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# Absence and Presence of Religious Identity in Rebellions

**The Tuareg Rebellions in Mali**

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## Abstract

Since the Malian independency of 1960, four Tuareg Rebellions erupted against the Malian Government. In order to find out the relation between conflict, religion and identity and find out how much the rebellions relate to the Tuareg community, the following research question is posed: How did the Tuareg rebels legitimize the Tuareg Rebellions against the background of the changing religious identity of the Tuareg people? Using an interpretative document analysis based on ethnographies and audiovisual data, this thesis examines and applies the integrated approach of identity theory to the Tuareg case. This approach combines primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism.

The thesis is divided in two analytical parts. Chapter 4 focuses on the nature of identity and examines the development of the Tuareg (religious) identity. From this chapter is concluded that Muslim identity has become increasingly important for the Tuareg people, as caused by the processes of sedentarization and Islamization. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focus on the path from identity to conflict and provides analyses the rebels' definitions of the four Tuareg Rebellions. It becomes clear that static motivations for the rebels were autonomy and mistreatment. Islam was an important reason for the First Tuareg Rebellion and played a role in the Second Tuareg Rebellion. However, most Tuareg rebels distanced themselves from Islam in the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions, due to the impact of religious terrorism, while other Tuareg rebels made Islam more explicit in their goals. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that although Islam has become increasingly important to Tuareg, it did not affect the support for or opposition of the rebellions, as other identity components and the circumstances of religious terrorism were more important.

Keywords: Mali; Tuareg Rebellion; Islam; identity theory; primordialism; instrumentalism; constructivism; integrated approach

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# 1. Introduction

On 22 September 1960, the Malian Republic was declared, but its Government had no easy path ahead.<sup>1</sup> Ever since 1960, the relationship between the Malian Government and the Tuareg community has been rough to say the least. Over the past 80 years, there have been four Tuareg rebellions against the Malian Government, in the 1960s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. Who are these Tuareg people constantly resisting the Malian Government? The Tuareg have been a nomadic people until about the 1950s, after which periods of droughts and decolonization caused them to become more rural or semi-nomadic. They are no unified group, but instead consist of eight large confederations, each composed of various tribal groups.<sup>2</sup> They live in the Sahara, but their traditional lands have been divided among modern nation states, such as Mali, Libya, Niger, Algeria and Mauritania.<sup>3</sup> Although their Islamic roots reach back to the ninth century, they have very distinctive cultural traits compared to other Muslims.<sup>4</sup> For one, they are a matrilineal society where women have the right to independently own property and have an unveiled face, whereas the men are supposed to wear veils.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, their cultural interpretations are formed by a combination of Islam and Tuareg cultural symbolism and cosmology, with a belief in spirits. Their religious and gender-related models come from institutions that existed before their conversions to Islam in the eight century.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.1 Problem field

As becomes evident from this short introduction on the Tuareg people and the Tuareg Rebellions, the Tuareg identity is something that is difficult to clearly determine. Although there are some significant traits that can be assigned to the Tuareg, there are many differences that can easily be overlooked, with regard to veiling, gender relations, Islam and politics, especially since some Tuareg settled, while others remained nomadic. The heterogeneous identity of the Tuareg people

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<sup>1</sup> Baz Lecocq, *That Desert is Our Country: Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)* (PhD Thesis. University of Amsterdam, 2002), 35-36, <https://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.210092>.

<sup>2</sup> Caroline Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music," in *The Garland Handbook of African Music*, ed. Ruth M. Stone (New York: Routledge, 2008, second edition), 258, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=432835>.

<sup>3</sup> Eamonn Gearon, *Sahara: A Cultural History* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2011), 238, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=1480964>.

<sup>4</sup> Helené Lackenbauer, Magdalena Tham Lindell and Gabriella Ingerstad, "If Our Men Won't Fight, We Will": A Gendered Analysis of the Armed Conflict in Northern Mali (Sweden: FOI, November 2015), 28, accessed 7 December 2020, <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--4121--SE>.

<sup>5</sup> Wendt, 258; Susan J. Rasmussen, "Veiling Without Veils: Modesty and Reserve in Tuareg Cultural Encounters," in *Veiling in Africa*, ed. Elisha P. Renne (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 34, <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=578504&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>6</sup> Susan J. Rasmussen, "An Ambiguous Spirit Dream and Tuareg-Kunta Relationships in Rural Northern Mali," *Anthropological Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (2015): 636, 649 and 657, DOI: 10.1353/anq.2015.0038.

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leads to the question how the Tuareg rebels represent them. It is important for rebel groups to connect to the people they try to represent, as political scholars Klaus Schlichte and Ulrich Schneckener explain:

*'Like regular political actors, they need to explain and justify their agendas and actions; they need material and moral support from communities both inside and outside the conflict region. Without minimal legitimacy, an armed group is bound to fail in its attempts to stay in power.'*<sup>7</sup>

In order to earn community support, rebels often assert an identity that is distinct from their opponents. Robert Anthony Pape argues that while during peace, linguistic differences are important to emphasize, during war, religious differences become more important.<sup>8</sup> Overall, there is agreement that 'differences in identity, including differences in religion, are core causes of conflict,' but there is no agreement what sort of identity is most important: religious, national or ethnic. This differs from case to case.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, from the 2000 onwards, a split based on religion is noticed within the rebel groups. The Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC) declares themselves a secular movement, just like the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) later.<sup>10</sup> Azawad refers to a wide valley between two wadis, the Azawad and Azawagh, which is regarded as the heartland of all Tuareg.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Ansar Edine is explicitly Islamist and connected to Al Qaeda groups.<sup>12</sup> Similar to the rebels, the Tuareg people are a divided and heterogeneous group, who are religious and of whom some have become increasingly Islamic over time. It is difficult to identify the Tuareg people solely based on religion, ethnicity or nationality, yet these rebels deny one of these identity components. Therefore, this case is interesting to find out how much identity actually matters to the eruption of conflict and how much religion matters in this identity.

With regard to the role of identity in the eruption of conflict, there are three key perspectives: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism. Each of these theories has its own strengths and weaknesses. Philip Q. Yang tries to overcome the distinctions by creating an

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<sup>7</sup> Klaus Schlichte and Ulrich Schneckener, "Armed Groups and the Politics of Legitimacy," *Civil Wars* 17, no. 4 (2016): 410, DOI: 10.1080/13698249.2015.1115573.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Anthony Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York, NY: Random House, 2005), 88, accessed 26 January 2021, <https://archive.org/embed/dyingtowinstrate0000pape>.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Fox, *Religion, Civilization, and Civil War: 1945 Through the Millennium* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 18, <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=246963&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>10</sup> Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali*, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 395, DOI: 10.1163/ej.9789004139831.i-433; Souleymane Diallo, "The Truth about the Desert": *Exile, Memory, and the Making of Communities among Malian Tuareg Refugees in Niger* (Cologne: Modern Academic Publishing, 2018), 185, DOI: 10.16994/bai.

<sup>11</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 276.

<sup>12</sup> Diallo, 185.

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integrated approach. This thesis examines these theories and tests them further using the Tuareg case study. An explicit focus on the integrated approach is chosen, as this approach combines the various perspectives and seems to overcome their weaknesses. In the theoretical framework, the various perspectives are further elaborated. This thesis can add to the debate by examining who got to define what the Tuareg Rebellions were about. Exactly due to the unique nature of this case study, with a complex identity of both Tuareg and rebel groups, this research can tell more about the relations between religion, identity and conflict.

## **1.2 Central research question, subquestions and objectives**

Using this theoretical framework, this thesis answers the following question: How did the Tuareg rebels legitimize the Tuareg Rebellions against the background of the changing religious identity of the Tuareg people? On one hand, this research adds to the theoretical debate on religion, identity and conflict. On the other hand, this research seeks to find out whether the Tuareg Rebellions have actually anything to do with the Tuareg people, as their name initially suggests, and what part of the Tuareg identity mattered most in the rebellions. In this research, it is important to have a diachronic question, as identity and religion are not static and the way the rebels and Tuareg treat these factors differs from rebellion to rebellion. Additionally, from the literature review is concluded that the historical roots of a rebellion are important in order to conduct a proper analysis. Therefore, this research focuses on the change in religious identity over the period 1960-2015, from the Malian Independency until the end of the Fourth Tuareg Rebellion.

In this research, a few questions should be answered in order to answer the main research question. The first subquestion is: How are religion, identity and rebellion related? This question is answered throughout a literature review. From the general literature is concluded that one of the necessary factors that allow a rebellion to erupt, is a strong group identity. This group identity includes multiple components that differ in hierarchy, such as religion, culture and language.

The literature review thus explains that identity and religious identity play a role in rebellions. However, a specific question is required for this research: How does group identity lead to conflict? There are various theories that provide an explanation: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism. A fourth approach combines the strengths of the three theories, which is named the integrated approach. Each identity theory can be distinguished in two parts: one, the nature of identity, and two, the path from identity to conflict.

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In order to examine the validity of the various approaches, the Tuareg case is analyzed based on two questions, with the first question relating to the first part of identity theory. The third subquestion therefore is: How has the Tuareg identity developed over time? Or more specifically: How has the religious component of the Tuareg identity developed over time? In order to answer this question, some distinct components of the Tuareg identity are selected and examined over the period 1960-2015. The components are selected based on their connection to religion.

The fourth subquestion targets the second part of identity theory: How did the rebels define the rebellions? This question refers to the definition of the rebels' motivation, goals and their view on the Malian Government. In order to nuance the role of the religious background of the Tuareg people, there must also be looked into the people's perception of the rebellions and Malian Government.

### **1.3 Chapter overview**

In the literature review is reflected on the connection between religion, identity and rebellion. From the general literature is concluded that one of the factors important for a rebellion to erupt, is a strong group identity. This group identity includes multiple components that differ in hierarchy, such as religion, culture and ethnicity. An article by Shane Joshua Barter is discussed that closely resembles the Tuareg case. He examines an Aceh separatist movement: the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The GAM also explicitly distances themselves from religion. In the literature review, it is argued how the Tuareg case differs from this case and what it can bring to the primordialism/instrumentalism/constructivism debate.

In the theoretical framework, the debate is further examined and a fourth approach is discussed: the integrated approach by Philip Q. Yang. This approach is to be examined and tested further using the Tuareg case study, which makes up the subsequent analytical chapters. It is expected that some propositions of the integrated approach are more appropriate to understand the Tuareg case than others, which are therefore highlighted. Additionally, while Yang only focused on the nature of identity in his approach, this thesis takes the path from identity to conflict, as explained in the three theories, into account as well.

The subsequent analytical chapters are divided over four topics in the following order: the (religious) identity of the Tuareg people, defining the First Tuareg Rebellion, defining the Second Tuareg Rebellion and defining the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions. The reason to discuss both the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions in the final chapter, is that, unlike the previous rebellions,



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in these rebellions, most Tuareg rebels explicitly distanced themselves from Islam and focused on the goal of independency with the state of Azawad. While the chapter on the Tuareg identity examines the development of certain identity aspects from 1960 until 2015, with a focus on the first part of the identity theory, the chapters on the rebellions have a different design. Each of these chapters starts with an overview of the rebellion(s) and then examines the rebels' definition of the rebellion(s). Subsequently, the people's perception of the rebellion(s) is analyzed and finally a discussion is provided in which the theoretical framework is applied to the rebellion(s) at hand.

The conclusion reflects on the posed research question, how the Tuareg rebels defined the rebellions and how much the religious identity of the Tuareg mattered for the rebels and Tuareg people in the rebellions. Furthermore, the theoretical framework is discussed in terms of its usefulness and added value to the theoretical debate.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

This thesis concerns a qualitative case study on the Tuareg. The main method of this research is an interpretative document analysis. This method is chosen for multiple reasons, as due to the broad coverage provided by documents, a longer time span and various perspectives can be analyzed, so that nuance can be provided. Additionally, it is a useful means to track changes. The selected documents are skimmed, then thoroughly examined and finally interpreted. This process combines elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. The content analysis involves the identification of meaningful and relevant passages that are identified through a document review. The thematic analysis, consequently, entails the re-reading and review of the selected data, so that the data of various sources can be categorized. When evaluating the data, in order to make sure that various voices are included in the research, it is important to notice absence of perspectives, to which additional, related documents should be searched in order to fill the gaps or this absence is explicitly mentioned.<sup>13</sup>

Especially with this case study, this is important, due to the fairly limited data on Tuareg. However, though there are few sources, they are rich in information. The most important two sources are two ethnographies: *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* by Baz Lecocq (2010) and *"The Truth about the Desert": Exile, Memory, and the Making of Communities among Malian Tuareg Refugees in Niger* by

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<sup>13</sup> Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 30-34, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A218450363/AONE?u=groning&sid=AONE&xid=05f1fa77>.

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Souleymane Diallo (2018). Lecocq's ethnography deals with the relation between the Malian Government and Tuareg people with an explicit focus on the First and Second Tuareg Rebellions and a lesser focus on the Third Tuareg Rebellion. In writing a detailed history, he uses his fieldwork in Northern Mali, as well as the extensive archival work he conducted there.<sup>14</sup> Diallo bases his ethnography on two Tuareg groups of inferior social status, namely the free-born non-noble Tuareg, who fled Mali between 1963 and 2012, and the unfree Bellah-Iklan, who fled Mali after 2012.<sup>15</sup> His conversations with the first group are incorporated in this thesis, as the Bellah-Iklan are a separate ethnic group. As the Tuareg refugees requested Diallo to keep their names anonymous, he has changed their names. Tuareg names have two parts, their own name and the name of their father, with an "Ag", or in the case of women "Ult", separating them.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Diallo's own designed names might show a connection to rebels, even overlapping one time, but this is purely coincidental. To prevent confusion, it is explained whether a quote concerns a rebel or refugee.

Two other sources are also important. Regarding the Tuareg identity, *The Lesser Gods of the Sahara: Social Change and Indigenous Rights* by Jeremy Keenan (2004) is used. Although Keenan focuses on the Algerian Tuareg, this source is still useful, as it deals with the religious changes in Tuareg communities and he also reflects on the Malian Tuareg.<sup>17</sup> As the Fourth Tuareg Rebellion took place after Lecocq's publication, another source is used to examine the rebels' position on this rebellion, namely Al Jazeera. Information by Al Jazeera is accessed through audiovisual data, because the videos allow access to the opinion of both the rebels and people on the rebellion. When analyzing audiovisual data, it is important, even more so than with the analysis of textual documents, to reflect on the context in which this data is produced. In other words, it is important to distinguish 'between, on one hand, the actors who made the news and their intentions and, on the other, the actors shown in the film and their intentions.'<sup>18</sup>

## 1.5 Ethical statement

With such a divided group as the Tuareg, the greatest danger of this research is a bad representation of them. There are many tribes and over time some Tuareg have settled, while others stayed

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<sup>14</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 1, 16-17 and 22-26.

<sup>15</sup> Diallo, IX.

