Entangled Histories of Colonial Occupation,
1899–1917

Few events may seem as straightforward as military conquest, usually narrated as a tale of mission accomplished. This fiction conceals moments of genuine uncertainty, dissent, and the bitter aftertaste that taints the winners’ spirits as much as it hurts the soul of losers. The French conquest of Ader is a bland caption for a plethora of entangled histories. Groups that collaborated with the French invaders did not necessarily share the objectives of colonial forces. Some chiefs opted for what they saw as a lesser evil, compared to the rule of pre-colonial warlords. Others realised the hopelessness of resistance, and through submission saved themselves and their dependants from the bloody repression that hit the resistance. Some slaves chose freedom, and took sides against masters who had denied them the most basic human entitlements. Others remained loyal to chiefs and masters whose power they saw as legitimate, whose strength they deemed undeniable, and whose fight against usurpers, white and black, they regarded as just.¹ The words of some colonial officers are filled with regret that it should be their fate to serve – as they loyally did – a cause they doubted and sometimes openly questioned. Commandant Gouraud, who endured immense hardship in exhausting campaigns for France, wrote descriptions of battles that exalted the courage and military skill of his Tuareg adversaries.

¹ For example, see Capt. Marty, Rapport politique annuel 1922, ANN1E9.39: ‘[in the events of 1917] all the former vassals and serfs of the Tuareg, whom we had freed from the harsh control of their masters ... made common cause with their ancient masters.’ Against this view, there are countless examples of former slaves who sided against the imajeghen and even risked their lives for the French cause; see for example Nicolas, Tamesna, p. 96.
The occupation of Ader was a protracted process. It exposed the contrasting views of colonial invaders and local elites on what constituted legitimate power. French rulers had a particular understanding of the relation between territory and population: for each fixed administrative unit they identified a corresponding set of inhabitants expected to invest their labour in local resources and pay taxes in kind or, later, cash. The relationship between administrators and their subjects was anonymous. By contrast, as shown in the previous chapter, the imajeghen’s political authority was based on their ability to access resources and make them available to allies and dependants; make others move in support of their economic and military purposes; and hinder the mobility of enemies. It was less a fixed ‘power over’ an indistinct territory and an anonymous population, than a ‘power to’ make one’s dependants move if and when needed, and to access a range of scattered resources upon which the imajeghen held priority rights by virtue of their hierarchical relation to the individuals or groups who exploited these resources at an everyday level.

To French officials, the military defeats they inflicted on Tuareg chiefs, and the acts of submission that followed constituted proof that Ader’s communities had surrendered to France. This interpretation was not shared by Tuareg warlords, who continued to engage in raids and counter-raids aimed at gaining access to people and goods. Constant raiding was in continuity with the imajeghen’s pre-colonial style of rule, but it soon appeared to be incompatible with France’s view that pacification was a necessary prerequisite to the establishment of its superior ideals of government. These differences only mattered for as long as confrontation was an option: the French mobilised the goal of pacification to justify the organisation of a major military offensive that eventually put an end to both Tuareg raids against settled villages and French recurrent confrontations with Tuareg resistance. Almost twenty years passed before resistance was lastingly overcome. The submission of different constituencies happened gradually and was negotiated separately with each group.

France’s initial attempts to penetrate Ader were frustrated by its inhabitants’ ability to turn the desert’s edge against invaders. At the end of the nineteenth century, no European had ever set foot in northern Ader. The first French missions did not know what to expect: finding out cost them enormous human and financial losses. Once French officers overcame the obstacles posed by the hostility of the land and its peoples, it was only a matter of time before they subdued even the staunchest resistance. The most vulnerable to France’s military superiority were the least mobile sections of the population: Asna farmers and hunters, Hausa
chiefdoms, and those Tuareg who could not retreat indefinitely into the
desert. Hence, the first groups to accept French rule were the Lissawan and
the Hausaphone sections of the population, who benefited from the con-
straints that French control imposed on the imajeghen’s power. The Kel
Gress capitulated in 1901 after suffering a major defeat at the battle of
Galma, where their warriors, armed only with swords, could not resist the
power of French firearms. The Kel Denneg resisted until 1917.

The Kel Denneg retreated into the desert, from where they continued to
raid settled villages. French conquerors, under-staffed and under-
financed, struggled to control the movements of their new subjects and
to protect the most docile amongst them. Their ruling techniques were
more effective in the southern sedentary region than in desert areas.
Nevertheless, southern Ader fell on a disputed border between French
and British possessions, the final limit of which was only defined in 1906.2

The political instability of southern Ader rendered it insecure, in spite
of its greater geographical accessibility. In northern Ader, the desert
remained the abode of dissidents, because the effort required to control
this region would have been disproportionate in relation to the limited
means available: ‘for the moment our politique must continue to appear
indifferent toward what happens in the desert ... we cannot with our
limited means attempt to police the region beyond the settled zone.’3
This was a precarious equilibrium. Dissidents in the desert region could
not be prevented from accessing the fertile southern zone, from which
they continued to extract whatever they needed. Anyone in Ader wanting
to resist French impositions soon realised that all he needed to do was
move into the desert to the north, or to British Nigeria to the south,
depending on where he might receive greater support.

The French administration did not develop ties of personal dependence
with their subjects, but impersonal ones over the people and resources
contained within the new colonial boundaries. People wishing to evade
colonial demands crossed frontiers beyond which French authority van-
ished. Tension between pre-colonial and imperial governmental ration-
ales resulted in the administration’s tenuous grip over Ader’s society.
French officers strove to enrol local people into their logics of

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2 Monteil, Conventions; Fourage, Frontière. Colonial boundaries were maintained at inde-
pendence; cf. Lefebvre, Territoires et frontières; Miles, Hausaland Divided. The Annexes
of Camille Lefebvre’s PhD thesis include the original maps of redesigned borders; Lefebvre,
Territoires et frontières, volume deux: annexes.

3 Rapport sur la situation politique du Troisième Territoire Militaire, quatrième trimestre
1902, ANN 1E17.bis.
government. But imperial administrators offered few incentives to embrace colonial projects and ruling ideology.

Personal dependence on former rulers provided safety in times of crisis, as long as one’s superiors retained the capacity to access scattered and volatile resources. By contrast, impersonal subjection to the French did not guarantee safety from poverty, hunger, and ultimately death. France did not introduce social welfare measures and the commandant had no personal obligation towards forced labour in colonial worksites. When French demands were excessive and did not yield returns, people took the exit option and moved outside the sphere of French authority. The Kel Denneg struggled to retain control over their movements, for therein lay their power. In 1917 the opposition between the political rationales of France and Tuareg resistance reached a climax. The French did what territorial empires do when faced with desert nomads they could not subjugate: they exterminated them.

The notion of a ‘Tuareg rebellion’ essentialises Tuareg identity. Different Tuareg groups reacted differently to French invasion. The forms of resistance developed by the Kel Denneg and Kel Gress reflected their different ecological bases and economic strategies. The lower echelons of Tuareg society tried to take advantage of colonial challenges to elite authority. For many slaves and slave descendants colonisation coincided with the defeat and subjection of their masters. It opened new avenues of emancipation. This chapter explores colonial conquest from multiple perspectives revealed by different sources, including colonial archives, Arabic correspondence between French conquering officers and Tuareg chiefs, and the oral testimonies of commoners and former slaves. The aim is thus to approach conquest in a multivocal and perspectival fashion. The chapter begins with a reconstruction of the immediate precedents to the French occupation of Ader, which provide a background for interpreting the expectations and aspirations of the first French administrators who reached Ader. It explains where the first generation of French officers who governed Ader were coming from, historically and ideologically, and contextualises their actions in the encounter with local groups. Ader’s society, introduced in the preceding chapter, was not a homogeneous entity. Accordingly, this chapter is heteroglossic: it weaves together different socio-ideological languages of individuals and groups disposed to perceive the same events differently.⁴

Sometimes it has been possible to find sources whose authors spoke for themselves and became involved in a dialogue with colonial administrators. This is the case of letters in the correspondence between French commanders and Tuareg chiefs. Such correspondence, often written in the Arabic medium and translated by colonial interpreters, has been analysed by Camille Lefebvre, who revealed the ambiguity and reversibility of power inequalities between conquerors and conquered. More often than not, French administrators had to adapt their language, world views, and ambitions to local expectations. They were frequently unable to impose their objectives and methods, and so the occupation of Ader proceeded in a one-step-forward-two-steps-back fashion. For the French, compromise was constant and unavoidable. When it reached proportions judged unacceptable, it precipitated violent repression intended as a demonstration of strength, but in fact providing proof of weakness: brutal repression demonstrated France’s failure to govern Ader.

Colonial occupation had different implications for colonisers and colonised, chiefs and commoners, masters and slaves, farmers and herders, men and women. One text never tells the whole story: in the following pages multiple sources are introduced and triangulated to reveal the experiences of those willingly or unwillingly involved in the events of colonial occupation.

Prelude to occupation

The world described in the previous chapter was unknown to Europe. Before 1897 Ader had never been visited by Europeans. However, several explorations had reached its surroundings. In the nineteenth century, the first expeditions to reach areas close to Ader had been British. Hugh Clapperton, either alone or with other members of the British Mission to Borno, passed to the east and south of Ader, reaching Sokoto but not venturing north of the capital. In his second expedition, Clapperton reached Sokoto from Badagry on the Guinea Coast, but died there in April 1827. Heinrich Barth and the other members of the British-funded Central African Mission travelled north, east, and south of Ader in 1850–5. Following these expeditions, the growing practicability of the Niger waterway and ongoing insecurity of trans-Saharan routes to

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5 Lefebvre, ‘Le temps de lettres’.
6 Denham, Clapperton, and Oudney, Narrative of Travels and Discoveries.
7 Clapperton, Records of the Second Expedition.
8 Barth, Travels and Discoveries.
Central Africa resulted in decreasing British activity in the Sahara. The following missions into areas near Ader were French-staffed and financed. Their main objective was to reconnoitre the border between French and British Central African territories. The harshness of nature and lack of familiarity with local rulers made European penetration difficult. The first Say–Barruwa line, which marked the Anglo-French border, had been traced on a map in Berlin without knowledge of the territory in question. It proved impracticable. Between 1890 and 1906 the Anglo-French border to the north of Sokoto was the object of four renegotiations.10

The Mission Monteil (1890–2) and the Mission Cazemajou (1897–8) were obliged to intrude into British territory in order to avoid a long stretch of waterless desert. Quoting Monteil’s letter of 29 November 1891 to the Under-Secretary of State, de Tessières notes that Monteil disregarded instructions to remain on French soil because ‘in order to do so, Monteil would have to cross a desert frontier zone of about 60 km. And then venture, without a guide, into a region on which he had scarce information, access to which he had been unable to arrange by any means.’11 Captain Parfait-Louis Monteil reconnoitred the towns of Say and Barruwa, the two termini of the Anglo-French border, but was unable to remain within French territory. He passed via Argungu and Sokoto in the British zone.12 At the time, these infringements caused diplomatic incidents.13 Monteil did not enter Ader. He travelled with one interpreter, ten armed men, and three porters. His stated aims were exploratory.

Cazemajou’s mission was more overtly political. He did not only have to reconnoitre the Anglo-French border, but also to negotiate French protectorates with local chiefs, and to verify Messaoud Djebari’s contention that Tahoua in Ader hosted survivors of the second Flatters expedition (1881).14 Tahoua made its first appearance in French imperial discourse through the sensational story, invented by a mentally unstable

9 Cf. Boahen, Britain, the Sahara, p. 221.
10 The four conventions setting (or modifying) the Anglo-French border in the Central Sudan are the Declaration of 5 August 1890; the Paris Convention of 14 June 1898; the London Convention of 8 April 1904; and the second London Convention of 29 May 1906. They are cited and discussed in Tilho, Documents scientifiques, pp. xii–xxxii.
12 By doing so, Monteil was able to assess to what degree the British were actually established in the area and the extent of Sokoto’s political borders, on which the British based their territorial claims; cf. de Tessières, ‘Episode’, pp. 372–5.
Algerian military interpreter, of the presumed survival of three (or four) members of the second Flatters expedition, whose massacre at the well of Gharama in Algeria on 18 February 1881 had shocked France. In his widely read *La Conquête du Sahara* published in 1925, E. F. Gautier leaves no doubt as to the impact of the Flatters massacre on French imaginary: ‘It is not easy to talk objectively of Flatters; as soon as it was discovered, his death assumed a sentimental value, it instantly grew into legend, it became the death of Siegfried or Achilles.’

Cazemajou, a family friend of Flatters, wanted to dispel the doubts raised by Djebari’s imaginative account. He did so in a report based on his enquiries conducted in the Konni region, which proved ‘that (1) no survivor of the Flatters Mission was ever in Tahoua or any other part of Adar; and (2) Djebari has never been in Adar himself.’ With this report, for the first time scanty information on Adar seeped through administrative intelligence. In particular, Cazemajou established that northern Adar and Tahoua were in the hands of the ‘Loumaden’ or ‘Aoulimmiden’ – as had already been noted, correctly, by Djebari, and confirmed by the Commandant of Timbuktu, Rejou, who stated in a letter dated 30 November 1895 that in order to reach Tahoua it was necessary to cross the entire territory ‘occupied by the confederation of the Iwellemmeden, particularly hostile to Europeans’.

Cazemajou left accompanied by the interpreter Olive and a military escort of thirty-three tirailleurs. Like Monteil before him, he was

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15 Mission Djebari à Thaoua, ANS 1G 210. Djebari describes Tahoua as follows: ‘Tahoua is a prototypical market town. At the market I have seen traders from Morocco, Tripolitania, Ghadames, and even some Chamba of Algeria. The currency for all local transactions is golden ingots of about 10g. Tahoua is a large oasis of about 35-40 square kilometres situated on the road from Agadez to Timbuktu, at about four days of walk from the latter. Until the present day we have been attributing to Timbuktu a commercial importance that it has lost a long time ago. It has been replaced by Tahoua’, ANS 1G 210. On the adventures and personality of Meassaoud Djebari, see Kanya-Forstner, ‘French Missions to the Central Sudan’ pp. 15–35; see particularly pp. 23–6. Djebari claimed to have personally been to ‘Thaoua’ and to have seen there the European survivors with his own eyes, including Flatters himself. In a libel he published on this subject, he mentions alternatively three or four survivors; cf. Djebari, *Survivants*, pp. 3 and 23.


20 The journal of Cazemajou’s expedition has been published posthumously as ‘Du Niger au Lac Chad: journal de route du Capitain Cazemajou’ in *Bulletin du Comité de l’Afrique*.
obliged to pass through Argungu south of the impracticable French route. In Argungu he convinced the Sultan of Kebbi to sign a treaty that gave France a protectorate over the area.\textsuperscript{21} However, the Caliph of Sokoto refused Cazemajou’s visit, and in March 1898 the French officer crossed Gobir. Meanwhile, he gathered information on Ader that allowed him to prove the inaccuracies of Djebari’s story. He reached Zinder on 15 April. In Zinder, Cazemajou and his interpreter Olive were assassinated on 5 May.\textsuperscript{22} In the text of the project of the ill-fated mission which was going to follow Cazemajou’s expedition, Captain Paul Voulet commented on the failure of his predecessor: ‘How could we hope that [France could have made an impression] and that [indigenous] chiefs who had thus far been consistently victorious could be seduced by the simple presence of one Frenchman whose sole influence lay in his courage?’\textsuperscript{23} By the time Voulet was asking these rhetorical questions, aggressive imperialist grandeur had reached a climax. Voulet himself would soon ensure that French armies left a lasting impression amongst the African population.

