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MODERN NOMADS, VAGABONDS, OR COSMOPOLITANS? Reflections on Contemporary Tuareg Society

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The Tuareg traditional lifeways of nomadism and pastoralism have been facing vigorous challenges during recent decades. But the Tuareg are not just victims of global processes. Instead, they have developed creative strategies for dealing with and participating in the outside world, and they have shown an extensive capacity to adapt and to cope with transformation processes. This article deals with a part of recent Tuareg society (ishumar) and discusses whether the three terms “modern nomads,” “vagabonds,” and “cosmopolitans” suitably describe this “borderliner” society. Are ishumar “modern nomads” because they move irregularly, adapting to various situations, and, for the most part, according to individual choice or preference in the Libyan-Algerian-Nigerien-Malian borderlands? Are they simply “vagabonds,” owing to their disrupted life circumstances and their lack of traditional morals, norms, and values? Or are they “cosmopolitans” because they are exiles and migrants, and victims of modernity?

The Tuareg,¹ an originally nomadic society living in the Central Sahara and on its Sahelian fringes, have always been linked to mobility and creative processes of adaptation and interaction. During recent decades, recurring droughts, global economic interests, and local and supralocal attempts to enforce political hegemony have driven those following nomadic lifeways into a rather challenging position.

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The Tuareg are forced more than ever to switch from nomadic to urban life; they are being squeezed into sedentism or pushed into transnational border-crossing without documents, nationalities, or citizenship. Their original strategies of nomadism and pastoralism are facing extremely vigorous challenges. There has been a dramatic decrease in the nomadic way of life in recent decades. Nomadism has virtually disappeared in Algeria and Libya. In Mali and Niger, where nomads once were the most numerous and wealthy group, rapid socioeconomic deterioration and a steep population decline are evident (Claudot-Hawad 2006:655). But the Tuareg nomads are not just the victims of global processes. Indeed, they have developed creative strategies for dealing with and participating in the outside world, and they have shown an impressive capability to adapt and cope with transformation processes.

In this article,² I will not refer to strategies of the traditional nomadic society but instead will concentrate on the young Tuareg population, which has developed a particular youth culture in the central Sahara. This population is called *ishumar*,³ a term that came into use in the 1960s and is derived from the French word *chômage*, meaning “unemployment.” The term originally referred to those Tuareg who gave up their nomadic life in order to migrate to nearby nation-states in search of employment. Since then, the term’s meaning has changed several times. Today, *ishumar* stands for “borderliners,”⁴ characterized by transnational movements in the borderlands between Libya, Algeria, Mali, and Niger (Figure 1) and by ruptured, modified, and newly invented traditions, norms, and values (Kohl 2009, 2010b).

The Tuareg claim an estimated population of 3 million, and they are numbered at 1.5 million by official agencies. The different numbers reflect the various political stakeholders in the respective countries and do not correspond to any reliable census (Claudot-Hawad 2006:655). What proportion of the Tuareg population has become *ishumar* is difficult to measure since most of the young people are leaving or have left their original surroundings in search of employment.

In this article I examine whether three concepts—modern nomads, vagabonds, and cosmopolitans—are applicable to this “*ishumar* borderliner society.” I discuss whether the *ishumar* are “modern nomads” because they move irregularly and according to individual preference or rational choice in the Libyan-Algerian-Nigerian-Malian borderland. Are they simply “vagabonds” because of their ruptured life circumstances and their—from a traditional point of view—often-remarked lack of morals, norms, and values? Or are they to be called “cosmopolitans” because they are exiles and migrants who have seen and experienced so much more than their nomadic fellows?

