

## Chapter 3

# Between Imajaxen (Warrior) and Timogoutar (Helplessness): Trauma and Identity Conflict in Indigenous Spaces

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter is drawn from a much larger qualitative phenomenological inquiry into the Kel Tamashek of the Central Sahara and its Sahelian transition zone. The impetus for this larger research was driven by US Army Generals John Mulholland (Ret), James Linder (Ret), and US Navy Admiral Brian Losey. These senior military leaders foresaw the coming clash between this powerful ethnic community and the rapid spread of globalization into the vast spaces of the Sahel and Sahara Desert. This ethnic community lives in an alternate reality in the northern parts of Niger and Mali, and the southern parts of Algeria and Libya. This alternate reality is of their own design and is well over a millennium in the making. The Kel Tamashek are of extreme interest to regional and international security forces because of their tendency to resist political control. After fighting the French Colonial governments to a standstill in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, they went on to overthrow the African-based governments in Mali and Niger several times each.*

### INTRODUCTION

Indigenous communities live a dual life in the physical present and the metaphysical past and future. In this chapter, we will explore the nature of indigenous reality and the effects of trauma, using the Kel Tamashek of the Azaway Valley in northern Niger and Mali, and southern Algeria and Libya.

The Tamashek (aka Tamasheq (Mali), Tamajek (Niger), Tamahak (Algeria) language uses the Latin letter Gamma,  $\gamma$ , as do a number of African alphabets requiring the representation of the voiced velar fricative. In the Tamashek language, the gamma sound is a guttural kh/gh/ka made in the back of the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3665-0.ch003

throat. I incorporate this letter in usage to accurately illustrate the way in which most Tamashek people understand the meaning of key words that use it. I incorporate those Tamashek words that require a significant amount of English words to fully describe the emic, or interior meaning of them. Dr. Jeffrey Heath's (2005) *A Grammar of Tamashek (Tuareg of Mali)* has been my principal reference source in learning and employing the Tamashek language during my field research in the Central Sahel from 2013 to the present.

From the fall of 2013 to the end of 2014, I served as the senior special forces team leader supervising operations in the central Sahel regions of northern Niger and Mali. I also served as a psychological anthropologist conducting IRB approved human subject field research within the touchetts of the Kel Tamashek in the Valley of Azaway. The focus of my field research was to discover the underlying drivers of the tribes participation in violent conflict and covert inhibitors to successful resolution. The findings and summaries in this chapter are drawn from that research which was used to complete my doctoral dissertation in 2015. These findings were also used to design engagement and messaging strategies that sought to help the Kel Tamashek withdraw from participation in violent conflict and adapt to globalization and environmental changes in the Sahel. Over 100 separate qualitative phenomenological interviews were conducted with social gatekeepers and their communities in 'essuf' which is a literal Tamashek word for 'bush' and carries a meaning of ancient, traditional ways of semi-nomadic life of the desert dwellers of the Sahara and its transition zone, the Sahel. As well, I conducted several sessions of group interviews with young college aged Tuareg boys and girls who were attending the University of Niamey. Collectively, these research interviews established a pattern of psychological archetypal thought and emotional conjugation that illuminated one of the most complex peoples of North Africa.

The Kel (people of) Tamashek (language of the amashek) are remnants of the Berber peoples of North Africa who were pushed southwards into the Sahara Desert by the 6<sup>th</sup> Century invasion of the Bani Hillal after their conversion to Islam. The Kel Tamashek are socially structured into agnatic (tribal) segments of related families that are called *Touchetts* or villages. As a people, they follow a version of the Muslim faith, but are quick to remind outsiders that they were first Jewish, then Christian, before finally converting to Islam. Their Islamic practices are Sufi in nature and include a great deal of pre-Islamic spiritual beliefs about demons, angels, and spirit possession that have survived every previous religious conversion.

## **Indigenous vs. Urban Realities**

The reality of life in indigenous cultural communities is vastly more complex than we can observe with all our five senses. The reality of indigenous cultural life trades the complexities of technology and automation for the complexities of thought and emotion. While every indigenous and traditional community is a unique biosphere that must be explored and understood separately, there are common themes that apply to most such communities. Some of these common themes involve physical and metaphysical constructions of reality and the interaction between humans and their environment. The Kel Fadey subset of the Tamashek in Niger express this interaction as "*Nilo Guer – Jimawan id middlum* (We are under the sky and on the earth) *id Idgazane Medranan* (and we live a lot of dreams)" as described in an interview conducted May 26–30 in 2014.

Consider the following conversation that I observed at the home of Agalih Hamidoun in Niamey, Niger during ethnographic data collection in 2014 between a Tuareg father and his 6-year-old daughter, Zeynab:

*Zeynab: Aba, mimos essuf? [where is the 'bush' or traditional places of Tamashek people?]*

*Father: All around us...the sand, the mountains, and even the sky.*

*Zeynab: Aba, miniawa adraá? [where are the mountains?]*

*Father: they are 'out there' in essuf.*

*Zeynab: Aba, miniawa emarr'wan? [where are our grandparents, great grandparents?]*

*Father: they are 'out there' in essuf. <sup>1</sup>*

Little Zaynab was trying to understand spatial representation of her world that consisted of the sacred *essuf* against the time representation of beloved *emarr'wan* (deceased grandparents) whom she knew only from photos and stories told by her parents and siblings. The father's rote depiction of *essuf*, *adraá* (mountains), and *emarr'wan* as all being 'out there' at the boundaries of geography and geology combined the natural into the sacred and spiritual place of safety and reunion with deceased family members.

Urban, modern, and industrialized realities work to reshape the natural environment into an artificial construction that supports an ordered and controlled human existence. Vast spaces of air are heated or cooled on demand. Vegetation and animals are grown under controlled conditions that ensure optimal output that is visually pleasing in phenotype, if not always nutrition. Normal reality is imaginatively augmented by talented artists and outwardly presented on giant canvases of cloth and pixels that leave little need for a viewer's imagination. Indeed, all that can be imagined is brought to life in physical and virtual realities of mixed mediums that allow communal members to escape their earthly life for imagined lives in a never-ending succession of availability.

It may seem, in fact, that this urban, industrialized reality is much more complex than the realities of indigenous life. Forest floors, vistas of desert, mountain, and ice may seem like poor substitutes in complexity compared to the artificial realities of modern life. Urbanites experience their augmented realities mostly via two dimensional projections that guide their imagination into adding the missing third dimension to complete the imagined reality. The power of this reality is always limited to two or at most, three dimensions of phenomenological experience.

Indigenous reality, however, operates in five dimensions that include the normal height, width, and depth of augmented reality, but adds the dimensions of experienced time and experienced metaphysical perception. "*The young Tamashek with their sword and lance; they stand to protect what they are. I am walking when I saw a tomb, with a démon on it.*"<sup>2</sup> These added dimensions cannot exist outside of the collective of shared human experience. Electronic and graphic projections of imagined stories can only hint at the inner power of experienced time and metaphysical perception, never truly allowing for an artificial experience of human participation.

Within indigenous realities, after a story vignette has unfolded and climaxes in dénouement, the multi-dimensional screen does not go dark. The sound does not turn off and the human characters that held the storyline do not dematerialize into pixels of light that wink out when the power is turned off. The characters and landscape remain in their solid form, with all their power and frailty. Participants continue to express verbal and nonverbal emotional reactions to shared events that were experienced

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<sup>1</sup> From field notes taken during ethnographic observation at the home of Agalih Hamidoun, Niamey, Niger, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

by their full range of visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile senses, both in the present physical and the past-future metaphysical.

