

Ishumar

The Guitar and the Revolution of Tuareg Culture

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I

Introduction

Music is widely recognized by scholars as a symbolic system that can convey significant social meaning, especially a sense of identity.¹ This paper investigates the interaction of identity and musical performance by examining the emergence of guitar music—called *al-guitara*²—among the Tuareg, a traditionally nomadic people of the southern Sahara. The guitar, well recognized for its connections to the transformation of cultures around the world, epitomizes the massive upheaval they have endured over the last forty years. Political marginalization in West African nation-states exacerbated the problems of severe drought and economic hardship that have struck the Tuareg since the 1960s. This created a generation of young Tuareg exiles known as the *ishumar*, who fled Mali and Niger to pursue better opportunities in North African cities. During this time some of the *ishumar* discovered the guitar and began to form bands where they sang songs about their experiences in exile, their memories of home, and their political ambitions for better Tuareg rights.

Al-guitara confirms Fela Kuti's claim that "music is the weapon of the future." It became the major tool for mobilizing rebels in violent rebellion against Niger and Mali in the 1990s. But it also has been important in promoting unity and community among Tuareg in both pre- and post-rebellion Africa. This genre features a Western instrument and adopts many Western musical influences, but it is grounded in earlier genres of Tuareg music associated with traditional instruments. Its role within the Tuareg community is shared with the older genres. This combination of old and new represents a "'straddling' of the cultural divide...rather than a sharp

¹ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

² Tuareg terms encountered throughout this paper will be italicized and included in the glossary for ease of reference.

break with local traditions or opposition to alien influences.”³ Many may be eager to label *al-guitara* as modern popular music, but its continuing role within Tuareg society clearly indicates that it cannot be separated from “traditional” Tuareg music, no matter how revolutionary it has been.

However, in the last decade *al-guitara* has drawn a lot of attention from Western audiences. People are fascinated with this music that shares a sound and an attitude remarkably similar to rock ‘n roll. Images of real rebels going into battle “with a Kalashnikov in one hand, a saber in the other, and a guitar strapped [to their backs]”—whether factual or not—cast a mythic quality to the story of this music and its musicians.⁴ Tuareg bands now tour and distribute recordings around the globe. This expansion of audience has contributed to an accelerated Westernizing process in Tuareg musical composition. The emphasis of *al-guitara* has shifted from its message and function to its strictly musical qualities, to suit Western listeners interested in world music mostly for its entertainment value. It is too early to tell yet if *al-guitara* will join the fold of the popular “world music” genre, or if it will retain its distinction from other tradition-based, Westernized music.

This paper aims to investigate what this process of revolutionizing and Westernizing Tuareg music indicates about Tuareg society. Specifically, it asks what changes in musical function and musical practice have been brought about by *al-guitara*. Is distinctly Tuareg music—and by extension, all Tuareg culture—disappearing, replaced by Western music? If not, how is it being adapted to Western instruments and tastes? With such an interest in musical evolution, this paper is inherently linked to Tuareg social history. Thus, it will carry a parallel examination of Tuareg music and society extending chronologically from the period before

³ Susan Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance," *Ethnohistory* 53, no. 4 (2006). 644

⁴ *Ibid.*

European colonization of the Sahara, through African independence and the Tuareg rebellions, to the present international fascination with *al-guitara*.

The sources necessary for conducting this research have been highly eclectic. Ethnographies on Tuareg music and culture from the last century have provided invaluable perspective on the various stages of this changing society. The anthropologist Jeremy Keenan has published several works on Tuareg society, establishing himself as one of the preeminent scholars of the Tuareg. His work spans several decades, providing perspective from both before and after the Tuareg rebellion and the development of *al-guitara*. He points out that political instability in the Sahara for the last several decades partially accounts for the decline in academic scholarship on the Tuareg, as it has often been unsafe or closed off to Westerners.⁵ Indeed, there is relatively little available on the Tuareg except from recent years or during the years of French colonialism.

Adding to this problem for my own research is the unforeseen limitation that the vast majority of research on the Tuareg is published in French, because of the French colonial presence in Tuareg lands during the 20th century. Where possible, rough translations have made some of these studies available to me. The language problem is especially true with regard to ethnomusicological works, of which a very limited number are available in English. Most ethnographies in English only treat Tuareg music tangentially, or only from a social perspective. Accordingly, one of my most valuable resources has been Caroline Card's *Tuareg Music and Social Identity* (1982)⁶, a comprehensive overview of the major genres of Tuareg music during the mid-20th century. Her work does not directly inform us on *al-guitara*, for it was completed before *al-guitara* had become the major genre of Tuareg music it is today. However, Card's

⁵ Jeremy Keenan, *The Lesser Gods of the Sahara : Social Change and Contested Terrain Amongst the Tuareg of Algeria*, Cass Series--History and Society in the Islamic World (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004). 2-3

⁶ Caroline Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity" (Dissertation, Indiana University, 1982).

work has provided the core for the introduction to Tuareg musical practice before *al-guitara* seen in Section III.

Tuareg Music and Social Identity has also established some of the key assumptions in this paper. Card's treatment of Tuareg music and identity is based on two observations: first, that musical styles play an important role in establishing and differentiating group identity, especially in stressed social conditions; and secondly, that music itself can play an active role in shaping social processes. The studies informing Card's approach suggest that "identity concepts affect the creation, selection, and performance of the musical styles used to convey them and that conflicts and changes in those concepts have a direct bearing, by means of symbolic attachments, upon the musical traditions."⁷ Conflict and change are perhaps the two most pertinent terms in any discussion of *al-guitara*, because it is intimately linked to the experiences and revolutionary ambitions of the *ishumar*.

Studying the lives of the *ishumar* will therefore be of great importance, for, "to the extent that [the writer] is aware of, and wishes to participate in, the world in which he lives, any conscious action that he takes—including the writing of a piece of music—will be affected by this world."⁸ Baz Lecocq has been particularly important in furthering our understanding of the *ishumar* and the massive social changes from the last several decades in his historical survey "*That Desert Is Our Country*": *Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)*.⁹ Susan Rasmussen has also contributed significantly to updating Card's observations of musical performance contexts, examining post-rebellion Tuareg society as an

⁷ Card, 5.

⁸ Charles Hamm, "Changing Patterns in Society and Music: The U.S. Since World War II," in *Contemporary Music and Music Cultures*, ed. Charles Hamm, Bruno Nettl, and Ronald Byrnside (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975). Quoted in Card, 2

⁹ Baz Lecocq, "'That Desert Is Our Country': Tuareg Rebellions and Competing Nationalisms in Contemporary Mali (1946-1996)" (Dissertation, Amsterdam University, 2002).

anthropologist. Both Lecocq and Rasmussen provide important insight into *al-guitara*, but from the perspective of social scientists rather than musicians.

The recognized authority on *al-guitara* is Nadia Belalimat, who has collected a number of recordings and transcriptions of poetic texts. She provides thorough explication of *al-guitara* poetry in French, but her analysis of performance practice—while more informative than others—is still not as thorough as Card’s work with other Tuareg genres. But even in the fairly recent release of *The Garland Handbook of World Music*, Card’s article (her surname changed to Card Wendt) on Tuareg music is essentially an abridged version of her dissertation, not an updated discussion of the music today.¹⁰ This leaves the majority of information on *al-guitara* available in English in the hands of popular publications, which do not necessarily meet the rigors of academic inquiry. Discussion of current Tuareg musical issues is left to liner notes accompanying the increasingly commoditized recordings released by Western record labels. Rasmussen observes the commercial orientation of liner notes for the touring Tuareg musical group Tartit, which misrepresent Tuareg society to better appeal to Western audiences.¹¹ Nonetheless, liner notes have been invaluable to me for providing the background to many bands and their songs, as well as translations of some song texts.

Finally, my most important resource has been recordings of Tuareg music. These are relatively rare and hard to come by without traveling or conducting fieldwork on my own. I have been able to identify a few recordings of non-*al-guitara* Tuareg music, which provide important sources of comparison with *al-guitara*. However, because of the minimal recent research conducted in the Sahara mentioned by Keenan above, field recordings of *al-guitara* are almost

¹⁰ Caroline Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music," in *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, ed. Ruth M. Stone (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).

¹¹ Susan J. Rasmussen, "A Temporary Diaspora: Contested Cultural Representations in Tuareg International Musical Performance," *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 78, no. 4 (2005). 809

non-existent. *Al-guitara* was widely copied on cassettes and distributed throughout the Sahara, but obtaining these requires travel to Africa as they were not produced commercially and are not available in the West. My source of non-commercial *al-guitara* recordings comes in the form of three tracks on the Le Chant du Monde CD *Hoggar: Musique des Touareg*¹². These tracks are highly informative, and I have transcribed each as representatives of non-commercialized *al-guitara*. They are incredibly informative when compared to the several commercial recordings of *al-guitara* that have become available in the West, especially of the band that started it all, Tinariwen. Thus, my musical analysis, while it cannot be treated as conclusive evidence, does make a few important observations about the direction *al-guitara* is taking as it becomes a global commodity.

The absence of a thorough musical study devoted to *al-guitara* is the most obvious deficiency in ethnomusicological literature about the Tuareg at present. This paper attempts to fill this void by expanding and updating Card's comprehensive study of Tuareg music. It achieves this through social analysis based on ethnographies and musical analysis based on recordings and my transcriptions of these. These sources allow me to pay particular attention to: (1) the evolution of Tuareg performance practice through *al-guitara*, because the technical elements of music are important for creating and expressing identity; (2) and song texts and performance environments, which differentiate *al-guitara* from other genres in terms of its social function. Ultimately, I will demonstrate how the Tuareg use guitar music to cope with the challenges of their recent history and play an active, rather than passive role, in shaping the future of their society.

¹² *Hoggar: Musique Des Touaregs*, (France: Le Chant du Monde, 1994), CD.

II Tuareg Society Before African Independence

Despite their relatively small population, the Tuareg have played an important role throughout their long history in the Sahara; as Jeremy Keenan puts it, “they have punched far above their numerical weight.”¹³ Originally identified as part of the *Amazigh* (Berber) people indigenous to North Africa, their traditional territory extends for over 1.5 million sq. kms in the Sahara and Sahel, from the Fezzan region in Libya in the northeast to the northern bend of the Niger River in Mali in the southwest. Today they are found mostly in southern Algeria and northern Mali and Niger, but small populations are in Libya, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and northern Nigeria.¹⁴ In this central area between the Mediterranean coast in North Africa and the Atlantic coast of West Africa, the Berbers played a critical role as merchant traders in the ancient trans-Saharan trade networks. Only they knew the Sahara well enough to survive the journey between North and West African civilizations.¹⁵ Accounts of the nomadic Tuareg, dating back over a thousand years, focused on their most exotic qualities: the fearsome appearance of tall, veiled, camel-riding raiders (often referred to as the “blue-veiled warriors”); a matrilineal society; and the unveiled women (rarities in the Muslim world). The earliest accounts come from Arab historians and travelers, including Ibn-Haugal (10th century), Ibn-Batuta (14th century), and Leo Africanus (16th century), but Europeans also began exploring this region in the eighteenth century. European explorers and scientists in the nineteenth century provided detailed observations of life in the Sahara immediately before colonial conquest, while French colonizers

¹³ Keenan, *The Lesser Gods of the Sahara : Social Change and Contested Terrain Amongst the Tuareg of Algeria*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-2; and Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity".

¹⁵ Joseph E. Harris, *Africans and Their History* (New York: Penguin Group, 1998).

also kept detailed documents that inform us about Tuareg life and culture in the early twentieth century.¹⁶

Tuareg identity is less clear today because the integration of several ethnicities within the culture has obscured a strict ethnic or Berber classification. The density of the Tuareg population has shifted southward throughout history, most likely driven by invasions of North Africa from the east, moving from their origins among the Berbers in the northern Sahara and the Maghreb to the sheltered mountainous regions of Ahaggar (southern Algeria), Iforas (Mali), and Air (northern Niger). There they became extremely powerful, and in order to insure a reliable food supply they began to infiltrate more fertile land in the southern Sahara, where they made subjects of or enslaved many of the indigenous Sudanese peoples encountered there. Thus, although Tuareg culture has been strongly identified with the elite warrior class of Berber origin, the inclusion of vassals and freed slaves of other racial backgrounds has clouded the notion of a distinct racial or ethnic definition of the Tuareg today. This multiculturalism is evident in all genres of Tuareg music, and is also reflected in the regional dialects of the Tuareg language, known as Tamahaq (north), Tamajag (south), or Tamashek (west). Though it is a Berber language, traces of other languages, including Hausa, Fulani, Songhai, and Arabic, are found in the dialects according to region.¹⁷ In fact, beyond the class divisions alluded to above, the greater Tuareg society is really separated into eight confederations with varying degrees of autonomy, denoted by the word “Kel”: the Kel Ahaggar (southern Algeria to northern Niger); Kel Ajjer (southeastern Algeria to southwestern Libya); Kel Geres (southern Niger); Iwllimmedan Kel Dennek (western Niger); Iwllimmedan Kel Ataram (southwestern Niger); and the Kel Tademaket (Mali).¹⁸ “Whether the

¹⁶ Keenan, 2 and Card, 12-14.

¹⁷ Card, 14-24 and 26-28.

¹⁸ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music.", Lecocq, ""That Desert Is Our Country"".

Tuareg have ever viewed themselves as a single people to the degree that the word ‘Tuareg’ might imply to outsiders is doubtful,” explains ethnomusicologist Caroline Card.¹⁹

For outsiders and Tuareg alike, identity is clearly difficult to agree upon. Censuses dealing with the Tuareg are extremely inconsistent. In 1960 Lloyd Cabot Briggs estimated a population of ten to twelve thousand, but he only counted those living in the “Sahara proper,” which excludes the increasingly mixed populations in the southern territories. A few surveys in the 1950s estimated the population from 286,000 to 500,000, which accounts for some of the southern population—but they clearly had different definitions of who qualified as a Tuareg. Furthermore, at the end of the twentieth century many governments, such as that of Algeria, ignored ethnic divisions and did not count the Tuareg or other minorities in their efforts to emphasize national unity.²⁰ In addition to these strictly geographic considerations, censuses also reflect the different notions of what social classes and ethnic groups qualify as “true Tuareg” within the culture. Sometimes they only counted the camel-riding warrior nomads, or nobles (*imuhagh*, *imajaghan*, *imushagh*), who are the source of the oldest traditions and the imagery most recognized by outsiders as distinctly “Tuareg.” But other censuses often count the goatherds, or vassals (*imghad* or Kel Ulli), who physically resemble the Caucasoid Tuareg nobles; and sometimes they count the artisans (*inadan*), whose origins and social position are less certain. Negroid peoples who share the Tuareg language and culture began to be counted in the late 1900s.²¹ If this wasn’t enough trouble for accurate population estimates, there is also the matter that many Tuareg are nomadic or have been displaced by political strife, especially in Mali and Niger. Estimates have claimed more recently that the total Tuareg population is anywhere from 300,000 to 3 million!

¹⁹ Card, “Tuareg Music and Social Identity”.

²⁰ Card Wendt, 574-575; Card, 14-28; and Keenan, 1.

²¹ Card Wendt, 575.

Regardless of the specific population details, there are two very important things to recognize: first, that the Tuareg are minorities in all of the modern nations where they are found today;²² and secondly, that for all its diversity, Tuareg society is cohesive because of the shared identity forged by the strong, ancient ideals and values imposed and promoted by the dominant nobles.²³ While Tuareg culture has persisted for over a millennium, it has not been static by any means. This paper aims to avoid the dichotomy of “traditional vs. modern” when discussing recent Tuareg musical innovations, because this characterization of musical progress suggests that Tuareg culture previously existed in a vacuum. In fact, some of the most prominent instruments in 20th century Tuareg music had only been popularized in the last century or two.²⁴ Nonetheless, there is a remarkable level of continuity in this evolving culture.

In fact, the name “Tuareg” arguably reflects the tenacity of distinctive Tuareg traditions through a long history of change. The origin for this name is uncertain. It is an Arabic word meaning “abandoned,” and is understood by many in the derogatory sense of “abandoned by God.” Some believe it was the name used by pious Arab neighbors who scorned the Tuareg’s less orthodox practice of Islam, while others argue that the name evinces the Tuareg desertion of an earlier Christian faith. Moroccan *marabutin*—Muslim holy men from the Maghreb who were separate from the Arab conquest of North Africa—probably brought Islam to some of the Tuareg in the seventh century, but whether the Tuareg were previously Christian is uncertain. For a variety of geographic reasons, Islam did not reach some remote populations until possibly as late as the nineteenth century. Though most Tuareg today identify as Muslim, a number of pre-Islamic beliefs and practices have persisted in their culture. “The scornful allusions to the lack of religion among the Tuareg,” writes Card, “are little more than ethnic slurs that bear witness to the

²² Keenan, 1-2.

