But these characteristics also make it difficult for the state to govern these groups. Southern politicians simply are not culturally equipped to deal with the internal power dynamics of desert tribal politics and Tuareg society. Some argue that these realities make it imperative that the Malian government find alternative ways of governance with regard to Tuareg groups, including forms of indirect rule allowing for greater autonomy that would vary according to each tribal group’s self-governing decisions. Nevertheless, while the Malian government may be blamed for failing to prevent some of the past rebellions, there is no guarantee, given the internal dynamics of Tuareg society and culture, that granting the Tuareg groups greater autonomy will be a successful approach or that a reduced involvement of the Malian state in Tuareg affairs will bring peace among them. The suggestion here is that the government should administer the various Tuareg groups through some version of indirect rule.

Tuaregs and the Nation-State

As discussed above, the Tuaregs are a minority group in Mali. According to the 2009 national census the Songhay-speaking groups as a whole constitute 5.3 percent of the national population of 15 million, while Tamasheq-speaking groups (including the Tuareg and Bellah) are 3.2 percent

(Traoré et al. 2011). The Tuareg alone constitute only 1.7 percent (Sidibé 2012). The Songhay cluster (including the ethnic Sorko fishermen) constitutes the vast majority in the northern regions, but the Fulani, Arabs, Moors, and Bellah also live there. All have been affected by the decades of environmental degradation and governmental corruption.

The traditional way of life of many Tuareg seems a difficult fit in the modern nation-state of Mali (as well as Niger, Algeria, and in the other countries in which they live). The political demands of the nation-state, including, at a minimum, representation of the larger group by a small set of individuals, payment of taxes, and participation in stable bureaucracies, are not congenial to nomadic lifestyles. Current environmental conditions have made the nomadic lifestyle particularly onerous, and educated Tuareg as well as those who have converted to economic pursuits other than animal husbandry do not seem to suffer the same discontents that their more traditional peers do. Animal husbandry has been seriously compromised by the successive droughts of the early 1970s and mid-1980s, and the Malian state does not have the financial means to offset the problems caused by the environmental conditions of the past forty years that started in the early 1970s. Other Tuareg ways of life have either been curtailed or become obsolete, such as participation in the trans-Saharan trade as trucks have replaced camels, and the exploitation of captive labor and brigandage.

Disaffected Tuareg groups say they not only have been neglected by the Malian central government but also have been its victims, and they may be right. However, many other Malian ethnicities can make similar claims, and the rest of Mali suffers from the same corruption, injustice, nepotism, and mismanagement of resources by their national, regional, and local leaders that the Tuareg people do. As many observers have pointed out, several administrative regimes have attempted to hold the country together by making alliances with the elite in various regions through clientelism, corruption, and nepotism. As Saraceno (2015) (citing Bayart 1989) puts it, the state keeps the system afloat by feeding the traditional stratification of social authority and consequently manufacturing inequality. Indeed, many claim that the Malian state lacks legitimacy outside large cities and the elite French-speaking circles. However, for the combined twenty years of the Konaré and Touré regimes, Tuareg rebel and tribal leaders themselves received cash from the central government, as well as from international institutions, including NGOs. One such example is the failed UNDP project to disarm, demobilize, and resettle ex-combatant Tuaregs. According to Sears (2013), the combined efforts of the Touré government and donor partners to relieve tensions were aimed largely at co-opting Tuareg leaders. The project also allocated millions of dollars disproportionately to the Ifogas group, which then used that money to buy loyalty and consolidate their power base at the expense of other ethnic Tuareg (IRIN 2013).

The Tuareg people certainly have suffered, but so have the Songhay, Bellah, Fulani, Berabiche, and Moors—by far the great majority of the people that inhabit the piece of land that the MNLA calls Azawad. The same can be

said of all the other ethnicities in Mali, none of which has resorted to taking up weapons against their fellow citizens. The Tuareg people have human rights, but so have the other 98.3 percent of the Malian population. The Tuareg claims of discrimination do not give them license to commit the crimes and human rights violations that they have perpetrated in this latest rebellion.