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Keenan, *The Lesser Gods of the Sahara: Social Change and Indigenous Rights* (London: Routledge, 2004), 69, <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=116142&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>17</sup> Keenan, *The Lesser Gods of the Sahara*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Silvana K. Figueroa, "The Grounded Theory and the Analysis of Audio-Visual Texts," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, no. 1 (2008): 6, DOI: 10.1080/13645570701605897.

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nomadic, all without having a uniting voice or force. Therefore, it is important to mention clearly who states what and whose voices are absent in the research. Furthermore, due to the limited data on the Tuareg people, context must be provided in order to situate the statements well and not make the identity of some Tuareg represent the whole community. In order to fulfill the goal of a good representation, in this research, misinterpretation must be avoided, statements are contextualized and the used documents are handled with care and transparency. This means that the original purpose of each document should be taken into account, just as the context in which it was produced and the intended audience.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Bowen, 38.

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## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Factors that produce rebellions

Rebellions have been researched in various ways and with regard to various factors. In the literature, often the question has been asked: why do rebellions happen? Or how do rebellions happen? These questions are designed to understand why some people can live in peace, while others have violent relationships, as is researched by Francesco Caselli and Wilbur John Coleman II, Roger Petersen, Gregory D. Saxton and Michelle A. Benson, Stuart J. Kaufman, Dina G. Okamoto and Rima Wilkes.<sup>20</sup> There are some models and theories that explain which factors or components affect violent rebellions, while other literature focus on a single factor or component.

Based on a growing body of research, Gregory D. Saxton and Michelle A. Benson have conducted a quantitative research in which they suggest that a similar set of factors produce both violent and non-violent conflicts, as they seek to understand why some ethnonational communities produce non-violent protests, while others produce violent rebellions.<sup>21</sup> Dina G. Okamoto and Rima Wilkes also identify factors, but related to why minority group members choose to emigrate, rebel or both.<sup>22</sup> Overlapping themes can be identified in both researches. According to Saxton and Benson, the *basis* for organizational mobilization is provided by a powerful shared group identity. Okamoto and Wilkes also see group identity making up the basis, as it provides group solidarity and ethnic networks. The *means* for such mobilization is provided by the available resources. Saxton and Benson argue that grievances provide the *reason* for the mobilization, while Okamoto and Wilkes focus more on collective fear and current or future threats to a group's security, such as discrimination, power shifts, that can lead to (a fear of) exploitation, and political violence, that can lead to repression. Finally, Saxton and Benson see an *opportunity* for either violent or non-violent conflicts in political factors. Okamoto and Wilkes notice that *opportunities* for rebellions increase,

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<sup>20</sup> Francesco Caselli and Wilbur John Coleman II, "On the Theory of Ethnic Conflict," *Journal of the European Economic Association* 1, no. 11 (2013): 162, DOI: 10.1111/j.1542-4774.2012.01103.x; Roger Petersen, "A Community-Based Theory of Rebellion," *European Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (1993): 41, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23997221>; Gregory D. Saxton and Michelle A. Benson, "Structure, Politics, and Action: An Integrated Model of Nationalist Protest and Rebellion," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12, no. 2 (2006): 137, DOI: 10.1080/13537110600734653; Stuart J. Kaufman, *Nationalist Passions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 1, DOI: 10.7591/9781501701337; Dina G. Okamoto and Rima Wilkes, "The Opportunities and Costs of Voice and Exit: Modeling Ethnic Group Rebellion and Emigration," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 3 (2008): 347-348, DOI: 10.1080/13691830701880194..

<sup>21</sup> Saxton and Benson, 137.

<sup>22</sup> Okamoto and Wilkes, 348.

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if groups participated in past rebellious activities, due to developed organizational tactics, recruitment strategies and information networks.<sup>23</sup>

What these quantitative researches lack, is an understanding of the contexts in specific cases. However, that limitation is purely methodological. Other research with different methodologies focus more on distinct factors that influence a rebellion, as well as the context that this factors are embedded in, providing a more nuanced understanding of a rebellion. These case studies help in making general insights useful in specific contexts. Nevertheless, the mentioned researches are useful in merging existing literature, which provides some general insights. In this case, both Saxton and Benson and Okamoto and Wilkes suggest a set of factors that either lead to a rebellion or something else, be it nonviolent conflict or emigration.

Regarding the Tuareg Rebellion, there have been conducted researches in which these factors return. Some focused on multiple factors, while others selected one factor. Most of the researches have included *opportunities*. For example, Baz Lecocq and Georg Klute seek to find out the impact of the Tuareg separatism on the presence of international Jihadi-Salafist movements in the region and the resulting War on Terror. This research focuses largely on the various rebel movements and the connections between the rebellions. One of these connections is between Libyan returnees and the MNLA turning violent.<sup>24</sup> In other words, they focus both on *means* and *opportunities*, in which political factors played an important role. Mohamed A. El-Khawas also discusses the Fourth Tuareg Rebellion in terms of political factors and resources, seeking connections to other conflicts in “North Africa. He connects the Tunisia uprisings to the Egyptian revolution, as the revolution was inspired by the uprisings. Subsequently, he researches the armed conflicts in Libya. Finally, he analyzes the potential impact of these conflicts or revolutions on other parts of Africa, among which the Tuareg Rebellion.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Dona J. Stewart researches the same rebellion with a similar focus. She analyses the roots of the conflict, which relate to socio-economical and political issues. Her analysis is based on a regional security framework that she

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<sup>23</sup> Saxton and Benson, 138 and 143-144; Okamoto and Wilkes, 348-351 and 355-356.

<sup>24</sup> Lecocq and Klute, 424-425 and 431.

<sup>25</sup> Mohamed A. El-Khawas, “Revolutions Across North Africa: What Will Be Their Impact on the Rest of Africa?” in *Africa in the New World Order: Peace and Security Challenges in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Olayiwola Abegunrin (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 136 and 153-155, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=4085765>.

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wants to improve in order to overcome its weaknesses, so that it can bring effective, long-term security in Mali.<sup>26</sup>

It seems logical to discuss the factors of *means* and *opportunity* together, as certain political factors result in the availability of resources, as is the case in the Fourth Tuareg Rebellion. On the other hand, David Zounmenou focuses more on the historical trajectory and the motivations of the Tuareg to rebel. He takes into account the relations between Mali and the Tuareg communities, the war on terror and the contradictions of the democratization process of the 1990s.<sup>27</sup> His research thus focuses not only on political factors, but also on the *reason* to rebel.

## **2.2 Returning factor: Group identity**

The factor of group identity is important, especially when researching how rebels legitimize their rebellion to a community. As Klaus Schlichte and Ulrich Schneckener argue: ‘the politics of legitimacy are central in order to understand the activities of armed actors,’ in which “armed actors” refer to organized non-state actors, or rebels.<sup>28</sup> According to Schlichte and Schneckener, these actors require material and moral support from communities for their legitimization, as without minimal legitimacy, they are bound to fail in pursuing their political objectives. One of the legitimacy challenges they face, is the challenge to gain support from, among others, specific local communities or wider national audience.<sup>29</sup> This requires the armed group to ‘reflect (to some extent) the ideas, social practices and (assumed) interests of local constituencies.’<sup>30</sup> Another group whose support the armed actors need, is on an international level, which includes states, international organizations, NGOs and the media.<sup>31</sup> The first groups relate especially to the organization factor, or the shared group identity, in the way Saxton, Benson, Okamoto and Wilkes described it. However, in defining their group identity within a rebellion, the rebels should take the second group into account.

In the context of rebellions, various kinds of identity are named, such as religious, ethnic and cultural identities, while often nationalism is also mentioned, though barely explicitly in terms of national identity. This is because often rebellions have nationalist or secessionist tendencies,

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<sup>26</sup> Dona J. Stewart, *What Is Next for Mali?: The Roots of Conflict and Challenges to Stability* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), 4, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep11807>.

<sup>27</sup> David Zounmenou, “Rethinking the Tuareg Factor in the Mali Crisis,” *Conflict Trends* 3, no. 16 (2013): 16-17 and 23, accessed 17 January 2021, <https://www.accord.org.za/publication/conflict-trends-2013-3/>.

<sup>28</sup> Schlichte and Schneckener, 409-410.

<sup>29</sup> Schlichte and Schneckener, 410.

<sup>30</sup> Schlichte and Schneckener, 419.

<sup>31</sup> Schlichte and Schneckener, 419.

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which they try to explain according to certain specific identities. In the literature, multiple identities can furthermore overlap and the definitions of identity can vary, depending on the case at hand. In other words, those performing case studies believe that context matters for the concept of identity.

For example, Jason Sorens focuses on ethnic or civic-national identity in his work on secessionism. He defines ethnic identity as relating to a common ancestral origin, while civic nationality refers to a shared political origin or fundamental ideology.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, he discusses cultural identity, which can have various bases: ‘language, race, ideology, common political history, even religion.’<sup>33</sup> Ethnonational identity is also a term that Saxton and Benson use. They measure this identity based on language, custom, belief and race.<sup>34</sup> Francesco Caselli and Wilbur John Coleman II measure ethnic distance, or distance between ethnic identities, based on physical characteristics, religion, language and other cultural differences.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding the Tuareg case, Kassim Kone also looks into the factor of group identity, thus the *basis* for a rebellion. He researches what makes the Tuareg society, culture and politics so distinct from other Malian minorities, such as the Bellah, Songhay and Fulani, in order to find out why Tuareg rebel against the Malian Government and other minorities do not. In this, he focuses on language, culture, religion and race. However, he still considers the *basis* to be weak, as many Tuareg rejected the idea of Azawad and the rebels were responsible for much unnecessary suffering of Tuareg and other Northern Malians<sup>36</sup>

All these authors have some overlapping factors, in which race, language, culture or custom and religion or belief are most cited. As mentioned before, in the literature, context matters to the kind of identity. Therefore, it might be better to say that one identity consists of various components. While the authors often assert the importance of a certain definition of identity for their specific case, their conclusions can be extended to other cases as well, because all researches have in common that people’s identity consists of multiple components that are intertwined. This body of literature, however, does not look into what happens when a rebel group chooses to

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<sup>32</sup> Jason Sorens, *Secessionism: Identity, Interest, and Strategy* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 20-21, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=3332461>.

<sup>33</sup> Sorens, 21.

<sup>34</sup> Saxton and Benson, 146.

<sup>35</sup> Caselli and Coleman II, 163.

<sup>36</sup> Kassim Kone, “A Southern View on the Tuareg Rebellions in Mali,” *African Studies Review* 60, no. 1 (2017): 53-54, 56, 58, 62, 70 and 74, DOI: 10.1017/asr.2017.10.

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distance themselves from one of the identity components of the group they seek to represent, while sharing identity is important for the rebel group to legitimize their rebellion.

This is the case for the latter Tuareg Rebellions, where the MNLA explicitly distances themselves from religion. However, as mentioned before, Kone sees other reasons for the weak group identity than this absence of religion. Regarding the Islamist Ansar Edine, that mostly consists of Tuareg as well, he argues it is the first time ‘that Islam became the battle horse’ in Tuareg uprisings. Although the Tuareg are Muslim, he claims that Islam is not central to their identity.<sup>37</sup> This thesis looks further into these claims, showing that both are up for debate.

### **2.3 Nonreligious rebellion**

While ethnic, religious and cultural identity are returning concepts in literature on specific rebellions, the absence of a certain identity component in rebellions has rarely been studied. For example, in the mentioned literature, regarding various cases, such as China, Zimbabwe and South Africa, it is argued that religion played a vital role in shaping the rebels’ identity and the conflict itself. However, some rebel groups explicitly distance themselves from religion and decide to shape their identity based on other factors.

An example of a rebellion with a secular identity, is the rebellion by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) against Indonesia. The GAM promoted ethnical nationalism and downplayed religion, despite Acehnese history, identity and global trends, which were marked by Islam. Shane Joshua Barter explains that two misconceptions are common in analyses on the recent Acehnese rebellion, namely that it was about oil and Islam. However, Barter argues that oil only played a role for the leaders of GAM in the beginning of the conflict, while the main motivation for the followers concerns the abuses by the Indonesian military that occurred much later. Furthermore, GAM leaders shaped an ethnic nationalist identity and downplayed Islamic elements. In the conflict, Islam was more a source of peace than of violence. With his research, Barter contributes to the instrumentalism/primordialism debate on identity.<sup>38</sup>

One explanation for the absence of faith in the separatist rebellion, is provided by Edward Aspinall, which is that both Aceh and Indonesia share a similar faith. He argues that certain qualities of Islam that strengthen secessionist claims among Muslim minorities, actually weaken

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<sup>37</sup> Kone, 58.

<sup>38</sup> Shane Joshua Barter, “Resources, Religion, Rebellion: The Sources and Lessons of Acehnese Separatism,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 1 (2008): 39-40 and 51, DOI: 10.1080/09592310801905769.



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separatist movements in majority-Muslim states. However, Barter feels that this explanation is incomplete, as a previous rebellion was between a religious Aceh against a secular Indonesia, namely the Darul Islam Rebellion. Additionally, many Acehnese believe Indonesia, especially Java, to not be Muslim at all. Finally, it ignores distinctions between leaders and followers, as well as that many conflicts in the world are among groups with different interpretations of the same faith.<sup>39</sup> Barter uses a different explanation, based more on instrumentalist and constructivist syntheses for explaining ethnic conflict:

*GAM leaders have Western backgrounds and allies and lack support among powerful Islamic groups, so have constructed the conflict according to their personal beliefs and strategic interests. This said, the GAM failed to build a conflict based on resource exploitation or self-determination, undermining instrumentalist approaches.*<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, they shaped the conflict in ethnic nationalist terms instead of religious terms. Barter claims that the identity has been negotiated by leaders, who downplayed the religious element, and their followers, as the Acehnese have a deep dislike for the Javanese, especially due to Javanese transmigrants who arrived in Aceh in the 1970s.<sup>41</sup>

This research thus shows that although an identity consists of various components, the representing group can choose to deny certain components and focus instead on other components. However, according to Barter's research on the GAM, the representing group cannot construct a completely new identity when there is no good enough of a connection with the represented group. Therefore, the representing group must choose a component of the identity of the represented people and instrumentalize it. With this case study, Barter thus adds to the debate on primordialist/instrumentalist/constructivist identity, a debate that will be further explained in the theoretical framework. However, what happens if the religious and ethnic identity of the people cannot be distinguished that easily? The literature on group identity, namely, shows that various components of identity are often intertwined. And what happens if, at the same time, another rebel group does focus on the identity aspect that the other group denies? Or if the people the rebels try to represent, are not unified? By focusing on a different case, this thesis attempts to contribute to the same debate. This other case is about the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions.

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<sup>39</sup> Barter, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Barter, 52.

<sup>41</sup> Barter, 52.

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Based on the mentioned researches on Tuareg Rebellions, can be concluded that such a research has not been conducted before, only going into the topic shortly, such as Kone's research. However, what the literature on Tuareg does assert, is the importance of historical roots to the rebellions. Therefore, this thesis focuses on all four rebellions and the development of the religious identity of the Tuareg. Not only does it look into the absence of the religious component in the latter rebellions, but it also researches the role of religion in the former rebellions.