TOYOTAS INSTEAD OF LIVESTOCK: MODERN NOMADS IN THE SAHARA

Hawad, a Targi (singular form of Tuareg) living in France, classified *ishumar* society and summarized their way of being and acting (*teshumara*) as a new force in nomadism. In his opinion (1991:123), *teshumara* encompasses a certain political vision, an ideology, and a special way of life. It represents resistance which developed on the margins of traditional society.⁵ The *teshumara* movement

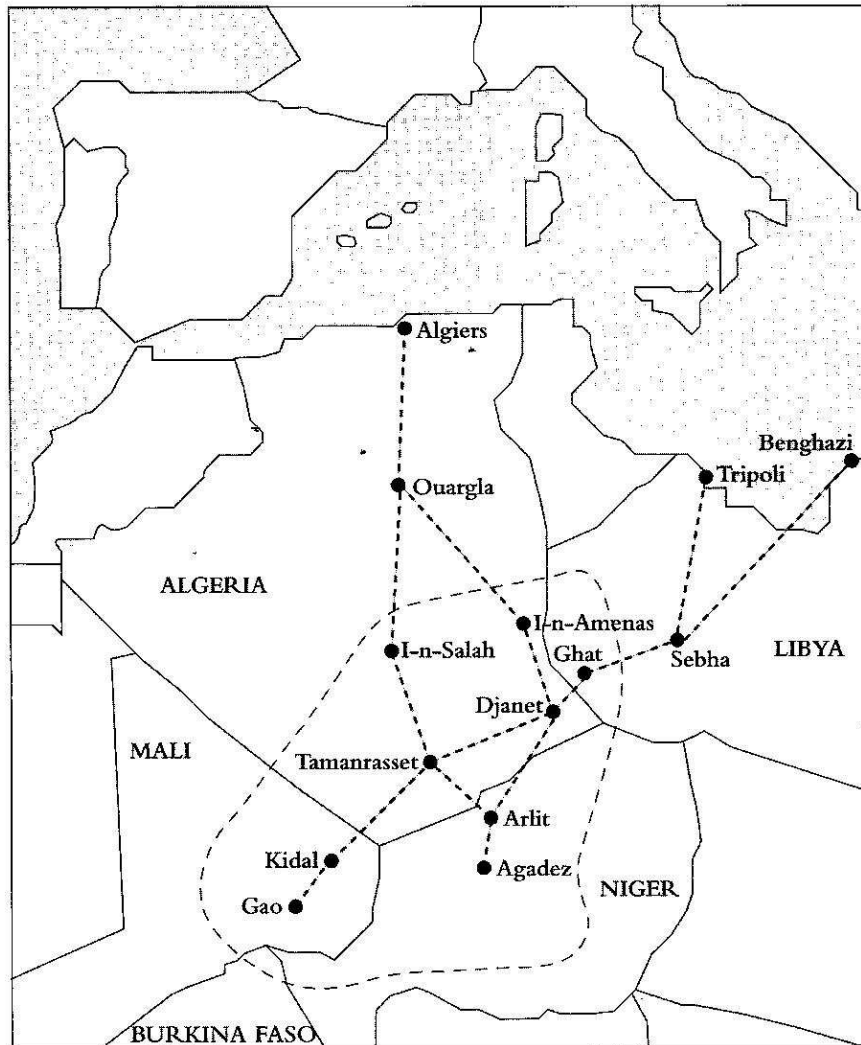


Figure 1. A map of *ishumar* transnational mobility in the borderlands of Libya, Algeria, Mali, and Niger. The continuous line represents the original territory of the Tuareg from which they travel especially to Algeria and Libya for employment opportunities.

created a nomadism which departs more and more from original spaces and traditions, but nevertheless respects and defends memories associated with them. By doing so, *ishumar* retain a piece of history and therefore preserve Tuareg tradition for the future. This “new, modern” nomadism is characterized by a special form of mobility: a disorganized and anarchic mobility, which has totally parted with the traditional cyclical movements of pastoralists.⁶

Elsewhere (Kohl 2010a) I have tried to complement Hawad’s explanations with further reflections on *ishumar* mobility by analyzing the different forms. I came to the conclusion that it is impossible and even unnecessary to grasp their mobility