²³ Card Wendt, 575.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 584 and 588.

vitality of an Arab-Tuareg opposition of long duration.”²⁵ The derogatory meaning of this name today is certain, but whether it is the original source for this name is not. A more likely origin for this name is a group of powerful Berber tribes known as the Targa, who once inhabited the Libyan region of the same name (now Fezzan). The Targa were one of two main groups of camel-breeding Berbers in the northern desert discussed by Ibn-Khaldoun in the fourteenth century and Leo Africanus in the sixteenth. Their name also appears on European maps from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, and in the early writings of Arab explorers describing the region that stretches from the Niger River to the Mediterranean Sea. Regardless of the true origin of this name, “Tuareg” was in general among Arabs and Europeans by the nineteenth century to describe these tribes as a single people, although some references suggest it was probably in use several centuries earlier.²⁶

As mentioned above with regard to identity, Tuareg society is traditionally built of several social castes. Each caste has an established social and economic role. The highest caste, the *imushagh* (warriors, or nobles), formed the dominant culture with their customs and beliefs. It is believed that this group was formed by Berber camel-breeders who invaded the Sahara from the north. They subjugated Berber goat-breeding tribes in the Sahara, who became the vassal caste. These two castes formed a sort of symbiotic relationship, because the *imushagh* needed a source of food: their camels were tough and provided fast movement for raids and durability for the long caravan journeys, but they did not provide an efficient source of food. Goats needed better grazing lands, which would restrict the movement of the warriors, but they also reproduced more quickly. While the *imushagh* dominated this relationship, they did provide valuable protection to the vassals against raiders from hostile neighbors. Sometimes, additional Tuareg, Arabs, or

²⁵ Card, 28-29.

²⁶ Ibid., 29-30.

Sudanese would be captured in battle and put to work as vassals. While both castes are traditionally endogamous with regard to caste (and to a lesser extent to tribe), the contribution of these different ethnicities explains the racial mixture among the vassals that is especially prominent in the south; the noble caste, on the other hand, has remained more homogenous. The nobles are consistently more conservative than other Tuareg groups with regard to their customs. For instance, social position, rights, and privileges are usually determined through a matrilineal line; however, with the increasing influence of the Arabs, patrilineal customs are becoming more common, especially among non-nobles. Music, as we shall see later, also reflects the conservatism of the nobles and multicultural elements in other groups.

Below both nobles and vassals is a separate caste of artisans, known as *inaden*. These artisans craft items out of metal, wood, leather, and stone for daily use by Tuareg at all social levels. Their unique status allows them to perform services that are inappropriate for members of other classes, such as tax collection, healing and grooming rituals, and the performance of certain types of music. The *inaden* are respected for their specialized knowledge and skills, yet they are also shunned for their use of fire and metal (which are regarded with superstition) and for the roles that they play. While they are said to lack “noble” Tuareg values, they are unique because they have access to events at all social levels.

The lowest members of traditional Tuareg society were the Sudanese slaves, who provided labor to tend herds of camels, sheep, goats, and cattle; maintain wells; cultivate oasis gardens and palm groves; serve as domestic servants; mine salt; and operate caravans that traded salt in the markets. Slavery is an ancient practice for the Tuareg, and all free Tuareg possessed slaves. They usually obtained slaves through the raiding of caravans and other Tuareg camps, and sometimes through purchase from southern slave markets or Arab traders. The household

slaves were incorporated into the kinship structure of their master's clan and were therefore rapidly acculturated. While many slaves earned freedom, this usually only amounted to small changes in living conditions and, reminiscent of American slavery, a move from direct to indirect forms of servitude. Freed slaves often began performing more agricultural work instead of herding or caravanning. They are generally grouped into either the *irawelan*, who were freed so long ago as to have lost track of their Tuareg tribal associations, or the *iderfan*, who were recently freed and thus have more knowledge of their affiliations. The *iderfan* generally have thus been more strongly influenced by Tuareg culture, while the cultural independence of the *irawelan* sometimes allow them to join communities of neighboring peoples, such as the Hausa. Some *irawelan* have capitalized on this cultural ambiguity, while others completely abandon their Tuareg identities.²⁷

These are just the major groups that make up Tuareg society, but this breakdown of the early 20th century hierarchy into a feudal system does not necessarily reflect absolute reality so much as it does the perceptions of French colonialists, who are our main source of information for this period. Nonetheless, this understanding benefited the French as they devised different approaches to ruling over the various federations. The Tuareg violently and brutally resisted French rule until devastating defeats had undermined the Tuareg perception that their warriors were somehow invincible. For the most part, the French attempted to respect the traditional hierarchy of Tuareg society where it suited their goals;²⁸ their lack of economic interest in Tuareg lands undoubtedly contributed to a policy of minimal involvement.²⁹ To this end, French authorities established indirect rule over the Tuareg by increasing and reinforcing the authority of

²⁷ Ibid., 21-28.

²⁸ Jeremy Keenan, *The Tuareg : People of Ahaggar* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

²⁹ Baz Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara: The Teshumara Nationalist Movement and the Revolutions in Tuareg Society," *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004).

the *Amenukal* (chief of a federation) and encouraging the unification and centralization of individual federations.³⁰

However, French colonialism did not preserve some sort of status quo, even if that was their aim. “To think,” explains Jeremy Keenan, “that the revolutionary changes that have taken place...since Algerian independence have been experienced by a society that had changed little during the preceding sixty years is a gross misconception.”³¹ Before the French arrived, the *imghad* were already expanding their power by acquiring camels and arms, increasing their economic independence and political clout. French conquest in the Sahara accelerated this decline of *imushagh* power. They took control of several major oases, so that the Tuareg were less equipped to deal with droughts and famines than they had been in the past. The French also established forts and restricted the ability of the *imushagh* to conduct raids, putting the Tuareg in a precarious position because raids were an important part of subsistence survival during harder environmental and economic times. French conquest in the Sahara also linked Algeria to French West Africa, establishing new borders that restricted nomadic movement and separated federations from some of their important grazing lands and from other Tuareg confederations. Consequently, Tuareg began to cultivate more land than they had before, a trend that continued throughout the century. International borders would only become more problematic when the French withdrew their colonial presence from Africa, leaving the Tuareg as minorities in a handful of newly independent nation-states.³² These political changes will be one of our major concerns in later sections.

³⁰ Keenan, *The Tuareg : People of Ahaggar*.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

III Tuareg Music Before *Al-guitara*

Music is extremely important in social, political, and ceremonial situations among the Tuareg. It sometimes plays such a central role that certain social events are named after their associated instrument or genre—for example, *tende*. In other situations, music plays a more supplementary role, but one that is no less important. It is extremely symbolic and, therefore, closely linked with identity within and without the Tuareg community. Music and poetry are both regarded as verbal arts, which explains why Tuareg music is primarily vocal. These vocal arts are greatly respected because they have been developed, sometimes over the course of several centuries, to a high degree. Talent earns composers and performers great prestige and fame, although historically none but the *inaden* (artisans) would perform professionally.³³ As we have seen, the upheaval of recent history has challenged the traditional structure of Tuareg society, and established musical roles for different social classes are no exception.

Tuareg music reflects Saharan cultural geography. As they led caravans north and south along the trans-Saharan trade routes, the Tuareg interacted with Arabs and Sudanese Africans. This exposure over a long period inevitably led to the assimilation of musical and other cultural behaviors into Tuareg practices. Elements of these cultures are clear in Tuareg music. For example, Tuareg musicians and singers frequently use pentatonic scales—favored by the Sudanese in the south—as well as scales employing augmented seconds and, sometimes, microtones—adopted from Arabs to the north.³⁴ Tuareg singers distinguish themselves by improvising with traditional melodic forms based on these scales. Microtones are not common, but at the end of a piece singers will often introduce notes that seem unrelated to the scale upon

³³ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity".

³⁴ James A. Standifer, "The Tuareg: Their Music and Dances," *The Black Perspective in Music* Vol. 16, no. 1 (1988).

which the song is based; at other times, they will deliberately alter notes with specific structural functions.³⁵ Especially telling of the multicultural influences is that Tuareg singing is often characterized as either “Middle Eastern” or “sub-Saharan” in style. The “Middle Eastern” style includes many traits found in Islamic vocal music, such as florid ornamentation of a melody, subordination of rhythm to melody, and constriction of the vocal chords. The mouth becomes the resonance chamber and the sound is usually small due to this restriction (not because of lacking effort), producing a hoarse quality in loud upper-register singing. The “sub-Saharan” style emphasizes rhythm, incorporates unornamented syllabic melody, and features less restricted voices with increased use of the lower register. Men tend to sing in the Middle Eastern style more than women, but the major factor determining vocal style is the instrumental accompaniment, if there is any.³⁶ Women express admiration and joy through the *terelilit*, the trilling cry or ululation heard in Arab and other cultures.³⁷ One other indicator of Arab and Sudanese influence on Tuareg music is in the use of instruments—perhaps slightly modified and called by different names—that are found in many of these other cultures. These will be explained more during the discussions of each instrument.

What, then, is Tuareg in Tuareg music? Card attempts to answer this in *Tuareg Music and Social Identity*, where she logically begins by searching for an older, “true” Tuareg style among the *imghad* (vassals). The *imghad* were far less mobile than the nobles, and therefore had less contact with other cultures. Nobles, on the other hand, encountered Arab and Sudanese cultures during their travel for trade or warfare. However, French colonization in the twentieth

³⁵ Tolia Nikiprowetzky, "Tuareg Music," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Grove, 2001).

³⁶ Caroline Card, "The Music of the Tuareg Tribes of the Central and Southern Sahara" (Thesis, Hunter College, The City University of New York, 1973).

³⁷ Finola Holiday and Geoffrey Holiday, *Tuareg Music of the Southern Sahara* (New York: Folkways Records, 1960), LP.

century restricted the nobles, whose wealth and power began to decline. They became culturally conservative as they attempted to assert their cultural dominance among the Tuareg, while the *imghad* and other classes were more innovative because of their increasing prosperity. Thus, the oldest musical styles can be found among the nobles, but even among them the styles have probably only been around since the late nineteenth century. Stylistic differences between performers from the separate classes can be readily identified within specific repertoires, such as those of the *anzad*, but are also recognizable when comparing different genres.³⁸ Regional differences are also recognized by Tuareg listeners, who can describe musicians' styles not just in terms of "Middle Eastern" versus "sub-Saharan," as described above, but also in terms of which region the style belongs to—for instance, Ahaggar, Aïr, or Azawar. Like the distinctions among Tuareg classes, these regional styles are partly distinguished by varying levels of foreign musical influence. It should be mentioned, though, that not all songs from a specific region are played in the specific style of that region. Listeners can identify not only the regional source of a composition, but also the birthplace of the performer and even, within a familiar region, the distinctive style of an individual performer.³⁹ It is the strong ideology of the nobles—an ideology celebrating pastoral, nomadic life—and their ability to convince others of their cultural superiority, which has most contributed most completely to establishing a specifically Tuareg musical identity. "What is Tuareg in Tuareg music," concludes Card, "...is more than a mere set of musical traits; it is a set of social attitudes of which the traits are symbolic."⁴⁰

In order to understand the significance of *al-guitara* in Tuareg musical development, we need to explore the specific genres and instruments that dominated Tuareg music before *al-guitara*. Most of these are still extremely popular today. Card divides the genres and their

³⁸ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 46-48.

³⁹ Ibid. 85-91

⁴⁰ Ibid. 49

associated instruments into three major categories identified by the use of voice and/or instruments. The category we will examine most closely consists of the genres that involve both voice and one of the principal Tuareg instruments: the *anzad*, the *tende*, or the *tahardent*. The other categories include the cappella genres, such as religious music, music by and for children, and caravan songs; and the instrumental genres with little or no association with vocal repertoires.⁴¹ We will limit our focus to the first category because it covers the majority of music and instruments that influence *al-guitara* and social change. By discussing the distinctive performance practices of these genres and the social contexts in which they are performed, we will establish for ourselves a catalog to which we can later compare *al-guitara*. These comparisons will be made in the next section, where our focus will be the development of *al-guitara* in terms of the sociopolitical context and the musical qualities of this new genre.

Vocal Music Associated With Instruments

Although there are relatively few instruments used among the Tuareg, three in particular—the *anzad*, the *tende*, and the *tahardent*—are quite significant because each is associated with specific poetic genres and musical styles. They are also central to particular social events. We will discuss each of these instruments in terms of their physical construction and playing technique, performance practices, and their associated poetic genres. These instruments are closely linked with vocal music, but we will also include solo instrumental genres in this discussion.

Anzad: The One-Stringed Fiddle

⁴¹ Ibid. 54

The Tuareg one-stringed bowed lute is known by various names, depending on the dialect; for the sake of simplicity, we will refer to it as *anzad*. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that variation exists among the Tuareg groups. It is common throughout West Africa, albeit referred to by other names and constructed in slightly different ways.⁴² Only women play the *anzad*, and it is perhaps the most celebrated instrument among the Tuareg due to its diverse, powerful symbolism. Card refers to it as “a multifaceted symbol of Tuareg culture and identity,” for it represents the authority of their women that is unique among neighboring peoples, and in different contexts their noblest traditional ideals, youthfulness, and love.⁴³

The *anzad* is also believed to be a force for good that can inspire men to be courageous and heroic, and protect them when they are away from home. Much of this stems from the power exercised by the women performers, who can impact a man’s reputation by deciding whether or not to perform songs of praise when he returns from battle. Card elaborates on the *anzad*’s significance: “Warriors in combat strove always to act courageously, lest their women deprive them of music: the prospect of silent fiddles on their return renewed their courage in the face of defeat.”⁴⁴ However, this tradition has been in decline since the early twentieth century, for two main reasons. Defeat by the French and the end of slavery diminished the Tuareg economy, part of which thrived on the conquests of the warriors. Only slave-owning women of the noble caste had the leisure time necessary to perfect their skill with the *anzad*, which takes years to master. While women of all social levels play the *anzad*, the diminished wealth of the nobles means fewer accomplished and celebrated fiddlers exist today. Secondly, warfare became less common due to the colonization and defeat by the French, eliminating much of the inspiration for *anzad*

⁴² Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, *Fiddling in West Africa: Touching the Spirit in Fulbe, Hausa, and Dagbamba Cultures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008). 251-255.

⁴³ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 577

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 575-576.

performance. Heroism seems to be a thing of the past for many Tuareg, who find little worthy of celebration in modern urban life.⁴⁵

Besides its association with warfare, the *anzad* is also important for courtship. A talented *anzad* player may attract visitors from far away when she performs at *ahal*, evening courtship gatherings centered on the *anzad*.⁴⁶ These often occur during holidays and political rallies, or following religious phases of rites of passage.⁴⁷ The *anzad* is the central focus at *ahal*, for in this context it symbolizes youthfulness and romantic love. Young unmarried Tuareg gather at these events to sing love songs, recite poetry, and play games of wit;⁴⁸ immodest behavior and courtship between members of different social levels—who ideally do not intermarry—becomes common as reserved social codes are temporarily relaxed. But important business is also attended to, such as marriage negotiations, critical social commentary, and the establishment of economic and political alliances. Though they do not play a central role, older people are often present at *ahal*, creating some inter-generational tension. Susan Rasmussen elaborates on this in her study of age relations at evening festivals like *ahal*:

In song texts and audience interactions at these performances there is much age-related social criticism. These performances contain much inter-generational dialogue on age issues. These commentaries suggest the agentive power, as opposed to the malleability, of youths. Yet their themes do not always follow binary elder/traditional/authority vs. youth/modern/resistance alignments.⁴⁹

When we discuss *al-guitara* and the *ishumar*, we will explore these issues—inter-generational dialogue, the agentive power of youth, nuanced themes in social commentary—in greater detail.

⁴⁵ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 76-77.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Susan J. Rasmussen, "Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances," *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 73, no. 3 (2000). 133-134.

⁴⁸ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 77-78

⁴⁹ Rasmussen, "Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances." 134

It is no surprise that *anzad* performances have been a source of tension with Muslim religious leaders. The *anzad* is an old instrument with mystical powers associated with pre-Islamic beliefs. From a Muslim perspective, it aggrandizes women performers, encourages licentious behavior, and distracts listeners from thoughts of Allah and the teachings of Mohammed. Performance is therefore discouraged or even banned by religious leaders. While some women may submit to these demands, others will make compromises—for example, refraining from performance on holy days. Most are apprehensive about such rules, for women have long been held in high regard and charged with preserving culture among the Tuareg. They feel that the patriarchal concepts of Islam will suppress their influence in the community, and make them more like neighboring Muslim groups, where women wear veils and have little say in community affairs. By suppressing female authority and important practices like *anzad* performance, Islam may threaten the continuation of Tuareg traditions.⁵⁰

Inaden women build the *anzad*, which is constructed of a slender stick inserted at opposite sides under a leather top—usually goatskin—that is stretched over a hollow gourd cut in the shape of a bowl. A string made of horsehair is attached at both ends of the stick, one of which extends about 30 to 36 centimeters beyond the body. Two twigs bound together in a cross form a bridge near the center of the skin, and as the string tightens, the neck arches forward.⁵¹ A leather strip binding the string to the neck near the tip can be moved to tune the instrument. Performers don't all choose the same tuning pitch, but one performer will be consistent with their own tuning. The bow is made of another stick, formed in an arc by the tension of the attached hair. The performer sits and holds the *anzad* with the neck in her left hand, which rarely moves during performance of a single piece. Tuning can also be adjusted without altering string tension by

⁵⁰ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 77-79.

