Notes

Preface

1 Slavery was abolished de jure in 1903 as a consequence of the French colonisation of Mauritania, in 1961 when the universal declaration of human rights of the United Nations was ratified by independent Mauritania, and finally on 5 July 1980, when Colonel Ould Haidalla, then leader of the military committee for national salvation, declared slavery to be abolished. Legislation for this last abolition was passed as ordinance nº 81.234 on 9 November 1981 and included a stipulation that masters who freed their slaves should be compensated (cf. Mauritanie Nouvelles, nº 235, 23.1.1997: 7f.).

2 Public concern over the issue of slavery in Mauritania is actually greatest in France, the former colonial power in Mauritania, and the USA: examples in recent articles decrying the persistence of Moorish, i.e. bīẓān, slavery are Mercer (1982); Salondon (1983); Paringaux (1990); Jacobs/Athie (1994); Diallo (1995); French (1996); Montefiori (1996); Burkett (1997), and finally more tempered views presented by Hecht (1997) and Daddah (1998).

3 Traditional forms of servitude also survive in other areas, such as many parts of south-east Asia, or India, where bondage persists (cf. Klein 1993b: 26).

4 Indeed the notion of slavery is not altogether dead, but it is often used metaphorically today to compare living conditions of distinct groups and individuals with what are commonly assumed to have been slaves' living conditions. There is a bitter irony in the fact that today children from Mauritania become subjected to such modern types of exploitation. They are employed as jockeys for the camel races in the oil-exporting countries of the gulf, where they live more or less without payment, while their job of riding camels at the highest speed is an excessively dangerous one. Once they become too big for this task they are sent back home.

5 Among others Frederick Cooper (1979: 105) voiced this reproach to Africanists studying slavery. In the quest for an African, emic description able to contrast African slavery with slavery in the Americas, they reproduced the ideology of the elites. Recently the UNESCO "Slave Route" Project, inaugurated on 1 September 1994 at the old slaving port of Ouidah in today's Bénin, put the systematic study of the reciprocal influences the

Atlantic slave trade had on Africa and the Americas on the agenda (cf. Lovejoy 1997).

6 Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (1995: 28ff. and 1997: 587, note 1) recently suggested applying Louis Dumont's (1966) theories on social hierarchy to bīẓān society, and hence concluded that belonging to hierarchically stratified status groups in this society is not perceived as disgraceful, unconscious, or rejected but is a social classification adopted voluntarily by this society. This definition begs the question of how such consent achieves hegemony in society and whether there are any groups contesting it.

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8 The Mauritanian NGO SOS-esclaves defines its position towards this question as follows:

"4. N'y a t-il seulement que des séquelles de l'esclavage en Mauritanie?

Une certaine opinion voudrait, sans doute pour se donner bonne conscience, qu'il n'y ait plus que des séquelles de l'esclavage en Mauritanie et non pas une véritable pratique de ce phénomène. Pour ce faire on recourt à la vieille rengaine de la cécité, si ce n'est de l'amnésie volontaire. Il n'y a pas d'esclavage. Il n'y a que des survivances, car on ne veut pas voir une réalité qui, pourtant, crève les yeux. Parler de séquelles permettrait en effet de justifier le peu d'empressement des autorités sur ce dossier. Se pencher sur les restes d'un phénomène supposé disparu, permettrait ainsi de légitimer la négation officielle du problème.

C'est une approche bonne pour mystifier l'opinion internationale et non à usage interne. La réalité vécue et non pas seulement vue des palais officiels, lui apporte, en effet, un démenti certain. *Dans ce pays, des hommes et des femmes continuent de souffrir d'un esclavage qui, pour être multiforme n'en est pas moins réel.*" (SOS Esclaves 1995: 2f.; emphasis added)

9 The five, Maître Brahim Ould Ebety, Professor Cheikh Saad Bouh Kamara, Boubacar Ould Messaoud, Fatimata M'Baye, and Abdel Nasser Ould Yessa, were accused of "faux usage de faux" and "création et appartenance à association non autorisée et propagation d'allégations mensongères" (cf. L'Autre Afrique, 18.2.1998: 35).

Introduction

1 On the impact of the war with the POLISARIO on Mauritanian politics refer e.g. to Pazzanita (1997: 18ff.).

2 Albert Memmi (1993) distinguishes between the relation of domination-subjection on the one hand and purveyance-dependence on the other. While dependence is based on consent resulting from the purveyance of goods, domination reflects a relation of power likely to be called into question.

3 On a micro-level scale this insight is used as a methodological device, for example in ethnomethodology, where Garfinkel (1967) developed crisis experiments as a means to uncover common-sense and the structures of society incorporated in everyday life.

4 The existence of discrete and hidden though not powerless forms of resistance by subservient strata, such as peasants, has been highlighted by James C. Scott (1985, 1990). While the theoretical assumptions of this approach are subject to strong criticism (cf. Akram-Lodhi 1992; Rubin 1995), which are seen as justified in the present analysis (cf. chapter eight), its strength lies in raising sensitivity to the subtle elements in the localised manifestations of social power. The need to take into account slave action as a substantial element defining the master-slave relation has been highlighted by Frederick Cooper (1979) and Jonathon Glassman (1991 and 1995).
5 Jonathon Glassman (1995) gave his both favourable and critical review of Claude Meillassoux's (1986) theoretical contribution to the study of slavery the title "No words of their own" to highlight the lack of concern with slave action and expression not only in Meillassoux's work.

Chapter 1

1 Later a Catholic abolition movement developed as well, having the foundation of several societies in France in 1888 as a starting point (cf. Klein 1993b: 17).
2 Only recently a DNA-analysis proved that Thomas Jefferson (1746-1826) had fathered several children on his slave Sally Heming, a fact he had continued to deny during his lifetime.
3 Of course the socialist states' ideology was critical of slavery as well, but the kind of freedom the capitalist market economy professed to be the alternative was criticised as failing to meet essential needs of mankind.
4 The definition of slavery as resulting from an initial act of violence is controversial as there were also non-coercive ways to become slave, for instance as a result of debts (debt-bondage), or became subject to arrangements very similar to slavery as famine refugees or war captives (cf. Glassman 1995: 134). Stressing that the slave estate results from an initial act of violence, however, by narrowing the definition makes it possible to link slavery as an institution more consistently with a systematic versus a kind of accidental use of slaves in society. While the latter case also expresses an act of violence, though on a lower level, two theoretical concepts have been based on this distinction. James L. Watson (1980b) differentiated between "open and closed systems" of slavery, societies which offered modes of integration to slaves and those which denied such options. Other scholars, such as Martin A. Klein (1983: 79) and Paul E. Lovejoy (1981: 22f.), have tried to frame these distinct patterns of slavery in terms of a distinction between a household mode of production and a slave mode of production. However, most of the evidence they present distinguishes between societies in which slaves constituted a significant part of the population, and thus were important to its functioning, and societies in which slaves were of minor importance. Claude Meillassoux (1986), who is a proponent of the mode of production approach, refrains from applying this concept to slave

societies, while Frederick Cooper (1979: 116, note 51) denounces it in the context of the analysis of slavery as a "pigeonhole".

5 Claude Meillassoux (1986: 35) characterises the slaves' deprivation in the following terms: "l'incapacité sociale de l'esclave à se reproduire socialement" and in the statement that slavery constitutes "l'antithèse de la parenté".

6 Wendy James (1988: 133) emphasised that the enslaving society has to construct a boundary separating itself from the enslaveable other. By this practice of attributing features to alien people the slave society engages in the definition of its own identity.

7 The French terms used by Claude Meillassoux (1986) are "état" and "condition". The translation used here follows the one proposed by Martin A. Klein in his translation of Claude Meillassoux's (1983) article on "Female Slavery", wherein this latter author notes (note 3) "I distinguish *estate* from *status* because the jural situation of the slave stands on negative criteria whereas *status* defines people on positive jural grounds." (original emphasis)

8 M.I. Finley (1968: 310) suggests that slavery becomes institutionalised once slaves are essential to the working of the economy and consequently that slave work outweighed other forms of labour.

9 The notable exception to the demographic deficiency of slave populations not only in Africa but on other continents too, is the US South. There the slave population grew and thus – quite paradoxically – this slave system therefore fails to fit into the theoretical framework of Claude Meillassoux (1986), who argues that there needs to be a slave mode of reproduction by trade and warfare.

10 The impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa remains disputed among scholars, although a majority of these confirm the thesis that the Atlantic trade indeed affected Africa in many ways. A thorough discussion of this topic is provided by Paul E. Lovejoy (1989: 365), who concludes that the Atlantic trade "marked a radical break in the history of Africa, most especially because it was a major influence in transforming African society." As a consequence of this evolution, enslavement on the continent increased, the trade grew, and African societies themselves employed a growing number of slaves, thus developing new modes of enslavement. For a more complete elaboration of Lovejoy's transformation thesis refer to his "Transformations in Slavery" (1983). The issue of the responsibility of the Atlantic slave trade for today's Africa's underdevelopment is still vigorously discussed (cf. among others Manning 1990a, b; Klein 1990 and 1992; M'Bokolo 1998; Rauzduel 1998).

11 This very special mode of reproduction of slaves, namely by warfare and trade, which constitutes the central thesis of Meillassoux's (1986) book, is expressed by a subtle metaphor in the subtitle: "le ventre de fer et d'argent".

12 In his descriptions of slaves as having completely internalised their subservient status and being incapable of developing thoughts of their own, Claude Meillassoux (1986: 127f.; 318, 359) moves even beyond the position forwarded by Orlando Patterson (1982), who has been blamed for merely reproducing dominant ideology in his descriptions of slaves and slaves' actions (cf.

Glassman 1995: 136ff.). For the very same reason Frederick Cooper (1979: 110) expressed discomfort with certain aspects of the earlier work of Meillassoux (1975a).

13 According to David B. Davis (1966: 33) these two characteristics of the slave were already acknowledged by Roman law. While in most legal contexts the slave was treated as a thing, in distinct cases, such as provision for preventing the slave from being murdered, he was considered a person. Islamic jurisprudence, while maintaining the divide between the slave as a thing and as a person, later widened the number of circumstances in which slaves could appear as legal persons. Nevertheless, despite becoming "the brother of the freeman in Islam and before God" (Lewis 1990: 6), slaves remained discriminated against in many regards, e.g. they could testify, but their testimony had only half of the weight of a freeman's (cf. Brunschwig 1960: 26ff.).

14 This concern indeed takes up a major criticism Frederick Cooper (1979: 117) expressed with regard to Africanist studies of slavery: "Africanists have tried too hard to say what 'rights' slaves did or did not have or what the 'status of slaves' in a particular society was, and not hard enough to analyse how such rights and statuses became customary or how they changed."

15 It has to be called to mind that until recently isolated cases of slave sales have been reported from Mauritania, the most prominent case of which certainly is the one of a woman sold on the market of Atar in 1980, an incident which took place at the height of the confrontation between El Hor, Mauritania's first political organisation of former slaves and manumitted slaves and the government, and resulted in strong national and international protests (cf. Mercer 1982: 31f.).

16 In this feature slavery in Islamic societies differed from slavery in many African societies which had no codified legal system. Although Islamic jurisprudence, especially in the western Sahara, did not provide the institutional support the state institutions in the US South did for the maintenance of slavery, it remained a powerful source of reference for the masters. This argument, however, does not mean that Islam has been a causative agent shaping a distinct kind of slavery, as it appears in a number of writings (such as Claude Meillassoux 1986). Rather the Qur'ān and numerous ḥadīṯs which demanded that slaves be treated well and recommended manumission, but did not question slavery (i.e. conversion of a slave to Islam was no reason for manumission, cf. Brunschwig 1960; Lewis 1990: 5ff.), were used as a cultural means by the masters to produce an ideology legitimising their rule. However, this is a two-edged strategy. The two tendencies present in the Qur'ān and further developed into a legal framework by the Islamic schools of jurisprudence allow the oppressed to make the interpretation of Islam an element in their struggles for social recognition (cf. Cooper 1981; see also p. 262-265).

For an overview of Islamic jurisprudence concerning slavery refer to Daumas (1883: 319-344), Schacht (1964: esp. 127ff.), Ibn Abî Zayd Al-Qayrawânî (1983), Willis (1985a) and Lewis (1990).

17 Until today one of the most common conflicts between slaves and former slaves and their masters or else former masters develops from quarrels

involving the question who has the right to inherit from dead slaves: the master or the children of the slave. Numerous such cases are documented by SOS esclaves (1995) as well as the independent press of Mauritania. These contemporary cases, concerning deceased slave women and men alike, however, mark the definite break in master-slave relations more than manifest how slavery is maintained. Those masters who now want to inherit the few belongings of their deceased slaves want to profit a last time from an estate that has lost most of its significance, and would be of no benefit with regard to the slave's descendants anyhow.

18 The case also shows how the bīẓān effectively did not respect slave marriages as legally valid. This contradicts Islamic jurisprudence, which respects slaves as legal persons, though not endowed with full responsibility. However, as subjects of their masters, they were allowed to conclude marriages (although they could also be married contrary to their will by the master), and hence should have had the right to enjoy their marital relation fully (cf. Schacht 1964: 127).

19 The Qur'ān is especially rigid in defining the circumstances allowing slavery to arise: through war (against infidels) (4:94, 8:67) or by birth as a slave (cf. Lewis 1990: 6). The enslavement of Muslims is hence banned and soon became forbidden by Islamic jurisprudence. However, this point was often not respected. What remained unquestioned, even by Sudanese Muslim reformers wanting to restrict slavery, was that conversion of slaves after (due) enslavement did not entail their manumission (cf. Barbour/Jacobs 1985: 130). Great emphasis is laid in the Qur'ān on the fact that masters should do good unto their slaves and other dependents (4:36), that they may not force female slaves into prostitution (24:33), and that freeing slaves is recommended after war is over (47:4), as a break with pre-Islamic traditions (90:13), as a penance for a broken oath (5:89) and the death of believers fighting against you (4:92), and also for retracting a divorce (58:3). Freeing is also described as the act of a truly pious person (2:177) and the master is asked to share sustenance with his slaves (16:71). For a discussion of the prescriptions of the Qur'ān with regard to slavery by a Mauritanian scholar refer to Ahmed (1983: 26ff.)

20 Martin A. Klein (1993c: 189f.) portrays slave masters in the region of the French Sudan as not having been able to suppress much of the emancipation of their slaves after colonisation, but as having won another battle, that of controlling the slaves' past, i.e. maintaining the memory of their slave ancestry and estate.

21 The settling of runaway slaves in new villages was difficult first of all because these people lacked almost all means of production and at best were only able to start cultivation directly after their arrival in the new area, which meant they had to wait almost half a year until their first harvest. During this time, they had to find other means to secure their survival. These problems runaway slaves had to overcome contributed decisively to the development of a free labour market in the Sudan and in the peanut-basin of Senegal (cf. Roberts 1988: 287ff.; Moitt 1989; Klein 1993c: 182ff.).

Lee V. Cassanelli (1988: 321f.) describes how runaway slaves formed

independent villages in Italian Somalia. While the first villages thus built were inhabited by former slaves of like ethnic origin, those founded later, i.e. at the turn of the 20th century were occupied by runaway slaves of diverse ethnic origins who identified themselves as ex-slaves of various Somali clans. Within these villages principles of seniority developed, which granted the first settlers control over resources like land and political power. The resulting disadvantages for newcomers are responsible for the successive development of many small villages inhabited by groups of runaway slaves who had settled together.

22 In fact by far not all slaves were exploited in economic terms. Some were integrated into the state apparatus, where they often occupied important positions, or as what is probably the most prominent example, the Mamluks of Egypt, shows, became themselves the rulers of a state (cf. Hunwick 1992: 17; Patterson 1979: 42f.).

23 Until today the volume edited by Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (1983) remains to my knowledge the only comprehensive approach to the question apart from local studies such as e.g. the one by Claire Oxby (1978), Aurelia Martìn (1991) and Marcia Wright (1993).

24 In these features, these societies fit a Marxist interpretation of what constitutes a slave society: "the most significant distinguishing feature of a given mode of production is not so much *how the bulk of the labour of production is done, as how the dominant propertied classes*, controlling the conditions of production, *ensure the extraction of the surplus* which makes their leisured existence possible." (De St. Croix 1988: 20, original emphasis) However, as the bīẓān case will show, things are not always as neatly to be discerned, and hence the demographic significance of slavery, though being no theoretical device, comes to be an appropriate means to discern different kinds of slavery (cf. Klein 1993c: 172).

25 Indeed the great camel caravans were constituted in the north of the country, especially in the trade towns and the Adrar, which was the western Sahara's link with the north, i.e. Morocco. More to the south, in the Tagant and the Gebla regions, caravans were much smaller, and trade was more decentralised (cf. Webb 1995: 61).

26 Indeed little is known about this group, whose name recurs in different contexts. E.g. a distinct group of date-palm workers in the oasis of Tidjikja is also called ʿaġzāzīr. Even more scarce is information on other bīẓān salt mines. The earth-salt dug at Tîchît e.g. seems to have been extracted by free people of a distinct group, the Masna, but perhaps these employed slave workers too. In the Trarza there were also earth salt deposits, which seem to have played an important role in the region's history, but even less is known about their exploitation than is about the Tîchît case (cf. McDougall 1990: 248ff.).

27 Similar structures of complementary production patterns linked by relations of servility are found among the Tuareg and their slaves (cf. Olivier de Sardan 1976: 26ff.).

28 These literal meanings of the two ḥassāniyya terms have entered the French discourses of Moors in Mauritania, in both newspapers and academic

writing. There sūdān and bīẓān appear often as "Maures noirs" and "Maures blancs".

29 The term kwār might be derived from the North African kāfir, designating the unbelieving (cf. Aguade/Meouak 1993).

30 This latter etymology is something of a paradox, for the ḥarāṭīn of the Sahara cultivate by the hoe, not by the plough.

31 Such groups, representing a kind of a ḥarāṭīn nobility, effectively existed in bīẓān society. In the Adrar a number of ḥarāṭīn own written manumission contracts which are already 200 years old (Pierre Bonte, personal communication 1994). Among the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed ḥarāṭīn were among the closest counsellors of the ʿamīr of Tagant, Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar (deceased in 1982). And ḥarāṭīn of the Kunta living in the Tamourt en-Naaj on the Tagant plateau claim to descend from independent workers who lived in the nearby former Kunta trade town Kasr el Barka. Such distinctions are taken up by El Keihel Ould Mohamed El Abd (1986: 28), who makes a distinction between independent populations that became ḥarāṭīn and imported slaves that did so, calling the former "Noirs Maures" and the latter "Maures Noirs". While it can be affirmed that there existed a kind of a ḥarāṭīn nobility in precolonial bīẓān society, there is also a recent trend to describe a growing number of independent groups of low status as ḥarāṭīn of free origin (cf. Brhane 1997a: 58ff., 78f.). This use of the term ḥarāṭīn helps to affirm the representation of bīẓān society as marked by a bipolarity between ḥarāṭīn (or else sūdān in the terminology adopted here) and bīẓān, which is less and less embarrassed by social groups not fitting into this scheme.

32 Among the Fulbe of Boobola, who also owned slaves (*maccubbe*) and who called the manumitted slaves *riimaaybe* the latter term is reported to have received a new meaning recently. While *riimaaybe* used to be a euphemism among Fulbe freemen speaking of both former slaves and manumitted slaves, there now are Fulbe stating that the term does not mean "those to whom we gave birth" but "we have grown together" (cf. Diallo 1997: 103).

33 Meskerem Brhane (1997a: 59, note 39) remarks that the use of "akḥal" in order to refer to sūdān might be a recent evolution of ḥassāniyya language which does not imply a reference to phenotype but to distinct race and therefore can also designate black Africans. This contradicts an earlier finding of Catherine Taine-Cheikh (1989a: 97) stating that this adjective is not used in ḥassāniyya to describe human beings.

34 Several sūdān interviewees in the region of Achram-Diouk presented the sūdān living at Daber (the former location of the ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar's main camp on the Tagant) as all being nānme and hence subservient to and dependent on the bīẓān.

35 The feminine form of ʿabd can be derived regularly from the masculine form and hence is ʿabda (cf. Wehr 1976: 586).

36 These conclusions are based on written documents, which admittedly use classical Arabic and not ḥassāniyya. Within this corpus of sources the term kwār occurs as well, but often in an adjectival form and only for distinguishing prominent bīẓān figures who have a close relationship with people of black African ethnic groups (cf. Taylor 1996: 37, note 1).

37 The list of references to descriptions of bīẓān social hierarchy is long, as almost all works dedicated to aspects of bīẓān society provide an introduction to this topic. Certainly the most important works in this respect are Ahmed Lamine Ech Chenguiti (1953, which includes a description of bīẓān society at the end of the 19th century written by a zwāya emigrant to Egypt to introduce his country and people to members of his host society) and the colonial ethnologist Paul Marty (1919, 1920, 1921a,b). New perceptions of bīẓān society were shaped by Pierre Bonte (1979, 1987a, 1991, 1997, 1998c), Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1985a, 1991a,b, 1997), Charles C. Stewart (1972, 1973) and Harry T. Norris (1960, 1968, 1972, 1986). Recently the debate on the characteristics of bīẓān society has been reanimated and fuelled by new evidence by Rainer Oßwald (1986, 1993), Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (1995, 1997, 1998), Raymond Taylor (1995, 1996), Timothy Cleaveland (1995), Glen W. McLaughlin (1997), Meskerem Brhane (1997a) and Urs Peter Ruf (1995).

38 Part of the strategies to portray this tripartite order as invariable are mythical narratives. One such tradition refers to the Almoravid leader Bou Bakkar ben Amar (died 1087). While fighting against the blacks of the south this historical figure is presented as having taken the decision to divide his followers into three groups, one specialising in warfare, one in religious scholarship and one working manually (cf. Norris 1972: 154, note F; Amilhat 1937: 45). Another tradition, focusing especially on the establishment of a hierarchy between ḥassān and zwāya, locates the definitive establishment of a hierarchical order among the three status groups at the war of Šurr Bubba, which is reported to have taken place from 1644-74. However, this event, which opposed two bīẓān coalitions in the Gebla region (one led first of all by zwāya and one by ḥassān), hardly had the character of an ethnic confrontation between zwāya Berbers and ḥassān Arab invaders (members of both ethnic affiliations could be found on either side of the two opposing groups), nor did its regional character allow the shaping of ḥassān-zwāya relations in all of the vast bīẓān territory. Rather the confrontation was part of a struggle for the control of the economy of the Senegal valley at the start of the trade with European merchants at Saint-Louis (cf. Ruf 1995: 108ff.; for different strains of interpretation refer to Stewart 1972: 378f.; Ould Cheikh 1985a: 830-964; Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 153ff.; Marty 1919: 60; Norris 1960)

39 Bīẓān traditions, which were strengthened and underscored by colonial ethnologists, portray an initial ethnic divide of bīẓān society. Here the ḥassān are descendants of Arab invaders who continued to migrate into the western Sahara from the 15th century on and defeated the Berber (Ṣanhāğa) population. The latter, once beaten, are supposed to have given up warfare and as a consequence converted to peaceful religious scholarship (for an overview of these traditions refer to Villasante-de Beauvais 1997: 592-611). This reconstruction of the past in ethnic terms, however, is not convincing, not only as far as theoretical assumptions about the nature of inter-ethnic interaction are concerned but also with regard to empirical facts. First, the in-migration of Arab tribes into the western Sahara, which continued over centuries, is unlikely to have produced a direct and violent confrontation,

but suggests slowly changing patterns of interaction. Second, the Idawʿlš, a major ḥassān tribe, have a Berber and not an Arab ancestry. What indeed took place after the arrival of Arab groups was an increasing Arabisation of the western Sahara, including an Arabisation of tribal genealogies (cf. Ruf 1995: 104-115).

40 Derived from the Arabic root ṬLB, meaning search, quest, pursuit, from which is also derived the word meaning student (cf. Wehr 1976: 563f.).

41 The word is derived from the Arabic root TWB, meaning to repent, do penance, be penitent (cf. Wehr 1976: 98).

42 Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (1997) argues that the occurrence of this less rigid social order is specific to the eastern regions of the bīẓān territory as opposed to a more complete evolution of rigid patterns of hierarchy in the Gebla and the Adrar. While this assumption is tempting, for it allows new interpretations to be added to older ones without the need for a reassessment of the latter, it should nevertheless be dismissed. Raymond Taylor (1996), on the basis of bīẓān documents from the 19th century, draws convincingly a picture of Gebla society marked both by social mobility and shifting ethnic identities. Useful insights into how perceptions of the social order, and especially the status of zwāya vis-à-vis the ḥassān continued to be debated in precolonial times from the 16th century on, are also given by Rainer Oßwald (1993).

43 The common distinction was between zwāya of the sun, i.e. zwāya who did not have to pay tributes to ḥassān, who in return provided protection, and zwāya of the shade who did pay such tributes (cf. Norris 1968: 15).

44 This perception is highlighted by Ahmed Mahmoud Ould Mûdi, a leading member of the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd, who was interviewed on the issue of this tribe's characteristics by Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (1997: 594; see also Ould Cheikh 1985a: 443).

45 Laḥme is considered to be a less pejorative name for the tributary groups and persons than znāga (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1997: 608). The Arab etymology of laḥme needs attention. The verbal form derived from the root ḤLM refers to "mend, patch, weld, solder (up) s.th.", and hence presents the laḥme/znāga as the base of bīẓān society and evokes the idea of solidarity among the different orders (cf. Ould Cheikh 1985a: 399). The noun derived from the same root indeed is less romantic. Meaning "flesh, meat" it unmistakably hints at the major occupation of the tributaries: raising livestock (Wehr 1976: 861).

46 One of the most prominent examples of such an ascension from tributary to master are the Idawʿlš, one branch of which, the Abakak, later led the emirate of Tagant (cf. Amilhat 1937: 58ff.; Ould Cheikh 1991a: 110; Miské 1970: 110). Raymond Taylor (1996: 149-194) provides a detailed study of how the emiral power in the Gebla depended on support from tributary tribes, which, outnumbering the small ḥassān elites by far, managed to take advantage of conflicts among competing ḥassān lineages by shifting alliances or threatening their overlords with a change of allegiance. Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1997) recently criticised some of these conclusions for being

too strongly committed to the paradigms of segmentation theory and neglecting the centralisation of political power in the hands of the ʿamīrs.

47 Major aspects of discursive strategies vis-à-vis the znāga and the valuation of their status are found in the following interview with a ḥarṭāni:
Author: What is the difference between a znāga and a ḥassān?
BOS: This is a huge difference. The znāga have no origin [aṣl], they have no status [nasab], they are not recognised. You have to know there are true znāga and those where you cannot be sure about their true status. Their behaviour shows that they are znāga, but nobody knows where they come from. One doesn't know whether they are zwāya or ḥassān. In the times of the battles and wars, then people had to leave their tribes and had to go to other ones. Then nobody knows about the status [these people had]. There [within the other tribe] you started to do the work of a znāga. Before you could have been a šarīv, or a ḥassān, but this is not known. However, you continued to do the work of a znāga. . . . These people have a secret. (Interview Brahim Ould Soueilim, ḥarṭāni, 26.8.1995)

48 Among the iggāwen the women play a harp (ardīn), and the men a lute (tidinīt). Both sing, though they veil their mouths every time their voices rise. The topics of their songs, which today have become an important means of bīẓān identification, cover a wide range, from praising and mocking to topics associated with sexuality (cf. Guignard 1975; Norris 1968).