in terms of types, definitions, or classifications. Ishumar mix all different forms: their mobility can be described as partly cyclical, partly situational and irregular, and sometimes seasonal. Some of them move voluntarily, others are more or less forced by political and economic circumstances. Although there is little to nothing left of the pastoralists' original cyclical movements with their livestock, ishumar still embody a certain philosophy of being mobile. I agree with H el ene Claudot-Hawad (2006:658) that nomadism is not only an itinerant way of life associated with economic activities adapted to the arid environment. Nomadism also represents a philosophy and a certain manner of interpreting reality and acting upon it. It does not matter if an *ashamur* (singular masculine of ishumar) is moving between Mali and Algeria in order to pursue smuggling activities, if he is moving seasonally between Niger and Libya to work during the tourist season, or just drifting among relatives and friends between Niger, Algeria, and Libya. Their movements have two characteristic features in common: ishumar move transnationally, and they move continually. Of course, the transnational aspect is in part the consequence of the harsh economic and political situation in the Sahara-Sahel states. Niger and Mali do not provide any support for impoverished nomads, whereas the working and living conditions in Algeria and Libya are much better, which is why many young ishumar try their luck there, particularly in Libya (Kohl 2010b). The transnational movements are also pushed by a particular ideology and philosophy of being connected to an imagined stateless nation (*tumast*). The intrusion of European armies into the Sahara in the mid-nineteenth century eliminated the flexible, permeable nomadic territorial boundaries. New colonial frontiers were established to serve the purely economically motivated expansion of European interests. Following decolonization and the independence of African nation-states in the 1960s, strict borders were defined in the Sahara and Sahel, which were seen as clear manifestations of the modern state. The Tuareg were thus split up among five different nations with different educational systems, competing economies, and partly hostile political ideologies. Despite this disastrous development for a nomadic population, the idea of being linked together beyond national boundaries defines the movement of ishumar (*teshumara*). In order to retain their transnational mobility in times of international politics, border controls, passports, and identity cards, ishumar have developed sophisticated strategies to circumvent nation-state barriers. In addition to a profound knowledge of the desert, they profit from kinship affiliations beyond state borders, as well as from multiple citizenships and places of residence (Kohl 2010a). Ishumar utilize the various governments' increasing efforts to integrate pastoral nomads into their state systems for their own objectives, and at the same time, many ishumar have several citizenships and a wide variety of different identity cards. Depending on where they go, they pull out the most useful document.

Without access to four-by-four vehicles—specifically, the Toyota Land Cruiser and pickup (Figure 2)—transnational mobility would not be as successful. In addition, four-wheel-drive vehicles provide enormous support for organizing the transport of animals, goods, and people to and from the camps for those members of the population who are still nomads. These cars have gained even more importance in transnational activities, such as smuggling, trade, and migration

(Kohl 2007a, 2007b). The Toyota has superseded the dromedary in terms of its importance for mobility. Dromedaries are still of cultural and economic value, but Toyotas provide opportunities to act and actively engage in the global space. Apart from this aspect, the Toyota was the basis for the development of tourism, which supported many families in Niger during recent years until its total breakdown in the rebellion which broke out in the Aïr mountains in 2007.



Figure 2. In the typical mode of travel (*afrod*) between Niger and Algeria, 20 to 30 passengers climb onto each Toyota pickup and are joined by several other vehicles. The routes across the Sahara represent a rite of passage that must be “experienced” by all *ishumar* at least once (Photos: Akidima Effad, August 2007).

The Toyota Land Cruiser is the most important economic resource for a driver, guide and especially owner of an agency. In that it is what generates their wealth, it has become the substitute for a camel herd. The analogy is also expressed in the term *akh n mota*, meaning the milk of the car, referring to the money a car brings when transporting tourists. The Toyota Land Cruiser is also called “Japanese camel” (*alam n japon*) or is given names usually accorded to camels. Furthermore, the cars are often decorated like camels with colourful woven blankets called *isilis* (Scholze 2010:188).

The Toyota is a symbol of the modern nomad’s lifestyle and nowadays is associated with other cultural attributes expressing belonging and identity. Originally, the men’s veil (*tagelmust*, *eshesh*), the sword (*takuba*), the dromedary

(*alam, amis*), and the honor code (*asshak*) defined Tuareg norms and values. Today, the Toyota has joined this assemblage and has evolved into a symbol of transnational mobility.