The French Central African Mission (Mission Afrique Centrale) was also known as Mission Voulet et Chanoine. The two officers who led it had the now-familiar objective of reconnoitring the Anglo-French border without trespassing across it. At the beginning of January 1899 the Mission left Sansanne Hausa (100 km north-west of Say) and ventured into a scarcely known and unsafe territory.\textsuperscript{24} Preceding expeditions had been very small and relied on local guides. They had sought the cooperation of local hosts, which was obtained at a price and had afforded partial protection. The Voulet and Chanoine Mission was a massive military operation. At its departure from Sansanne Hausa it numbered more than 1900.\textsuperscript{10–11}


\textsuperscript{21} The text of the treaty is included in the file ‘Mission du Capitaine Cazemajou dans le Haut Soudan, 1896–1897’, ANS 1G 222.

\textsuperscript{22} Dossier mission Cazemajou: opérations entre le Niger et le Chad, 1897–1898, ANN27; Dossiers reconnaissances et opérations militaires, ANN 1.7.1. On the death of Cazemajou, see Rapport du Chef de Bataillon Crave commandant la région Est Macina sur les événements relatifs au désastre de la mission Cazemajou d’après les déclarations de l’interprète indigène Badie Diara attaché à la mission et celles des autres survivants de la mission, Ouagadougou 26 August 1898, ANS 1G 222. See also Salifou, \textit{Damagaram}, pp. 103–9.


From Slavery to Aid

1,700 people and 800 animals.\(^{25}\) Its presence alone threatened to upset the delicate balance between the population and the meagre resources of this land. As Voulet advanced into the central Sudan, he realised his vulnerability in the face of a harsh, unknown environment. He clung to the one thing he could control: his army and its destructive potential.

The Mission reached the inaccessible waterless stretch that gave access to southern Ader at the beginning of the hot season. In spite of firm orders to remain in the French zone, it entered British territory at the border near Matankari. In Lougou, water was found in wells at a depth of 60–70 metres. On 19 June 1898 fifty men died of thirst near Lougou. Violence erupted at the first sight of water. Villages encountered in this march were openly hostile. The Mission’s commanders returned hostility with atrocity. In his eyewitness account, Joalland described villagers decapitated and hung on trees, the legs of their corpses eaten by hyenas.\(^{26}\) When alarming news reached the French command, Klobb and Meynier were sent to conduct an enquiry. Voulet murdered Klobb and declared that he was leading a coup against France. Chanoine was loyal to his friend and superior until the end.\(^{27}\)

Echoes of the Mission’s brutality had reached Ader from Birnin Konni\(^{28}\) in Ader’s south-western corner. Thereafter, Ader villagers knew what to expect from the French military. When, less than one year later, French columns entered Ader, people’s attitudes ranged from diffident to overtly hostile. Villages had been abandoned. Commandant Moll feigned astonishment: ‘The pretext of being afraid of us, so often

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\(^{25}\) About 7 Europeans, 600 tirailleurs and their servants, 800 porters, 200 women, and 100 other followers that included various categories of servicemen and prisoners. The 800 animals included pack oxen and bulls for slaughter to feed the expedition, donkeys, camels, and about 150 horses. Cf. Mathieu, *Mission Afrique Centrale*, pp. 89–90.


\(^{27}\) From Zinder the formerly Voulet-Chanoine mission split into two. The largest section returned to Say under the command of Lieutenant Pallier. Joalland and Meynier remained in Zinder, saw to the construction of Fort Cazemajou and installed Amadou II as new sultan for the Kingdom of Damagaram. In October 1899, they continued their march towards Chad, leaving in Zinder a small contingent commanded by Sergent Bouthel. They did not wait, as originally planned, for the Mission Saharienne, or Mission Foureau Lamy, which had been delayed by lengthy negotiations with the Air Tuareg who resisted French attempts to requisition camels. Eventually, in November, the Mission Saharienne reached Joalland and Menyner, who had been joined recently by the mission Gentil from the Congo in French Equatorial Africa. Reunited, French forces proceeded outside Niger. For a recent study of the Voulet and Chanoine Mission, see Thaite, *Killer Trail*.

\(^{28}\) Interview with Aghali Assadeck, Keita, 13 February 2005; interview with Maliki and Tambari, Agouloum Sabon Gari Kaoura, 19 September 2005.
adduced by the few inhabitants encountered [by the conquering troops], conceals the hostility that everyone feels toward us. This hostility is surely stronger than I initially imagined. I became more and more convinced that the character of these populations contains a lot of cowardice and treachery.'

At the turn of the century French officers occupied Ader. Captain Moll and Lieutenant Jigaudon crossed Ader on their way to Zinder; they were followed shortly by Captain Figeac, aiming for Tahoua; and finally by Lieutenant Colonel Peroz and Commandant Gouraud, who undertook the occupation of Ader and established military posts in the region. The march of Peroz and Gouraud took longer, and was more arduous, than the preceding expeditions. This was because they had come to stay, and had to prove that it was possible to colonise French possessions without crossing into British areas.

It may appear surprising that it took four months for an energetic man like colonel Peroz to go from the Niger to Tahoua, when preceding missions – Monteil, the unfortunate Cazemajou, and Joalland – had taken a much shorter time. This is because they had followed the standard road that crosses an area punctuated by many villages and wells separated by short distances, which for us was ‘the arc of the inaccessible circle’ around Sokoto.

Article 4 of the Anglo-French convention of 14 June 1898 established that the boundary between French and English territory to the east of the river Niger would follow a median line across the Dallol Maori until it reached the circumference of a circle with a radius of 100 miles from the city of Sokoto at its centre. Beyond the ‘inaccessible arc’, the frontier was defined by points fixed by meridians and parallels up to the town of Zinder, and from Zinder to Lake Chad. The arc of the circle constituted a major problem for the French, because it obliged them to follow a route that entered an uninhabited desert zone. Peroz and Gouraud had been able to avoid crossing the British area to reach Ader. However, having accomplished this extraordinary feat once, and having created permanent French posts in Ader (Tahoua, Gidan Bado, and Tamaske), they could not establish regular liaisons between posts, checked by the waterless stretches that had hindered penetration into Ader. Peroz explained:

At the price of extraordinary hardship and suffering, our troops were able to dig a certain number of wells that rendered temporarily accessible these inaccessible places.

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30 Gouraud, Zinder-Chad, p. 29, note 1.
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MAP 3.1 Trajectories of early colonial expeditions
routes; but the wells dried up soon, as underground waters depended solely on yearly rainfall, which in this region is always meagre.\textsuperscript{32}

A southern passage, which until 1906 fell within British territory, was necessary for establishing viable links across the area of French administration. France obtained this passage with the final revision of the border in 1906. Until then, French convoys crossing British areas via Matankari and Illela suffered the humiliation of being disarmed and escorted by armed British officers.\textsuperscript{33} France’s uncertain hold over Ader’s southern fringes, in the heart of Kel Gress power, had not escaped the notice of its new subjects. The northern desert boundary and the southern, politically unstable boundary attracted groups who realised that the French hold over these areas, for different reasons, was limited.

‘IT WAS NECESSARY TO SHOW WE WERE THE STRONGEST’

The Military Territory of Zinder was created by decree on 23 July 1900, and placed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Peroz, assisted by Major [Commandant] Gouraud.\textsuperscript{34} Peroz and Gouraud followed in the steps of Captain Moll’s first exploratory mission into Ader, which in September 1900 went from Say to Zinder via Tahoua and Tessaooua. Following Moll closely, Lieutenant Jigaudon stayed in Tahoua and Tamasko. At the head of a column of more than 100 tirailleurs, Jigaudon found that all villages had been abandoned. He struggled to find guides, water, food, and fresh animals. It took him three days to get from Tahoua to Tamasko, which he finally reached on 1 October 1900 after an arduous trek:

The road presents some very difficult tracts; the slopes of the ferruginous mountains we are crossing exhaust my already worn-out animals. Especially on the mountain that dominates Tamakso many animals fall and cannot get back on their legs, to the point that I am forced to send all my porters to collect the baggage lost in this tough stretch. In the vicinity of the village of Bagay ten porters take advantage of the millet fields to escape, and we cannot retrieve them. With difficulty I reach the village of Tamakso with the remaining animals. Their backs are covered with open sores and I cannot continue the march without replacing

\textsuperscript{32} Colonel Peroz, \textit{La dépêche coloniale illustrée}, 15 Août 1906, as quoted in Tilho, \textit{Documents scientifiques}, p. xviii.

\textsuperscript{33} Tilho, \textit{Documents scientifiques}, pp. xviii–xix.

\textsuperscript{34} Troupes du Groupe de l’AOF, 3\textsuperscript{e} brigade, Battaillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais no. 3, n. d., Notice sur la colonie du Niger, première partie, p. 8, SHD-BAT GR5 H211.
MAP 3.2 Anglo-French borders, 1890–1906 (from Tilho)
them. Like all the other villages, Tamaske has been evacuated; we camp at the side of a dry watercourse two kms south of the village.  

Near the abandoned village of Tamaske Jigaudon met two men who led him to a Tuareg camp where he obtained new horses, camels, and pack oxen to replace dead and exhausted animals. He sent a guide to look for locals and persuade them to send representatives to meet him at Keita Lake. As he advanced into the country, he requisitioned all the animals he could find. He took about twenty women and children as hostages. When a man came to rescue his child, he told him to tell his people that he would return their women and children in exchange for three camels. The following day he obtained one camel and two horses and released the hostages. On 5 October, meeting with very few men, he asked them why they were hiding.

They replied that they feared whites, and thought that whites had come to make war. I reassured them, and showed them how inconvenient it was that they left their village, putting the convoy in the greatest embarrassment and forcing it to use force to obtain what it needed . . . forcing even the most peaceful spirits to wage an unwanted war. They seemed to understand and promised to stop escaping, and instead to offer their support to the leaders of [French] expeditions crossing the area with their troops. They appeared delighted by the success which we achieved against the Tuareg, their enemies, whom they must accept because the Tuareg are stronger, but they would love to get rid of them. They left me with good intentions: will they do as they promised?

The reports by Moll and Jigaudon on their reconnaissance mission in northern Ader were sent to the Governor General. In a separate letter Captain Moll expressed his personal views following initial contacts with the people of Ader. In this letter he expressed indignation at people’s explanation, first to Jigaudon and then to him, that they hid because the preceding mission had ‘completely shattered’ them (complètement éreintés). These claims must have referred particularly to the Voulet and Chanoine Mission’s passage in Konni only four months earlier. But the shame of that catastrophic expedition was such that any reference to it was taboo in French correspondence and reports. It was only logical to fear the French in a region where that gigantic expedition had wrought havoc. But French officials had removed the Voulet and Chanoine Mission from the order of discourse. Paradoxically, this made local fears

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appear unjustified.\textsuperscript{36} They were not: French forces were to inflict huge losses, in people and animals, in the months that followed the misleadingly reassuring promises offered by Jigaudon and Moll.

In November of that same year, Tahoua was crossed by Captain Joalland (of the Voulet and Chanoine Mission) and the Mission Saharienne, returning from Chad. At the end of November, one platoon of the Sixteenth Senegalese Company (later renamed as the Fourth Brigade of the Zinder Battallion), made up of 150 tirailleurs and about 100 porters and teamsters, left Say for Tahoua under the command of Lieutenant Figeac.\textsuperscript{37} Figeac’s march was slowed by local resistance, but on 4 December 1900 he reached his destination and established the Poste de Tahoua. There, his men were soon having to repel attacks by Tuareg horsemen and Hausa archers. Capturing some local men, Figeac ordered them to take messages to their chiefs promising peace in return for submission and threatening war against anyone who opposed the French occupation. When threats did not produce the desired effect and attacks continued, Figeac resolved that ‘it was necessary to show that we were the strongest’.\textsuperscript{38}

Figeac’s first offensive of 8 December at the Lake of ‘Tagalack’ [Tabalak],\textsuperscript{39} was followed by a larger operation on 21–31 December, when he directed a series of attacks against Asna and Tuareg fighters. The French were attacked in Inkinkaran by a group of Tuareg horsemen

\textsuperscript{36} ‘I feel obliged to report a statement that Lieutenant Jigaudon shared with me in person, but omitted to include in his report. Some people of Tahoua told him that if they were so scared of the French, it is because they had been completely devastated by the detachment that had just passed, that is, mine. This is the same pretext they used with me, accusing the Voulet Mission and the detachment of Lieutenant Pallier. I strongly protest against Tahoua’s inhabitants’ accusations. As I explained in my report, I have acted with the greatest patience and as peacefully as the circumstances allowed’. Capitaine Moll to Gouverneur Général, Zinder, 16 November 1900, ANN 27.1.

\textsuperscript{37} Rapport du Lieutenant Figeac commandant le Cercle de Tahoua sur la Marche de Say à Tahoua et les reconnaissances de ce poste, 13 March 1901. SHD-BAT GR5 H207.

\textsuperscript{38} ‘As it was necessary to show that we were the strongest, we reconnoitred Tuareg camps and defeated them at the well of Djingissima. A second offensive surprised six camps of people of Tahoua in the night of 21 December. The prisoners we took directed us to the Iwellemmeden camps in Eger and Ikenkaran (40 km east of Tahoua). They were pursued by Acouya and Tiggert, and they lost large herds. Following these events, the villages of Tamaske surrendered in Tahoua on January 1st 1901’. Rapport du Lieutenant Figeac commandant le Cercle Annexe de Tahoua sur la Marche de Say à Tahoua et les Reconnaissances de ce Poste, 13 March 1901. SHD-BAT GR5 H207. See also Figeac’s \textit{Journal du poste} cited in Mallettes, \textit{Monographie du Canton de Calfou}, 1950, ANN 17.1.10. See also: No date, no author, \textit{Historique de l’Ader et de l’Azouak}, SHD-BAT GR5 H211.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Mare de Tabalack} in French sources. Tabalack is the name of the village, and the name of the lake only by association.
commanded by the brother of Makhammad, _amenokal_ of the Kel Denneg. The French pursued and defeated their attackers, raiding several Tuareg camps on their way back from the mission. On 31 December 1900 the ‘_groupe de Tamaske_’, as the villages around Tamaske were known, made their submission, followed by Tahoua on 1 January 1901. This first submission involved primarily Hausa villages clustered in the area, but the most powerful chiefly Tuareg groups did not appear at the meeting. At this time, French officers knew relatively little about the physical, demographic, and political characteristics of Ader. A more comprehensive peace treaty would be signed in Tamaske in the following November. Figeac led a third offensive on 25 January around Barmou. On 3 February his fourth offensive signalled the political realignment of local groups who accepted the legitimacy of French power and supported French military forces against former rulers, the Tuareg _imajeghen_. Local informants warned the French contingent that a Tuareg raid had hit Insafari and was threatening Tamaske. Some local fighters joined the French punitive campaign. Figeac was gratified that ‘the aim to associate locals to our actions against the relentless raiders of Makhammad had been attained’.  

In these four offensives Figeac inflicted substantial losses on his enemies: 190 camels, 610 oxen, 10,800 sheep, and 30 horses were captured and about 100 ‘Tuareg and _Bellah_’ were killed. Soon after the submission of Hausaphone villagers in Tamaske, the Lissawan chief Amattaza Ennour signed a peace treaty. Lissawan elites sided with the French against northern Ader’s Tuareg chiefs, the Kel Denneg, who continued to raid French posts and allied villages from the northern locations where they had retreated. Figeac, with the small contingent at his disposal, relentlessly responded to Tuareg attacks. In January the Kel Eghel maraboutic group submitted in the person of Abdul Karim, father of Khamed Elmumin. Makhammad, _amenokal_ of the Kel Denneg, continued to pillage the main farming settlements, including Tamaske, at will – but the Kel Denneg had been forced into a defensive position in the desert. The French set out to govern a region they regarded as subdued. In the months that followed French occupation, the majority of Ader’s

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40 Rapport du Lieutenant Figeac commandant le Cercle de Tahoua sur la Marche de Say à Tahoua et les reconnaissances de ce poste, 13 March 1901. SHD-BAT GR5 H207.