⁵¹ Nikiprowetzky, "Tuareg Music.", Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 856/577-588

using the thumb as a stop, while pitch is changed by lightly fingering the string, rather than pressing it against the neck. Sometimes the little finger may be extended to produce harmonics, although most performers only use the second harmonic, producing a pitch an octave above the open string. Changes in the length and speed of bow strokes create variety and imitative sounds, which storytellers use to compliment a singer's text or vocal style. "Slow strokes combined with rapidly fingered notes can suggest a melismatic singing style, and short strokes paired with single notes can produce a syllabic effect. Short, light strokes coupled with harmonics may simulate the tones of a flute; rapid use of the bow in a tremolo style may depict animals in flight; halting, interrupted strokes may portray a limping straggler."⁵²

Clearly, the *anzad* is well suited to vocal accompaniment. It is no wonder that the majority of *anzad* music is for *anzad* and voice, or that this music, *anzad n-asak*, is characterized by heterophonic playing that demands great fiddling technique. The performers express their personal styles by emphasizing different aspects of the melody and rhythm, paying little attention to strictly synchronizing their lines. Between the strophes of the texts, the fiddler may demonstrate her skill by improvising on thematic material. If the fiddler is also the singer, she may only play a single drone until these interludes. However, in the presence of men, the preferred vocalists, women seldom sing. *Tesiwit*—the greatest of the Tuareg poetic genres—is the genre most often heard with *anzad*. It is recited in one of the meters traditional to a region, to which a composer may set an appropriate new or existing melody. While *tesiwit* deal with the themes discussed above, they often refer to local people and events. *Tesiwit* are rarely understood outside of their native regions because of this and because of differences in dialect, but regional styles also make them less accessible to listeners from other regions.⁵³

⁵² Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 577-578.

⁵³ Ibid. 579

The *anzad* serves as a solo instrument as well, capable of playing vocal melodies or its own unique repertoire. Most solo *anzad* melodies are airs, or *izlan*, composed specifically for the instrument. As mentioned above, distinctive styles characterize the *izlan* of different regions. The style of the Ahaggar Tuareg in Algeria is considered the oldest style because of their conservative cultural response to the political ideologies, educational policies, and national media of independent Algeria. This isolated them from the southern groups in Mali and Niger, who shared the experience of French colonialism but reacted less strongly, driving the Ahaggar Tuareg to conserve older musical practices and repertoire.⁵⁴ One Ahaggar Tuareg described *anzad* music as the “classical music” of the Tuareg,⁵⁵ but southern Tuareg characterize their *anzad* music as “a still flowering plant,” in recognition of their continuing innovation in this old tradition.⁵⁶ As mentioned earlier, the southern Tuareg are also more racially mixed and have greater exposure to Sudanese cultures, which certainly contributes to this innovation as well.

Rhythm is usually subordinate to melody in the Ahaggar style, and sometimes the pulse is difficult to discern. Ahaggar *izlan* are composed of short melodic formulas linked together in phrases of varying lengths. These motifs usually center on one or more pitches, which are highlight with a rapid cluster of tones that may be embellished with ornaments such as acciaccaturas, mordents, and turns. Rhythm is subordinate to melody in the Aïr style in Niger, like in Ahaggar. Melodies are also based on formulaic motifs, but these connect more smoothly, making it difficult to tell where one ends and the next begins. Phrases usually have simpler structures and less ornamentation. Unlike older compositions, new pieces are often through composed and may incorporate long phrases of original or developed material. The style of Azawagh, in Niger west of Aïr, contrasts to these other styles because melody is subordinate to

⁵⁴ Ibid. 578-579.

⁵⁵ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 85

⁵⁶ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 578

rhythm. While still constructed of formulaic material, the Azawagh style employs strongly accented rhythms, metric melody, short phrases, and regularly recurring pulses. Dancing and hand clapping also may accompany this *anzad* music, which is rare in the other styles.⁵⁷ It will become quite obvious that the various styles of *anzad* performance are of great concern for us in our discussion of *al-guitara*.

Tende: The Mortar Drum

If the music of the *anzad* is the “classical music” of the Tuareg, then *tende* is their “true folk music.”⁵⁸ *Tende* (*tindi* in the northern dialect) describes a mortar drum, its associated musical genre, and the social event centered on its performance. It is a much less specialized instrument that does not require years of practice to learn; most performers gain no recognition for their playing.⁵⁹ In light of the decline of prestigious *anzad* performers, it is no surprise that *tende* has surpassed *anzad* music in popularity at national holidays, evening phases of rites of passage, and spirit possession rites.⁶⁰ Most performers are young—even some children may participate in drumming—because singers and drummers tend to stop playing during adulthood, in order to make room for younger players. Men and women of all social classes participate by drumming, singing, clapping, shouting, and, on certain occasions, dancing or camel riding.⁶¹ “*Tende* is a music of ordinary people; its appeal is immediate and communal.”⁶² However, because of this, nobles did not perform the *tende* until very recently, when Tuareg nationalists broke down some of the traditional social structures. Much of this earlier ambivalence towards

⁵⁷ Ibid. 578-579

⁵⁸ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 154

⁵⁹ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 582

⁶⁰ Rasmussen, "Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances." 137

⁶¹ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 582, and Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 113-114

⁶² Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 582

tende was because it is known as “the music of the earth,” for the drum is made of tools used in the manual labor of non-nobles.⁶³ Its origins are unclear, but some believe that the *tende* developed among the *imghad* in northeastern Mali, and then spread to Ahaggar and Niger; others believe it may have developed as an alternative to a Hausa drum, *ganga*, which accompanied the dance music of Tuareg slaves. Regardless of where it originated, the instrument itself probably developed recently, because the first mention of *tende* among outsiders is in a report from 1926. Musical occasions much like *tende* are mentioned in earlier writing, but the drums were clearly different in these descriptions.⁶⁴

Made of tools used in Tuareg daily life, the *tende* is an instrument with a temporary existence. It is assembled for a few hours of use, and then dismantled for other purposes. A moistened goatskin is stretched over the opening of a large wooden mortar by two wooden pestles about 1 1/4 meters long. The ends of the pestles are usually tied together to keep them parallel, creating seats on which women, stones, or bricks may sit to adjust the tension of the drumhead. Sometimes the pestles are actually removed once the skin is fastened with rope or leather. To keep the skin moist and elastic, water will periodically be sprinkled onto the drumhead or, in some areas, applied from the inside by tilting the mortar, which was filled with water before the skin was fastened. It is becoming more common today for Tuareg to avoid the hassle of constructing and maintaining a mortar *tende* by using substitutes, such as large plastic water containers, or “jerrycans.” These are readily available, but even though these substitutes are still referred to as *tende* (meaning “mortar”), this practice is controversial. Some find the sound of

⁶³ Rasmussen, "Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances." 137

⁶⁴ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 584

these alternatives satisfactory or even preferable to the traditional mortar, but others find them absolutely unacceptable.⁶⁵

While moisture and skin tightness affect timbre and pitch, these can also be manipulated by the drummer. Varying the intensity of hand slaps, brushing the skin with palm or fingers, tapping with fingertips, damping, rim slapping, and strokes on different areas of the skin surface can all produce different pitches and timbres. In some types of *tende* music, wooden sticks or beaters made of woven palm fronds are used with their own various techniques, and will be of different lengths and thicknesses if two sticks or beaters are used together. Good *tende* players are recognized for their creative applications of these techniques. Sometimes, other instruments will accompany the *tende*. In the south, women may play the *assakalabu* or *aralaba*, which is made of a half calabash placed in a basin of water and struck with a stick. Played only with *tende*, it provides a deeper sonority that performers use to emphasize the pulse of the *tende* by making even strokes. In other *tende* music, especially among the *inaden*, a small single-headed frame drum (like a ringless tambourine) called *ɔkänzäm* may reinforce or complement the *tende* rhythms and sonorities with its higher, less resonant pitches. The *ɔkänzäm* is used to accompany music other than *tende*, unlike the *assakalabu*. Finally, handclapping forms an integral part of *tende* rhythmic patterns throughout the Tuareg world. Clapping usually divides the pulse into binary or ternary units that often run counter to the *tende* rhythm—usually to support the metric structure of the vocal line, which is not necessarily the same as that of the *tende*—but sometimes it is used simply for reinforcement.⁶⁶

There are countless varieties of *tende* style and performance practice, even within a small geographic area or one category of *tende*. One reason for this is that “the homogenizing effects of

⁶⁵ Ibid. 581-584. and Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 114-128

⁶⁶ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 120-124

radio broadcasting and recording have touched *tende* much less than *anzad*. Because outstanding ability is a less important criterion in *tende* performance, average players and singers have not been supplanted by recordings to the same extent as have *anzad* performers.”⁶⁷ *Tende* singers typically specialize in one or two of the four types of *tende* songs, described by their musical and textual origins: (1) old songs and texts (poems) transmitted from generation to generation as complete entities; (2) new texts (poems) set to old melodies, but the original title is preserved; (3) new texts (poems) and melodies; or (4) old melodies set with new texts (not always poems) drawn from a situation. There are also a variety of *tende* performance situations. Among these, the three major occasions are races or dances with camels, dances of black Tuareg and *inaden*, and curing ceremonies.⁶⁸

The “camel *tende*,” known as *tende n-ɔmnas*, is performed for camel races and dances featured at weddings, births, honored visits, and other joyous occasions. Traditionally during these races and dances, women sing and play the drum while men parade or race their camels around them to display their prowess and gallantry. As the Tuareg urbanize, *tende n-ɔmnas* is increasingly performed out of context. Texts celebrate the beauty of camels and the honor of their owners and riders in symbolic messages of love and praise for Tuareg individuals. However, texts may also be critical or scornful. When improvising text over a familiar melody, the singer has the opportunity to comment on local people and recent events; this allows women to express themselves in ways not normally permitted in the culture. Those who improvise especially well are the ones most likely to receive any recognition as *tende* singers.⁶⁹

Linking the music to the social event are the rhythms, which are said to imitate the gaits of the camels and may in fact direct their movements as their riders take cues from the drumming

⁶⁷ Ibid. 130-131.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 131-153. and Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 584-587

⁶⁹ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 584-585. and Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 131-138

women. The rhythms are either based on equal beats in duple meter with syncopated duple or ternary subdivisions, or are based on unequal beats of 3+4+3 in several variations. *Tende n- δ mnas* is usually faster than other types of *tende*; in her analysis of several recordings, Card finds that men's *tende n- δ mnas* is generally slower (MM104-116) than women's (MM132-146). Melodies of men and women have roughly the same ambitus—from a minor third to a major ninth in Card's analyses—but the men sing about a fifth lower, so that their voices are much less tense or piercing than they are when singing *tesiwit*. Women use some ornamentation to personalize their singing, while men use none. Also, while melodies are based on a pentatonic structure, women may also use the augmented fourth, a common interval in *anzad* music. In northern regions, a women's choral drone provides a pedal point for the solo line; in southern regions, this drone is replaced with a responsorial choral ostinato.⁷⁰

Dance *tende*, or *tende n-tagbast*, is performed in Niger by *inaden*, Sudanese Tuareg, and (less often) *imghad* at birth, marriage, and other celebrations. Dancers dressed in fine clothes perform a few steps in the center of a circle of spectators, before retreating to the circle to allow others to take their turn. Exceptionally talented displays are rewarded with men's shouts and women's *terrerehits*. These dances first emerged in Tuareg culture among the slaves, who probably developed them from the similar dances of the Hausa and other Sudanese peoples. It is likely that these dances were unaccompanied until *inaden*, bridging the culture gap between Sudanese slaves and the Berber upper caste with their unique social position, began to introduce and adapt the *tende n- δ mnas* style to them.⁷¹

Like *tende n- δ mnas*, the texts of *tende n-tagbast* praise good dancers or discuss love. Male *inaden* usually are the drummers in *tende n-tagbast*, while women sing and accompany

⁷⁰ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 585-586. and Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 139-141

⁷¹ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 585-587. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 141-145.

them on *assakalabu*. Sometimes men or women will also play a *ḍkänzam*. If instruments are unavailable, only singing and handclapping will accompany the dances. *Tende n-tagbast* is recognized for its strongly marked pulse, reinforced by hand clapping and equal beats on the *assakalabu*. It is usually in duple meter with occasionally syncopated duple subdivisions, although ternary subdivisions, while rare, may appear between parts or in brief hemiolic exchanges within the melody. *Tende n-tagbast* is generally recognized to be slower than women's *tende n-ḍmnas* and about the same as that of the *inaden*; Card found tempos to range from MM88 to MM138 in the recordings available for her analysis. The structure of these songs may be either antiphonal, in which case a melodic line alternates between two choruses or between soloist and chorus; or responsorial, in which a solo line follows or overlaps a choral ostinato, like in southern *tende n-ḍmnas*. In such cases, the ostinato is usually a short rhythmic pattern sung on one to three pitches; ostinatos on one pitch are differentiated from choral droning by their rhythmic articulation and spacing between repetitions.⁷²

Finally, musical curing ceremonies—a practice common throughout much of the Sahara—are known among the Tuareg in some regions by the Arabic *el janun* or *alhinin* (“possession, madness”), and in Niger as *tende n-gumatan* (“*tende* of the possessed” or “*tende* of the emotionally ill”). The Tuareg do not regard these ceremonies as religious (they associate religion specifically with Islam), but given their similarities to one another it is very likely that *tende n-gumatan* developed from similar Sufi ceremonies. The Tuareg ceremony is based on the belief in the *Kel Asuf* (“People of the Solitude”), spirits that can be good or evil and that are believed to inhabit fire, water, wind, caves, darkness, and empty places. They are responsible for suffering from unseen causes, such as mental illnesses. The ceremonies are designed to either entice unwanted spirits from the body or restore harmony between the patient and his or her personal

⁷² Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 585-587. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 141-145.

spirit.⁷³ *Tende n-gumatan* is in greater decline than other *tende* genres among urban Tuareg because of its link with “folk medicine” and disapproval by orthodox Muslims. It is more an interest in improving their status in the multi-ethnic Muslim society of North African cities than any religious conviction that drives urban Tuareg to conform to Islam, and thus abandon practices like *tende n-gumatan*.⁷⁴

Because the *Kel Asuf* are attracted to rhythmic music, Tuareg sing, clap, and drum during these curing ceremonies. At such ceremonies, which take place late at night, the patient sits in the middle of a circle of musicians and sways to the rhythms of the *tende* (played by either a man or woman). Accompanying the *tende* is a chorus of women; men who issue raspy, rhythmic grunts known as *tahômôhôm* by forcing breath through their constricted throats; family and community members who clap and make cries of encouragement from outside the circle; and oftentimes, a woman playing *assakalabu*. The songs, rhythms, and grunts lead the patient and some participants into an altered state of consciousness. The ceremony is repeated for as many consecutive nights as deemed necessary, largely dictated by the family’s ability to compensate the musicians. Any songs the patients or family desire may be performed at the ceremonies, although at one time specific texts and maybe even specific music were probably used. *Tende n-gumatan* is musically distinguished by its tempo, which is slower than either *tende n-ômnas* or *tende n-tagbast* (about MM73-96), and by the use of the *tahômôhôm*.⁷⁵

Tahardent: The Three-Stringed Plucked Lute

The plucked lute has been part of Tuareg music for a long time, performed by *inaden* men who were professional musicians (*aggutan*) and bards at the courts of chiefs. Accompanied by

⁷³ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 587. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 145-153.

⁷⁴ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 157.

⁷⁵ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 587. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 145-153.

their *tahardents*, they would sing praises to their patrons and recite heroic tales of local battles and heroes; nowadays, they may praise bridegrooms. Additionally, the *tahardent* has become the central instrument in widely popular music and dance performed as entertainment in cities across the Sahara. Like the *anzad*, the *tahardent* is found throughout West Africa with separate names and variations in construction; in all of these traditions, this instrument is played exclusively by musicians and bards known as *griots*, whose professions are normally hereditary and who have similar social roles and statuses. The similarities in instruments, styles, repertoires, and performance practices accounts for their popularity in multicultural urban areas:⁷⁶

[*Tahardent*] music, as well as the musician, bears a closer resemblance to that of the *griots* of other ethnic groups than it does to other Tuareg music.⁷⁷

Before the widespread urbanization of Tuareg since the 1960s, the *tahardent* was only part of southern Tuareg traditions in Mali, between Timbuktu and Gao. As discussed above, this is one of the regions with greater multicultural exposure, and it therefore seems likely that the *tahardent* was adopted from neighboring peoples rather than independently developed among the Tuareg. When Tuareg began to migrate in response to the droughts and dismal conditions of the 1960s and 1970s, they brought the *tahardent* to refugee centers in Niger and to cities like Tamanrasset, Algeria. Without their traditional patrons in these places, itinerant *inaden* began to identify themselves as *aggutan*, the Tamashek term for *griots*. The *aggutan* thus severed their ties with metalsmiths and other *inaden* and established a separate urban identity. They adapted their repertoires to appeal to broader, multiethnic audiences. This new genre, consisting of accompanied songs and instrumental solos, became known as *takômba*, although this term developed from a misunderstanding that will be explained below. Malian *tahardent* players have been active throughout urban areas of the Sahara since 1976, and recordings of star performers

⁷⁶ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 587-588. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 55, 164-166.

⁷⁷ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 166.

and hits songs have been exchanged and copied from one tape to another throughout West Africa. In fact, *tahardent* music is mainly experienced through recordings because few Tuareg can afford to hire professional performers. This informal practice of recording and distribution was later of vital importance to the spread of *al-guitara*, which was restricted by government censorship.⁷⁸

Additionally, *tahardent* music was controversial among the Tuareg in much the same way that *al-guitara* would be, because of its associations with urban life and contemporary values. Card elaborates: "Those who adhere to traditional ways are often vehement in their disdain for the instrument, the music, and its devotees: they denounce *tehardent* music as a corrupt, urban product, and not a true Tuareg art. To them, it matters little that the *tahardent* represents an old and respected Tuareg tradition in Mali. Their attitudes toward it highlight an emerging division between conservatives and progressives."⁷⁹ The division between conservatives and progressives was a source of major tension among the Tuareg, especially during the second rebellion, when it essentially destroyed the initial unity of the movement. Clearly, modern *tahardent* music and *al-guitara* are closely related in terms of their social significance. This will be explored in the next section.