49 A few interviewees did not want their statements to be documented on tape. In these cases extensive notes were taken and also later transcribed.

50 These efforts surely are exemplary of the pitfalls of intercultural communication. While I always admired the oral memory of my sūdān and bīẓān friends, the latter, basing their methodology of "teaching" ḥassāniyya on such skills were annoyed by my inability to match up to their expectations. I on the other hand missed the kind of a textbook that until then had accompanied my learning of foreign languages.

Chapter 2

1 For the most concise presentation of Norbert Elias' arguments against the static impetus of "social change" see Elias (1977).

2 The present chapter owes much of its inspiration to seminars and colloquia held by Prof. Dr. Karen Knorr-Cetina, Dr. Stefan Hirschauer and Dr. Claus Amman at the University of Bielefeld, all discussing new trends in ethnography as well as their publications (cf. Knorr-Cetina 1991; Hirschauer/Amann 1997).

3 Mark Hobart (1997: 12) formulated one of the most trenchant critiques of anthropology. To him "much of what we wish to convey by 'understanding' anyway is closer to 'recognition', the mutual, but momentary and situated, appreciation of difference." In fact there hardly ever is complete understanding, but if this is true of the dialogue with other cultures, it is also essentially true of any communication. For this reason, understanding is not to be

negated, provided one is aware of its partiality, its momentary and contestable nature.

4 The idea of the anthropologist being passively permeated by the foreign culture is no longer maintained as the constituting dogma of anthropology, and other core assumptions are also under severe criticism; e.g. the methodology of participant observation constitutes a permanent shift from the inside to the outside, that if taken by the letter would constitute a paradox. Participant observation therefore should be interpreted in terms of hermeneutics (cf. Clifford 1988: 15).

5 There has been and still is a lively debate on the post-modern challenge (cf. Alexander 1992) to ethnography, dealing first of all with questions of the construction of ethnographic authority (cf. Clifford 1988), the epistemological consequences of the relation between textual representation and fieldwork (cf. Agar 1990) and the question of writing ethnography in times of an "epistemological hypochondria" (cf. Geertz 1988: 71).

6 Mark Hobart stresses the partial character of field research when stating that most communication the anthropologist performs is confined to people to be considered as "organic" intellectuals in the Gramscian sense (personal communication, 12 May 1997, at Bielefeld Workshop on Ethnography and Lifestyles). These people, often outsider themselves, rationalise their society in a way communicable to the western-trained anthropologist. Their discourse is much like the scientific discourse, and translation – understood as taking place between different types of logic and reasoning – thus is minimised.

7 As the interview was held in French, Badeyn here used the term "noir".

8 Long periods of apprenticeship are common for novices in trade and other occupations like driving trucks. It took my driver Nanna Ould El Vaida six years of work as an apprentice with a truck driver before the latter helped him get a driving licence.

9 The unusual character of this religious knowledge among people of slave of origin is revealed through the fact that during the entire period of fieldwork, I only became aware of three cases of slaves/ḥarāṭīn who had participated in traditional religious education.

10 The zakāt is the tithe for the poor prescribed by Islam and paying it used to be a privilege of the free. However, former slaves often lack the knowledge of how to determine the amount of zakāt and it is the masters who are the beneficiaries (cf. p. 263-265). Freed slaves continuing to pay the zakāt to their former masters after having gained independence subsequent to the First World War are also reported by Roberts (1988: 296) from the Banamba area in Mali.

11 Approximately 40 kg, the mūd being a measure of capacity whose weight equivalent varies greatly throughout Mauritania; in the Tagant/Aftout Region one mūd is equivalent to 4 kg. For the different measurements of the mūd refer to Pierret (1948: 185).

12 According to his mother, this dam was first constructed in 1975. Whatever the exact date may be, the case fits well the general tendency in the region to

increase agricultural production after the partial destruction of the livestock sector due to the severe drought in 1969.

13 I use this term following the convention of livestock classification in French literature. In Mauritania sheep and goats are commonly subsumed under the term lġnem, and not distinguished in most contexts. This although – taken for granted numbers of livestock attaining the herd level (100 to 200 head) – goats and black and white sheep were watered at different times of the day, in order not to mix up the species. Today preferences with regard to the different species are changing, favouring to some extent goats for being more resistant to poor pasture than sheep. Today most families in the rural areas own just a few animals. These, together with other people's animals, are led to pasture by children who assemble both sheep and goats in these herds thus making of the lġnem a true entity.

14 The preference for a high share of females in the herds of pastoral nomads is well known. In this context it nevertheless becomes significant in a second way: the obligation to pay the herder did not specify whether he should be given a male or a female animal. Most logically the owner of the herd too wanted to maximise his stock, hence the herder in most cases was remunerated with male animals. This is the reason why male to female exchanges were essential to the creation and perpetuation of the dependent's livestock.

15 Interviewees used to call the colonial tax on livestock ʿašūr, although the French had a different term for this tax, namely zekat, thus alluding to the alms tax prescribed by Islam (zakāt). The tax on livestock, measuring one tenth of the animals' assumed value, replaced in the colony of Mauritania the poll tax common in all other regions of French West Africa (A.O.F.). A colonial tax called ʿašūr existed as well, but concerned one tenth of agricultural production. Unlike the zekat it was collected only irregularly and was suppressed as early as in 1940 (cf. Toupet 1959: 103).

16 This is a euphemism used frequently by bīẓān to speak of their slave. In employing the nisba *-ī* a relation to a place or proprietor is expressed, e.g. the master is speaking of "his" ḥarṭāni. For an elaboration of the nisba as a variable category of social identification in Moroccan society refer to Clifford Geertz (1977: 487ff.).

17 During the years 1994-1995, the price of one mūd was about 100 UM in sales of peasants to traders at the time of harvest. The approximate value of the millet involved here therefore is about 12,500 UM, or about four goats, quite a significant sum.

18 Colonel Ould Haidalla indeed decreed the official abolition of slavery on 5 July 1980 during his first year in office and legislation was passed in November 1981. The famous national radio broadcast condemning slavery in question here, however, was on 5 July 1983 (Brahim's mother Zeyneb's memory seems to be more accurate, cf. p. 62). This public discourse was initiated by the removal from office of a judge who had refused to apply the new legislation on slavery (Mauritanie Nouvelles, nº 235, 23.1.1997: 8).

19 I.e. the master as the owner of the slave was also his legal tutor and hence replaced the slave's parents. Without permission of the slave master, no slave could get married. It also was the slave master who was involved in setting

the dowry and arranged the marriage ceremony. Slave parents could be consulted, but until these days cases can be witnessed in which the master's will remains decisive for a marriage to be concluded or not (for the legal aspects refer to Ibn Abî Zayd Al-Qayrawânî 1983: 173ff., 181).

20 According to Abdallahi Ould Youba Ould Khalifa (1991: 700) "the year of the first banknote in Mauritania" was in 1919. An age of about seventy-five at the time of the interview seems realistic to me. According to Khalifa Ould Kebab, my research assistant, who worked for years as a basic health agent, by "the year of the diseases" most probably an epidemic of syphilis is meant.

21 These grains are from *Panicum turgidum*, a meadow plant. It starts growing with the first rain that appears, the grains are mature at the end of August (cf. Ould Hamidoun 1952: 23).

22 This is *Boscia senegalensis*, which Mokhtar Ould Hamidoun (1952: 19) describes as follows: "Arbre aux feuilles assez grandes, à l'écorce fibreuse; inerme. Il produit des baies (*mandyhagha*) qui ressemblent un peu au café. Les gens de basse classe les mangent après les avoir lavées et fait cuire. Ce fruit et très nourrissant et sain en raison des matières grasses qu'il contient."

23 Being big symbolises feminine beauty. In former times young girls were forced to drink large amounts of fat milk and eat huge portions of millet – often prepared by specialised slave women or ḥarṭaniyya – in order to grow fat (a most detailed description of the cruelties imposed on a young noble girl by a slave woman in former times is presented by Caillié [1830: 98f.], another eye-witness account comes from Daniel Meyer [1959: 53f.]). While in former times the custom was mainly restricted to the better off people, and often restricted to the short period of unmarried women's youth, the custom nowadays is fading. Many young girls refuse to get fat, while many other women of high status tend to retain a life-long cycle of fattening.

24 There are several Oued (wād) Labiod, as well as places called Achram etc. in the region of Tagant/Aftout.

25 According to the French model, which the Mauritanian educational system is based on, access to higher education often is restricted to successful participation in entry examinations. In early independent Mauritania this concept permitted the ad hoc establishment of university level education, while formally qualified adherents were still lacking. In addition as in the case described, the system offered reintegration facilities to those once excluded from the formal educational system.

26 As the interview was held mostly in French, the term "serviteur" employed by Youba is adopted here. It is one of the numerous common euphemisms to circumscribe "slave" and the condition of "slavery".

27 In ḥassāniyya "tent" [ḫaima], is a synonym for family, e.g. one speaks of descending from a good tent to indicate noble descent. Counting slave tents like those of free people thus means to accept them as a families on a more or less equal footing and to include them in the social community.

28 The mniḥa is a loan of use-rights that can be concluded according to different conditions, e.g. as here for the duration of one rainy season. Often a mniḥa is lent without a fixed time schedule, until the lender feels himself to be in need of his property.

29 Ḥubs according to Islamic jurisprudence transfers property into a pious endowment (cf. Oßwald 1993: 188f.; Ibn Abî Zayd Al-Qayrawânî 1983: 231ff.). In the bīẓān context this is realised by a definitive loan of rights of use, either limited through the lifetime of the proprietor or the beneficiary of the loan. These arrangements most often concern palm trees, agricultural plots or animals, but also slaves. The idea behind a ḥubs is that the property in question becomes indivisible and inalienable. An animal under ḥubs thus cannot be slaughtered (except if at risk of being wasted through natural death), and agricultural plots cannot be divided amongst inheritors (Interview Ahmed Ould 'Aly, qāḍi, 24.12.1995).

30 The Ougiya has been the bīẓān unity of currency for a long time. Like in other regions of Africa, in bīẓān society money is counted in units of five. The French Franc and later the Franc CFA (until its replacement by the UM on the 29 June 1973) used to be counted in "Ougiyas", with five Francs being considered as one Ougiya.

31 During the regime of colonel Ould Haidalla the seat of the national iron ore mining company (SNIM) was transferred from Nouakchott to Nouadhibou. The former headquarters building of the company then was used to lodge ministries.

32 This statement refers to the so-called "événements" of 1989, when after riots against black Africans in Mauritania and bīẓān in Senegal both countries expelled a great number of people from these ethnic minorities (cf. p. 289f.).

33 Throughout the interview a sūdān was sitting besides Youba. At an earlier moment of the interview, he already had referred to him as the one of his servants still with him. During the sequence concerning the plots for, and the methods of cultivation, Youba was much helped by this servant to formulate appropriate answers.

Metric measurements provided by the interviewees have to be taken cautiously. The land flooded by the dams (*barrages*) and small dams (*diguettes*) is not right-angled but depends on the shape the depressed area has. Also the length of a dam does not determine the width and hence the surface of the fields thus created. The A. dam has in fact a length of 1,100 metres, but the total size of inundated and hence cultivable land measures only 67 ha.

34 Jonathon Glassman, although providing a profound critique of several aspects of Meillassoux's (1986) study, takes up and extends his central distinction between estate and condition (in Glassman's terminology, state). "Meillassoux also emphasizes the contradiction between the absence of a legal recognition of the slave's personhood and the fact that it is the slave's very humanity that makes him valuable. Focusing on this contradiction as the source of *struggle* is my own elaboration." (Glassman 1991: 289; original emphasis)

35 Martin A. Klein (1983: 77) notes that despite severe penalties slave flights had always threatened African masters. After colonisation and the abolition of slavery in 1848 the number of escapees grew even further, making of them a major topic of correspondence between African rulers and French colonisers.

This was true for the Mauritanian context as well. Slaves left their masters to seek protection from another master, or they fled to the adwaba (more or less independent settlements of slaves). As late as 1940 bīẓān complained to the French administration about ḥarāṭīn (in this case more probably slaves, ʿabīd, are meant) leaving the subdivision of Moudjéria for the plains of the Gorgol, and wished to get them back (AT Colonie de la Mauritanie, Cercle du Tagant, Résidence de Moudjéria, "fiche de renseignement tribu Torkoz" n.d., document kindly passed on by Roger Botte). Even in 1953 a meeting of local notables headed by the ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar, remarked to the commandant de cercle on the lack of labour power, and the continuing drain of labourers to the more southern regions of the colony (AM, Cercle du Tagant, "Procès Verbal de la réunion du conseil des notables du Tagant" 29.6.1953).

Analogous examples are reported from the French archives of the Adrar at Atar, e.g. slave women from Chinguetti fled to Atar, and slave men ran away to the Assaba and Senegal Valley to engage in commerce and agriculture (McDougall 1988: 373).

36 This is undeniably a rather simplistic characterisation of the economic system induced by the colonial powers. In fact "free labour" was very much a coloniser's ideology – but rarely applied to Africans. For a long time, coerced labour dominated the mode in which Africans were brought to work (cf. Klein 1993c). Frederick Cooper (1996) presents a detailed study of the hardships the French and the British colonists had in conceiving labour in Africa and developing a coherent policy.

37 I am well aware that this line of argumentation follows the dominant, i.e. the master's ideology. Orlando Patterson (1979 and 1982) has been heavily criticised for presenting this perspective as the somewhat emic perspective of the slaves, and of declaring the master-slave dyad to be the essence of slavery (cf. Glassman 1991 and 1995). This critique is right, but to explore slave consciousness one has literally to "go through" these ideological representations. This in fact is done in a brilliant way by Jonathon Glassman, in his critical evaluation of major contributions to the question of slavery.

38 According to the Māliki school of Islamic jurisprudence, damage caused by a slave had to be compensated by the master (cf. Brunschwig 1960: 229; for the bīẓān context: Ould Mohamed 1988: 100; Caratini 1989: 101). The matter is also discussed by Patterson (1982: 204ff.), who stresses that this practice is of pre-Islamic origin later rationalised by Islamic jurisprudence. A number of sources, among them Patterson, attribute this practice to the Tuareg. However, Claire Oxby, in her detailed study on a camp of Kel Ferwan Tuareg, did not find any trace of the practice (cf. Oxby 1978: 203). An account somewhat contradicting the bīẓān practice applied to slaves comes from René Caillié, who differentiated very well in his observations between the different social groups, He reported this habit only with reference to the tributaries, the znāga (Caillié 1830: 155). Finally Ould Mohamed (1988: 37, 58, 100) tells with reference to a French administrator's report of 1949 that only the ḥassān regarded this slave action as resulting in a change of the proprietor, and reports a council of zwāya notables of the Ahel Bārikalla and

the Tandġa having taken the decision to ignore these actions in 1865, in order to reduce the number of slave flights. The most concise information on this practice comes from Oßwald (1993: 107), citing several bīẓān legal documents which recount cases of slaves having cut off a bīẓān's ear or that of a bīẓān's horse, from 1901 Tîchît, 1859 Ouadâne, and an undated document from Oualâta. According to these documents, slaves were not automatically handed over to those mutilated, but often their masters preferred to pay high fines, usually in guinée cloth.

39 Of course as an outsider, the slave had no protection from injury by a third person than his estimated slave-value to the master, for a Muslim free man in this case was not to be punished by the law of retaliation (cf. Ibn Abî Zayd Al-Qayrawânî 1983: 249ff.).

40 Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1993: 185) cites a French administrator who reported that he had met in 1942 a slave with burns so severe that they made amputation necessary. The master declared he had wanted to prevent the slave from fleeing by this measure.

Cruelty in the treatment of slaves is a sensitive matter. Human rights activists such as Hecht (1997) blame Mauritania for tolerating the continuance of practices such as the "camel treatment", the "insect treatment" and others. Whilst in no way sympathetic to many of the bīẓān masters' attitudes, however, I have to stress, I was not told of any such case.

41 This is an aspect Pierre Bonte (1993: 71) recently has focused on. He deals with an early period of colonial administration in the Adrar region, where the French had re-established one of the bīẓān emirates. This ʿamīr, for different reasons, started in 1932 to oppose the colonial power by arms. He failed after an unexpectedly short period and found very little support from the Adrar population – he had misconceived the important social change that had already taken place. But the administrators too had no less trouble in establishing and keeping their system of indirect rule running – for many remained prisoners of their static colonial-ethnographic misperception of bīẓān society.

42 The French army behaved very much like their Sudanese enemies during the conquest of what was later French West Africa (A.O.F.). Its troops, the "tirailleurs", were largely recruited among slaves, and during the war most prisoners were distributed among the French allies, the officers and soldiers; indeed even the slave trade was encouraged (cf. Klein 1993c: 176ff.).

43 According to various reports the living conditions in these villages were very much like those they had experienced among their former masters. The aim of the "villages de liberté" was largely to weaken the enemies of the French by creaming off some of their servile labour force, and put the latter to use as a coercible pool of labour. The success remained limited, since many of those few who did come to the villages merely used them as an outpost for another flight (cf. Roberts 1988: 284ff.; Ould Cheikh 1993: 187; De Chassey 1984: 92). Even long times after establishing their colonial rule the French had an at best ambivalent position towards the use of coerced labour. Only in 1937 did the Popular Front finally take the decision to ratify the 1930 ILO Convention on forced labour (cf. Cooper 1996: 91).

44 Kiffa, today Mauritania's third largest city, was until the big drought of 1969 inhabited predominantly by sūdān, some of them were categorised as "clan Khadara" (meaning the "green" and used as a synonym for ḥarāṭīn) by the French administration and allotted some fields in 1936 (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1991: 194).

45 Two factors influenced a significant restructuring of the Mauritanian labour-market; first the creation of the MIFERMA, the iron-ore mine in the northern desert region of the country, which necessitated much wage labour for its construction as well as an extensive infrastructure (railway to the coast, roads, buildings etc.; cf. e.g. Anonymous 1996), and second the construction of the capital Nouakchott, located on a spot near the coast with only some hundred inhabitants in 1957. The big drought in 1969 gave the definitive kick to an already massive urbanisation process focusing heavily on the capital. Today out of an estimated 2.1 million Mauritanians an estimated 700,000 live in Nouakchott.

46 Fieldwork in an area of emigration inevitably brings to the fore those cases where people stay or come back. Narratives of family history or the life of friends nevertheless tell of numerous slaves leaving the zone. Often the economic feasibility of the master-slave relationship had ceased due to external influences and emigration seemed to be the most promising alternative for survival.

47 Ahmed Salem Ould Salik Liman, a warrior-poet of the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd, living at the end of the 19th century, is reported to have once manumitted a ḥādem for a very peculiar reason. On the occasion of the camp changing its location, the slave woman had been left behind in order to pack some very heavy tents onto a camel, and then follow the others to the new camp-place. Soon after she was left alone, some visitors arrived, and the ḥādem slaughtered the camel to fulfil the obligations of hospitality. Ahmed Salem, wondering why his slave did not turn up, returned and found her with the tents, but unable to proceed in transport, because she had sacrificed the camel in honour of the visitors. Ahmed Salem liberated her on the spot, because what she had done could only be done by someone with a warrior's nobility. While this legendary account has been interpreted as one praising the generosity of the warrior-poet (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 217f.), a second reading is possible too. The obligation of Ahmed Salem to manumit the ḥādem (undoubtedly a result of his deep commitment to the morality of paternalism), was the result of the slave woman's obvious ability to behave not like a slave, but honourably and responsibly like a noble warrior. Manumission in this constellation is hence a way of acknowledging a slave's qualities.

48 Meskerem Brhane reports a case of an escaped slave's son, who managed to trace his father's master's family on the Tagant. Both sides insist that they are now like brothers, and have the same rights. Their fathers, i.e. those related to the fact of slavery, are dead, and the fact it once existed is taken simply as a reminder of how the two families now allied once became connected; but is not considered to be a constituent of their present interrelation (cf. Brhane 1997a: 141ff.).

49 The case illustrates very well the aspect stressed by Orlando Patterson (1982: 63). Fictive kinship is either "adoptive" or "quasi-filial", and these ties "involve genuine assimilation by the adopted person of all the claims, privileges, powers, and obligations of the status he or she has been ascribed. Fictive kin ties that are quasi-filial are essentially expressive: they use the language of kinship as a means of expressing an authority relation between master and slave, and a state of loyalty to the kinsmen of the master." Though this characterisation emphasising the fundamental opposition between the two concepts is revealing, the structures of alliances as practised in Arab societies reveal a large number of ambiguities as well (cf. Conte 1991, Bonte/Conte 1991).

50 A bīẓān of noble descent, directly linked to the prophet Muhammad's family, in standard Arabic "šarīf" (cf. Wehr 1976: 467).

51 The abolition of slavery by colonel Ould Haidalla was embedded in the general project of the application of the šarīʿa. Legal advice was sought from experts before proclaiming the decree of abolition. Thus the masters' rights of proprietorship of their slaves were acknowledged, and they were considered to be compensated. This latter aspect of the decree in fact was never applied. Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1993: 191) notes the irony of a slave liberation bound to the establishment of the law of retaliation.

52 It has already been suggested that the pace of change towards freedom was more rapid for men than women. "Men more often had formal education and wage-paying jobs open to them, whereas women remained in labor-intensive work." (Klein/Robertson 1983: 17) The present example shows this to be more an outcome of a society's gender structure and its transposition onto slaves.

53 Brahim recounts that the first of his brothers left for the towns in 1982. The eldest of these brothers might have been about the same age as the master's son, as it was Zeyneb who nursed him.

54 Animals could be lent, e.g. under the terms of mniḥa, so that animal numbers with the household did not necessarily correspond to the numbers belonging to a family (cf. for the Tuareg and the problems of raising exact data on herd sizes Klute 1992: 131; Falkenstein 1995: 210). Granaries hence had to be guarded against theft. Nevertheless in former times, as several interviewees mentioned, millet sometimes was hidden by putting it in holes dug in the earth.

One example of the times of the old ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar, reported in Daber on the Tagant plateau, confirms the difficulties slaves wanting to save a part of their harvest had to face. Daouda's father wanted to give his old mother a donkey. Directly after the harvest he bought the animal with some of his millet and sent it to his mother in Kehmeit. When the ʿamīr came to collect his share in the harvest, no sign of the transaction remained, and hence the ʿamīr had no reason to doubt his slave's honesty. This strategy failed in a second attempt following an especially good harvest. Of 600 mūd Daouda's father hid 200 mūd. The ʿamīr, however, took all 400 mūd his slave presented him and, after having been told by somebody that there was some more millet hidden, later returned to take off all the rest (Interview Daouda

Ould Haroun, ḥarṭāni, Daber, 19.12.1995). Besides throwing a light on Daouda's political attitudes, the two stories throw a light on the legitimacy and illegitimacy of different kinds of slave belongings.

55 Not all adwaba were exclusively inhabited by sūdān. Many interviewees in Daber on the Tagant stated – although not univocally – that there were bīẓān living among them in the adabay. This might have resulted either from bīẓān supervising sūdān as already reported by René Caillié (1830: 133ff.), or as can be observed nowadays, of impoverished bīẓān choosing to live among the sūdān. The adabay therefore are not necessarily equivalent to independent sūdān settlements with emancipatory aspirations, but can also be a kind of a satellite camp.

56 Changes in the slave's condition following marriage are reported of different societies practising slavery: "Most slaves 'born in the house' were permitted after marriage to farm for themselves. A fixed sum was paid every year for each man, woman, and child." (Klein 1983: 76)

57 In nomadic societies the co-residence of a couple was often the exception rather than the rule. Men herding animals like camels, those engaged in learning or warfare, or men engaged in business like caravan-trade were absent from their household or tent for a large part of the year (cf. for the Tuareg Spittler 1989b: 77ff.). While slave couples were often hindered from living together at all, separation among free couples resulted from the men participating in more or less self-determined and above all temporary tasks.

58 There are legal traditions which confer to the male slave's master the obligation to sustain his slave's spouse. But this right was more or less theoretical, for it was bound to the condition of the couple living together – a right slave couples were often denied. If ever this happened, and the slave man's master contributed to the bringing up of the slave couple's children, he had the right to be compensated for his efforts by the legal owner of the children, the slave woman's master (cf. Ould Mohamed 1988: 60f.).

59 The reverse case was also possible; slaves could be well treated, and e.g. be promised their manumission by their master (one common agreement was to provide liberty upon the death of the master). But once his former mentor was dead, the slave found himself confronted with the master's heirs, not necessarily prepared to acknowledge the slave's claims for the fulfilment of his dead master's last will. If written testimony was lacking, the slave had hardly any chance of experiencing the manumission he had been promised. Such a case was reported from the village of Achoueibir, and Brahim in his narrative stressed the point too, when he remarked that he got a second copy of his manumission contract, one for his masters (and descendants) and one for his family and himself.

60 The first marriage in bīẓān society should result from the parents' preferences. Under such circumstances, these marriages are concluded in terms of the classical preferential patterns, e.g. with the patrilateral parallel cousin or members of same status group. However, divorce is frequent, and subsequent marriages are ruled by individual preferences rather than group aspirations (cf. Tauzin 1984a: 89). The first marriage among the free thus marks a step out of parental hegemony. This clearly is not the case among

slaves. As the example of Badeyn's first spouse shows, living a marriage among slaves depends on the masters' approval to continue, and thus never completely loses its precarious character.

61 The point that property within the family was attributed individually to every member was stressed by several sūdān interviewees.

62 Property is individual, but exploitation of livestock nevertheless is organised by the chief of the family managing the animals collectively, as one of the few important livestock-owners in the region of Achram-Diouk explained: "We have 20 to 40 camels, these are for the whole family, my brothers, my father and me. Everything we have is regarded as belonging to the whole family, even if it's owned individually. Even the animals of the father are treated alike, it is considered as being of the family's, and his sons will have nothing." (Interview Mohammed Sid'Ahmed, 13.9.1995). Or in other words, unless a proprietor has constituted his own tent, his animals will be managed together with all others of the tent he belongs to. Often individual members of the family are assigned animals from childhood on. Men build up the herd that will be the nucleus of their own animal possession once they establish a household separated from their parents after marriage in a sort of pre-inheritance. Women too can own livestock. Often animals owned before marriage remain with the woman's own family; otherwise they are joined to the family herd, but assigned to the woman. These animals thus constitute a sort of individual relief property in case the marriage fails and the woman returns to her parents. A more important part of feminine wealth is constituted by jewellery (cf. Tauzin 1984a: 88ff.; Caratini 1989: 52ff., 86).

Chapter 3

1 Jonathon Glassman (1995) sums up in the title "no words of their own" his major criticism of Claude Meillassoux's (1986) work on slavery in Africa.

2 According to Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh the word "nānme" is of Berber origin, and the meaning unknown to him. Albert Leriche (1955: 175) refers to the znagui (former Berber language, spoken in the western Sahara) term of "en-anem", meaning adaptation, becoming accustomed to a family. These slaves, according to Leriche, are supposed to descend from ancient slaves of the times of the Almoravid ʿamīr Abū Bakr ben ʿUmar, or else Bou Bakkar ben Amar (died 1087 AD). Therefore their genealogy is supposed to be known and their sale is forbidden. I personally, like Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, never encountered this definition smelling so heavily the masters' ideology, and controverted by M'Barke's experiences. A second designation for slaves, tilād (root TLD), is of Arab origin. However, I did not witness its use in the region of my fieldwork. Like nānme, tilād carries the idea of an ancient possession (cf. Ould Cheikh 1993: 183; Wehr 1976: 96). Albert Leriche (1955: 176), whose description of bīẓān terminology of status groups is flawed by subsuming ḫādem (slave woman) under the category of tributary people, proposes for this case the meaning of inherited slaves.