There are no single viewer experiences in indigenous realities. Indigenous communities collectivize life events and resulting memorialization of those events. Indigenous stories are not held back and written into autobiographies because all stories are experienced collectively and memorialized as they occur. The breathless experience of indigenous relationships and their experience of the natural world that is a bodily extension of themselves is an immediate and shared event. These relationship experiences of human and nature are not easily described to outside observers. The desert, says Mohamed Bamyeh, “is a sphere of absolute speechlessness” (1999, 3). Its seas of shifting dunes rise higher than apartment buildings. Its rock mountains plunge up from the ground like blackened spaceships left behind by ancient races of giants, long turned to stone. Seasonal rains turn the hidden millet and wildflower seeds into vast impossible carpets of brilliant colors that stuns the disbelieving eye.

The conscious, subconscious, and emotional stimulation of participation in human stories that play out across the vast natural landscapes tends to crowd out objective thought in favor of subjective experience. The experience of a Shamal, or north wind, in the open desert for example, does not allow for a single objective thought. The Shamal forms a living, breathing, wall of sand thousands of feet high, rising higher than a small plane can fly. It carries sand from distant lands and can cover over man, beast, dwellings and, sometimes, entire cities with powdery fine sand. To experience and survive that Shamal is to lose a capacity to describe it and your individual experience of it. Its affect on the human mind and emotions can only be shared phenomenologically by those who have also experienced it. Experiencing and surviving the Shamal can be thought of as a metaphor for a central part of indigenous reality and the construction of indigenous identity. The central lesson that I have found while living within realities of indigenous life is that struggle and suffering are an inextricable part of the construction of their identity.

**Meanings of struggle and suffering in indigenous identity.** The first Noble Truth of Buddhist thought is that ‘life involves suffering’ (Gyatso, 1996) regardless of the circumstances of birth, health, and historical narrative. Suffering in the form of biological vulnerability and negative emotions can lead to greater artistic creativity (Akinola & Mendes, 2008). Suffering without meaning, however, destroys the human mind (Frankl, 1959). From the beginning, human suffering had meaning. This meaning has been an ever-evolving creation by each cultural community, brilliant in its outward presentation and utterly poignant in its remembrance of love and loss.

These explanatory creations of meaning do more than relieve suffering. Indigenous meaning creation was and is central to the existence and evolution of archaic types of their human psychological identity. Said differently, human beings self-create their own explanations for the nature of their suffering, about the mythology of their existential origin, and about their purpose as individuals and collective groups. And this self-creation of explanations, in turn, establishes ever higher levels of sentient capacity and forms the context of indigenous cultural reality and psychological identity.

The meanings created by indigenous people of their struggle and suffering gives purpose to life and animates family and extended relationships that bind each to each other. Creations of indigenous meaning of their struggle and suffering explain and memorialize historical and spiritual origin, while allowing them to perceive the nature of the world around them and their interconnection with it. Where

industrialized societies change and adapt nature to meet their psychosocial-emotional needs, indigenous societies adapt themselves to the power of nature over them.

The deepest ends of indigenous struggle and suffering involve man against nature and the brutality of damaged or lost relationships. *“I am an orphan; I am alone. Pity I did not die as a baby. If I had died as a baby, I never would have suffered. One's fate, one cannot change it. My departed mother, nothing can bring her back.”*<sup>3</sup> In indigenous society, the existence and the nature of the struggle and suffering are essential psychological mechanisms for the development of masculine and feminine identity. The power of nature provides a never-ending antagonist to the indigenous community's inward sense of self-as-protagonist. Where nature has the power to feed, it has the power to starve. Where nature has the power to shelter, it has also the power to expose. Famine and exposure are no strangers to indigenous communities. Every touchett (community) in the central Sahel portion of the Sahara Desert has its tales of famine, thirst, and madness. Amamatou bint Tlgezali is the matriarch of her touchett in a semi nomadic encampment north of Agadez. She is the mother of Achmedou and sister of Mohammed and provides insight into the daily struggle for survival in the Sahara and the Sahel.

*The two of them [her son Achmedou and brother Mohammed] lost their minds together on the same day ... they were searching for water during a year of great thirst in the Sahara. It was about 16 years ago ... the water pump at the well nearby us broke and thirst was extreme. It was intensely hot that year. People said that the heat of that year would affect men's brains. They spent days and nights wandering the desert searching for water. When they came home from the journey, they were both insane (Bint Tlgezali 2014).*

As an antagonist to man's protagonist suffering, nature has few equals. So, we should not be surprised that nature has been mankind's most effective backdrop in the creation of archaic types of human thought and action. Archetypes of male masculine identity are littered with ancient strands of thought relating to survival, savior, protector, and warrior. For more than thirty millennia, these strands offered indigenous families a lifeline of physical survival against nature's impossible conditions. Subset strands of father, nurturer, and husband completed the common structure to ensure propagation of a species.

Where masculine identity strands were focused on Abraham Maslow's more shallow levels of human need (physical and survival), archetypes of female feminine identity drilled down into the psychosocial and emotional needs that created the purified inner spaces of love, nurturance, and the intimacy of family belonging. Dense bone and thick muscle create natural defenses for survival in the profane outer world of nature, the mingling of non-family, and never-ending quest for survival. The story below is an ancient fable titled *Tilk'awi Tamashek fil Essuf* (A Nomadic Tamashek Family) and is a part of a vast oral collection of stories that populates the historical narrative of the Kel Tamashek.

*A Tamashek man lived with all his tilk'awi (family) and kinsmen. All of them are nomads. Where they are, there is nothing for their animals. He asks all the Tamashek to come and decide to move and look for another place for the animals and for them. If anyone thinks that this place is bad, then they would have to move. Some of the other Tamashek families do not agree, and the Tamashek man decides to go alone with his family because, they refuse to go with him. He prepared his leaving, then he took his wife and his son and began his journey to a new place. He*

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<sup>3</sup> Lyrics from *The Orphan's Lament*, by Mongolian artist Huun-Huur-Tu (1994) and appears on their 2010 album *Ancestors Call*.

*and his family travelled far and eventually found a good place, where there were mountains and some fresh green places for the animals to graze. He built a small ahakeytt (home) for his wife and his son who was at that time, six years old. He goes behind the animals for all day. After the day, the night comes and the Tamashek man stayed to protect the animals. The place that he had built his house and where his wife and son were living happened to also be a place where lions hunted, a camp for lions. The lion attacked his family and killed the Tamashek man's wife. When the Tamashek man returned to his newly built home, he felt that there was something wrong, that something bad had happened. He was looking for his wife, but he could only find his son hiding between two big rocks. The Tamashek man spent all the night thinking about what he was going to do. Early in the morning, he crept up behind the lion that had attacked his family and killed his wife and fell on the lion, killing him. The Tamashek man cried and said, any animal or person who harms my wife or child; I know that I will do the same to him that was done to me.<sup>4</sup> (Muhammad, 2014)*

In indigenous spaces, the power of the feminine is not constituted from the remains of the masculine. Instead, feminine archetypes serve to define the masculine and ensure its integration into the family structure. Where bone and muscle serve exterior purpose, slender form, and a unique capacity to bear new life create natural aptitudes for managing emotional interplay and constructing inner worlds of love and beauty. Against the backdrop of the profane outer and nature as eternal antagonist, this interior construction of inner spaces of purity and beauty provide psychosocial and emotional purpose that makes human life bearable. Phenotypes of human and natural beauty are interchanged with each describing the other and both form the backdrop and supporting cast for constructions and display of archetypal expressions of identity.