41 Rapport du Lieutenant Figeac commandant le Cercle Annexe de Tahoua sur la Marche de Say à Tahoua et les reconnaissances de ce poste, dated 13 March 1901, SHD-BAT GR5 H207.
population strove to guess what the future would bring: the return of *imajeghen* rule or the definitive installation of the French invaders.

In March 1901, Figeac’s position was strengthened by the arrival of Captain Joly, who temporarily assumed command of French forces in Tahoua, waiting for Peroz and Gouraud to arrive. On 5 October 1900 Lieutenant Colonel Peroz had left Marseille to go to take command of the recently created Third Military Territory (*Troisième Territoire Militaire*), whose capital was Zinder. On 1 March 1901, he reached Tahoua, where he created the posts of Tamaske and Gidan Bado, and reported that the Tahoua–Filingué route was established. Joly had charged Figeac with identifying an accessible route and creating wells on long waterless stretches of land, but Figeac fell ill. He was repatriated and substituted by Sergeant Ariste. After lengthy investigations the ‘route of Laham’, from the name of a well on which the route’s viability depended, was established. The first official convoy to take this route left Filingué on 3 May 1901 and reached Tahoua on 25 May.

Gouraud and Peroz, who had separated near Niamey on 13 February 1901, met again in Matankari on 26 February, after Gouraud had crossed the country with a convoy of 200 *tirailleurs*, 200 porters, 50 camels, 90 oxen, and 120 donkeys, which he had to split into two because such few wells of clear water as existed were too deep (water at 25–60 metres). Watering the animals often took the whole night. They marched most of the 55 km to the Dallol Maori at night, to avoid the overwhelming heat of the day. In the harshest tracts, 20–40 animals would fall exhausted at the same time. In Matankari, Peroz informed Gouraud that instead of continuing his march towards Lake Chad as planned, he would assume command of the western region between the Niger River and Tahoua. The stretch of 900 km between Say and Zinder, where Peroz would be based, was too vast, difficult to cross, and incessantly targeted by Tuareg raids to be left void. On 14 March 1901 Gouraud reached Tahoua, which he described as a ‘large village of miserable straw huts, numbering 3,000 or 4,000 inhabitants and operating as a supply centre for the Eastern Aoullimminde Tuareg’. The view from the verandah of his

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42 Gouraud, *Zinder-Chad*, p. 25. The porters carried 25 kg each on their heads, the local oxen carried 100 kg, camels 120 kg, and donkeys 60 kg.

43 Gouraud, *Zinder-Chad*, p. 28.

44 Gouraud, *Zinder-Chad*, p. 29. Today Tahoua has approximately 80,000 inhabitants (73,000 in 2001).
round straw hut in Tahoua revealed the seamless expanse of dry land which he had just conquered:

From the dark interior of the hut one sees the dunes shining in the sun and a green corner of vegetation formed by the thorny trees filling the empty lake of Tahoua. When the rains will start, there will be water. Water: we dream of it! From the River Niger to the Chad, we did not cross a stream in more than 1300 km.

When Gouraud reached Tahoua, the Kel Dennen and most of the Kel Gress had retreated into the Sahara. At the end of March, after having established a post in Gidan Bado, Peroz and Gouraud made their way to Tamaske. They slept for a few hours on the evening before their departure, then, with Peroz in front, started marching at midnight, to avoid the day’s heat, and continued after sunrise. That day, a dozen tirailleurs died of exhaustion. In the evening, they reached Tamaske, where the first tornado of the season broke out: ‘Sandy whirlwinds and a furious wind, then a few raindrops, just enough to wet our shirts, as we had all gone out to receive this small beneficial rain’. In Tamaske, Gouraud and Gaden (Peroz’s adjutant) shared a straw hut for the night. The following morning was spent making arrangements for the continuation of the trip and gathering information from locals on the route ahead of them with the help of a ‘bad interpreter’. On this journey, Gouraud adopted two dogs and named them Kalgou and Mademoiselle Tahoua. Gouraud, who had captured the fearsome Samori of Wasulu and was about to defeat the mighty Kel Gress, described Mademoiselle Tahoua with tenderness: ‘With her big black eyes and her small white nose, [she] has the charm of delicate persons. She only leaves the side of her master to lie between two cases of wine on the back of a pack ox while her master rides his horse.’

Gouraud’s fondness for Mademoiselle Tahoua left a trace in local memory, as in some villages his nickname was ‘Quarrelsome master of a female dog’ (Fittina mai karya).

ATTITUDES OF INDIGENOUS CHIEFS: HAUSA AND LISSAWAN SUBMISSION

Gouraud appears in the testimony below, which portrays the colonial encounter from the perspective of an elderly descendant of the Hausa

45 Gouraud, Zinder-Chad, p. 30. 46 Gouraud, Zinder-Chad, p. 31. 47 Gouraud, Zinder-Chad, p. 31. 48 Interview with Almoustapha Ada and Isha Idi, Alela, 30 September 2005.
village chief, Almoumine, (discussed briefly above in Chapter 1). Here Almoumine is remembered as having dared to shake hands with *Fittina mai karya*. Like countless other village chiefs and leaders, Almoumine is not mentioned in colonial archives. He, or others like him, did not exchange letters in Arabic with French officers, as the Kel Gress and Kel Denneg chiefs did. They did not confront them in battle or write records that can be compared with French texts. All we have are testimonies like the one below, which portray events that may never have happened, or may have happened differently. Like the ‘uchronic dreams’ discussed by Alessandro Portelli,49 these stories represent possibly imaginary situations that Almoumine, his descendants, or the narrator imagined to have occurred in their village on the arrival of the French. Yet these accounts give access to perspectives on colonial occupation that would otherwise be lost. In representing a reality that is *imaginable as real*, they provide information on the context, relations, and ideas that surrounded French occupation. The passage quoted below explains the transition from *imajeghen* power to French rule. It emphasises how in this transition the Tuareg Lissawan turned out to assume the role of canton chiefs, while the status of Hausa chiefs like Almoumine, who had welcomed the French and accepted their peace conditions, did not rise in the new colonial system.

It was Almoumine who signed the peace treaty with the white man called *Fittina mai karya* [...] Before the arrival of the whites the Abzinawa had power. They used to come and collect bags of cereals [...] They did not leave one of their own as representative in villages, but when they reached a village they saw a representative who was their contact, usually a village chief or a local leader [*zarumi*]. In Sakole they went to Almoumine. Almoumine was a Bahaushe [a Hausa man], and the Abzinawa spoke Tamasheq [*Abzanci*]. They communicated because, then, the representatives of the Abzinawa could speak Hausa. They did not come at a specific moment of the year. When they needed something, they sent a representative to collect whatever it was they needed from the villages – farmers [...] threshed millet, put it in bags, and gave it to them [...] It was the Abzinawa who had power then, not the Lissawan. When the French came, our people welcomed them first, but the Lissawan kept visiting them, went to talk to them [...] The Hausawa did not want to remain always close to the French, like the Lissawan did.

When the French arrived, they went to see Almoumine. Almoumine gave his hand to *Fittina mai karya*, who asked him ‘What kind of people are you? No one has had the courage to shake hands with us so far.’ Initially, some people from Sakole

had gone to see the French who had just arrived, but they were killed. A woman in Sakole danced bori, then she said – they are here in the woods, what you have to do is go home, if you do not stay home the White will find you. At that time Almoumine had power in the village. He told people to prepare food [. . .] French soldiers arrived from the east of the village [of Sakole], west of Agouloum. Almoumine went to meet them on the road with his following. They said: ‘Peace, peace . . .’ [Amana, amana . . .] . . . ‘peace, peace . . .’ They were carrying food to offer [to the French], Almoumine walked in front. He continued saying ‘Peace, peace . . .’ until he was close enough to the French soldier to give him his hand. So the Frenchman asked him: ‘What kind of man are you? No one dared offering us his hand before you.’ Then he asked him his name, he said ‘Almoumine son of Danfan . . .’ The French wrote and wrote [Sai rubutu, sai rubutu, sai rubutu . . .].

They made peace [ama na], but the Frenchman said: ‘tomorrow you must come to find me at the hill near Tamaske’. The following day they went to the meeting and said ‘Here we are, we have come.’ So the Frenchman took his writing stuff [abun rubutu] and told him ‘This is what you must bring for the peace: such-and-such [kaza] a number of camels, oxen, donkeys, sheep, and goats . . . this is what you shall bring, they are [necessary] for making peace.’ Once they have given them [the animals requested], they will have the peace agreement [. . .] many [animals] of each type. ‘Oh! Where shall we find all these animals? How can we get them?’ So they told him to bring the double. The Sakolawa said they could not make it, so the French doubled the amount again. Then the interpreter of the French told Almoumine to accept the deal and say they would bring what they were asked. So they told them so. The French wrote it down and they told Almoumine ‘Well then, go and bring [what we agreed].’ They started bringing, bringing [. . .] and the Frenchman wrote down ‘Almoumine son of Danfan is a great chief.’ But after this Almoumine did not visit the poste [bariki] frequently, he feared he would be asked for more animals. Instead the Lissawan went to the French. If they reached the French in the evening, they stayed until the morning. He kept going to see the French and staying with them. The Sakolawa did not do the same. This is how it happened that the whites gave the chiefdom to [the Lissawan] Alfadanda,51 they gave him the chiefdom.51

Local villagers resented the brutality of Kel Gress and Iwellemmeden rule. While they initially feared French invasion, they were eager to free themselves from the extractive rule of Tuareg warlords. As discussed in the previous chapter, throughout the nineteenth century, Lissawan imajegen had established skewed alliances with Tuareg warrior chiefs and Hausa farmers. They acted as intermediaries between these two groups in the fertile area of Agouloum, Tamaske, and Keita. The first French victories in the region had proved their superior military technology. Lissawan

50 This is a mistake. The first of the Lissawan to be appointed chief (sarki) by the French was Ennour (‘Amattaza’). Afadandan was his successor.

51 Interview with Almoustapha Ada and Isha Idi, Alela, 30 September 2005.
chiefs based in Agouloum had to choose between siding with former Tuareg rulers or with European newcomers. The Lissawan knew that they could not hope to resist French conquest successfully. They were a small group unable to compete with powerful Tuareg warriors – and even less able to withstand the French army. Their interests were tied to agricultural production. Retreat into the desert and armed resistance were not options. Like the settled Hausaphone groups with whom they had been living in the ethnically plural towns of Mashidi and Agouloum, the Lissawan had no realistic alternative but to side with the French. The testimony offered below by a Lissawan intellectual bears resemblances with the story of Almoumine, although here it is the Lissawan chief Amattaza who meets the French officer. Amattaza instructs the women of Sakole to prepare food to offer to French soldiers:

Voulet and Chanoine did not pass through here. They passed toward Konni and Mayayi. On 12 December 1900 Figeac, a French captain, installed the first French military post in Tamaske. At that time Agouloum was the Lissawan capital. Keita did not exist yet. In Bambey the French did not find a village chief, they told them to select a chief for them. The same happened in Kalfou and Tamaske, where they did not find Hadu. Amattaza was away from Agouloum, with his herd. But a messenger reached him from Kalfou and explained the situation. ‘Those people, if you don’t make war against them, they accept peace. But they came to make war. You either accept peace or make war.’ Amattaza consulted his brothers who did not want to sign a peace treaty. But he managed to convince them to find a strategy to deal with the French. He asked the women of Sakole to pound millet and get sugar and prepare food for the French. Then he awaited the arrival of the French. Amattaza waited with a white flag in sign of peace. He sent as many women as there were French soldiers, each woman with a bowl of food to offer the soldiers. They had never been welcomed like this. The two chiefs exchanged their horses.52

In Agouloum, the ‘Lissawan capital’, descendants of local Hausa chiefs claimed that their ancestor welcomed the French military with offers of food and signed a peace treaty:

It is Moussa Baba who signed peace with the French. They prepared tuwo and food for them and they offered it to the captain. At that time there was a ‘capitaine’, not a ‘commandant’. They had concerted themselves on how to act. But they heard about how the whites [Voulet and Chanoine] had won in Konni and Libatan, and they knew that it was not possible to resist. The French then gave all the power to the Lissawan.53

52 Interview with Aghali Assadeck, Keita, 13 February 2005.
These testimonies, each of which represents the point of view of a particular constituency, do not follow the same chronological sequence as the French records. Here, the colonial encounter begins when one man or a group from that village first met a French officer. Like the anonymous natives upon whom Moll and Jigaudon attempted to impress their ‘peaceful intentions’, these men responded as well as they could to French demands for food and/or animals. Almoumine and Moussa Baba may have welcomed Figeac in his preliminary exploration of the region, and Figeac may – or may not – have asked them to sign a peace treaty. Unfortunately, Figeac’s original journal is lost, and we do not have a detailed account of his initial contacts. Figeac probably met only Hausa village chiefs, and asked them to support the French. At first, local villagers did not seek political roles that they had not held before. The populations who had accepted that Lissawan representatives assume an intermediary role between them and the Kel Denneg initially supported Lissawan chieftaincy under French rule. In the words of an elderly Hausa intellectual from Kirari:

On the arrival of the French, an alliance was formed, including the villages of Sakole, Zangarata, Agouloum, Tamasek, etc. These allies met in Tamasek and formed a front of resistance against the French […] When peace was signed in Tamasek, the colonialists wanted someone responsible, and they held a large meeting. There was Amattaza who was a friend of the Tuareg and resided in Agouloum. All these chiefs, united, decided to nominate Amattaza, to support his candidature vis-à-vis the French […] The Blacks designated Amattaza at the time of the pact of peace with the French. Apparently there were no other candidates. Some said they should designate one of them, a Bahaushe. But others said they should designate Amattaza who was already the intermediary between them and the Tuareg. Others disagreed, but eventually they selected Amattaza. They had not paid tribute to him before then, but now he started collecting taxes for the French.54

Lissawan rule guaranteed stability in the area. The French used Lissawan chiefs and their entourages as intermediaries with the population and allies in military operations directed against other Tuareg constituencies. The journal de poste of the first years following military occupation is replete with references to services rendered by the Amattaza Ennour to the French administrators. Amattaza participated in the defeat of the Kel Gress at Galma in 1901. It is clear that after the initial reconnaissance

of Figeac, Peroz and Gouraud saw Amattaza as a customary chief and they promoted him to this position. It is also clear that the Hausa village chiefs did not seek administrative power in the first years of French rule. Amattaza honoured Gouraud with a grand welcome in Tamaske and the gift of his own horse. The exchange of horses between Amattaza and the French chief mentioned by the Lissawan historian is confirmed by the description provided by Gouraud himself in his published diary:

In Tamaske, at the bottom of the large dune, we meet about one hundred horsemen of Amattaza forming a fine squadron armed with spears. Their march ends with a charge that reminded us of Zanguebe [...] Sure that I would refuse it, Ahmed Taza [sic] gave me his horse which pranced a lot. But at the time I was a good horseman and I accepted. The horse resisted for a while and entertained the viewers.\(^55\)

The Lissawan were the first local chiefly group to sign a peace treaty with the French in the person of their leader Ennour, known as Amattaza.\(^56\) French officers welcomed Amattaza’s collaboration as ‘the most important [submission] of all, that of the Amattaza Ennour, the sole hereditary chief of the region who, thanks to his authority and energy, was going to be a serious support to us’.\(^57\) The occupation of Ader had been accomplished by a small number of French officers and a few hundred West African tirailleurs serving in the French army. These forces needed the support of local populations to operate in a challenging environment unknown to them. Since such support was never freely forthcoming, it was obtained either under the threat of violence or in exchange for direct or indirect benefits. The Lissawan benefited both directly and indirectly from colonial conquest: they received protection and were made ‘customary chiefs’ of a region larger than the area over which they used to have some influence under Iwellemmeden power. The French contributed to strengthening Lissawan claims to hereditary power by officially subscribing to a particular version of regional history that emphasised the

\(^{55}\) Gouraud, _Zinder-Chad_, p. 42. It cannot be excluded that Gouraud’s _Zinder-Chad_ is the source of Aghali Assadeck’s account.