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### 3. Theoretical Framework

From the literature review can be concluded that the general definition of the concept identity is that it consists of various components, such as ethnic, religious and cultural identity. These components do not solely determine the identity of a people, but one component can be regarded as more important than other components. Interestingly, the GAM in Aceh and the Tuareg rebels during the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions in Mali both distance themselves from one identity component, namely the religious identity of the people they seek to represent. The ADC and MNLA declared themselves as secular separatist movements, but the group they represent is divided and heterogeneous. The Tuareg are religious and some of them have become more Islamic over time. This thesis seeks to find out how much their religion matters to their identity, as the rebels distance themselves from this component.

There are multiple theories that on the relation between identity and conflict. This chapter provides an overview of the three key perspectives: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism. These theories are explained in reference to the work of Philip Q. Yang, Jonathan Fox, Sabina A. Stein, Dodeye Uduak Williams and Alemu Asfaw Nigusie. Each perspective consists of two parts, namely the nature of identity and how identity leads to conflict. However, these perspectives have both strengths and weaknesses, that Yang tries to overcome with an integrated approach. This thesis adds to this debate by applying and testing this integrated approach.

#### 3.1 Identity: Primordialism

The general interpretation of primordialism is that each individual has only one identity that is fixed or static. This identity is inherited through kinship. In other words, the group that the individual belongs to shares biological and cultural origins.<sup>42</sup> The group identity is defined in opposition to the “Other”, which leads to the propagation of a separation between these different groups, as Stein, Nigusie and Williams argue.<sup>43</sup> Differences between various groups are perceived

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<sup>42</sup> Philip Q. Yang, *Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 42, accessed 2 March 2021, <https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:f28bdce8-36e0-40bc-8f9b-02b6e7a431d8/Theories%20of%20Ethnicity.pdf>; Sabina A. Stein, “Competing Political Science Perspectives on the Role of Religion in Conflict,” *Politorbis* 22, no. 2 (2011): 22, accessed 26 January 2021, <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Politorbis-52-21-26.pdf>; Dodeye Uduak Williams, “How Useful Are the Main Existing Theories of Ethnic Conflict,” *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary studies MC SER* 4, no. 1 (2015): 147, accessed 26 January 2021, <https://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/ajis/article/viewFile/5964/5735>; Alemu Asfaw Nigusie, “An Integrated Approach to the Study of Ethnicity and Its Relevance to Ethiopia,” *International Journal of Social Science Studies* 6, no. 12 (2018): 39, DOI: 10.11114/ijsss.v6i12.3782.

<sup>43</sup> Stein, 22; Williams, 147; Nigusie, 39.

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as ancestral, deep and irreconcilable.<sup>44</sup> Nigusie and Williams specify primordial aspects of a group to their race, religion, language, location, history, culture and customs.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, these aspects are often exactly how scholars generally define group identity, as the literature review shows.

Usually, Tuareg are described as white nomads living in the Sahel desert. They have a combination of Islam and traditional beliefs and are known for the veiled men and strong position of women in their society. If primordialism is applied to the Tuareg case, this would mean that these features make them so distinctive from other ethnicities that there is no other option than conflict. However, there are Tuareg who (want to) collaborate with the Malian Government and Tuareg opposing the rebellions, as becomes clear throughout this thesis. Furthermore, the Tuareg identity is not as static as generally described.

However, while most scholars explain primordialism as this ideal type, Yang distinguishes two perspectives: the sociobiological and culturalist perspectives. The sociobiological perspective asserts the importance of kinship as a sociobiological factor that determines one's ethnicity. The implication of this is that an ethnicity never perishes, as kinship does not either.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the culturalist perspective argues that 'a common culture (e.g., a common language, a common religion) determines the genesis and tenacity of ethnic identity even in the absence of common ancestors.'<sup>47</sup> In other words, a common ethnic identity can still be developed when there are no biological bonds. Yet, neither of these perspectives explain differences within the Tuareg society and the development of the Tuareg identity.

With regard to this perspectives, some strengths and weaknesses must be addressed. What primordialism does well, is grasping the sentimental or psychological origins of identity. These origins are a plausible explanation of the strength of ethnic identity, as Yang argues.<sup>48</sup> Williams also refers to the emotive dimension to identity and conflict that primordialism explains well. Primordialism, namely, explains how the attachment to beliefs can provoke certain emotions that lead individuals or groups to violence.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, Nigusie states that some primordial elements cannot be denied.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Williams, 147.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, 147; Nigusie, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Yang, 42-43.

<sup>47</sup> Yang, 43.

<sup>48</sup> Yang, 43.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, 147.

<sup>50</sup> Nigusie, 40.

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On the other hand, primordialism fails to address structural, economical and political interests and processes. It does not account for changing identities and ethnic memberships or why identities can emerge among biologically and culturally diverse groups. Identities are not fixed and static, but fluid and subject to change.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, this perspective cannot explain the existence of wars in homogeneous areas and peace in plural societies, as Stein and Williams argue.<sup>52</sup>

### **3.2 Identity: Instrumentalism**

Whereas primordialism explains ethnic identity as something that is inherited, instrumentalism instead explains identity as a rational choice by individuals. Furthermore, as Yang argues: ‘ethnicity is not simply a mix of affective sentiments, but like class and nationality it is also a means of political mobilization for advancing group interests.’<sup>53</sup> Other scholars also notice primordialist arguments in instrumentalism. Fox, for example, argues that ‘while culturally based identities exist, they only become politically relevant when political entrepreneurs make use of them to further their own political goals.’<sup>54</sup> To this, Nigusie adds that while the mobilization of an ethnic group can help the interests of the ethnic group, as it can strengthen group solidarity, political actors mostly use the ethnic members for their own benefits.<sup>55</sup> Stein also relates primordialist arguments to instrumentalism, explaining that instrumentalists argue that while the cause of a conflict is material, identity can be used as a tool to manipulate the masses. This requires the identity to be powerful enough to actually motivate the masses. In her explanation, she focuses on religious identity specifically, which she describes as the “opium of the warriors”, because framing a conflict in terms of religious values instead of interests makes it easier for the masses to accept and justify violence.<sup>56</sup>

Regarding the Tuareg case, instrumentalism can explain what primordialism cannot, namely that within the Tuareg society, there is both support for and opposition against the rebellions. Furthermore, although there are variants of instrumentalism that notice affective ties, the main theory solely focuses on political interests as the sole determinant for ethnic affiliation.<sup>57</sup> In the Tuareg case, emotions such as hatred played a great role in the recurring rebellions, as becomes

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<sup>51</sup> Yang, 43; Williams, 147; Nigusie, 39.

<sup>52</sup> Stein, 23; Williams, 147.

<sup>53</sup> Yang, 46.

<sup>54</sup> Fox, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Nigusie, 40.

<sup>56</sup> Stein, 23-24.

<sup>57</sup> Yang, 46.

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clear in this thesis. Furthermore, structural developments also influenced the eruption of the rebellions and forced some Tuareg to join with no alternative, thus having to deal with limitations to ethnic choice, even though rational choice theory within instrumentalism argues that ethnic affiliation is an option made based on the calculation of costs and benefits.<sup>58</sup>

Although using primordialist arguments, this perspective is perceived as less simplistic and deterministic.<sup>59</sup> It helps understanding changes of identity and why some identities are more strongly asserted than others.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, instrumentalism explains why some fragmented societies make the decision to either fight or cooperate, as ethnic diversity does not automatically lead to conflict, as primordialism has argued. Finally, instrumentalism helps explaining why some individuals choose to participate in conflict, even when they are not personally convinced, but they follow the masses.<sup>61</sup>

However, there is also much critique with regard to this perspective. While instrumentalists bring ethnic identification as something subject to choice, ethnic choice is in fact limited, due to ancestral constraints that are defined by a society.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, as Yang argues, not everyone identifies with a certain ethnicity based on rational and materialistic arguments.<sup>63</sup> The rationality also bothers Williams, who states that instrumentalists fail to explain the emotive aspects of ethnic conflict that primordialists do explain. The feelings and sentiments associated with ethnic identity already exist and are not created by elites. Instead, they only recognize these feelings and appeal to them.<sup>64</sup>

### **3.3 Identity: Constructivism**

For constructivism, it is difficult to explain it as one theory, as constructivism encompasses a wide range of theories and approaches. Still, there are some general aspects to constructivism that can be defined. For one, constructivism takes ethnic identity as a social construct, something that can be constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. In other words, ethnic identity is flexible and subject to change.<sup>65</sup> Stein explains that identity is formed by ideational or cognitive structures. These

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<sup>58</sup> Yang, 47; Nigusie 40.

<sup>59</sup> Stein, 47.

<sup>60</sup> Yang, 47.

<sup>61</sup> Williams, 148.

<sup>62</sup> Nigusie, 40.

<sup>63</sup> Yang, 47.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, 148.

<sup>65</sup> Yang, 44; Williams, 149; Nigusie, 40.

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structures can be defined as ‘shared understandings, expectations, and social knowledge.’<sup>66</sup> Referring to the same thing, Williams uses the term social discourse.<sup>67</sup> According to constructivists, these cognitive structures provide meaning to the people’s identity, in other words the social roles they are expected to play and their interests, but also their perception of the material world and their behavior towards others.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, Yang argues that ethnic identity is a response to a changing social environment, which Williams and Nigusie specify to social, economic and political processes, such as conquest, colonization and immigration.<sup>69</sup>

This theory accurately notices the influence of social, economic and political processes on the formation of identity in its path to conflict, which is especially important to explain the Tuareg case, as the First Tuareg Rebellion erupted right after the Malian Independency and this rebellion, as well as droughts and the Malian response to this, affected the following rebellions. Furthermore, this theory explains well how the Tuareg identity changes over time and the role of cognitive structures on the Tuareg interpretation of their identity. Nevertheless, certain ancestral ties cannot be ignored, as the Tuareg have existed for hundreds of years within Mali and their identity was not suddenly constructed following the Malian independency.

With regard to primordialism, constructivists argue for a clash of interpretations instead of a clash of civilizations. Stein explains this argument using the interpretation of religion. Religion can be interpreted in a way that legitimates violence, but it can also be interpreted in a way that promotes peace. Thus, whereas primordialists argue that religious doctrine inevitably contributes to conflict, from a constructivist perspective, this depends on the interpretation of the religion.<sup>70</sup> Constructivism not only disagrees with the primordialist idea that genes drive identity construction and affiliation, but instead argues that identity can be chosen by individuals and is driven by the logic of cognitive structures.<sup>71</sup>

In opposition to primordialism, constructivism is regarded as less simple, as it explains the flexibility and changing nature of identity. Yang asserts that it is useful in a sense that it ‘highlights historical and structural forces that create and sustain ethnicity.’<sup>72</sup> Williams likewise sees value in

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<sup>66</sup> Stein, 24.

<sup>67</sup> Williams, 149.

<sup>68</sup> Stein, 24.

<sup>69</sup> Yang, 44; Williams, 149; Nigusie, 40.

<sup>70</sup> Stein, 25.

<sup>71</sup> Williams, 149; Nigusie, 40.

<sup>72</sup> Yang, 46.

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this, as she asserts its ability of showing the role of agency within these forces, but also exposes the interaction between the interests of actors and the social, economic and political environment in creating identity and producing ethnic violence.<sup>73</sup>

On the other hand, Yang believes the ancestral basis of ethnicity to be ignored in constructivism and argues that there are limits to social construction.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, Williams says that it fails to explain why some societies produce conflicts and other do not, while both kinds of society have similar historical processes and structures commonly associated with conflict. Also, while it is useful to explain macro level processes, it is difficult to see with this theory what happens on a micro level, such as the emotive aspects that primordialism emphasizes.<sup>75</sup> In other words, this theory does not include various contexts, as it looks at the general structures and processes. Yang and Williams furthermore agree that although the construction of identity is argued by constructivists to develop as a reaction to social, economic and political processes, it pays insufficient attention to the role of political and economic interests in identity construction. Additionally, it disregards the ancestral basis of ethnicity.<sup>76</sup>

### **3.4 Identity: Integrated approach**

According to Williams, each dimension on its own is too narrow, as it emphasizes some factors while leaving out other significant factors. She believes that a better framework would be one ‘that incorporates grievance, greed, weak states, breakdown of security, ethnic geography, intergroup policies, elite politics, unequal economic distribution systems, historical processes and other socio-political factors.’<sup>77</sup> Alemu Asfaw Nigusie confirms her critique, especially when studying issues of countries with a diversity of ethnic groups and where ethnicity plays a vital role in political discourse. He chooses an integrated approach to ethnic identity based on the work of Philip Q. Yang.<sup>78</sup> Yang argues with this approach that:

*‘ethnicity (including race) is socially constructed partly on the basis of ancestry or presumed ancestry and more importantly by society, that the interests of ethnic groups also partly determine ethnic affiliation, and that ethnic boundaries are relatively stable but undergo changes from time to time.’<sup>79</sup>*

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<sup>73</sup> Williams, 149.

<sup>74</sup> Yang, 46.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, 149.

<sup>76</sup> Yang, 46; Nigusie, 40.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, 150.

<sup>78</sup> Nigusie, 40.

<sup>79</sup> Yang, 48.



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The integrated approach thus combines the strengths of the three perspectives and is based on four major propositions. The approach as described by Yang and Nigusie looks at identity in terms of ethnicity.

The first proposition is the assumption that ethnicity ‘is partly based on ancestry or presumed ancestry that normally carries certain physical or cultural characteristics and national or territorial origins.’<sup>80</sup> This proposition incorporates the strengths of primordialism, while simultaneously acknowledging that primordialist elements do not solely make up an ethnic identity. Furthermore, it addresses the weaknesses of instrumentalism and constructivism that choice of ethnicity and the social construction of ethnicity are limited by ancestral ties.<sup>81</sup>

The second proposition is based on constructivism and poses that ethnicity is largely socially constructed. In other words, taking into account both the first and second propositions, identity exists due to ancestry and social construction. Yang and Nigusie explain that certain mechanisms allow society to create ethnicity: ethnic categorization rules that determine an individual’s ethnic belonging, social conditions that can (re)create new ethnic groups and identities, and structural issues that can increase ethnic consciousness and ethnic affiliation.<sup>82</sup>

The third proposition addresses the instrumentalist idea that individuals identify with a certain ethnic group based on costs and benefits. This proposition claims that individuals select an ethnicity not only based on rational choice value, which is included in instrumentalism, but also based on non-rational or symbolic choice value. This value addresses a critique on instrumentalism, as ethnic choice is not only rational, but also the result of psychological satisfaction or dissatisfaction.<sup>83</sup>

The fourth and final proposition argues that ethnic boundaries are relatively stable, but not static, as they can slowly transform. Ethnic boundaries can for example expand to embrace groups that had previously been excluded. The boundaries can be elevated from a lower to higher level, or the other way around, which means that certain ethnic groups can become subgroups to a panethnic group, such as Asian groups as Chinese, Japanese and Indians within the Asian American panethnicity. Furthermore, boundaries can shrink or fragmentize, as well as dissolve completely.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Yang, 48.