Inaden build *tahardents* by carving the oblong body from a single block of wood. The typical instrument is about twenty-one inches long and seven or eight inches wide, but a smaller version may also be played. Next, cowhide or goatskin is stretched over the block and cut to produce a large sound hole. Bamboo is inserted under the skin so that a length of it extends about twelve inches beyond the body, forming the neck. A metal resonator dangles from the end of the neck to provide a buzzing sound. Three strings are attached to a mounting just above the sound hole, stretched over a bridge, and then fastened to the end of the neck with adjustable leather

⁷⁸ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 587-588. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity".161-169.

⁷⁹ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 589.

bindings used for tuning. The strings are today made of nylon, and have different lengths and thicknesses. Each individual string is named after an animal. The lowest and middle string, *ahar* (“lion”) and *tazori* (“hyena”), are tuned to a perfect fifth or fourth, depending on the music. The highest, *ebag* (“jackal”) or *awokkoz* (“young animal”), is tuned an octave above the lowest. Its primary purpose is to create sympathetic vibration, although it is occasionally plucked.

Tahardent players perform by sitting cross-legged, normally holding the neck in their left hand. They pluck the middle string with a bone or leather plectrum worn on their right index finger, and pluck the lower string with their thumb. The remaining right hand fingers tap accompanying rhythms on the *tahardent*'s surface. The left hand fingers stop the strings against the unfretted neck, and because melodies rarely exceed an octave, hand movement is unnecessary. Pitches are clearly articulated with crisp fingering, although occasionally a player may create a glissando by sliding a finger along a string.⁸⁰

The greatest performers are distinguished by their virtuosic improvisation over the basic rhythmic patterns, especially during instrumental interludes between vocal strophes. Listeners express approval by making undulations with their upper torso and outstretched arms, periodically exclaiming, “Ush-sh-sh-sh!” Both the traditional and the modern poetry of the *tahardent* are performed exclusively with the instrument alone—not unaccompanied or with additional instruments. Like the *anzad*, the *tahardent* can also be played as a solo instrument, but it is rarely associated with other instruments or poetic genres;⁸¹ recently, however, exceptions to this have included performance with multiple *tahardents* and percussion instruments.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid. 589-590. Card, “Tuareg Music and Social Identity”. 163-166.

⁸¹ Card Wendt, “Tuareg Music.” 589. Card, “Tuareg Music and Social Identity”. 55.

⁸² This will be addressed later, but for one example see “Tabey Tarate” on Tartit, *Abacabok* (Crammed Discs, 2006), CD.

Tahardent music is composed with specific formulas that the musicians regard as rhythms, each of which has a specific name, its own appropriate contexts, and distinctive modal or rhythmic characteristics. As mentioned above, *tahardent* music is commonly called *takômba*. This stems from the failure to recognize that this is just one specific rhythm in the *tahardent* repertory; however, with texts concerning women, love, and sensual things, *takômba* is the genre in greatest demand. *Tahardent* rhythms fall into two categories: bardic ballads that praise patrons and heroes and which may be part of a tradition several centuries old, and newer rhythms for dance and entertainment. These rhythms are defined by their rhythmic formulas and tonal structures. The heroic rhythms are based on five-pulse patterns, and the dance patterns have twelve pulses; each rhythm divides the pulses differently. These rhythmic definitions are not absolute, and elements of other rhythms (especially *takômba*) may be incorporated into a specific genre, especially during interludes. Virtuoso performers temporarily obscure the basic patterns and create the sense of a suspension of metric values by using hemiolas (transforming duple divisions into ternary or ternary divisions into duple), especially during the interludes in dance rhythms. The tonal structure of each *tahardent* rhythm is less varied, although *takômba* is least strictly defined because of its frequent adaptation to songs from other genres or older *tahardent* repertoire.⁸³

The oldest *tahardent* rhythms are those used in the heroic ballads: *n-geru* and *yalli*. *Takômba*, *abakkabuk*, *ser-i*, and *jabâ* are the newer entertainment and dance rhythms. The older of these rhythms are *abakkabuk*, which is a rhythm unique to the Tuareg, and *ser-i* (“toward me”), which is a traditional pattern that musicians play for the enjoyment of their fellow *inaden*. *Jabâ* and *takômba* are the newest rhythms and praise youth and youthful pleasures. *Ser-i*, *n-geru*, and *jabâ* are distinguished by their unique modes. *Yalli* has a similar mode to *abakkabuk* and

⁸³ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 588-590. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity".166-176.

takômba, but is built on a different meter. *Abakkabuk* is characterized by rising and falling melody patterns. *Ser-i* melodies usually have ascending patterns, and *yalli* melodies typically descend.⁸⁴

Although *tahardent* music has not been widely studied by outsiders, evidence suggests that the Tuareg modes have specific extra-musical meanings and uses, just as modes in Mauritanian, Arabic, and Indian music do. One *tahardent* player explained some of these specific meanings to Card:

N-geru gives strength to warriors. It is a music for heroes of any battle. *Yalli* also gives force to warriors, but it is used only for battles between Tuareg tribes, not for those with the French or other outsiders.⁸⁵

Sub-Saharan influence is better represented in the twelve-pulse hemiola patterns of dance rhythms, which are prevalent in West and Central African music. The *tahardent* and its repertoire, much like *tende*, clearly indicate how Tuareg culture is inherently multicultural.⁸⁶ However, *tahardent* music is multicultural because of the *aggutan* need for patronage in diverse urban environments. Today's *tahardent* music represents the momentum that urban life and its modern attitudes have in revolutionizing Tuareg society; "it is in nearly direct opposition to *tende*, which symbolizes traditional life and a 'past' orientation."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 589-590. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 168-174.

⁸⁵ Interview with Tanil ag Risa, Niamey, April 25, 1977 in Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 173.

⁸⁶ Card Wendt, "Tuareg Music." 590. Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 173-174.

⁸⁷ Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 178.

IV

Ishumar: A Revolutionary Generation and Its Music

In the last fifty years, Tuareg society has significantly changed from the society described above. A number of factors contributed to these changes, especially the independence of Mali and Niger in 1960, which created borders that both restricted nomadic movement and established the Tuareg as marginalized minority populations within these new nations; and severe droughts in the 1970s and 1980s, which led to economic hardship and drove many Tuareg to seek employment abroad. These were some of the conditions which drove the Tuareg to violent rebellions in Mali and Niger in the 1990s, when Tuareg attempted to gain political independence, or at the least, greater autonomy. While many refer to these rebellions as “The Revolution,” Baz Lecocq argues that the real revolution took place before the rebellion. This was, indeed, the period of most radical change, as the sentiments of one Tuareg from this time suggest:

[The Tuareg] are condemned, not to disappear, but to become something different. They are condemned to disappear as nomads, but not as human beings. The question inevitably asked, is to know what the nomads are and what they will do...⁸⁸

What many of them did was pursue a new way of life. This lifestyle, known as *teshumara* (“unemployment”), was characterized by the replacement of nomadism with urban settlement; an economy based on wage labor and increased variety of consumer items instead of self-sufficiency and direct exchange; and the fragmentation of a once geographically connected group into a diaspora with communities in North and West Africa, Europe, and North America. Adherents to this new lifestyle were called *ishumar* (sing. *ashamor*), or “the unemployed,” and their changing circumstances led to changes in their gender relations, cultural expression, education, and politics.⁸⁹ It was in this environment that *al-guitara* first developed. Immediately it became

⁸⁸. Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 95.

⁸⁹. ———, ""That Desert Is Our Country"".

intrinsically linked with the experience of *teshumara*, serving as a powerful tool for social cohesion and mobilization.⁹⁰

Teshumara was not the only path to modernity that the struggling Tuareg could pursue. . For instance, more Tuareg of slave origins moved to cities in West Africa than in North Africa, partly because their physical appearance allowed them to blend in and not be immediately recognized as outsiders, and partly, as mentioned earlier, because they still had connections to neighboring ethnic groups Tuareg could also pursue formal education both within and outside Mali, exposing them to many of the same changes and new cultures that the *ishumar* encountered. The *ishumar* developed a very radical political outlook, while the educated were more moderate, leading to significant tensions during the rebellion. We shall focus our attention on the *ishumar* in North Africa, however, for it was these Tuareg that developed the influential new genre of poetry and music, known as *ishumar*, *teshumara*, or *al-guitara*—“guitar music.”⁹¹ This section will explore *teshumara* and the evolution of *al-guitara* during the period preceding the Tuareg rebellions of the 1990s. It will highlight broad trends in Tuareg society while closely following song texts by Tinariwen, the first and most influential *al-guitara* band since its formation in 1981, and the life of one of its cofounders: Ibrahim “Abaraybone” Ag Alhabib, the Malian *ashamor* who was one of the first to develop *al-guitara*. The performance practice and musical significance of *al-guitara* will be discussed in depth in the following section.

⁹⁰ Lecocq, 169.

⁹¹ Lecocq, ““That Desert Is Our Country””. 186 and Rasmussen, “Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances.” To avoid confusion between the guitar genre, the *ishumar* generation, or the *teshumara* lifestyle, I will refer to the genre as *al-guitara*. While most scholarship on this music employs the term *ishumar*, *al-guitara* will eliminate, for example, the need to differentiate between the *ishumar* genre and the *ishumar* generation. Nonetheless, it is important to understand that all three terms are in use by Tuareg from various regions.

While a few communities had already formed outside of Mali and Niger by the time of the first rebellion in 1963, the most important Tuareg migrations occurred later. During this first rebellion, known as *Alfellaga*, the Tuareg aimed to break free of the oppressive Malian government.⁹² To Malian authorities, nomadic lifestyle was backwards and undesirable; in their push for rapid modernization, they aimed to educate the Tuareg and settle them into sedentary life. To the Tuareg, these policies were “perceived as a ‘recolonization’ of their society.”⁹³

Ibrahim describes how Tuareg experienced the application of these policies:

When I was young, I remember that people were scared, all of them. You could never say what you wanted to say, never. They would just wait until this person came, to give a speech. At that time there were people who were like official counselors. When a counselor came out to the desert to visit the nomads, it was as if the president himself had come. The nomads killed a goat for him, prepared a feast and provided everything he wanted. And then he made a little speech: “This must be done” or “The nomads must do that.” And if someone didn’t want to do that, then he went to jail. That’s how things worked then.⁹⁴

Many fled the violence and political turmoil in Mali to find refuge in southern Algeria. These populations were the first members of the Tuareg diaspora, which would grow significantly with the generation born in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

This generation, known as “the children of ‘63” or “the orphans,” experienced traumatic violence at a young age.⁹⁵ Ibrahim’s own father was abducted and killed by the Malian army in 1963, when he was just three years old; soon thereafter his family fled to Algeria under the cover of darkness.⁹⁶ Many others saw members of their families violently murdered as well, committing young Tuareg to the concept of *egha*—a debt or contract created by the shaming of

⁹² Lecocq, ““That Desert Is Our Country””.132, 171.

⁹³ ———, “Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara.” 89.

⁹⁴ Darren Simon, “Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales,” in *Tinariwen: Live in London* (UK: Phoenix Film and Television Productions LTD, 2008).

⁹⁵ Lecocq, ““That Desert Is Our Country””. 132, 171.

⁹⁶ Simon, “Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales.”

one's honor, which can only be broken with violent action. These experiences left such a strong impression that it was almost inevitable that another rebellion would occur.⁹⁷

While the pervasiveness of *egha* significantly affected Tuareg society—and planted the seeds for the second rebellion—it does not explain the genesis of *teshumara*. What did create this lifestyle of “unemployment,” as would be expected, were poor economic conditions in northern Mali and Niger during the 1970s and 1980s. Two periods of severe drought in the Sahara peaked in 1973 and 1984. By the time of the first drought, camel herds had not yet recovered from retaliatory slaughter conducted by the Malian army during *Alfellaga*. During droughts, Tuareg families and clans in Mali would traditionally move south toward the Niger River for better grazing lands, or north to sell surplus animals in Algeria. They would spend their revenues on grain, which would substitute for the low yields of camel milk from malnourished herds. However, this type of movement was restricted during these droughts because Malian authorities were more wary of Tuareg movements after *Alfellaga*. As a result, families moved less, and access to the drying wells and pastures became highly competitive. It is estimated that as much as eighty percent of the herds were lost, and the second drought in the 1980s only worsened conditions.

Most Tuareg had no choice but to move to cities in Niger, southern Algeria, southern Mali, and other parts of West Africa—as far away as Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. However, many lacked the strength to move and had to endure the famine that claimed countless lives. The Malian government was highly corrupt and non-cooperative in refugee camps that outside agencies created to aid the Tuareg, leading one journalist to conclude that the government was deliberately carrying out genocide. At the very least, the lack of government aid reflected the tensions both between the Tuareg and the Malian government, and between nomads and

⁹⁷ Lecocq, "That Desert Is Our Country".132, 171.

sedentary people—tensions that had characterized the Sahara and Sahel regions since the arrival of the first Berber warriors many centuries ago.⁹⁸ Clearly, it was the interference of the Malian government (and the French before them) that caused the dry environmental conditions—which the Tuareg had learned to adapt to throughout their long history in the Sahara—to become so extremely disruptive. This created only stronger conditions for *egha* among the entire Tuareg population in Mali.

Teshumara starkly contrasted the old lifestyle, with salaried employment, close living quarters in multicultural and multilingual urban environments (rather than in tents in open terrain), and access to modern consumer goods. *Ishumar* pursued whatever opportunities they could find. “By force and overnight,” writes Lacocq, “[Tuareg] life changed from rural and pastoral to urban and wage-earning....Many young [Tuareg] reached the conclusion that pastoral existence had no future.”⁹⁹ They commonly sought seasonal jobs in the cities, often in completely alien occupations to them, such as agriculture in oasis towns, the guarding of villas, salaried herdsmanship, construction and masonry, car mechanics, and fishery. Some *ishumar* would participate in dangerous but profitable smuggling between Algeria, Mali, and Niger. *Imushagh* often refused to participate in manual labor after losing their herds, but could pursue other types of jobs, including driving, herding, smuggling, or security and military service. In fact, of great significance later, many *ishumar* received military training in Libya under Colonel Ghadaffi, who hoped to exploit Tuareg resentment in neighboring countries to boost Libya’s regional power. In contrast to the *imushagh*, the *imghad* and former slaves had greater flexibility in employment because they were not restricted by noble mores. Smuggling in particular contributed to the modernization of Tuareg life because many of these *ishumar* would spend their

⁹⁸ Ibid.172-178.

⁹⁹ Ibid.178.

earnings on such modern luxuries as watches, stereos, or sunglasses. Even with access to some of these luxuries, however, the relative wealth of their surroundings in Algeria, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, and even southern Mali were striking to the exiled Tuareg. Most struggled to reach comparative levels of wealth, and their living conditions were only more difficult because of their awkward legal standing in these countries.¹⁰⁰

Ibrahim's youth is representative of these experiences. As a young boy he stowed away on a cement truck headed to Tamanrasset and northern Algeria. He was partly inspired to leave by his frustration with school, where his family had tried to send him. But there was more to it than that: "I wanted to have an adventure. I said, 'I want to find work.' I thought I was man enough to work, to bring back money for my grandmother and my sisters, and my little sister and big sister." He worked a variety of jobs and even trained with a carpenter. Ibrahim's choice of manual labor, plus the fact that his family had owned a herd of goats in Mali, suggests that he was born an *imghad* (member of the vassal class). This distinction helps us place him in the context of Tuareg musicians from a variety of social positions, and will be informative as we further discuss the genesis of *al-guitara*. When he later moved to Libya, he encountered—just as other *ishumar* had—an affluent environment with a host of Western goods and luxuries: "For me [Libya] was very rich. Because the first time I bought a watch...I bought TWO watches....It was a big thing for me, two watches."¹⁰¹

The economic circumstances of the *ishumar* stimulated a number of cultural changes, which developed either out of necessity or as a deliberate response. Music is of course our main concern, but a few other examples of such changes should be mentioned. The Tuareg diet, which traditionally consisted almost exclusively of meat, milk, and tea, began to include fish, fresh

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.177-188.

¹⁰¹ Simon, "Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales."

fruits, and fresh vegetables. Some Tuareg even began gardening and farming, partly as a reaction to the fact that foreign aid and NGOs had only been structured to aid development among sedentary people. Gender relations are changing in several significant ways, especially with regard to marriage and codes of gallantry. One clear example of this is the dress code of male *ishumar*, which broke from tradition and became increasingly casual. They exchanged the traditional double-edged sword for Kalashnikov assault rifles, sandals for sneakers or boots, and donned t-shirts or collared shirts. However, the most important dress change was in the *tagelmust*, the male turban or veil (Figure 1a). The *tagelmust* represents a man's honor, dignity, and pride, and traditionally it was a very long, multi-layered wrapping. A man preserved more honor by showing less of his face and mouth, especially among women, and a man displayed his greater age, wealth, and standing with a larger *tagelmust*. The *ishumar* felt compelled to express the turmoil of their society and the need for radical change by abandoning the traditional treatment of the *tagelmust*. They wore a single layer of cloth that was significantly shorter than in a normal *tagelmust*, and wrapped it around their head carelessly¹⁰²—in the manner of their counterparts in the Western Sahara, the Polisario guerrillas.¹⁰³ The veil was lowered, exposing the mouth and the presence of a mustache and shaved chin, which contradicted the prescriptions of Mohammed. Some *ishumar* even altogether refused to wear a *tagelmust*, even in the presence of women (Figure 1b).¹⁰⁴ We will return to *ishumar* dress and the *tagelmust* when we discuss how musicians present Tuareg culture to the international community (Chapter VII).