The phrase “modern nomads” characterizes recent ishumar society in terms of moving, inheriting a certain transnational philosophy (of *tumast*, the imagined community), and the dictum “traveling is the rule” (Kohl 2010a). Although ishumar themselves are now far away from traditional cyclical movements with livestock, their families back at home continue this traditional nomadic life. When asked, an ashmur will say he still considers himself a nomad (*amawal*) since some of his family continue to move with their animals. He deems himself to be a part of them. This phenomenon has been noted among other tribally organized nomadic societies. Arabs who have swimming pools and laptops and live in cities like Amman still consider themselves Bedouin because of their ancestors’ ways of life (Toral-Niehoff 2002:86). This means that tribal affiliation has more significance than their actual, current life style.

Let us undertake an analysis of the Tamasheq word for nomad: *amawal* (plural masculine: *imawalen*). This term has two meanings: a livestock breeder, and a special part of the men’s veil (*tagelmust*). With regard to the first meaning, and in contrast to the anthropological understanding of a nomad (one who makes regular and frequent residential movements; Salzman 2004:18), an *amawal* can be sedentary as well as nomadic (Prasse et al. 1998:343). A synonym for *amawal* is *aggal*, which means controlling (the herds) and also breeding them. In Alhousseini’s words, “*nekenni majeghen nela eshin professionen: aggal d afarag*.—We Tuareg, we have two ‘professions’: livestock breeding and garden culture.”⁷ People working in gardens (*inesfaragen*) are not called *imawalen*, Alhousseini continues: “Look at Bala. He is cultivating a garden, therefore we call him *anesfarag*. His wife is moving with the goats, so she is a *tamawalt*.”

We can conclude that the Tamasheq term *amawal* refers to an economic activity and not predominantly to the aspect of moving, and it is analytically better translated as pastoralist, rather than nomad.⁸ This explains why an *ashmur* still calls himself *amawal* (even if his close family has given up their traditional lifestyle and moved to villages) because parts of his extended family are still living in the Sahara, raising livestock. It further illustrates the close relationship of tribal members.⁹ Even when living far away and not able to stay in touch with relatives, members are aware and proud of their tribal background. One can say that the homeland of a nomad is his tribe (Toral-Niehoff 2002:85). This connection is kept alive, even though many ishumar have adopted a lifestyle in which they have forgotten or left behind their roots, relatives, and traditions and have moved closer to a type of vagrancy.

VAGABONDS WITH RASTA HAIRSTYLES AND GUITARS

When the strategies of the impoverished ishumar and their irregular transnational movements are examined, their lifestyle can also be summarized by the concept of “vagrancy, the opposite of nomadism” (Claudot-Hawad 2006:662):

The territorial dispossession of the nomads, the fragmentation and the extreme limitation of their lands, the banning of mobility, the destruction of natural resources, and the weakening of their social fabric have forced thousands of families into poverty and exile. Nomadism as a protective way of life can no longer be practiced and has been replaced by a series of improvised activities, which are considered by the Tuareg to be closer to vagrancy. This has both ripped to pieces the social fabric and loosened ancient ties of solidarity (Claudot-Hawad 2006:666).

To illustrate this aspect, I sketch the lives of two young *ishumar* from Niger. I will call them Talla and Anolam.

One afternoon in the winter of 2008, Talla stood in front of our door in Libya, exhausted from her three-day hike from Djanet (Algeria) to Ghat (Libya), with a small handbag strapped over her shoulder. She had abandoned her husband in Tamanrasset (Algeria), left one child with him, and sent the other back to her mother in Niger. Carrying nothing but her clothes, she decided to move to Libya and stay with her relatives. After a while she was quite well off, with a mobile phone, beautiful dresses, and even gold jewelry—presents she had received from several *ishumar* and from Libyans who found her attractive or with whom she had sexual relations. Sometime later, Talla left Ghat to stay with other relatives in Sebha, a city about 500 km away, for a couple of weeks. One month later she married an *ashamur* from Mali and organized quite a large wedding celebration, with Anolam playing the guitar at night. A month after that she came back to Ghat with two enormous suitcases containing wedding presents and announced the end of her marriage. Only days later, she left for Misrata in the north of Libya to visit other relatives, and we did not hear from her for another month, when we got the news that she had married an *ashamur* from Niger in Tripoli. Her belongings, several suitcases with dresses, makeup, and jewelry, are scattered all over Libya, but she decided to stay in Tripoli because of its comfortable climate.