3 I met one other old slave woman, of a zwāya tribe too, who confessed she had been denied the right to marry by her masters ("the bīẓān did not make a ṭbal [marriage ceremony] for the sūdān." Interview Boye Mint Ahmeide, 6.2.1996). In most of the cases however the marriage was reported to have been celebrated in accord with or even with the support of the masters. The problem of legitimate marriage among slaves is less one of assuming the same rights as the bīẓān, but of having legitimate children. This was obvious when I tried to look up some sūdān men I met once before by asking people. These men were recognised by other inhabitants of the village only by their first- or nickname, while the father's names these interviewees had told me (Ould: "son of") were unknown.

4 Rzā'a seems to be a dialectal form of riḍā'a, translated as "foster relationship", whereas the verbal form of the root RḌ' refers to sucking and nursing at the breast (cf. Wehr 1976: 344).

5 This statement is somewhat paradoxical, for neither the Qur'ān nor the jurists explicitly assign men this predominant place with regard to the establishment of milk-kinship. Rather the jurists take great care to scrupulously list all possible relations prohibited according to this kind of relation (cf. Héritier 1994: 323f.). The ambivalence of this is revealed by milk-kinship thus becoming either more strictly integrated into the patrilineal model of filiation, as well as being made legally acceptable and valid. In bīẓān practice, the male line of milk-kinship, however, is of no significance. It rather is believed that all bodily fluids (blood, semen, and milk), are supposed to establish parental relations (cf. Meskerem Brhane, personal correspondence 22.1.1998). This vision is likely to be inspired by classical Arab humoral medicine, which was in turn derived from ancient Greek traditions and has been widely disseminated in bīẓān society. Therefore bodily fluids and their circulation play a major role in the constitution of health and illness (cf. Ould Ahmedou, E.G. 1990: 98f.).

6 The root ḤRM stands for "forbidden, prohibited, interdicted; taboo; holy sacred, sacrosanct; s.th. sacred, sacred object; sacred possession; wife; sanctum sanctuary, sacred precinct;" (Wehr 1976: 171).

7 "These iggāwen I could touch, because they were my milk siblings, they had drunk of the same milk as I had. . . . Milk parenthood entails the same rights as real parenthood, you can touch these people just like your own brothers and sisters, and it is the same case with a milk-mother. You have the right to touch her and sit around and talk with her. And both you are forbidden to marry. . . . But their food does not concern you, this is because they have their own father and mother, you are not responsible for them, as well you don't inherit." Ahmed Ould Aly, the region of Achram-Diouk's most famous qāḍi, who follows an austere interpretation of Islam condemning all instrumental music (Interview 24.12.1995).

8 Aline Tauzin (1984b: 98f.) discusses various aspects of bīẓān oral tradition; those about incest make strong allusions to bad spirits involved in these liaisons. These make that e.g. each time the couple is together creatures separating them appear; among other consequences it is described that these couples' offspring dies.

9 I was not able to get hold of a copy of Poulet's work. Until recently this type of nursing has been observed. Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (personal correspondence, 26.6.1997) reports two cases of slave women breast-feeding their mistress' babies in 1988 in the oasis of Kurudjel (Assaba) and states that nursing the mistress' children was more a rule than an exception. This is confirmed by Ann McDougall (1988: 364). Another recent observation is documented by Aline Tauzin (1989b: 76) from the east of Mauritania.

10 There are also reasons to avoid establishing milk-kinship with the masters by nursing their children. In order to breast-feed the master's or mistress' children, slave women had to have children of their own. This complied with the master's desire to breed slaves and cut short slave women's opportunities to resist or to flee. Last but not least, being responsible for the nursing of the master's or mistress' children meant reducing one's own children's supply of mother's milk (cf. Tauzin 1989b: 76).

11 I doubt that milk-sons rather than sons-in law are a secure source of material support for a woman, as proposed by Cleaveland (1995: 47) and Brhane (1997a: 76). This kind of responsibility was clearly denied by all local informants I interviewed on the question (Khalifa Ould Kebab, Interview Ahmed Ould Aly, qāḍi 24.12.1995). This goes along with the prescription that only blood-kin are allowed to inherit (cf. Conte 1991: 77). Most women declared that their daughters were the ones to support them later. Material support nevertheless often is provided by sons, as e.g. in the case of Moustava, now living together with his sūdān mother and her ḥarṭāni husband. This view is also presented in the analysis of some bīẓān oral traditions on female ruses. "Il semble que l'objectif de ces trois ruses soit bien plus l'obtention d'un enfant que celle d'un mari." (Tauzin: 1984b: 93)

12 This very difficulty of employing milk-kinship for immediate purposes is highlighted by a tradition related to the prophet Muhammad, reported to have given a married woman the advice to nurse, and hence create an adoptive relation towards a former slave, whom her husband did not want to meet her for reasons of female seclusion. As the woman asked the prophet if he was aware of the man in question being an adult, the prophet told her he knew this very well. Although the suckling of adults is univocally rejected as not valid by Islamic jurisprudence (and hence dismisses female strategies to surmount seclusion by establishing milk-parenthood with adults), the prophet in this case consciously made an exception (cf. Conte 1991: 78f). The example reveals that the question of easing the relations between masters and slaves is not a general problem, but one of surmounting the barriers of gender segregation.

13 A very similar case is made for the West African Songhay-Zarma female slaves. Milk-kinship here is interpreted as a remnant of earlier matrilineal practices of alliance. A slave women nursing her mistress' babies rises to be a social mother, i.e., she stops merely breeding slaves. Relationships with milk-siblings were the safest way to preserve their status as slaves of the house, because they were secured by the magic of milk (cf. Olivier de Sardan 1983: 142).

14 Sexual relations or abuses of masters with regard to their female slaves are a

much obscured issue. Meskerem Brhane (personal correspondence, 30.6.1997) suggests that slave women were frequently inclined to have sexual relations with the masters or their sons, a statement very well illustrated by Gabriel Féral (1983: 287).

Although – as detailed later – the offspring of a free man and a slave woman should be recognised as the man's son or daughter and be assigned his social status, in practice there are many exceptions to the rule. Begetting a child with a slave milk sister, however, might have resulted in far more severe mental stress because this meant offending the incest taboo. Marriage between a master and his children's nurse on the contrary was possible.

15 This interpretation might also apply to milk-kin ties between patrons and clients, i.e. between ḥassān and zwāya on the one hand and znāga on the other. These are reported to be frequent in Tidjikja and to be an expression of close relations by Abdallahi O.Y. Ould Khalifa (1991: 284; for the Moroccan deep south see Ensel 1998: 80-87). Affective relations cross-cutting status barriers thus are not limited to master-slave relations.

16 Legally these two options do not exclude each other. A male slave holder did not lose his rights over his female slaves if these established milk-kinship with the master's children.

17 One interpretation of Māliki law derives the master's right over his female slaves from the integration of the latter into the master's dominium. Illicit are only sexual relations with slave women who are neither Jewish or Christian. While other people's slave women can be married by free Muslim, one's own slave women have first to be manumitted, for one cannot have one's slave as spouse (cf. Ibn Abî Zayd Al-Qayrawânî 1983: 179).

18 This was the case with slave women destined to be traded and employed as such, and who hence obtained the status of concubine (cf. Meillassoux 1986: 193).

19 The Islamic regulations concerning master-slave woman sexual relations and their offspring are largely based on pre-Islamic principles, refined by Islamic jurisprudence (cf. Abd el Wahed 1931: 255ff.). Nevertheless the slaves were given some definite rights for the first time. These – as any laws – then underwent a process of varying interpretation and application (cf. Hunwick 1992: 6ff.).

20 The practice of Islamic jurisprudence or the application of traditional law (ʿurf) varied according to the socio-geographical location of the community. Among nomads and in remote areas the ʿurf predominated, while in the oasis towns, or among zwāya, the šarīʿa was more likely to be followed (cf. Norris 1968: 18).

21 Monette Clapier-Valladon (1971: 68) in her observation of life in the town of Néma states that bīẓān men frequently took their slave women as concubines and assigns the black phenotype of most bīẓān in the Hodh region to this practice. "Becoming black", as the references indirectly suggest, was not only a matter of intermarriage between "white" masters and "black" slaves, or else the latters' descendants. The bīẓān kept various inter-ethnic relationships with the neighbouring black African communities, including intermarriage not only in the east (cf. Schmitz 1996; Leservoisier 1994a: 125f.).

22 Unfortunately Webb does not provide any source for his statement. Ahmed B. Miské (1970: 111) equally describes as frequently concubinage between bīẓān masters and their slaves, but states these became immediately free, and their descendants legal and full heirs.

23 This description of bīẓāniyya power reads much like a practical study of the oral traditions on women's ruses presented by Aline Tauzin (1984b, 1989a). According to her analysis, men only achieve superiority to the women if they unite and act together, whereas the corpus of female tricks is abundant.

24 This right is still in use today and extends to all form of adultery, be it with concubines or other women. It is codified in the bīẓān marriage contract, and follows scrupulously a stipulation from 1099 (cf. Oßwald 1993: 61).

25 This is also reflected in statements from zwāya asked for legal advice on the matter (cf. Oßwald 1993: 61).

26 I was told of one case of a slave woman still working for, and having three children of both sexes by her married master, a member of a ḥassān tribe's notability.

27 Freeing and marrying slave women rather than taking them as concubines seems to have been frequent in the West African Islamic context. It is reported to have been practised by scholars of Timbuktu, who were given Fulbe slave girls by Sunni ʿAli (cf. Hunwick 1985: 27). The urban centres of Timbuktu in turn, as well as Djenné, were the cradles of the evolution of the important western-Saharan Islamic civilisation (cf. Oßwald 1986: 200ff., 251f.).

28 The Moroccan meaning of this verb, here phonetically ğūra, is "living with slave concubines at the exclusion of free wives" (cf. Taine-Cheikh 1989b: 346). However in classical Arabic ğāriyye designates not a concubine but a "slave girl, maid, servant" (Wehr 1976: 122).

29 It goes almost without saying that such a strategy could fail. There were (and are) extra-marital relations that never become recognised publicly. This might be the case even in the paradoxical setting of everybody knowing about a relationship, but it nevertheless remaining a "public" secret. One such recent, and widely known case is reported from Nouakchott. Brahim Ould Daddah was not recognised as son by his father, a member of a prominent family. "Nevertheless, as a child, Brahim (and indeed the entire community) was aware of his father's identity. When as an adult, his father continued to deny his paternity, Brahim sued. The court ruled in his favor as his father's identity was common knowledge, thus giving him the right to bear the Daddah family name. The central piece of evidence was the public knowledge of the father's name which could only be propagated through information only women (i.e. his mother and those around her) had access to." (Brhane 1997a: 74)

30 To my knowledge besides Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais only Aline Tauzin once made reference to sarriye as a means of establishing ties between a bīẓān and a ḥarṭāniyya (cf. Tauzin 1989b: 87). El Ghassem Ould Ahmedou (1994: 121f.) describes sarriye in the context of his novel on bīẓān society. All in all there might be some overlapping in the meaning of ğāriyye on the

one hand and sarriye on the other hand, as derivatives of the latter word's root (SRR) also refer to "concubine/concubinage" (cf. Wehr 1976: 405).

31 The legitimacy of children is assured even if these are born after a marriage. The idea of the "sleeping child", known as maḥṣūr, which may reside for several years in its mother's womb before starting to grow, is approved by Islamic jurisprudence. This institution allows women to bridge several years of divorce without having to fear that a child born in this time might damage their reputation (cf. Al-Akhbar nº 7, 21.8.1995: 4f.).

32 A congruent case is that of Hammodi, an Adrar ḥarṭāni "who made it". Among many other "slaves of quality", he bought a slave woman from Mali, who first served him in the household and as his concubine (in the wider sense, without implying legal rights and obligations). In 1955 he opted for a change in her status and married her. She bore him a son (cf. McDougall 1988: 382).

33 With respect to bīẓān society Pierre Bonte has carried out a most detailed examination of different practices of marriage. These are found to aim at maintaining a hierarchical representation of different tribal entities. Nobility thus results from close strategies of matrimonial alliances as opposed to open ones. While deficient on symbolic grounds, the latter strategy allows for the inclusion of many new members into the tribe, and the transformation of gains in demographic weight into political power (cf. Bonte 1987a). According to this strain of analysis the concept of exogamous versus endogamous matrimonial strategies proves to be inappropriate, and has to be replaced by the notion of "open" or "distant" versus "close" range modes of matrimonial alliance (cf. Bonte 1991, 1994a,b; Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 661ff.).

34 This observation fits neatly into the framework of segmentary theory, providing a further level of fission and fusion to the popular interpretation: "I against my brother, my brother and me against my cousin, all of us against the rest of the world." Many criticisms have been advanced against this simplistic application and indeed the theory as a whole, but these are not the issue here (for some aspects of re-evaluation see Bonte/Conte 1991, Amselle 1990, Eickelmann 1984). On rivalry between half-brothers and sisters born of slave and free women refer also to Fisher/Fisher (1970: 105-107).

35 The fact that Abderrahmane in popular consciousness is remembered as having been born of a woman of slave, and not as being of ḥarāṭīn origin, reveals the profoundness of the distinction. A status formally achieved had to be transformed into one socially recognised. Hence he is remembered not only by his father's name but also as "wull at-tläylä" his mother's name. An analogous tradition is reported of the important ʿamīr of the Trarza Amar Ould al-Muhtar, who died in about 1800 (cf. Ould Mohamed 1988: 61f.).

36 Another similar case is the influential leader of the Kunta fraction of the Awlād Sīdi Ḥayballa, Mohamed Ould Ahmed, who died in 1995. His father had four wives, one of them a former slave. Her son was the one to become his father's successor. This chief in those days was the candidate to the office supported by his tribe, but opposed by the French colonial administration. Despite considerable pressure, the French candidate, the uncle of the still

very young Mohammed Ould Ahmed, could be dismissed (Khalifa Ould Kebab).

The success of prestigious ḥassān leaders with a ḥarṭāniyya mother raises questions of a more fundamental kind. Claude Meillassoux outlines the important role slaves could be assigned in the organisation of power in a single aristocratic lineage, where blood-ties create rivalry rather than solidarity. Slaves are exempt from multi-directional commitments (cf. Meillassoux 1986: 192). Likewise a ḥassān leader with a ḥarṭāniyya mother has only one filiative tie, the one to his father's family whereas descendants of more prestigious unions have to meet the expectancies of both their father's and their mother's lineage. Candidates lacking maternal kinsmen therefore were most liable to be of a certain neutrality in this regard and thus likely to become the exponents of compromise between competing lineages and to maintain the chiefly lineage (cf. Cooper 1979: 117). All in all the pattern is widespread. Among the leaders of the Songay empire, the Askias, all except Muhammad I were sons of concubines (cf. Hunwick 1985: 22).

37 Still in 1951 Ely Ould Bakkar was depicted as being among the most persistent enemies of Abderrahmane (AM, chef de subdivision Moudjéria, "fiche de renseignement" n.d.).

38 One member of the emiral lineage presented his own youth to me as being that of a spoilt child. He never had to work nor was obliged to do anything (Interview Sid Mohamed Ould Dey, 27.8.1995). This style of life is presented too by Youba – although his focus is on his brothers, who have a bīẓān mother. While he is obliged to go to school, they stay under the tent and pass their time in camel-riding and other diversions.

39 Much the same beliefs are reported from the ḥassān already in the mid of the 19th century (cf. Carrère/Holle 1855: 226; see also Toupet 1977: 182).

40 Claude Meillassoux analyses in depth both the attraction and pitfalls resulting from the lack of a maternal lineage. However, his concern is not with a case similar to those presented here. Central to any of these unions, in patrilineal- as well as in matrilineal societies, are factors weakening the offspring's social position (cf. Meillassoux 1986: 135ff.). Other such examples are presented by Keim (1983: 147f.) and Olivier de Sardan (1983: 141).

41 With the beginning of the new pasture after the first rains in the rainy season (normally in July), ewes with a lamb are imported from the Hodh and sold throughout the cities and also large villages like Achram. These are considerably cheaper than the local sheep, and many people profit from the occasion to buy some, take them out to the seasonal camp they are living in, drink of the milk and later, when back in town where keeping animals is problematic, sell the fattened animals at local conditions, thus making some profit.

42 An individual's outfit is not a good indicator of status or affluence. Quite noble, rich and influential people may dress more than modestly. Somewhat recognisable to western eyes is the symbolism nowadays applied to houses and household utensils. The more money at hand, the more likely there will be a nice set for the tea-ceremony, a carpet, a radio etc.

43 There were many bīẓān who did not want to send their own children to school, but managed to make their dependents' children go (cf. De Chassey

1984: 141ff.). However, some local leaders – forced initially to send children to school – at least from the 1950s on perceived the opportunities offered by school education, and made their sons enter the colonial and later independent administration (Interview Hamoud Ould Amar, 4.11.1995).

44 This ḥarāṭīn community insists that it was never anybody's slave, but only the ḥarāṭīn of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed. They had close tributary-like ties with the ʿamīr, but did not keep individual patron-client relations with specific families. This consciousness of status reaches a peak of a certain kind in the statement of a ḥarṭāniyya who refused to let her children marry descendants of some other communities whom she perceived as not being true ḥarāṭīn, but ʿabīd (slaves; Interview Bâke Mint El Mokhtar, 2.11.1995).

45 This ambiguity and precariousness in the status of a slave woman married by a freeborn man is very well analysed for the Songhay-Zarma. Being married to a freeborn man thus meant advancement to a new status, however reminiscent of the master-spouse's goodwill. While entering into such a relationship needed the display of sexual attractiveness, one of the major characteristics of female slaves, the objective of slave women in these circumstances was to overcome these stereotypes by consolidating their role as wives. This they achieved by giving birth to children who no longer suffered from the stigma of servility, but who in turn later would deny all of their maternal origin for this reason (cf. Olivier de Sardan 1983: 141).

46 This pattern of non-integration of the former slave, woman-spouse into the family of the noble, or better-off status is also apparent in the case of Hammody, a ḥarṭāni from the Adrar, who made a great career and fortune during the colonial rule. He married several freeborn and noblewomen and one of his female slaves. Until today this woman and her son live separate from the rest of the family, and relations between the two branches of the family are strained, because of the memory of their slave origin (cf. McDougall 1988: 384).

Chapter 4

1 These are only the most important, and with respect to West Africa, the main destinies of slave trade. However, on the African east coast and horn a quickly expanding, but small and short-lived slave trade developed as well (cf. Manning 1990a: 73ff.).

2 From 1700–1809 an annual average of 2,458 slaves from the interior West African regions are calculated to have been exported across the Atlantic and an average of about 1,824 across the Sahara. Changes in trade patterns would have resulted in the trans-Saharan trade absorbing more slaves from 1700–1709 and from 1770 onward. Both trades would have been near parity from 1760–69, and the Atlantic trade would have outnumbered the trans-Saharan from 1710–59 (cf. Webb 1995: 66).

3 One of the major flaws in the nevertheless exciting analysis of Patrick Manning (1990a, b) might be his assumption that the "number, age, and sex

composition of male and female captives were similar" (Manning 1990a: 189, note 8). As the author acknowledges, this most important factor in demographic model building is contested by other scholars. Manning's model is also insensitive to changes in the composition of the enslaved population. These were likely to result from different modes of enslavement driven by either a political or an economic rationale (cf. Curtin 1975a: 181ff.).

4 By the 1850s Timbuktu had ceased to play this important role due to political instability in the region. Caravans effectively by-passed the city (cf. McDougall 1992: 65).

5 This pattern of trade is revealed in the accounts of the French shipwrecked on the western Saharan coast (cf. Barbier 1984). By the end of the 19th century the bīẓān trade network had expanded and trade routes were re-structured in response to changing geo-political circumstances. In the Trarza salt mines were exploited to acquire slaves from the Niger bend. These were transported westwards along the desert-edge and the right bank of the river Senegal until reaching the Trarza, from where they were moved to Morocco (cf. McDougall 1992: 70).

6 Daniel J. Schroeter (1992), drawing on data concerning slave sales on Moroccan markets, estimates that the early 19th century witnessed a decline in the slave trade, because of insecurity in the desert, and later competition from eastern trade routes. Subsequent to the abolition of the Atlantic trade, a new climax in trade lasted from about 1840-56. A continuous high level in slave trading was reached from the 1870s to 1894. There the numbers of slaves traded between the western Sudan and Morocco, according to a conservative estimate, are likely to have ranged between 4,000 and 7,000 per year. This increase reflected the fact that all other Maghribi destinations for the many Sudanese slaves were already closed by this time.

7 The main interest of the Portuguese during the heyday of Arguin lay in the acquisition of gold, not slaves. They used to trade slaves along the West African coast from one region to the other, in order to exchange them for gold (cf. Lovejoy 1983: 35f.).

8 James Webb holds the view that enslavement within the region persisted, but was primarily related to the Sudanese kings' need (namely of Kajoor and Waalo) for a commodity they could barter for horses. These were crucial to maintain the region's most important military force, the cavalry, which suffered severely from the animal diseases of the humid zone. The Barbary horses the bīẓān bartered were either bred in the western Sahara or imported from the north and the trade continued well into the second half of the 19th century (cf. Webb 1995: 68ff.).

9 James Searing (1993: 75) portrays the exchanges with the desert-side as two distinct networks: "This trade exchanged animals for slaves, grain, dried fish, and other savannah commodities on the one hand, and gum for Atlantic imports such as cotton cloth, iron, and firearms on the other."

10 According to James Searing (1993: 196), the demand for grain produced by the slave traders having to feed their slaves while waiting for the middle passage and later on the trip, has been the pivotal moment behind the region's commercialisation of agricultural production, the emergence of

slavery as the primary means of organising economic production and political control, and the development of important urban centres. This may be to overemphasise this very special aspect within the vast Senegambian trade networks. It is equally difficult to assess the hypothesis according to which the trade with gum arabic in the context of overall increase in trade activities raised bīẓān demand for grain from the left bank (as stated by Searing 1993: 62).

11 The take-off in urban growth and trade in Saint-Louis took place only after the end of the legitimate Atlantic slave trade in the 1820s. It was an outcome of the trade in gum arabic rather than the slave trade (cf. Searing 1993: 165).

12 It might be argued that the trade in gum arabic was more profitable for the local bīẓān than joining into the east-west slave trade feeding the Atlantic markets. Martin A. Klein (1990: 237) has convincingly argued that slaves were rarely a commodity of a higher value than other competing commodities, but often of lower or equal value. This pattern of profitability seems to have altered by the end of legitimate slave trade, which witnessed a rapid expansion of salt and slave exchanges, now all destined for Morocco, throughout the whole western Sahara, including Trarza (cf. McDougall 1992).

13 Nāṣir al-Dīn claimed to be an Imām, a leader of the faithful in prayer, and took the title of ʿamīr al-muʾminīn (Commander of the Faithful). He also appointed a wazīr and four qāḍis in order to administer the state and collect taxes (cf. Gomez 1985: 550). His religious learning, praised on various occasions (cf. Ould Cheikh 1985a: 841; Seiwert 1988: 70f.), remains contested however. No writings of Nāṣir al-Dīn are transmitted, but several of contemporary zwāya, who argued against him (cf. Oßwald 1986: 282).

14 John Ralph Willis (1985c: 16) has pointed to the "paradox" that the "jihad, in its effort to free men from unbelief, should become a device to deprive men of freedom." Although the ǧihād of Nāṣir al-Dīn in its initial phase opposed the illegitimate enslavement of Muslims by their own rulers, the logic of holy warfare soon became a means to redefine the boundary between the believers and unbelievers to be enslaved.

15 The decisive character of the impact this single event is supposed to have had for the evolution of antagonistic ḥassān and zwāya identities, and of the ḥassān emirates, has to be questioned. The recent analysis of the development of 19th century Gebla identities provided by Raymond Taylor (1997: 131f.) and fitting neatly into Barth's (1969a) approach to the evolution of ethnic groups demonstrates how group formation among the bīẓān relied on the nature of continued encounters in a socially and professionally highly heterogeneous setting. In a similar perspective the emergence of Saharan conceptions of "white and black" is seen by James Webb (1995: 16ff.) as result of the encounter Saharan and Sudanese groups had during trade, as well as in the context of political turbulence.

16 On right and left bank rulers' alliances cross-cutting the Senegal river see also Olivier Leservoisier (1994a) and Jean Schmitz (1994a: 430ff., and 1994b).

17 Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1997) recently criticised the theoretical paradigm underlying the conclusions of Raymond Taylor (1995), and

underscored that political power in bīẓān society did not remain subject to the patterns of fission and fusion typical to segmented societies, but that the emirates were able to build nuclei of institutionalised and centralised power.

18 This is why Claude Meillassoux, analysing West African slavery, develops the framework of a slave mode of reproduction, one by warfare and trade, rather than a slave mode of production (cf. Meillassoux 1986). While data on the demography of western Saharan slavery is lacking, demographic deficiency can be deduced from their desperate living conditions having been comparable to those of other African slaves. Reasons for high mortality and frequent diseases lay in a lack of food and clothing, maltreatment, mental stress, and the difficulty to adapt to a new and hostile environment (cf. Webb 1995: 25f.; Vincent 1860: 486, 492f.; Meyer 1959: 57).

19 The data is based on an estimate of Saharan population at the end of the 18th century considered to equal one quarter of today's total Mauritanian population. Of these two thirds, or 167,000 are estimated to have lived along the axis from the Adrar to the Tagant and further south and south-east, and one quarter to one third to have been slaves (cf. Webb 1995: 67).

20 The region's infestation with animal diseases like Trypanosomiasis made imported horses subject to an extremely high mortality rate. Over time interbreeding with Sahelian ponies succeeded, but these breeds could not match the equine qualities horses needed for military use: speed and height (cf. Webb 1995: 68).

21 These numbers are estimates. Neither were only pure breed horses imported, nor were all horses imported. Prices varied according to various factors, such as equine qualities, but also the slaves' age and sex (cf. Webb 1995: 89).

22 It is highly probable that from the beginning of the trade of salt for gold (usually cited as the only trade in the medieval era), grain was traded as well (cf. McDougall 1983: 266). Indeed medieval trade was likely to have already been diversified, and not solely reliant on salt (cf. Ruf 1995: 95). The volume of this trade, however, might have remained limited. A medieval source describes the camel caravans travelling to Timbuktu and ancient Mālī to change salt slabs for gold as having suffered terrible losses due to animal diseases affecting up to 75 percent of the camels (cf. Ca da Mosto 1967: 20f.).