\(^{56}\) ‘The ruler of Tamaske is Ahmed Taza [sic], the only Tuareg chief who surrendered to us without fighting as soon as we arrived. Hence, we treated him with particular regard. He obviously took advantage of this by raiding extensively the Aoullimminden [sic], more or less disbanded. Recently, for fear that the surrender [of the Iwellemmeden] would have marked the end of his profits, he obstructed negotiations. Mohamat [sic] and he are not on good terms, and each claims that he shall have the best of the other, as soon as the French will have left the country.’ Gouraud, _Zinder-Chad_, p. 70.

\(^{57}\) Malfettes, _Monographie_.

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**From Slavery to Aid**
antiquity of Lissawan authority in Ader. They granted the Lissawan ownership rights over farming lands in their district.\textsuperscript{58} This meant that Lissawan relatives of the canton chief could sell or rent out some of the most productive lands in the region around Keita Lake. They governed over a large number of villages, most of which had hitherto been subject to Iwellemmeden and Kel Gress power.

The conquered society was not homogeneous, and French conquest had different consequences for different groups. In the first two decades of French occupation, no-one knew how things would change: different groups took stances dictated by what they imagined the future might bring. Numerous dependants of Iwellemmeden chiefs, the majority of whom resided to the north of the village of Ibohamane, began severing ties from their masters. The story of a certain Abdou, who had been the slave of Kel Eghlel Enninger clerics close to the Kel Denneg, remained alive in the memory of his slave descendants. He appears to have negotiated with French officers the independence of a slave settlement, of which he became the first administrative chief. Today, he is remembered in a cluster of villages, mostly created in the twentieth century through the permanent settlement of descendants of former slave communities that had existed in this area: ‘Our maternal grandfather, Abdou, negotiated independence for all our villages with the French. He was based in Seyte.’\textsuperscript{59} But slave descendants soon realised that their dependence had not ended. It had been replaced by new impositions, such as the obligation to pay taxes and to work as forced labourers. These new impositions, coordinated by the Lissawan chiefs, were bitterly resented. Popular resentment against colonial demands resulted in frequent unrest and contestation of the legitimacy of Lissawan authority.

\textbf{KEL GRESS DEFEATS AT ZANGUEBE AND GALMA}

The ones who stood most to lose were former chiefs, the Kel Gress in southern Ader and the Iwellemmeden in the north. Their strategies towards the French differed. Kel Gress wealth depended on the caravan trade, and the herding and farming that made it possible. The southern, more fertile regions they dominated were easier for French forces to control. French rule and Kel Gress rule were both based on land and landed resources. Confrontation was inevitable, as was Kel Gress defeat.

\textsuperscript{58} Cf. Nicolas, \textit{Tamesna}, pp. 99 and 103. \textsuperscript{59} Interview with anonymised speaker, 1995.
Defeated, the Kel Gress did not continue to resist, at least not overtly, but strove to resume the economic activities that underpinned their wealth. The most important one, caravan trade, depended on their ability to circulate along the main trade routes. The French understood this. In the first letter that Peroz sent to the Kel Gress chiefs in his march of occupation into Ader to consolidate the earlier expeditions of Figeac, he informed them that, after a stop in Matankari, he would reach Tahoua, where he expected Kel Gress chiefs to come to meet him and accept his peace conditions. Failure to do so would result in the same punishment already inflicted by Lieutenant Figeac on the Kel Denneg:

If the Kel Gress have not submitted to the officer who commands Tahoua [by my arrival in Tahoua], I shall wage war against them. Already the officer who commands Tahoua has fought against Makhammad chief of the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg because the latter had attacked them first. My officer killed many Tuareg of Makhammad, looted them, and chased them away from the lakes. But I hope that Makhammad will surrender because we do not want to harm the Tuareg, we only want them to surrender and live in peace with us. If the Kel Gress of Abzin do not surrender, we will loot them and push them into the desert and close all the routes of Abzin, Damagaram, Démergou, and Air.60

Before their final defeat and capitulation after the battles of Zanguebe and Galma, different Kel Gress chiefs followed separate strategies. Their letters to French officers state clearly their demands. In particular, they were to maintain their freedom of movement: ‘If you grant us [peace], we shall be able to stay anywhere we want in the country, and to travel wherever we want.’61 One month later, another letter was written after an initial agreement had been broken by some Kel Gress sections.62 The French army had resumed chasing Kel Gress imajeghen where they knew they could find them, that is, along the main trade routes. Kel Gress demands were clear:

Leave us the routes. Because of the peace that shall reign between us [if you accept the request advanced in this letter] we will do nothing [against you] and you will not have to interrupt our peace agreement [again] for as long as we live […].63

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60 Colonel Peroz to Kel Gress chiefs, n.d. (written before 26 February 1901), ANN 7B1.1, my italics.
61 Kel Gress Malem, Ickendo, and Maiou to French command, received on 4 September 1901, ANN 7B1.1.
62 In a letter written in Matankari Colonel Peroz asked the Kel Gress chiefs why, if their intentions were indeed peaceful, some of their people had attacked the French convoy, Peroz to Kel Gress chiefs, Matankari, 28 February 1901, SHD-BAT, GR 3H 207.
63 Kel Gress of Ouarzagane to French command, received 12 October 1901, ANN 7B1.1.
In a proclamation of peace to Kel Gress sections camped near Galma, Zurmanni, and Arzerori after the defeat of Galma, Colonel Peroz ruled that they ‘be allowed to return in peace to their villages and camps, and that they be left free to come and go along paths and everywhere (sur les chemins et partout)’.  

Some Kel Gress chiefs, following the lead of their renowned warrior Idiguini, were in favour of unconditional war. Others, grouped around the Agholla Moulloul, professed peaceful and collaborative intentions, but did not cease to raid French convoys and posts. Attacks targeted food provisions, and Gouraud grew increasingly concerned. The camps of the Kel Unwar (headed by the Agholla Mallam), and of the Kel Azar (headed by the Agholla Al Mokhtar), together with other unidentified groups, had been sighted near the well of Zanguebe, from where Kel Gress chiefs could access the farming villages of their dependants in Mansala, Laba, and Djibale. Gouraud decided to strike against the groups settled in Zanguebe. He could only count on a small contingent, so he kept his plan secret until the last minute, in the hope that the surprise element and the French superior weapons would allow him to prevail against the enemy.

On 13 April, Gouraud left the post of Gidan Bado at 8.30 p.m., with Lieutenants Bacheley and Chédeville and four half-sections of about fifteen men each, a total of fifty-seven African tirailleurs, minimal baggage and provisions for three days. In order to avoid villages, the contingent made a large southwards detour, then swept north into a mountainous region. The moon rose at 1 a.m. In the first hours of their march, they advanced in total darkness: ‘At moments we smelled the scent of flowers which we could not see’.  

At 8 a.m., having marched all night, they spotted a small group of Kel Gress herders stationed on top of a dune, who disappeared as soon as they sighted the French contingent. Gouraud ordered his men to form a square, expecting a charge from behind the dune. This did not fail to arrive. A first group of fifty Kel Gress horsemen attacked. Hidden behind their distinctive white shields of thick antelope skin, the horsemen were raked by French fire and scattered, leaving ten men dead on
the ground. The French advanced, leaving some officers behind. They were crossing a stream-bed in the valley’s bottom, struggling with the thorny bushes that filled it. Chédeville and Gouraud scrambled to the top of the hill ahead, from where they saw a plain swarming with enemy warriors. They immediately alerted the soldiers caught in the stream-bed, but too late: a Tuareg charge of 150–200 horsemen swept down on them, cutting them down with their swords. Within minutes of this attack the Kel Gress, who did not possess firearms, suffered enormous losses. Gouraud’s words reveal the discomfort of the French officer in the face of the unfairness of a confrontation that opposed unequal military technologies:

The fight ends with an episode of epic bravery. While the remainder of their army is disbanded, two unhorsed Tuareg fighters start running alone, brandishing their swords, their head rising above their shields. They run slowly, upwards in the sandy dune. All fire is concentrated against them. They keep running, invulnerable. One falls at 50 steps, the other one continues alone. I do not know how many gunshots he absorbed! I looked into his dark eyes behind the litham [Tuareg head veil]. Finally, only 20 steps away from the bayonets, a shot killed him. To attack with a sword, on foot and isolated, a squadron prickling with bayonets and churning out volley after volley – this is courage! We were moved by admiration.68

The small French company, having lost four men, had to make its way back to Gidan Bado. Stopping to rest after seventeen hours of marching and fighting was extremely dangerous in a territory still filled with enemies. Gouraud had hoped to avoid stops, but soldiers could not be kept from falling asleep. After a short overnight rest of four hours, they reached the post on 14 April at 3 p.m. Their incursion had lasted thirty-nine hours, during which no-one had eaten.

The few French officers stationed in Ader spent the spring of 1901 negotiating with numerous Tuareg sections, exchanging letters, and receiving chiefs. Chiefs declared themselves eager to submit and signed peace treaties, which they repeatedly broke. Gouraud knew that Kel Gress resistance was reassembling around the leadership of Idiguini. He asked for reinforcements. The Kel Gress learned about every French move, and Gouraud’s informants confirmed that the bulk of their army, 400 or 500 men in strength, was being assembled in Galma, near Madaoua. On 18 June, Gouraud, at the head of two platoons of the 20th and 22nd companies, with a total of 220 rifles, defeated the Kel

68 Gouraud, Zinder-Chad, p. 38.
Gress in Galma, at the heart of their area of influence. The battle of Galma marked the end of Kel Gress resistance. It took place in what initially seemed a tranquil landscape:

The 18th at 2.00 a.m. the reconnaissance reached an immense cultivable plain locked in an amphitheatre of rocky hills 30 to 40 metres high, at one end of which it was possible to see the village of Galma. Behind the village, to the right, on the slopes, Tuareg camps were scattered as far as the eye could reach. As we moved closer, we were able to see long lines of people leaving the village and climbing the mountains, without any agitation, no herds, and few isolated horsemen. At one kilometre from the village, three or four huts lit up and took fire, one after the other. In the background, at a low height, we saw the drawn swords of the infantry shining in the sun.

The surrounding hills, like curtains, concealed the view. Gouraud rushed to occupy the ‘suspicious dunes’. While he was still securing his position, he spotted the bulk of the Kel Gress cavalry charging at 150 metres. The left front of the French square opened fire at will.

The charge arrives at an oblique angle. It scrapes the [French] square so close that a Tuareg horseman hits the head of a corporal in the left-back corner of the square with a terrible blow of his flying sword. Shot horses and horsemen fall under the bayonets, forcing the tirailleurs to step back [...] Meanwhile [...] the front side (Lieutenant Cotten), strengthened by a reserve half-section (Sub-Lieutenant Bandiougou) has opened fire on the enemy infantry, which dominates the dune and is trying to descend and throw itself against the square. A violent and precisely aimed fire stops them. These brave fighters do not step back, but crouch on the ground protecting themselves behind a rampart of shields. On the left front, successive waves of cavalry launch themselves on the sides of the square, looking, at moments, like a continuous line of white shields that conceal the horsemen entirely. The bravest ones stop their horses a few meters from the square, at the back, and appear to wait for the fight with the infantry to begin. The square moves forward toward the top of the dune, which it tries to reach as fast as possible, in small moves of 12–15 meters alternated with shooting. Three times the Tuareg try to stand up and throw themselves against the square. Three times they are blocked

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69 Rapport du Chef de Bataillon Gouraud, Commandant la Région Ouest 3ème Territoire Militaire, à Monsieur le Lieutenant-Colonel, Commandant Militaire du Territoire sur les Opérations contre les Kel Gress, 17–28 Juin 1901. Signed by Gouraud, Guidam Bado, 30 Juin 1901, ANN 27.5. The same document is available at SHD-BAT GR 5 H207. See also: Troupes du Groupe de l’AOF, 3ème brigade, Bataillon de Tirailleurs Séénégalais No. 3, no date, Notice sur la colonie du Niger, première partie, p. 8, SHD-BAT GR 5 H211. Different sources do not always agree on dates. Where possible, I follow Mallettes, who cites the Journal de Poste de Tamaske, which would have been the most precise source.

70 Gouraud, Rapport sur les opérations contre les Kel Gueress [sic], 17–28 Juin 1901. ANN 27.5.
and overcome by the fire. At 20 steps from the top they still hold their position, flattened on the ground under their shields. Finally, in a final impetus the square gets to the top of the dune brandishing its bayonets, and the last remaining Tuareg infantrymen escape toward the plain. Some tirailleurs, exalted by the fight, want to run in pursuit, but the commandant stops the combat and orders the ceasefire and ‘rassemblement’, as individual action against the Tuareg could only yield the worst disappointment.\textsuperscript{71}

After the fight, the corpse of Idiguini was identified: he was an old man, his veil covering a white head.\textsuperscript{72} He had almost no teeth left in his mouth. Gouraud commented with admiration, ‘it is sad to defeat men of such courage’.\textsuperscript{73} Some of the Kel Gress dependants did not share the ambivalence of the French commander towards Kel Gress defeat. Loyalty to Tuareg elites was not unknown amongst slaves, freed slaves, and free Hausa subjects. The death of Idiguini acquired supernatural overtones in the memory of Hausa villagers near the site of the battle. But others, who must have suffered personal losses and humiliation at the hands of imajegben elites, had nothing but resentment towards the defeated Tuareg nobility. An elderly lady in Galma commented on the battle: ‘When the whites came the Abzinawa used to sell our people (irin mu) far away. But Allah brought the whites. There was war, and the white defeated the Abzinawa. And everyone became independent.’\textsuperscript{74}

Following the battle of Galma, the French commandant issued a proclamation that mirrors how French colonialism represented the conquest of Ader to itself and to the conquered populations:

Three months ago, when the Colonel [Peroz] crossed Adar he offered peace to the Iwellemmeden of Azawagh commanded by Makhammad and to all the Kel Gress tribes, but on condition that they submitted and paid a small tax as a reminder of who commands the country. The Tuareg did not surrender, no chief came to see the Colonel, but some chiefs tried to betray him with false words of submission and letters of deception. God gave patience to the Colonel. The Colonel left his Commandant in Ader and continued offering convenient terms of submission to the Tuareg. But instead of submitting, the Tuareg Iwellemmeden and Kel Gress raided villages which had submitted to the French. Several chiefs uttered insulting words against the French. So the Colonel sent the Commandant to Zanguebe with only sixty tirailleurs to talk to the chiefs gathered in this place; but the Kel Gress attacked the Commandant and the latter killed forty of their men and wounded many more. Once again, the Colonel asked the Iwellemmeden and the Kel Gress to submit. And the Iwellemmeden died of hunger in the desert because we took away their wealth, and one

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. \textsuperscript{72} Gouraud, \textit{Zinder-Chad}, p. 48. \textsuperscript{73} Gouraud, \textit{Zinder-Chad}, p. 48. \textsuperscript{74} Anonymised speaker, 2010.
by one they came to the posts to surrender. But the Kel Gress had millet and livestock and they did not submit and continued instead to raid villages. And this state of things went on for three months. But finally the moment of justice came. The Colonel had spoken. The Commandant went to find the Kel Gress in Galma and he killed so many men that all Kel Gress families are crying. And amongst those who died at Galma are Idiguini, chief of the Ayawan and chief of the country, Alkassoum, nephew of Idiguini, and Iuzadel (?) chief of the Kel es Ahtafan and Abouzart (?) brother of the Tambari and Mohamed Matashi chief of the country of Gandessamou, and Aboula and Agholla, brothers of Mohamed dan Izé, and many other important men, and other white-skinned Tuareg whose cut-off heads now lie in the sand. The commandant took a lot of wealth from the Kel Gress, and they are now escaping in all directions, toward the Hausa, toward the east, west, and north. And this is how God in his justice caused those who do not submit to the French to die of hunger or be killed, or injured, or deprived of their wealth. But He gave goodness to the Colonel who always pardons those who seek his indulgence. May the ones who read this proclamation explain the situation to those who cannot read, and may the Tuareg who refuse to submit and write letters full of lies understand that God gave patience to the Colonel, but this patience is not eternal.