*This year, I made a good trip without any time in timogoutar. I visited a lady with the long hair and the white color skin. I went to a small village where I found a girl who everyone tries to get. I was lucky, I won her over and that made me very popular because all the young Tamashek always likes to see a winner. Fatima do not worry; I am here to do everything you want even to give my life because of you. Elam is the soft skin of Fatima; her elam is like a river, like a grass, looks like a milk; I do not have words enough to describe my Fatima. If the Tamashek men are always thinking of their young Tamashek ladies, they will always be trying to do the best they can. Tamashek ladies will never hear that we shoot, and we run. Tamashek warriors will do everything to save the lives of their ladies and children. We will show to the world who Tamashek is. We will get our freedom with our old guns and knives and stones or all of us will die.<sup>5</sup> (Amawal, 2014)*

The grieved husband stalks and kills the lion to avenge his wife's death. Young indigenous men and women compete for love and affection through displays of heroism and valor against promises of interior love and nurture. Each courtship constitutes a sort of ritualized dance that occurs between the masculine, the feminine, the beautiful antagonism of nature, and the metaphysical demands of the watchful-judging past and the expectant future. Man, woman, nature, and spirits, constitute the

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<sup>4</sup> Dialogue translation of audio recorded interview with poet Abdurrahman Muhammad, 21 May 2014, Agadez, Niger. The full narrative recitation can be found at [https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss\\_dcar\\_etd/22/](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss_dcar_etd/22/), in the appendices.

<sup>5</sup> *The lessons of the Tamashek- Ibrahim Amawal* (Amawal, 2014)

complex psychological and emotional cultural reality that is visible only through phenomenological descent into indigenous identity.

### **Primordial Evolution of Indigenous Identity**

Indigenous human identity constructions are based on this four-part cultural reality of man, woman, nature, and metaphysical spirit. The identities of men and women are assembled in part, though the use of oppositional phenotypes of gender and oppositional archetypes of domination and submission. Like the oppositional phenotypes of gender, the oppositional archetypes of domination and submission define each other. Domination and submission are not assigned to gender and do not define male and female archetypes in many indigenous communities. Domination and submission can be placeholders for related oppositional pairs such as giver and taker, care giver and care receiver, or loved and lover. Each former cannot exist without the existence of the latter, and often these two roles shift naturally back and forth between parties in a healthy relationship.

To express an archetype of nurturer, there must be someone or thing to nurture, or else that archetype cannot successfully be expressed by an individual. All other combinations of archetypal structure follow similar oppositional needs, such as protector and protected, or teacher and learner. Out of these two basic oppositional pairs of typologies, all other archaic types of human psychological identity emerge, in the same way that the primary colors of red, blue, and yellow can mix to create millions of identifiable secondary and tertiary colors.<sup>6</sup>

Indigenous identities are further deepened and refined by the addition of gendered metaphysical archetypes and natural world phenotypes which are themselves, often gendered. The indigenous world of spirits or jinn, can be thought of a metaphysical manifestation of energy and emotion that accompanies all matter, be it organic or inorganic. Mountains, rivers, valleys, forests, and deserts are possessed with this energized emotion that is in interplay with the energy and emotion of ancestors and angels, or jinn. The meaning of each spirit, angel, or jinn and its relationship to a human is culturally variant and defies any universal categorization. But indigenous psychological identity allows for and incorporates the real or imagined existence of these metaphysical manifestations into community members' own lives as much as normal archetypes and phenotypes.

As with all humans, indigenous identity begins at birth. It is sparked by an ongoing process of verbal and non-verbal human interaction with the emerging dendrites of the infant's brain. Without this interaction between humans and infant, psychological identity that is constructed by the subconscious ego-self does not form and the infant, if it survives into childhood, does not become bipedal, does not have the use of opposable thumbs, does not have an awareness of its own mortality, cannot understand complex humor, nor can it employ verbalized language.<sup>7</sup>

The subconscious ego-self grows within the 86 billion neurons that are connected by an ever-increasing structure of dendrites as the child grows. Human psychological interaction with infants and children spurs the growth of dendrite interconnections throughout the brain that ultimately builds the cognitive

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<sup>6</sup> Scientists have determined that in the lab we can see about 1,000 levels of dark-light and about 100 levels each of red-green and yellow-blue, which equates to at least 10,000,000 colors.

<sup>7</sup> For a deeper and fascinating look into this condition that psychologists refer to as the "Mowgli Syndrome", the case of Dani – the girl in the window, provides one of many heartbreaking and terrifying case studies of severe psychological deprivation and development. <https://projects.tampabay.com/projects/girl-in-the-window/danielle/>.

reasoning capacity and the subconscious ego-self where the sentient capacity for self-awareness lies. These two virtual structures of psychological software develop in tandem and are so interrelated that one cannot function without the other. The loss of the cognitive reasoning capacity of the conscious part of the mind in the prefrontal cortex would invariably trap the subconscious ego-self in a prison of its own mind, unable to communicate outward or to receive data inwardly. The loss of the subconscious ego-self results in the loss of sentient self-awareness and physical death or life in a vegetable state of being.

Every verbal and non-verbal interaction and mediated experience with a developing and already developed mind, builds conscious cognitive capacity and subconscious ego-self strength. A mediated experience is any type of external event that the mind is exposed to that is mediated with meaning. Mediated with meaning means that the mind is helped (by itself or by others) to understand the nature of the event and assign to it, cause, effect, and outcomes. In other words, meaning.

The attachment of meaning to events that are external to the brain causes the growth of dendrites between neurons and an increase of data storage in the cerebral cortex. The attachment of meaning to events creates emotional affect through the amygdala and expands the quality and quantity of data that the mind evaluates, stores, and acts upon, mostly in the subconscious ego-self. The subconscious ego-self thinks-feels as it assigns meaning to events that in turn, stimulates the conscious cognitive mind to verbalize or realize that meaning, then drives action through the release of chemicals that drive or power emotion.

The takeaway from these last several paragraphs is that the subconscious part of the brain is central to your individual self-awareness and that your sense of self grows from your infancy. This subconscious software, for lack of a better word, grows through the interaction with the external world as mediated (explained) by older humans around you. At some point, your subconscious ego-self begins to decide for itself, the meaning of events that it experiences, but remains sensitive to suggestions throughout its life cycle. This subconscious ego-self sensitivity to suggestion is dramatically increased during times of stress and trauma, as we will explore later.

Indigenous constructions of identity draw upon the natural world as part of its palette of archaic typologies that represent ideas of beauty, nurture, and joy, or, oppositional ideas of power, survival, and fortitude. Our earliest archeological records suggest that indigenous human societies have employed metaphysical symbolic objects that link the physical traits or composition of animals and objects to an individual member of society. A boy who miraculously survives an encounter with a wolf, might be said to have been selected by metaphysical spirit guardians of the wolf clan for a special relationship and a psychological transference of power from wolf to boy-man. A girl who demonstrates an aptitude for finding, selecting, mixing, and employing herbs and roots to heal wounds and sickness, might be said to have been selected by natural spirit forces to serve as a healer or medicine women.