¹⁰² Lecocq, ""That Desert Is Our Country"".182-184.

¹⁰³ François Borel, "Tuareg Music: From Acoustic to Electric," in *Art of Being Tuareg: Sahara Nomads in a Modern World*, ed. Thomas K. Seligman and Kristyne Loughran (Los Angeles: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University and the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2006). 132.

¹⁰⁴ Lecocq, ""That Desert Is Our Country"".182-184.

In addition to economic struggle, the *ichumar* were challenged by the negative perception of the Tuareg held by locals in various North and West African cities. This negativism stemmed from a number of sources: racism (to Arabs they appeared “black,” and to Sudanese they appeared “white”), scorn for the social independence of Tuareg women, or the fact that the *ishumar* and refugees often developed shantytowns in the cities where they settled.¹⁰⁵ Ibrahim’s memories of his interactions with local Arabs in North Africa are generally positive, however. He was especially impressed by the generosity of his Arab carpentry mentor, who welcomed him in his house to participate in family activities. Negative experiences generally stemmed from fear and suspicion of the Tuareg, whom most people in northern Algeria and Libya were only familiar with through rumor and exaggerated stories. In one case, Algerian Arabs discovered Ibrahim and several Tuareg friends loitering in the streets; their fearful, hostile reaction prompted a rumble that landed Ibrahim in jail for three months. Experiences such as this were hard on *ishumar*, but Arab misunderstanding and ignorance was certainly preferable to the violent campaigns of the Malian army. At a young age, Ibrahim learned to cope with the hardship of *teshumara* by playing music in the solitude of the open desert. “I would always play the flute. I remember well because when you play the flute, you’re always expressing your worries. You think about things that touch you deeply. In Tuareg culture, if someone plays the flute, it means that he has worries.” But Ibrahim was impressed at a very young age with the guitar, which he had seen played by a cowboy in a western movie, and later attempted to make his own guitar out of strings and a jerrycan. His curiosity for music was clear, but it was not until later that this interest began to really develop into a powerful form of expression.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.177-188.

¹⁰⁶ Simon, "Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales."

A major urban hub for *ishumar* was Tamanrasset, in southern Algeria. It was here, in early 1979, that Ibrahim first encountered a real guitar. “Everyday [an Arab man] walked past this water tower with his guitar and went and sat on this small hill to play,” recalls Ibrahim. “He sang in Arabic. I really liked the guitar. When he went past I stayed with him and listened, and watched.” After some time the guitarist, recognizing his keen interest in his instrument, invited Ibrahim to come make tea and play the guitar at his house.¹⁰⁷ Ibrahim eventually bought the guitar and began to play it with his friend Inteyeden. These informal musical explorations were the beginning of what became a revolutionary new mode of musical expression, played by Tuareg throughout the Sahara. And yet it clearly began as something that was much more personal than Tinariwen’s later political music. Ibrahim elaborates: “We were always were playing out there, out of town—And we’d say, ‘We’re Kel Tinariwen¹⁰⁸.’ Kel Tinariwen for ‘people of the desert.’ We don’t want the city life. We don’t want the town. We’re people of the bush. That’s it.” That’s it: a couple of young *ishumar* coping with their uncertain circumstances through music.¹⁰⁹

Ishumar musicians are conscious of the therapeutic role of their music. Ibrahim had specifically referred to this when he described playing flute as a child. But as an adult he continues to directly address this function behind music: “When I take my guitar and go and play outside, it does me good. It’s a relief for me.”¹¹⁰ In “Ténéré Daféo Nikchan,” he plays flute to recall the music of his childhood; this, in addition to the fact he performs solo, strengthens the powerful text depicting the lonely life of an *ashamor*:

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ According to some [Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 96 and Nadia Belalimat, "Qui Sait Danser Sur Cette Chanson, Nous Lui Donnerons De La Cadence: Musique, Poésie Et Politique Chez Les Touaregs," *Terrain* 41 (2003).], Tinariwen’s original name was Taghreft Tinariwen, meaning “Let’s Build Up the Countries.” The name “Tinariwen” was simply their nickname used by the public.

¹⁰⁹ Simon, "Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales."

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

*I'm in the desert with a wood fire
I'm keeping the night company
With its shooting stars*

*Life
In the ruins
These traces that cry memories
I remember and I settle down
Deep in nostalgia*

*My head resting on a pillow of woes
Tonight I sleep in the ruins
I follow the traces of my past
It sometimes befalls me to live like this
My heart oppressed and tight
And I feel the thirst of my soul*

*Then I hear some music
Sounds, the wind
Some music which takes me far, far away
To the clear light of morning
Where, before my heart
The brilliance of the stars goes out.¹¹¹*

In fact, many songs feature lyrics reminiscent of the blues in that their tone is melancholy and reflective, describing one's misery. The song "Ahimana" is one example, depicting the fruitless struggle for wealth abroad:

*Dear Mother, since the time I left for Libya with patient steps
I arrived but I have been feeling aimless
I search for the money I need by any means necessary
But it refuses to accumulate
Oh my soul....¹¹²*

Intertwined with this sense of misery is the concept of *assouf*. This word has a complex meaning that is difficult to translate. It expresses some of the most important sentiments of *ishumar*, such as loneliness, longing, and nostalgia. But it is also a psychological state of mind

¹¹¹ "Ténére Daféo Nikchan" by Ibrahim ag Alhabib, from Tinariwen, *Amassakoul* (World Village USA, 2004), CD. Text translations are taken from CD liner notes unless noted otherwise.

¹¹² "Ahimana" by Mohammed Ag Itlale (aka 'Japonais'), from ———, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life* (World Village, 2007), CD.

associated with exile as well as spirit possession; a possessed person in a trance is said to “be in *assouf*.”¹¹³ As one Tuareg once explained, *assouf* is “everything which lies out there in the darkness, beyond the warmth of the campfire.”¹¹⁴ Inteyeden’s song “Imidiwane Win Akaline” conveys a lot of the intense complexity of *assouf*:

*My friends of my country, I live in exile.
I am in a country where there is no maternal love.
I am wounded in my soul.
I struggle against my thoughts.
I do not understand the life that surrounds me.
I burn my heart with my cigarette, [but] that makes my real illness worse.
My friends of my country, I live in exile.
I am ill, so that prevents me from laughing.
I am in a country where I have no maternal love.
I am unhappy in my soul.
I live where there is no maternal love.
I see the world upside down.
I burn my heart with my cigarette, [but] that makes my illness worse.*¹¹⁵

The laments over maternal love express nostalgia for family at home as well as the matrilineal institutions of Tuareg society that have been threatened by Islamic and national interference. Additionally, the relationship of illness and the imagery of the burning cigarette reflects a common image in *tende n-gumatan* songs, in which a “burning liver” conveys sadness, wounded feelings, and unrequited love.¹¹⁶

Performing songs along these themes was (and is) cathartic to the individual musicians, to be sure. But they also helped foster a sense of community among the *ishumar* gathered together in exile. Songs of praise composed by one *ishumar* for another also contributed to this community by creating a circle of mutual support. The exile experienced by the *ishumar* lasted

¹¹³ Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance." 642-643.

¹¹⁴ Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

¹¹⁵ Translation from Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance." 642. The song is performed and attributed to Ibrahim on Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

¹¹⁶ Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance." 642.

far longer than the time spent abroad by Tuareg raiders and caravan merchants of the past, so Tuareg women were rarely seen for long periods of time (although there were some women *ishumar*). Male *ishumar* therefore did not often hear *tende* or the *anzad* songs of praise that motivated men of previous generations. *Al-guitara* filled this gap, sometimes in ways more obvious than others. For instance, “Ahimana,” described above, takes the form of a *tende* song performed within the means of an *al-guitara* ensemble, a more obvious attempt at recreating a women’s musical performance. Susan Rasmussen recognizes the fulfillment of this void through *al-guitara*, stating: “the fighter, composer, and singers evoked, and also embodied, popular memories of warrior heroes and the Saharan spaces they defended.” Such imagery allowed the *ishumar* to adequately substitute the traditional rites of passage—caravan trading and herding—with their modern experiences: exile and fighting together in the rebellion.¹¹⁷ *Al-guitara* would continue to be an important force in mobilizing the *ishumar* community and attempting to maintain unity during the rebellion, as we will soon see.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 635-6 and 653.

V Music of the Rebellion

Until recently, when it began to reach beyond African audiences to Western music enthusiasts, *al-guitara* music was always subordinate to its message.¹¹⁸ The meaning behind *al-guitara* was clear to anyone involved in *tanekra*, the Tuareg resistance movement, although the specific words may not have been. *Ishumar* poetry did not conform to common modes of versification and mixes Tamashek and Arabic language. Additionally, the recording and transmission of cassettes carried *al-guitara* and *ishumar* poetry beyond local listeners, which was problematic because the various Tamashek dialects were not easily understood—if understood at all—by Tuareg from other regions. Nonetheless, the symbolism associating *al-guitara* with *teshumara* and *tanekra* would be clearly understood by any *ishumar* audience.¹¹⁹ This was crucial, as *al-guitara* became a tool, a “political news bulletin for propaganda” for organizing and mobilizing rebels participating in *tanekra*.¹²⁰ It provided the *ishumar* something more than just catharsis: it became a weapon.

Based on a collection of poems compiled in 1995, Nadia Belalimat found that *al-guitara* repertoire falls into four main categories, reflecting the evolving aims of their music: (1) those songs about the circumstances of the *ishumar*; (2) those songs written before the rebellion (1978-1989), planting the seeds for organized resistance against oppressive national governments; (3) those expressing the initial struggle of the rebellion, in 1990 and ‘91; and (4) those addressing the discord among various Tuareg factions as the rebellion fell into disarray, from 1991 to ‘94.¹²¹ A lot has happened since that time, but as Belalimat clearly explains, songs about the experiences of the *ishumar* are common throughout all periods of *al-guitara* music. In the previous section we

¹¹⁸ Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 96

¹¹⁹ Belalimat, "Qui Sait Danser Sur Cette Chanson."

¹²⁰ Borel, "Tuareg Music: From Acoustic to Electric." 132.

¹²¹ Belalimat, "Qui Sait Danser Sur Cette Chanson."

examined the role that this music played in creating a sense of community and providing comfort to *ishumar* experiencing *assouf*. The remainder of the *al-guitara* repertory is oriented more towards action than emotion. This will be clear as we explore the evolving messages of *al-guitara* in an essentially chronological order. The other three categories identified by Belalimat will be discussed here, following the course of the rebellion, while in the final section we will update her catalog with the music created since the signing of peace accords and the explosion of international interest in *al-guitara*.

The conditions driving *teshumara* also fueled the Tuareg nationalist movement, *tanekra*, which shared the same aims as *Alfellaga*. As many Tuareg remarked to Lecocq, “*Alfellaga* and 1990 are one and the same thing.”¹²² This comparison is clear in “*Soixante Trois*,” one of Ibrahim’s early songs:

'63 has gone, but will return
*That time has left us memories*¹²³

During the 1970s and 80s, reflecting the resurgence of this revolutionary spirit, the term *ishumar* began to take on political connotations beyond its original meaning of exile and unemployment.¹²⁴ Although it originated in Algeria with some of the former fighters of *Alfellaga*, many of whom had been released or who had escaped from prison, *tanekra* gained significant strength in Libya. The country is rich in oil while lacking in labor, and during the 1970s it was the preferred destination for *ishumar* because wages and opportunities for employment were better. But the movement really took off when Libya’s leader, Colonel Ghadaffi, offered military training to the *ishumar*. While his aim was to use these *ishumar* in his army in Chad and Lebanon, as well as in regional political maneuvering, the *tanekra* fighters—

¹²² Lecocq, ““That Desert Is Our Country””. 214

¹²³ Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

¹²⁴ Rasmussen, “Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance.” 638

aware that they were being used—nonetheless saw the offer as a chance to receive military training and experience.¹²⁵

Ibrahim and Inteyeden followed the call to Libya in 1980, but they didn't bring a guitar with them. However, it wasn't long before they played again, rising to prominence as the "official" voice for *tanekra* and heralding a revolutionary new form of musical expression. While in the camps, a fighter named Iyad composed "Bismihali," a song that essentially became the Tuareg national anthem:

*In the name of God,
We start the revolution with my brothers
In the name of God,
We pursue the traitors, we take on the enemies
In the name of God,
We will win mountains
In the name of God,
Raise us with my brothers.*¹²⁶

"Iyad wrote the lyrics," recalls Ibrahim.

We'd sing it without any guitars. Everyday, at assembly we'd sing that song. And after that I asked for a guitar. I said, I play guitar and I need one to sing. They said yes and the soldiers put money into a kitty to buy a guitar.¹²⁷

Clearly, music was an important part of the *ishumar* experience, and the incorporation of the guitar only added strength and legitimacy to the militant sentiments behind a Tuareg revolution.

In the camp, additional *ishumar* joined with Ibrahim and Inteyeden to expand Tinariwen into a full band. They became the major voice for *tanekra*, although they certainly weren't the only *al-guitara* group within the movement. *Al-guitara* musicians and *ishumar* poets were critical to the mobilization of *tanekra*, and their key tool was the cassette. *Al-guitara* groups

¹²⁵ Lecocq, "That Desert Is Our Country". 214-215

¹²⁶ "Bismilla" translated into English by the author, based on French translation (from Tamashek) by Nadia Belalimat, in Terakaft, *Bismilla, the Bamako Sessions* (Tapsit, 2007), CD. "Bismillah" also appears on Tinariwen, *The Radio Tisdas Sessions* (World Village USA, 2001), CD.

¹²⁷ Simon, "Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales."

would perform at *zahuten* (parties), where they would often be recorded. The resulting cassettes were then copied and recopied, distributed to listeners throughout the Sahara and thus spreading whatever messages they had. Possession of these tapes was extremely dangerous, and one could be imprisoned if caught by police.¹²⁸ When Ibrahim first started hearing talk about a second rebellion, around 1976, the level of secrecy was extreme: “There weren’t many Tuareg who spoke of [rebellion]. There were people who spoke about it, but secretly. There were these small meetings, but VERY secretive. They didn’t do that in a house or in a yard. They went off and had a meeting, far off somewhere, and talked about it.”¹²⁹ The meetings remained informal, although they did begin to involve more and more people and took place in homes, indistinguishable from normal meetings between friends or *zahuten*.¹³⁰

With a slogan of “one country, one goal, one people,” *tanekra* aimed to achieve Tuareg national independence and led directly to the rebellions in Mali and Niger of the 1990s. To the leaders of *tanekra*, only national union would create a united front strong enough to effectively break from the Malian and Nigerien governments. One of the earliest *al-guitara* songs expresses this:

*Friends, hear and understand me.
You know, there is one country,
One goal, one religion.
And unity, hand in hand.
Friends, you know
There is only one stake to which you are fettered
And only unity can break it.*¹³¹

They sought to create a single nation-state comprised of all of the different Tuareg confederations. This became an interesting twist on the typical problems of national union in

¹²⁸ Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 97

¹²⁹ Simon, "Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales."

¹³⁰ Lecocq, ""That Desert Is Our Country"". 210

¹³¹ "Friends, Hear and Understand" by Intakhmuda ag Sidi Mohamed, 1978, cited in ———, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 97

Africa, because while there was a lot in common among the various confederations, they had still never been one political unit—their nationality would, like in most African nations, be an “invented tribe.”

Participants in *tanekra* held many disparate viewpoints and came from several different confederations. Not all participants in *tanekra* supported the idea of an exclusive Tuareg nation, and many *ishumar* felt that the Tuareg caste system needed to be eliminated. In its quest to propagate equality among its citizens, the Malian government had effectively painted Tuareg leaders as colonial feudal lords, a perception that *ishumar* adopted in part because these lords carried on colonial practices such as tax collection or forced education for children. *Teshumara* also did not lend itself to the traditional structure of Tuareg society; caste-based behaviors such as the *imushagh* refusal to perform manual labor were nonsensical. As a consequence, the celebration of *imushagh* ideals that had long maintained a clear Tuareg identity across all members of society was faltering. “*Imghad*-ness” became celebrated for characteristics such as industriousness (as opposed to the perceived laziness of *imushagh*), and the sense that all Tuareg are equal and lineage is not important to one’s place in society.¹³² Yet even then, *imushagh* values like endurance, bravery, valor, and sacrifice maintain their presence in *ishumar* ideals:

*Abandon this incessant laziness
that kills the body and the living soul.
Men, extend the sleeping hand to me.
Work is at your door; what prevents this?*¹³³

The difference here is that those warrior values are not exclusive to members of just one class.