<sup>81</sup> Yang, 48-49; Nigusie, 40.

<sup>82</sup> Yang, 49-54; Nigusie, 40-41.

<sup>83</sup> Yang, 54-55; Nigusie, 41.

<sup>84</sup> Yang, 55-56; Nigusie, 41.

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Although this approach tries to incorporate the strengths of the other theories, Nigusie criticizes that it does not accurately address their weaknesses. He does not specify what weaknesses are ignored, aside from stating that the integrated approach fails to address the psychological dimension of ethnicity. However, this dimension might be addressed with the notion of symbolic ethnicity that is included in the third proposition, but apparently Nigusie believes this to be insufficient and wants this aspect to better provide information about the cognitive processes of ethnicity. Though, despite his critique, Nigusie states that the integrated approach is more useful than the other approaches when addressing an ethnic issue that is complex and dynamic.<sup>85</sup>

Another thing that can be criticized from Yang's theory, is that he discusses the identity theory by solely focusing on the nature of identity, while identity theory consists of two steps: the nature of identity and how the identity's nature leads to violence. Although Nigusie does not explicitly take notice of this defect, he reflects a bit on the second step in his own description of the theory, explaining how 'identity can be enhanced by competition for economic or political resources,' showing how the theory integrates the instrumentalist second step. He also reflects on the ethnic choice based on ratio or emotions, which can be extended to the support in conflict. This thesis attempts to solve the limitations of the integrated approach by using it the same way as Nigusie does. In other words, it takes into account the second step of identity theory according to the three main paradigms: primordialism, where ancestral differences cause violence; instrumentalism, where identity as it exists only causes violence when it is asserted by influential people; constructivism, where a combination of historical processes, differing interests and developments can cause violence between certain identity groups.

This approach, as well as the other approaches, are examined and applied further using the Tuareg case study. This case fits well, as the Tuareg identity is quite complex and the Tuareg rebels deny the religious aspect to the Tuareg identity. Due to the unique nature of this case study, this thesis provides a refreshing reflection upon the debate, with an explicit focus on the integrated approach, as this approach seems to solve some problems with the other approach through combining the various lenses. Some propositions are expected to be more appropriate than others to understand the Tuareg case, which are highlighted.

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<sup>85</sup> Nigusie, 41 and 45.

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## 4. The (Religious) Identity of the Tuareg

The identity theory as presented in the theoretical framework concerns two steps: the nature of identity and the path from identity to conflict. This chapter focuses on the nature of identity. In other words, in this chapter, the Tuareg identity from the 1960s until the 2010s is discussed, with an explicit focus on its religious component.

In this chapter, a couple identity aspects that the Tuareg are most known for are discussed. The focus is explicitly on those features that made/makes them stand out as an Islamic society, as well as those aspects related to Islam. Therefore, the points of analysis are: Muslim identity, male veiling, nomadic lifestyle and the position of women in society. Other identity aspects that are not discussed, as they are quite static and thus relate closely to the primordialist proposition (1) are their so-called white or red skin color and their Tamasheq language, although these aspects prove to play a role in the rebellions.

### 4.1 Muslim identity

Throughout its history, the Tuareg have always highly valued people who are closely connected to Islam by means of education or ancestry. Two main reasons lead to this observation. Firstly, learned Muslims have been given a high status in the overall Tuareg hierarchy. Secondly, political authority has been based on, among others, the so-called *shorfa* status. With this status, they claim to descend from the Prophet Muhammed.

The first point can be supported by many examples. Traditionally, French ethnographers perceived the societal ranks in the following order: *Imushagh* or white noble warriors, *Ineslemen* or white noble men specialized in religious affairs, *Imghad* or free not noble white people, *Inadan* or free not noble black people and finally *Iklan* or *Bellah-Iklan*, who are also known as the black slaves. Although, according to Lecocq, scholars are increasingly reluctant to use these classes as the basis of the Tuareg societal description, due to the difficulty of explaining the meaning of these classes in society today, this traditional description still reflects the high status of learned Muslims in the past.<sup>86</sup> However, Lecocq argues that the *ineslemen* is a difficult category, as its exact meaning is simply “Muslim”, which all Tuareg are. Nevertheless, some Tuareg are more connected to a Muslim identity than others, such as the Ifoghas, who claim *shorfa* status, and the Kel Essuq, who are the marabouts, or Islamic teachers, to the Tuareg, as argued by Lecocq and refugee Alhabib Ag

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<sup>86</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 5-6.

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Sidi.<sup>87</sup> The high status of learned Muslims is also visible in the important role of religious leaders alongside tribal chiefs in the peacemaking process after the Second Tuareg Rebellion.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, as there is not much knowledge about the Qur'an available to Tuareg, whenever people claim to be knowledgeable on the Qur'an, the Tuareg accept it, as they highly value the message of the Qur'an.<sup>89</sup>

This respect is also for others with a close connection to a Muslim identity, such as with the shorfa claim. As mentioned, the Ifoghas claim shorfa status. Its members, the *tefoghessa*, described their clan in the 1980s as consisting of noble, strong warriors and religious specialists. Their shorfa status, their pure adherence to Islam and their historical experience leading the Kel Adagh, would give them the right to political supremacy.<sup>90</sup> Basing political authority partially on Islamic elements, points to the importance of religion in Tuareg society.

Interestingly, in 2012, the shorfa status was not only claimed by the Ifoghas, but by all free-born Tuareg refugees living in Niamey. The refugees claimed that their ancestor is Mohammed El Moktar Aitta, an Arab and descendent of Fatoumata, daughter of Prophet Muhammed. This claim supports the idea that the Tuareg had brought Islam to Northern Mali.<sup>91</sup> 'It was when these black farmers, fishermen, and traders met our ancestors, that they began to abandon their tree, air, or water spirits and became Muslim. But before that, they did not know about Islam,' tells Mohamed Ag Irgimit to Diallo.<sup>92</sup>

Describing their identity in connection with the origin of Islam in the Sahara, shows the importance of Islam to their identity today. However, more importantly, this claim changed over time from only the Ifoghas to all Tuareg people. Due to the difficulties the Tuareg as a people had to go through, Diallo's informants felt the need to create a certain homogeneity between them by downplaying tribal differences. Therefore, they did not want to answer to which clan or federation they originally belonged and claimed shorfa status for all Tuareg. This would mean that all Tuareg descend from Arabs, while the *imghad* are actually said to descend from Berbers. The claims thus

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<sup>87</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 7 and 255-256; Diallo, 97.

<sup>88</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 358.

<sup>89</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 382; Ariane Kirtley, "The Devastating Impact of Climate Change on Niger and Mali," interview by Armen Georgian, *The Interview*, aired 10 February 2018, on France 24, accessed 6 December 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/20180212-interview-ariane-kirtley-climate-change-azawak-valley-niger-mali-amman-imman-water-africa>.

<sup>90</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 317-318.

<sup>91</sup> Diallo, 130-131.

<sup>92</sup> Diallo, 131.

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gloss over differences and hierarchies among various Tuareg clans, Diallo explains.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, the important position of Islam to their identity is reflected in this.

The high status of those with a close relation to Muslim identity, both within the clan and among various clans, leads to the conclusion that religious identity is highly valued by Tuareg. While at first, the religious identity component seems to be assigned only based on ancestral ties, although all Tuareg are Muslim, later on, this identity component is extended to all Tuareg. This relates to both the primordialist and constructivist propositions of the integrated approach, as their ethnicity is partly based on (presumed) ancestry (proposition 1), and later the boundaries are extended to include all Tuareg (proposition 4).

#### **4.2 Male veiling**

Identity can be expressed in various ways, such as historical origin, in which the shorfa status takes an important position, and culture or custom, which can be expressed in clothing, in which the veil plays an important part. It gave them their mysterious identity to outsiders for over centuries. The veil is only worn by Tuareg men, while in other Islamic cultures it is often the women who wear veils.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, religion did play a role in this outstanding custom. However, increasingly, the reason for veiling is related to it being a symbol of Tuareg identity.

Past scholars have suggested the men wore it as protection against the sun and sand, or to preserve their identity against enemies. However, these explanations have been rejected, as they do not explain why the men remained veiled in the shade, without enemies nearby and even at night when sleeping.<sup>95</sup> Instead, Jeremy Keenan found out that two main reasons explain the importance of the veils to the Tuareg men. The first reason is that the veils are part of their social interaction process. When confronted with women or other respected people, it was a taboo to expose the mouth, nose and brows.<sup>96</sup> Lecocq describes the veil as an instrument to express honor, dignity and pride.<sup>97</sup>

The second reason Keenan mentions is related to religious beliefs. Many Tuareg at the time believed that most of the internal diseases were caused by wicked spirits called the Kel Asouf. In order to avoid the spirits from entering the body, they wore veils. Another belief they had, was in

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<sup>93</sup> Diallo, 130-133.

<sup>94</sup> Keenan, 84.

<sup>95</sup> Keenan, 87.

<sup>96</sup> Keenan, 87-90.

<sup>97</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 249.

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*tehot*, or “evil mouth”. It relates to the belief in “evil eye”, a belief existent in many cultures, but also very prominent in Islam, where many Muslims have made protective innovations, such as amulets, using incense or hanging up shells, animal skulls or horse shoes.<sup>98</sup> The Tuareg used both the veil and Islamic amulets as protection against *tehot*. The reason to why women remain unveiled might be that women have an impure status in Islam. However, Keenan believes the social rituals associated with veiling to be a greater reason for this.<sup>99</sup> From their veiling habits can be concluded that veiling was an important part of the Tuareg identity, as part of their cultural beliefs and their social interactions. Their traditional beliefs in the Kel Asouf seems to be connected to the Islamic belief in *tehot*, to which they not only used Islamic amulets as protection, but also the veils.

Due to the veils’ role in social interaction, it also expressed a sense of honor. After the lost rebellion and devastating droughts that forced the Tuareg into exile, the Tuareg felt that honor was lost. As a way of expressing their state of crisis, the veil custom changed. Mouths were exposed by a lowered veil or no veil at all. Another visible aspect were the grown moustaches and shaved beards, whereas before they had shaved their moustache and grown beards, following the example of the prophet Muhammed.<sup>100</sup>

However, after the end of the Second Tuareg Rebellion, a reverse trend is noticeable; many former *ishumar* started wearing the veil again, to indicate a sense of reinstated honor, as well as a way of explicitly showing their ethnic identity.<sup>101</sup> This was much less important in Algiers, where Tuareg in the cities stopped wearing veils, so that their social position would not be determined by ethnic identity, but by occupation instead.<sup>102</sup> In 2012, refugee Alassane also argues that to most Tuareg men, the veil is the most sacred thing and whenever in public, their face should be covered, especially when meeting his father- and mother-in-law. Being forced to unveil, would again lead to lost honor and lost respect, especially when not restoring the honor appropriately.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, there are also exceptions to the veiling habit. Refugees Mohamed Ag Irgimit and Mossa Ag Attaher

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<sup>98</sup> Abu’l-Mundhir Khaleel ibn Ibraaheem Ameen, *The Jinn and Human Sickness: Remedies in the Light of the Qur’aan and Sunnah*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2005), 277-278, accessed 5 May 2021, [http://www.ruqyaqa.com/uploads/2/5/2/5/25255474/the\\_jinn\\_and\\_human\\_sickness.pdf](http://www.ruqyaqa.com/uploads/2/5/2/5/25255474/the_jinn_and_human_sickness.pdf).

<sup>99</sup> Keenan, 91-92; Iyad Alharafesheh, “Discrimination Against Women in Islam,” *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 8 (2016): 45, accessed 17 May 2021, <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Discrimination-against-Islamic-Women.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 249-250.

<sup>101</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 249-250.

<sup>102</sup> Keenan, 93-94 and 99.

<sup>103</sup> Diallo, 72-74.

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express to Diallo their disapproval of many other Tuareg, who, in their eyes, had abandoned their culture by not wearing traditional Tuareg clothing and instead embracing T-shirts and jeans.<sup>104</sup>

The changes in wearing veils are both visible in the actual wearing of them, as well as the reason to wear veils. Before, the veils were worn as part of the social interaction process and religious protection, while later, the second reason lost ground and another reason was added, namely wearing it as an expression of the Tuareg identity. Keenan assigns the loss of as religious protection to the islamization and modernization processes, as caused by an increase in schooling and the influence of fundamentalist Islamic doctrines.<sup>105</sup> This process caused many Tuareg to stop believing in traditional beliefs. This was especially explicit when he asked about Kel Asouf. In the 1960s, Keenan could have serious discussions about the topic, but in 1999, he was met with laughter and comments such as ‘perhaps there might be some old people who believe it.’<sup>106</sup>

In short, Islamization and modernization caused a decrease in traditional beliefs among Tuareg, while the Second Tuareg Rebellion resulted in the veil functioning as an expression of the Tuareg identity in society. This relates to the constructivist proposition (2), with social conditions constructing ethnic identity and structural conditions that can heighten ethnic awareness. Nevertheless, some decided not to wear veils, which relates to the instrumentalist proposition (3), namely that interests of individuals to some extent shape the ethnic affiliation. Furthermore, the fact that Mohamed and Mossa disapprove of the Tuareg not wearing veils and thus seeing them as not being Tuareg, relates to the second proposition as well, as this shows ethnic categorization rules.

#### **4.3 From nomads to settling**

The Tuareg are known for their veiled men, nomadic lifestyle and independent women. However, both the fundamentalist Islam that arrived in Northern Mali and the increased settlement affected the reason behind veiling and the position of women in Tuareg society. As for the increased settlement, already after Malian independency, the Malian Government sought to transform the Tuareg nomads in a settled society. They did so by forcing agricultural projects upon them. However, the people who participated in the projects were mostly administrative and military staff and the project was a failure. It was not until later, when their only source of income was diminished, that Tuareg actually demanded farming material from the Malian Government, calls

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<sup>104</sup> Diallo, 163-165.

<sup>105</sup> Keenan, 93-94.

<sup>106</sup> Keenan, 94.

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which were then not heeded. The need for another source of income was caused by the dramatic slaughter of their animals by the Malian Army during the first rebellion, as well as the draughts of 1973 and 1984, which prevented the Tuareg from recovering of the impact of the slaughter. Having to seek other means of survival, involuntary settlements rose immensely.<sup>107</sup>

The increased settlement is important for the development of the Tuareg culture and identity. From a rural society with an economy based on pastoral household self-sufficiency, living in a geographically limited and coherent region, the Tuareg society changed to an urban society with an economy of wage labor, living in a scattered diaspora all over West Africa, the Maghreb and Europe. The Tuareg called the new way of life Teshumara, which means unemployment. The Tuareg living this new way of life, were subsequently called ishumar, meaning unemployed. However, some other Tuareg defined ishumar as “to endure with patience”, in the sense that it would only be a temporary lifestyle.<sup>108</sup>

The diaspora of the Tuareg as caused by the rebellions and draughts, resulted in an immense diversity among Tuareg and their customs. While many settled, some stayed close to a nomadic lifestyle. While some fled to neighboring countries, others stayed in Mali. The ishumar can therefore be seen as a fragmentation of the Tuareg with a newly created identity, which relates to constructivist propositions (2) and (4). Not only did new structural condition lead to the creation of a new identity, but also a fragmentation within the Tuareg identity.