23 Many sources covering the time-span from the medieval era to the early 20th century stress the central role salt held in Saharan commerce with the western Sudan, and the increasing relevance it gained in the slave trade (cf. McDougall 1992). This does not imply that the extensive trade networks run either by the bīẓān, or by Sudanese communities like the Juula and the Maraka, restricted themselves to only these commodities. Many goods, such as e.g. grain, which were traded to the north as well as slaves could be purchased not only with salt, but with horses, as well as other desert products like livestock or dates. James Webb (1995: chapter three) argues that during the 18th century western Saharan salt trade for Savanna grain increased to compensate shortfalls in local production induced by climatic changes. While empirical evidence remains scanty, it seems unlikely that the large populations of the Tagant and Adrar, who have a long experience of cultivation (cf. Toupet 1958, Bonte 1985a), became all too heavily dependent

on grain imports. Such modes of complementary production did develop, but needed a high specialisation into camel rearing and caravan trade not documented for the western Sahara. This is illustrated by the case of the highly specialised economy of the Kel Ewey Tuareg of the Aïr in the Republic of Niger (about 14,000 inhabitants in the early 1970s). Until today they combine camel and small ruminant rearing, and caravan trade to exchange desert salt for Sahelian millet, and oasis gardening (cf. Spittler 1989a, b).

24 Both Raymond Taylor and James Webb take the cases of the Ahel Ganār, the Ahel al-Gebla, Trarza al-Kiḥil, and the Idawalhağğ to underpin their argument. Initially the Ahel Ganār were constituted by a conglomerate of riverine populations having strong links to Wolof society, and being Wolof-speakers. During the 18th century, they integrated more and more closely into bīẓān society, and became the Ahel Ganār. The Idawalhağğ were bīẓān who for centuries controlled much of the trade with the Sudan, where they settled to build up trade outposts. When the tribe's influence in trade diminished, and the formerly strong relations between its various branches started to vanish, the southern communities increasingly dropped their Saharan links and customs, such as e.g. the use of ḥassāniyya as language, but maintained much of their religious prestige (cf. Taylor 1997: 68ff.; Webb 1995: 36f.).

25 Khalifa Ould Kebab, my research assistant, told me his grandfather five generations back had worked as a mason in the construction of Kasr el Barka, the now abandoned important Kunta settlement on the Tagant. He claimed his family had definitely never had another status than ḥarāṭīn, i.e. none of his forefathers to have been unfree or slaves.

26 Al-Hajj Umar, who had started his conquest in 1852, was unlucky, as his initial ambitions to control the Upper Senegal paralleled the rise of French interests in controlling this region. In 1857 both parties clashed and Umar was defeated. This led him to direct his movement to the east, and conquer the territory of the former Segu Bambara State situated on the Niger River up to Timbuktu (cf. Roberts 1987: 79ff.).

27 David Eltis has gathered data on the following points of embarkation: Upper Guinea, Windward Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, Congo North, Angola, Southeast Africa. Of the slaves shipped from the Bight of Benin, 46 percent were men; 21 percent women, 22 percent boys, and 19 percent girls (cf. Eltis 1987: 256). These numbers are confirmed by French shipping and plantation records (cf. Geggus 1989).

28 The same set of data shows the price differential to be much less marked for older than for younger slaves of different sex (cf. Lovejoy/Richardson 1995: 279).

29 This can be discerned by the different ethnic origins noted for male and female slaves entering the Atlantic world. In the late 18th century the largest group of male slaves was Hausa. Those slaves coming from the interior most often were "prime slaves", i.e. young male slaves, who had the lowest value in the interior, but the highest on the coast. Those women and children

shipped to the Americas most often came from the coastal regions (cf. Lovejoy/Richardson 1995: 282, 286, see as well Geggus 1989).

30 Admittedly, this argument seems to portray a rather simple distinction of supposed female/male virtues. The point here is not to decide whether men or women were more docile, but to hint at the perceptions slave raiders, traders, and masters developed of their slaves' minds. It was these ideologies that directed the masters' actions. For a discussion of masters' responses to problems of slave control see Martin A. Klein (1983: 77ff.).

31 Islamic jurisprudence provides a large set of rules defining the rights and obligations of slave traders and buyers. Within this framework it was commonly admitted that the slave's willingness to serve his new master, and hence his value to the latter, was difficult to assess. Sales therefore remained open to reversal within a distinct delay in case the buyer had not been satisfied (cf. Daumas 1883: 321ff.).

32 The notion of a plantation sector was introduced to the discussion of African slavery with regard to the east coast of Africa by Frederick Cooper (1977: 221f.). On these estates the sex ratios of slaves were relatively balanced. Paul Lovejoy (1983: 31), though cautious about drawing an analogy to the slave economy of the Americas, stresses the role plantations run by slaves had in the economic transformation of the "inner Niger valley into a heavily populated and productive region". John H. Hanson (1990: 212) notes that slave prices in Jomboxo rose considerably when Futanke settlers, who had come there in the course of the Umarian movement, started to invest in slave labour to expand agricultural production. Slave prices in the area became twice as high as in the Senegal valley.

33 Slave marketing in the interior was rarely a public affair. Slaves were commonly sold "in the house", and only in the most important trade towns were slaves sold on the public market (cf. Dunbar 1977: 161, note 7).

34 Martin Klein (1983: 82f.) reports interviewees both of slave and free origin stressed the point that masters were obliged to provide adult male slaves with a woman, i.e. a major means for social integration.

35 This conclusion has to be drawn from the data available on slave demography in Africa. On average, slave women had less than one child. The rate of reproduction thus was negative (cf. Klein 1983: 69, Meillassoux 1983: 51). Still in 1974 Claire Oxby (1978: 176, 200) recognised that the fertility of slave women among the Tuareg was markedly inferior to that of the freeborn; the former having an average of 2.65, and the latter of 3.26 children. The slave women also were more numerous than slave men in the camp.

36 This is most evident in those cases where slaves in the region of Achram-Diouk remember their ancestors. I met no case of a slave reclaiming his most far-reaching line of descent from a male ancestor. Instead all referred to a woman, e.g. a Bambara stolen by one of the ʿamīr Bakkar Ould Soueid Ahmed brothers at the turn of the century, or an enslaved Fulbe woman, whose ethnicity was recognisable due to her typical scars. Since socialisation into bīẓān society was important, only these first generation slave women were remembered as having spoken some other language than ḥassāniyya.

37 ANM (no registration number), Commandant de Cercle du Hodh, I.

Bastouil, Aioun el Atrouss, "étude sur la population noire dans la subdivision centrale d'Aioun-el-Atrouss" 25.5.1959: 2; document kindly passed on by Meskerem Brhane.

38 At this time 4,193 people of various black African ethnic groups were counted. The data presented by Munier arose from the official administrative census. It may underestimate the number of sūdān, because according to I. Bastouil, only sūdān registered together with their masters' tent were counted, while those living independently with their own tent and household were numerous too (cf. ANM (no registration number), Commandant de Cercle du Hodh, I. Bastouil, Aioun el Atrouss, "étude sur la population noire dans la subdivision centrale d'Aioun-el-Atrouss" 25.5.1959: 2; document kindly passed on by Meskerem Brhane).

39 The difficulty in drawing a sharp distinction between ḥassān and zwāya is a point stressed by Timothy Cleaveland (1995: 37) too. He cites a 1953 French administrator's "mémoire", which in contrast to the colonial-administrative mainstream criticises a dichotomy which he felt to be meaningless due to its having too many exceptions.

40 This document, entitled "Rapport politique, année 1950, Tableau de Population, TOM de la Mauritanie, Cercle du Tagant, Subdivision de Moudjéria" found in 1979 in the Tidjikja branch of the ANM (no system of cataloguing) was kindly passed on to me by Roger Botte. The original document distinguishes "Maures blancs" and "Maures noirs", i.e. white and black moors. This meant that znāga, maʿalimīn and iggāwen were subsumed under the category bīẓān. The layout of tribal fractions follows the colonial administrative design, which resulted occasionally in redrawing tribal boundaries. This is most evident in the case of the Kounta Haiballa I and II, divided by Commandant Frèrejean, to reward with his own chieftaincy a Kunta leader for his support during the French conquest of Tagant. To clearly mark these differences the French transcription of tribal names is maintained.

41 Unlike from the other colonies of French West Africa (A.O.F.), there was no poll tax in Mauritania, but only a tax on livestock. A tax on agricultural products, called ʿašūr, which was once introduced, was suspended in 1940 (cf. Toupet 1959: 103).

42 One other explanation for the unbalanced sex ratios among the sūdān might be selective infanticide (Prof. Dr. Günther Schlee, personal communication 25.6.1998), but up to now data allowing to investigate the scale and the rationale of such practices in the western Sahara are lacking.

43 A colonial administrative census of Oualâta's 1912 population presents bīẓān women as largely outnumbering men, and an even higher disproportion among the sūdān (cf. Cleaveland 1995: 315). This is characteristic for the small, ancient trade towns, where men were absent most of the year accompanying caravans, and travelling for trade. Today, small towns and villages which emerged subsequent to the drought of the early 1970s, are dominantly populated by women. In the big urban centres, focus of male wage labour migration, men outnumber women (cf. D'Hont 1985: 102).

44 This is a phenomenon still frequent in colonial times. One reason why "tribes" moved out of a given territory were conflicts. A major case in the

region of Achram-Diouk was the conflict between the Awlād Talḥa and the former ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar. It was resolved in 1939 by detaching the Awlād Talḥa from the administrative region of Tagant, and registering them in Kaédi (cf. AT, anonymus, "Historique Abakaks", n.d., kindly passed on by Roger Botte). In other cases parts of tribes sought to establish themselves and become recognised as independent tribal fractions (cf. AT, J. Hornac, "Télégramme-Lettre", Subdivision de Moudjéria, apparently May 1940; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

45 Still in the 1960s, the evaluation of national demography was based on tribal membership and not on areas of residence (cf. Brenez 1971). Later studies, such as the 1977 census, adopted an approach taking coresidential units as the basic units of inquiry (cf. Paccou/Blanc 1979).

46 Besides my fieldwork data I have not come across this definition of šurva. The scholarly debate portrays them as zwāya, a description conforming well with the meaning of the term, which indicates direct descent from the prophet Muhammad via the sons of his daughter Khadija. The example of šurva among the emiral Ahel Swayd Aḥmed shows how prestigious strangers become integrated into the tribe and strengthen the intersections existing between the zwāya and ḥassān social world.

47 Of this total of 124 women heading a household alone, 57 were actually unmarried, i.e. divorced, and 45 had survived their husbands. Of the remaining 18 cases data concerning the current marital status is missing. Only three women were reported to be married, but nonetheless leading the household on their own, thus replacing their permanently absent husband.

48 This is the case in Hella, whereas the case of Achoueibir, where many of the znāga are closely integrated into the tribal community, presents a balanced distribution. As among the ḥarāṭīn, among the znāga different levels of subordinate status exist. The present thesis therefore rests on the assumption that subordination correlates with more fragile marital relations and male absenteeism. Further research on this topic is required, as some of the cases in question may be the result of marriages between old men of noble descent and women of subordinate status, likely to survive their husbands for a long time.

49 Achoueibir has a rate of 39, Téjal of 23, and Legned of 27 percent sūdān women leading a household without male support.

50 Most of the nine slave women in Hella leading their household on their own are described as closely attached to one influential bīẓān family. One woman was married to the actual (unofficial) ʿamīr of Tagant, but is now divorced (for this to take place she ought to be a ḥarṭāniyya). Besides her, only one other of these slave women was described as having ever been married. For the eleven unmarried women in Téjal data on former marital status is lacking except in two cases, one being that of a grandmother whose husband died long ago, and another, divorced mother.

51 Here only valid data is processed. The cases from Leqraye are excluded, because the missing data on women would have produced a strong bias.

Chapter 5

1 There is just one narrative with a male slave actor (and provided by a slave man). Alas, rather then telling of a slave's fate and ruses like the female narratives, he tells of one free enough to look for a job. The point of the story is that he denies knowing any of a slave's typical occupations, but insists on being a good worker (cf. Tauzin 1989b: 86f.).
2 Claude Meillassoux (1983: 50ff.), while stressing the role de-sexualisation played in producing the difference between masters and slaves, restricts its practice to women. While the emphasis is right, de-sexualising practices, well reflecting the actual slave condition, also applied to slave men (cf. Klein/Robertson 1983: 10). E.g. Alexander Scott, enslaved on the western Saharan coast in 1810, had to grind meal (cf. Scott in Barbier 1985: 82). His earlier fellow in suffering, Brisson, had to make faggots, churn butter, spin wool and pull up roots (cf. Brisson [1792] in Saugnier/Brisson 1969). Among the Tuareg slave men were assigned typical women's tasks whenever there was a lack of slave women (cf. Bourgeot (1975: 83).
3 Time and space are dimensions crucial to the analysis of social relations and the constitution of social structures (cf. Giddens 1992: 161-213). An analytical framework drawing on the links between space and the division of labour, and later also gender, has been developed in human geography and feminist theory within this domain (cf. McDowell 1993a, b). Today the differences produced by the gender differential are no longer perceived as bound to local arenas and the household. Rather global structures, like macroeconomics, which used to be portrayed as gender-neutral, appear to be gendered and their shape in time and space to be pervaded by shifting boundaries between male and female (cf. Lachenmann 1998: 312f.; Elson/McGee 1995).
4 Nehemia Levtzion (1987) assumes that the development of a distinctly rural Islam (a model opposing the common ideal of learned Muslims as urban traders) in West Africa was possible only because of the strong hierarchical structure of these societies. Slavery thus allowed the masters to develop a religious scholarship for which they otherwise would have lacked the material means – and the time.
5 In fact the abrupt end of slavery due to massive slave exoduses in some parts of West Africa shortly after the colonisation did not lead to the breakdown of the local economies, as the colonisers had feared. Instead the former masters quite quickly adapted to the new situation, and made their way without the former slave support (cf. Roberts 1988). The case of the bīẓān in this respect is different, for the longevity of slavery in this society may be regarded as exceptional. This, however, does not imply that there was no change in the bīẓān modes of production. Indeed the bīẓān, while maintaining relations of dependency, managed to adapt their pastoral economy quickly to the new circumstances provoked by colonisation (cf. e.g. the development of pheniculture in many parts of Mauritania pp. 161-165 and 222f.).
6 These considerations, focusing on the slave perspective, leave out two major

professional activities restricted to the bīẓān: Islamic scholarship and warfare. Neither are easily subjugated under a narrow definition of work, implying the means of direct production and reproduction. More important here, however, is the point that these occupations were inaccessible to slaves. Some exceptions were made for ḥarāṭīn. There are several narratives speaking of ḥarāṭīn forming distinct groupings of subordinate warriors (cf. Ba 1932: 118f., note 1; Bourrel 1861: 36f.; Taylor 1995: 427). Very few ḥarāṭīn ascended to being trustees of bīẓān, either in the caravan trade or among the ḥassān chieftains (cf. p. 165-170).

7 Gudrun Lachenmann criticises the social sciences for having contributed to making women's economic agency invisible (cf. Lachenmann 1992: 77f.). Today's bīẓāniyyāt are heavily involved in economic activities, above all trade. The sūdāniyyāt more often occupy niches of small scale production of textiles, take-away food and the like (cf. Simard 1996).

8 With the rise of feminism came the challenge to the masculinity of social sciences, and the development of women's and gender studies. With regard to slavery this track, in a nutshell, states that "The oppression of women antedates slavery and makes it possible." (Lerner 1983: 174) Many aspects of the complex thus raised still remain largely understudied. The major contributions with a focus on the Sahelian and African slavery are the unpublished dissertation of Claire Oxby (1978), and the contributions to the volume "Women and Slavery in Africa" edited by Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (1983).

9 Few milk given to slaves was prevalent until the 1970s among some Tuareg (cf. Oxby 1978: 153), however, this could change if milk was abundant, or simply if the master was richer or more benign (cf. Robert Adam's report of captivity in 1816, reproduced in Barbier 1985: 35). Milk and millet when consumed together, as is normally the case with ʿaiš , yield more protein than when consumed separately (cf. Webb 1984: 155). This is apparent in popular traditions: ʿaiš was reported to me as a meal endowing the one who eats it with tremendous strength. Quite logically the former ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar was reported to have been one of the greatest lovers of ʿaiš.

10 By the end of the 18th century the Wolof state of Waalo was destroyed, and the Trarza warriors enslaved an unknown number of its inhabitants. Some were traded to the North African markets, but most remained within the desert society (cf. Webb 1984: 111; Barry 1988: 111).

11 Slave masters in the new world also profited from the skills African slaves had. Farming practices such as bush-fallow and hoe-and-hill agriculture proved to be best suited to the growing of plants such as tobacco and maize in certain circumstances, such as in Chesapeake (Virginia) during the early 18th century (cf. Walsh 1997: 93).

12 Among the Kel Ferwan Tuareg until the 1970s mistresses are reported to have claimed "at least one slave girl in every household (usually in the 10 to 14 year age-group) . . . in order to mind the latter's [the mistresses'] baby, and perform small tasks for her, such as sweeping; the free woman's own daughter would never be asked to do such things. This slave girl lives and sleeps in her owner's tent, not in her mother's." (Oxby 1978: 178)

13 The collection of ʿaz was reported several times to me, mainly by slave women. Although disliked for its inconvenience (three husks to be pounded off, "had to be accompanied by much milk"), it still is collected in considerable amounts on the Tagant, while in the plains of the Aftout it seems to have become rare. During the big drought in 1969 ʿaz was used as a relief foodstuff by many inhabitants of the Achram-Diouk region. At this time people even located colonies of ants in order to dig them up and get to their supply of ʿaz. A technique already described by Bourrel (1861: 41f.).

14 Louis Hunkanrin, although he entered history as one of the first and most fervent opponents of the French policy of laissez-faire vis-à-vis the practices of bīẓān slavery, had only a limited knowledge of bīẓān society. Those cases of slavery he referred to were drawn from his personal vicinity in the Mauritanian towns were he was held under arrest (cf. McDougall 1989).

15 Reproductive labour is defined by Margaret Strobel (1983: 111), as "the reproduction of new human beings, the daily restoration of human beings, and the reproduction of ideology or culture". The focus here is more restricted and lies on chores serving daily reproduction, as well as how female slave work was related to the reproduction of bīẓān ideology.

16 Loughaye Mint Driss, born around 1945, comes from a well-off zwāya family. At the time she was speaking of they lived only off their pastoral resources and did not engage in agriculture. Their animal possessions numbered 50-60 cows, and 150-200 sheep and goats, together with some riding camels and donkeys. She married a slightly less wealthy zwāya, but with a very good reputation and elaborate religious education.

17 Ideology persists despite, or perhaps just because of contrasting experiences. Khaite early in her life experienced her mother having to work on the fields because of the family's poverty, and her husband having died early. While the mother is described as working, Khaite does not mention having joined in. She stresses that her brother had completed his basic studies in the Qur'ān despite the difficult conditions the family was living in. The situation only changed when Khaite married a man wealthy enough to sustain the family.

18 Women in bīẓān society are not obliged to enter and constitute from the day of the wedding ceremony a household with their husband. The situation described hence may arise from the woman's will to continue to live with her parents despite being already married. Only about 40 or 45 days after the first child is born (childbirth has to take place with the woman's family), is the woman obliged to move to her husband (Khalifa Ould Kebab).

19 Brisson, one of the 18th century French castaways notes as a success that he was sometimes allowed to stay in the back of the tent (cf. Saugnier/Brisson [1792] 1969: 417).

20 Margaret Strobel (1983: 116ff., and note 7) has highlighted that work played a crucial role in determining slave women's conditions. Taking part in reproductive work was crucial for an increasing integration because tasks in and around the main house enabled the slave women to develop intimacy, to acculturate, or from the masters' point of view: to "become civilised". This step up meant also renouncing some of the slave subculture, was seen as

essential for a further career as a concubine, and eventually becoming manumitted.

21 Some bīẓāniyyāt related the end of the sūdāniyyāt's (sūdān women's) willingness to pound millet to the arrival of MENDEZ, the company constructing the asphalt road from Nouakchott to the east of the country in 1977 (Interview Khadijetou Mint Abdallah, zwāya, 11.2.1996).

22 Grinding one standard sack of cereals (50 kg) in a modern local small-scale mill costs between 150 and 180 UM (US$1.00). For a fee of only 2,000 UM (i.e. the equivalent of the supplemental monthly pay a housemaid receives for pounding millet) one can therefore grind more than 500 kg of cereals, a quantity even a large family couldn't consume.

23 While during pounding the bran is separated from the flour, the simple milling techniques are unable to do this. Couscous prepared with the locally ground flour therefore is considered to scratch the gullet when consumed. This annoying concomitant of modern times can be avoided by enveloping the couscous-grains in a final layer of white wheat flour.

24 Analysing bīẓān society as an entity one has to be aware of this multitude of slave men's occupations. There are several authors who have tried to distinguish too sharply between slave and freemen's occupations, e.g. by stating that male slave labour performed almost all the work of livestock rearing (cf. De Chassey 1977: 86; more differentiated: RAMS 1980: 74). Such statements fail to illuminate the interrelations between different branches of pastoral and agro-pastoral production and the wide range of male slave labour.

25 Caillié's report has been criticised for over-representing the importance of slave labour to the collection of gum arabic (cf. Ould Cheikh, personal communication in McDougall 1992: 85). Indeed this assertion relies on only second hand information, (a fact not obscured by Caillié). Apart from the exact number of slaves involved in the harvest and trade of gum arabic, what remains besides question is the great interest the bīẓān had in this business. Most importantly, the trade in gum arabic fuelled trade networks throughout the western Sahara, so that the exchange of cloth, millet and other goods increased (cf. McDougall 1992: 74; Ruf 1995: 116ff.).

26 Unfortunately Bourrel hardly ever distinguishes between male and female slaves. René Caillié (1830: 56, 92) too remarked that the zwāya were much better off than the ḥassān.

27 The development of bīẓān pheniculture originated in the Adrar region (perhaps on the remnants of wild palm trees) and later expanded to the south. Slaves were imported to meet the need for labour power (cf. Bonte 1985a,b: 329ff.).

28 Here Dubié's description lacks accuracy. It is not evident from his writing whether the herders get the use-right or the possession of the sheep. Neither is the number of sheep subject to the procedure mentioned.

29 There are doubts whether all these animals were the property of Weddou Ould Jiddou. He himself declared that he had been very close to the ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar. This might indicate that he had managed some of the latter's herds.

30 Charles Toupet (1958: 98), stating the same difficulties in ascertaining the average animal property, proposed the characterisation of four distinct lifestyles: 1) a pastoral nomad, not engaged in agriculture, with 30 cows and 140 small ruminants, 2) a ḥarṭāni who was well off and owned 15 cows, 50 small ruminants, 140 date palms and some fields with an annual harvest of about 140 mūd and an unknown quantity of ʿaz collected, 3) a noble bīẓān, owning a good riding camel and keeping 10 cows on loan, 4) a sedentarised trader.

31 Meskerem Brhane (1997b: 26) analyses these strategies as a "subtle entrapping". A slave man, having received this or a similar favour from his master (e.g. the latter also could buy the slave's mother, if the slave had changed his master), had much more to lose by leaving than one without family. Interpretations of these acts however differ among the slaves themselves. Some regard them as the charitable act of a generous man, others, often the subsequent generation portray it as a strategic option for better conditions of exploitation.

32 Michael Winter (1984), presents a rather different image of the cattle rearing Kel Agheris Tuareg in northern Mali. There slaves made up as much as 70 percent of the population, and the noble strata relied almost entirely on their slaves for livestock rearing. Dominance was maintained by prohibiting livestock ownership by slaves. This system broke down when the colonial administration interfered and decided the majority of cattle belonged to the Bella slaves, thus dispossessing the Tuareg.

33 Different strategies of herd management are likely to result from socio-economic transformation. Among the Kawāhla of Kordofan, the objectives of pastoral production have changed markedly since the 1930s and 1940s. Camels are no longer important as providers of milk and transport, but are kept primarily for sale for slaughter. Ecological degradation, as well as the main camps' increased cattle herding has produced almost independent movements of the cattle and camel herds and the redefinition of the herders' tasks (cf. Beck 1988: 226ff.).

34 Of course there were tasks besides the narrow range of "normality". One interviewee of slave origin stated that he had left his master during the big drought, because his work had increased to a level he could no longer manage. His master, trying to save his cattle, had told his slave to cut fodder for all the animals. Besides this task he had had to water them (cf. Interview Boueibou Ould Amar, ḥarṭāni, 1.11.1995).

35 René Caillié (1830: 98ff.) reports the cattle being led to the pasture by slaves, but does not specify whether the animals were continuously guarded or not. However, seeing the great danger from theft and predators in those times, animals might normally have been guarded.

36 Samba Ould Haroun told me that already in the times before the drought near to the well of Letfatar a camp existed, composed of people called anmāre, who were of various tribal origins. They herded cattle for other people for a monthly payment of 60 UM. This was meant to pay for the work of watering the animals. The use of the milk was included too. Obviously these people accompanied the cattle to pasture, for one reason

why people sent their precious lactating animals to these strange herders was the danger of wolves prevalent in the region at this time (Interview Samba Ould Haroun, ḥarṭāni, 7.11.1995).

37 A full-time herder receives about 5,000 UM (about US$32) per month. For cattle the average prices vary between 200 UM during the wet season and 250 UM during the dry season, when watering makes the job more labour intensive (Interview Maʿarouf Ould Eleyatt, ḥassān, 26.3.1995).

38 This I observed among former slaves of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed nobility living in Daber on the Tagant. Several interviewees stated that they herded some goats and cows belonging to a bīẓān among their own herd. While no remuneration was specified, many in the course of the interview said they had benefited from some aid in cereals or other goods offered to them in case of need by the noble bīẓān.

39 A whole variety of factors contribute to the well-being of the animals, e.g. camels have a considerable need for salt. If there is no especially salty pasture, the animals have to be led to salt deposits, or, as is nowadays common in the region of Achram-Diouk, provided with salt every two to four weeks (Interview Abdallahi Ould Briké, zwāya, 9.4.1995).

40 El Ghassem Ould Ahmedou (1994) in his novel entitled "Le dernier des nomades" gives a beautiful description of an outstanding camel herder's virtues.

41 Personal luck could increase or diminish animal property quite fast. Sīdī Muḥammad Wuld Habot, a 19th century Lāġlāl trader, who amassed a legendary fortune during his life, liberated a number of znāga from their obligation towards their ḥassān patrons. The experienced camel herders thus became his dependents and watched his supposed 400 camels (cf. Bonte 1985b: 330)

42 Sophie Caratini (1989: 100) emphasises that the distinction the Rgaybāt make between second generation slaves born in the camp, and slaves captured or bought, does not rely on different levels of affection but on more or less complete socialisation into Rgaybāt society. Only slave boys are believed to become skilled herders, knowing all animals in the master's possession extremely well; once this is achieved they are hardly ever exchanged. Saugnier, while enslaved in the western Sahara, consequently herded only camels in the vicinity of the camp (cf. Saugnier/Brisson [1792] 1969: 37).

43 As already stated, property in this camp was distributed highly unevenly. While Mohamed Ould Abass during his interview declared one close relative to have owned 100 camels, and his own nuclear family to have owned 50 to 60, he stressed that the number of poor people in the camp has been so high he now could not count them.

44 Most big herd owners I became aware of come from the local notability. However there are some "new rich" too, the modest origins of whom people increasingly dare to name (Interview Yahya Ould Heime, ḥassān, 12.12.1995).