What held this diverse movement together initially was the sense of *egha* common among its participants. “Soixante Trois” draws attention to *Alfellaga*, an experience directly linked to *teshumara* and therefore something that all *ishumar* of any political motivation could share:

¹³² ———, ““That Desert Is Our Country””. 193-203

¹³³ Rasmussen, “Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance.” 640

*It [1963, Alfellaga] murdered the old folk and a child just born
It swooped down to the pastures and wiped out the cattle*

*America can bear witness, and Lebanon too
Russia supplied the arms inflamed*

*My sisters were hunted down without mercy
Those who I would exchange for nothing on this earth*

*Because love is powerful and strong
It penetrates the soul, and blisters.*¹³⁴

Only violent action can break this contract based on the shaming of a Tuareg individual or group; the deeds committed by the Malian and Nigerien governments during and after *Alfellaga* clearly created a common bond among the *ishumar* who had experienced them.¹³⁵ The 1990s rebellion “was something that healed me,” explains Ibrahim, “because I had always carried this thing which was too big in my heart.”¹³⁶

Despite the various internal divisions, the movement became quite popular. Before long, the movement was growing too out of hand for Ghadaffi’s tastes, and he withdrew his support. The members of Tinariwen and the other fighters went their different routes, but *al-guitara* had become something that resonated too well with the *ishumar* to let this disruption bring it to an end. Instead, the 1980s turned out to be the most fruitful period for *al-guitara* composition as musicians all had different new experiences to sing about. Cassettes were traded over the span of thousands of miles, their content becoming much more lucid about the future of *tanekra*:

*We look forward to the future,
Whether you agree or not.*¹³⁷

It is clear that action was imminent:

¹³⁴ “Soixante Trois,” on Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

¹³⁵ Lecocq, ““That Desert Is Our Country””.132.

¹³⁶ Simon, “Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales.”

¹³⁷ Translation into English by the author, from the French translation by Nadia Belalimat, in Belalimat, “Qui Sait Danser Sur Cette Chanson.”

*We pull up our trousers and fasten our belts,
we no longer accept the mistreatment we have endured.*¹³⁸

And it is clearer still that this action would be violent:

*Death is here, she's counting the days
When she arrives, there will be no more remedies
Let the blood boil if it is really in your veins
At the break of day, take your arms and take to the hilltops*

*We kill our enemies and become like eagles
We'll liberate all those who live in the plains
Joy will come and spread across the horizon
The youth will rediscover fulfillment, and express it with feasting
We'll dig wells and cultivate gardens.*¹³⁹

The *ishumar* had a positive, hopeful attitude towards a second rebellion. *Al-guitara* songs such as these glorified battle and promised that the fruits of the struggle would bring prosperity that probably none of the *ishumar* had ever experienced.

Rebellion came at last on June 28, 1990, when Tuareg fighters attacked a Malian district office and ambushed a convoy belonging to the NGO World Vision (rebellion in Niger began in 1992). It began with a series of victories against Mali's army for the united *tanekra* fighters, and in 1991 peace accords were signed.¹⁴⁰ However, the preexisting tensions and disagreement over the future of *tanekra* led to the fragmentation of the movement. Some parties wanted to continue the fight, while others did not.¹⁴¹ Many *al-guitara* musicians and poets began to compose and perform for one specific group or clan while others called for reconciliation, and some Tuareg even fought for the Malian army. Schisms within a particular family could create deep wounds.

¹³⁸ English translation by Baz Lecocq in Lecocq, ""That Desert Is Our Country"". 187, based on text in G. Klute, "Die Rebellionen Der Tuareg in Mali Und Niger" (Habilitationsschrift, Siegen University, 2001).

¹³⁹ "Tamatant Tilay," on Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

¹⁴⁰ Lecocq, ""That Desert Is Our Country"". 227-228

¹⁴¹ Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

These divisions made it dangerous to possess cassettes because of the potential for discovery by—in addition to government agents—other Tuareg as well.¹⁴²

Many songs aimed to preserve the unity that had seen such a strong start to the rebellion. Ibrahim's call for unity and negative attitude towards the divisiveness of the separate confederations in "Matadjem Yinmixan" reveals the nationalist sentiment driving *tanekra*:

*Why all this hate between you, which you teach your children?
The world looks at you and surpasses your understanding
You who resemble neither a westerner nor an Arab
Your faith in the tribes blinds you to the truth
Even if God were to send a blessing down for you to share
With a friend, they will only betray your confidence.*¹⁴³

Rasmussen has found that these songs about unity often still resonate with listeners, even after the rebellion has ended. The imagery of the following song is common to Tuareg poetry of many genres, giving it more than just an immediate meaningfulness:

*My brothers know [this]:
May you be attached to a single wood [tree].
Your brothers they are attached [to it].
This wood [tree], it is solidarity [mutual help; i.e., without unity, there is nothing].*¹⁴⁴

For the Tuareg, tree and wood imagery is especially symbolic of a strong bond. For example, "the central post of the tent" refers to the connection between mother and child in many *tende* songs. Rasmussen observes: "in more modern Tuareg poetry, natural features of the desert, mountains, and oases are prominent. These images mark out cultural as well as physical space—territories with moral significance that are to be defended."¹⁴⁵

Other songs aim to preserve unity by recalling the images of prosperity depicted in those songs encouraging rebellion (see above). In 1994, at the peak of Tuareg disunity, Abdallah wrote

¹⁴² Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance." 641 and Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 97-98.

¹⁴³ Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

¹⁴⁴ Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance." 641.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 641.

a song called “Toumast,” a word originally meaning “identity” or “self” but within *tanekra* coming to mean “nation” or “the people”:¹⁴⁶

*A divided people will never reach its goal
It will never cultivate an acacia tree with beautiful leaves*

*A divided people will lose its way
Each part of it will become an enemy in itself*

*Friends! Look after its wellbeing. Out there the ténéré [the desert or bush] is thirsty
Its trees are desiccated. Women and children await its water*

*In the time of revolt, we all rested under the shadow of its trees
And drank from its gourds, which were full of water.¹⁴⁷*

Here again, the imagery of the tree returns together with water as a symbol of unity. The trees are withered by Tuareg neglect, but Abdallah recalls the prosperity afforded by the healthy “trees” of unity, which supplied abundant water. *Aman Iman*, the title of the Tinariwen album on which “Toumast” appears, comes from a Tuareg proverb and means “water is life.” Abdallah interchanges water and people to draw attention to how disunity will prevent the *tanekra* dreams of prosperity from becoming reality.

Ultimately, the rebellions were settled with new peace agreements brokered by some of the educated traditional Tuareg leaders. In March 1996, three thousand weapons turned in by rebel fighters were symbolically burned in a “Flame of Peace” in Timbuktu. It can be debated whether or not the failure to create an independent Tuareg nation was due to the fragmentation of the movement. However, this goal had quickly been replaced with demands for greater political autonomy, which the Tuareg did successfully achieve. The secondary goal of the *tanekra* rebels—to abolish tribal and caste divisions within Tuareg society—was never realized. Nonetheless, the Tuareg did succeed in achieving some improvement in their position within Mali

¹⁴⁶ Lecocq, ““That Desert Is Our Country””. 200 and Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

¹⁴⁷ Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

and Niger. The fictive image of a nation of equals that been promoted by the Malian government had been shattered. While ethnic self-awareness resurged, it forced the government to acknowledge its discrimination against the Tuareg. The Malian government had its share of trouble during the rebellion; it changed from a dictatorship to a multi-party democracy, and in 1999 the Tuareg had their first chance to elect Tuareg into local government. Efforts were made to repatriate refugees and political exiles and compensate them for lost property, to integrate rebels into the Malian army, and to provide development opportunities by directing international NGOs to Tuareg communities.¹⁴⁸ These are definite improvements for the Tuareg, but the society known over a century ago has been all but completely replaced with a more urban lifestyle coping with conflicting past and current identities. Recurring violence in Tuareg regions of Mali and Niger clearly indicate that this process of adaptation is still running its course.

¹⁴⁸. Lecocq, ""That Desert Is Our Country"". 227-228 and ———, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 107-109. Rasmussen, "A Temporary Diaspora." 799-800.

VI

Al-guitara and the Revolution of Tuareg Music

Critical comparison of *anzad*, *tende*, and *tahardent* performance practices to those of *al-guitara* reflects the revolution of Tuareg society associated with the *ishumar*. Although a number of established Tuareg practices have been adapted to the new instrumentation and style of *al-guitara*, there is a clear trend—intentional or not—towards a Westernized musical conception. *Al-guitara* is rooted in Tuareg tradition, but it is not the music of Tuareg tradition—it is the music of Tuareg exile and suffering. “I was ashamed to play the guitar at first because that was not part of our tradition,” explains Alhousseïni Abdoulahi (“Abdallah”) of Tinariwen.¹⁴⁹ But as François Borel points out, the fact that *al-guitara* was non-traditional made it all the more appealing to all (eventually even non-Tuareg), who demanded a modern restructuring of Tuareg society. “The musicians justify their use of acoustic (and sometimes electric) guitar by citing the freedom it gives them. This instrument has no social connotation; it can be played by men—unlike the one-string fiddle—regardless of their social status and at any time, under any circumstances.”¹⁵⁰ This section will analyze the revolutionary role *al-guitara* plays in Tuareg music by way of musical transcription, rather than with text. It will become evident that the influence of Western exposure has led to increased regularity and simplification of rhythms, and in the increasing formal complexity of recent *al-guitara* songs.

In the formative days of the band, Tinariwen members were listening mostly to Moroccan chaabi and Algerian rai, but they also acquired cassettes of many popular Western musicians.¹⁵¹ Additionally, through the contact with similar resistance movements in North Africa, *tanekra*

¹⁴⁹ Banning Eyre, "Interview: Tinariwen: Abdallah," Afropop Worldwide, [http://www.afropop.org/multi/interview/ID/65/Tinariwen:+Abdallah+\(2004\)](http://www.afropop.org/multi/interview/ID/65/Tinariwen:+Abdallah+(2004)).

¹⁵⁰ Borel, "Tuareg Music: From Acoustic to Electric." 132

¹⁵¹ Andy Morgan, "Tinariwen: About," www.tinariwen.com/about.php. and Eyre, "Interview: Tinariwen: Abdallah."

fighters were inspired to emulate aspects of these movements, including their music. For instance, it is probable that the songs of the Polisario, the liberation movement in Western Sahara (a former Spanish-controlled territory claimed by Morocco), served as models for *al-guitara* with their use of guitars and Spanish rhythms. Borel finds that “ this resemblance is particularly striking between the song “Kel Akal Nin” (“Those of My Country”) by the group Takres n Akal and “Adelante Ejercito Popular” (“Onward People’s Army”) sung by the Grupo Nacional de Cantos y Danzas Populares of the Polisario Front.”¹⁵² But in addition to this, Tinariwen found musical inspiration in (among other things) Jimmy Hendrix’s virtuosic solos and Dire Straits’ simplicity and clarity of chords.¹⁵³

In the previous discussion of Tuareg music, one major recurring element was the contrast between Middle Eastern and Sudanese musical styles. Recall that the “Middle Eastern” style includes florid ornamentation of melody, subordination of rhythm to melody, and constriction of the vocal chords; and that the “Sudanese” style emphasizes rhythm, incorporates unornamented syllabic melody, and features less restricted voices with increased use of the lower register. *Al-guitara* borrows much more heavily from the Sudanese elements, which is surprising considering that it first developed among the *ishumar* living in Algeria and Libya.

There are several factors that may explain this. Foremost of these is that these *ishumar* came from Mali and Niger, regions of greater Sudanese influence than the other Tuareg lands in Algeria. Tinariwen wanted to carry on Tuareg “traditional” music, perhaps as a way of creating a sense of Tuareg community or a cultural “home-away-from-home” while abroad. Without access to Tuareg instruments, the guitar became a substitute that connected *ishumar* to their music as well as to the non-Tuareg music they were discovering. Furthermore, when Tinariwen first

¹⁵² Unfortunately, I have been unable to find recordings of these songs to include in this analysis. Borel, "Tuareg Music: From Acoustic to Electric." 132.

¹⁵³ Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 97

formed in the Libyan military camps, they were separated from Tuareg communities in general—not just from the southern Tuareg of Mali.¹⁵⁴ In their effort to perform Tuareg music, they were reproducing the only Tuareg music they knew—that which was more Sudanese in character—despite living in a much more “Middle Eastern” cultural environment. Of particular significance to Tinariwen’s sound was the addition of Sweiloum, who joined the band in the Libyan camps. He knew how to tune a guitar and had learned how to play in Mali. “There was a certain Aziz [in Mali], who played the guitar before Ali Farka Toure,” Ibrahim explains. “He was a Songhai. [Sweiloum] knew the songs of Aziz, he sang a bit like Aziz.”¹⁵⁵ His knowledge of tuning systems certainly helped solidify the use of pentatonic scales as the foundation of *al-guitara* harmony; while microtonal ornamentation is common, the core scale of any *al-guitara* song is consistently pentatonic. Additionally, although *al-guitara* developed through significant experimentation with Western styles, there may have been an element of Tuareg conservatism fostered among these *ishumar* musicians to resist Middle Eastern cultural influence and solidify their separate Tuareg identity. This resistance would not likely be as strongly directed towards Western culture because it was not the defining factor that differentiated Tuareg from Libyan identity.

An alternate explanation for the strong Sudanese element in *al-guitara*, though not mutually exclusive of the suggestions made above, addresses the musical training of *ishumar* musicians. As explained above, the *anzad* is an instrument well suited to the imitation of florid vocal effects, and consequently demands extensive training to be performed well. *Anzad* performance quality declined in the twentieth century because Tuareg social upheaval has limited luxuries such as the opportunity to practice musical instruments; also, the *anzad* only played by women. It is quite likely that because the early *ishumar* musicians were untrained, they lacked

¹⁵⁴ Vietze, Dmitri, “Resistance, Exile, and Electric Guitars,” Liner Notes, in Tinariwen, *The Radio Tisdas Sessions*.

¹⁵⁵ Simon, “Ibrahim: The Campfire Tales.”

the ability to effectively replicate *anzad* styles. Combined with the fact that the guitar (and *tahardent*) is plucked or strummed—rather than bowed—and limited to notes of short duration, this makes it quite difficult to execute melodies in a melismatic, Middle Eastern style. And, because the *ishumar* in Ghadaffi’s camps were almost all men, they may have not had the interest in performing the conservative music of noble women. *Tende* and *tahardent* music better addressed their interests and needs because *tende* is such a strongly communal genre, and the *tahardent* is urban and modern; the *ishumar* needed a Tuareg community in Libya, but it could not be the same sort of Tuareg community that had existed for hundreds of years in their homelands. All of these issues and forces are important to keep in mind, although greater research into the experiences of the earliest *ishumar* musicians is necessary before we can draw firm conclusions about them. What is clear is that *al-guitara* shares much more with “Sudanese” Tuareg styles than with “Middle Eastern” ones.

Some characteristics of *al-guitara* that may be described as Sudanese may also be linked to Western popular music (although the African-American origins of Western pop trace back, through American slavery, again to the cultures of sub-Saharan Africa). The most recognizable of these musical qualities are the subordination of melody to rhythm, and syllabic, minimally ornamented singing. If these elements came to characterize *al-guitara* because musicians sought to emulate Western music, it was more likely because it fostered a preference for certain Tuareg styles over others than because it triggered musical innovation, for these qualities were common in Tuareg music before *al-guitara*. Other, related developments in *al-guitara* are more indicative of the integration of solely Western performance practices.

The relationship between melody and rhythm is a defining element in the various regional styles of *anzad* music, as described above. The *anzad* love song “Ezzel N Oufada Aoua Etteb

Ales Ou N Abaradh”¹⁵⁶ (Transcription 4) is representative of the Aïr and Ahaggar styles, in which melody takes precedence over rhythm to such an extent that the pulse can become obscured. In *al-guitara*, as in *tende* and *tahardent* music, rhythm dictates the melodic structure (compare Transcriptions 1-3 with 5-6). Occasionally the meter of an *al-guitara* song may be adjusted to fit the text, but this is accomplished by altering the pattern of stressed and unstressed pulses, not the rate of the pulses (tempo). For example, in Tinariwen’s “Amassakoul N’Ténére”,¹⁵⁷ many of the verses and the choral responses temporarily switch from 4/4 to 2/4 in the second bar of the melody (Transcription 8). These changes accommodate the needs of the text—which explains why some verses include the 2/4 measure and others don’t—but they never sacrifice the steady pulse. Most genres of Western pop music are even stricter, typically maintaining a consistent pulse and meter throughout the majority of a song.

As in Western pop, syllabic singing is the standard for *al-guitara*, although brief ornaments common in *tende* (Transcription 5) and *tahardent* (Transcription 6) are also frequently heard (Transcriptions 1-3). These ornaments, sung and/or played on the guitar, usually take the form of acciaccaturas, turns, upper mordents, or trills. Extended melismas like those that are characteristic of *anzad* music (see Transcription 4) are extremely rare in the available *al-guitara* recordings (for an exception to this, see Transcription 7). Less similar to Western pop but quite distinctive to *al-guitara* and *tende* are simple melodies often featuring a lot of consecutive repetition of individual pitches. They stand in stark contrast to *anzad* melodies. This repetition occurs most often at the end of a verse, where the melody settles to the tonic of the mode (see Transcriptions 1-3 and 8), but it is also frequent throughout the course of a melodic strophe. For

¹⁵⁶ Holiday and Holiday, *Tuareg Music of the Southern Sahara*. Title translation in Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity". 210

¹⁵⁷ Tinariwen, *Amassakoul*.

instance, the strophes of one song by the *al-guitara* group Ensemble Tin Foussen de Ideles¹⁵⁸ at several points repeat the note G#, F#, or E for one or more beats (Transcription 2); and in “Amassakoul,” the strophes begin with a repetition of D for three beats (Transcription 8). “Amassakoul” also provides an excellent example of the low, open singing characteristic of Sudanese vocal style.