Indigenous cultural realities often involve a constant mental state of members' communion with the natural world around them to mediate its power to destroy and deprive them or provide for and protect them. Embedded within the thousands of years of indigenous knowledge are metaphysical explanations for all manner of geographic and geologic formations, climatological events, and the interrelationship between animals and humans. Many of these metaphysical explanations are crafted from generations of careful observation that create accurate templates of cause and effect that allow for event predictions that have only recently become possible through the alternative use of scientific discovery.



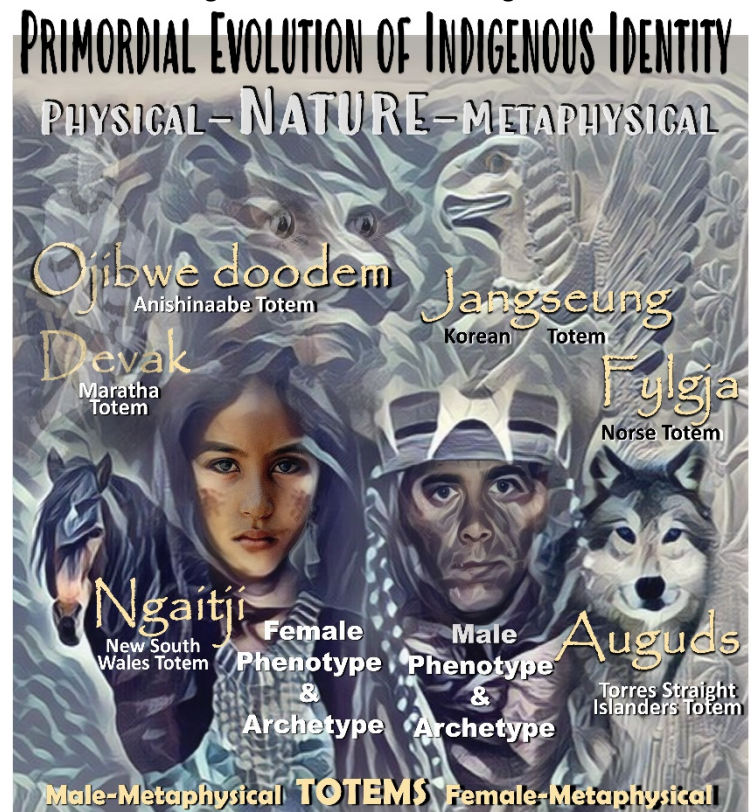
The actual scientific mechanics of physics, electricity, astronomy, geology, biology, physiology, and the principles of agriculture and climate as we now study and employ them may not have been available to early indigenous peoples. Using scientific methods of observation and reasoning, a significant number of these natural mechanism were discovered and attributed to metaphysical spirits that still followed accurate patterns of understanding. Even today, field researchers studying diseases follow ancient clues left by indigenous medicine people, hoping to rediscover lost ancient knowledge that leads to the next medical breakthrough.

In indigenous communities, naturally occurring skills, and aptitudes of young members of society are carefully watched and observed to discover nature's metaphysical intention for them. The ceremonial linkage of one of nature's metaphysical guardian 'totems' that mirrors or supports a young member's natural inclination signals to him/her and the community, what their developmental path should be as they mature. The capacities or powers that are ceremonially transferred from metaphysical nature to physical human, help the maturing mind of the adolescent child organize its subconscious ego-self's emerging identity.

This systematic organizational intervention serves to help the child push back against chaos that can result from too much sensory input competing for both cognitive and subconscious attention. In this four-part world of male, female, nature, and metaphysical spirit, the construction of individual identity becomes incredibly rich with possibilities, and the assignment-acceptance of a spirit guardian or totem helps guide the child's mind into solidifying that identity into a cohesive whole.

The physical objects of trait and capacity transference from nature to human can be anything from an object part of an animal, or geographic, geological remnant that symbolizes the transference of trait and capacity. The object can also be a healed wound made by the animal or a ritualized tattoo or scar that marks the origin of that person's inner psychological and emotional power. These objects are referred to as totems in some cultures, but the actual totem or symbolic object is not the totem.

Instead the totem is the relationship between boy/man or girl/woman and the natural world from where he or she gains their sense of personal physical and mental power. Within this physical or virtual object or totem, resides a tutelary, which is a deity or spirit that serves as the metaphysical guardian of a species of animal, fish, bird, geographic or geologic formation, or a family and clan. The relationship between human and totem or metaphysical nature-guardian is extremely complex and laden with emotional meaning and power.



The human beneficiary of a natural guardian's power is responsible for working to learn all that he or she can about their totem, or metaphysical object of protection. The nature of the totem (animal, bird, fish, or natural formation) helps guide the person's selection of archaic typologies to model or adapt to their own use in assembling a unique mental structure. The totem's social reputation for speed, violence, nurturance, flight, or cunning are attributes that the human wearer will examine and determine how to apply or fit to themselves.

Characteristics and traits of this totem (symbolic object) are used by the human during childhood, to help them assemble their male masculine and female feminine identity. Other community members who possess the same or similar totems are enlisted to help the young member mediate the meanings of the characteristics and traits of their chosen totem as they apply to him or her. As this collection of conscious and subconscious ideas about who and what he/she is grows, the subconscious ego-self models this collection of ideas into its own self-capacity to define itself from everyone else in the community, creating a fully unique individual that capable of either staying with the collective or breaking free to begin anew elsewhere.

The intermingling of male-masculine or female-feminine archetypes with archetypes from the natural world that are themselves imbued with metaphysical guardian spirits creates individual psychological identities that are every bit as complex as advanced industrial societies. The crossover between physical reality and the metaphysical reality of the spirit world creates powerful systems of belief that can sustain humans through great trials and pain. Returning to our examples of life in the Kel Tamashek, ancient poems, songs, and stories illustrate archetypes and construction of indigenous identities.

*Oh Tamashek, I always see you. Our souvenirs (remembrances) are in my head and in my heart. I told you that I am here now and always for you. I have you as a reminder of tmidurrt ( life) Tamashek. Tamashek you are imajaxen; I will wake and stand to let the world know about you. Even when (or if) I am far from you; I will keep you in my head and in n'imam (my soul) contained. I will try to not be mounafiq (traitor to amashek ideals). I always remember my camel totem-milk. I will always do everything to not be a hypocrite with you (Tamashek). I am far from you; but I am somewhere in the world, and I never forget you. (Rhissa, 2014)*

This poem is one of many that Mohamed Rhissa's great grandfather taught him when he was a child living in Adra' des Ifoghas, or Mountain of the Nobles in northern Mali. The poet and his family are from a distinguished family of Imajaxen, or free-born noble warriors who have effectively ruled the Sahara Desert and its Sahelian southern reaches for more than a millennium. His totem is the camel, a single hump species of dromedary that are physiologically and anatomically endowed with homeostatic traits which have allowed them to reproduce, survive, and support human life in hostile environments that preclude nearly all other animal life. The bond between Tamashek Imajaxen and dromedary is a result of evolutionary genetic adaptation to the most extreme climate in the world. In the vastness of the open desert, the dromedary is the symbol of survival.