Anolam, who played the guitar at Talla's wedding, has a rasta hairstyle called *bob*, which some older people think makes him look suspicious and associates him with undignified moral conduct (*iban asshak*). Anolam tried working in the tourism sector in Algeria and Libya, but the insecure situation in the Sahara and the "war on terror" in the Sahara-Sahel region (Keenan 2009), which has been fabricated by national governments in recent years, has reduced tourist activity to a minimum. Anolam's skill as a cook was no longer wanted by the travel agencies for whom he had worked, so he turned to transnational border crossings. He worked as a guide, a so-called *taxi*, taking migrants across the border between Libya and Algeria—a risky, but well-paying, business. His dreams, however, rest with his guitar.

In the context of the first rebellion in Niger in the 1990s,¹⁰ a new musical genre developed, which communicates messages through music (Belalimat 2003; Kohl 2009). Abdallah ag Oumbadougou was among the first guitarists to attain supra-regional importance. In 1990, he actively joined the rebellion with a Kalashnikov in hand and at the same time began to compose his songs, which, in the beginning, had no purpose other than to inform the nomads about the conditions

and injustices in the country, to spread news about the rebellion's progress, and to call for their participation. Since then, this guitar style has developed into a popular music genre for *ishumar*, and many young men copy the well-known songs by Tinariwen, Abdallah, Kheddo, or Hasso, for example, and perform at weddings to earn a little pocket money. Only a few have the ability to create new songs and lyrics.

Along with the guitar-rasta phenomenon, the anarchic, unrestrained, and dissipated mobility of the *ishumar* fit the description of "vagrancy." As did Talla, mentioned above, many young men and more and more women leave their places of origin and move to Libya in order to make a living. But instead of trying to find opportunities for work, which are plenty but not well paid in Libya (gardening, farming, herding, etc.), many men just linger, borrow money from friends and relatives, or work a couple of weeks until their earnings are sufficient to buy a new *bazin*, a colorful, expensive type of clothing (Kohl 2009). Young women often turn from lover to lover, trying to profit as much as possible from one before leaving for another. They all have one thing in common, as Moussa, a young *ashamur*, describes. They forget about their parents and siblings:

Ishumar, those are the people who are moving permanently (*tekle ías*). If it occurs to them to go, they shoulder their bag and they are gone. And nobody knows where they go. *Ishumar* are of no use (*wur elen fayda*), they don't have any work (*wur elen eshuf*), always live alone (*egawaren ías nessen*), forget their parents and siblings, and they are always chasing after women (*erán tyadoden wullen*). They are not included in the calculation of parents, marriage, and their people, they scrounge through life, only sit around the whole day, drink tea, and listen to tapes. The same applies to *tishumar*, the women. They spend a few days in Tripolis, then travel to Ghat, and eventually you will find them in Sebha, where they are staying with friends or relatives. Their parents don't know anything about them, weddings between *ishumar* happen without their parents' knowing and often without following Muslim customary law (*tamerkest*). The number of their illegitimate children increases and they don't have any prospects for the future (quoted in Kohl 2009:14–15).

Thus "vagrancy" seems to fit. A similar term exists in Tamasheq: *emarragaz* (plural masculine *imarragazen*) describes a person who is walking, or a person delivering messages, but also means a fainéant, a vagabond, or an unemployed person (Prasse 1998:272). When locals were asked if *ishumar* could be called *imarragazen*, they agreed, and one told me: "*ishumar fawda irgazen!* – *ishumar* are always moving!"

COSMOPOLITANS AND ELITES IN THE SAHARA

A third concept was introduced by Baz Lecocq, who is doing research among Mali Tuareg. He draws on postmodern theory to describe the recent situation of Tuareg nomads. Lecocq uses "cosmopolitanism" instead of exile and diaspora,

terms which have been widely used in the anthropology of the Tuareg. He argues that exile and diaspora have political connotations linked to the nation or the national home from which one is forcibly removed. Such terms are still useful for describing and analyzing the political movement and nationalist ideology related to the Tuareg rebellions (Lecocq 2010:42). For the majority of ishumar, however, a better term is *cosmopolitanism*.