While the government and politicians in Bamako can be accused of malgovernance, corruption, and failing to work for the greater good of Mali, the Tuareg rebel leaders of 2012 can be considered the enemies of their own people. The Malian government and political leadership have not represented the Malian people well, but the Tuareg rebel leaders have not only failed to represent the Tuareg people, but they are also responsible for the unnecessary suffering of Tuaregs and other northern Malians.

Conclusion

There is no easy solution to the Tuaregs' problems in Mali or anywhere else as long as Tuareg people attempt to perpetuate their past lifestyle and heavily stratified social structure. In southern Mali traditional chieftaincies were disempowered around the period of Mali's independence, but the Tuareg counterparts have survived. In southern Mali individuals from artisan castes or even descendants of former slaves occupy high administrative, political, and military positions, while such leadership roles for these groups are still unthinkable in present-day Tuareg society (see Rasmussen, this issue). And while the Tuareg people are no longer involved in the slave trade, some still exact tribute from their former slaves in the form of money, goods and livestock, and services, creating a reputation for exploitation that tars the whole group. Such Tuareg cultural practices are indefensible. Although cultural change cannot be bureaucratically imposed, the government of Mali should actively reinforce the antislavery laws to defend the rights of lower castes and former slaves in Tuareg society. There is also an urgent need for intratribal Tuareg reassessments and changes of the old order to meet the requirements of twenty-first-century life. Currently Tuareg social stratification is such that the leaders in each group use government resources, including development grant funds, for their own benefit. Whether the mutual interdependence of Tuareg nobles and smiths (see Rasmussen, this issue) leads to abolishment of the political stratification that impedes access to positions of power by the servile castes remains to be seen.¹⁰

In terms of Tuareg economic survival, camel caravans from the pastoral past have now been replaced with motorized vehicles that pass via the ancient trans-Saharan routes, but the contexts and the dynamics of the trade have hardly changed for the better. The new trade includes human trafficking, the illegal buying and selling of cigarettes, and narco-trafficking—one of the most important problems in Mali. According to Tinti (2014), some of the major armed confrontations in northern Mali have taken place

between various Tuareg or Arab groups over the control of the illicit drug routes and economy. Drugs from South America have been transiting through the Sahara to Europe and the Middle East, and Mali's vast desert covers many of these arteries. Northern elites, including government and military officials, have been bought or co-opted in this traffic. According to Tinti, a Tuareg interlocutor from Kidal told him that "in the last year alone there are people who have changed from the Malian military, to separatist rebel, to jihadist, to French ally, all while being narco-traffickers" (2014:9).

Perhaps the most complicated problem that needs solving is the internationalization of the Tuareg rebellion. The presence of Islamists funded by oil-rich Gulf countries has given the U.S. an opening in the region for conducting the Global War on Terror. Some Malians believe that the French created the MNLA in order to return to part of the country that they were forced to leave at independence, to control the potential natural resources of the north, and to establish a military base in the region from which they can protect their uranium mines in neighboring Niger. France and Mali have signed a defense treaty, against the will of many Malians. France has opposed the presence of the Malian army in Kidal despite the presence of MINUSMA (the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) and the French army in this region. This situation has been perceived as a violation of Mali's sovereignty and has deepened the rift between the Tuareg and other ethnic groups since France, which fought the Tuareg during colonial times, is now perceived as their defender. Finally, the Tuareg rebellion of 2012 has opened the gate for Islamists to enter and gain power in Mali. The consequences of this cannot be completely assessed at this time, although the destruction of Mali's cultural heritage, the violations of human rights, and the planting of the seeds of radical Islam will undoubtedly have lasting effects. Even now it is evident that the preaching of radical Islam, the increase in the number of females wearing the veil, and the proliferation of previously little known, obscure Islamic sects as far south as Bamako all have seriously reshaped the religious landscape in Mali. Southern Malians will for a long time hold the 2012 Tuareg rebellion responsible for the internationalizing and undesirable consequences of this conflict. According to Bamana proverbs, "the first person who fires the shot that initiates a war carries the blame" and "he who destroys your house, and he who points out your house to its destroyers, are the same."