*For Tamashek people, the camel is what they know they have in common. The camel is not only used for the transport, but he is a Tamashek companion. When did you see the camel come and it is doing [scratching] the ground near the tents of his owner that means that he is announcing to them that there is some new people whom are coming to the camp. If the camel does not want to go with the others, that means that there is a lot of camels about 30 kilometers away,*

*and that there is a female Camel with them that he wants to go towards. The camel is part of the Tamashek family, and his role is as important as other people's roles.*<sup>8</sup> (Ag Elwaley & Ali, 2014)

The word Tamashek in isolation from Kel (people of) in the poem above, indicates that the poet is referring to the feminine language of T'amashek, which serves as perhaps the clearest marker of inner belonging. The root of this word, amashek, is their central masculine archetype of heroism as expressed by the Imajaven noble warrior, who remains un-subjugated by man or nature. The struggle to become heroic, noble, and grow into an ideal of warrior, forever able to fight or flee from subjugation in this life and beyond is the psychological journey of male masculine identity. For the Kel Tamashek, they are one and the same.

### **The stability and weakness of Tamashek Identity and Cultural Reality.**

A central point that the previous section attempts to make is that male masculine identity within the Kel Tamashek is defined as, and is gained by, the eternal struggle to become Imajaven (noble warrior) through the expression of amashek (heroic ideals of savior-protector). Many indigenous societies use the never-ending backdrop of untamed nature as a constant variable of antagonist against the male protagonist. For the Kel Tamashek, each would be Imajaven must overcome and survive nature-as-antagonist to be worthy of their symbolic object of manhood, the *tagelmoust*, the indigo-dyed head dress worn by males of the Kel Tamashek.

Within an indigenous ethnic cultural community, phenotype, archetype, nature, and metaphysical are mixed in creative force to establish individual and collective identity and assign meanings to suffering. The establishment of identity and the assignment of meaning to suffering are creative acts that indigenous societies display in song, narrative, art, architecture, medicine, commerce, manufacturing, and education, to name but a few. The oral poems and stories of the Kel Tamashek are part of a vast oral record of their historical narrative that reaches into the furthest memory of their culture. The stories of pain, suffering, loss, and even madness, establish a mythic psychological landscape of timogoutar, a place of hopeless helplessness, where the archetypal capabilities of amashek have fallen and the Imajaven (warrior) identity is disintegrating.

The place of timogoutar is a terrible and feared place within the Kel Tamashek, more of an involuntary state of being, than an actual physical place. The consequences of timogoutar are not merely psychological, but physical, emotional, and spiritual. In its deepest sense, timogoutar involves an Imajaven's inability to battle against adversaries, both human and natural, or carry himself and his family to safety. As a complex nomadic, or semi-nomadic people, the Kel Tamashek operate over perhaps the largest single landscape in the world. The Sahara Desert and its Sahelian reaches, are larger than the North American continent.

**The nobility and tragedy of freedom and sovereignty of indigenous identity.** Indigenous ethnic and cultural communities often view their freedom and sovereignty as in absolute terms, with nature as the natural boundaries of human conduct and aspirations. The historical rise and fall of episodic empires that sought to enslave communities at worst, or establish coercive dependencies at best, created dense

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<sup>8</sup> Batty Ag Elwaley, of the Daksahak Clan of the Iwellemedan Confederation of the Kel Tamsashek. Ag Elwaley is an advisor to the National Assembly of Niger and Mali on Tuareg (Tamashek) affairs. 17 May 2014, at the home of Mohamed Ali, the Amenokal (chief) of the Daksahak Clan, near Tillyberry, Niger. The full interview can be found at [https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss\\_dcar\\_etd/22/](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss_dcar_etd/22/), on page 407 of the appendices.

archetypal stands of individual and communal need for freedom for ethnic and cultural sovereignty. I have found a correlation between indigenous struggles to survive and their capacity to willingly share their freedom and sovereignty with other cultural communities in a political state.

Indigenous communities whose survival has been severely tested in each generation by the rise of empires seeking domination and subjugation, and or by the violence associated with extreme natural habitats of desert, ice, or mountain, possess extreme archetypes of independence and sovereignty. In the words of so many colonial or empire governments, such indigenous communities are often 'ungovernable.'

Such indigenous communities develop complex identities that revolve around freedom and sovereignty, even to the exclusion of survival during periods of great change that favor adaptability over absolute resistance. Ethnic cultural communities such as the Chechen and Pashto communities of the Caucasus and Hindu Kush mountains or the Bedouin Arab, Tubou, and Tamashek communities of Arabia's Empty Quarter and the Sahara Desert are easily observed examples. These communities develop physical and psychological capacities to resist assimilation into larger cultural identities common to the political nation state.

Returning to our case study, through generations of evolution, Tamashek men and women are endowed with adaptations that rival the homeostatic traits of the dromedary. Legends and myths abound that tell of Imajayen who can ride a camel or drive a vehicle from Tripoli, on the coast of Libya, to Timbuktu in northern Mali or Agadez in northern Niger, without lights, compass, or the aid of global positioning systems. It is believed that through epigenetics, the nomadic peoples of the Sahara Desert and Sahel transition zones, possess an enhanced geospatial capacity that provides a mental map of these vast spaces. Psychogeography and psychogeology refers to the cognitive and subconscious imprinting of space and terrain beginning in early childhood, which elevates and expands mental association with the physical world around them.

Just as the Inuit have a 'sense of snow,' so to do the Kel Tamashek have a 'sense of sand.' Both have extensive vocabularies for sand that give them their senses of direction, location, and with whom they are sharing their indigenous spaces. This sense of sand, wind, mountain, and space has enabled the Kel Tamashek to resist French efforts at colonization for the last century and a half. They have brutally defeated every attempt at subjugation, winning a deep, if begrudging, respect from the colonial government, if not the African's to the south and the Arabs to the north. The exploits of Imajayen at escaping and evading overwhelming French and Arab security forces is legendary, even if the reality has



people to the changes of modernity. Abdulrahman's story is about a conflict between his people and a neighboring Tubou tribe called Emoulougane on the western side of the Air Massif in northern Niger.

#### **Alkhissate wan Razzia**

*The Emoulougane people practiced Razzia, a form of raiding where men from a village would come to another village and use power for gaining honor of courage and skill in riding and fighting. This is called tarkabte in Tamashek; the men doing Razzia are riding fast horses, and they would come and take all the animals and leave the villagers without anything. One day, they came just near a small Tamashek village and some of them make a big noise to inform the village that they are coming. They are getting ready to get into the village to kill and get everything they want. All the people run away from the village and only one of them, a man whose name was Attaher Ibrahim, said no. I will not run, I should go to fight with the raiding group. Attaher got all his war material, such as his Takola, sword, allough (French lance), and aghar (armor covering). All the village think that it will be finished and Attaher will be killed by the raiders. He made a big noise called a taghirit, and he asked the group if there is any brave man. Attaher said that I need him to come down from his horse and fight with me. All of the raiders came down to fight with Attaher, who made another big taghirit and told them "you raiders are not good fighters because I am alone; all of you want to fight with me. The raiders, shamed, told Attaher to choose one of them to fight. Attaher chose the one who was doing the talking. He cut all off his hands, but Ibrahim continued to fight even with injuries. The raider that he was fighting against, said to everyone, 'Ibrahim, I give you the truce because you are fighting even without hands, but you still fighting not giving up". The raider took Attaher on his horse and they told Attaher and his villagers, come with us, we will never fight with you again (Muhammed, 2014).*

The fierce courage of the story's Tamashek protagonist, Attaher Ibrahim, is attested to by his continuing to fight despite having had his hands cut off. The antagonist's refusal to kill Attaher and instead, brought him and his symbolic heroism, back to their village to tend his wounds and care for him. The cultural identity point of the story is to reinforce courage in the face of overwhelming adversity on the one hand, and compassion that is based on the demonstrated upholding of the highest honor and courage during extreme adversity. This cultural reality is a nonnegotiable requirement in cultural societies where the community's survival depends on its members displays of such courage and fortitude. Given that these archetypal traits have been in place for centuries, or even millennia, intrusive changes to this reality would likely be resisted at all costs, perhaps even to the point of cultural expiration.