When the Kel Gress realised that they could not win the war against French military technology, their main concern was to resume control over the production and trade that underpinned their wealth. After the defeats of Zanguebe and Galma in 1901, Kel Gress resistance ceased, and the Kel Gress were mobilised on the side of French offensives against other insubordinated Tuareg groups. While the bulk of French forces had been occupied fighting the Kel Gress in Galma, the Iwellemmeden had made a series of attacks to the north of Tamaske, Barzanga, and Tessack. On 28 July they attacked Agouloum to show their resentment for what they saw as a betrayal by their former allies and dependants. After the defeat of Galma, the Kel Gress did not engage the French in battle again. Yet, they continued occasionally to raid caravans and sack villages. Roughly three weeks after Galma, on 18 July, they sacked a Kel Ewey caravan. Colonel Peroz, fearing more trouble, sent to Tahoua as many reinforcements as he could from his post of Zinder. The troops were concentrated between Gidan Bado and Tamaske and were found by the Kel Gress on their return from the salt cure in Aïr. Faced with a large contingent of French forces, the Kel Gress submitted in Tamaske on 2 November 1901. The Tamaske convention that was signed on this date

75 In Ader, 'Hausa' means south and refers to the Hausa area of northern Nigeria.
76 Combat de Galma, Proclamation, n.d., SHD-BAT GR5H 207.
regulated the relations between the Tuareg, the settled population, and the French authorities.\textsuperscript{77}

**MAKHAMMAD AND IWELLEMMEDEN RESISTANCE**

The Iwellemmeden, unlike the Kel Gress, did not fear losing control over a particular region, but they could not renounce their way of life. Their power rested on their ability to move freely and intimidate settled populations. Their unrestrained mobility exposed other groups to attacks and raids, something clearly unacceptable to the French authorities. What Kel Denneg elites saw as a prerogative of their status openly challenged French notions of sovereignty. Joly wrote to the Ettebol Makhammad,\textsuperscript{78} ‘you know that in order to be in peace with me, it is absolutely necessary that you stop making war on [settled] villages and that you do not take anything away from them’.\textsuperscript{79} The French and the Kel Denneg held incompatible governmentalities. They were not fighting for control over the same resources, but over different logics of power. This confrontation led to the virtual annihilation of the Kel Denneg warrior nobility, not their submission.

The incommensurability of Iwellemmeden and French rule was already apparent in their initial exchanges at the beginning of colonial occupation. In their march of conquest into Ader, French troops engaged the local population in military action, took hostages, and confiscated anything they needed to pursue their mission. Yet they did not encounter organised resistance. Most villages had been evacuated, and the colonial army advanced blindly into a desolate country, looking for water, food, animals, and people. The Kel Denneg moved northwards, counting on the harshness of the territory to wear out the occupying forces. The same strategy had been adopted by their western ‘cousins’, the Iwellemmeden Kel Ataram, who were also based at the desert’s edge, in the Menaka and Gao areas of the French Soudan.\textsuperscript{80} Tuareg warriors trusted their superior knowledge of the desert environment and their hitherto unchallenged

\textsuperscript{77} Arreté no. 58 du 2 novembre 1901: convention réglant la situation des Touaregs et de l’Ader signée à Tamaske par le lieutenant commandant le 3e territoire militaire Periz, ANN 17.1.2

\textsuperscript{78} Makhammad ag Ghabdessalam ‘Elkumati’, ettebol of the Kel Nan in the period 1875–1905, cf. Alojaly, *Histoire des Kel Denneg*, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{79} Captain Joly to Makhammad, 5 May 2001, reported by Chédeville, historique des faits survenus depuis avril 1901, Gidan Bado 10/06/1901, ANN 7B1.1.

\textsuperscript{80} On Kel Ataram history, see Grémont, *Les Touaregs Iwellemmedan*. 
capacity to move in and out of the Sahara. An undated letter to the amenokal Firhun, \(^{81}\) who had expressly rejected French peace conditions, \(^{82}\) shows that French command was fully aware of Tuareg tactics: ‘You say that the French cannot come to find you in the waterless country [le pays sans eau]; you are wrong. The French go everywhere [les Français vont partout].’ \(^{83}\)

Once the French had established military posts in Ader, they wrote to the erstwhile rulers demanding their surrender. The result was a correspondence in Arabic, translated by military interpreters, \(^{84}\) in which the Kel Denneg engaged while seeking to temporise. Negotiations with Makhammad Amenokal of the Iwellemmeden (and, later, with his successors) remained inconclusive until the Kel Denneg resistance was overwhelmed in 1917. The Kel Denneg chiefs retreated in the Sahara. They did not engage the French in major battles, but continued to pillage settled villages at will. Early correspondence between Makhammad and French officers reveals not just clashing interests, but incommensurate world views.

By the end of March 1901 the posts of Tahoua, Tamaske, and Gidan Bado had been established. Charles Gouraud commanded the sector of Tahoua, under the authority of Peroz in Zinder. From the north of the country, the Kel Denneg continued to raid and pillage areas that until recently had fallen under their command. Continuous attacks occurred throughout April 1901, and were repelled by colonial troops. The modest numbers of the French were more than balanced by their superior military technology. Confrontations took the characteristic form of raids (rezzou) and counter-raids (contre-rezzou). The Kel Denneg had mastered this form of guerrilla warfare, and their tactical dexterity seriously undermined French credibility.

In the first years of occupation, the few French officers stationed in Ader were continuously engaged in the repression of Tuareg raiding and pillaging, directed against settled villages and different Tuareg sections. On 3 April a Kel Denneg raid targeted the villages of Karezi and Bermo, looting harvests and livestock. A successful French counter-raid retrieved 29 camels, 120 head of cattle, 20 donkeys and 2,900 sheep, but the village

\(^{82}\) Letter from Firhun to French command, 9 December 1902, SHD-BAT GR 5H 207.
\(^{83}\) Letter to Firhun, n.d. (probably written between 1902 and 1908), SHD-BAT GR5H 207.
\(^{84}\) The French military interpreter during Ader’s occupation was Moïse Augustin Landeroin of the Mission Tilho, who went by the local name of Moussa Ben Abdalla; see Gouraud, letter to Ismi of 10 May 1901, ANN 7B1.
of Bermo had been burned down. On 4 April a second, smaller raid took twenty oxen and seven camels from the village of Akala, north-east of Tamaske, and was also repelled. Sometimes the French intercepted Tuareg raids by pure chance. A mission sent to stop Kel Gress warriors escaping after the defeat of Zanguebe fell upon the camp of Tayou, chief of the Tillimidis branch of the Kel Denneg who had refused to submit, and requisitioned 3 camels, 420 sheep, 25 head of cattle, 6 donkeys and 40 hostages. Tayou made his submission in Gidan Bado on 21 April and recovered his animals and people. On 20 April a raid by forty Kel Denneg warriors was intercepted in the village of Tabancour. A fight with the tirailleurs resulted in three Tuareg dead and one prisoner, who revealed that, having learned of the Kel Gress defeat at Zanguebe, the amenokal Makhammad had decided not to surrender, but to try and establish an alliance with the Kel Gress to fight against the French. Four unarmed Kel Denneg, taken prisoner on 1 May between Kolloma and Tahoua, confessed that they wanted to surrender to the French, but Makhammad forbade them to do so. Meanwhile, Makhammad exchanged letters with the French command.

Like a refrain, successive French letters repeatedly requested that Makhammad present himself in person to the French post to sign a peace agreement. Makhammad’s letters invoked different reasons for not doing so, while invariably protesting his honesty and friendly disposition towards France. This strategy bought him time, because the French could not attack a chief who expressed, in writing, willingness to collaborate with all French demands. For example, in a letter dated 5 May 1901, Makhammad repeated twice that ‘it is not fear that stops me from coming to see you. Send me a trusted man who can mediate peace between us. Again, it is not fear that stops me from coming to see you. I will do anything you want…’ Joly’s reply asked the amenokal to present himself within fifteen days and accept the peace conditions, after which ‘together we shall decide where you can settle with your people’. The amenokal did not go, and the Kel Denneg were banned from the sedentary regions controlled by the French. In an attempt to cut their

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85 Report of Adjoint Chédeville on the events that took place since April 1901, Gidan Bado, 10 June 1901, ANN 7B1.
86 Ibid. 87 Ibid.
88 Makhammad to Capitaine Joly, 5 May 1901, quoted in Chédeville’s report, Gidan Bado, 10 June 1901, ANN 7B1.
89 Capitaine Joly to Makhammad, 5 May 1901, quoted in Chédeville’s report, Gidan Bado, 10 June 1901, ANN 7B1.
MAP 3.3 Sites of battles and confrontations between Tuareg and French forces, 1900–1917
access to cereals and other necessary goods, the French authorities arrested any Kel Denneg caught at a southern market.

This measure could not leave Makhammad indifferent. On 20 May he wrote another letter asking what were the peace conditions (which had already been communicated to him several times). He added: ‘When the peace is signed, will we be able to come to trade in the villages?’\(^9\) In his reply, Captain Joly reiterated the conditions: no more raids and pillages, security of routes and villages, and the yearly payment of an ‘extraordinarily light tax of 50 head of cattle and 50 camels’.\(^9\) Shortly afterwards, following Gouraud’s orders from Tahoua, Joly summoned Makhammad to Tamaske to submit to Commandant Gouraud, who would be there on 5 June. On 2 June Makhammad wrote to say that he had sent many gifts to the French command through the Lissawan chief Amattaza, but the latter ‘only wanted to create enmity between them’. An immediate reply, from the French commandant of the western region, said that if indeed Amattaza schemed to spoil their relations, Makhammad should come in person. But Makhammad never appeared in Tamaske, and Joly wrote to him to inform him that if any of his people were found in French-controlled villages, they would be arrested. On 7 June, the prison of Tahoua held fourteen Kel Denneg who had come to local markets to exchange livestock for millet.\(^9\) These arrests, targeting people close to the amenokal and preventing access to markets, proved effective: in September 1901 an act of submission of the Kel Denneg was signed by Badidan, a representative of Makhammad of artisan (enadan) status.\(^9\) After this, Makhammad was expected to start paying his taxes, but in a series of letters he adduced reasons for his failure to gather the required number of animals, which was higher than the amount initially requested. The artisan Badidan told the commandant in person that Makhammad did not trust the people sent by the French to collect taxes. Colonel Peroz’s reply betrays a sense of impotent impatience:

At this moment, oh Makhammad, you are with all your people between peace and war. God gave me patience as he gave to all just and strong men, but patience cannot last forever. I pray God the all powerful that he illuminates your spirit [and inclines it] toward peace and does not blind it as it blinded the spirit of Idiguini.\(^9\)

\(^9\) Makhammad to Capitaine Joly, 20 May 1901, quoted in Chédeville’s report, Gidan Bado, 10 June 1901, ANN 7B1.
\(^9\) Chédeville’s report, Gidan Bado, 10 June 1901, ANN 7B1.
\(^9\) cf. Nicolas, Tamesna, p. 84.
\(^9\) Colonel Peroz to Makhammad, Tahoua 30 September 1901, SHD-BAT GR 5H 207.
On 2 November 1901 the Convention of Tamaske, also known as ‘the Peace of Tamaske’, had been promulgated at a large public meeting.\textsuperscript{95} Here, Lieutenant Colonel Peroz, who commanded the French Third Military Territory, set out the new norms regulating relations between different Tuareg and Asna constituencies and the French government. Most chiefs attended the meeting, except for Makhammad and the Iwellemeden. The new position of Amattaza, chief of the Lissawan, was forcefully asserted. At the beginning of this text, Peroz saluted ‘Amattaza, chief of the Lissawan: I gave him and all his children command of the country and the Asna villages of Tamaske, because he is the only Tuareg chief who came to us and understood that we brought the justice and peace of God’.\textsuperscript{96} Peroz went on to greet the other chiefs, including Ouarzagane Tambari of the Kel Gress and the Asna. Then he addressed Makhammad, who was not there to hear his warnings:

And now I am speaking to the Amenokal Makhammad, to the Iwellemmeden whom he commands, and to all the Tuareg and Bellah tribes and others who obey his orders. I authorise you to return to the north of the country of Ader, and to live there and conduct trade. But you waged war against France, and you shall pay 40 beautiful camels as a war tax. Then, every year you shall pay to the French governor of Ader, who is the Captain of Tahoua: 80 good oxen and 1,000 sheep, and when the Captain will ask you to, you will use your camels to transport for us 1,200 camel loads, that is, four times 1,200 cases [last line illegible]. We shall feed your men who bring the camels and will make a gift to your chief of 5 francs per load of 4 cases delivered to Tahoua in good condition. And if God wills, this shall happen every year. You will know that the Captain of Tahoua is your supreme chief and the supreme chief of all the Tuareg and the Asna of Adar and of the Sahara to the north of Adar. It is to him that you shall ask that justice be made, and he will render justice to you in the name of God and in my name, without any obligation on your part to make him gifts. You shall obey his decisions. You shall not steal, nor pillage; and if anyone wants to steal from you or raid you, you shall ask the Captain to protect you and punish the thieves and raiders. Your enemies shall be our enemies, and our enemies your enemies, if God wills.\textsuperscript{97}

The conclusion of this public declaration reiterated the role of Amattaza:

And now, may peace reign amongst you all. I inform you that the words that I have just spoken are your law, and that they will be written down in Arabic and handed over to our younger brother Amattaza, whom we honour more than all other Tuareg chiefs and more than all the Black chiefs. And our junior brother Amattaza shall keep our written words, and whoever in Adar should wish to
consult the country’s law will come to see Amattaza, and Amattaza will have his marabout read the law for him.  

The convention had clarified and made public the new political arrangements that followed colonial occupation. It could only come as a grave offence to the paramount chief of the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg, who persisted in his strategy of verbally feigning subservience without modifying his habits. When taxation became due for the first time, Makhammad explained that his people, who led a nomadic life, were dispersed over a large region, and it would take him time to travel amongst them and collect all the animals requested by the French. Makhammad had Ouaoua (who had been sent to him by French officers to collect the Kel Denneg taxes) support his version of facts in a separate letter: ‘I inform you (me, Ouaoua), that people are dispersed [...] in this country, there is no one who can gather the goods you demand in such a short time. But I shall only return to you once I can bring you what you imposed to Makhammad, who sent his men to collect [the tax].’ Meanwhile, Makhammad attempted to undermine Amattaza’s position:

I inform you that Ouaoua has arrived with your letter [...] I had started to gather the goods you demanded, when a representative of Ennour, known by the name of Amattaza, arrived and instructed me: ‘If you do not send the goods to Amattaza, there shall be no peace between you and the French.’ [...] Last year I sent goods to Amattaza, who disposed of them as he pleased. This year I sent him other goods, and I do not know what he did with them; this fatigues me.