45 Payment may vary according to the size of the herd; for herding about 20 to 50 head, recently about 5,000 UM were paid. Herds up to 100 animals, necessitating labour input exceeding at least during a part of a year one nuclear household's capacity, could be paid for with up to 10,000 UM (about

US$64) per month (Interview Mahmoud Ould Mnih, znāga, 4.2.1996). The sum of 60,000 UM approximately equals the price of an average riding camel. For past arrangements refer to Mokhtar Ould Hamidoun (1952: 56).

46 The great bīẓān traditions of brave herders, such as those of Deyloul, show these to be znāga (cf. Tauzin 1993: 13-20). Among my interviewees, commitment to pastoral activities was most marked among people likely to be of znāga origin (Interview Mahmoud Ould Mnih, 4.2.1996). Though slaves too could engage in camel herding, riding etc., they often did so only as a secondary occupation to cultivation (Interview Ghalim Ould Elkhair, ʿabd, 17.12.1995). Badeyn, too, in his long career of professional occupations once herded camels for a Kunta notable (cf. p. 57-59).

47 This is practised throughout the Sahel. Although moving around in one and the same herd, sheep and goats maintain different patterns of mobility, due to distinct fodder preferences and seasonal vegetation differences. In a mixed herd observed near Niono (Mali), sheep had an overall intake of 59 percent herbaceous plants and goats about 87 percent of shrubs (cf. Wilson/de Leeuw/de Haan 1983: 102).

48 The region of Achram-Diouk by and large has considerably cut down export of livestock. Nowadays sheep imported from the Hodh region are cheaper than local ones, and subsequently more competitive on the national and international level. Former sales to Senegal are replaced by the quick lorry transport to and subsequent sale in the capital Nouakchott. A few exceptions come from the northern meat markets in the mining centres. In this direction animals are still transported on the hoof until reaching the station of Choum at the iron ore railway linking Nouadhibou with Zouérat.

49 Sheep are not able to browse and digest wooden fibres, but in turn seem to use resources more efficiently than goats and have slightly fewer miscarriages (cf. Wilson/de Leeuw/de Haan 1983: 87).

50 Several such plants were reported to me, but I was unable to identify all of them. Whenever branches from a tree called tebnenna (this might be the species called titarek, *Leptadenia pyrotechnica*, by Ould Hamidoun 1952: 19), are laid into water to make ropes of it, the water is poisoned for animals. Residues of millet plants sprouting again some time after being cut for harvest become harmful to animals too (Interview Sidi Ould Salim, ḥarṭāni, 12.4.1995).

51 There are a lot of practices to cure animals of this and other diseases. Most prominent are treatments with a red-hot pole. Depending on the injury or disease, different areas are marked with burns (the same treatment applies to human beings). With regard to the inflation caused by tigengilit, several treatments were related to me. One is to grease with oil or butter or to wash with a large amount of soap the anus of the animal, another treatment is to penetrate the animal's belly with a sharp needle and hence let the pressure out, yet another is to make small incisions beneath the ears and the nostrils or to dilute sugar in water and make the animal breathe in this liquid.

52 During and for some months subsequent to the rainy season small stock can be watered from surface water. Good shepherds then are able to distinguish good from bad water infected e.g. by animal residues. Once this water

supply dwindles away, professional adult herders have to dig wells, a task they have to get an assistant for because of the amount of work entailed. On the Tagant such wells attained a depth of between 8 and 10 metres (Interview Mbarek Ould Koueriye, ʿabd, 21.12.1995).

53 This period, experienced on a big plantation of millet, like the large dam of Daber on the Tagant or Zemmal in the Aftout, is most impressive. All day long the fields virtually vibrate with the endless shouting of an infinite number of cultivators, reinforced by the cries of the chased birds, the sounds of pots, cans and other items hit or clapped together and the irregular rhythm of slapping slings. The omnipresent tension accompanies a deep fatigue on the part of the cultivators.

54 Here flood recession agriculture is described, where both sowing and harvesting takes place about two to three months later than in rainfed or recession farming behind dams.

55 This method entailed the danger that the location of the granary might be hard to recognise. Sometimes it could only be located after rain, when the stored grain started sprouting (Interview Ahmed Ould Aimar, ḥarṭāni 29.3.1995).

56 The submersion, either in the traditional walo-cultivation on the borders of the Senegal river, or behind dams, referred to in the following, has the advantage of suffocating vegetation. After the waters have retreated, the land is ready for cultivation without further input.

57 Gerd Spittler (1991: 4f.) has analysed the ethic and conception of work among Hausa cultivators. These draw a sharp distinction between places of work, identified with loneliness and sometimes the bush, and places of communication and social life. An interference of social life with work is perceived as spoiling the latter. A comparable conception is probable for the work ethic of both sūdān and bīẓān. Bīẓān interested in Islamic scholarship usually left the camp of their family to live with a teacher elsewhere, and only returned with the studies accomplished. Among the sūdān the spatial segregation of work places and social places follows a different pattern. Cultivating implied in many cases living by the fields, often in the close vicinity of other sūdān. As many slaves were sent cultivating, this was the time when many of the otherwise dispersed slaves met and families came to live together.

58 There is divergent information on the ecological impact of the modern type of large dams. A socio-economic study of the Tagant region, prospecting the region's potential for a development project (which later came into being as the project Achram-Diouk), noted an increased compacting of the soils due to the long-lasting flooding (cf. Grosser/Ibra Bra 1979: 49). Other scholars, such as the geographer Charles Toupet (1977: 264f.), too, remark on this phenomenon. Increased salinity of the soils seems not to be a major problem. I found just one case concerning some stretches of the large dam of Daber on the Tagant, constructed by the French administration in the early 1950s. Other large dams, e.g. the almost one hundred-year-old large dam of Zemmal (120 ha), modernised by the Achram-Diouk rural development project in 1991, do not reveal comparable problems.

59 Millet and niébé beans (in ḥassāniyya called adlagān) are sometimes cultivated in combination. This is advantageous, because the leguminous plants increase the nitrogen content of the ground (cf. Wüst 1989: 84).

60 There is a considerable number of women now living as household chiefs in the region of Achram-Diouk as well as other rural areas of Mauritania. Many teenagers dislike working on the fields, especially if a continued presence on the highly dispersed fields is required, far away from their friends in the nearby village. Therefore tasks needing constant presence, like guarding the fields and chasing birds, is done by the women and small children, while the teenage boys are obliged by their mothers to join in temporary activities like weeding and harvesting. To get this work done, the youngsters rely more or less successfully on reciprocal help from their friends (Interview Mahmoude Mint Ali; ḥarṭāniyya, 26.7.1995; Boua Ould Beydyali, hartani, 11.9.1995).

61 Male absenteeism due to migration has probably increased women's contribution to these tasks vis-à-vis former times (cf. Toupet 1977: 259).

62 Both beans and melons are important cereal substitutes, being able to grow successfully without too much rainfall. They were cultivated at the desert's edge to cope with the frequent shortfalls in sorghum supply and local production, but the bīẓān did not prize them. In good years with sufficient grain available, the consumption of vundi and adlagān, which when accompanying millet raises the dish's yield of proteins, was left to the slaves and ḥarāṭīn (cf. Webb 1984: 154f.; on the use of vundi see also Bonte 1985a: 36f.)

63 Pierre Bonte, who started research on the Adrar region of Mauritania in the early 1970s, recently finished a comprehensive thesis on the history and anthropology of the tribal society in this part of the western Sahara (cf. Bonte 1998c).

64 The case of Awdaghust has always fascinated people and raised discussion. Evidence is only to be drawn from excavations of a site lying in the Aouker, in the exact middle-point between Kiffa and Tîchît, most probably identified with the ancient Awdaghust. According to two divergent hypotheses, occupation of this site began either in the 7th or in the 8th century. An excellent discussion of the interrelations between the early trans-Saharan caravan trade, the Almoravid movement, ecological change and the emergence of the bīẓān society is provided by Ann McDougall (1985a).

65 A study of the Kunta trade network on the Tagant still needs to be done. The towns of Talmeust, Rachid, and Kasr el Barka appear in almost none of the descriptions of pre-colonial trans-Saharan trade, despite their considerable size and affluence. The ruins of Kasr el Barka, with its distinct flat stone architecture, are impressive, even one hundred years after the city was abandoned (due to the defeat of most Kunta fractions in a war with the Abakak Idawʿlš). The extent of its former date palm grove once was estimated to be about 20,000 trees, and the number of inhabitants as many as 2,000 (cf. ANM E12-82, "rapport Lt. Fonde" 1936). In this Kasr el Barka is likely to have outdone the famous trading-towns of Ouadâne (supposed maximum inhabitants 1,500) and Chinguetti (supposed maximum inhabitants 1,200; cf. Mauny 1961: 484). Rachid, destroyed several times as well, was reconstructed during this century. The new town faces the ruins of the

old town on the opposite slope of the valley. To my eyes these cities are very likely to have performed as well as the illustrious old trade towns of Tidjikja and Tîchît. The most concise analysis of the economics of the Kunta trade in salt is provided by Ann McDougall (1980, 1987).

66 Tîchît, like Timbuktu for a long time out of reach of European travellers, seems to have been subject to much idealisation. While its central role in trade seems to be confirmed, much less so is the alleged fame of its date-palm groves. Du Puigaudeau (1993: 204) describes during the 1930s the ḥarāṭīn of Tîchît having to climb up the date-palms in order to wash off the salty deposits inflicted on the dates by the heavy winds charged with salt from the salt deposits. According to the former commandant de cercle du Tagant, Dubost (1924: 459ff.) this procedure was effected every three or four days during a period of about four months. Still then the Tîchît yield was much below the Tagant average (25-30 kilos versus 70-80 per date-palm). Given the high evaporation rates in the Saharan climate, this problem is likely to have antedated recent decrease in rainfall. The huge demand for labour for this type of cultivation also definitely limited the extension of the date-palm groves.

67 The intensity of agricultural use can be derived from the complexity of water management and irrigation systems. In this respect the Mauritanian oases did not match those of the northern Sahara (cf. Clancy-Smith 1994: 15-25; Ensel 1998: 70-72).

68 According to this interviewee, who for some time co-operated with the Mauritanian institute for research on pheniculture, throughout Mauritania only the people of the Adrar are real experts at date-palm cultivation.

69 Grosser and Ibra Bra (1979: 44) estimate the intensity with which the Tagant date-palm groves are put to use as follows: at maximum 10 percent meet the standards of intensive use, 40 percent follow an intermediate scheme, implying some fencing and the watering of the young plants, the remaining 50 percent rarely benefit from more care than pollination and harvest.

70 Ould Khalifa (1991: 253, 722) reports that the slaves and ḥarāṭīn (which he subsumes under the euphemism of ḥarāṭīn) in Tidjikja always remained directly attached to their master and subsequently lived in his household and had no segregated residence. This rather dogmatic statement, although very likely to describe accurately the case of most sūdān dependents, might be softened by supplemental characterisations. The masters often engaged in caravan trade, and the women were sent to nomadic camps to drink milk, the residences in town often were used more as a warehouse watched by the sūdān. In the early colonial period, the sūdān quickly started to sedentarise within the date-palm groves, transforming their huts into houses.

71 This very concern is expressed by Ould Khalifa (1991: 800f.), obviously trying to grasp his forefathers' action.

72 The occurrence of witchcraft and bīẓān society's ways of dealing with it are until today almost unstudied. Ann McDougall reports for the end of the 19th and early 20th century Tidjikja witchcraft trials involving slaves, performed by a bīẓān jury composed of a prominent cleric, witnesses and the supposed victim. The slave owners were in no way involved. Dealing with

sorcery was common enough to produce a whole set of procedures, the death penalty being only the ultima ratio. The French administration was still concerned with these practices in 1936, trying at least to eradicate the death penalty (cf. McDougall 1989: 289; Ould Khalifa 1991: 221). Witchcraft, ultimately contradicting Islamic belief, is a much obscured subject in bīẓān society.

73 It is probable that the two names represent the same group. During my fieldwork, although not working on the spot in the Wād Tidjikja, I became aware of the ʿaġzāzīr as a distinct group of specialists in date-palm cultivation living in social relations much like those of the ḥarāṭīn. Having come across the writings of Ould Khalifa (1991) only subsequently, I was not able to confirm the identity of the two terms. Another group with this name are the ʿaġzāzīr of Ijil, who exploit the salt mine there and live in a sort of tributary relation towards their Kunta overlords. Their origin is as mysterious as that of the ʿaġzāzīr of Tidjikja – and invokes similarly contradictory oral traditions ranging from bīẓān slave descent, mixed Berber and black African, and finally purely Berber descent. A further, not unlikely hypothesis is that the name might be derived from an ancient commercial language called "azayr" (cf. McDougall 1990: 248f.).

74 Abwayr, a settlement founded according various traditions during the 8th century, was the predecessor of Sinqīt, ore else Chinguetti, founded in 660 H/1261 AD (cf. Mauny 1955: 148f.).

75 A red phenotype is invoked frequently in the description of social categories. The blacksmiths (maʿalimīn), are similarly described as being of red phenotype. Another example is from the eastern regions of Mauritania. There the term ḥaḍāra, meaning greenish/dark, is frequently used to refer to ḥarāṭīn as people who descend from legally manumitted slaves (cf. Brhane 1997a: 59, and personal communication; Toupet 1977: 180).

76 Both authors develop the point of view that already before the 1960s the production in the Tagant oases relied predominantly on contractual relations between bīẓān and (in this case necessarily) sūdān of free status, i.e. ḥarāṭīn. This phenomenon is described as ancient, and the ḥarāṭīn status of many inhabitants of Tidjikja as coming from times immemorial. Other authors however stress that this "ḥarṭānisation" has contributed to a better performance of the workforce and has risen considerably since the begin of colonisation, i.e. since the first decade of the 20th century (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 284). From the 1950s on all men of servile estate are said to have been attributed freedom from their birth on (cf. Moussa/Ould Maouloud 1997). Similar trends during the first half of the 20th century have been derived from colonial documents of the Adrar by Ann McDougall (1988: 376, note 26).

77 This was thanks to the institution of muġarassa. This treaty, generally concluded between a bīẓān and a ḥarṭāni, obliges the former to provide the land to plant the palm trees, and the latter to provide the labour necessary to the development of the trees for about five years. This time being over, the trees should be divided among the ḥarṭāni and the bīẓān, while the land always remains the sole property of the bīẓān (cf. Dubost 1924: 464; Ould Abde 1989). The ease with which most bīẓān made use of Islamic jurispru-

dence, mechanisms of endebting and so forth, however, deprived most of the ḥarāṭīn of ever getting proprietorship of palm trees, and of course land. A second contract was musāqāt, defining a set of duties for the worker with regard to the land owner, and in return his right to one fifth of the harvest. This arrangement has been described as the most frequent in the Tagant until the 1970s by Ba B. Moussa and Mohamed Ould Maouloud (1997), and as common in the oases of the Maghrib too (there it is called ḫammās). Unlike muġarassa, it constitutes the ḥarāṭīn as a paid labourer without any means to acquire their own means of production.

78 I remain sceptical towards the interpretation James Webb offers of the interrelation of ecological degradation and social as well as economic change in the western Sahara both on theoretical and empirical grounds (cf. Ruf 1995: 50-70). Climatological data on the era is scarce and most interpretation has to rely on early travellers' accounts. These however, very frequently lack any accurate description of the severe seasonal variations the fauna and flora are subjugated to in arid and semi-arid environments. An evaluation of the Sahelian droughts from local chronicles and oral data (from the 16th to the 20th century) provides no direct evidence of a continuous degradation during this period (cf. Boureima 1993). Also desertification today is no longer conceptualised as an encroaching desert frontier, but as developing in niches and spots (cf. Mainguet 1991). Finally, an interpretation turning Webb's argument upside-down seems to fit the case at least equally well. After an initial crisis at the end of the 17th century, manifested in bīẓān chronicles and marked by segregation processes within, and southward migrations of some tribal groupings, the new mode of production characterised by increased trade activities developed. A dynamic economic development was induced, by which the plateau regions of the western Sahara (Adrar and Tagant) were able to import great numbers of slaves and hence to become the home of a population bigger than ever before (cf. Ech Chenguiti 1953: 115f.; Bonte 1985b: 329).

79 This was largely due to the French struggle to replace desert salt with imported sea-salt. While the Saharan salt was able to preserve its dominance in the trade over the decades preceding colonisation, railway transportation to Koulikoro (east of Bamako) available from 1904 brought about the breakthrough for French salt on the western Sahelian markets (cf. McDougall 1985b: 100; Roberts 1987: 161).

80 Donkeys could carry 50, oxen 100 kilograms of load over a daily distance of about 30 kilometres. Camels could load up to 200 kilograms, a load they could carry over 16 to 25 kilometres per day depending on their condition. A lighter load considerably increased the distances the camels could cross per day; up to 30 or 40 kilometres (cf. McDougall 1985b: 102). While within the Saharan climate camels were the beast of burden of choice, they suffered badly from animal diseases in more humid environments. Only a particular bīẓān breed of pack-camels resistant to Trypanosomiasis could overcome this limitation (cf. Féral 1983: 335).

81 The provisions of fodder naturally cannot fully cover the animals' needs. Rather they are intended to limit the deterioration of the animals' physical

condition during this period of extreme strain. These limits, however, are interpreted differently by different caravaners, an attitude largely determined by their dislike for the manual work of cutting fodder (cf. Spittler 1983: 70). Here one has to add that in former times, when the Kel Ewey Tuareg still had slaves to do this work in the place of the free men, the camels might have been better off.

82 Similar examples are reported from Tuareg traders, especially of the Kel Ewey and Kel Gress and their associates (cf. Baier/Lovejoy 1977; Lovejoy 1983: 211f.; Lovejoy 1986: 277f.).

83 Bourrel (1861: 66) in his mid-nineteenth century account from Brakna and Aftout reports the case of a tent-slave sent by his master with Bourrel's small caravan, in order to have the opportunity to gain some pieces of guinée-cloth.

84 This description particularly represents the situation of the eastern regions of bīẓān territory. In the south-west, the Gebla, caravan trade for a long time was on a minor scale, and implied shorter distances (cf. Stewart 1973: 118f.). Some caravans led by bīẓān were even constituted by oxen instead of camels, because of the region's infestation with Trypanosomiasis.

85 There were three tlāmīḍ associated with this Kunta family from the Azawad: "One organised and conducted the azalay [salt caravan], a second supervised the mining and preparation of the salt blocks, and the third attended to the livestock and camels. It is said that the one who managed the mining sector amassed a considerable fortune through his own private trade, which suggests that talamidh may have been given some sort of payment in kind for their services." (McDougall 1985b: 107)

86 Probably the best documented case is that of Šayḫ Sidyya al-Kabīr (1775-1868 AD), who set out for sixteen years of study among the Kunta of the Azawad at the age of thirty-four. Once he returned to his natal Gebla, he managed to gain both economic power and spiritual influence over diverse groupings within and beyond his own tribe. This enabled him to play an influential role in Gebla politics and make of these another source of symbolic and economic power (cf. Stewart 1973: 109, 112; Ould Cheikh 1991b; Taylor 1995: 430ff.).

87 The case of a ḥarāṭīn elite is reported from the Adrar region by Pierre Bonte (1991: 182).

88 This woman lives in a small hut at the back of the ʿamīr's present residence in Achram. She makes her living from drum-performances, a job she is engaged to do to enliven festivities. The iggāwen, traditionally the ones who did such jobs, have become rare in the rural areas due to their migration to Nouakchott where it is easier to make a living.

89 Ever since the ḥella of the ʿamīr ceased to mount the Tagant, the ṭbal played in Daber has changed. It is no longer the big drum of the tribe, but an old mortar transformed into a drum by stretching a hide onto it. It is now played with sticks instead of bare hands (Interview Doueige Mint Dvih, Daber, 21.12.1995). This instrument is often used among sūdān and called šenna (cf. Guignard 1975: 172).

90 This is confirmed in the case of Hammodi, a ḥarṭāni who was able to gather

great wealth in the early colonial Adrar, and subsequently was made paramount chief by the colonial administration (cf. McDougall 1988: 379ff.)

91 Abdi Ould Embarek, put into office in 1909 by the French after having joined their conquest of the Adrar, was deposed by the latter only a few years later in an attempt to give way to pressures from opposing bīẓān factions. Abdi's career ended when he was murdered on 26 June 1915 under circumstances never fully uncovered. For the next few decades local politics continued to involve much the same factional alliances that had been present in the days of Abdi (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 567, 581ff., 594f., 622, 648, 683).

92 This is of course an ideal-type description, and in everyday life these boundaries – as has been demonstrated in this chapter – were often less clear-cut. The herding of small stock, like many other tasks, was frequently done by children. However, speaking of child labour necessitates a definition of what it means to be a child in bīẓān society. Roughly the first initiation into the social world of the adults takes place around the age of five to seven, when bīẓān children are considered able to receive Qurʾānic education, and also could start to herd sheep and goats like the sūdān children. A next step was marked for the sūdān boys by their shift from herding to agriculture, which took place between the ages of fourteen to eighteen.

93 Norbert Elias (1990: 65-301) provides an authoritative study of how the evolution of feudal habits and this very social group were interrelated. The cultural practices thus developed do not constitute transcendental qualities but are signs and metaphors in struggles constituting sameness and difference; inclusion and exclusion.

94 Barbara Cooper (1994: 70f.) analysed female labour and the development of seclusion in the Maradi region of Niger. Recently the formerly servile female labour supporting the legitimate wives in the polygamous Hausa society has started to be replaced by that of now underprivileged junior wives. Similar developments can be observed in Mauritania. While polygamy is not at issue, the use of a household maid has become rather widespread. Millet, as I have noted already, is no longer pounded, but ground for money in motor-driven mills (cf. p. 147)

95 The equality of all (free) men is a central element in the bīẓān conception of their society. Therefore all members of a tribe are considered to share a common patrilineal ancestor, and thus to be equals who share a common solidarity. According to this model, it is the women, i.e. the uterine affiliation which marks difference (cf. Bonte 1987a, 1991).

96 Within the uniform ideal of femininity indeed some differences exist too. Women among the ḥassān used to accompany the men going to battle, as Benne Mint Ahmed told me (Interview, ḥassān, 29.10.1995). While she witnessed a battle of her tribe in which two men were killed, her veil was riddled with bullets. No such account from zwāya women has so far come to my knowledge.

97 Proverbs and tales are most informative about the cowardice attributed to blacksmiths (maʿalimīn) and musicians (iggāwen; cf. Tauzin 1993: 69).

98 Those ḥassān who for various reasons were no longer able to maintain their

status made the towba; they repented from their supposed immoral lifestyle and adopted zwāya status considered to be of lower esteem (cf. Bonte 1988).

99 Claude Meillassoux (1983: 49) describes slave women as being the only slaves experiencing what he calls de-sexualisation. As the term clearly relates to the domain of gender, and the present analysis is based on the distinction between sex and gender I prefer to avoid Meillassoux's terminology for the sake of clarity.

100 This is the case in narratives of noblemen who were taken and treated as slaves. This is usually discovered once the supposed slaves start behaving like people of noble descent. Mohammed Khairat is said to have been treated as a slave (like his mother) although his master knew him to descend from a zwāya. His real status became manifest once the master falsely accused Mohammed of drinking, i.e. stealing camels' milk while out on the pasture. Thereupon one of the young camels responded in his place and confessed having drunk the milk of his mother. This miracle made the master's eyes cross, his hand was paralyzed and his mouth deformed, while Mohammed Khairat became a saint of renown (cf. Brhane 1997a: 127ff.). Similar narratives from the Tuareg have been documented by Clare Oxby (1978: 150f.).

101 This was already observed by Saugnier a Frenchman shipwrecked on the western Saharan coast in the late 18th century (cf. Saugnier/Brisson [1792] 1969: 94).

102 Sūdān women not dressing correctly, i.e. not covering their hair, are an embarrassment for political activists struggling for the integration of sūdān on an equal footing into bīẓān society. Becoming an awakened ḥarṭāniyya, i.e. a ḥarāṭīn woman, also means learning to dress correctly and devoutly (cf. Brhane 1997a: 304).

103 Laura Fair (1998) analysed the gendered politics of dressing in post-abolition Zanzibar, which became much more for the former slave women than the men a field in which discriminating patterns had to be overcome. Crucial to this undertaking was wearing clothes in line with religious precepts.

104 Slave masters constructed an analogy between slave offspring and animal offspring. As in a herd of goats, only the relation between the she-goat and sucking kids is of interest.

105 This paragraph is strongly influenced by the approach to slavery as social death developed by Orlando Patterson (1979: 39, 1982: 35ff.) and recently taken up by Patrick Manning (1990a: 113). Both stress that slaves were excluded from society by its conceiving of them as socially unborn. This analysis, partly re-emerging in Claude Meillassoux's thesis of the slave as non-kin (Meillassoux 1986: 99ff.) is strongly criticised by Jonathon Glassman (1991: 281) for being a mere reconstruction of the masters' ideology, neglecting the entire "slave" conception of society and slave agency. While this argument is shared here, for it highlights major shortcomings in past analyses, it appears nevertheless imperative to also reconstruct the masters' ideology. This is essential to grasp the contradictory character of slaves' a gency, containing both submission and integration into the masters' world (as analysed here), and resistance and deviant ideology, which (besides the short overview of these aspects in chapter one) will be the subject of chapters

seven and eight. Finally the present case study aims to provide a glimpse of how social practice offered a means for slave women to overcome their fundamental exclusion from social motherhood even within the framework of the masters' ideology, as milk-kinship inserts slaves into precisely those collective social relations, i.e. a "civilisation", the denial of which is supposed to be constitutive of their very estate (cf. Meillassoux 1986: 113f.). The borders between inclusion in and exclusion from society are socially constructed, and hence are both maintained and contested in interaction.

106 The social configuration expressed by this Tuareg proverb in fact illustrates very well those aspects of slave men's mobility and slave women's immobility revealed by the narratives of Badeyn (with regard to his two, subsequent wives), and of Zeyneb and her husband (i.e. Brahim's father; cf. p. 57-59 and 62f.).

107 Among pastoral-nomadic Tuareg in the early 1970s many divorces among slave couples resulted from the camp splitting up, and the slave woman and man from that moment on belonging to different camps. While some ex-slave men, and slave men living in bad conditions left with their spouses, those slave men who had a good job and living, did not leave. Some of them, maintaining the marriage over great distance by temporary visiting, were reluctant to leave their work even for these visits, for they feared their masters might replace them with slaves present every day (cf. Oxby 1978: 196).

Chapter 6

1 This double meaning of sāḥil is present in the ḥassāniyya dialect until now. There are different terms for the cardinal points in the country. In the west, where the sea is close, sāḥil comes to mean "west", and represents the direction leading to the sea-coast. In the east of the country, the directions which the cardinal points represent shift. Sāḥil comes to mean "north" (with some tendency to north-west), i.e. the direction towards the shore constituted by the Sahara desert (cf. Frérot 1989: 110).

2 It should be noted that the nomads of the desert were hardly ever as predatory as commonly assumed. Much of the interrelations with the sedentary population developed on peaceful terms, as both depended on each other. This is especially true for the desert trade, which appears in the description of Ibn Baṭūṭa as well organised and safe (cf. Ibn Baṭūṭa in Levtzion/Hopkins 1981: 282ff.). Warfare did indeed occur, but in general only when one of the many parties involved in the business felt itself disadvantaged (cf. Clancy-Smith 1994: 18ff.) or went through a crisis.