#### **Trauma of broken realities, a place called hopeless helplessness.**

The realities found in many indigenous societies bear little resemblance to the realities of developed, industrialized life in urban settings. Governance, law, justice, physical health, mental health, spirituality/religion, are all separated into individual spheres of knowledge and practice in industrial constructed societies. The divisions between these spheres of knowledge are artificial constructions of manmade science that purports to explain everything under and above the heavens, anew. As if this knowledge had never been previously discovered by indigenous peoples over tens of thousands of years.

Indigenous systems of law, order, and justice can be nearly unrecognizable in contrast to the industrialized world of modern cities. Governance, law, and justice are intricately bound up in physical and mental health. The physical and the metaphysical are equally as important to indigenous philosophies of life, human purpose, and expectations of the afterlife. Indigenous structures of human life are inherited rather than constructed. Their provenance is often beyond the memories of the oldest members and exist only as stories, poems, and songs that are orally taught to each generation as part of their childhood cultural reality. The introduction of non-indigenous social construction can have a corrosive, destructive effect on indigenous realities and the individual and collective identities contained therein.

*'Here, take water, food or ammunition and medicine because the French have now left. We can no longer respect your customs, laws and traditions, that your ancestors and their ancestors followed, but we are going to give you some better ones in exchange, in order to make your lives in the Sahara easier, so easy that you will no longer need to follow your ancient traditions...' 'If they [French colonial forces] have gone, it seems logical that we return to our ancient traditions. Nothing has changed here. The desert has remained the same and will do for another one hundred years more. While you are not ready to adapt to that [post-colonial life in the desert reaches of the Sahara], it would be better to respect what already exists.'* (Vazquez-Figueroa, 2009, pp. 111-112)

For people whose psychological identity is constructed as a response to surviving hardship from nature and invasion, each offering of food that is not harvested or hunted, undermines ancient archetypes of indigenous survival that gives life and purpose to man and woman.

*The story of my son is a man chased by poverty. There is hunger that you can see if you look at the women and children around us. Omar [another son] was forced to travel to Libya, so he went. It was not a choice. To live in the desert is to survive hunger. One day you find food, he next day you do not. One day you go to sleep thirsty, the next day you drink.* (Bint Tigzali 2014).

Each offering of water that is not dug from wells or oasis in the unforgiving sand undermines family stories of trauma and glory in the never-ending quest for family and collective survival, a survival that has given meaning to suffering for thousands of years. Balkhou Eridel, Amenokal of the Kel Fadey describes the replacement of ancient ways with carbonated beverages that replace camel's milk and bottled water that replaces forgotten wells and oasis.

*The touchetts of the town, they bring new things and now they do not want the old. Look at what our host gives us to drink; is there someone here who has a strong (enough) stomach who can drink this? (Referring to the canned soft drinks presented on the table for the interviewees) ...this is not Tamashek in essuf (traditional life)... all the nomads who drinks milk (yoghurt and camels' milk) has a good stomach but not to drink this (carbonated beverages). (speaker cuts through murmuring) yes this is a small thing, but what about the wells that are not here, or the trade that does not come?* (Aradile, Ahmed, Assalim, Eridel, & Ahmad, 2014)

Each offering of medicine that removes the need to brave pain and agony calls into question, the need for heroic bravery faced by family members past and present. The new external knowledge plants the

seeds of survivor guilt because the 'cure' was always there and parents and family had somehow, failed to save loved ones. Algabib Assalim, one of the Amenokal of the Kel Ahaggar in southern Algeria/northern Mali, brought his ailing daughter to a Tamashek clinic in the town of Ingall, about 60 kilometers west of Tahoua, in northern Niger. His face was lined with worry and grief at not being able to save his child's life and blamed himself for not being able to help her.

*Tatreet id ashedad (sickness and disease) is with us and threatens our survival. One of my girl's feels ill, she is going to the clinic at Ingall. That is why they called me to this meeting. Most times, in the past, those in our touchetts are not able to travel or find medicine. If my children are in tatreet id ashedad, it is like I am in timogoutar and it is me that went to there. (Aradile, Ahmed, Assalim, Eridel, & Ahmad, 2014)*

Each new road and self-propelled vehicle that replaces donkey, horse, and camel, abrogates the intimate relationship between man and animal. Each new offering of fixed structures with plumbing, electricity, heat, coolants, and solidity enough to resist the power of the Shamal, calls men and women to abandon their nomadic movement throughout their vast landscape that has created and sustained their individual and collective identity for thousands of years. Ag Sayadi Ahmed is the Amenokal of the Kel Ewey, whose lands include the town Iferouāne, the cultural center of Azaway, north of Agadez, which is the economic center of life. Iferouāne is in the north-central part of the Air Mountains and hosts a key Tamashek cultural festival each year in February.

*We have emutyen now, a lot of changes occurs in Tamashek peoples. Every Tamashek has problems, but the feeling and the thoughts are the same. We have worries about iyzerien (younger generation) ... they want the motorcycle, the picture (smart) phone, and to go and live in the town away from essuf. How will they know emarr'wan (parents and grandparents) and eemeyen batu (oral – talk stories of the past)? When the Hausa and Zarma towns take iyzerien what about assam'drn tas-aq-q (remembering and relationships)? (Aradile, Ahmed, Assalim, Eridel, & Ahmad, 2014)*

### **Indigenous Trauma from Collapsing Meaning and Disintegrating Identity.**

When we think of trauma suffered by indigenous peoples, we think of violence, loss of family members, wartime sexual violence, deportation, ethnic cleansing, famine, or drought. Horrifying though such events are, they are not, in and of themselves, trauma. These events can create trauma, but they are not the trauma. When a person is shot, stabbed, impaled, or suffers an opening or damage to the body, that opening, or damage is the physical trauma. Two children fall off an embankment and roll down a long hillside. One child suffers a wound where a stick pokes into his leg, while the other is shaken, but undamaged except for a minor scratch that does not bleed and no apparent bruises. The first child has suffered trauma because his body has been pierced or damaged, not because he rolled down the hill. The second child suffered the same event, but, fortunately, did not suffer a physical trauma because there was no piercing or damage to the body.

The conditions of psychological trauma must meet the same criteria of physical trauma. Instead of the physical body being pierced or damaged, however, it is the psychological body that is pierced or damaged. The psychological body that we are referring to is the psychological reality of the subconscious ego-self. Most people can easily discern the symptoms of when the human body suffers a



trauma. There is bleeding, swelling, bruising that is indicated by blackish-blue discoloration of the skin, a limb that is twisted unnaturally, and the affected person, if they are conscious, are often in some level of pain.