These various performance techniques in *al-guitara* clearly demonstrate the strength and reticence of Tuareg culture in the face of conditions unfavorable to (relative) cultural stability. However, they don’t explain why *al-guitara* is a revolutionary genre. The magnitude of social change represented by the *ishumar* generation warranted a far more dramatic transformation of Tuareg music than this. Musical revolution requires a potent catalyst, and the *ishumar* found one in what may be the world’s most recognized music of rebellion: rock ‘n roll. Since the earliest days of their civilization, the unique geographic position of the Tuareg had ensured their society a blend of Berber, Arab, and Sudanese cultures. *Al-guitara* was one of the first instances where Western culture was integrated into this mix in a significant way. The *ishumar* were prepared for—and in fact demanded—change. Even with all the strife the Tuareg suffered under French colonial rule, the tenacious fibers of Tuareg noble ideals preserved a relatively consistent culture for some time (although this is not to suggest that Tuareg society did not change significantly with French colonization).

What makes *al-guitara* so significant in Tuareg music are the elements of Western pop adopted into it, most obvious of which is the guitar. At first these were acoustic, but now electric guitars and even bass guitars are common in *al-guitara* ensembles. The expansion of ensembles to include multiple instruments of the same type (guitar) is a significant break from *anzad*, *tende*, and *tahardent* music, which do not usually include more than one of each type of instrument in an

¹⁵⁸ *Hoggar: Musique Des Touaregs.*

ensemble. *Al-guitara* ensembles typically include two guitars, with a third sometimes added as a percussion instrument; solo (male) singer; a responsorial chorus;¹⁵⁹ and now, it is becoming more common to see increased use of percussion instruments, including Western drum sets. These instruments introduce new timbres and textures to Tuareg music even when they emulate traditional practices. Amplified guitars have a remarkable array of timbres available to them, ranging from a gritty sound that is not all that different from that of a *tahardent* with a buzzing attachment to the neck (e.g. “Intidgagen” by Terakaft, Transcription 9), to a round, polished tone more akin to jazz guitar timbres (e.g. “Amassakoul,” Transcriptions 8). And the bass guitar, it should be mentioned, has no parallel among traditional Tuareg instruments. Though it often plays a drone, as heard on *tahardent* as well, the bass is also used to play riffs in some songs—a huge step towards integrating rock ‘n roll into *al-guitara* (again, see “Amassakoul”).

Although guitar first acted as a substitute for the *tahardent*, reflected in the *tahardent*-like melodic material heard between *al-guitara* strophes,¹⁶⁰ the playing technique of the guitar differs in a significant way. Rather than being solely a plucked instrument, the guitar has the additional capability of providing chords to the musical texture. Chords are a potentially significant innovation in Tuareg music because they convey considerable harmonic information in a vertical (rather than linear) fashion. The various melodic modes used by the Tuareg establish a static harmony in their songs, which do not require chords in order to be harmonically clear. In the majority of *al-guitara* songs, the harmony remains static; chords draw their pitches from the present mode, but they serve a more percussive role than a harmonic one because they do not convey any information not already established by the melodic elements of the song. For example, one of the guitars in a song by Ensemble Stella de Tamanrasset adds a source of rhythm

¹⁵⁹ Borel, "Tuareg Music: From Acoustic to Electric." 132

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 132

while repeating only one chord, especially important during moments when there is no clapping (Transcription 3).

However, even in this song there is evidence of an awareness of vertical harmony. Occasionally the droning guitar pitch will raise a step (from F to G) to sound at an octave when the melody lands on an extended G on the downbeat, a moment when the prolonged sonority of a major 2nd, which may or may not be desirable to Tuareg listeners, would be exposed. There are several more examples where accompanying guitars will briefly alter a droning pitch and avoid clashes by playing unison pitches with the melody. In one of the songs by Ensemble Tin Fousseen de Ideles (Transcription 2) the droning pitch raises from E to F# at recurring moments to sound an octave below the melody; although this change does not happen at every iteration of the melody, the fact that it does always appear at the same point suggests it is performed intentionally. The bass in “Amassakoul” steps downward from G to F at recurring points in the melody, creating more consonant harmonies with the As, Cs, and Ds that dominate the melody at these moments (Transcription 8). These are very minor examples of vertical harmonic consciousness in *al-guitara*, but the mere presence of these moments—and their frequency in both earlier and current recordings of *al-guitara*—suggests that there may be more significant harmonic developments to come.

In studying Nigerien *al-guitara*, Borel found that *ishumar* musicians typically produce a limited range of chords (usually three) on the guitar. He observes that “the music is repetitive, since the key of the accompaniment and the rhythm rarely varies in the whole repertory.”¹⁶¹ It is unclear whether Borel means “key” in a Western sense, or in terms of a particular melodic mode. This distinction is important because it might seem reasonable, considering Tuareg practices of static harmony, to expect that chords would not introduce any new pitches outside of a particular

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 132

mode. However, in Western music it is very common to include pitches from outside a given key (e.g., secondary dominants) that are so brief in duration that they do not suggest a change in key within a section of music. “Intidgagen” by the *al-guitara* group Terakaft features a four-bar progression using just three major chords: A, C, and D (Transcription 9). If modal harmony were the rule here, the combination of these chords would be impossible because they would require six pitches (A C C# D E F#), which does not resemble any recognized Tuareg mode. This progression clearly exhibits a Westernized harmonic sensibility, in that it borrows pitches from outside an established mode or key. However, the melodic content in “Intidgagen” makes use of just one mode, ignoring some of the introduced pitches in the chordal accompaniment. In these moments, the melody generally shares just the root pitch with a given chord. Nonetheless, the introduction of these new chords and pitches, yet to be explored for the potential uses common to Western music, may lead to new developments in Tuareg harmony and melody.

While harmony is slightly more complicated in *al-guitara* than in other Tuareg music, rhythms are becoming generally smoother and more simplified, akin to Western popular music. While between the two major Tuareg styles the rhythm of *al-guitara* is much more Sudanese, the distinctive polyrhythms of Sudanese music—still prevalent and important—play a greater background role than heard in other genres, such as *takamba*. The syncopation in the *takamba* “Khadisia” is extremely prominent, accentuated by the musician’s percussive tapping on downbeats and melodic flourishes on upbeats (Transcription 6). While overall the repeating 2-bar rhythm can be counted over six equal beats—in 3/4—the syncopation in the second bar strongly emphasizes a sharply contrasting, almost disorienting 6/8 feel. The examples from Ensemble Tin Fousen des Ideles (Transcriptions 1-2) illustrate the background role polyrhythms play in *al-guitara*. The guitars, voices, clapping, percussion, and droning guitar strings all create

contrasting rhythms, but the phrasing of the guitar and vocal melodies propels forward with more regularity and at greater length than in “Khadisia.” There is no question to the meter. Other examples, especially more recent recordings released in the West, smooth rhythms out even more. For instance, the crisp guitar chords on beats two and four in “Amassakoul N’Ténére” (in 4/4) contrast with the melody, built of eighth notes and pauses on beats one or three, but the combination of these two create a steady lilting rhythm (Transcription 8). The simplification of rhythm and meter in *al-guitara* undoubtedly was an essential development that paved the way for Western enthusiasm for *al-guitara*.

The most important element by far, however, is the increased sophistication and organization of *al-guitara* compositions compared to those of other genres. Rhythms and melodies may be simplified, but the form of *al-guitara* songs are more clearly and regularly structured like Western pop—an element more representative of Western art music. In fact, *al-guitara* melodies are frequently structured with the perfect balance of four- or eight-bar periods, akin to so many works since the Western Classical period (see Transcriptions 1-3). This significantly changes the way Tuareg music sounds, and undoubtedly impacts poetic forms, which are of supreme importance as the high art of the Tuareg. *Al-guitara* songs, though highly repetitive as they are mainly composed of solo vocal strophes, responsorial choral strophes, instrumental strophes, and instrumental interludes, can be more compositionally complex than other Tuareg music.

For instance, many *al-guitara* songs begin with extended introductions that may be out of time or involve melodic material unrelated to the core structure of the song, as illustrated in Tinariwen’s “Mano Dayak” (Transcription 7). Introductions of this sort are quite common in Western popular music, but are rare if not nonexistent in older Tuareg genres. Once the entire

ensemble joins in and establishes a steady rhythm in “Mano Dayak”, the form again becomes more complex. The first verse is repeated after a separate call-and-response section between solo voice and chorus, but during this repetition is followed with instrumental response between phrases. Following the subsequent repetition of the solo-choral responsorial section, there are two guitar solos and a guitar interlude. Finally, after another full iteration of the verse and responsorial section, a final guitar interlude and solo round out the song as it is faded out. The amount of different melodic material is significantly more than in most other examples. It creates some contrasts that are arguably better suited to Western ears, which could potentially be bored by the static nature of droning *al-guitara* harmony. In this way it reflects the potential that Tinariwen’s Western audiences may be shaping new developments in *ishumar* music. At the very least, this is one example of how *al-guitara* songs more clearly display the compositional (musical) work of their authors, increasing the importance of music itself to better equal the esteemed status of poetry. By doing this, *al-guitara* songs become more personalized, linking music with text to better reflect the social and political concerns of the *ishumar* musicians.

VII

Al-guitara and the Global Stage

The 1996 “Flame of Peace” was a symbolic gesture heralding the beginning of reconciliation between the Tuareg and the rest of Mali (and, indirectly, Niger). But it also symbolized a major turning point for *al-guitara*. Peace and reconciliation did not mean the Tuareg were suddenly content: many of the problems facing the Tuareg since *Alfellaga* and *teshumara* continue to plague them. *Al-guitara* continues to serve as a vehicle for commentary on these issues, but since the rebellion it has lost its subversive edge and is now performed publicly. Additionally, its audience has broadened considerably to include non-Tuareg Africans and Westerners—a large audience that does not speak Tamashek. This has had a significant impact on the performance practices of *al-guitara* and, subsequently, its reception among the next generation of Tuareg youth. With this final section we will explore what the current trends within Tuareg music suggest about the future of *al-guitara*.

Many Tuareg and non-Tuareg political and social leaders in Mali and Niger now emphasize peace, repatriation, and reconciliation, as governments have little control over armies and police in rural areas, where fighting continues to occasionally break out. Tuareg musicians and poets are often hired by these leaders to perform at festivals, rallies, or other gatherings and promote these goals.¹⁶² In Kidal, Mali, an extended poem condemning the rebellion, written by a Western-educated Tuareg intellectual, is often played over the radio to remind listeners about the negative effects of the internal conflicts.¹⁶³ Rasmussen observes that many current performances are “carefully orchestrated and mediate disparate and even opposed forces and viewpoints impinging on Tuareg society.” Musicians must balance the old Tuareg suspicion towards outsiders—who frequently were instruments of coercion and taxation—with the new

¹⁶² Rasmussen, "A Temporary Diaspora." 800

¹⁶³ Lecocq, "Unemployed Intellectuals in the Sahara." 98

understanding that these outsiders are often humanitarian workers or political leaders who promise food, livestock, and new wells.¹⁶⁴

Al-guitara and *ishumar* have taken on broader new meanings since the peace accords. *Ishumar* no longer describes just the generation that grew up immediately after *Alfellaga*—the “children of ’63.” And *al-guitara* (and even *tende*) has come to refer more generically to any non-liturgical popular music performances, especially those featuring guitar, bass, and drums. The revolutionary spirit of the original *al-guitara* songs can still be found, but is less specific. However, among Tuareg the genre still serves as an important vehicle for social commentary and praise.¹⁶⁵ For instance, “Mano Dayak” offers gratitude to the Tuareg hero and leader who tragically died in a plane crash in 1995:

*I come from a tenere well used to sandstorms
I take my rest under the shadeless Anna et Tadjart bushes
I have never seen enough trees to make a forest
My home is the Tamesna: white, naked and empty
It affords pasture to neither goat nor cow
It is the land of the young camel, who wanders after its mother*

*I come to a tenere [the desert or the bush] which lies to the north of Bouss
A desert which is totally naked
Whithout a single tree, or even a twig
And when men travel there, it's always hot*

*Now I've seen something that fills me with joy
A Tamashek [Tuareg] who's living well
And communicating through a satellite phone
Tied to the tree under which he rests
The buds fall all around him
All of that is thanks to Mano Dayak.¹⁶⁶*

¹⁶⁴ Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance." 639.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 638-639. and ———, "Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances." 134

¹⁶⁶ “Mano Dayak” by Abdallah Ag Alhousseyni, in Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

Al-guitara is frequently performed at the same youthful evening gatherings (*ahal* or *zahuten*) as *tende*, although they don't perform simultaneously. These are opportunities to use images that comment on sexuality, courtship, marriage, and descent, but which also show that:

these long-standing concerns among Tuareg, while still important, are increasingly being translated into concerns of cultural autonomy, as many local youths, uprooted from their communities by migrant labor and guerrilla warfare, return, reflect upon, and sometimes dispute, those values embedded in traditional age imagery. They struggle with cultural survival and sometimes question elders' definitions of what is important in transitions over the life course.¹⁶⁷

These questions and criticisms helped mobilize *tanekra*, but today they energize calls for action to improve Tuareg conditions and also preserve Tuareg culture. Such appeals no doubt encourage Tuareg unity as they aim at issues shared by the society as a whole, rather than individual tribes or castes. The use of "Kel Tamashek" in the following song emphasizes the commonality of language among all Tuareg:

*That which has happened gives no succor to the soul
Of whoever lives and cares for his loved ones
The sun, the wind, and even more
But the worse for them is the lack of water*

*My Kel Tamashek brothers, there's a hidden truth:
The Tamashek language*

*A great truth which has long been buried in the emptiness of the desert
Over which ignorance has said its final prayer.¹⁶⁸*

One of the issues of great concern is the future of the Tamashek language and its script, Tifinagh. These are undoubtedly threatened by the encouraged integration of Tuareg into various parts of the national societies through North and West Africa, including schools and universities. Such integration favors more popularly spoken languages, like French or Arabic. Tinariwen is working on a project (called "Taghreft Tinariwen," no less) to develop tools for cultural

¹⁶⁷ Rasmussen, "Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances." 134

¹⁶⁸ "Awa Didjen" by Mohammed Ag Itlale ("Japonais") on Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*.

preservation and development, including the construction of a museum with a mission to preserve writings in Tifinagh.

Part of the effort being made by national governments to promote peace and reconciliation, and to offer economic opportunity to Tuareg, is to create public festivals at which professional musicians can perform. Festivals such as the annual Festival in the Desert provide opportunities for musicians from throughout West Africa and the world to come perform for each other. These promote multicultural exchanges but also stimulate local economies with tourism—especially when such festivals are attracting Westerners. DVDs and CDs with performances from the Festival in the Desert are available worldwide, and travel companies now organize annual tours through Mali that bring travelers to the festival site. This festival has been particularly successful, and the creation of an additional Tuareg-specific cultural festival is indeed another part of Taghreft Tinariwen's development goals.

A key part to building a successful tourism industry in Tuareg regions such as northern Mali is to break stereotypes and misunderstandings held by foreigners. Such reeducation benefits professional musical groups seeking to tour internationally, as well. Promotional literature about the predominantly female music ensemble Tartit distances the Tuareg from negative Muslim stereotypes by focusing on the fact that the Tuareg do not follow the Koran as strictly as some other Muslim peoples. It also emphasizes the freedom women have to, among other things, divorce or choose their husbands, not only downplaying Muslim stereotypes but also, as Rasmussen notes, appealing to Western feminist sentiments. These efforts reeducate foreigners and perhaps succeed in changing their perceptions of the Tuareg and their homelands, but they also set a trend towards mythmaking. Performers (and especially their Western producers) purposely choose to emphasize certain parts of Tuareg culture to attract the greatest interest and

sympathy. “Performers present as nonthreatening an image as possible to deemphasize political controversy,” writes Rasmussen. Tartit, for instance, carefully seeks to convey their human rights concerns to international audiences without introducing the *ishumar* calls for violent resistance. They focus on themes such as love, resistance to arranged marriages, peace and national reconciliation, the roles of griots, and the struggle to prevent AIDS—themes that are appealing to Western audiences.¹⁶⁹

Tinariwen walks a fine line with the issue of the rebel past, for the band’s history *is* the history of *teshumara*, *tanekra*, and the rebellion. They are promoted as warriors with Kalashnikovs and guitars, but their similarities to subversive rock music are played up so that this becomes more appealing than threatening. Rasmussen elaborates on this, saying, “international touring ensembles...respond with self-conscious and intentional impression-management, by performing their culture and history for others—their ‘exotics.’”¹⁷⁰ At international concerts, members of Tinariwen dress in traditional clothing of *imushagh*, their *tagelmusts* typically covering their entire face for at least part of the performance. It is a beautiful image of the ideal Tuareg warrior, but as informal pictures of Tinariwen members show, is not at all how they normally dress. This is not something anyone seems interested in reminding audiences, who are attracted not just to the music, but to the exoticism of the band as well. At a recent Tinariwen concert I attended in New York (April 2009), the Western venue employee who introduced the band played up the authenticity of their exotic other-worldness, going so far as to excitedly claim that “These guys are actually from Africa!”