The reply reassured Makhammad that Amattaza had no right to interfere between the French and the Kel Denneg: ‘It is not Amattaza who commands the country, it is I and the captain under my command.’ The conclusion reveals the extent of French exasperation: ‘I pray God to inspire your heart to fulfil my demands, because they are just. If you do not meet them, God shall decide between us.’ Shortly afterwards, Makhammad wrote to the French chiefs asking them to stop the continuous thefts that ‘the Blacks’ directed against the Kel Denneg, and asked him to return to him through Ouaoua any of his stolen goods that French soldiers would be able to recover. He added: ‘And with regards to the Blacks and the Illissawane who are with Amattaza and who want war,

98 Ibid.  
99 Makhammad to French command, 28 November 1901, ANN 7B1.  
100 Ouaoua to French Command, 10 December 1901, ANN 7B1.  
101 Makhammad to French Command, attached to Ouaoua’s letter of 10 December 1901, ANN 7B1.  
push them away from you because they are using deception to prevent well-being and peace between us.¹⁰³

These letters express an undisguised resentment towards Lissawan and Hausaphone groups (‘the Blacks’), which received French support because they collaborated with colonial forces. The resentment of these letters contrasts with the explicit French support for Amattaza. At the beginning of the 1900s the Kel Denneg were losing their power, which had been based on their capacity to control dependants who held resources they could access at will. As discussed in the previous chapter, their power lay in secure access, not ownership. Access was progressively curtailed by direct colonial action and by the refusal of increasing numbers of former dependants to share precious resources, now that the Kel Denneg could not impose their demands. The system that had supported Kel Denneg political power was crumbling. Of this Makhammad was lucidly aware, as he stated in a letter translated in Tahoua on 29 December 1901:

I am writing to say that I do not know what relation there is between myself and the French, because the latter do not resemble me. It is for this reason that I abandoned the power and the country and I sought refuge in the desert. All I desire for [the French] is the following: each time they have tried to come close to me, I have moved further away, even if I had to go to the mountain of Kaf (that is, the end of the world). As regards my fellow men, and those viler than them, they have been trying to kill me, and I had to escape from them until the arrival of Ouaoua, the man you and I trust. I believed what he told me about you. Our meeting has only been prevented by what I had heard before your arrival: that you depose chiefs and replace them with their subjects. I have seen that this is the case, because you elevated the humble Amattaza and made him chief of the villages, letting him take care of my own business. I cannot pay visit to him who raises my subjects above me, or makes me their equal. If what you say is true, that I am your subject, the chief of the country must make justice between the oppressor and the oppressed. Amattaza has kept my horse and my slaves, Arkilla and others. He took them from me because of you, and because Arkilla and the others were making war. And because of you I did not wage war against him. By God, get me back my horses, my slaves and everything that belongs to me which he has appropriated, because you repress the oppressors. Or if you prefer, do not interfere between us.

I inform you that the affairs of the Iwellemmeden are in the hands of our trusted man Ouaoua and his peers, because no other intermediary between us deserves my trust. As for Amattaza, all he tries to do is to create misunderstandings between us, because when his messenger (the one I already mentioned to you) went to see him

¹⁰³ Makhammad to French Command, 29 December 1901, ANN 7B1.
and reported my words to him, he said: ‘Tell Makhammad that he will only have peace with the French if I allow that.’ Moreover, for us to be in peace with you, we want that they let our traders go wherever they want, because Tahoua alone does not give us access to enough food and clothes. I inform you — and I swear it by God the Unique one — that what I told you about Amattaza is true, it is not a calumny, because after your messenger Ouaoua [came], he took three of my slaves. I also inform you that we are not like the Kel Gress: they are traders who rent their things (camels), they live on the packsaddles of camels. We, we live by selling our animals and our goods. We are not used to renting. And finally, I want you to know that I give these goods only because we want well-being and peace, because we want to be able to go everywhere. We do not give these things for the reasons you mention: that you will pursue and raid any individual even if he escapes far away, because we will not do any of the things you detest: we neither lie nor pillage. Greetings.¹⁰⁴

Shortly before writing this letter, Makhammad had signed an Act of Submission to France brought to him by Galabi, chief of the canton of Tahoua, and signed by Gouraud and Joly. One of the conditions comprised in this peace agreement was that the amenokal appeared in person at the Post of Tahoua. But Makhammad died in Ouazey in September 1903 without ever having met the French authorities. After Makhammad’s death, Ismoghil and Rhezi were the main contenders to succeed him. Colonel Noel favoured Ismoghil, disappointing the partisans of Rhezi. Reconnaissance missions were sent to Azawagh to reconcile the two parties, but the negotiations failed when Rhezi fled into Aïr. Rhezi would be one of the leaders of Iwellemmeden resistance in the following years.

NORMALISING GOVERNMENT: BORDERS, CHIEFS, AND THE ‘BELLAH QUESTION’

On 1 January 1905, a decree abolished the Third Military Territory and replaced it with the Territoire du Niger, divided into three regions: Timbuctou, Niamey, and Zinder. Tahoua belonged to the Zinder region. The border between French and British territory was still disputed.¹⁰⁵ French convoys could not avoid crossing British territory when the wells dried up in the hot season. In 1904 a treaty that improved the situation in France’s favour had been signed, but not immediately enforced.¹⁰⁶ The fuzzy boundary between the two empires lay in the sector of Gidan

¹⁰⁴ Makhammad to Commandant Gouraud, 29 December 1901, ANN 7B1.
¹⁰⁶ In the Rapport politique of May 1905, Guyon Vernier was still referring to a time ‘when the treaty of 1904 will actually be applied’, ANN tE2.14.
Bado, roughly covering Kel Gress country and Gobir Toudou. Administrative reports signalled increased insecurity in the area. Taking advantage of the circumstances, the Kel Gress raided villages of free and slave status, and kidnapped people to sell them in Hausaland.  

The disputed boundary exposed the limits of French power and encouraged defiance of French authority: in 1905 the Kel Gress refused to provide camels for French transport.  

It also created confusion: when the village chief of Sabon Birni was summoned to Sokoto by the British Resident, he sent a letter of apology to the French lieutenant commanding the Gidan Bado sector.  

The Laham route, punctuated by dried up wells, was abandoned on 1 October 1905. The British claimed immediate cession of the entire Ader region, which would have been unacceptable to France. Captain Guyon Vernier was exasperated:  

It is urgent and necessary for our interests that a provisional boundary be established between Sokoto and the Tahoua District [Cercle de Tahoua], because outlaws continuously seek refuge in the neutral zone where neither French nor English forces want to penetrate, as each pretends that this area belongs to the other. This [provisional] arrangement would have a local practical character and would not affect future negotiations for the final settlement of the boundary question. This arrangement could be settled locally and immediately by the colonial officers commanding Tahoua and Sokoto.  

Shortly after this report, Guyon Vernier met Major Bardon, the British Resident in Konni, and a final arrangement was reached that ceded fifteen villages between Matankari and Tahoua to the British, and created a ‘French passage’ through Gougoufeina. The new route was opened in November 1905. Raiding continued, however, not just in southern Kel Gress country, but also in the northern area where the feud between the partisans of Rhezi and Ismaghil continued to spur internecine fights between different Iwellemmeden factions. In October 1905 Rhezi made his formal submission to Commandant Gadel in Agadez. But two months later, in December, Ismaghil was still complaining that partisans of Rhezi were raiding him. Several northern Tuareg groups had abandoned Ismaghil and sided with Rhezi: ‘Soon Ismaghil’s influence will be limited to the Kel Nan only, where he himself belongs’.  

All subdued

110 Rapport politique, October 1905, ANN tE2.14.  
111 Rapport politique, October 1905, ANN tE2.14.  
groups were acquitting their fiscal obligations, except for Rhezi – who continued to be classed as the leader of a ‘dissident fraction’.

A number of elite groups of the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg, including Issieth and Bousta, chief of the important Tillimidis fraction, asked and received authorisation to settle near Amattaza in Keita. Under Amattaza’s authority, Keita was like an island of peace between turbulent northern and southern areas. Peace-seeking groups, tired of fighting each other and worn out by French retaliation, converged on Amattaza, if only temporarily. In the second half of the first decade of colonial rule in Ader there was a moment of relative calm, Relations with the western Iwellemmeden – or Kel Ataram, headed by the amenokal Firhun – were described as ‘excellent’. In January 1907 the chiefs of various Iwellemmeden sections, including maraboutic ones, were summoned for the public announcement of Decision no. 122, translated into Arabic by literate clerics, and accepted by all parties. Decision no. 122 was an attempt to settle once and for all tensions within the Kel Denneg, and support the feeble authority of Ismaghil, the French-designated chief.

Decision no. 122 fixed the respective duties and rights of the amenokal Ismaghil, Rhezi, and the ‘nobles’, ‘maraboutiques’, and imghad. Agreement between Rhezi and Ismaghil was mediated in the office of the Commandant de Cercle in front of the ‘Amattaza of Tamaske’ and other notables. French administrators took these official meetings, documents, and pronouncements very seriously, and congratulated themselves on their temporary achievements. But between the lines of their self-reassuring reports constantly surfacing suspicions betrayed the insecurity of their command. The same indigenous chiefs were declared,
by turns, loyalists or traitors every other month. Obsessively sought intelligence was aimed at discovering the actual disposition of various chiefs towards the French cause. Sentences like this one punctuated every monthly report: ‘The deference and submission of Ismaghil have grown in the course of his policing tour with Lieutenant Peignot, whilst Rhezi’s duplicity appears more clearly.’ However, while these sentences reappeared like formulae, the roles of innocent or culprit shifted with similar frequency from one chief to the other.

In December 1907, Lieutenant Peignot led a group of mounted troops on a ‘policing tour’ of the Azawagh. He was accompanied by Ismaghil and five Iwellemmeden camel corps. Peignot’s tour signalled the end of a first phase of French rule. Different groups took different positions towards French governance. Newly created chieftaincies supported France. They knew that elevation to power had earned them enormous resentment on the part of crushed pre-colonial elites, and that their security depended on French protection. Yet the French were distant rulers. Security had to be sought through alliance with the populations that had been placed under their control, but in whose eyes their legitimacy was limited. Canton chiefs were caught in a double bind: on the one hand, they had to reassure the French that they were capable of ruling new administrative units (exacting taxes, providing men for various types of recruitment, maintaining order). On the other hand, they needed to acquire legitimacy amongst their new subjects, on whose collaboration they depended. The land was too vast, and French contingents too understaffed, to actually control Ader’s population. If people did not want to participate in colonial institutions, they could generally avoid doing so.

Most local chiefs and commoners paid lip service to French authority. They only did so because they could not get rid of the French. They had to satisfy some French demands in order to be able to carry out their activities without colonial interference. French relations with local populations could not be normalised, because Ader subjects did not embrace colonial institutions and ways of thinking. They had no reason to identify with institutions that did not work to their advantage. Consistent failure to comply on the part of any one chief or group triggered harsh retaliation.
and summary executions, supported by the legal framework of the Code de l’Indigénat (see next chapter). Individuals and groups who stood to gain nothing from cooperating with colonial rule concentrated their efforts on avoiding French punishments. They met some French demands, sometimes, and went on with their lives, regulated by the same norms and constraints that had existed before the French invasion. Actual participation only happened when engagement in colonial institutions yielded results that were desired, or when non-participation was too risky. French administrators knew their hold on Ader populations was tenuous. Doubt and disillusion recurrently appear in French colonial discourse:

Important chiefs directly subjected to our power demonstrate to us their deference and readily obey our orders, but they run counter to an almost total inertia on the part of the entire population. Towards us, these people show nothing but the deepest indifference. They appear to ignore us.\textsuperscript{121}

\textbf{‘THE BELLAH IS INDISPENSABLE TO THE TUAREG’}

After 1905 the ‘slavery question’ (or ‘Bellah question’ from the term used to designate Tuareg servile classes in the French Sudan) became central to French administration. France had to support indigenous chiefs who, with varying degrees of conviction, served its cause. However the application of French anti-slavery policy would have eroded chiefly power. This difficulty was overcome at the expense of the least influential group, former slaves. Until 1905 colonial intervention had invariably favoured masters over slaves. However, a number of reports in the first years of the twentieth century had clearly stated that France could not support slavery.\textsuperscript{122} But it did not rush to eradicate it, either. While the slave trade and the harshest abuses against ex-slaves were actively opposed, slavery was tolerated as a form of dependent labour.\textsuperscript{123} The Kel Gress economy relied heavily on

\textsuperscript{121} Rapport politique, January 1906, ANN 1E2.14.

\textsuperscript{122} The most important reports are George Virgile Poulet’s Report of March 1905 (ANS K17), known as ‘Enquête sur la captivité en AOF’, based on a wide-ranging survey on the situation of slavery in French West Africa that had been ordered by General Governor Ernest Roume in December 1903. Poulet’s report was accompanied by Governor Roume’s report of June 1905, which described colonial administrative policies toward slavery. George Deherme’s report ‘L’Esclavage on AOF’ was completed in September 1906 (ANS K25). The full texts of these reports are published and discussed in Lovejoy and Kanya-Forstner, \textit{Slavery and Its Abolition}.

\textsuperscript{123} For a general discussion of early French policy, legislation, and activities concerning the slavery problem in West Africa, see Lovejoy, \textit{Transformations in Slavery}, chapter 11;
slaves and liberated slaves involved in caravan trade, herding, and farming. As soon as slave populations realised that their masters were not free to impose demands on them any more, they began resisting exploitation. Men of slave descent started migrating seasonally. Kel Gress dependents became more and more intolerant of the their masters’ demands and more willing to work on their own account. This situation stimulated early reflections on the ‘slavery question’, or ‘question Bellah’. In the first decade of rule, French administrators believed that the vestiges of slavery would gradually disappear. But the ‘slavery question’ did not dissolve until the end of French rule in Niger. In 1908 Captain Marty had a clear insight into the relation between masters and dependants in Ader. The Tuareg calls himself ‘noble’. Nobility, for him, consists in doing nothing [Le Touareg se dit ‘noble’. La noblesse, pour lui, consiste à ne rien faire]. He refuses to work and when, as is the case for the Kel Gress, he cannot pillage anymore, he prefers to live miserably rather than to look for a job that will improve his material condition. He disdains the opportunities that, with patience and perseverance, we offer him [ . . . ] In my opinion, I can only consider the Tuareg as useless. One might object that the Kel Gress have an industry and farming. [But] it is not the Kel Gress who works [ . . . ] it is his slave [Bellah] [ . . . ] and the Bellah is starting to become aware of his force. The Bellah is now rich. He resists the Tuareg who, most of the time, cannot force him to obey when the Bellah refuses to serve him [ . . . ] and the Bellah is indispensable to the Tuareg [ . . . ] and we are obliged to intervene. The Bellah now owns new herds. Groups of Bellah take shape and they nomadise in a specific region. They disregard the Tuareg’s authority and resist accepting our own when we exercise it through the intermediary of Tuareg chiefs. Besides, the Bellah is right, because when he will be as familiar to us as the sedentary farmer, a model toward which he is moving, he will deny the ancient authority of his master completely and work for himself rather for his master. I cannot, in the space of this report, deal with an extremely complex question that requires serious study. But it seems to me that one day we will have to take a clear stance for either the Tuareg or the Bellah and we will not be able to continue indefinitely this temporising politics [ . . . ] The time will come when we shall have to decide if we want to sacrifice the Tuareg for the sake of the Bellah, or the Bellah for the sake of the Tuareg. Here, I simply pose the question. I should think it is an important question, susceptible of being one of the main preoccupa-
tions of the Commandant de Cercle who has under his authority Kel Gress and Iwellemmeden.\textsuperscript{124} Marty overestimated the capacity of the French administration to act on this situation. Moreover, his view of ‘the Bellah’ and ‘the Tuareg’ did not

\textsuperscript{124} Capt. Marty, Rapport politique, October 1909, ANN 1E2.14.

pay sufficient attention to the differences within each of these two groups. The poorest groups, which included the poorest slaves, relied on dependence because they lacked alternative income opportunities. Not all slaves had been able to constitute a separate herd and move away from their masters. French rule did not create paid employment opportunities, and ties of personal dependence remained strong for the most vulnerable people. The ones who emancipated did so by migrating to places where paid jobs were available. However, the French administration saw migration as a loss in fiscal revenue and labour power. France strove to limit migration – and the emancipation process that migration made possible. In these circumstances, Marty’s lucid analysis remained just a lucid analysis.