There is increasing recognition that cosmopolitanism exists not solely among the globally mobile elite, but among a wide variety of nonelites, especially refugees, migrants, people in diaspora, and exiles. They are often victims of modernity, deprived of the comforts and customs of national belonging and representing the spirit of the cosmopolitan community (Pollock et al. 2000:582; Vertovec and Cohen 2002:8). Based on the indicators identified by Beck (2002:79f.), the ishumar are cosmopolitans par excellence: they have dual or even multiple citizenship and several places of residence (Kohl 2010a); they are able to communicate in several languages (Hausa, Arabic, French, English) besides their native language; they engage in multiple forms of mobility; and therefore they have a transnational way of life. "Cosmopolitan ties are multiple, not necessarily ethnic, and most importantly weak or loose, so that they enable cosmopolitans to participate in many worlds without framing a community with fixed boundaries" (Caglar 2002:180).

Having loose or weak ties without framing a community with fixed boundaries describes the ishumar case quite well. Although they still recognize their tribal bonds, in most cases the ties no longer play the role they did in traditional society. But one aspect is remarkable: Ishumar do not mix across regional and social categories. Ishumar from the Aïr mountains in Niger, for example, create and sustain networks among each other. Although kinship ties are stronger than other ties, one can observe a deeper loyalty toward ishumar from the same region than toward those from other regions. Networks with people from other regions, such as Azawad (between Niger and Mali) or Mali, for example, are looser and are maintained only to advance certain survival strategies—for example, the business of *afrod*, the illegal border-crossings (Kohl 2007a, 2007b, 2009). Social boundaries, such as the distinction between the ishumar and the *inadan* (craftspeople) or the offspring of former *iklan* (slaves), are still kept.

However, ishumar are not solely unemployed refugees, migrants, rebels, or people in the diaspora who form a "non-elite" stratum of society. To the contrary, many ishumar represent a "new elite" of modern Tuareg society. In traditional society, tribal leaders (*amenukalen*, *ettebelen*, *imfaren*) and Muslim religious specialists (*ineslimen*) formed the intellectual elite (Lecocq 2004:92). At the beginning of the twentieth century, and with the defeat of the Tuareg, the warriors were the elite in terms of the political hierarchy. Other social figures (*inadan*, *ineslimen*, tributaries, etc.) also fit the image of "excellence" (Claudot-Hawad 2000:17). "The elite" is not a monolithic category; each domain has several levels, as expressed by a rich vocabulary (2000:19). The overarching Tamasheq term for a member of the elite is *anefren*, one who is chosen (2000:18). The criteria for this choice include blood (descent), honor, prestige, and status, but other qualities such as knowledge, courage, force, or beauty and charisma can be incorporated.

The new elite embodied by the *ishumar* is better described by the word *anefreg*, one who is able or capable. The new elite is not elected or chosen; rather, their own ability empowers them to act as leaders of society.

The *ishumar* are mostly autodidact intellectuals, whose reflections developed through experiences of international travel, smuggling, and (un)employment in various industrial sectors previously unknown to Tuareg society. . . . The *ishumar* can be perceived as an elite, first of all because they saw themselves as such. From the 1980s onwards, those *ishumar* involved in the preparation for armed rebellion perceived themselves as a revolutionary military vanguard which would lead their people to independence. Second, they can be seen as an intellectual elite among their fellow immigrant workers, as they put their thoughts on migration, modernity, and politics into words: the poems and songs of the *teshumara* movement. They were the ones who produced knowledge, even if part of this knowledge concerned experiences they had in common with their less articulate audience (Lecocq 2004:93).