#### **4.4 The position of women in Tuareg society**

Finally, the discussed settlement and fundamentalist Islam affected the position of women in Tuareg society. Traditionally, women were quite independent. They owned the tent and cattle, allowing them to occupy the territory and material means.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, as the men were usually away from the camps, looking after the camels, fighting wars or raiding, the women were left in charge of the camps. They organized day-to-day business, took care of the goat herds and the children and their education.<sup>110</sup> However, in the settled societies, they now lived in huts and apartments that were owned by their fathers, brothers or husbands. Without access to cattle, they lost the relative autonomy they had before. In cases of divorce, this made them increasingly

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<sup>107</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 162, 227 and 233.

<sup>108</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 229 and 231.

<sup>109</sup> Diallo, 62-63.

<sup>110</sup> Keenan, 118-119.



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dependent on their male family members.<sup>111</sup> As their management tasks also fell away, the women were reduced more to the status of domestic workers. This housework was usually behind closed doors instead of the open tents, which set the women apart from other people, adding to the air of seclusion in line with other Islamic people.<sup>112</sup> Meanwhile, Islamic rules were more strictly imposed on married women. Keenan explains that among the Algerian Tuareg, women had to focus more on their family and in cases of the death of their husband, women had to endure a period of seclusion. In order to acquire some freedom and independency, an increase in divorces among Tuareg is noticed.<sup>113</sup>

The fundamentalist Islam affected the status of women in another way as well, as the communal elections of 1999 show. These elections had become the new battleground for rivalry between the Ifoghas and the Idnan and their imghad allies after the fragmentation during the Second Tuareg Rebellion. The Ifoghas legitimized their power on religious grounds, as explained before, but the Idnan presented the most popular candidate, a woman called Tenhert or Doe, referring to her Idnan clan Inheren, “The Does”. Here, the influence of the Tablighi Islam on traditional Tuareg gender politics becomes clear. Tuareg women enjoy certain freedom, which is often viewed as exceptional in the Muslim world. Initially, Intalla Ag Attaher acted favorably to Doe, although she came from the competing clan, but under influence of the Tablighi, which preached antifeminist concepts, he changed his position and started blocking her means of becoming mayor politically. The local ulema claimed that according to the shari’a, a female mayor was not possible.<sup>114</sup>

Among Tuareg women, in particular those near Doe, opposition rose against the Tablighi Jamaat. The Muslim movement blocked her possibilities to run for mayor and furthermore, the women feared “Algerian situations”, which Lecocq defines as ‘a forced retreat from public and political life under the impact of conservative Islamic teachings.’<sup>115</sup> In Tuareg traditions, women had always enjoyed the right to participate in social debates and Tuareg traditions were preferred over strangers’ beliefs. The women also wondered where in Islamic teachings is explicitly said that women cannot become elected and why the Tuareg spiritual leaders needed advice from strangers. Nevertheless, Doe would eventually come to accept her defeat, because of the opposition of the

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<sup>111</sup> Diallo, 62-63.

<sup>112</sup> Keenan, 119.

<sup>113</sup> Keenan, 122.

<sup>114</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 383.

<sup>115</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 383.

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ulema and Intalla, as well as the death of Attaher Ag Bissada, the amenokal or leader of the Idnan. The dispute over his succession weakened the Idnan's power. However, in exchange for her acceptance, she still got a position on the electoral lists of the newly created Haut Conseil des Collectivités, which was to represent the new Communes at the central-government level.<sup>116</sup>

Before, women had enjoyed more freedom and had a strong position in society. Due to the Tablighi teachings and the increased sedentarization, this changed. However, the Tablighi teachings affected the Ifoghas, but not the Idnan. This difference or fragmentation relates to constructivist proposition (4). The same fragmentation should be noticed among the settled versus nomadic Tuareg. Furthermore, Tablighi Jamaat quickly lost popularity due to the events of 9/11. According to Lecocq, the people were quick to connect the global Salafi Islam to terrorist attacks abroad and feared possible retaliation.<sup>117</sup> This relates to the instrumentalist and constructivist proposition (3), as identity is subject to change due to reconstruction, as well as the role of choice in association with this certain form of religious identity. At first, association seemed good, but after 9/11, the costs seem to have outweighed the benefits.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

In short, the traditional Tuareg identity can be described as having a combined religion based on traditional religion and Islam. Due to increased Islamization and modernization, Islam took over in their culture, as is visible in the reasons to wear veils and the position of women. However, fundamentalist Islam did not transform Tuareg society completely. Some aspects already existed before, such as the high value assigned to learned Muslims. Other aspects remained somewhat strong, such as language and race. Additionally, other factors changed the Tuareg identity as well, such as the rebellions, lost and “won”, and the droughts, which led to increased settlement in cities. One of the changes in Tuareg identity is the shorfa claim, which had been assigned only to the Ifoghas before, but now claimed by Tuareg refugees for all Tuareg. Nevertheless, there are also many differences among the Tuareg people. Some stopped wearing veils completely, while others tried to stay in touch with their homeland and traditions.

While it is impossible to look at the complete identity theory, there can be looked at to how identity is described in each theory. In primordialism, identity differences are ancestral, cannot be changed and conflict is unavoidable. As is shown already in this chapter, the Tuareg identity is

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<sup>116</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 382-383.

<sup>117</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 384.

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subject to change. However, while the definition of their ancestry also changes, from a smaller group to their whole ethnic group, ancestral ties matter to their identity. This relates to the primordialist proposition (1). Instrumentalism is a bit more difficult to reflect upon. According to instrumentalists, identity differences do nothing, unless people assert them and use them for their own political goods. Ethnic affiliation is based on the rational calculation of costs and benefits. One thing that can be concluded from this chapter, is the rational calculation of associating and disassociating with tablighi teachings. Additionally, while some embrace the Tuareg identity with its difficulties, others make the decision to adjust to the new urban society they found themselves in by downplaying their Tuareg identity, such as through not wearing veils anymore. In other words, the moderate version of instrumentalism is more accurate, as the decision is not only based on reason, but also on emotion, that instrumentalism forgets, but does relate to the instrumentalist proposition (3) of the integrated approach. Finally, according to constructivism, identity differences can be constructed and reconstructed. This is especially visible with regard to the shorfa status, that has expanded to include all Tuareg. Furthermore, the meaning of the veil and the position of women have been reconstructed. This relates to constructivist proposition (4), while the creation of the ishumar relates to constructivist proposition (2).

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## 5. Defining the First Tuareg Rebellion

While the last chapter focuses on the nature of the Tuareg (religious) identity, the following chapters concentrate more on the path from identity to rebellion. In other words, how did the rebels define the rebellions? What are their motivations and how do they define the rebellion in order to get support, both internal and external? In the last chapter, the changing (religious) identity of the Tuareg people over time has been described. That background is important to understand and analyze the rebellions, as the rebels define the rebellion with the Tuareg identity in mind. Did they accept the rebels' definitions or did they have other reasons to support or oppose the rebellions?

The first chapter of this section concentrates on the First Tuareg Rebellion that dates from 1963. In short, it started after the Malian independency in 1960, with the Kel Adagh not wanting to be part of Mali. First, the Tuareg prepared for the war, gathering men and material under the leadership of, among others, Zeyd Ag Attaher and Amegha Ag Sherif. They fought with 250 men at most, using camels and outdated rifles. Although this seems hopeless against trained military, the camels were highly effective against the Malian Army, as the Adagh surface is difficult to cross by cars, which the army used, but easy by camels. The arms were light, cheap and known to the Tuareg, allowing more rebels to be armed than would have been possible with modern rifles only, although they also had some more advanced weapons. Yet, the rebels did not expect a military victory, but hoped for Algerian and French support, as Zeyd had some regional contacts among the Algerian National Liberation Front and French administrative personnel. However, while personal contacts are important to Tuareg politics, in international politics, these expectations made little sense, Lecocq explains. Algerian-Malian relations were good at the time and France did not want to risk its nuclear test bases in Southern Algeria to help its old but now useless ally, while at the same time France was still contemplating its loss in the Algerian liberation war. The rebels did receive some unofficial support from France and Algeria in the form of weapons and bases. Yet, fighting with about 250 against 2,200 men, the rebels were still bound to lose.<sup>118</sup>

Until August 1963, the goum, camel mounted military forces which consisted mostly of equals and some Tuareg as well, pursued the rebels. The goumiers and rebels fought based on the Tuareg rules of warfare, *Aqqa*. However, after August, the Malian Armed Forces started to involve, who did not fight by these rules. They killed women and religious people, as well as men who did not participate in combat, normally forbidden by *Aqqa*. Furthermore, on 27 September 1963, the

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<sup>118</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 187, 191-194 and 199.

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Adagh was declared forbidden territory. Some regrouping zones were installed and anyone in the forbidden zone would be taken for a rebel and shot at sight. However, not all tribes knew about this, due to difficult communication means, which caused many casualties. Others stayed as they did not want to watch their livestock perish in regrouping zones. The casualties resulted from being seen as rebels and attempts by the Army to hurt the rebels by poisoning wells and slaughtering cattle. Finally, the rebels lost the war and some of the leaders were arrested, unveiled and executed.<sup>119</sup>

## 5.1 Tuareg rebels

In order to answer the question to how the Tuareg rebels defined the First Tuareg Rebellion, conversations with former rebels and archival work by Lecocq are referred to. From this is concluded that the rebels' motivations were based on race, lack of respect and mistreatment, heavy taxes and broken promises in terms of Tuareg autonomy and ruling in accordance with Islam. However, there will also be reflected on different positions in the Tuareg politics that led to the outbreak of the rebellion.

One of the people Lecocq spoke with, was Mohamed Lamine Ag Mohamed Fall, long time the main organizer of the Second Tuareg Rebellion and, during the time of his conversations with Lecocq, an amateur historian and member of the Ifoghas council.<sup>120</sup> Based on this conversation, Lecocq explains that while the Malian Government believed there had been made no promises regarding Tuareg autonomy, the Kel Adagh, at least in their memory, believed promises had been made to grant autonomy to the Tuareg. To them, such promises were necessary, as during colonialism, the Tuareg had been given certain autonomy by France as well. When Mali became independent, they expected a similar treatment. A second promise concerns the rule of Mali, which would be in accordance with Islam. However, Mohamed Lamine told Lecocq that these promises were broken, which to the Tuareg proved that the Malian Government did not consist of nobles, but slaves.<sup>121</sup>

The second promise was also remembered by Mohamed Ag Intalla, whom Lecocq spoke as well. Mohamed is the oldest son of Intalla Ag Attaher, amenokal of the Adagh. Intalla was one of the two heirs of Attaher Ag Illi, amenokal before him, with Zeyd being the other heir. Mohamed remembered the discussion of the promise of the country becoming Muslim, which some believed

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<sup>119</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 207, 209-211 and 214-215.

<sup>120</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 413-414.

<sup>121</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 107.

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and others did not. Only after a marabout arrived from Gao alongside a black commander, everyone believed the promise and Intalla and Attaher sent a letter written by their religious leader Embakoua that they agreed on independence. Only Zeyd was against this decision. Mohamed recalls:

*'He said "Whatever his religion, I prefer to stay with someone of my own skin colour". Zeyd said the blacks had a complex because of their skin colour and this would give troubles. Then there was the problem with slavery. Intalla said it was too late now and if Zeyd really thought about it that way he should have said so earlier.'*<sup>122</sup>

Attaher Ag Illi and Intalla Ag Attaher both believed in this promise when they supported the Malian independence, but Mohamed Lamine and Mohamed Ag Intalla noticed that this promise was broken, which was a great reason for hatred. On the other hand, Zeyd did not necessarily not believe in the promise, but saw race or skin color to be more important than a similar religion. As Zeyd would play an important role in the rebellion, this shows that, although the broken promise of Muslim rule was a motivation for the rebels, race was taken as more important. So, while Islam can be seen as a unifying factor, race would divide the Tuareg from Mali.

Islam has also been mentioned in a negotiation in Tamake between Government officials, tribal chiefs and rebels, with respect to Muslim customs. A report based on this negotiation includes the following:

*'We fight for our independence. We don't want any of this Mali. The leaders have no patience. They throw us in prison for no reason. There are heavy taxes and exaggerated customs duties. We are beaten and chained in front of our women and children. There is also the marriage act, which does not conform to Muslim custom. We are against Mali because all its institutions are anti-religious and against us. We want our independence, that is all we look for, but we cannot stay with Mali. We are against all the principles of the Party and the Government.'*<sup>123</sup>

Interestingly, Mali is framed as anti-religious and anti-Tuareg in the same sentence. This makes it seem that Islam and the Tuareg are presented by the rebels as inseparable. Additionally, taxes and mistreatment, by means of wrongful imprisonment and exaggerated custom duties, are named.

Based on these quotes, religion, race, taxes and mistreatment were motivations for the Tuareg rebels. However, to return to the first broken promise, the main motivation seems to be the protection and autonomy of the Tuareg people and identity. This is shown by this final quote, based on an interview with former rebel Bibi Ag Ghassi:

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<sup>122</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 148.

<sup>123</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 187.

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*'We had no ideological concepts that come with a revolution. We were essentially motivated to save our identity and by the wish to reconquer the independence the French had given to us, and which the Malians had confiscated to their own benefit.'*<sup>124</sup>

Nevertheless, the straw that broke the camel's back was a story of revenge, a story that played a role in the following rebellions, as the story of continuity of resistance against external rule and the struggle for independence is seen as a genealogical continuity. The story starts with Alla Ag Albachir, who defied the French authorities in colonial times. During French colonialism, the leading clan Irayaken once headed the Kel Adagh. However, Alla refused to obey both the French authorities, as well as the Irayaken, led by Attaher Ag Illi. His actions made him popular as a local hero, but the French wanted his head. Goumiers caught and beheaded him. Alla's son, Elledi Ag Alla, wanted to avenge his father's death by killing his assassins. However, achieving this triggered the rebellion. Although he initially only sought revenge, he became the rebellion's most prestigious leader.<sup>125</sup>

## **5.2 Tuareg people**

To find out whether the rebels' definition is in line with that of the Tuareg people, this section focuses on how the people defined the First Tuareg Rebellion. This is done, in order to provide some nuance. If the rebels' definition is only put alongside the religious identity of the Tuareg people, a different and limited view on their definitions' "success" would be found. The people's view is described in reference to Diallo's conversations with Tuareg people who have experienced the rebellion, as well as in reference to Lecocq, whose informants sometimes referred to the peoples' response.