As discussed above, it was not until recently that the music itself began to be equally or even more important than the message of *al-guitara*. As has been explained earlier in this

¹⁶⁹ Rasmussen, "Moving Beyond Protest in Tuareg Ichumar Musical Performance." 646-647. and ———, "A Temporary Diaspora." 807.

¹⁷⁰ Rasmussen, "A Temporary Diaspora." 794.

section, the message continues to be of extreme importance when performed among Tuareg. However, when reaching out to Western audiences, who generally listen to Tinariwen and other world music groups as entertainment and who often don't speak the language of performers (which is especially true with rare languages such as Tamashek), the appeal comes primarily from the music itself. The message might only be understood by reading liner notes or becoming informed about a performer's life. This provides a logical explanation for the increasing complexity of *al-guitara* compositions discussed in the previous section. A comparison of Transcription 1 to Transcription 7 ("Mano Dayak"), our recurring example of complex *al-guitara* composition, highlights this trend. The song in Transcription 1, while played with nearly identical instrumentation, is much simpler and more akin to other Tuareg genres in terms of its compositional form.

It was interesting to compare the live performance I attended to the recordings of Tinariwen I am familiar with. In live performance in a small club, the musicians displayed much more active showmanship and were much more virtuosic than I had previously observed. The guitarists—and especially the bassist—played with a lot more improvised variation on various riffs than what can be heard on the recordings. Instrumental solos also displayed increased harmonic complexity than just the pentatonic *tahardent*-like flourishes that are the norm on the recordings. And what was particularly surprising was the sudden stop-time section in one song, where the entire band except for the lead guitarist dropped out, leaving him to show off his improvisation skills over a repeating, accelerating melody.

Al-guitara continues to evolve to suit new purposes, new goals, and new audiences. Like the post-*tanekra* structure of Tuareg society, still trying to reconcile ancient tradition with modern attitudes, "as a relatively new instrument and musical genre in Tuareg culture, the guitar's place

in traditional cosmology...is as yet ambiguous. It is not, however, merely an instrument of 'globalization.'"¹⁷¹ Sharing important social functions with *tende* especially, *al-guitara* seems to have staked a long-term hold within Tuareg culture. Still, its explosion of popularity around the world, under names such as "rebel blues" or "desert blues", has contributed to an increasing trend towards a Western sound. Borel predicts that this Westernization is already creating a void within Tuareg music that will need to be filled with some other new innovation:

Today, after having met with real success among Tuareg youth—for whom traditional music evoked a sense of scorn mixed with repressed nostalgia, as though it had become 'politically incorrect'—this new music is already beginning to tire its audience, precisely because it is losing its original militant character and resembling all other popular world music. Actually the Tuareg have more and more difficulty identifying themselves with a music, which, mostly for commercial reasons, is 'formatted' for the European and American audiences by 'modern' Tuareg musicians (like the groups Tinariwen and Tartit) and Western producers who want to profit in the international records market by taking advantage of the current 'Tuareg trend.'¹⁷²

Whatever music the Tuareg may come to identify with in the future, there is no doubt that the revolutionary changes brought about by *al-guitara* will continue to have a significant impact.

¹⁷¹ ———, "Between Several Worlds: Images of Youth and Age in Tuareg Popular Performances." 140

¹⁷² Borel, "Tuareg Music: From Acoustic to Electric." 132

Tamashek Pronunciation Guide

from Caroline Card, "Tuareg Music and Social Identity," pg. xv.

Vowels

- a:** as in "a" of "father"
- ä:** as in "a" of "bat"
- e:** as in "e" of "they"
- i:** as in "i" of "machine"
- o:** as in "o" of "bone"
- u:** as in "u" of "rule"
- ô:** as in "a" of "about"

Consonants

- g:** as in "g" of "go"
- h:** slightly more aspirated than the English "h"
- j:** when in internal position, pronounce as "s" in "measure"
when in initial position, pronounce as "j" in "jar"
- n:** nasal before "z"
- ñ:** nasal in any context
- q:** similar to "k" but less aspirated and produced deeper in the throat
- r:** rolled with tip of tongue

Additional Symbol

- ^** indicates pitch rise on an unstressed vowel

Glossary

- abakkabuk:** *tahardent* dance rhythm unique to the Tuareg; based on twelve-pulse pattern
- aggu:** professional *inaden* musicians
- aggutan:** plural of *aggu*
- ahal:** evening gatherings associated with *anzad* performances, and relaxed social interaction among Tuareg youth
- ahar:** “lion,” the lowest *tahardent* string
- ðkänzam:** small single-headed frame drum used in some *tende* music
- Alfellaga:** the first Tuareg rebellion, in the 1960s
- al-guitara:** the genre of guitar music developed by the *ishumar*
- alhinén:** Arabic term for *tende n-gumatan*
- amenukal:** chief of a Tuareg confederation
- anzad:** one-stringed fiddle
- anzhad:** *anzad* in the western dialect
- aralaba:** alternative name for *assakalabu*
- ashamor:** singular of *ishumar*
- assakalabu:** an instrument made with a half calabash placed in water, to accompany *tende*
- assouf:** a complex word of great importance, expressing loneliness, longing, or nostalgia
- awokkoz:** “young animal,” one name for the highest *tahardent* string
- azel:** solo air performed on *anzad*
- ebag:** “jackal,” one name for the highest *tahardent* string
- egha:** a debt for shame brought to one’s honor, which must be repaid violently
- el janun:** Arabic term for *tende n-gumatan*
- ishumar:** alternate spelling of *ishumar*
- iderfan:** members of the class of freed Sudanese slaves, who were recently freed and have more knowledge of their Tuareg tribal associations
- imajaghan:** one term for a member of the Tuareg noble class
- imghad:** members of the vassal class
- imuhagh:** one term for a member of the Tuareg noble class
- imushagh:** one term for a member of the Tuareg noble class
- imzad:** *anzad* in the northern dialect

inaden:	members of the artisan class
irawelan:	members of the class of freed Sudanese slaves, who were freed so long ago as to have lost track of their Tuareg tribal associations
ishumar:	“the unemployed,” the generation of Tuareg exiles who sought work and opportunity outside of their homelands, especially in North African cities
izlan:	plural of <i>azel</i>
jabâ:	<i>tahardent</i> dance rhythm for praising youthfulness; based on twelve-pulse pattern
Kel Asuf:	good or evil spirits believed by Tuareg to be linked to fire, water, wind, etc., and responsible for suffering from unseen problems such as mental illnesses
marabutin:	Arabic word for Muslim holy men
n-geru:	<i>tahardent</i> rhythm for heroic ballads; based on five-pulse pattern
ser-i:	<i>tahardent</i> dance rhythm played for <i>inaden</i> ; based on twelve-pulse pattern
tagelmust:	male turban or veil
tahômðhðmt:	men’s raspy, rhythmic grunts used in <i>tende n-gumatan</i>
tahardent:	three-string plucked lute
takðmba:	urban popular genre played for entertainment, played with <i>tahardent</i> ; also, <i>tahardent</i> dance rhythm based on twelve-pulse pattern
Tamesna:	arid region spanning across Mali, Niger and Algeria
tanekra:	the Tuareg resistance movement
tazori:	“hyena,” the middle <i>tahardent</i> string
tende:	mortar drum, the musical genre associated with it, and the social event that features the instrument
tende n-ðmnas:	<i>tende</i> genre for camel races and dances
tende n-tagbast:	<i>tende</i> genre for dances of former slaves, <i>inaden</i> , and sometimes <i>imghad</i>
tende n-gumatan:	<i>tende</i> performed for curing ceremony
tenere:	the desert or the bush; singular of Tinariwen
terrerehit:	woman’s shrill tongue flutter cry, used to express appreciation or joy
teshumara:	the lifestyle associated with the <i>ishumar</i> , which was in contrast to the older Tuareg lifestyle
tesiwit:	poetic genre often accompanied by <i>anzad</i>
yalli:	<i>tahardent</i> rhythm for heroic ballads; based on five-pulse pattern
zahuten:	<i>ishumar</i> evening parties

Transcriptions

Note: Pitches and rhythms are approximate; the most subtle ornamentations and tonal alterations are not represented. It should be mentioned that there are frequently cases where musicians unintentionally perform “wrong” notes that do not fit the melodic mode; these are included in the transcriptions, but comments will only be made if these pitches appear to be intentional or serve specific functions. Text translations are from notes accompanying the listed recordings unless stated otherwise. Transcriptions have been completed by the author unless stated otherwise.

Transcription 1.

Title: Untitled

Genre: *al-guitara* song

Instruments: Solo voice, chorus, acoustic guitar, unidentified drum, hand clapping.

Recording: Track 16 on *Hoggar: Musique des Touareg* (France: Le Chant du Monde, 1994), CD.

Performer: Ensemble Tin Foussen de Ideles

Form:

Introduction

Motivic Material: A A B A A B A B A A' B A

Vocal Strophe (4 bars)

Choral Strophe (4 bars)

Interlude: A B A

VS

CS

Interlude: A B A

VS

CS

Interlude: A A B A A' A' A B A

VS

CS

Interlude: A B A A B A

VS

CS

Interlude: A B A A' A' A B A

VS

CS

Interlude: A B A B A

VS

CS

Interlude (Recording Fades Out)

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Transcription 2.

Title: Untitled

Genre: *al-guitara* song

Instruments: Solo voice, chorus, acoustic guitar, drum, hand clapping.

Recording: Track 17 on *Hoggar: Musique des Touareg* (France: Le Chant du Monde, 1994), CD.

Performer: Ensemble Tin Foussen de Ideles

Form:

Introduction (builds up parts, rhythm, etc.)

Instrumental Strophe

Interlude (6 bars)

IS

Vocal Strophe

Choral Strophe

Interlude (3)

IS

VS

CS

Int 6

IS

VS

CS

Int 16

IS

VS

CS

Int 2

IS

VS

CS

Int 16

IS

VS

CS

Int 12

IS

VS

CS

[Recording Fades Out]

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Transcription 3.

Title: Untitled

Genre: *al-guitara* song

Instruments: Solo voice, chorus, electric guitars, acoustic guitar, hand clapping.

Recording: Track 18 on *Hoggar: Musique des Touareg* (France: Le Chant du Monde, 1994), CD.

Performer: Ensemble Stella de Tamanrasset

Form:

Introduction (34 bars)

[Harmonic Material (5x F#, 2x G, 4x F#, 2x G, 13x F#, 1x G or 1x F#?, 6x F#, 2x G, 1x F#)]

Vocal Strophe (4 bars)

Choral Strophe (4)

Interlude (10x F#, 2x G, 1x F#)

VS

CS

Interlude (5x F#, 2x G, 1x F#)

VS

CS

Interlude (11x F#, 2x G, 1x F#)

VS

CS

Interlude (14x F#)

VS

CS

Interlude (1x F#, 2x G, 5x F#)

VS

CS

Interlude (11x F#, 2x G, 1x F#)

VS

CS

Interlude (5x F#, half bar 1x F#, 4x F#)

VS

CS

C

C [Recording Fades Out]

Transcription 4.

Title: Ezzel N Oufada Aoua Eteb Ales Ou N Abaradh (“Young man’s song about a man leading a camel”*)

Genre: *Anzad* love song for *ahal*

Instruments: Solo male voice, *anzad*

Recording: Side I, Band 3 on Finola and Geoffrey Holiday, *Tuareg Music of the Southern Sahara* (New York: Folkways Records, 1960), LP.

Performer: unknown

* Title translation and transcription from Caroline Card Wendt, *Tuareg Music*, 583.

Transcription 5.

Title: unknown (“Tinde de Femmes”)

Genre: *Tende n-ɔmnas?* (maybe *tende n-gumatan*)

Instruments: Tende, female solo voice, chorus, hand clapping

Recording: Track 1 on *Hoggar: Musique des Touareg* (France: Le Chant du Monde, 1994), CD.

Performer: unknown ensemble of women

Transcription 6.

Title: Khadisia

Genre: *Takamba*

Instruments: *Tahardent*, male voice

Recording: Recorded by Caroline Card Wendt on 20 May 1977 in Agadez, Algeria. Track 12 on CD accompanying Ruth M. Stone, *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Vol. 1: Africa* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).

Performer: Hattaye ag Muhammed

Text: My soul loves what it will,
 O my Khadisia!
The best woman is one who is fat,
 Not one who is thin!
Or else a woman who has a low stomach
 Which is soft, nice to touch,
Or one who has fleshy arms and calves,
 Ush-sh-sh-sh!

Notes: Transcription transposed down (about 35 cents) to facilitate Western notation.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Transcription 7.

Title: Mano Dayak

Genre: *Al-guitara*

Instruments: Electric and amplified acoustic guitars, bass, *tahardent?*, solo male voice, chorus, drum (djembe?)

Recording: Track 2 on Tinariwen, *Aman Iman: Water is Life* (World Village, 2007), CD.

Performer: Tinariwen; composed by Abdallah Ag Alhousseyni

Text:

I come from a *tenere* well used to sandstorms
I take my rest under the shadeless Anna et Tadjart bushes
I have never seen enough trees to make a forest
My home is the *Tamesna*: white, naked and empty
It affords pasture to neither goat nor cow
It is the land of the young camel, who wanders after its mother

I come to a *tenere* which lies to the north of the Bouss
A desert which is totally naked
Without a single tree, or even a twig
And when men travel there, it's always hot

Now I've seen something that fills me with joy
A Tamashek who's living well
And communicating through a satellite phone
Tied to the tree under which he rests
The buds fall all around him
All of that is thanks to Mano Dayak

Transcription 8.

Title: Amassakoul N'Ténére

Genre: *Al-guitara*

Instruments: Electric guitars, bass, solo male voice, chorus, calabash, derbouka (drum),
additional percussion

Recording: Track 1 on Tinariwen, *Amassakoul* (World Village, 2004), CD.

Performer: Tinariwen; composed by Ibrahim Ag Alhabib

Text:

I am a traveller in the lone desert
It's nothing special
I can stand the wind
I can stand the thirst
And the sun
I know how to go and walk
Until the setting of the sun
In the desert, flat and empty,
 where nothing is given
My head is alert, awake
I have climbed up and climbed down
The mountains where I was born
I know in which caves the water is hidden
These worries are my friends
I'm always on familiar
 terms with them and that
Gives birth to the stories of my life
You who are organized,
 assembled, walking together
Hand in hand, you're living
A path which is empty of meaning
In truth, you're all alone

Transcription 9.

Title: Intidgagen

Genre: *Al-guitara*

Instruments: Electric guitars, bass, solo voice, chorus

Recording: Track 4 on Terakaft, *Akh Issudar* (World Village, 2008), CD.

Performer: Terakaft; composed by Kedou Ag Ossad

Text:

“Song is an homage to Alla Ag Albachar, who during the 1940s and 50s, fought alone and until his death against the French colonial occupation in the Adrar region.” – Liner notes

Discography

Al-guitara and Commercial Recordings

- Adrar des Iforas: Voyage en Pays Touareg.* CD. Le Chant du Monde, 2002.
- Etran Finatawa. *Desert Crossroads.* CD. Riverboat, 2008.
- _____. *Introducing Etran Finatawa.* CD. World Music Network, 2006.
- Festival in the Desert.* CD. World Village USA, 2003.
- Festival in the Desert.* DVD. World Village, 2004.
- Group Doueh. *Guitar Music from the Western Sahara.* CD. Sublime Frequencies.
- Group Inerane. *Guitars from Agadez: Music of Niger.* LP. Sublime Frequencies.
- Hoggar: Musique des Touareg.* CD. Le Chant du Monde Fr., 1994.
- Mali Lolo! Stars of Mali.* CD. Smithsonian Folkways, 2003.
- The Rough Guide to the Music of Mali.* CD. World Music Network, 2008.
- The Rough Guide to the Music of the Sahara.* CD. World Music Network, 2005.
- Tartit. *Abacabok.* CD. Crammed Discs, 2006.
- _____. *Ichichila.* CD. Network Germany, 2000.
- _____. *Amazagh.* CD. Fonti Musicali, 1997.
- Terakaft. *Akh Issudar.* CD. World Village, 2008.
- _____. *Bismilla: The Bamako Sessions.* CD. World Village, 2007.
- Tinariwen. *Aman Iman: Water is Life.* CD. World Village, 2007.
- _____. *Amassakoul.* CD. World Village USA, 2004.
- _____. *Live in London.* DVD. World Village, 2008.
- _____. *The Radio Tisdas Sessions.* CD. World Village USA, 2000.
- Toumast. *Ishumar.* CD. Real World, 2007.

Other Tuareg Genres

Africa: Drum, Chant & Instrumental Music. CD. Nonesuch, 1976.

African Music. LP. Smithsonian Folkways, 1957.

Bush Taxi Mali: Field Recordings from Mali. CD. Sublime Frequencies.

Festival in the Desert. CD. World Village USA, 2003.

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Ikewan: Tuareg Memories. CD. CNR Music, 1997.

Tuareg Music of the Southern Sahara. LP. Smithsonian Folkways, 1960.

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Tinariwen. *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*: World Village, 2007. CD.

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