Lecocq is referring to the *ishumar* movement (*teshumara*) during the first rebellion in the 1990s. During the subsequent phase, from the mid-nineties until February 2007, when the second rebellion started, much changed. Some popular intellectuals of the *teshumara* still performed guitar concerts and expressed their ideology, but most ex-rebels lost their admired and adored position. *Ishumar* have been much more commonly viewed as irresponsible people without honor (*iban asshak*) and without respect (*iban takarakit*). Since the beginning of the second rebellion, the leaders and their advisers have regained their position as an intellectual elite. This time, the leaders were not chosen but arose as a result of their ability to understand global interconnections and express themselves. The new elite's knowledge comes not from formal education but via their transnational mobility (combined with multilingualism, multiple places of residence, contacts with Europe, etc.). The new elite also has the opportunity to express their claims and demands in new media. Thuraya Telecommunications provides Internet and satellite connections. Since the beginning of the insurgency in Niger in 2007, the rebels have posted their activities on the Internet.¹¹ People all over the world can observe the attacks carried out by the rebels. Improved modes of communication and information, together with forms of mobility based on rational decision-making, have made it possible for the Tuareg to engage more actively in the outside world. The Tuareg have been able to establish a new location of agency in the central Sahara (Kohl and Fischer 2010:4). The leaders of the rebellion, the guitarists, and the (few, but dedicated) NGO activists embody the new elite. Their transnational mobility entails cosmopolitan ways of life, which provide them with awareness of human rights and inform their struggle concerning uranium and justice (see below) in Niger.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

"Modern nomads," "vagabonds," and "cosmopolitans" are all concepts suitable for describing contemporary Tuareg society. Although the harsh ecological, political,

and economic situation in the Sahara and in the Sahel challenges the nomadic population more than ever, Tuareg society is far from declining. In large parts of the region, nomadic activities are no longer feasible for ecological reasons and primarily because of global economic interests; today the Tuareg deal actively with supralocal influences. Mobility has always been a crucial factor in making a successful living in the Sahara. Recent forms of mobility go beyond moving with livestock, but they challenge national loyalties and politics in their translocal, transregional, or transnational design (Kohl and Fischer 2010:2).

One can only hope that the cosmopolitan Tuareg with their multifarious survival strategies can find a way to assert their rights amidst the recent political and social unrest in Niger and Mali. The prospects for political intervention by the European Union or the United States in the Tuareg fight for human rights are slim. Niger is one of the world's greatest uranium-producing countries.¹² The uranium mines explored and exploited by the French company Cogema-Areva are in the north of Niger, in the heart of Tuareg territory. Aside from radioactive contamination of water and soil, and free cotton cloth (inscribed "100,000 tonnes uranium") for the mine workers' wives, little is left for the Tuareg population. In the past two years, exploitation rights were reassigned to France and, among other countries, to China, Canada, and India. As a result, large areas formerly used by the nomads are in danger of economic and environmental exploitation. This led to a second rebellion in Niger in February 2007. The rebels (MNJ: Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice) demand a fair share of the uranium profits, construction of schools and provision of social services, adherence to environmental restrictions, and access to work in the mines. The ex-president of Niger, Mamadou Tandja, has denied the legitimacy of the rebellion from the beginning and maintains that the riots are caused by bandits whose drug- and weapon-smuggling activities are being endangered. France, which has been pulling the strings in the uranium business, has kept silent and cooperates with Nigerien interests. With China's help, Niger has activated its military and, during 2007 and 2008, has pursued not only rebels but also civilians. Young men and owners of satellite phones and four-wheel-drive vehicles were arrested as potential rebels. Nomad camps were burned down, animals slaughtered, nomads killed, independent newspapers and radios forbidden, and committed journalists arrested.

As of August 2009, Niger continues to face internal political problems, and a solution for the Tuareg remains out of sight. Despite the present marginal position of the Tuareg and their limited opportunities for finding allies, their cosmopolitan skills of transnationality, multilingualism, multiple forms of mobility, and trans-boundary and cross-frontier connections have granted them active participation in the broad Saharan playground of global economic and political interests.

O People, wake up from this despotic and disgraceful yoke you've
submitted to!
Wake up from the ills and injustices that are strangling you!
Let that part of you that was lost finally find the path of justice! . . .
The lions who revolted in the Tenere, . . .
They can defend the cause for which they have set their goals, and

achieve justice in this country.

Niger has pretended not to see it, but they know, they have witnessed what happened in Iferouane and Tezirzeit.