Just as seen in the Tuareg politics, among the people, a split can be noticed. For example, there were those who supported Intalla in the division between Zeyd and Intalla, regarding cooperation with the Malian Government. Rebel Amouksou Ag Anzandeh, when questioned by Captain Diby Sillas Diarra in 1963, argued that this split was especially visible along geographical lines: 'We have seen that all the Ifoghas fractions of the south and west follow Intalla while those of the north and east follow Zeyd.'<sup>126</sup> Similar to Attaher and Intalla, some Tuareg saw Islam as a unifying factor between their people and Mali. In 1961, Mohamed Ayoul Ag Mohamed, a Kel Intessar, wrote to President Modibo Keita a letter explaining this. The purpose of his letter was to

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<sup>124</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 189.

<sup>125</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 184-185.

<sup>126</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 194-195.

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get the Tuareg leaders to represent their people in the Government, as the Sudanese Commandants in the Government did not understand the Tuareg character, which led to disagreements.<sup>127</sup>

On the other hand, there was a great resentment against the Malian Government, which shows in the large support for Zeyd and the rebellion. One of the reasons for support, were the broken promises. According to Moussa Baswish, a former member of the Tanekra, a group that is further explained in chapter 6, and at the time of his conversation with Lecocq a local historian in Kidal:

*'The promise of a federation and the establishment of the shari'a...were very important to the Kel Tamasheq in those days. Well, the federation broke up on the twenty second of September 1960, and the shari'a has never been employed. That is where the dissatisfaction with Modibo Keita's regime came from.'*<sup>128</sup>

Another reason for dissatisfaction, were the high taxes and membership dues, which before the rebellion led to emigration from the Niger Bend. However, when some Government agents toured the Niger Bend, in order to calm the people and prevent their exit, some of these agents were killed. In response, soldiers were sent. They took more drastic measures and intimidated the population, for example by test-firing weapons in Dogon villages, while also killing about fifty civilians in a clash at the border.<sup>129</sup>

These authoritarian attitudes from Malian soldiers against the nomads took shape in other ways as well. Alhabib Ag Sidi described the following to Diallo:

*'At that time, the soldiers replaced God Almighty in the north. When the Malian soldiers paid visits to our girls at night, they did not like to meet other Tuareg young men there. In cases in which they met some Tuareg youth there, stories were made up in the following days that denounced these people. Most commonly, it was said that they have done something against Mali, and for this reason, they were arrested, unveiled, and forced to do manual work in the presence of women, wives, and children.'*<sup>130</sup>

Diallo interprets the metaphorical use of "God Almighty" by Alhabib as referring to the extreme effects their authoritarian attitudes of the soldiers had on the nomads. The soldiers did whatever they wanted and humiliated and degraded them. According to Alhabib, this loss of honor encouraged the young Tuareg to turn against the Malian soldiers.<sup>131</sup> This quote exemplifies the high

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<sup>127</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 139-140.

<sup>128</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 179.

<sup>129</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 82.

<sup>130</sup> Diallo, 98.

<sup>131</sup> Diallo, 98.



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resentment against Malian soldiers, with the description of God Almighty not being a light phrasing. Alhabib also reflects on the new marriage law. Traditionally, marriage was a religious affair and performed by the Kel Essuq, the marabouts. However, this new law forced them to go to the military to marry. This also shows how the soldiers took the place of God Almighty.<sup>132</sup>

While some were dissatisfied with the Malian military, based on religion, taxes, mistreatment and broken promises by the Malian Government, and thus supported the rebellion voluntarily, others were forced to join. One reason was that they feared being raided by the rebels when they would support Mali. Another reason is closer to the mistreatment already discussed, namely army repression during the rebellion. An important example of this is the so-called forbidden zone.

### **5.3 Discussion**

Various similarities and differences in motivation to support the rebellion have been stated. Both rebels and people were dissatisfied with the broken promises for autonomy and rule in accordance with Islam. Additionally, both groups noticed high taxes and the great mistreatment and lack of respect, especially coming from the military. In terms of identity, religion was a main point of interest for both rebels and Tuareg people, but race has also been mentioned by the rebels. This does not mean that race was not a motivation for the Tuareg people. This observation can result from the sources discussed. The authors might have made a selection where some topics were not included in their final ethnographies. Another option is that the informants decided not to speak about certain topics or were not asked about them. Furthermore, a possibility is that those who were concerned with other topics, did not get the chance to speak with Lecocq or Diallo. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the religious background of the Tuareg rebels and people, and especially the high position of learned Muslims and the Shari'a mattered in their motivations, both in opposition to and support of the Malian Government. Additionally, other identity factors aside from religion mattered, such as race.

So, how does this relate to identity theory? As religion and race matter in the primordialist proposition (1), these seem to have led to the rebellion. On the other hand, due to a similar religion, there were also Tuareg who wanted to participate in the Malian Government. This connects to the instrumentalist proposition (3), that an individual's interest determines ethnic affiliation. Furthermore, the rebellion only erupted after Malian independence, which connects to the

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<sup>132</sup> Diallo, 97.

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constructivist proposition (2), as structural changes can enhance ethnic affiliation, leading to a conflict.

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## 6. Defining the Second Tuareg Rebellion

This chapter follows a similar structure as the chapter on the First Tuareg Rebellion, only analyzing the Second Tuareg Rebellion. The same questions are asked and the same perspectives are looked at. First, a short overview on the rebellion is given.

In short, the Second Tuareg Rebellion was preceded by two droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. During these periods, the Tanekra movement emerged, starting preparations for a new rebellion. At a meeting in 1976, a name for the movement was established: Mouvement de Libération de l'Azawad, later also known as the Mouvement Populaire de l'Azawad (MPA).<sup>133</sup> Lecocq distinguishes four phases in the Second Tuareg Rebellion. The first, he calls the “real rebellion”. Between June 1990 and January 1991, the rebels formed a united front against the Malian Army and won various battles, with the Battle at Toximine as the most decisive victory. This Malian defeat, along with great opposition to the Malian regime, resulted in negotiations that led to the Tamanrasset Agreement of 1991. This concerns the second phase, which lasted between January 1991 until February 1994, and is called by Lecocq the “confused rebellion”. During this period, there were internal conflicts and changes within the Malian Government and the Tuareg movement.<sup>134</sup>

All these negotiations between the Tuareg rebels and the Malian state excluded other communities of Northern Mali, aside from Tuareg and Arab communities. Therefore, the Tamanrasset Agreement was seen as a privilege given to the Tuareg. Other communities disapproved of the Tamanrasset Agreement and the National Pact, a peace agreement that was signed in 1992.<sup>135</sup> However, the National Pact was obstructed in 1994, when the rebellion entered a third phase. The Tuareg movement fragmentized alongside tribal lines, fighting amongst one another over the structure of the Tuareg political landscape. In April 1994, the Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy, a vigilant group armed by the Malian Army and mostly consisting of deserted army officers, entered the scene. Finally, in the last phase between October 1994 and March 1996, gradual peace returned, concluded by the ceremonial burning of about 3,000 weapons in the marketplace of Timbuktu, called Flame de la Paix or Flame of Peace, organized by the Malian Government and the United Nations.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 276 and 311.

<sup>134</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 295.

<sup>135</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 330 and 336.

<sup>136</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 295-296.

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## 6.1 Tuareg rebels

Based on Lecocq's archival work and conversations with various former rebels, can be concluded that the rebels' main motivation for rebellion was similar to that of the first rebellion, namely hatred or egha, racism and mistreatment. Their goal, however, differed, due to the immense divisions regarding independency and a societal reform. Islam played a role in the organization of the MPA, but less with regard to the rebels' motivations.

The connection with the first rebellion is important to reflect upon. Following this lost rebellion and the droughts, the Tuareg felt in a state of crisis with a loss of honor. Just as Elledi Ag Alla revenged his father's death, all Tuareg had to avenge their loss. The notion of revenge cannot be overstated, argues Lecocq, although it was not the sole motivation to join the rebellion.<sup>137</sup> Keyni Ag Sherif, brother to Amegha Ag Sherif and involved in the organization of the Tanekra Movement from its first moments, defines egha as the following: 'Egha is when you have fought and you have not made up afterwards, you have not acquiesced, you have not shaken hands. Then, something remains open. That is egha.'<sup>138</sup> In order to settle this egha, revenge is required. Egha can last for generations, can be felt as a group and compromises shame about having lost face or respect. Lecocq furthermore adds that 'Egha as an emotion can be reified and instrumentalised to connect a past with a future, via a present.'<sup>139</sup>

Revenge can only be achieved by means of violence. Mohamed Lamine reflects on the massacre of 1963 of Mali against the Tuareg and says:

*'And me, I grew up seeing all this, and in my youthfulness I grew a really, really strong hatred. In those years an incredibly grave obligation fell upon us... All young people of my age in that period had the same hatred, the same sentiment of being recolonised, and that caused a great feeling of hate in us.'*<sup>140</sup>

In other words, the rebels wanted to avenge the First Tuareg Rebellion and fight against the mistreatment they had endured. Aside from hatred or egha, racism also played a role in their motivation and hatred, as explained by Mohamed Lamine, who says that the Tuareg 'had become slaves of the blacks', had not yet achieved their independence or modernization, unlike Tuareg in other countries, and had nobody to protect or help them during the droughts.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 229.

<sup>138</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 268.

<sup>139</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 272.

<sup>140</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 270.

<sup>141</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 272.

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But more important than racist motivations, the rebels sought independence. However, there was a difference in the kind of independence. Lecocq, says that there were numerous Tanekra movements, a network of like-minded men. Only in the 1980s, the structures became more fixed.<sup>142</sup> Some, like Mohamed Lamine, sought complete independence. Others sought autonomy within Mali, seeing themselves both as Tuareg and Malian. For example, a former rebel feared he would become less than a reptile in his own country, with which he referred to Mali.<sup>143</sup>

Religion played a role as well in the rebel group. Lecocq explains that if someone wanted to join the Tanekra, and considered trustworthy, he would be recruited. These recruits had to swear an oath on the Qur'an that he would do anything to achieve their goal of independency and would not snitch on them.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, when planning the start of their rebellion, the Tuareg movement selected 4 July, which was the celebration of 'aid al-fitr, the end of Ramadan.<sup>145</sup> Although this plan failed, the selected date does show the importance of Islam for the Tuareg. Mark Juergensmeyer explains: 'To capture the public's attention through an act of performance violence on a date deemed important to the group perpetrating the act, therefore, is to force the group's sense of what is temporally important on everyone else.'<sup>146</sup> Although his argument addresses terrorist attacks, the same argument fits the Tuareg rebels as well.

In short, although there were internal divisions, autonomy to a certain extent was the main goal for the rebels. They sought independency due to egha, mistreatment and racism. This independency goal seems to be more concrete in comparison to the First Tuareg Rebellion, as a specific territory is claimed. Islam seems to play a lesser role in the motivation of the rebels compared to the first rebellion. This might be due to the greater importance of egha against their people than Islam, as Islam does play a role in their lives and the organization of the rebel groups.

## 6.2 Tuareg people

In order to find out what played a role in the Tuareg people's perception of the Second Tuareg Rebellion, not only their religious identity is analyzed, but their explicit perceptions of the rebellion as well. Their view is discussed based on Diallo's conversations with refugees and Lecocq's archival work.

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<sup>142</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 273.

<sup>143</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 355.

<sup>144</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 275.

<sup>145</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 299.

<sup>146</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003, third edition), 133.

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With the First Tuareg Rebellion and the periods of drought, the Tuareg were left without a steady food income and required humanitarian aid to overcome the disaster. However, they were left to themselves, without any help from the state. Like French journalist Phillipe Decreane and Tuareg refugee Mohamed Ag Irgimit, some Tuareg believed the droughts were used to get rid of the Tuareg once and for all. The only option the Tuareg were really left with, was to migrate to other countries.<sup>147</sup> There was also discontent due to the lack of possibilities to participate in the Malian state, even if the Tuareg wanted to, as Mohamed Ag Zeyd experienced when he was a soldier in the national army and was not given promotions, even when his own students were:

*'Whenever I asked, no explanation was given. I knew that the reason behind it was not an issue of discipline. I was docile enough and fulfilled all my duties well. At some point I realized that the unofficial explanation was that I am Tuareg. I decided then to quit the army and Mali.'*<sup>148</sup>

As this discrimination and feeling of mistreatment shows, the Tuareg people felt attacked. This was also with regard to their language. For example, Lecocq mentions that between 1967 and 1968, 910 nomad children were attending school. The aim of the Keita Regime was to teach the children a patriotic spirit and a sense of national consciousness. Their means was to forbid the children from speaking Tamasheq and only allow French and Bamanakan.<sup>149</sup> Language is important to the Tuareg identity, which is also seen by the Malian Government, who acted upon this knowledge.

The memory of mistreatment also becomes clear in this al-guitara song from 1979 that recalls the First Tuareg Rebellion, showing how the Tuareg connected their current situation to their past. Seeking to protect their identity and avoid further mistreatments, they desired autonomy:

*'I live in deserts  
where there are no trees and no shades  
Veiled friends, leave indigo [turban] and veil  
You should be in the desert  
where the blood of kindred has been spilled  
That desert is our country  
and in it is our future'*<sup>150</sup>

In short, there was a great desire for all Tuareg to return to the desert with both their ancestors and future connected to it.

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<sup>147</sup> Diallo, 52 and 101.

<sup>148</sup> Diallo, 103.

<sup>149</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 157.

<sup>150</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 261.

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Nevertheless, not all Tuareg supported violence as a means to solve their problems. A poem by a pastoralist Tuareg man of the early 1980s shows this.

*'There are no friends left to count on  
Each for himself and God for all  
From the biggest chief to the smallest child  
I hope the worthy are blessed  
The best for us is righteousness, honour and patience  
The wrong path leads to failure  
A change is needed or the worst will come  
The young say it all, without omission  
But it is left in oblivion  
Not being serious is an evil  
that runs everywhere, grows and spreads  
We need a remedy before it hurts us  
These are my thoughts on a solution  
Where will it be without the respected ones  
who know the right choice and banish evil  
who don't like the road of lies and banditry  
Awful is he who thinks he is superior  
who forgets the ties of his mother'<sup>151</sup>*

The man believed change was needed, but not through the wrong path, noticing that illegal activities as smuggling, 'road of lies and banditry', caused more problems. Instead, he argues that they forgot 'the ties of his mother', in other words, the ancestral ties that are important to him. This shows that not all Tuareg supported the rebellious ideas, even if they wanted change.

The tactics that the Malian Army used against the Tuareg Rebels during the Second Tuareg Rebellion, were recalled by Tuareg refugees with an important role for religion and ethnicity. Mohamed Ag Irgimit explains that the first strategy they used, resembled the strategies against the rebels during the 1960s. However, the difference, he explains, was that the international community watched the region closely and the same war crimes, with civilian casualties, could not be repeated. Therefore, the tactics changed and vigilante groups composing of Fulani, Songhay and Bellah-Iklan were organized. These groups were armed by the army and targeted the Tuareg. Mohamed remembered the following as part of their actions:

*'In between 1994 and 1996, several systematic attacks took place against the Tuareg. In Gao, the entire quartier inhabited by the marabouts was burned. They lost everything they had there. There was no action from the army to protect them or to prevent the event.'*<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 265-266.