3 The trade in salt from the desert mines, which was witnessed already from the 9th century, indeed could not have been managed without the participation of – and without profiting – the western Saharans. The history of Awdaġust shows that already from the 9th to the 12th century both short and long-distance trade co-existed, and that this trade helped develop and

maintain a trade in grain. The pastoralist diet of milk, blood and meat has always lacked carbohydrates and thus made relations of exchange with cultivators (either by trade or warfare) a necessity (cf. McDougall 1983; Bollig/Casimir 1993: 535f.). This reconsideration of small-scale trade and bartering, for long time underestimated in relation to the more prominent long-distance trade, is crucial to the understanding of the economy at the desert edge.

4 See also Valentin Ferdinand's report, where an annotation explicitly mentions the presence of North African (Tunisian) merchants at Ouadâne prior to the activities of the Portuguese at Arguin (cf. Valentin Ferdinand, report translated and edited by Kunstmann 1860: 260, note 59).

5 Such commodities were textiles, saddles, stirrups, metalwork, silver, spices, and wheat. The western Saharans sold slaves, gold, and gum arabic (cf. Valentin Ferdinand, report translated and edited by Kunstmann 1860: 264ff.).

6 The varieties of cotton cloth in this period were less standardised than the uniform pieces of indigo-dyed cloth – the famous guinée – which were later imported to the region from India by the European traders. Only Mauny (1961: 380), who bases his assumption on Leo Africanus, states that the cotton cloth imported by the Saharans from the Sudan during the 16th century was blue.

7 Cotton cloth production in the Sudan expanded in the course of the 18th century too. Richard Roberts (1987: 47ff.) describes the history of state formation in the Middle Niger valley as closely interwoven with the evolution of trade, local production, and political organisation. One aspect of this is that the Maraka responded to bīẓān demand for cloth and grain by expanding their production, and establishing slave plantations.

8 This was due to the development of the new cotton calico textile printing which relied on the use of gum arabic. These new fabrics provided an inexpensive substitute for tapestries, exotic silks, and expensive, imported chintzes, and unleashed a veritable consumer craze (cf. Webb 1995: 99).

9 From the West African coast, the gum was first shipped to France or Great Britain, from where a large part was re-exported to other countries, who themselves often re-exported the gum (cf. Webb 1985: 150).

10 Of course the advantages in the terms of trade calculated for the barter of gum and guinée, did not only result in a rise in the value of gum arabic, or the increased ability of the bīẓān traders to exploit their position of strength. During the period examined here, guinée cloth became less expensive. While in 1718, the price index for guinée imported to Senegambia was 100, it was only 66 in 1753, and 68 in 1838 (cf. Curtin 1975a: 321).

11 An evaluation of the reasons for the increase in grain demand is difficult. James Webb (1995: 118f.) argues that the terms of trade had become so favourable for the bīẓān, that the comparative cost of purchasing grain for gum was lower than producing it locally in the Gebla. This view is contested by James Searing (1993: 197), who holds an increase in the bīẓān dependent labour force (supposed to be great consumers of millet) responsible for the rise in demand. While both points remain difficult to prove, Webb's

argument is flawed by the fact that the demand for grain persisted, although from 1838 the terms of trade no longer developed in favour of the bīẓān, and the gum trade experienced several crises. There is also no proof of the bīẓān producing less grain than before; indeed, they were making use of a growing number of slaves, many of whom were settled in the south. An approach to this evolution considering it as an outcome of modes of production and exchange transformed by the gum trade appears more fruitful. Less grain may have been exchanged locally between pastoralists and sedentary cultivators in the framework of reciprocal relations of exchange, and more in commercial transactions. Once it had entered the trade networks, the trade in grain became likely to figure in the statistics.

12 Sources quoted and used by James Webb (1995: 114) to produce the present table: Gum prices for 1718 to 1823–27 are in pounds sterling from Curtin (1975a: 217, footnote 4). Gum prices for 1830-49 are estimated from Curtin (1975b, Table A15.14). Guinée prices before 1776 are rough estimates based upon Curtin (1975b, Table 15.11), which provides an import price index for the 1730s and is included only to estimate general magnitude. Guinée prices from 1776 to 1849 are from Table 5.8 in Webb (1995); see also Curtin (1975b, Table A15, 13). The guinée price for 1788 is unavailable: the 1787 price was used as a substitute. The guinée price for 1825 was used for an average gum price in 1823– 27.

13 Collecting gum could be done in addition to other activities like herding. Additionally it fell in the non-agricultural season, and therefore did not conflict with other major productive activities of the servile strata. In the 18th century about 2,000 individuals would have been able to collect all the gum harvested at this time. Despite the increased production of gum in the 19th century, the servile population of the Gebla still was large enough to make more workers unnecessary. Rather than being one-dimensional, the 19th century increase of the western Saharan slave population might have been driven by a complex set of various factors (cf. Webb 1995: 98).

14 Highlighting as it does the dynamic link between human action and natural environment, this is a strong case against an interpretation of western Saharan social and economic changes as being determined by ecological factors such as proposed by James Webb (1995).

15 While documents concerning trade with Mauritania in this era are lacking (cf. De Chassey (1984: 67; 84f.) there are strong arguments why the patterns of consumption developed in the course of the gum boom persisted. Early colonial accounts continue to report the bīẓān preference for guinée cloth of Indian origin, while at the same time an overall greater variety of commodities starts to be imported. How much the use of cloth had become indispensable to life at the desert's edge can be revealed from accounts of the great drought of 1940-43. Despite the severe famine in these years, this period is remembered above all as the time "where the people dressed in hides".

16 This was largely due to the Awlād Bū Sba, a tribe of the north who developed the trade in green tea "8147" from China, imported from Morocco together with other luxury merchandise and modern rifles (cf. Ould Cheikh/Bonte 1982: 34).

17 Patterns of tea consumption have evolved significantly during the 20th century. Throughout my interviews I was told how in former times, i.e. between thirty and fifty years ago, the consumption of tea was still restricted to the most wealthy. Trade in tea was not well developed in the hinterland until the end of the 1940s. As many pastoralists lacked cash, they had nothing to exchange but animals (Interview Isselmou Ould Sidi, zwāya, 8.4.1995).

18 The ʿašūr is considered to have first reduced bīẓān interest in agricultural production (cf. Ould Cheikh/Bonte 1982: 41). However, numerous agricultural and phenicultural undertakings can be traced in this period. These moreover are unlikely to have resulted from the few colonial incentives.

19 An evaluation of livestock exports from Mauritania is difficult due to the imprecision of data on both livestock numbers and animals traded. The colonial sources, which are likely to be the most exact, were based on assumptions too. E.g. the Commandant du cercle de l'Assaba noted in a report in March 1929 that the economic situation in the region was bad, and that its inhabitants had sold as many as 6,500 cattle and one thousand sheep to pay the colonial taxes (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 863).

20 The development of the early colonial peanut economy in Senegal is analysed by George E. Brooks (1975). Bernard Moitt (1989: 50f., 1993: 82f.) has shown that slaves imported from the east contributed significantly to the labour force in the peanut basin. These later sought emancipation by becoming followers of the Mouride brotherhoods, which managed to gain control of Senegal's peanut industry (cf. Diouf 1998). In the last decade of the slave trade Dagana on the left bank of the Senegal river was a major market for slaves, before Kaédi on the right bank took up this role for some years at the turn of the century. Here again the bīẓān appeared as slave dealers (cf. Klein 1993c: 176).

21 The whole Senegal valley functioned as a major labour reservoir, first for peanut production, and later for French industry, until the 1970s. Cash income in the area did not stimulate local agricultural production, but helped develop new patterns of nutrition, based on imported foodstuffs like rice, French style bread, coffee, pasta and others (cf. Bathily 1991: 61).

22 This description, essentially based on the work of Delaunay (1984), contradicts the view held by Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh and Pierre Bonte (1982) that the Senegal valley continued to be the "grain-basket" of the area until the drought of the late 1960s, though they acknowledge this role to have been in decline since the end of the Second World War. After the "pacification", as the French had named the installation of their colonial power, the local production, especially on the bīẓān-controlled right bank, is likely to have increased due to its resettlement both by black African ethnic groups and bīẓān. No information is available whether the grain imports of the valley, which took place during the 19th century (cf. Hanson 1992: 209), continued during the 20th century, and thus eased the accessibility of marketed grain for the bīẓān pastoralists. Francis De Chassey locates first signs of the valley no longer being able to meet the grain requirements from the interior in the year 1945, and supposes the surplus in the years before to have been moderate (De Chassey 1984: 67ff.).

23 While accurate data is lacking it seems likely that grain consumption in bīẓān society rose during the 20th century. The pastoral diet of former times was often described to me as having consisted only of milk during the rainy and cold season, with millet only complementing the decreasing amount of milk in the dry hot season. Eating in these times often was restricted to one or two meals a day. Later, eating a dish accompanied with millet twice a day became a sign of personal wealth (Interview Benne Mint Ahmed, ḥassān, 29.10.1995).

24 During this famine, slaves are reported to have been re-sold, and children to have been pawned, because people did not have the means to acquire food or pay taxes. Among the purchasers, the bīẓān were reported to have been the most important group at Bundu and Gajaaga (cf. Clark 1994: 63). Various bīẓān groups buying slaves (among them the Idawʿīš) were also present in the upper Senegal valley (cf. Clark 1995: 213).

25 This high percentage did not only result from the deliberate will of the slaves. In many cases, the nobility responded to the French request for fixed quotas by sending their slaves instead of their own sons (cf. Clark 1994: 65).

26 A very good description of the repercussions the First World War had in West Africa is found in the autobiography of Amadou Hampâté Bâ (1992: 469ff.). The experiences the West African soldiers had on the European battlefields hastened the collapse of the stereotype of the white man as an almost supernatural being.

27 The French had already annexed the right bank of the Senegal valley to their colony of Senegal in 1891. From 1900 on the frontiers of the future colony of Mauritania were drawn and negotiated with other colonial powers, notably the Spanish, who claimed possession of the Seguiet el Hamra and Rio de Oro, which later became their colony and nowadays is known under the term "Western Sahara". In 1903 a protectorate over parts of today's Mauritania was established, and was declared "territoire civil" in 1904. Only in 1920 was Mauritania integrated as a colony into French West Africa (A.O.F.; cf. De Chassey 1984: 464f.).

28 The effects of the declining production and commercialisation of grain in the Senegal valley on bīẓān society are likely to have been tempered by the reoccupation and re-cultivation of the right bank subsequent to the colonisation (cf. Ould Cheikh/Bonte 1982: 40).

29 In 1954 the Fulbe are reported to have reached the Tagant at Diouk and Djonâba, their expansion then continued eastwards, where they crossed the Assaba (cf. Santoir 1993: 138).

30 In some areas of the southern Gebla such as Trarza and Brakna, the right bank populations suffered severely from the establishment of French control on the left bank in the second half of the 19th century. The French quite effectively established a frontier, and prevented right bank populations from moving southwards. This hit the local populations hard and led to the pauperisation of many groups, as well as to northward migrations. In this process the right bank became less densely populated and exploited than in the first half of the century (cf. Taylor 1996: 216ff.). The beginning of the 20th century thus became somewhat a scramble for the reestablishment of

territorial claims that, both among the bīẓān and among left bank dwellers, had not been effective for a long time.

31 This was especially true for the Brakna region, where in the second half of the 19th century the emirate had been weakened and tribal control of land became fragmented. Additionally strong neighbouring tribal groups, among whom were the ʿamīr of Tagant, as well as the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd of the Assaba, intervened in local conflicts and thereby sought to maximise their influence (cf. Leservoisier 1994a).

32 The dam of Zemmal near Leklewa is an example of how this policy and the underlying evolution of the relations of production had an impact even within the remote area of the northern Aftout. Local tradition refers to the construction of the dam as having coincided with the first presence of the French. The dam, constructed and cultivated first of all by slaves, was registered as tribal territory, and hence gave the Legwāṭiṭ a secure claim over a large part of the fertile area of the Chelkhet Arkham. This is true for the dam of Achram too. According to interviewee Mohammed Yahya (zwāya, 21.9.1995), this dam was first constructed around 1915 by Tarkoz of the Leġwāreb fraction.

33 Tribal rights and tribal authority were difficult to eradicate by colonial decrees. Still in 1969, i.e. nine years after independence, and in the middle of the severe drought, the ʿamīr of Tagant, Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar, prevented pastoralists who had no relations of affinity or affiliation with him from entering the Tagant plateau where the local animals were already dying in large numbers (AM, confidential letter from the préfet at Moudjéria, 15.4.1969).

34 Southward migrations as such were nothing peculiar in the western Sahara and frequently resulted from periods of economic crisis engendering social conflict. The foundation of Tidjikja goes back to a southward migration of Idawʿalī from Chinguetti in the Adrar. The Idawalhağğ are a zwāya group from Ouadâne in the Adrar, who during the late 16th or early 17th century migrated to the Trarza, where they developed the marketing of gum. Later in the 18th century many settled on the left bank of the Senegal, where their religious prestige attracted numerous black African students and provided them with considerable power. They successively adopted the Wolof language and intermarried. Today they are almost "Wolof", but still remember their noble bīẓān descent (cf. Webb 1984: 62ff.) An interpretation of bīẓān history as a continued southward migration fleeing from a desiccating environment is proposed by Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1995).

35 Especially the zwāya scholars felt a need to reduce mobility in order to obtain better conditions for teaching and learning. One zwāya woman remembered that in the past it were only their sūdān who tended the livestock, consisting of sheep, goats and cattle. While the sūdān were highly mobile, the bīẓān remained almost sedentary (Interview Loughaye Mint Driss, zwāya, 18.9.1995).

36 According to Loughaye Mint Driss (zwāya, 18.9.1995), who was born around 1945, her family (before their herds were destroyed in 1969) used to sell their animals "at all places", i.e. the traders came to meet the pastoralists

and buy the meat stock on the spot. Payment was either in cash, or on credit to be paid in tea or other commodities.

37 After independence the structure of the meat market was profoundly changed by the emergence of the mining town Zouérat in the north, Nouadhibou on the coast, and the capital Nouakchott. The capital for one of the now largest shops in Achram was generated by first bringing and selling sheep, and when the business had began to develop well, camels to Zouérat.

38 The trade of western Saharan desert salt for grain from the Senegal valley was still active in the first decades of this century – e.g. there were 1,000 camels loaded with grain passing through Tidjikja in 1907 (cf. Ould Cheikh/ Bonte 1982: 35) – but then fell quickly into decline due to the import of French salt. Already before the great drought virtually no more salt caravans left the Adrar (cf. Ritter 1986), and the trade became limited to individual, small-scale exchanges e.g. between inhabitants of the Adrar who came to the Tagant, where they could exchange salt for grain with local sūdān (Interview Bâke Mint El Mokhtar, ḥarṭāniyya 2.11.1995).

39 D'Hont (1986: 157) notes that it was this monetisation of the commercial transactions that weakened the old trade elite's former privilege to create and maintain relations of dependency by providing credit.

40 The monetisation of the grain trade in the Senegal valley was effectively accomplished quite early this century. Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh and Pierre Bonte (1982: 43) locate the golden age of this trade in the years from 1931-48.

41 Speculating on the direct barter of grain for animals or other commodities was less reliable than accepting perhaps less favourable terms of trade, but gaining quick service in the trade towns. Isselmou Ould Sidi told me he had often failed to barter millet locally with sūdān because he arrived too late, when the latter had already sold off their surplus grain, e.g. to people from the Adrar, paying in cash. Still needing millet, Isselmou Ould Sidi then finished up travelling to Kaédi, where grain was always in supply. All this ended with the drought in 1969 (Interview Isselmou Ould Sidi, zwāya, 8.4.1995; Bake Mint Mokhtar, ḥarṭāniyya 2.11.1995). Information on the modes of exchanges was more detailed from women than men and it was the former who highlighted that animals were converted into money (Interview Benne Mint Ahmed, ḥassān, 29.10.1995; Loughaye Mint Driss, zwāya, 18.9.1995).

42 These middlemen were at the heart of the spread of the large bīẓān trade diaspora, covering first of all West Africa, but later the rest of the continent too. E.g. some migrants from the region of Achram-Diouk are involved in the diamond business in central Africa.

43 Prices for small stock differed according to the species. Most prized were white sheep, which fetched a considerably higher price than the black sheep kept by the bīẓān to furnish wool for tent-making (Interview Isselmou Ould Sidi, zwāya, 8.4.1995).

44 Sugar, though necessary to the preparation of the typical green tea, was not among the goods Weddou Ould Jiddou imported. The profits to be drawn

from this bulky and heavy commodity, which was available at good prices in Kaédi too, were much too low.

45 Weddou Ould Jiddou, however, insisted that he had been a pastoralist above all. He undertook the journey only twice a year, while others, who according to his statement assembled the animals only on the basis of credit, kept coming and going throughout the year.

46 Kiffa, though passing through several periods of crisis, quickly developed into the most important trade town of east-central Mauritania. Already in 1917 a local market was declared open by the colonial administration, and in 1924 a branch of the French west-African trading company "Maison Maurel et Prom" was established. Droughts in 1926-27, and later economic depression led to an occasional breakdown of local trade business, and the reorientation of trade to the river Senegal. The sustained growth of Kiffa as a centre both for regional and export trade began in 1944, when the drought and recession of the early 1940s had ended (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 662f.).

47 Prostitution in the towns is documented in many colonial reports (cf. for the Adrar McDougall 1988 and for Kiffa ANM B1, anonymous, "La question des haratines et serviteurs dans l'Assaba" 1931; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

48 Some aspects of these liaisons were discussed on H-Net List for African History [H-Africa@H-Net.msu.edu], see e.g. Klein, Martin [mklein@chass.utoronto.ca] "Interracial Marriage & relationships: reply", in: [H-Africa@H-Net.msu.edu], 21 January 1998.

49 It was the presence of colonial administration that tempered depopulation of many of the old Mauritanian trading towns, which lost their former function as centres of trade and scholarship. E.g. Tîchît, which witnessed a net emigration not only of the sūdān; documented already in 1926 as leaving in large numbers for Oualâta, but of bīẓān too (cf. D'Hont 1986; ANM E1-20, Colonie de la Mauritanie, Cercle du Tagant, Subdivision de Tidjikdja, "Lettre du Capitaine Commandant du Cercle du Tagant à M. le Lieutnant-Gouverneur de la Mauritanie à Saint-Louis" 14.8.1926; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

50 ANM E2-114, Cap. Gilles, Colonie de la Mauritanie, Cercle de Kiffa, "L'Aftout de Kiffa" 1936, p 3ff.; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte.

51 ANM série Tidjikja, dossier 33/1 "Compte rendu du conseil des notables, séance du 15 et 16 juillet 1921", cited in Ould Khalifa (1991: 777f.). It has to be noted that the French commandant at the time felt concerned about the sūdān leaving for the south less because he wanted to support the bīẓān claims, but because this endangered his ambitious projects of agricultural development of the Tagant (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 778).

52 AT, Vézy, Résident Moudjéria, "rapport Tribu Tarkoz" 30.9.1940; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte.

53 AM, Cercle du Tagant, "Procès verbal de la réunion du conseil des notables du Tagant" 29.6.1953.

54 The role of patronage in the acquisition of work is difficult to ascertain on the basis of individual narratives, which cannot be cross-checked. There are

good arguments for attributing credibility to the many sūdān claims to have looked for and found work without external (i.e. bīẓān) assistance and patronage. Some of the most menial jobs can be accessed directly. Also there are now some sūdān networks. This question, however deserves further exploration.

55 The valley is the locus of recession cultivation (waalo). Sowing and maturation here takes place later than with rainfed cultivation (dieri). The delay between the two harvests allows farmers from areas of rainfed cultivation to migrate to the locations of recession cultivation and work during harvest (cf. Grayzel 1988: 312; Leservoisier 1994a: 284).

56 Exploration began definitely in 1959, and mining in 1963. Only five percent of the MIFERMA, as the SNIM mining company was called prior to its nationalisation in 1974 and re-privatisation in 1978, was initially held by the Mauritanian state. All the remaining capital was held by French, British, Italian, and German investors (cf. Reichhold 1964: 71).

57 Above all watering was paid in cash, but wages seem to have varied strongly. Laghlave Ould Mahmoud (Interview, ḥarṭāni, 13.4.1995) claims to have earned 3,000 UM per month while watering cattle from different bīẓān in 1968, the year prior to the drought. This seems particularly much, for a medium cow then cost about 5,000 UM and a goat between 150 and 200 UM.

58 Many bīẓān owning only smaller herds put these together and thus had to pay only one herder instead of paying one for every herd or sustain a slave herder. While this trend created a certain amount of occasional job opportunities for sūdān seeking a greater autonomy, it also released the former masters and patrons from their obligation to assist their dependents in times of need (Interview Laghlave Ould Mahmoud, ḥarṭāni, 13.4.1995).

59 Among well-off bīẓān excessive mobility, i.e. submission to the needs of the livestock, was perceived as an expression of rudeness and lack of standing that had to be relayed to the sūdān or znāga (Interview Loughaye Mint Driss, zwāya, 18.9.1995).

60 There are numerous examples of herders who have a great knowledge of distant pastures and migrations. Such people, however, rarely appear in my sample, which is dominated by sedentarised sūdān and bīẓān now typical for the region. Most of the pastoral activity once located in the area has now moved south, namely to the region of Sélibabi and even further south beyond the Mauritanian border (cf. Interview Mohammed Ould Abass, znāga, 5.12.1995; Sidi Ould Gere, zwāya 19.4.1995).

61 The pastures of the north are supposed to be of higher nutritive content than those of the south. The latter are suspected by many to be "like water", and thus unable to give weakened animals their strength back. The case of the pastures of the east, i.e. the Hodh, is different. Here pastoralists from the Aftout and Tagant are reluctant to go. They state that their animals are accustomed to pastures of stony soils and therefore do not thrive in pastures of sandy soils (and vice versa). These conceptions of different pastures can be found not only in the Tagant and Aftout region, but throughout Mauritania (Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, personal communication).

62 According to Ahmed Ould Breik (ḥarṭāni, 11.4.1995), "One member of the family has to keep here [in the village, close to the land], not all [members of the family] can leave. All other brothers have left, therefore I have to take care of everything here. They [the brothers] have things here that one cannot leave just like that. One needs a brother who stays with these things."
63 On the practices of veil-dyeing, which is both an art and a big business, refer to Tauzin (1986). While bīẓān women are most frequently engaged in large scale manufacturing and especially trading of veils, sūdān women first of all dye small numbers of veils on an occasional basis, thus achieving far smaller profits. On Mauritanian women traders refer also to Simard (1996).
64 ANM B1, Colonie de la Mauritanie, Direction des Affaires Administratives, rapport "La question des haratines et serviteurs dans l'Assaba" 1931; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte.
65 Every year, shortly before the rainy season, the government initiates campaigns for the return to the rural area, and provides subsidised transport on lorries for the inhabitants of Nouakchott. Deprived populations who migrated from their rural home to the city thus are to be given a chance to restart cultivation and life in the rural area. These transports enable many who otherwise would be unable to get back home to start the trip. The sustainability of the measure, however, has to be questioned.
66 One ḥarṭāni told me how he recovered from coughing blood by permanently leaving Nouakchott and returning back home to his field, where he now lives almost exclusively on millet (Interview Ally Ould Mohammed Ghalle, ḥarṭāni, 12.12.1995).
67 One well established ḥarāṭīn employee of the Achram-Diouk rural development scheme helped his mother, who had lived in Nouakchott for more than a decade, to move to Achram. There he offered her a cow with the single purpose of improving her health and well-being with large quantities of fresh milk.
68 The central thesis in the most prominent bīẓān scholarly work on medicine can be summed up in the following words: "L'estomac est la demeure du mal". Consequently the main treatment for acute diseases was the laxative (Ould Ahmedou, E.G. 1990: 98).
69 Similar results are reported from other studies comparing sedentary and nomadic populations. The closer children lived to a modern, sedentary and urban environment, the worse was their nutritional state (cf. Oba 1990: 43).

Chapter 7

1 This overall discrepancy between local production and consumption of grain does not imply that no grain was exchanged locally. Until the big drought in 1969 pastoralists from the Adrar used to come to the Tagant to buy local grain, thus economising on the long journey to the Senegal valley. Caravans buying grain abundant on the Tagant are also reported by Bou el Moghdad from the second half of the 19th century, but doubts have to expressed about

his assumption that these were directed towards the black Africans of the šemāma (cf. commented and edited report of Bou El Moghdad from 1894 in: Ould Mohameden 1995: 94f.; see also the report of Bou El Moghdad issued in 1861).

2 Land that is to be "vivified" has previously to be identified as "dead land", i.e. it has to be proved that there has been no occupation or appropriation of any kind (Ould al-Barra/Ould Cheikh 1996: 164). As a consequence legal regulations abound concerning the status of abandoned land (either by force or intention), land conquered by force, different modes of transmitting land involving different regulations concerning further alienability, etc., which allow for overlapping and conflicting claims to land ownership.

3 The nawāzil are a distinct kind of literature concerning juridical cases. In the western Sahara, the term often was used synonymously to fatwā (cf. Oßwald 1993: 23f.).

4 Wells can be constructed and owned collectively or individually. One can only claim ownership if they are located on one's own tribal land; in the case of wells built on foreign land, these will become the property of the collectivity holding ownership rights over this territory. Access to wells has to be granted to foreigners, as far as drinking is an essential need.

5 The definition of tribal territories depended also on pastoral specialisation. Bīẓān specialised in camel rearing, implying long and frequent migrations, had less well-defined tribal territories than bīẓān specialised in cattle, which depended on watering every, or every second day, and which followed patterns of transhumance rarely spanning more than one hundred kilometres (cf. Bonte 1987b: 196).

6 The desire to trace actual ownership back to the introduction of Islam highlights the zwāya preoccupation that their possession does not arise from illegitimate sources. This is documented by a special genre of legal documents, focusing on the supposedly illegitimate nature of most ḥassān (but also other groups') belongings. Many zwāya claimed to be (in a kind of a primordial definition) the only Muslims in the western Sahara and to be poor (thus entitling them to receive the zakāt, the Islamic tithe for the poor). Therefore they saw themselves legitimised in taking over possession of goods of illegitimate origin, i.e. goods whose legitimate possessor was no longer to be ascertained. This definition included the belongings of the ḥassān, who often were portrayed as evil beings, living only from theft and robbery (cf. Oßwald 1993: 190ff.; Brückner n.d.).

7 Among the Kunta of the Tamourt-en-Naaj, a few strangers were able to acquire land and palm trees. This, however, is inconceivable among the Idawʿalī of Tidjikja, among whom strangers may own palm trees, but would never be allowed to own the land on which they grow (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 402).

8 The central role distinct places can play in the constitution and maintenance of tribal or ethnic identity and cohesion among pastoral nomadic people, and the strong link between these processes and either practical and symbolical territorial hegemony has been highlighted by Günther Schlee (1990) with regard to the "holy grounds" of the Gabbra of northern Kenya.

9 Apparently the legal framework for the local land registers was introduced by laws in 1902 and 1932 (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1991: 193).

10 This indeed brought about some problems, for there hardly ever was such a neatly defined hierarchy in tribal terms. However, as Colette Establet (1987) has shown for the case of the Algerian south, the indigenous population learned to express themselves in a way matching up with the colonisers' idea of a tribal hierarchy well organised into tribes, fractions and sub-fractions.