(*Tanakra* – The Awakening, Lyrics of an MNJ Rebel)¹³

NOTES

1. "Tuareg" refers to an ambiguous foreign term that was introduced into the German, French, and English languages. This society calls itself Imuhar in Algeria and Libya, Imajefer in Niger, and Imushar in Mali and Burkina Faso. Because these different names originated from dialectic sound shifts, it is difficult to come up with a uniformly suitable terminology. The recent anthropological literature refers to Kel Tamasheq, the people who speak Tamasheq. This designation is not fully inclusive, however, since a large part of the society speaks Tamahaq. Although I normally prefer to use emic terms, I retain the more familiar "Tuareg" here because for most readers it provides greater clarity.

2. The material for this article was collected during several fieldwork sessions in Libya and Niger between 2003 and 2009. I gratefully acknowledge research support during this period from the University of Vienna, the Austrian Oil Corporation (OMV), the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW). The manuscript was improved by comments from the three *JAR* reviewers and the Editor.

3. Singular masculine *ashamur*, singular feminine *tashamurt*, plural masculine *ishumar*, plural feminine *tishumar*.

4. "The anthropological term borderliner (border crosser) designates something entirely different from the borderliner syndrome in psychiatry. In anthropology it designates groups of people who live on state borders and who specialize in benefiting from crossing these borders on a regular basis" (Kohl 2009:11).

5. "*Teshumara* désigne un état d'esprit, un mode de vie, un courant idéologique, une vision politique, qui se sont développés en marge de la société touarègue. . . . *Teshumara* tire une force nouvelle du nomadisme et de la résistance ancienne qui cheminent dans les voies de l'honneur, mais représente également une résistance qui se met en marge de la société et du poids entravant de ses valeurs et de ses lois" (Hawad 1991:123).

6. "Une nouvelle conscience apparut qui pronait un modèle de nomadisme désorganisé, anarchique, en rupture totale avec le nomadisme cyclique traditionnel qui s'harmonisair avec la marche des saisons" (Hawad 1991:125).

7. Alhusseini is an ashamur from Niger, living and working in Libya. *Professionen* derives from the French word *profession*. Many Tuareg borrow French words and combine them with their own language's lexical structure, such as adding "en" for the plural ending.

8. Anthropologists and geographers often analytically divide nomadism into raising livestock on natural pastures and moving from place to place. This leads to a differentiation between pastoralism and nomadism. "Nomadism (is) the regular and frequent movement of the home base and household" (Salzman 2004:18). Pastoralism is "the predominant form of economic activity. Its extensive character connected with the maintenance of herds all year round on a system of free-range grazing without stables" (Khazanov 1984:16).

9. Tribes are collective sociopolitical identities. They are usually associated with particular territories, share some dominant idiom of common origin (such as descent from a single ancestor), and enact kinship ties to ensure and strengthen intimate networks (Gingrich 2001).

10. The first rebellion (called *ath-thawra*) from 1990 to 1995 was a direct consequence of the droughts that hit the Sahel in the 1970s and 1980s. The impoverished nomads did

not receive governmental aid, and the lack of employment opportunities resulted in an uprising in Niger and Mali with the aim of achieving autonomy, or decentralization and participation in governmental and economic sectors (the uranium company Areva in Niger). In Mali, numerous rebel groups were active, and in Niger two main fronts under the leadership of Mano Dayak and, subsequently, Rhissa ag Boula were formed: Front for the Liberation of Tamust (FLT) and Front for the Liberation of Air and Azawad (FLAA). The peace agreements, made in 1995 in Niger and 1996 in Mali, promised an integration of Tuareg and ex-combatants into the military and government, and a return to civil life.

11. MNJ, Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice: <http://www.m-n-j.blogspot.com> or FFR, Front des Forces de Redressement: <http://redressement.unblog.fr/>

12. Information from the World Nuclear Association (WNA) 2009. In 2008 Niger ranked behind Canada, Kazakhstan, Australia, Russia, and Namibia. <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/default.aspx?id=360&terms=niger>

13. English and Tamasheq versions are published at <http://tuaregcultureandnews.blogspot.com/2008/07/al-jazeera.html>

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