<sup>152</sup> Diallo, 105.

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In other words, the Tuareg remembered an action by other ethnic groups, equipped by the Malian Army, against marabouts. Recalling the event like this, shows how important these marabouts are for the Tuareg and how violence against them is disapproved of.

### **6.3 Discussion**

Various similarities and differences in the rebels' and peoples' ideas at the time can be noticed. Just as in the past rebellion, mistreatment played a great role in both rebels' and peoples' dissatisfaction with the Malian Government. Islam has been asserted much less, but played a role in the rebels' organization and people's memory of the rebellion. Protecting identity or getting autonomy in one way or another mattered a lot to both groups. Nevertheless, while slavery has explicitly been mentioned in the rebels' sources, it has not in the people's sources, although this can be the result of data selection or the sources themselves. Although religion has been asserted much less in this rebellion, it has not been distanced from and did play a role in terms of organization. More important was the Tuareg identity as a whole, regarding its protection and autonomy, especially with regard to the long mistreatment they had already endured.

In connection to the integrated approach, what becomes immediately clear is that territory, in terms of independence, Azawad and "the desert", as well as language and general livelihood and history, as showed in the ethnic attacks, mattered in the rebellion. This connects to primordialist proposition (1). On the other hand, some did not want to affiliate with the rebels, which relates to instrumentalists proposition (3). The strong unification of the rebels later fell apart due to internal divisions, especially tribal differences, which relates to constructivist proposition (4). Again, the integrated approach is confirmed by this rebellion, showing that identity caused the rebellion, with an important role of the historical events of the past rebellion and the droughts, which is thus part of the Tuareg history and thus their identity, according to primordialist proposition (1).



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## 7. Defining the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions

This chapter follows the same structure as the previous chapters, only analyzing two rebellions instead of one, namely the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions. The reason for this is that these rebellions have similar motivations and dealt with similar issues. Nevertheless, the main focus of the analytical part is on the Fourth Tuareg Rebellion, due to its size and importance both nationally and internationally.

After the Flamme de la Paix ceremony, violence remained part of everyday life in Northern Mali, although efforts were made to further disarm the local population.<sup>153</sup> The power was given to local informal rulers, appointed by the Malian state. Additionally, about 9000 of the 11645 Tuareg rebels were reintegrated into the Malian Army, local administration, ministry cabinet and parliament. There were many joint commissions between the Government and Tuareg for national consultation and the mobilization of resources.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, complete violence erupted in May 2006, when some former rebels took up arms again in what Lecocq calls a renewed rebellion, also known as the Third Tuareg Rebellion.<sup>155</sup> He states that the rebellion was rooted in internal tensions within Tuareg society. One tension arose between uneducated and educated Tuareg, who had benefited more from state and NGO resources than the uneducated. The second tension was between the noble warriors' politically dominant groups and the vassal groups, who fought in Malian army units.<sup>156</sup> The internal divisions were already visible when the MPA, as led by Iyad Ag Ghali, had split into various other rebel groups during and after the Second Tuareg Rebellion, among which the Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC), which was formed in 2006.<sup>157</sup> In this year, the Algiers Agreement was signed, which, according to Diallo, was 'merely a prelude to further protracted fighting between separatist fighters and the Malian army units under the leadership of Tuareg of vassal origins.'<sup>158</sup> Only after decisive losses against the Malian Army on 23 January 2009, those rebels who had not left the country gave up fighting.<sup>159</sup>

Violence again erupted in 2012 by the MNLA. In 2011, the MNLA was created by Tuareg rebels of previous rebellions and former Tuareg fighters in the Libyan army, who had returned

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<sup>153</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 375.

<sup>154</sup> Zounmenou, 18.

<sup>155</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 375.

<sup>156</sup> Diallo, 56.

<sup>157</sup> Zounmenou, 17; Lecocq and Klute, 429.

<sup>158</sup> Diallo, 56.

<sup>159</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 401.

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following the fall of Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi. Also in 2011, Ansar Edine was created. Iyad Ag Ghali, who participated in the Second and Third Rebellions as well, wanted to form the MNLA along Shari'a lines. When this proposal was declined, he formed Ansar Edine. In an alliance with Ansar Edine, the MNLA attacked Malian garrisons and occupied the northern regions after defeating the Malian Army in just a few months. However, internal differences soon arose. Islamic groups Ansar Edine, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and the Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) quickly ousted the MNLA in November 2012. While Ansar Edine was closely linked to the secular Tuareg nationalism through Iyad Ag Ghali, in 2012, he broke with the other leaders to further his Islamic political project, by implementing the Shari'a in the North. In 2013, Ansar Edine attacked the Malian Army in Central Mali, to which the French Army responded and the conflict became international. The MNLA now vowed to chase the Islamists out of the Sahara with the help of the international community.<sup>160</sup> However, talks and fighting between the Malian Government and Tuareg rebels alternated. Only in June 2015, a peace treaty was signed by the Malian Government and the Platform and the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), an alliance of rebel groups: the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. However, actual implementation is difficult, which can lead to a revival of the CMA's quest for independency in the future. Furthermore, violence remains an issue in Mali, especially with the continuous presence of Jihadist groups.<sup>161</sup>

### **7.1 Tuareg rebels**

The rebels' definition of these rebellions is discussed in reference to Lecocq's archival work, as well as audiovisual data from Al Jazeera, who spoke with many of the rebels. In this section, both MNLA and Ansar Edine are analyzed, as both rebel groups mostly consist of Tuareg, though each with a different goal.

After the peaceful Tablighi Jamaat had arrived in Northern Mali at the turn of the century, the militant Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) followed.<sup>162</sup> The arrival of terrorists gave Tuareg another stereotype. Before, they were framed as 'lazy anarchist nomads,

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<sup>160</sup> Lecocq and Klute, 430-432; Oumar Ba, "Tuareg Nationalism and Cyclical Pattern of Rebellions: How the Past and Present Explain Each Other," (Florida, US: The Sahel Research Group, March 2014), 13-15, accessed 10 May 2021, [https://sites.clas.ufl.edu/sahelresearch/files/Ba\\_Tuareg-Nationalism\\_final.pdf](https://sites.clas.ufl.edu/sahelresearch/files/Ba_Tuareg-Nationalism_final.pdf).

<sup>161</sup> Mathieu Pellerin, "Mali's Algiers Peace Agreement, Five Years On: An Uneasy Calm," International Crisis Group, 24 June 2020, accessed 12 May 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/laccord-dalger-cinq-ans-apres-un-calme-precaire-dont-il-ne-faut-pas-se-satisfaire>; Al Jazeera English, "Violence in Niger Displaces Malian Refugees," reported by Mohamed Vall, 7 March 2017, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/ZQI6WjrrRvc>.

<sup>162</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 375-376.

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racist slavers, and dangerous rebels,’ to use Lecocq’s words. After, another stereotype was attached to them: ‘the potential “Muslim fundamentalist terrorist”.’<sup>163</sup> Their arrival and 9/11 led to a decrease in Tuareg sympathy towards Muslim radicalism. This helped solve an abduction of European tourists by the GSPC in March 2003, where the main mediators were former rebel leaders, traditional chiefs and the local ulema from Kidal. After the abduction ended in October 2003, the Malian Government tolerated the presence of GSPC in its territory, as long as it remained peaceful and quiet. The Tuareg from Kidal made it clear that if they would stir up trouble, the Tuareg would deal with them on their own terms. However, the Tuareg help was not noticed by journalists, who mistook them for the abductors and turned them into the bad guys.<sup>164</sup> Their stereotype would remain both in the region and internationally. This was also caused by the Tuareg and Islamist Ansar Edine.<sup>165</sup>

This all helps explain why the Tuareg rebels felt the need to distance themselves from Islam in their politics. On 9 June 2006, the ADC commented on their website: ‘Denial of any connection between our movement and the GSPC. We could fight for Islam, but we fight first for our living conditions.’<sup>166</sup> So while acknowledging their Islamic belief and that they could fight for Islam, they placed their living conditions above their religion.

In 2012, the MNLA also presented itself as a secular movement. Spokesman Mossa Ag Attaher said:

*‘We are a liberation movement and we support the principles and values of democracy. We distance ourselves completely from any Islamist movement and their fight for religious law. Our aim is liberation, which we gained today with the proclamation of independence. There is no possible comparison between the MNLA and the Islamist movements.’<sup>167</sup>*

In other words, instead of fighting for Islam, the MNLA fought for liberation, which they achieved for a while after winning from the Malian Army, until being ousted by the Islamic movements later in 2012. On the other hand, Ansar Edine’s biggest goal was enforcing Islamic laws.<sup>168</sup> Working

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<sup>163</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 376.

<sup>164</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 385-386.

<sup>165</sup> Diallo, 34 and 106.

<sup>166</sup> Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 395.

<sup>167</sup> Al Jazeera English, “Tuaregs Claim ‘independence’ from Mali,” statement by Mossa Ag Attaher, 6 April 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/WCcvIChcw74>.

<sup>168</sup> Al Jazeera English, “Religious Leaders Call for Talks to End Crisis,” reported by Hashem Alhelbarra, 1 April 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/9VMoLsCmCQE>; Al Jazeera English, “Mali’s Tuaregs ‘ready’ for Talks amid Huge Gains,” reported by Hashem Alhelbarra, 2 April 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/lhIsZVyB4PA>; Al Jazeera English, “Chaos Reign in Mali,” reported by Hashem Alhelbarra, 6 April 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/UZyf5pOcCik>.

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with AQIM and MUJAO, they actually implemented Islamic laws after having ousted the MNLA from the main cities in Northern Mali. Sanda Abou Amama, spokesman of Ansar Edine, said on 13 April 2012: ‘We are ready for any talks that would lead to the establishment of Shari’a law in the country, because that is our fundamental objective.’<sup>169</sup>

Yet, within the movements, differences can be noticed. For example, in Timbuktu, in May 2012, the MNLA made a joined statement with Ansar Edine: ‘The two movements have created the transitional council of the Islamic State of Azawad... we are all in favor of the independence of Azawad... we all accept Islam as the religion.’<sup>170</sup> This statement does not explicitly express favor of Islamic laws, but it does express a religious instead of a secular movement, with the Islamic State of Azawad. This difference with regard to battling Islamic movements is visible in other statements as well. For example, on 6 April 2012, Moussa Ag Assarid, spokesman of the MNLA, expressed the need to battle Al Qaeda in order to protect the lives of their people.<sup>171</sup> This shows that they had strained relations with AQIM and saw them as endangering the lives of their people. On the other hand, an unnamed rebel from the MNLA argues that the “Azawadees” of Ansar Edine can be dealt with, unlike the foreigners of Ansar Edine.<sup>172</sup>

The lack of homogeneity is also visible within Ansar Edine, when in 2013, some members formed a breakaway group. Instead of collaborating with Al Qaeda, they wanted to distance themselves from them, like the MNLA before, and they wanted to seek a peaceful solution.<sup>173</sup> Sheikh Awssa explains that they changed their name to the Islamic Movement of Azawad, to avoid connections with Al Qaeda and terrorism that lead to international involvement. Instead, they want to focus on their fight with Mali.<sup>174</sup> Like the MNLA, the group mainly consists of Tuareg and seeks independency from Mali, but unlike the MNLA, it combines nationalism with religion, wanting the new state to be ruled by Islamic law.

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<sup>169</sup> Al Jazeera English, “Fighters in Timbuktu Announce Islamic State,” reported by Mohamed Vall, 13 April 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/79iwgxApZzM>.

<sup>170</sup> Al Jazeera English, “Mali Government Rejects Azawad Council,” reported by Mereana Hond, 27 May 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/BQgSUjKqHSU>.

<sup>171</sup> Al Jazeera English, “Chaos Reigns in Mali.”

<sup>172</sup> Al Jazeera English, “Tuaregs Fail to Assuage Terrorism Fears,” reported by Mohamed Vall, 10 April 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, [https://youtu.be/To18PZO\\_vVY](https://youtu.be/To18PZO_vVY).

<sup>173</sup> Al Jazeera English, “New Mali Rebel Faction Calls for Negotiations,” reported by Caroline Malone, 25 January 2013, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/eWfN3j1OM1A>.

<sup>174</sup> Al Jazeera English, “Mali Rebel Group Rejects ‘Terrorist’ Label,” reported by Mohamed Vall, 15 May 2013, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/DVhTwQbeA3Y>.

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While there were extremely opposing ideals among the MNLA and Ansar Edine regarding Islamic law, the desire to establish a new state as in the Second Tuareg Rebellion was still there. The Tuareg who had fought for Gaddafi were mostly illiterate and had no other job skills than military skills. As Mali had no means to provide livelihoods for these people, their return caused a difficult situation. Especially as these Tuareg wanted to die for their cause this time, not for someone else's. This cause is the creation of Azawad, an independent country in Northern Mali.<sup>175</sup> Hama Ag Mahmoud from the MNLA explains that they don't want to move beyond Azawad borders unless provoked, as their only objective was to liberate their territories.<sup>176</sup>

With Azawad, Mahamadou Djiri from the MNLA claims that:

*'The MNLA is not only for Tuareg. It is a national movement for the entire Azawad. It was created by all the people here, including the Songhay, the Arabs and the red and black Tuareg... I myself am not Tuareg. We have created this movement in order to end fifty years of marginalization in this region.'*<sup>177</sup>

In other words, Mahamadou claims that the MNLA represents many minorities of Mali and seeks to end years of marginalization.<sup>178</sup> This statement shows a connection to the past, a connection also clear in the statement by Habi Ag Al Sallat, the MNLA Commander of Gao: 'Because since the birth of Mali, the Tuareg said that the Malian State had taken their land just like the French colonialists and that the fact that the Tuareg land Azawad has never in fact been part of Mali.'<sup>179</sup> Based on conversations with Tuareg refugees in Mauritania, among whom some MNLA rebels, Mohammed Adow from Al Jazeera concludes that the Tuareg believe Mali cannot be united as long as the Malian Army continues to treat their people with hostilities.<sup>180</sup> Yet, in 2015, the MNLA still signed a treaty similar to the agreements made in 1992 and 2006. They tried to convince the Tuareg people to accept this treaty, but many still desired separation from Mali.<sup>181</sup>

In short, the goal of independency from the Second Tuareg Rebellion became even more explicit in the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions. However, the fragmentation only continued,

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<sup>175</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Al Jazeera's May Welsh on Return of Tuareg Fighters," reported by May Welsh, 20 January 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/ZjeboCnNnGg>.

<sup>176</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Mali's Tuaregs 'ready' for Talks amid Huge Gains"; Al Jazeera English, "Chaos Reigns in Mali."

<sup>177</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Divisions among Groups in Azawad," reported by Mohamed Vall, 17 April 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/EoQM5wF69vE>.

<sup>178</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Divisions among Groups in Azawad."

<sup>179</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Mali's North Left Unstable after Coup," reported by May Welsh, 3 July 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/O99eZWbKuSw>.