Emancipation would not happen because of France’s ideological support to the ideals of freedom and equality: it required political will and financial investment. Neither materialised. Early experiments aimed at supporting emancipation in Kel Gress society showed that the situation was complex. Slaves did not so much ‘want freedom’, as they sought material improvements in their living conditions. When dependence proved more convenient, they shunned ‘freedom’ with the higher risk and costs that often, if not always, came with it. The following example is a case in point. Some former Kel Gress slaves who had been classed administratively as dependants of their former masters requested permission to form independent communities. In March 1907, the French authorities created a mixed administrative unit (‘groupement mixte’, including groups classified as both ‘nomad’ and ‘sedentary’), designed to contain free Hausa (Asna) villages and former Kel Gress dependants, who thereby were separated administratively from Kel Gress elites.125 The latter lost rights to capital and labour, as former slaves were valuable in both these ways to their masters:

The liberation of the Bugadjes,126 classed as ‘sedentary’ because they are millet farmers, delivered a substantial blow to the Kel Gress chiefs, not only because it deprived them of one of their means of existence but also because of their caravans. The majority of the teamsters of camel caravans were recruited amongst the sedentary Bellahs. If the break [with former dependants] had taken place abruptly, the situation would have been unbearable for the Kel Gress. But, luckily,
many – roughly half – of the Bugadjes opt for remaining Kel Gress and continue to consider the Kel Gress their masters. Only a detailed census of the Bugadjes will allow us to make a clear distinction between the sedentary and freed Bugadjes and the semi-nomadic ones, which will continue to obey the Kel Gress of their own will. 127

This administrative separation was meant to support the progressive emancipation of groups of slave descent by giving them autonomous political representation and consequently greater leverage in negotiations with their masters. But the separation was short-lived. Ex-slaves had requested the separation to avoid paying taxes to their former masters. Now they resented the higher head tax they owed France as independent sedentary villagers. The Kel Gress put pressure on the French to have their ex-dependants returned to them, and many slave descendants appeared to support a return to the status quo ante. Eventually, in December 1908, the initial situation was restored. The Bugadjes were reabsorbed under the administrative authority of the five Kel Gress chiefs (chefs de tribu), who even took this chance to claim rights on former dependants separated from them after the battle of Galma in 1901. 128

Towards the end of the first decade of colonial rule it was not only former slaves who started coveting political autonomy from former superiors. The (temporary) separation of the dependants of the Kel Gress from their former masters through the creation of a new administrative unit inspired other groups, which wanted autonomy from their chefs du canton. The Rapport Politique of January 1908 notes that the ‘Asna and Bellab’ of Tamaske were giving ‘signs of insubordination’ towards their (French-appointed) chiefs. 129 This led to the partition of the ‘Group of Tamaske’ to the detriment of Lissawan power. As mentioned above, when the French first identified indigenous chiefs, a number of Asna constituencies consulted amongst themselves and decided to support the candidature of the Lissawan as chefs de canton. However, relations

127 Rapport politique, April 1908, ANN 1E2.14.
128 ‘Following the instructions of telegram 508 all the Bougadjes Kel Gress scattered in small camps without chiefs and without organisation in part of Gobir Toudou and part of Ader have been placed back under the authority of the five Aghollas, chiefs of the Kel Gress tribes, and the taxes due for these Bougadjes have been redistributed amongst the chiefs’. Rapport politique du Cercle de Tahoua, January 1908, ANN17.8.10.
129 Cf. Rapport politique, April 1908, ANN 1E2. 14: ‘Petty chiefs tend to resist all indigenous authority. Customary chiefs are fighting against this new spirit: they have the support of the notables and the bourgeoisie. We, too, must support them. The country is too vast, the military posts too distant from one another, the population too scattered for us to do without their services.’
between the Lissawan chiefs and Asna constituencies in Agouloum and Tamaske grew increasingly tense in the following decades.\(^{130}\)

The Asna of Agouloum sent representatives to complain to the French about the Lissawan’s administration and ask for independence from them. Asna leaders (zarummai) of the Mashidawa of Tamaske joined the Agouloumawa in a joint effort to obtain independence from the Lissawan. They had realised that French officers classified people along ethnic lines, or rather on the basis of a certain interpretation of ethnicity that represented all ‘Tuareg’ as ‘nomads’ and all ‘Hausa’ as ‘sedentary’ and developed different administrative institutions to deal with these two – partly imagined – realities. In their negotiations with District Officers, the Asna of Agouloum and Tamaske mobilised an ethnic argument. They claimed that they were Hausa and different from the Tuareg Lissawan. In 1908 Tamaske was rendered independent from Lissawan power and a new chief of Asna descent was appointed to head this important canton. Canton chiefship was located in Tamaske and given to Aga, a wealthy farmer of Tamaske with ties to groups of Mashidawa origins in both Agouloum and Tamaske.\(^{131}\)

Lissawan chiefs, who had moved to Keita, continued to be trusted and relied upon more than other chieftaincies by the colonial administration. The circumstances of the death of the first Lissawan chief, Amattaza Ennour, are shrouded in mystery.\(^{132}\) However, around 1910 this chief, who had proved so important to the French establishment in Ader, died and was replaced by his younger brother Afadandan.\(^{133}\) In 1913 the aged Sarkin Aga of Tamaske asked for and was granted succession by his son Tuba.\(^{134}\) The situation of the sedentary cantons of Keita and Tamaske appeared settled. But raids arranged by former Tuareg chiefs, who in this

\(^{130}\) This episode is analysed in Rossi, ‘Being and becoming Hausa in Ader’.

\(^{131}\) Aga was sarkin noma, or ‘chief of farmers’, in Tamaske. This was an honorary title given to the best-performing farmer in Hausa polities. He was classificatory cross-cousin of Moussa Baba of Agouloum, from their ancestors’ co-residence in Mashidi.

\(^{132}\) Amattaza’s death is the subject of gossip, but different versions are not conducible to a meaningful explanation. Lissawan descendants of Ennour avoid the subject. The relevant pages and/or reports in archives are lost (or were removed). Even the date of Amattaza’s death, like the date of the actual creation of Tamaske chiefship, varies across sources. Francis Nicolas places the death of Amattaza Ennour in 1910 (Tamesna, p. 87); Assadeck Aghali’s writings place it in 1912 (‘Histoire vivante de Keita’, unpublished manuscript).

\(^{133}\) Ennour had no sons. He was the son of Amattaza ‘Zangi’ and his wife Fatima; while Afadandan was the son of Zangi and Atti, cf. Assadeck, ‘Histoire vivante, généalogie de la branche régante depuis 1893’, unpublished manuscript.

\(^{134}\) Nicolas, Tamesna, p. 88.
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area were primarily Kel Denneg, continued to target these villages. The violence of Kel Denneg attacks escalated as it became intertwined in a broader insurrection of Tuareg and Arab groups against infidel rule to the north and east of Ader.

THE UPRISINGS OF 1916–17

The events that occurred in Ader in 1916 and 1917 were partly an outcome of the local processes examined above. But they were also part of broader international dynamics. The haphazard concurrence of a series of unrelated circumstances resulted in the interlocking of local and regional events, the first of which was climatic. The whole of the West African Sahel was hit by drought in 1913, resulting in a major famine that decimated the population. In the Cercle de Zinder alone, the population dropped from about 240,000 to about 167,000 people. Depopulation was caused by a rise in deaths as well as by migration to places where food and/or fodder were accessible. Men also left to avoid having to pay taxes and undergo forced military recruitment, both of which had been made more onerous by France’s engagement in the First World War. Recruitment operations in the cantons of Keita, Laba, and Tamaske generated frustration and armed resistance amongst Asna villagers, who did not share the same agenda as Tuareg insurgents. From the administration’s perspective, however, it had become increasingly difficult to control all sections of the local population.

Northern Ader and Aïr were in the middle of two axes of insurgence. The first originated with the Sanusiyya revolt in Fezzan in the early stages of the Great War. Italy had conquered Fezzan in 1912–14, but when war was declared between Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in May 1915, a revolt caused Italian forces to retreat, abandoning weapons and ammunitions in the forts. The Sanussites took possession of these armaments. Some of them would be used against the French in the siege of Agadez. The Sanusiyya movement’s main objective was the observance

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135 Rapport politique annuel 1914, ANN1E7.38 bis.
136 Two telegrams from the Governor General of French West Africa were circulated to the governors of colonies and territories warning them to observe closely all Muslim activities in French Africa following the Ottoman Empire’s alliance with the Central Powers; see telegrams from Gouv. Gen. William Ponty, quoted in circulars no. 106 and 109, SHD-BAT GR3H 207.
of Islam and the fight against European colonisation. In October 1914, the Grand Sanusi had proclaimed holy war against infidels. The main Sanusiyya chiefs operating in Fezzan were Sidi Labed; Boubaker ag Elegwi, chief of the Tuareg of Ghat; In-Gadassan, chief of the Tuareg Ajjer; and Sultan Ahmed of the Imanan, former chief of Djanet who had sought refuge in Ghat at the time of the French occupation of Djanet. In March 1916 a Sanusi coalition, joined by the Turkish governor (kaimakan) of Ghat entered Djanet, the main oasis of the Kel Ajjer, and besieged the French post, which eventually capitulated. From Djanet the jihadist forces aimed to extend their action southwards, ultimately unifying the central Sahara and Sudan from North Africa to northern Nigeria under Islam.

Command over southward operations in Air and Damergou was entrusted to Kaocen. Kaocen, a Tuareg Ikazkazan of Damergou, had joined the Sanusi while attending the zawiya of Ain-Galaka in the Borkou region (northern Chad). He had then become a follower of Sidi Labed, Sanusi caliph of Fezzan. At the beginning of December 1916, while jihadist contingents were attacking French forces in their North African and Saharan stations, Kaocen marched towards Agadez, counting on the collaboration of Sultan Tegama. Kaocen reached Agadez in the night of 12 December, without being noticed by the French post headed by Captain Sabatié, or by the patrol headed by Lieutenant Fons. The alarm was given by the wife of the interpreter Samba, who reached the post and, in panic, revealed the presence of Kaocen’s army in the village. Kaocen started his attack one hour later. The siege lasted eighty-two days.

In October 1914, Firhun, the amenokal of the western Iwellemmeden (Kel Ataram), had been captured and condemned to ten years of prison in Gao. He broke out of prison during the night of 13–14 February

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138 The main study of the Sanusiyya movement (also referred to as Senussi or Sanusi) is Triaud, Légende Noire. See also Evans-Pritchard, Sanusi.

139 See biographical details of presumed members of the Sanusiyya in Les notabilités senoussistes, by officier interprète (name illegible), SHD-BAT GR5H 209.

140 Telegramme du territoire du Tchad adressé au Territoire du Niger, Fort Lamy, 30 January 1917; also reported as ‘Annex 1’ in Riou, La révolte de Kaocen.

141 At their arrival in Agadez the French had found Sultan Oumarou, whom they replaced with Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy on 1 August 1907 (cf. Chapter 2), who was also replaced, shortly afterwards, by Sultan Tegama. The three successive sultans had been hostile to the establishment of French rule in Air.

142 A detailed report of the siege is provided in Riou, La révolte de Kaocen, pp. 19 ff.
1916 and declared holy war against the French.\textsuperscript{143} This had immediate repercussions amongst the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg of Tahoua,\textsuperscript{144} headed by Elkhurer of the Kel Nan section. Local informants suggested that Firhun had written to Elkhurer exhorting him to join the insurrection.\textsuperscript{145} There followed an intense intelligence effort to track Elkhurer’s every movement and alliances. A political report of January 1916 stated that ‘the sector is in the greatest anarchy’. The worst was yet to come.

The new canton chiefs of Keita and Tamaske, the Lissawan Afadandan and Tuba, felt vulnerable. Their authority over former dependants of the Iwellemmeden was backed by the French, but they knew that the French could only achieve a limited control over Tuareg activities. They put pressure on French officers to increase their level of alert. On 23 March 1916 Afadandan and Tuba went to see the commandant in Tahoua to provide information about Elkhurer’s schemes and alliances. They specified that Kel Denneg imajeghen had been mobilising their former dependants and taking them with them to the north, or forbidding them to have contacts with representatives of the colonial administration: ‘It would appear that Kaocen made an alliance with Elkhurer and that Firhun sent a message to Elkhurer to exhort him to join him.’\textsuperscript{146} These initial warnings were left unheeded. On 24 March, the commandant noted in his journal that he thought it premature to search and confiscate all weapons of Tuareg potential dissidents:

My perception is that Afadandan is very devoted to our cause […] I do not doubt his intentions in providing information to us, however we should not lose sight of the fact that this Lissawan chief is a deadly enemy of the Tuareg and that he is naturally inclined to exaggerate any grievance he may have against his neighbours, the Iwellemmeden.\textsuperscript{147}

Yet, as alarming information continued to reach the French colonial government from different sources, on 29 March the measure was taken to deploy soldiers at weekly markets and have them disarm Tuareg imajeghen. Some Kel Denneg imajeghen, such as Elistighna ag Lasu who had been Elkhurer’s main rival as amenokal, exploited

\textsuperscript{143} Nicolas, Tamesna, pp. 88–9.
\textsuperscript{144} Reinsenements sur Firhun et Alrimarett par le lieutenant Pelletier, Journal de Reinsenements de la Subdivision de Tahoua 1912–1919, ANN17.8.9.
\textsuperscript{145} Telegram from Sadoux Commandant Cercle Madaoua to Gouverneur Territoire Zinder, 24 March 1916, SHD-BAT GR3H 207.
\textsuperscript{146} Cahier d’enregistrement correspondance Cercle Madaoua, 1916, ANN17.
\textsuperscript{147} Cahier d’enregistrement correspondance Cercle Madaoua, 1916, ANN17.
present circumstances to settle personal rivalries. Iwellemmeden chiefs did not form a united front: Elkhurer and other leaders of the anti-French movement, denounced by their own followers and allies, were summoned to Tahoua.\textsuperscript{148}

The political report for the first quarter of 1916 noted that ‘the situation is not good in the Sector of Tahoua: it is certain that Elkhurer the chief of the Iwellemmeden of the East is in contact with Firhun and that, confident in the forty or so “1874” rifles that he possesses, he is ready to join the rebellion’.\textsuperscript{149} Shortly afterwards, a representative of Elkhurer, the artisan Amidy Lamy, visited the post to pay taxes and was interrogated. He said that the Kel Denneg had some weapons, which they used for defensive purposes against attacks by other Tuareg. He brought a letter from Elkhurer who informed the commandant that he expected an imminent Kel Ajjer raid and could not come in person, but sent instead the gift of a camel. On receiving this ‘present’ the commandant commented that it was ‘a camel that had been refused already, an apocalyptic beast (\textit{une bête apocalyptique}) that Elkhurer insisted on sending to us every time some camels are requested, and it is a further testimony of his goodwill toward us that he would dare to send back an animal that has been refused several times!’\textsuperscript{150} Amidy Lamy spent the night at the post and his conversation with Imborack, an Arab, was overheard by a French spy: Amidy Lamy confirmed that the Kel Denneg were preparing for war and that they were not sure if they could trust the Bellah, their former dependants.