11 The mobility of tribal habitat was limited by the French practice of registering tribes in one administrative post, and of appointing them distinct areas of nomadisation, which in general were limited by the boundaries of the different administrative regions, called "cercles". This was rarely respected by the nomads, as administrative reports full of complaints on the issue show. The attempt to control bīẓān caravan transport and trade failed as well (cf. AM series of monthly reports by various local residents from 1937-1943).

12 These measures of course could not prevent a number of arbitrary decisions, and the registers reveal certain tribes to have profited much more from land entitlements than others. This reflects not only the arbitrary nature of colonial policy and its ability to make and unmake bīẓān tribes, but also the complex interaction between colonial and indigenous power. The good relations some bīẓān tribes and chiefs had with colonial officials enabled them to fuel the latter with well selected information and hence influence the administrators' decision making.

13 In the case of the lake R'Kiz the French undertook several inquiries into the history of land ownership, in order to deal competently with the many demands for attribution of land and facilitate arbitration with regard to disputes between tribes and fractions. The outcome of the case is revealing of the reluctance of the French to enmesh themselves too deeply in bīẓān affairs. In 1916, and again in 1920, the distribution of the precious land surrounding the lake is carried out by a local qāḍi – acting under the authority of two capitaines. Until today, this distribution, apart from some minor rectification, prevails. No authority, either of colonial or independent Mauritania has ever since dared to endanger this compromise (cf. Ould al-Barra/Ould Cheikh 1996: 171f.).

14 In fact there are many means by which women can – legally – be excluded from their rights of inheritance. Declaring property ḥubs (synonym: waqf), i.e. a pious endowment which can be bound to different conditions, is one of the most prominent of such means. A detailed study of such practices (in use in Mauritania too), for Tunisia is presented by Sophie Ferchiou (1987), and Geneviève Bedoucha (1987).

15 These arrangements were defined as loans for use, and called ʿāriyya, according to the māliki jurist Ibn Abî Zayd Al-Qayrawânî (1983: 237). In general the beneficiary of the loan had to guarantee it would be returned intact.

16 The permanent installation of ḥarāṭīn in the Aftout, e.g. around Mbout, antedates the colonial period. The more permanent, and later sedentary

presence of the bīẓān began with the colonial presence in the region (cf. RIM 1986: 57).

17 There are strong regional variations in the access of ḥarāṭīn to ownership of land. Thomas K. Park (1988: 62, 64) witnessed the local qāḍi of Mbout stating that the ḥarāṭīn in this region all were legal owners of land, because they had initially cleared and cultivated it. This raised protest among the Mauritanian students in his research team. Coming all from the west of the country, they until then had never heard of ḥarāṭīn legally owning land. Still another picture is drawn by Olivier Leservoisier (1994a: 290f.). He saw the ownership rights of ḥarāṭīn were recognised only in so far as they could not be expropriated by bīẓān. The observation made in this context that land cannot be sold by ḥarāṭīn to people outside the tribe applies, however, to bīẓān too.

18 The limitation of the duration of a ḥubs causes many quarrels. Beneficiaries of a ḥubs are likely to raise claims that the ḥubs they profit from was made forever, or at least for the duration of their lifetime (Interview Ahmed Ould Aly, qāḍi, 24.12.1995).

19 Viewed rigorously, these contracts involved not only the ḥarṭāni who concluded the agreement, but in the case of his death his successors too. These inherited the obligations, and consequently also the rights of their father (Interview Ahmed Ould Aly, qāḍi, 24.12.1995).

20 It is this difference drawn between ownership of trees and land that allowed the alienation of palm trees to foreigners, i.e. members of tribes who did not share the local collective rights of land ownership. Local bīẓān thus could contract ḥarāṭīn from other tribes, and not only ḥarāṭīn of their own tribe, as these were not allowed to become owners of land, but only owners of trees (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 404). In the Tamourt en-Naaj on the Tagant plateau, however, individual members of tribes alien to the area were allowed to buy individual plots.

21 Ahmed Ould Aly, the most respected traditional qāḍi of the region of Achram-Diouk (Interview 24.12.1995), insisted while describing the stipulation of the muġarassa-contract on the importance of concluding any such contract in written form, and not relying on witnesses. This is clearly because quarrels over muġarassa are among the most frequent. A ḥarṭāni originating from the Tamourt en-Naaj confirmed that he knew ḥarāṭīn who gained ownership of palm trees through muġarassa-contracts, but expressed serious doubts whether they had profited from the full number of palm trees (Interview ḥarṭāni, 22.3.1995). Still 72 percent of the palm tree groves in the Tamourt en-Naaj, and 54 percent in Tidjikja, continue to be exploited indirectly, i.e. by means like the muġarassa, with this rate being lower in other regions of date palm cultivation (cf. Ould Abde 1989: 39).

22 Grosser and Ibra Bra (1979: 178ff.) report that at El Mechra in the Tamourt en-Naaj, one of three date palm groves is entirely owned by ḥarāṭīn. This in turn may be a result of the znāga status attributed to the Kunta fraction living in El Mechra, which had a long history of conflict with the dominating Kunta groups of the region to ascertain its own territorial claims. Allowing ḥarāṭīn to appropriate contested "tribal" land in this respect could be viewed

as a bīẓān (or znāga) strategy first of all motivated by the wish to strengthen their own group's solidarity and territorial boundaries.

23 Jean Schmitz (1987: 12) in his study on the Gorgol Noir, does not mention this conflict over land between bīẓān and ḥarāṭīn of the Mbout region. According to him the significant proof of ḥarāṭīn independence in matters of land ownership is that they do not pay an agricultural rent. Paying the zakāt bears no analogy to the rent, it only symbolises the recognition of spiritual leadership and protection by local bīẓān (cf. Park 1985: 68f.).

24 This was ordinance nº 1983.127 of 5 June 1983, and decree nº 1984.009 of 19 January 1984. For a presentation in full detail refer to Park (1985: 69ff.). The 1990 decree was issued 31 January with the reference nº 90.020 and replaced the one of 1984 (cf. Crousse/Hessling 1994: 91).

25 Trying to erase all references to tribalism, the text of the law employs rather subtle prose: "les immatriculations foncières prises au nom des chefs ou notables sont réputées avoir été consenties à la collectivité traditionnelle de rattachement", i.e. the tribe (cited according to Ould al-Barra/Ould Cheikh 1996: 177f.).

26 This was how Colonel Ould Haidalla was reported to have circumscribed the official abolition of slavery (decreed in July 1980, legislation passed in November 1981) in a national radio broadcast condemning slavery firmly on 5 July 1983 (Mauritanie Nouvelles, nº 235, 23.1.1997: 8). On sūdān reactions refer to the narratives of Brahim and his mother Zeyneb, p. 63-66.

27 A narrative of the formation of this coalition between many tribes and fractions which over most of their history had been involved in inter-tribal conflicts is presented by Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (1995: 593-595). Although resistance from the bīẓān to the French invaders was strong, this statement by a leading member of the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd fails to acknowledge the ongoing quarrels within the coalition, as well as the abstention of numerous tribes and fractions (cf. Frèrejean 1995: 193ff.)

28 Xavier Coppolani is an illustrious personality in Mauritanian history. Born as the son of poor peasants in Corsica, he chose to emigrate to Algeria, where he made a career as an administrator. Considering colonial policy unsuited to meeting the problems French rule raised in a Muslim country, he undertook studies of Islam to develop a both more sensitive and efficient policy. After promotion to the colonies of the "Soudan français", in 1898 he achieved the submission of several Tuareg and bīẓān tribes purely by negotiation. Thus encouraged he designed the plan for the constitution of a Mauritanian colony, which was initially met with adamant opposition by the Governor of Senegal representing the Saint-Louis establishment (cf. Désiré-Vuillemin 1997: 471-473).

29 The French troops were composed of about 30 Frenchmen and 800 men on foot, horse and camel (composed of tirailleurs from Senegal and bīẓān allies). Soon the food supply became a severe problem, and was tackled by the extensive slaughter of conquered bīẓān livestock (cf. Désiré-Vuillemin 1997: 481).

30 The death of Bakkar Ould Soueid Ahmed in the battle of Bou Gadoum is contested, not in the literature on the period, but by oral tradition from the

later ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Soueid Ahmed. Bakkar is said to have died not in 1905, but a few years earlier in 1901 and some days after his leg had been wounded in battle with French troops. In his last days Bakkar was described as being so old he had to wear a sort of a blindfold to keep his eyelids open. It is believed that had the old ʿamīr not already been weakened by his age, and died before the invasion of Tidjikja, his potential for resistance would have pushed the French back from the Tagant (Interview Khattar, zwāya, 12.10.1995). While the circumstances of this battle are reminiscent of those of the battle at Bou Gadoum, and thus raise doubts justifying a rectification of the year of Bakkar's death, his almost biblical age is certain: born in around 1816, he replaced his brother as ʿamīr of the IdawʿĪš Abakak in 1836. Reigning for about 70 years (as later did his son Abderrahmane!), and reaching an age of about 90 years is indeed extraordinary (cf. Frèrejean 1995: 263, note 326 edited by Désiré-Vuillemin).

31 The occupation of Tidjikja was on the 4 May 1905, and followed by the submission of several tribes, such as a fraction of the IdawʿĪš Abakak led by Houssein Ould Bakkar, a son of Bakkar Ould Soueid Ahmed. The IdawʿAlī, resident in Tidjikja, had already made their submission to the French, i.e. to Coppolani, on the 6 March 1905 in Kasr el Barka (they had already signalled their acquiescence to Coppolani's project in 1903). At this time large parts of the Kunta and the Taǧakānet had already sent emissaries to the French to negotiate peace (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 538ff.).

32 The small population of the town, about 2,000 people, had to provide 100 workers each day. About 700 animals per month were needed by the French for slaughter. This number was more than a heavy load for the sedentary people of the town who were not rich in animals, due to the scarce pastoral resources (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 542ff.).

33 This major exploit of bīẓān resistance to the French invaders is most vividly remembered up to the present day. While French historiography close to the sentiments of the colonial period continues to underline the treacherous and dirty nature of the ambush, and portrays Coppolani as a Frenchman who wanted nothing but to benefit the bīẓān (for such exploits see Désiré-Vuillemin 1962 and 1997), the latter today express their sentiments by calling their dogs "Coppolani".

34 The town of Smara was founded by Ma al-Aïnin, with the aim of developing a significant urban centre within the northern fringe of the Western Sahara (cf. Vergniot 1984: 138f.). What had remained of Smara after the death of Ma al-Aïnin (his house was reported to have comprised a vast library, and Ma al-Aïnin to have written more than 300 œuvres) was burnt to the ground on the 10 January 1913 by French troops led by Colonel Mouret. For further information on Smara refer to Aguirré (1988: 202) and Gaudio (1978: 81). A comprehensive study of the history of the former Spanish Western Sahara is provided by Barbier (1982).

35 The control of Bakel by Bakkar Ould Soueid Ahmed, and the payment of "coutumes" by the French was confirmed in his treaty with the governor of Senegal Faidherbe in 1858 (cf. Amilhat 1937: 96).

36 The division of the IdawʿĪš into different major branches (the Abakak, the

Šrātīt, and the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd), each constituting large tribal confederations, took place around 1830. Conflict arose when the succession to the emirate was contested by different factions (cf. Ould Cheikh 1991a: 108f.).

37 This description fits well with accounts of the battle at Goumal, a pass in the Assaba mountains which took place 9 March 1904 and hit the Idawʿīš Abakak hard (cf. Désiré-Vuillemin 1962: 118).

38 The participation of the Idawʿīš Abakak in the resistance against the French invaders seems to have temporarily ceased after the battle of Bou Gadoum which lead to a terrible defeat for the emiral tribe, the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed. While the Idawʿīš Abakak united some of the most powerful warrior fractions under the leadership of their ʿamīr, not all of the confederation's tribes supported the military resistance. E.g. Ethman Ould Bakkar and Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Bakkar, both leading the strongest ḥassān fractions within the emiral tribe of the Idawʿīš Abakak, the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, participated in resistance only two days after the battle of Niemelane, where the French experienced one of their heaviest defeats. Ethman kept up his resistance until 1910, and was part of the Ahel Kedia, the people of the hills, as the opponents to French rule operating from the north were called (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 605, 620).

39 Originally, Houssein Ould Bakkar had been considered ʿamīr by the French after the death of Bakkar Ould Soueid Ahmed, as according to their information he received all the tributes his father had. The French deprived him of this title when he – after first having negotiated peace with the French – joined the bīẓān coalition of resistance. This, however, remained without consequences. Houssein continued to send letters of submission even during his stay in the Adrar, never fought the French, and was among the first to return from the Adrar. After the breakdown of bīẓān resistance he again became the prime intermediary of the French (cf. AT, "Projet de directives politiques" 13.4.1938: 2f.; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

40 Neither Ethman Ould Bakkar, who was at the heart of Idawʿīš military resistance to the French (and today is barely remembered), nor Houssein Ould Bakkar are remembered as having been ʿamīr of the Idawʿīš Abakak, but only paramount chiefs (Interview Khattar 12.10.1995).

41 Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar, who led a "goum", a group of voluntary bīẓān camel riders, during the conquest of the Adrar, was awarded honours for his exploits in this undertaking (cf. AT, Résident Moudjéria, "Notice sur la subdivision, Satisfaction à circulaire nº 28/AP, du 20-2-32" 9.5.1932: 2).

42 Not only the bīẓān portray Abderrahmane as a most extraordinary personality (and the sūdān as one who shares his roots with them!). Gabriel Féral, who met Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar in 1942 as a young colonial administrator full of sympathy for great ḥassān personalities, described their encounter as follows:

"L'homme n'avait rien qui puisse retenir l'attention. Plutôt misérablement vêtu, noir de peau, les traits négroïdes, il se dégageait cependant de lui, je n'ose dire une aura, mais indubitablement quelque chose qui le plaçait hors du commun. Son geste pour ramener le pan de sa draâ sur son épaule trahissait l'aisance d'un homme bien dans sa peau. Le mousqueton que son

suivant venait de poser sur son illiouich soulignait, s'il en était besoin, que cet homme n'était pas n'importe qui." (Féral 1983: 64f.)

43 The instauration of the Tagant emirate by the colonial authorities took place at Saint-Louis on the 31 August 1918. The treaty guaranteeing also the tribal status quo comprised 11 articles, and gives a complete outline of the French conception of colonial rule in Mauritania. Under the condition of acting in agreement with the commandant of Tagant, Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar got the right to police his territory. Limitations arose from exceptions vis-à-vis some tribes, namely the Kunta and Ġūdv and by exempting questions of land rights from the authority of the ʿamīr (cf. ANM E2-16, "Convention avec l'Emir du Tagant" 31.7.1918).

44 The French had been well aware of this opposition, and built up Abderrahmane step by step. While the greatest opposition was observed among his brothers "more suitable to inherit [the office] by the nature of their birth", the zwāya should have been consoled that a new ʿamīr would not change their situation, and that they would continue to depend directly on the colonial administration. Rebuilding the emirate was also supposed to compensate for a lack the bīẓān were feeling and to help solve conflicts on this lower level (ANM E2-16, "Lettre lieutnant colonel Gaden, commissaire du gouvernement général en territoire civil de la Mauritanie à M. le commandant du cercle du Tagant" 30.5.1917; author's translation).

45 The demise of Houssein Ould Bakkar as general chief of the IdawʿĪš Abakak and his replacement by Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar in 1912 is mentioned in a document from 1913 by Lt. Moulet, Commandant du cercle du Tagant "Réponse au Rapport politique du 3º trimestre" (ANM E1-50). Already at this time, the opposition between Abderrahmane and the then young leader of the Awlād Talḥa, who maintained strong relations with Houssein Ould Bakkar, were evident.

46 There had been sites associated closely with the emirate and emiral power, but these did not correspond to a notion of property. In Tidjikja, the ʿamīr of Tagant owned a considerable number of palm trees, but not the land on which they grew (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 402, 582). In a later treaty concluded parallel to the installation of Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar as ʿamīr, Houssein Ould Bakkar resigns from all his aspirations to the office of ʿamīr, getting in turn the ownership right to Kehmeit on the Tagant, and an annual payment of 600 Francs (ANM E2-16, "Convention avec Houssein Ould Bakkar" 31.7.1918).

47 Recognition of superiority and leadership among the ḥassān was based less on descent than on the pursuit of a code of ḥassān values, among which strength, and courage, but also generosity, were most prominent (cf. Ould Cheikh 1985a: 368, 933ff.).

48 This was the case of the chief of the Ideybni. He had come to demand transfer to the region of Mbout from the commandant de cercle in 1917 because he had been exploited and beaten by Abderrahmane. The administration decided the chief had wanted to deceive them by false accusations and decided to firstly depose the chief, and secondly to condemn his collectivity to pay a fine of 1,000 Francs, thirdly to deprive them of all modern, French

guns, fourthly to evacuate from the region all the five leading opponents of Abderrahmane, among them those members of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed who were actually in jail. (ANM E2-16, "Lettre nº 154, résident de Moujéria au Commandant de Cercle Tidjikdja" 27.10.1917). The wish of the Ideybni to leave the region, however, was accepted in 1924 (cf. note 51, this chapter).

49 In general these "independent" tribal fractions, i.e. those not registered as being under the authority of the ʿamīr, and therefore able to deal autonomously with the administration, became reintegrated into the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, once their dissident leader died. The fission of the Ahel Muḥammad Swayd Aḥmed, regrouping the major opponents to Abderrahmane, however, was definitive. Today their area of residence is the vicinity of Guellaga on the north-eastern Tagant.

50 ANM E2-16, "Lettre nº 24, le résident de Moudjéria au Commandant de cercle du Tagant" 12 March 1918.

51 Other such cases are the Ideybni, who definitely left the region in 1923 for Mbout, and the Ahel Swayd, who left in 1940. Not in all cases had political dissent been decisive for this evolution, for many pastoralists sought to move further south. However, the emirate thus suffered a considerable drain of its population, as of originally seven tribes, constitutive of the IdawʿĪš Abakak confederation and residing on the Tagant and in the northern Aftout, three had left by 1940.

52 AT, anonymous, "Historique Abakaks" ca. 1939; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte; ANM E1-50, Capitaine Allut, Commandant du Cercle du Tagant, "Rapport politique, 4ème trimestre 1914".

53 In 1913 the ʿamīr of Adrar started again to collect tributes from some of his Tagant dependents. This was regarded as completely legal by the French. In Trarza, some tributes on behalf of the emirate had then already been bought back, though by far not all (ANM E1-50, Capitaine Allut, Commandant du Cercle du Tagant, "Rapport politique, 4ème trimestre 1914"). Only in 1944 did the administration start a general policy aimed at ending the rights to tributes of the ḥassān tribes. This was first achieved in the Trarza, and only in 1952 in the Adrar (cf. Bonte 1989: 122; Ould Cheikh 1990: 91).

54 ANM E1-50, "Rapport trimestriel sur la politique générale de la Résidence, 2ème trimestre 1914", cercle du Tagant, résidence de Moudjéria.

55 ANM E2-16, anonymous, Direction des affaires politiques et administratives, "Confidentiel A.S. Emir du Tagant" 10.6.1933. Problems arose especially with the many tributes the ʿamīr of Tagant received from tribes residing far beyond the Tagant. The agreements queried by Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar were tributes bought up and negotiated in 1919 by his brothers Sidi Mohamed and Ely Ould Bakkar (his fiercest opponent; ANM E2-16, anonymous, Direction des affaires politiques et administratives, "Confidentiel A.S. Emir du Tagant" 10.6.1933). The conflict was handled by the central colonial authority in Saint-Louis, and settled by raising the pay of the ʿamīr considerably while stressing all treaties concluded so far were not to be revised (ANM E2-16, "Le lieutnant-gouverneur p.i. de la Mauritanie à M. le commandant de cercle du Tagant à Tidjjikja" 5.7.1933).

56 This description is reminiscent of the ḥurma, insofar as it means an individ-

ual tax due to the ʿamīr, but a difference is marked by the supposedly voluntary nature of this "gift", intended to circulate only within the tribe or confederation, and not implying protection. Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1985a: 377) describes the gabeẓ as a tax paid by ḥassān, znāga or ḥarāṭīn to great scholars. Thus calling tributes paid more recently by various tribes, ḥarāṭīn and slaves to the ʿamīr "gabeẓ", may hint at practices replacing oppressive forms of tributes with more lenient ones (Interview ḥassān 4.11.1995; Interview Ghalim Ould Elkheir, ʿabd, 17.12.1995). There has, however, always been a multitude of tributes in the western Sahara, commonly subsumed under the generic term of mudārāt, and ġarāma (cf. Oßwald 1993: 320ff., 327 note 65). Obligatory tributes (maġram) were opposed by my interviewees to gabeẓ, supposed to be voluntary.

57 Tributes are a delicate subject, not to be developed here in detail. The Ahel Swayd e.g. paid tribute to the ʿamīr, but no longer continually when Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar became old. The latter in turn could – and sometimes did – send somebody to the tribe, which had migrated out of the Tagant in the 1940s, to collect tribute. The ḥarāṭīn of the Aftout stressed their payments to have been of voluntary nature, and the amount defined individually. It goes without saying that support from the ʿamīr was crucial in questions of access to land, and his help with commodities like tea and sugar depended on giving the ʿamīr whatever he wanted.

58 Further research is needed to fully explore the French politics on the Tagant with regard to ḥassān rights to tributes. From 1910 on, governor Patey had developed a new policy more in favour of the ḥassān. He wished to maintain at least partly their dominant political role and thus stabilise the social order. Part of this engagement was the maintenance of tributes, and the instauration of the formerly dissolved emirates (cf. reproduction of Patey's directives in Ould Khalifa 1991: 663f.). Those documents I could consult, however, prove that in the Tagant region ḥurma and ġaver tributes were abolished between 1912-14. Some tributes nevertheless persisted. E.g. mudārāt, meaning an additional gift in agricultural products and livestock the IdawʿAlī of the Tagant paid to the IdawʿĪš (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 694), but also being a generic term for tribute, continued to be paid on the Tagant (cf. AT, commandant de cercle, "Confidentiel, droits coutumiers et tableau annexe" 27.2.1950, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

59 The major tributes of the IdawʿAlī later were formally bought up for an amount of 938 pieces of guinée (AT, anonymous "Projet de directives politiques à l'occasion d'un passage du commandement" 13.4.1938, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte). Their ḥurma was received by one of the most illustrious, and perhaps decisive personalities of Tagant history: Abdi Ould Embarek (cf. p. 168f.).

60 These tributaries were under the suzerainty of the IdawʿĪš Šrātīt. The IdawʿAlī, after long negotiations, were ready to pay once 24, and once more 4 pieces of guinée to compensate the former overlords (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 668).

61 AT, anonymous "Projet de directives politiques à l'occasion d'un passage du commandement" 13.4.1938, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte.

62 Interviewees with a Tarkoz affiliation did not "remember" these tributes, and neither did some of non-Tarkoz affiliation. However, there still are a number of people who remember the past set-up of tribal hierarchies and tributes, which while remaining unspoken, continue to shape the politics of the present. On tributes paid by zwāya and znāga on the Tagant see also the document ANM E1-50, "Rapport du capitaine commandant du cercle du Tagant au sujet de l'application de décret du 12 décembre 1905 relatif à la suppression de la traite" 2.11.1906.

63 ANM E1-50, "rapport politique 1er trimestre 1915", cercle du Tagant April 1915.

64 Data is derived from two maps established for the rural development of the Tagant: RIM, développement rural de la région du Tagant, SO.NA.DE.R/ GTZ, sheet "carte de la végétation" and "carte géologique", established for the GTZ by Arbeitsgemeinschaft IFP, Institut für Planungsdaten, Frankfurt, in cooperation with Zentralstelle für Geophotogrammetrie und Fernerkundung (ZGF), München, West Germany 1979.

65 It has to be remembered that the authority of the ʿamīr of Tagant had been limited by the French to the boundaries of the sub-district of Moudjéria, covering only the southern part of the Tagant region. Extending this region meant extending the territory on which Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar could exert direct political influence.

66 The focus of my research on the land register was on the area of Achram-Diouk. Unfortunately this area cuts across the borders of three administrative regions, each holding its own land register. Of these I was only able to consult the one in Moudjéria which has been revised essentially in 1950 by colonial administrator Fargette. Here I wish to thank the préfet of Moudjéria, who gave me free access to both the archives and the land register and Mr. Fargette for having done a thorough work.

67 In this respect the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, and thus Idawʿīš Abakak leaders developed a different strategy to the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd of the Assaba region. While the registration of ownership rights in the latter district already began in 1914, the number of registered lands became significant only as late as 1934 and got a boost in 1949 at the conference of Galoula promoting the procedure. The outcome, however, resembles the case of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed: the family of the chief of the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd is noted as owner (representing the collectivity of the tribe's members) in about 76 percent of registered lands in their main area of residence (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 870ff.).

68 This is the case with the dam "Teidouma" (meaning Baobab in ḥassāniyya, bot. *Adansonia digitata*). Abderrahmane had built this dam together with the Legwāniṭ and the Lʿaweysyāt. Later the ownership of this dam (always comprising the land vivified, i.e. flooded by this construction) was restructured, and the ʿamīr remained the only proprietor, having bought up the two others' parts. The case of the rights for cultivation around the source of Garaouel is similar. These, but not the property in land, were granted by Abderrahmane to his brother Mohamed Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar. Finally the group of dams registered under the name "Oulad Sneibe" falls

into this category too. While the name of the dam clearly refers to a lineage, the registered proprietor is Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar. The Ahel Sneibe, as they are actually referred to, are a family of ḥarāṭīn, who profited from patronage by the ʿamīr Abderrahmane, and were granted the rights to cultivate these lands, which according to the logic of French legislation, continued to be property of the whole tribe.

69 This influential family is considered to be šurva, close friends of the emiral family, and member of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed. The family also profited from further attributions of land by the ʿamīr of Tagant, Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar.

70 All of the parents and grandparents of Mahmoud Ould Lella (ḥarṭāni), who was about fifty years old at the time of the interview (28.3.1995), were of the Tarkoz Awlād Tīki, and had cultivated at Mounhal. He himself had married a slave woman of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, but lived with the šurva family now possessing the land he continues to cultivate.

71 The reflux of tributaries who were under the domination of the IdawʿĪš prior to the French conquest of Tagant is revealed by a document from 1906. According to this, among the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd the tributaries had all become ḥassān, and the Kunta on the Tagant had reappropriated "their" znāga (ANM E1-50, Commandant du Cercle du Tagant, "Rapport du capitaine commandant du cercle du Tagant au sujet de l'application de décret du 12 décembre 1905 relatif à la suppression de la traite" 2.11.1906). For the case of znāga of the Šrātīt who had sought protection by the IdawʿAlī see p. 215. Another more practical reason why many znāga sought new overlords is that the IdawʿĪš, during the time of their armed resistance to the French occupation, were no longer able to provide undisturbed access to pastureland to "their" znāga (cf. AT, Résident de Moudjéria, "Notice sur la subdivision, Satisfaction à circulaire nº 28/AP, du 20-2-32" 9.5.1932; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

72 The "coutumes" various ḥassān leaders received from the French for their protection of the gum trade soon became a crucial resource for the establishment and maintenance of those inter-tribal and inner-tribal relations that allowed the comparatively small emiral tribes to control large territories. In turn these revenues also became a major reason for conflict, as many wanted to get hold of them (cf. Taylor 1996; Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, personal communication).