<sup>180</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Thousands of Tuareg, Arab Minorities Flee Violence in Mali," reported by Mohammed Adow, 30 January 2013, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/NYofl1fDNu0>.

<sup>181</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Rebels to Sign Peace Deal with Mali Government," reported by Mohamed Vall, 20 June 2015, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/bXPeTy7aDRE>.

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with in 2012 the divide clearly being along Islamic versus secular lines, instead of tribal lines. Although the reasons of mistreatment were still there, it was mostly the goal of independency or Islamic law that mattered to the rebels.

## 7.2 Tuareg people

Similar to the rebels, in this section on the perception of the people on the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions, Al Jazeera is used, as well as Diallo's conversations with Tuareg refugees.

As already shortly mentioned in chapter 3, the Tuareg people distanced themselves from Tablighi teachings as soon as connections between Islam and terrorism were made after 9/11. The Tuareg political elite even helped solve a hostage crisis by GSPC in 2003. Similarly, the Tuareg people disapproved of MUJAO, as well as Ganda Koy, whom they have had ethnic problems with in the past. Ibrahim Ag Mossa, namely, asked Diallo whether he was affiliated with MUJAO, Ganda Koy movements or the Malian Army, in order to find out whether he could trust Diallo, which he eventually would.<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, it is unclear if he disapproves of the MUJAO only due to the group being anti-Tuareg or also due to its Islamist goal.

Regarding the MNLA's goal of independence, opposing views are noticed. Some want independency, due to the suffering they have experienced. For example, Mossa Ag Attaher, Ibrahim Ag Mohamed and Alhabib Ag Sidi referred to a prophecy from an old Tuareg man who lived and died near Gao. This prophecy stated a future of Tuareg independency, which allowed the three men to believe that:

*'Our suffering will continue until the day at which we will have our independence from Mali. That day will come and our suffering will come to an end. It will come when people in southern Mali would be against each other. There will be great confusion there, and the Tuareg will then have their independence.'*<sup>183</sup>

Additionally, Mohamed Ag Zeyd told Diallo that 'a Tuareg can never become Malian. This is to tell you that a Tuareg remains Tuareg in Mali.'<sup>184</sup>

Within Mali, Tuareg also reflected upon years of discrimination and negligence by the Malian Government.<sup>185</sup> Akly Ag Mohamed, an old citizen of Azawad, explained in 2013:

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<sup>182</sup> Diallo, 29-30.

<sup>183</sup> Diallo, 74.

<sup>184</sup> Diallo, 103.

<sup>185</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Thousands of Refugees Flee Northern Mali," reported by Mohammed Adow, 26 January 2013, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/XsMGqdNDhpc>.

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*'The state of Mali never existed here. And when it was constituted, we were in total disagreement with it. The government decided to kill our people and try to liquidate us. It had nothing for us except acts of humiliation and onerous taxation.'*<sup>186</sup>

In other words, he still remembered past motivations, with regard to massacres, humiliation and high taxes. In April 2013, in Kidal, the support for MNLA was immense, with many protesting with the Azawad flag. The sentiments against the Malian Government were high here and a Tuareg man who was interviewed, said: 'No matter how different the people of this area might be, there is no disagreement whatsoever over the fact we do not want Mali here.'<sup>187</sup> The desire for independency among Tuareg people was also clear when many opposed the treaty in 2015.<sup>188</sup>

Although the MNLA claimed to fight for the Tuareg people, many had to flee due to the fighting, else being caught in the midst of the fights between the MNLA and the Malian Army, as well as later the Islamic groups.<sup>189</sup> Al Jazeera even called the relations between the rebels and tribes "strained" due to the continues looting in cities.<sup>190</sup> It is thus no surprise that some Tuareg explicitly oppose the rebellion. Mohamed Agossad and Mohamed Ag Hamma both prefer national unity and see Azawad as a utopian idea. They oppose the use of violence and prefer words instead.<sup>191</sup> Oumarou Ag Hairdara, called by Al Jazeera the highest Tuareg member in the Malian Government as head of Mali Supreme Council of Communes, adds:

*'Any demand is valid, only if it has consensus throughout the region. That wasn't the case regarding the Tuareg independence claim. They just woke up one day and thanks to the Libya debacle, they got arms and guns to invade the area. That's rather opportunistic.'*<sup>192</sup>

Just as the supporters of the rebellion, those opposing it also reflected upon the past. Additionally, they claim there is no consensus throughout the region for independence. It seems that many were tired of the fighting and instead wanted peace within Mali. Nevertheless, overall, it is clear that there are lots of different positions among the Tuareg with regard to both Mali and the rebels.

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<sup>186</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Mali Nomads Accuse Army of Atrocities," reported by Mohamed Vall, 28 May 2013, accessed 11 May 2021, [https://youtu.be/\\_z4qgv29sJE](https://youtu.be/_z4qgv29sJE).

<sup>187</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Mali's Ethnic Tuareg Accuse Army of Abuse," reported by Mohamed Vall, 2 April 2013, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/SXSY81Q5BVg>.

<sup>188</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Rebels to Sign Peace Deal with Mali Government."

<sup>189</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Mali Conflict Sparks Flight to Safety," reported by May Welsh, 22 February 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/dasqaouAGdA>; Al Jazeera English, "Thousands of refugees flee northern Mali."

<sup>190</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Mali's Tuaregs 'Ready' for Talks amid Huge Gains."

<sup>191</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Tribal Group in Mali Calling for Peace," reported by Mohamed Vall, 23 October 2012, accessed 11 May 2021, <https://youtu.be/atLyyZsELF4>.

<sup>192</sup> Al Jazeera English, "Tribal Group in Mali Calling for Peace."

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### 7.3 Discussion

Overall, it is clear that among the Tuareg people and rebels, positions can be highly opposing. Those supporting independency reflect upon decades of mistreatment, with the reflections being a bit general, supposedly as this seemed common knowledge to them. Nevertheless, regarding the Islamic motivated movements, it is interesting to notice that while in the 1960s, there was a desire of rule in accordance with Islamic law among rebels and people, in the 2000s, rebels fragmented based on this ideal. It also seems that most Tuareg people supported the MNLA more than Ansar Edine, probably due to its connection with groups linked to terrorist Al Qaeda.

With regard to the integrated approach, again a connection can be made to all propositions. The Tuareg history since Mali's independence especially matters to the support of the 2012 rebellion, thus connecting to the primordialist proposition (1). Furthermore, the Libyan situation affected the rebellion, linking it to the instrumentalist proposition (2), with changing social conditions leading to a situation in which ethnic awareness is heightened and identity instrumentalized. With some supporting and others opposing an Azawad state, the instrumentalist proposition (3) is also confirmed. Additionally, the choice of identity is visible with regard to Islamic law versus Azawad and Tuareg versus Malian. Finally, due to the Tuareg Rebels fragmentizing over Islamic law versus independency, the constructivist proposition (4) is confirmed. Additionally, the boundaries of Azawad expanded to include all people of Northern Mali, although its success is open for debate.



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## 8. Conclusion

Most descriptions of the Tuareg identity include the old “blue warriors of the desert” or “the people of the veil”, referring to the indigo turbans and veils worn by men. They are famous for their nomadic lifestyle and the distinctive position of women in their society in comparison to other Islamic societies. However, this thesis has shown that the Tuareg identity is not that easy to define and especially not that static. Most descriptions date from the colonialist era and although in some cases they are still applicable, the Tuareg society is a heterogeneous one with many different tribes and lifestyles. Being affected by rebellions, droughts, modernization and Islamization, many of their identity aspects have been subject to change, in one way or another. These also affected the definitions to how rebels legitimized the Tuareg Rebellions.

In order to answer the main research question, four subquestions have been posed, the answers to which are shortly summarized here.

### 8.1 How are religion, identity and rebellion related?

Multiple factors influence the eruption of a rebellion. One very important aspect is a strong group identity, which consists of various components, such as race, language, religion, culture or custom. As these components are intertwined, discussing them separately is difficult, while discussing them in a certain hierarchy might be easier. This also helps to understand how the rebels can assert one identity component, while downplaying another. In the First Tuareg Rebellion, the rebels strongly asserted religion and race in the definitions of their motivations for desiring independency from Mali. In the Second Tuareg Rebellion, this goal of independency became more based on the long history of mistreatment and loss of honor. Yet, it was not until the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions, when religion was no longer used to legitimize the rebellion at all and the rebels wanted to distance themselves from it.

### 8.2 How does group identity lead to conflict?

In identity theory, two things are discussed, namely the nature of identity and the path from identity to conflict. The nature of identity refers to identity being static, based on biological or cultural ancestry, as primordialism and instrumentalism argue, or it being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through cognitive structures, as constructivism argues. According to primordialism, ancestral differences are irreconcilable and automatically lead to violence, while instrumentalists believe that identity only leads to violence when instrumentalized by people for their own gains or

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interests. Finally, constructivists argue that identity can be (re)constructed by social conditions that can result in conflict. As each theory has its limitations, Yang has combined them in the integrated approach, which is confirmed in this thesis as the most fitting, as the Tuareg Rebellions relate to all three theories.

However, two notes should be made. Firstly, the approach incorporates much of the other theories, in order to make it applicable to various cases. Therefore, this thesis does not assess the parts not applicable to the Tuareg case. Nevertheless, its propositions are most accurate for describing the Tuareg case. Secondly, Yang's description of this approach is limited by the fact that he solely focused on the nature of identity. Although Nigusie does not address this issue explicitly, he does make a step of solving this by integrating the second step of the separate theories in the integrated approach, such as the instrumentalization of identity. This thesis follows his solution.

### **8.3 How has the Tuareg religious identity developed over time?**

This question has been answered throughout a discussion of a few identity aspects that either are about religion or have been affected by religious changes. The veiling of Tuareg men has not so much changed, but the reasons did due to Islamization and the rebellions, which caused the reason of wearing it as protection against spirits to disappear for many Tuareg and the reason of wearing it to explicitly show the Tuareg identity to be added. The Islamization also affected the position of women in Tuareg society, although the increased settlement also affected this. Finally, the development in the explicit connection to Muslim identity is interesting. Those whose identity is closely connected to Islam, such as learned Muslims and the Kel Essuq, are highly respected in Tuareg society. However, while at first only some tribes had the so-called shorfa status, in 2012, Tuareg refugees claimed this status for all Tuareg people. The explicit connection with Muslim identity thus has become increasingly important. This is especially interesting, as it has become less important for the rebels' identity.

### **8.4 How did the Tuareg rebels define the rebellions?**

In all four rebellions, some of the rebels' motivations have not changed. For example, in all rebellions, the mistreatment and lack of respect by the Malian Government has been mentioned. Additionally, in all rebellions the goal has been a certain kind of autonomy, be it in the form of autonomy within Mali or full independence with the state of Azawad. Racism has also been a

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motivating factor. Interestingly, while at first the rebels consisted mostly of the Adagh, in the final rebellion, other ethnicities of Northern Mali also fought against the Malian Government.

However, most importantly, is how the rebels dealt with religion. Before the First Tuareg Rebellion, some Tuareg supported the Malian Government, based on the promise that they would rule Mali in accordance with Islam and give certain autonomy to the Tuareg. However, both promises were broken and Mali was deemed anti-religious and anti-Tuareg, which was a reason to rebel against them. In the Second Tuareg Rebellion, Islam was still an important part of the rebels' identity and organization, but it played a lesser role in their motivation. In the Third and Fourth Tuareg Rebellions, the rebels started to explicitly distance themselves from Islam, due to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the effect of the religious terrorists on their identity as ascribed by outsiders. However, in the Fourth Tuareg Rebellion, a split can be noticed. Some Tuareg chose to focus on the goal of implementing Shari'a law, manifested by Ansar Edine. Others focused on the goal of the independent state of Azawad, seeking to distance themselves from Islam and Al Qaeda, even fighting them.

### **8.5 How did the Tuareg rebels legitimize the Tuareg Rebellions against the background of the changing religious identity of the Tuareg people?**

Especially due to the split as seen in the final rebellion, it is important to not only hold the rebels' definition of the rebellions against the background of the changing religious identity of the Tuareg people, but also look at how the people themselves viewed the rebellions.

Although some people oppose the rebellions, those who supported them, often had the same reasons in mind as the rebels: mistreatment and the desire of independency. The broken promises were also mentioned for the First Tuareg Rebellion, especially with regard to the implementation of the Shari'a. Regarding the Second Tuareg Rebellion, the people disapproved of the Malian Government due to mistreatments, not only of the people, but of their marabouts as well. Although from the third chapter it becomes clear that during this period the Islamization process took place and in 2012 the shorfa status was still much important to Tuareg, they did not trust Islamist MUJAO, due to its anti-Tuareg nature and disapproved of the GSPC abduction crisis. Therefore, due to these circumstances, the Tuareg rebels who distanced themselves from Islam were not met with opposition, even though Islam plays an increasingly important role in Tuareg society. Their identity is not only based on Islam and the other components were enough to still have some support. Additionally, most of the people opposing the rebellions did not agree with either the

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violence or the goal of independency; the absence of Islam in the motivation was not a reason to oppose the rebels.

### **8.6 Implications for identity theory**

When analyzing the rebellions and Tuareg identity, each time a connection has been made with the integrated approach. It is clear that the Tuareg identity consists of primordialist elements that cannot be denied. Their history has become more important throughout the rebellions, as the mistreatment they endured as a people heightened ethnic awareness and allowed the rebels to instrumentalize this in the goal of Azawad. Nevertheless, some made a choice to assert their Malian identity more than their Tuareg identity, opposing the rebellion. This also shows how much the Tuareg society is subject to fragmentation, but also expansion, with regard to the shorfa status and Azawad identity. It is clear that the Tuareg Rebellions have elements of primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism.

So how did their identity exactly lead to the rebellions? Due to the rebellions recurring and hatred back and forth between the Tuareg and the Malian Government, it seems that they are stuck in a downwards spiral. Identity might play a part in the motivation, but this loop does not allow the rebellions to really stop. Nevertheless, what should not be forgotten, is that there are breakaway groups, Tuareg who desire to live in Mali and fight in its army and Tuareg who want an end to all the violence. Additionally, there have been Tuareg accepted in the Malian Government and Army and some improvements have been made.

### **8.7 Future research**

What might help in ending the cyclical violence, are better living conditions that allow rebels another future. As Zounmenou says, poor living conditions have been the main cause of these rebellions, not necessarily the identity of a marginalized group.<sup>193</sup> As this research has focused on identity and discussed the living conditions as additional factors, future research might focus more on the latter. Identity certainly plays a role in resisting a government, but other factors might make the resistance more peaceful than others.

The conclusions drawn in this thesis may be subject to some errors, as it is impossible to ask every rebel and find every communication between the rebels and Tuareg communities. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to provide nuance and contextualize the references as best

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<sup>193</sup> Zounmenou, 18.

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as possible. Additionally, this thesis has added to the debate on identity theory by applying both steps of the integrated approach on the Tuareg case.

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