A state of siege was declared on 25 December 1916. The cool months of 1917 marked an escalation of attacks organised by the insurgents, which eventually would be repulsed under the scorching sun of the hot season. The Kel Denneg directed a series of raids against various villages of the cantons of Keïta and Tamaske. The commandants de cercle learned about these attacks from collaborating chiefs, primarily the chefs de canton of Keïta and Tamaske.\textsuperscript{151} On 15 January Insafari was raided. On 16 January, ‘Alfourane raided Barmou’; on the same day, the guide Amajallad, bringing a message to Elkhurer from the Commandant du Cercle de Tahoua, was beheaded by two of Elkhurer’s men. Amajallad

\textsuperscript{149} Cahier de Madaoua, Rapport politique 1er Trimestre 1916, ANN1E7, 57.
\textsuperscript{150} Cahier d’enregistrement correspondance Cercle Madaoua, 1916, ANN17.
\textsuperscript{151} Journal de renseignements de la Subdepartment de Tahoua, 1912–1919, ANN 17.8.9.
was an ex-slave of the Kel Nan (or, alternatively, Tillimidis), who worked as a guide for the French. His death was a punishment for what must have appeared as great impudence to the Kel Denneg. He was decapitated for carrying French orders to his former masters, an act that compounded treason and arrogance, and left no doubt regarding the former chiefs’ interpretation of the state of affairs: the French were usurpers and supporting them constituted an act of treason.

The Iwellemmeden’s capacity to strike at any time against villages and individuals under French authority was a deterrent to anyone willing to collaborate with the French administration. To the French, it was a constant reminder of their limited control over the region. In the words of Yves Riou, ‘this period, 1914–1918, was marked by our “embarrassment” (it is the least one can say!)’. On 19 January Manit and Kaocen raided Ibohamane (see Map 3.3). On 20 January a British patrol entered Niger to support French military operations against Tuareg forces. On 3 February, Loudou and Keita were raided. On 14 February, a double attack was aimed at Tamaske and Keita. Tamaske resisted, but Keita was sacked and the Lissawan canton chief Afadandan was killed ‘by the men of Kaocen, Manit and Rhezi who came from the north with about 400 men disposing of 17 rifles’.

This short note in the Cercle’s journal contrasts with the vivid accounts of the ‘war of Keita’ (yakin Keita) that I collected in Keita from the children of Keitawa eye-witnesses and fighters. These men saw themselves as Keita’s autochthonous Asna inhabitants. They had been settled near Keita Lake for generations, and were familiar with Tuareg wars and with the hierarchical rearrangements that had taken place in Keita since the French arrival. They had seen the second Lissawan saki, Afadandan, installed in the new palace built in Keita in the first decade of the twentieth century to host Lissawan canton chiefs. In 2017, they witnessed the Kel Denneg’s attack, the assassination of Afadandan, and the bloody revenge of the saki’s son Ichaman, known for his violent temperament.

The war hit Keita soon after Afadandan was enthroned. It is the Abzinawa who attacked Keita. They had made a small raid on Keita a week earlier. One week after this first attack, they began to prepare a larger offensive. When the whites

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153 Riou, La révolte de Kaocen, p. 16.
154 Journal de renseignements de la Subdivision de Tahoua, 1912–1919, ANN 17.8.9.
heard about this, they sent soldiers to Keita. But Tuba told them: the war that you are prepared to fight in Keita is here in Tamaske. He killed an ox and fed the soldiers. The soldiers ate the meat and felt satisfied. But the attack on Tamaske was small. Elkhurer, the father of Baso, went against Tamaske. The big attack was aimed at Keita.

Afadandan was not feeling well. He told Hamma Sarkin Yaki, his nephew, to make a tour to see if any attack was reaching Keita. Hamma went to see, and from Koutki to Seyte, he could not see the end of the war [i.e. of the enemy forces]. He returned and told the chief, ‘Afadandan, father, you ought to tell peasants to save their children, take whatever they can, and escape from the village, this war can’t be extinguished.’ Afadandan told him, ‘Do not repeat what you have said. Now people will go to sleep, and we shall prepare for war early in the morning.’ In the morning, when the villagers woke up and left their homes to relieve themselves [in the bush], they saw the village was surrounded and there was no escape. They told women to stay home. And from within their home’s enclosure [garka], the women could hear the cry of the shots [kartussei] in the air.

Hamma came out, the Abzinawa saw him and ran after him, all the way till the house of Malam Yakoub, on the other side of the lake. So [while the enemy was distracted], they let the women and children get out of their homes and sent them down the path that goes to [Lake] Ammanlahan. That way was covered with a forest so thick that you could not see a man walking in the trees. When the women had left, Hamma returned to the village, and Afadandan came out of the palace and went east, toward the market and the hill. And the Abzinawa said: ‘Tailanda [Tamashq!] Here is our guinea fowl!’ They meant, here is the sarki, they followed him, he went to the east of the lake, and the Abzinawa grouped, they made a plan, and sent the man with the rifle after Afadandan. He killed him. Afadandan had a sword that the Abzinawa warriors wanted, but while they were looking for this sword, the sword was killing many people, for today you cannot find a sword of that type. After they killed him, the people dispersed, some went toward Dutchin Tara, others went toward the dune of Gada.

Then Ichaman, the son of Afadandan, was released. Ichaman was a soldier (in the colonial army), and he had been arrested because he had killed some people. And until the day he died, Ichaman regretted that he had not been here to fight this war, because the whites were keeping him imprisoned at that time. After his father’s death, he took his place as Sarkin Keita. And during his reign he would sit in his throne, and wanted people to bow down before him. If one did not bow, he grabbed him and hit him and told him: ‘You imbeciles, how was the SARKI killed, he was alone, there was no one at his side!’ Eventually the news of his behaviour reached Tahoua and the whites said ‘He is crazy.’ After three months of reign he was removed. The whites enquired: did Afadandan have a brother? Yes, he did. Who is it? Rabo. They gave the sarauta to Rabo who reigned for 33 years. When he died, he was replaced by Abuzeidi, his nephew, the son of Afadandan, who reigned for three months only. When he died, the sarauta passed to Ahammani. But let us return to the war of Keita.

The Abzinawa at first had seen the sarki from a distance. The Kirarawa had come with their arrows [to defend the sarki] and tried to shoot them, but the Abzinawa
used powerful magic that spoiled the strength of their arrows. When they saw they could not fight, the Kirarawa used magic that made them invisible, and climbed the taramna tree, from which they saw everything that happened in the war. When they returned to the village, they said the situation was hopeless. When Afadandan left the palace, the zegui was holding his horse, but when the zegui saw that the situation was hopeless, he let the horse go and hid in a magariya bush. Afadandan fought until the one who killed him arrived. After this, the Abzinawa went to the lake shores to water their horses and do everything they had to do, then they played the drum so that all their men grouped, every warrior watered his horse, then they mounted and they left passing through Egulgulan, Akala Sabon Gari, and went passed Seyté. They had taken with them animals and people. This is when the French released Ichaman, and gave him soldiers to pursue the killers of his father. For one week those who had saved themselves in Keita pounded millet to make flour and stored the flour in leather bags [tayukka], as there were no plastic bags [buhunni], the bags were charged on the bulls, preparing to go to war. The French sent soldiers from Tahoua to help Ichaman, and he led the expedition.

The one who killed Afadandan […] before the war, when Afadandan used to go to Ibohamane riding his horse, the future killer thought he had to have that horse […] he kept staring at it, and the elders told Afadandan: ‘It is your horse he is looking at, he wants it.’ Abdulla used to tell this to Afadandan, ‘It is your horse he is assessing.’ And while the French were giving the soldiers to Ichaman, those who had attacked Keita met an old woman, and she asked them: what have you done in Keita? They told her they had killed the sarki. And she said: ‘Oh, you made a mistake [kun yi banna], you never kill the sarki! You take him prisoner, and one week later, you make him wear good clothes and return him.’ But what had been done could not be changed, the Abzinawa continued their trip after the war of Keita, stopping in hamlets [zango-zango] to sleep at night and beating the drum, celebrating, saying they defeated Keita.

Ichaman was looking for them with the soldiers, when he saw some lights of long-distance traders [fatakke] and ordered the soldiers to shoot at them. They fired. They hit them. Ichaman ordered to cease fire, he got off his horse and went to check. And one of the fatakke was still alive and told him: ‘Alas! Why did you not tell us you were looking for the Abzinawa: there they are, on that dune!’ At sunrise they were able to see the camp of the Abzinawa. Ichaman climbed a small dune and from there he saw the man who killed his father. So he mounted his horse and left the camp, he had his gaze set upon the man, he followed him, and when he entered his camp, he did not engage with anyone else, he just strove to reach the man who killed his father. He rode and rode, until he ran into two youths and told them he was [pursuing a killer].

The zegui was a pre-colonial office at the court of Keita, whose role was to walk in front of the sarki’s horse on all official occasions, including wars. He was known for his potent war magic and his main function, it would seem, was to defend the sarki and his horse. The zegui, sometimes also referred to as baran maya, was probably a slave official.
They were on foot and were trying to hide, and when Ichaman went close to them, one of them threw a spear [mashi] against Ichaman. The spear went through Ichaman’s thigh and into the shoulder of the horse. Ichaman straightened up on his horse, extracted the spear, took aim, and threw it back at his attacker, then he took out his sword and cut his head off, then tied up his [wounded] thigh. The killer of Afadandan had escaped. When they returned to the camp [...] the newborn, the woman, the toddler [...] no one was saved, everyone was killed, the tents were set on fire, they slaughtered in every village they reached. Amongst the warriors there were Bu, Atiya [...] they found a pregnant woman and opened her up to see what was inside of her. They recovered some of the animals and people that had been taken in Keita. When they got back to Keita, they called people to recognise their animals and take them back. Ichaman was so strong, that if he had been home the Abzinawa would not have attacked Keita. Even when he just shook a man’s hand the man would feel pain. His mother was from Djibale.156

**EPILOGUE: THE MASSACRE OF TANOUT**

Ichaman’s thirst for revenge was insatiable. He participated in the French repression of the revolt, including the terrible epilogue marked by the events at Tanout.157 On 25 December 1916 the Governor of the Territoire du Niger declared a state of siege. In June 1917 France launched major operations aimed at putting down the insurrections that swept across the country. The Colonne Berger (formed in Menaka) and the Colonne Mourin (formed in Zinder) converged on Agadez, still under Kaocen’s siege. In Bilma, N’Guimi, and Gouré (respectively) 250, 210, and 100 tirailleurs were stationed. Captain Sadoux commanded important French forces in Tahoua-Madaoua. Three British companies from Sokoto – two mounted and one infantry – secured the southern region around Tessaoua and were ready to support the French campaign in case of need.158 A number of Tuareg subgroups collaborated with the French.

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156 Interview with Aboubakar Keitawa and other elders, Keita, 14 December 2008. I am grateful to Mohammed ‘Tubali’ for his help with the Hausa transcription and translation of this testimony.

157 Nicolas, Tamesna, p. 89.

158 Cf. Télégramme officiel colonne Air à Gouverneur Général, 22 June 1917; The organisation of the Berger and Mourin columns, respectively, is described in the following files: Rapport d’ensemble sur la colonne Tombouctou-Agadez, Janvier-Août 1917, Cdt. Berger; and Ordre de la colonne Mourin; SHD-BAT GR 5H 208. Sadoux’s operations are related in Sadoux’s telegram, reported in the Journal de Cercle de Madaoua, Secteur de Tahoua, and Sadoux’s report: Rapport du Capitaine Sadoux commandant le Cercle de Madaoua sur les operations effectués du 12 Mars au 23 Avril 1917 contre les
The war did not simply oppose Africans to Europeans, or Tuareg to French, but opened a space in which old resentments were renegotiated and old debts settled. Most fighters had many enemies and feared both the rifle and the sword:

God! Thou art my Providence [ettema nin]!
He will take away my parents,
Al-Qasum, he is tracking me,
He accompanies the Lieutenant [ietenan] to kill me,
They will bring back my head,
To gain a high prize
[...]
The rifle shall hit your side,
The sword shall cut your neck.\(^{159}\)

Eventually, a major French assault stopped all the insurrections that had been unfolding in the hot season of 1917. Sadoux caught Kel Denneg camps in Tanout by surprise. The result was a bloodbath that effectively ended the rebellion. In a laconic telegram, Sadoux reported the killing in Tanout of the main chiefs of the Kel Denneg resistance and about forty-six other Kel Denneg chiefs (imajeghen), ‘that is, almost the totality of the Kel Denneg imajeghen’.\(^{160}\) In a detailed report on the military operations he had conducted against the Iwellemmeden between 12 March and 23 April, Sadoux estimated that most Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg had submitted or been killed. The toll of 538 casualties, for the small constituency of Kel Denneg imajeghen, was enormous. However, some of the most important leaders of the Tuareg revolt had escaped, including Elkhurer with about fifty Kel Nan and Tiggirmat imajeghen, Manit, Kaocen, and al Rhimaret.\(^{161}\)

Ghubayd Alojaly reconstructed the 1916–17 rebellion on the basis of testimonies of Touareg Oullimmiden, ANN tE8.8. The events of 1917 are described in detail in Nicolas, Tamesna, pp. 91–9. See also Séré de Rivières, Histoire du Niger, pp. 221–33. Poem composed by Toujan in 1918 and given to Francis Nicolas by El Hadj Ag Attesbekh (Kel Nan) on 12 September 1938, in Nicolas, ‘Poèmes Touareg’, p. 52. The ‘Al-Qasum’ mentioned in the poem is Al-Qasum ag Himmi, chief of the Irreulen imajeghen of the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg, who had participated in the French repression of the revolt in 1917.

Télégramme du Capitaine Sadoux sur opérations nord-est du Secteur, 30 March 2017, ANN tE8.9.

descendants of the Kel Denneg and maraboutic Kel Eghlel. The immense resentment that the massacre of Tanout generated in the spirit of the Kel Denneg and their allies is best conveyed by the verses of Khammad-Alamin ag-Sayd-Elbakka of the Kel Eghlel:

If I had a group of men all holding firearms in their hands
And oblivious of panic, I would salute the Captain
With a hissing metal ball that would break his eye-brows
And destroy his tear-glands. With another shot,
Which would traverse his chest crushing his shoulders, I would ask him
What the men whose throat he slit keeping them tied up could have done [to defend themselves]
What the necks he cut, adorned by shining gold, of Tehilaggan and her companions
could have done [to defend themselves],
And I would recommend myself with one more shot that would smash his knees
And break his legs so much that he would be unable to stand
As he walks to join his forefathers [in the afterlife].

162 Alojaly, Histoire des Kel Denneg, p. 160.