In the end it is the successive governments of Mali—specifically those that have been in place since the advent of democracy in Mali in the 1990s—that must be blamed for being asleep at the wheel in terms of their dealings with the Tuareg. Giving money to corrupt Tuareg traditional chiefs and rebel leaders helps buy time but does not resolve the problem, and such dealings are just one aspect of the corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement of national resources that exist at every level of the civil government, in the national assembly, and in the army. Executive, administrative, and judicial services can be openly purchased, resulting in myriad forms of

social and economic injustice. Finally, the first twenty years of the democratic era have seen the state far too disengaged from formal education, leaving room for the explosion of madrasas (Arab language-based schools), with their potential for becoming centers of Islamist training. What Mali needs most at this time is to revamp the formal education sector throughout its sovereign territory so that all Malians, from the Jula in the south to the Tuareg in the north, can learn how to participate fully in the civic life of a modern and democratic nation-state.

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Notes

1. The MNLA is a French-backed Ifogas (Tuareg tribe) organization, an associate of the Ansâr ud-Dîn, an AQMI affiliate. The Ifogas are a minority tribe of the Tuareg ethnicity, in the Adrar region of Kidal. Azawad is a piece of desert within the Sahara smaller than the Adrar region (380 square kilometers) where the Ifogas live. Politically, the MNLA includes the regions of Timbuktu and Gao as part of Azawad, although this claim is not tenable historically or ethnographically. The MNLA hopes to carve a new country, called the Republic of Azawad, out of present-day Mali.
2. The *imrad* (or *imghad*) vassals are free born but tributary to the Tuareg nobility, the *imajeren*. The *iklan*, the slave classes, are the black servants of slave descent who take care of all the manual chores such as herding, fetching water, cooking, and farming. The name Bellah, most frequently used outside Tuareg culture, is a Songhay word.
3. The French colonial power under Governor General Roum abolished slavery in French West Africa, including the French Sudan (now Mali), in December 1905 (Roberts 1987). However, the French remained ambivalent about abolition, especially among the Tuareg, where they turned a blind eye to the practice of slavery. At independence in 1960 the government believed that though slavery was illegal, it existed psychologically and socially (Lecocq 2010). To this day slavery, although illegal, persists in many forms in Tuareg society.
4. The majority of the Tuareg population reject the idea of a Republic of Azawad. The same is true for the much larger Songhay, Fulani, and Bellah populations of the Gao and Timbuktu regions. In reality, Azawad exists just for the French and the Ifogas.

5. The National Pact is an agreement that the Republic of Mali signed with various Tuareg rebel groups in 1992 for a definitive, peaceful, negotiated solution to the armed conflicts in the Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal regions. For further information, see http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/ML_920411_PacteNationalGouvMaliAzawad.pdf.
6. Mohamed Bagayogo (Suninke/Malinke, 1523–1594) from Jenne was a teacher of Timbuktu's famed scholar Ahmad Baba (Tuareg, born 1556), whom the Moroccan conqueror deported to Morocco and imprisoned from 1593 to 1596. When he was freed from prison he was allowed to travel back to Timbuktu, where he taught at the Sankore University until his death on April 28, 1627 (Cissoko 1975). Mahmoud Kâti, of Suninke stock, wrote the *Tarikh el Fettach* between 1655 and 1665 in Timbuktu.
7. Among other caveats Rasmussen argues that at least for the Kel Ewey Tuareg, "the tent (*ehan*) is not diametrically opposed, in strict binary fashion, to *essuf*" (2008:614).
8. However, Claudot-Hawad (1993) and Casajus (1989) have proposed the concept of *ebawel* as the feminine, matrilineal principle in structural opposition to *esuf*, and this may be more accurate. A recent meaning of *ehan* has also emerged that includes all Tuareg groups under the same umbrella of language and culture as part of the MNLA propaganda (see Rasmussen, this issue). If such an application of *ehan* were pervasive in Tuareg society, it might be a near equivalent to *badenya*.
9. Rarely have other Malian ethnic groups followed the Tuareg example, although the uprising of the armed Songhay Gandakoy in the 1994 rebellion against Tuareg people is one such case.
10. The Malian government also could learn from the Algerian, Libyan, and Moroccan governments' ways of dealing with their Tuareg populations, although the situation in Mali is complicated by matters of race. Whereas in Mali many Tuareg consider themselves a "white" group under the leadership of "blacks," in North Africa they are under the leadership of "white" Arabs.