How about psychological trauma? Much fewer people have the knowledge to discern the symptoms of psychological trauma. Clear symptoms do, however, exist and can be easily discerned. Some symptoms are culturally invariant, meaning that they are the same for all human cultural identities. Other symptoms are culturally variant, meaning that we must understand what or how the community's cultural identity psychologically and emotionally presents in a whole, healthy manner before we can see these covert aspects of trauma.

More importantly to psychosocial trauma diagnosis, is the need to be able to discern how an event created the psychological penetration or damage to the community's collective mental reality. As in the case of the two children who fell down a hillside, two communities can suffer the same event and one emerges untraumatized, while the other emerges traumatized, with growing social symptoms of psychosocial-emotional disintegration and discord.

Many indigenous communities do suffer from internal violence, social disorder, apathy, casual violence and cruelty, drug and alcohol addiction, sexual promiscuity, as well as negative or unhealthy family and social relationships. All of these are symptoms of trauma, but they are not the traumatizing events. When there is little evident physical damage to the community and its infrastructure, yet, the population still presents the symptoms of trauma, likely, the traumatizing event requires a much deeper analysis to discover. This is because psychological trauma is not about a physical injury, but rather, an injury to the psyche of the community and its collective members. Of course, violent events can cause psychosocial trauma, but patterns of violence is more often a symptom of trauma rather than a cause of the trauma, requiring ever deepening efforts at data collection and analysis.

**Following the trail of symptoms of indigenous trauma.** Separating the symptoms of social trauma from normal cultural practices can sometimes be difficult. The Arab tribes of the Yemeni highlands have grown, consumed, and sold khat, a mild narcotic, for generations. Its domestic purchase and consumption were mostly limited to male head of households that could afford it and was not a major consumable staple of Yemeni life. Since the civil war however, this has changed. Khat has become an all-consuming habit for many of society's members, especially for urban dwellers in Sana'a, Ibb, and Aden. In interviews, we find that farmers have changed a large portion of available agricultural land from food production to the production of khat. We found in interviews that internal strife in families and clans was increasing because men were spending money for groceries on rapidly growing addictions to khat.

My field research in the Acholi villages of northern Uganda, Oromo villages in Ethiopia, and Somali villages in Somalia, discovered increases in sexual promiscuity, dissolution of marriages, absent parents, and unsupervised children. All of these could be patterns of trauma symptoms or they could be aspects of normal cultural behavior. The Kel Tamashek for instance, follow most aspects of a Sunni-Sufi variation of Muslim beliefs, but have retained several pre-Islamic, pre-Christian, and pre-Judaic practices such as spirit possession ceremonies and premarital sexual behavior. During my field research, I spent months and even years tracking down the origins of practices to discover if they were part of normal, healthy social interaction or were symptoms of trauma and a wider disintegration of sociological tissue.

This process of discovery was not always easy. Respondents rarely agreed on cause, condition, practice, or social effects, much in the same way that there is so much disagreement in the United States regarding the practice of abortion and recreational drug use. Even when the behavioral patterns observed (such as Yemen and Somalis' use of khat) are clearly linked with sociological breakdowns in the family unit and the demise of individual and collective identity, most respondents are not able to turn inward to analyze a condition that they are themselves a part of. This is also normal in all societies where social trauma breaks down relationships and inhibits the effective functioning of family, clan, and micro-level social structures. We found that most respondents in communities of significant, widespread conditions of social trauma were unable to grasp either the trauma, or the causations of the trauma.

Below is an extract of a much longer interview discussion between several Amenokalen (tribal elders) that poignantly illustrates their interior fears over the disintegrating cultural identity of the Kel Tamashek. The purpose of this roundtable discussion with Amenokalen from Tamashek tribes from the Valley of Azaway (Mali, Niger, and Algeria) was to explore the deeper underlying causes of social breakdown in the central Sahel. For the past 40-50 years, multiple Tamashek (Tuareg) led revolutions have, several times, overthrown elected governments in Bamako Mali and Niamey Niger, most recently in 2013. The Malian portion of the Valley of Azaway remains under a United Nations Peacekeeping Mandate at the time of this writing.

*Ag Sayadi Ahmed, Amenokal of Kel Ewey, Iferouāne Niger: You are asking about what is in our mind, here there is no one who knows that for sure because of timogoutar. If my son leaves for the town and does not come back to me; he does not learn Tamashek...he does not learn imawalan and does not learn imajayen from the Hausa or Zarma who give him a job. Maybe he wears a dress of the imedlan in ikufar (lands of the whites and or of industrialized modern ways of life) and takes off his tagelmoust. For me this is timogoutar because my touchett sees that my son is not imajayen, not even imxad or inhaden.*

During my field work, we explored the various touchetts (semi-permanent and permanent encampments and villages of the Kel Tamashek) in the Sahel reaches from Tahoua to Agadez and Iferoune in northern Niger and over to Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu in northern Mali. We would sit with the young men and women who were up in the morning before daily chores and jobs, for those that had them, and listen to their casual, yet intense banter over morning tea. The most outgoing and engaging spoke eagerly of their desires to go to the big cities of Niamey, Bamako, Algiers, and Tripoli. Their smartphones showed them the ways of modernity, outside of essuf, or the way of bush, meaning the traditional ways of their parents and grandparents. Most of their available time and money would be spent perusing videos and blogs that informed them of the globalization of trade, travel, and technology that was transforming the world around them, and they wanted to be a part of it.

*Balho Aradile, Amenokal of Kel Fadey, Rural du Ingall Niger & Mali: The identity of Tamashek is in the tagelmoust what you can see and imajayen that you cannot see unless there is amaghr ... a Tamashek father is imajayen he must protect his family and his touchett. It'tikhal is what makes us Tamashek and is for all the community (Tamashek) do not do something who can blame Tamashek; to be Tamashek is Ashok. This is his allok if he fails [to protect, to save] he does not have ashok he is azook. To lose ashok is to do tagadar (betray) he take off the tagelmoust... any Amashek who leaves amaghr, that's bad; he has Alghar his touchett has milkate (banish) id his family has tekrahit (shame) ... it's like you shoot him.*

In the evenings, around family and communal fires, we sat with the emarr'wan, parents, grandparents, and sometimes great grandparents, as they talked to us about their fears for their children and their tagaste id tomoost n'tamashek (culture and identity) in a rapidly changing world. The Tamashek word, It'tikhal, that Balho Aradile speaks of, means the sum of expressions of individual and collective identity that signifies a free-born, noble class of desert nomads that are beholden to only God and nature. These families form the backbone of the Kel Tamashek's many subunits of life in the great valley between the Aïr, des Ifoghas, and Hoggar Massifs. National boundaries are of little use to indigenous nomadic and semi nomadic peoples, who consider the entire Sahelian region of Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Libya, to be their ancestral homelands, the land of the Azaway.

Ag Sayadi Ahmed, Amenokal of Kel Ewey, Iferouâne Niger: *The Tamashek word for nomad is imawalan which is part of imajayen. When a young man gets 25 years...no 18, or 20, he should get his tagelmoust before he makes his first journey... we will make a ceremony because wearing the tagelmoust – this is tangad - means that he becomes a man. The ceremony is called Amangad, and they are still doing it, the Tamashek in Essuf and in the city (Agadez and Niamey).*

Perhaps the most visible outward expression of identity for the Kel Tamashek is the royal or indigo blue head and face wrap shown in the previous illustrations, called a 'tagelmoust.' Its principal purpose is to shield the head, face, and shoulders from the blistering desert sun and ever-present dust. Traditionally, only members and guests of an Imajayen's touchett are permitted to see the man's face, while the women's face is never covered. The blue dye has historically bled into the skin of the men who wear the veil, giving them the moniker of 'blue men of the Sahara' by popular writers, whose imagination has been captured by this indomitable people. Subtle differences in the form and shape of the tagelmoust indicate the origin or kel, of the wearer.

Members of the Kel Tamashek who live and work in the capital cities of Niamey, Bamako, and Algeria, appear to wear the tagelmoust about 50% of the time and often do not always fully cover their faces. Even so, everyone in the western and northern parts of Africa seems to know when they are talking to or dealing with, a Tuareg (Tamashek) man, regardless of how he wears his tagelmoust.<sup>9</sup> Continuously it seems, that elders talk of the increasing numbers of adolescent boys in the touchetts who are more interested in modern objects of interest, than in pursuing traditional indigenous activities that lead to their preparation to perform the *tangad*, or tagelmoust wearing ceremony. The men of the touchett often begin to feel alienated from their own children and angered by the resulting shame.

Algabib Assalim, Amenokalen of Kel Ahaggar, Tamanrasset, Algeria: *They do not teach Tamashek in schools, only French and Hausa and maybe Zarma. They say that Tamashek people do not need to write because they are imawalan. Yes, Tamashek people always change places looking for a nice place for their animals, that is why the other ethnics are always saying that they do not have a country, Tamashek are nomads that is why they want to go everywhere, but it is only because of their animals and what we know from imajayen.*

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<sup>9</sup> Tuareg is the French-Arab name for the Kel Tamashek peoples of Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Libya, and are a subset of the Berber peoples, which is itself a foreign name for the Kel Tamazight of Morocco, northern Algeria, Tunisia, and northern Libya. They are classified as Caucasoid as are Arabs, but self-identify as neither 'blanc nor negro,' insisting that their skin color is imešwayan and sattaŋan (imaginary skin colors of red and green respectively).



pastoralist nomads such as the Kel Tamashek, the Tubou, the Fulani, Bedouins, Somali, and others, freedom is defined in opposition to sedentarism. Nomadic concepts of freedom reject manmade political divisions that create border fences, customs, duties, and tariffs. Nomadic concepts of freedom reject political states' attempts at regulating, conserving, and otherwise managing common pool resources, especially when they happen to be located on or under indigenous lands that are considered sacred parts of cultural identity. Finally, nomadic concepts of freedom reject attempts by political states to substitute the newly created laws of the state over the laws of antiquity that they and their ancestors have followed for hundreds, even thousands of years.

The power of these concepts; nomadism as a central aspect of psychosocial identity and nomadic conceptualization of freedom in a globalizing world, are even now destabilizing large segments of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Our research findings suggest that nomadism is not merely an aspect of communal behavior that can be changed by legislation and fences. Instead, we find that nomadism shapes or forms personalities of its members beginning in early life that members so imbued, cannot simply change, even if they wanted to. This field of study that has been informing our research is called Psychogeography by Dr. Howard F. Stein in his text, *Developmental Time, Cultural Space: Studies in Psychogeography* (2008). Using his work as a starting point, our research has added concepts of Psychogeology and Psychoclimatology to building an understanding of how the physical environment imprints human psychology.

## **Conclusion.**

I describe culture as an expression of group identity. Identity is the psychological distinguishment of the self and its most closely related human members; the whole from which the individual was/is derived. At the center of identity (as I define it) exists those archaic types of human longing and desire for attainment; perceived strands of human perfection that amorphously exist in forms that are tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory, and intuitive to sense. These strands of longing and desire are molded and perhaps sparked by physical markers of ethnicity, geography/geology, and inherited mythical narrative of historical origination. At its inception, I suggest that identity is the noun (thing) and culture is the verb (action) and the adjective (description). Eventually, expressions of the verb-culture create identity-nouns of ever greater depth in a cyclical symbiotic relationship. But the relationship between them is important for my field of cultural and ethnic conflict and where my answers to conflict are primarily in the psychology of identity and trauma. Anthropologist Howard Stein writes that cultural identity groups possess a "compelling image or metaphor, by which it seeks to understand and organize itself" (Stein and Hill 1977). Where the 'understand' part of this idea relates to the group and individual members' need to capture their existential identity in a larger narrative that achieves human *tas-aq-q* (communion) and outward transmission, the 'organize' part of his idea relates to a psychological organization of cognition, identity separation, archaic typology construction, and healthful emotional conjugation. The compelling image or metaphor causally relates both to how they understand their historical narrative and the organization of their group and individual identities that are encapsulated and transmitted across generational inheritance.

My research suggests that the compelling image or metaphor of the Kel Tamashek is that of the imajaxen (warrior-savior) in essuf (open desert-mountains) practicing imawalan (nomadism) as a precondition for avoiding timogoutar (inescapable shock) in a geography and geology that is hostile absolutely to human existence. Moreover, the construction of the central archaic typology of imajaxen is symbiotic to the feared psychological state of timogoutar and the sociological structure of imawalan life. In the case of the Tuareg of northern Mali and Niger, a case can be made that external events beyond their control are threatening psychological devolvement and sociological disintegration; conditions that are primary inhibitors of conflict resolution. The piercing of the Tamashek reality that is built on imajaxen and imawalan as a defense against timogoutar create a trauma that inhibits growth and adaptation to the emutyen change they so fear. Within the dialogue of Tuareg communal life, once can hear the cognitive dissonance of identity, culture, and sociological construction. For example, in the second interview session, Ag Hamid says that the native writing of Tamashek is in the Tifinaɣ alphabet which most Tuareg are not able to read or write. Yet in the first interview, Balho poignantly asks how they can be Tamashek if they cannot speak the language that bears their name? In the first interview, Ag Sayadi frames a central fear of identity definition for the Kel Tamashek when he talks about identity markers and threatened cultural assimilation into African and Arab cultural life (Horowitz 1985).

*Ag Sayadi: How will they know emarr'wan (parents and grandparents) and eemeyen batu (oral – talk stories of the past)? When the Hausa and Zarma towns take iyzerien what about assam'drn tas-aq-q (remembering and relationships)? (Aradile, et al. 2014)*

The Tamashek fear of identity boundary failure and cultural assimilation has been at the forefront of their efforts at constructing real and imaginary physical markers of identity and cultural expression for the duration of their historical narrative. In interview three, Ag Hamid links the central Tamashek archaic typology with the physical markers of skin color and language as well as the Tuareg psychogeography of their horizon ideology.

By framing the Tamashek as existing between imikwal African and blanc Arab, the Tuareg have created, over the life of their historical narrative, a model of structural relationship that Stein refers to as an adversary symbiosis of differentiation, where black, white, and red/green communal colors exist only in opposition to each other (Stein 1982). This adversary symbiosis allows the color blocks to define and differentiate themselves from each other, thereby strengthening their own identity boundaries while dissociating negative traits from within onto the outer other (Stein 1983) (Volkan 1986). As the reality of emutyen takes hold over the Tamashek touchetts, the boundary walls of identity weaken. Ag Hamid's plaintive question asking what color they will be without Tamashek is a stark reminder that their nomadic world built on language, the psychological boundaries of horizon, and the geology of erg and massif are crumbling.

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