73 Colonial sources mention repeatedly the great number of "haratines" among the ḥassān, especially the IdawʿĪš. According to these sources, these tribes consisted of only a small nucleus of noble, i.e. bīẓān descent, around which were grouped ḥarāṭīn, slaves, and znāga, and with the ḥarāṭīn often having a remarkable freedom of action (cf. e.g. AT, Résident de Moudjéria, "Notice sur la subdivision, Satisfaction à circulaire nº 28/AP, du 20-2-32" 9.5.1932; document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

74 Traditions of a past in the vicinity of the ʿamīr, or as part of a distinct group of warriors could not be traced among those sūdān declared to be the ḥarāṭīn Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, i.e. a group of free people without a slave past. Nevertheless the existence of such groups is not altogether unlikely. Several

independent and reliable sources mention independently acting warrior groups called ḥarāṭīn. In Tidjikja a group of "old" ḥarāṭīn associated with the old ʿamīr Bakkar Ould Soueid Ahmed was reported to have lived almost independently and while carrying guns and to have been almost like ḥassān (cf. ANM E1-50, "Rapport du capitaine commandant du cercle du Tagant au sujet de l'application de décret du 12 décembre 1905 relatif à la suppression de la traite" 2.11.1906). One other group of ḥarāṭīn, the "Soucabe", issued from the Kunta and became famous as raiders, but later was annihilated by bīẓān for being a threat to local society (cf. Ba 1932: 117f.).

75 The Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd developed a similar strategy during colonial rule. They readily enlisted every sūdān settling in Kiffa as a member of their tribe, thus offering the numerous slaves and ḥarāṭīn who came to this city a new tribal affiliation (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1998: 88).

76 This was revealed to me by a zwāya interviewee, whom I asked to explain the meaning of tribe (qabīla) to me. Somewhat unsatisfactorily, in view of my expectations at that moment, he explained: "Here are the Legwāṭiṭ, we are limited to the east by the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, to the west by the Lemtūna, to the south by the Taǧakānet, and to the north by the Tarkoz Leġwāreb." (Interview Mohamed Lemine Ould Belkhair, zwāya 27.3.1995).

77 Further research, however, would be required to elucidate the question whether cultivation necessarily implies a two-dimensional perception and appropriation of space, as Ingold (1986) proposes. Cultivation in the sahelo-saharian climate even until today is dominated by the use of "sites and paths within a landscape" (153). A two-dimensional perception of space is prevalent whenever the appropriation of sites and the legitimacy of land ownership are concerned.

78 Not all villages are tribally homogeneous. Especially large villages located at the tarred road attract many migrants of rather diverse origins. Here there is a strong tendency for the formation of quarters that reproduce tribal segregation, but also social segregation among bīẓān and sūdān of one tribe (cf. Ruf 1993).

79 I rarely witnessed something like pride in ḥassān status in the form of remembering and glorifying warfare and battle. This was different among the Lʿaweysyāt, where several interviewees, both women and men, described how they had defeated their enemies, and everybody, including the women and the ḥarāṭīn, had taken part the in battles (Interview Benne Mint Ahmed, ḥassān, 29.10.1995; Abdel Wedoud Ould Mamma, ḥassān, 31.10.1995)

80 The origin of the Lʿaweysyāt is described by a ḥarṭāni freed by his master, a member of the chief's family: "We are Abakak, we are Yaḥya Ben Eṭmān and come from the Adrar, and the Ahel Aḥmed ʿAyda. In the times we were in the Adrar, then we could no longer endure the situation there. We are the part of the Yaḥya Ben Eṭmān who could not bear to stay in the Adrar. We came here in the times of Bakkar [Ould Soueid Ahmed]. It was our first chief, Bnein, who made relations with the Abakak." This description fits by and large the glimpse of the Lʿaweysyāt history provided by Pierre Bonte (1991: 190): "Les Li'waysyât descendent, eux, des Awlâd 'Abdallah du Brâkna. Il partagèrent, au XIX^{e} siècle, les intérêts politique des Awlâd

Quaylân avec lesquels ils entretinrent des relations matrimoniales étroites. Certaines lignées sont affiliées à la tribu, mais la plupart durent quitter l'Adrar sous des pressions politiques."

81 One such event aimed to impress the ʿamīr probably was the serious battle causing several deaths taking place in 1950 at Diénour between the Lʿaweysyāt and the Awlād Talḥa (who had left to settle beyond the sphere of influence of the ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar). The fight still is remembered as one of the great and glorious battles of the Lʿaweysyāt. While the French judged the Lʿaweysyāt influence on the ʿamīr to be insignificant, Lʿaweysyāt traditions portray their old chief as the "first friend of Abderrahmane in Mauritania" (Interview Benne Mint Ahmed, ḥassān, 29.10.1995; Abdel Wedoud Ould Mamma, ḥassān, 31.10.1995; AT, anonymous "fiche de renseignement et notes concernant le nommé: Mohamed Ould Sidi Ahmed dit Ould Mama, Chef de la fraction des Aoueissiat Mama" Subdivision de Moudjéria 1951, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

82 The French colonial documents reveal at least for the 1940s a will to get back to a single chief of all Lʿaweysyāt, and thus to undo the decision taken in 1939 to tackle the internal opposition by installing two fractions and chiefs. This example was considered to have been a bad example fuelling other tribes' factionalism (AT, various political reports concerning the "Aouissiat", documents kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

83 According to interviewee Benne Mint Ahmed (ḥassān, 29.10.1995), the Lʿaweysyāt moved onto the Tagant only once, when a French administrator in the valley had forbidden the sale of grain to tribes from the north. This year of "Vounsi", as it was called according to the bīẓān version of the name of the administrator concerned, was probably around 1954-1956.

84 This deal is reported to have been concluded subsequent to the arrival of the Lʿaweysyāt in the area, and their incorporation into the Idawʿ Īš Abakak in the course of the 19th century. However, the attribution of this land might be more recent, as a written version of the treaty is said to exist. One copy of this remains with the Lʿaweysyāt and the other one is stored in Aleg (Interview Boueibou Ould Amar, ḥarṭāni, 1.11.1995).

85 AT, Alleman "rapport politique du 1er trimestre 1942", Subdivision de Moudjéria, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte. Some of the conflict arose from the question when and how the Tarkoz Ahel Sīdi Reyūg should let off water from their dam situated upriver, since this strongly influenced the submersion of the depression cultivated by the Lʿaweysyāt (ANM E2-109, Résidence de Moudjéria, "lieutnant René, Rapport de Tournée nº 112" 25.5.1935).

86 ANM E2-82, lieutnant Fonde, "culture en barrage, résidence de Moudjéria" 1936, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte.

87 In 1924/25 the sale of formerly confiscated date palm gardens for about one fourth of their market value witnessed lively interest among the bīẓān notability, which then was able to increase their grip on the most fertile lands (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 728).

88 Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (1991: 184) concludes with regard to the Assaba region that agricultural production is more likely to have decreased

than grown during the first decades of this century due to taxation and other unfavourable factors. However a different interpretation seems plausible as well, as the same author states that imposition of taxes in the Assaba and especially of the tax on agricultural production has rarely been applied. Furthermore the Ahel Sīdi Maḥmūd, the major tribe of the region, are described as having minimised their area of nomadisation since the end of the 19th century in response to increased cultivation (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 957). Finally there are colonial records from the Assaba region reporting a considerable increase of agricultural production in response to a changed economic environment, and hence an evolution comparable to that in the Tagant area (cf. ANM B1, anonymous, "Confidentiel, la question des haratines et serviteurs dans l'Assaba" ca. 1931, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

89 This aspect of risk minimisation is already prominent in the 1936 colonial report (ANM E2-82, lieutnant Fonde, "Culture en barrages", résidence Moudjéria 1936, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte). In recent times this aspect has become a major concern of rural development policy aiming at securing, and making more sustainable, local food production (cf. Wüst 1989; Justen 1991; Seiler 1992; Davis 1997). An earlier, and critical assessment of the efficiency of agriculture behind large dams (*barrages*) in Mauritania is given by Charles Toupet (1977: 263ff.)

90 To complete this outline of agricultural history, a comparison with the state and evolution of agriculture in bīẓān society prior to colonisation would be of great interest. Agricultural production in this period seems to have depended heavily on a stable political environment. Kasr el Barka and Rachid, two great oases of the Kunta of Tagant, went into decline when their inhabitants got involved in the political conflicts dividing the people of the Tagant (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 415ff.). While the livestock of nomadic groups could be reestablished by counter-raids and negotiations, looted trade towns and destroyed date palm plantations were much more difficult to reconstitute.

91 A different date is mentioned by Wüst (1989: 75), who states that Zemmal was constructed in 1926. While many interviewees were unanimous about Zemmal being the very first dam of the Aftout, Charles Toupet (1958: 87) notes the dam of Tachott to be the eldest in the region and even to antedate French colonisation.

92 This view is confirmed by claims of Tarkoz Leġwāreb reproduced by Dubié (1953: 193), and stating that their first dam was built near the mountain of Akrerai in the Aftout, which is only a few kilometres east of Achram, in around 1900 (cf. Map 3). Mohamed A. Ould Khalil, a member of the Tarkoz Leġwāreb, stated that the dam of Achram was constructed in 1919 and had been the first in the area (Interview 5.9.1995).

93 ANM E2-82, lieutnant Fonde, "Culture en barrages", résidence Moudjéria 1936, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte.

94 AM, anonymous "Bulletin de renseignement, subdivision de Moudjéria" 8/1945.

95 AM, various trimestrial and monthly reports 1935-1944 of the résident of Moudjéria.

The colonial reports I was able to study in the archive of Moudjéria for the period concerned are somewhat contradictory in this respect. In 1935 the résident of Moudjéria mentions that there had not been any budget to promote the construction of dams and wells, only to remark a little later that the indigenous population actually is building dams (Tachott Dakhna 1,100 meters, Achram 800 meters, Djonaba 400 meters) and is greatly interested in receiving the corresponding rewards (AM, "rapport trimestriel résidence de Moudjéria" 30.12.1935). Occasional exemption from the ʿašūr in this period is not mentioned in the reports but in the land register. In fact colonial administrators often achieved their ends by illegal gifts and bonuses (cf. De Chassey 1984: 81).

96 It has to be noted that the rapid expansion of dams was unique to the Tagant district. Colonial reports note the construction of 75 dams in the Tagant in the years 1934-36, but only of 10 in Brakna, and 7 in the Adrar (cf. Bonte 1986: 396, note 33). The number of Tagant dams was estimated to already represent the maximum of what could be realised without reducing their efficiency (too short distances between dams on one and the same watercourse; cf. Dubié 1953: 194). The concentration of dam building seems to be the result of an early policy using funds from the "société indigène de prévoyance" to promote agriculture and thus reduce food insecurity (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 834).

97 An administrative report from the Assaba region echoed in 1931 masters' complaints about slave flights and slave laziness. However, this was the way the slaves responded to the expansion of agriculture putting a heavy load on them (cf. ANM B1, anonymous, "Confidentiel, la question des haratines et serviteurs dans l'Assaba" ca. 1931, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

98 The French saw pacification and fixed ownership rights as the decisive factors for the economic renaissance, while the stubbornness of the indigenous population remained the main obstacle to economic growth (ANM E2-82, lieutnant Fonde, "Culture en barrages" résidence Moudjéria 1936, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte).

99 AM, various trimestrial and monthly reports 1935-1944 of the résident of Moudjéria; ANM E2-82, lieutnant Fonde, "culture en barrage, résidence de Moudjéria" 1936, document kindly passed on by Roger Botte.

100 The population of the region of Achram-Diouk was estimated at 24,000 inhabitants in 1987. This number has increased ever since due to the attractiveness of the zone, the vicinity of the road, and the proliferation of services and wages due to the rural development project in Achram.

101 AM, various trimestrial and monthly reports 1935-1944 of the residents of Moudjéria.

102 This period, and its consequences on the administration of French West Africa subsequent to the Second World War is described by Gabriel Féral (1983: 77, 99).

103 Still during the war, the leader of "France libre", Général de Gaulle, had

declared at the conference at Brazzaville (January-February 1944) that the colonies should be given greater liberty in administration and economy. Besides this process, to be implemented step by step, the colonies were to be given a more powerful means to represent their interests in France. Another aspect of these reforms was the official end of forced labour (cf. Désiré-Vuillemin 1997: 566).

104 The anecdote reported by Gabriel Féral (1983), and taken up by Philippe Marchesin (1992), that the grand-father of Horma Ould Babana was implied in the assassination of Xavier Coppolani at Tidjikja, is obviously false (cf. Villasante-de Beauvais 1995: 799).

105 One of the major problems in the handling of these dams is caused by erosion. Rainwater run-off may damage the dam surface and water exceeding the maximum capacity has to be diverted to an overflow to protect the dam. Finally, erosive forces are high at the main outlet. This is especially true for traditional dams, where water is let off by digging a breach into the dam and thus weakening the soil on which the dam must be rebuilt in subsequent years.

106 This opposition, which was shared by the majority of the Kunta too, can be explained by the political rivalry between the Idawʿ Alī and the Idawʿ Īš Abakak. While the former benefited from colonisation, and strengthened their predominance in the course of the drought and economic crisis of the early 1940s, the Idawʿ Īš Abakak lost both influence and prestige (Ould Khalifa 1991: 898f., 939ff.). Quite a different perspective comes from people of the vicinity of Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar, describing the latter to have had good relations with Horma Ould Babana in the beginning. This changed only in response to a conversation the old ʿamīr had with Horma at Saint-Louis after the latter's success in the elections (at these times Abderrahmane still had quarrels with his brothers). Horma then disclosed to Abderrahmane that he now held all of Mauritania in his hands and asked what he could do for him. While this in the eyes of Horma should have been an offer, Abderrahmane experienced it as a serious offence, calling his authority into question. As a result Abderrahmane was on bad terms with Horma as long as he remained deputy (Interview Khattar, zwāya, 12.10.1995).

107 AM, report of the "conseil des notables du Tagant", première session 1956.

108 The project was funded by German development cooperation and executed by the German agency for technical cooperation (GTZ). The activities had two focuses: the initial PAD (Projét Achram-Diouk) had the aim of integrated rural development. Later a second branch, the PBT (Projet petit Barrages du Tagant) was launched, aimed solely at the development of dams, hand-driven pumps and well infrastructure.

109 Recently Timothy Cleaveland (1995) formulated a lively critique of the application of segmentary theory to bīẓān society, e.g. by Pierre Bonte (1991), a scholar who developed his own interpretation of this theoretical approach on the basis of the structures of bīẓān society, which in turn is critical of earlier proponents, such as e.g. Ernest Gellner (1969).

110 This is merely a descriptive glimpse of the various articulations of tribal structures in bīẓān society and necessarily cuts short on this most complex

issue (cf. Bonte/Conte/Hamès/Ould Cheikh 1991). The notion of tribe referred to here reflects a major level of identification manifest among the interviewees in particular circumstances.

111 Political authority did not follow a single model in traditional bīẓān society. While the centralisation of power in only one person was common, and in principle could be inherited among the ḥassān, many zwāya tribes never formed stable chieftaincies. They practised collective forms of decision-making with the ǧemāʿa as major forum (despite prolonged attempts, the French colonial administration was never able to establish powerful chiefs among the Tarkoz fractions). Charismatic religious leaders, however, could attract numerous followers and clients too, thus gaining a dominant role in their tribe, and revealing that the centralisation of power was not per se alien to the zwāya milieu (cf. Ould Cheikh 1991b).

112 The chief at the time made explicit references to the French colonial administrative practices whereby tribal land was registered under the respective chief's name. These formally individual entitlements later often led to the disputes described.

113 This dam, constructed for the first time probably around 1905, is of particular interest, as it probably is one of the first dams ever constructed in the area. All local traditions tell that the French colonialists, who at the time just had arrived in the region, already supported the project. Construction was carried out by slaves and other dependents, while the property of the plots remained with the bīẓān, and among these most probably those close to the family of the chief supported by the French in their attempt at indirect rule.

114 Many of the former masters were reported to now live at Zemmal, in Leqraye, or other villages inhabited by members of the Legwāṭiṭ, but about 40 km to the south, like El Ghabbra and Boulahradh. For the description of a similar case among the Tāgāṭ refer to Boubakar Ba (1986: 10).

115 This ambivalent situation the sūdān experience when they appropriate land has already been observed by Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1985a: 470f.) in the Gorgol Blanc region, which is part of the Aftout south of the region of Achram-Diouk. In order to appropriate land, the sūdān have to stress their tribal affiliation and solidarity instead of a solidarity of class. In the conflicts concerning the tribal territorial boundaries the sūdān have to present themselves as members of their respective tribe (refer also to note 152, this chapter).

116 "Proofs" of ownership are a sensitive topic in bīẓān society. They are far less simple testimonies of legitimate ownership than something which involves all of the tribe's history, i.e. genealogy, and thus goes right into the core of tribal ideology. Today, written accounts aiming to provide proof of legitimate ownership for generations are likely to abound whenever conflict over land begins to escalate (Interview Amadou Bâ, project leader SO.NA.DE.R, 30.1.1996).

117 In legal terms, there cannot be a due appropriation of land by slaves. Nevertheless, bīẓān in most cases had begun to tolerate such practices of their slaves already prior to the heavy drought in 1969. After the drought, with times getting harder, this aspect of slave autonomy, and thus slave

emancipation, became more and more a necessity for survival. The slaves, however, were only rarely able to develop claims on the most fertile land and thus created little space for conflict with former masters who, at least in theory, could claim land vivified by their slaves.

118 These relations are confirmed by a survey study of five villages of the region in Achram-Diouk. There sūdān referred to the small dams as their most important source of revenue (second come large dams). Among bīẓān this role is ascribed to the large dams too, but their much more diversified economic activities make them depend less heavily on agricultural revenues than the sūdān (cf. Ruf 1993: 18ff.; and unpublished results of this study).

119 By this time only a few slaves were still living side by sides with the family of their master, and worked only to receive food and clothing.

120 These rates of exchange can already be seen as gifts, and the aim of these arrangements is likely not to be direct profit from the agricultural rent, but the maintenance of relations of patronage, which might prove profitable in other respects. Not all bīẓān had relations of affinity to sūdān, for many of these had completely left the region, or had decided to break off relations with their former masters. Therefore, although limited in its extent, a market for sharecropping developed in which sūdān to some extent could negotiate the share they had to pay to the bīẓān.

121 This was largely practised. E.g. in the case of the dam at Achoueibir, which was the first construction supported by the local development project, influential members of the tribe, among them the chief, acquired up to five parcels.

122 Both a number of bīẓān and of sūdān finally refused to participate in the dam, though for different reasons. Of the initially 120 sūdān only 71 contributed to the dam. Those who left were reported to have done so because the surface of land to be developed by this measure was considered minimal. Some of these 49, however, today own land behind the dam, which they acquired from both sūdān and bīẓān, selling their land at considerable prices (a plot of 15 metres width costs about 35,000 UM, one of 25 metres about 45-50,000 UM (US$220-310); Interview Sidi Ould Salim, ḥarāṭīn, 27.7.1995).

123 Some bīẓān had their slaves work for the construction of the first dam near Leklewa at Dharagouadir. The land these slaves vivified became the sole property of their masters. During an interview I met one of these slaves, a man who had become old and weak. His master, whom I came to know as a distinguished man of great knowledge, had assigned him a shed of about 1.5 by 1.5 metres, made of branches from the flimsy *Calotropis Procera*. This shelter in the court of the master's typical modest clay brick house barely protected the old man from the beating sun. The only comment my research assistant, Khalifa Ould Kebab, made on this situation was that the master was waiting for the old man to die.

124 The dams built by the project have a design aimed to make repairs and interventions on a level beyond the capabilities of the local population superfluous. Although considerable achievements were made in this respect,

in some cases erosive forces of water were stronger than calculated, and some dams had to be reinforced.

125 There are plans to reanimate the rural development project in Achram by extending dam-building activities to a larger area than before.

126 The definite character of these ownership rights is expressed very well by the name of these dams. While collectively owned dams get the name of the location, those of individuals are named according to their owner, e.g. the sed Ahel Jiddou, the wād Sid Mohamed Dey.

127 In fact, I was reproached for asking questions which only produced more questions with this expression.

128 Not everything is left to non-verbal communication. Services by the ḥarāṭīn cover a wide range, such as e.g. working as occasional driver, or assistance in construction projects. The actual, unofficial ʿamīr of Tagant, Ethman Ould Abderrahmane, e.g. asked for assistance to build a new dam. "He asked the people to help him, and nobody will ask him [for payment]." (Interview Mahmoude Mint Ali, ḥarāṭīn, 26.7.1995)

129 All the land is granted for only one season. Although the relations may persist over years, they are nevertheless revocable from one year to the other, and there is no doubt that people who disappoint the notables' expectations will encounter sanctions.

130 It has already been noted that bīẓān too depended on land granted by other bīẓān and notables. These arrangements, however, were concluded for much longer periods and implied much less heavy retributions than those concerning sūdān (cf. p. 204).

131 E.g. a ḥassān notable and large landowner asked the ḥarāṭīn community, which in the overwhelming majority profited from his grants in land, to thresh his millet (Interview Mahmoude Mint Benjik, ḥarāṭīn, 8.8.1995). Individual ḥarāṭīn, however, nevertheless stopped committing themselves to these rules of "good conduct", and now refuse to give the ḥassān notables anything (Interview Daouda Ould Harouna, ʿabd, 19.12.1995).

132 Among the Awlād ʿAlī Ntūnva, e.g. the current chief helped some sūdān to get land. These in turn insist that they do not give millet, but help the chief by other means, e.g. with some work on the fields, like threshing millet. In addition to this the chief also pays workers for distinct duties (Interview Moise Ould Emine, ʿabd, 10.2.1996). However, the resources these ḥassān have to distribute are far less important than those of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed .

133 These ḥarāṭīn claim to have had a distinct status that had no reference to a slave past, and thus to have formed a group within the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed. These claims are hard to prove or to dismiss. None of those concerned admitted to having had slave ancestors (while in other settings people did so, or at least this condition was deducible from other variables). Neither did any of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed bīẓān refer to these ḥarāṭīn as former slaves. The distinct collective status this group is likely to have achieved nevertheless depended strongly on the goodwill of the ʿamīr.

134 The village of Hella was established only subsequent to the death of the old ʿamīr in 1982. The redistribution of land therefore was not negotiated among

the ḥarāṭīn and this old, unchallenged authority, but under the auspices of his unofficial successor Ethman Ould Bakkar. While the redistribution of land within the tribe reproduced the old relations of hierarchy, the authority of the traditional elite is no longer uncontested. It is often said that the sons of the old ʿamīr do not match up to their father.

135 Information concerning this case was contradictory: According to a second informant some ḥarāṭīn sold their land to the ʿamīr, while another said that nobody left this site.

136 This outflow was constructed in the evaluation period of the rural development project at Achram, prior to the start of the large dam-building project PBT (Petit Barrages du Tagant). The dam itself is of about one and a half metres high, and was constructed by hand. Reconstruction after damage in the past was occasionally done by renting the project's caterpillar rather than by manual work.

137 It is quite common that individuals can obtain the right to cultivate for one season at collectively owned sites. The plots granted are deducted from the whole site. Either these plots are calculated like all other plots, i.e. they add to the total number of exploiters among whom the site is distributed, or the owners of the site define a fixed plot to be shared among all of these contractors.

138 It was one of the aims – and in a way a precondition for work – of the regional development project to "manage" the ʿamīr and other local notables. This goal was achieved, and the project became able to act largely independent of these instances of local politics (Interview Amadou Bâ, project leader SO.NA.DE.R, 30.1.1996). In the early 1990s, democratisation in Mauritania began to take on a new appearance. Multi-partyism was reintroduced in 1991/92, and an independent press that in the beginning was largely tolerated by the regime in power, was established (cf. Clausen 1993, 1994a). In the region of Achram-Diouk political opposition to the (unofficial) ʿamīr was strong, and successful in some elections that were the central arena for the political struggles in these years. At least since 1995, a counter-movement in national and local politics can be detected (Interview Mohamed A. Ould Khalil, zwāya, 1.8.1995).

139 With acknowledgements to Graham Greene.

140 Selling milk instead of sharing it generously is a most serious offence against the rules of good conduct in bīẓān society. It was repeatedly stressed to me that only people of the Idebussāṭ tribe used to sell their milk and nobody else would dare do so. In the cities and close to the road, the selling of milk has nevertheless increased. Small hand-written advertisements, or simply an empty Tetra-Pak carton of milk (great quantities of long-life milk are imported to Mauritania, but there is also a small dairy in Nouakchott selling fresh pasteurised cow's and camel's milk [http://www.tiviski.com]) nailed onto a stick, signal "fresh milk for sale" to the people passing by.

141 This may not only be interpreted as a measure by which the ʿamīr wanted to use his political authority for the sake of creating new alliances, but also as a quite modern economic policy aimed at establishing conditions allowing for increased local investment.

142 In the words of the Idebussāṭ leader "There is hardly anything to compensate for something good that was done to somebody." (Interview Mohamed Sid'Ahmed, zwāya, 13.9.1995)

143 This is a precondition for building a village. Cultivable land is concentrated in depressions, and depends on their becoming flooded. This characteristic is incompatible with perennial human occupation.

144 Unconditional access to water for their herds was a serious concern of the Idebussāṭ, who qualified a number of local wells as "wells of problem", i.e. wells where the owners made clear that they did not want alien users to come back. Having their own well of large capacity therefore was of a considerable interest for the Idebussāṭ, who despite their shop continued to be among the most important local owners of livestock (Interview Mohamed Sid'Ahmed, zwāya, 13.9.1995).

145 With these sūdān conceiving themselves as true ḥarāṭīn without a slave past and forming their own faction within the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, the integrity of the symbolic representation of a free men's status, e.g. the ownership of cattle and land, attains an exceptional importance. Any violation of this symbolic order directly calls into question their statuary identity.

146 This is true insofar as this is the family most interested in setting up their own village. The statement, however, downplays the significance of this settlement for several reasons. First the "family" concerned includes several nuclear families, and second, there are a number of further Idebussāṭ families in the region, likely to settle too, once there is a good opportunity. In early 1996, five houses were under construction.

147 Mohamed A. Ould Khalil left no doubt about the nature of territorial hegemony exercised by the ʿamīr. On my request he detailed his statement, saying that the ʿamīr could give the right to live on his territory to whoever he wants.

148 On the issue of land tenure, relations of domination and the conflict between the Tarkoz and the Tāgāṭ see Boubacar Ba (1986; esp. pp. 14ff.).

149 "It very frequently comes to conflict over land within the tribe, but these affairs are handled on the basis of this book [the land register] It happens that a field has been cultivated some time ago, but then was left uncultivated. According to our legislation, a field has to be cultivated, or else there have to be traces of this activity, to legitimise ownership. One is only allowed to leave for ten years, once these have passed all individual rights are void. Then there is an enormous amount of problems [that arise] with these cases. All this will be brought here to the tribunal. In some cases the préfet will be able to decide directly, but often everything remains pending. This is because there are no written documents, there is no proof. There are a great many of people around here who are quite sophisticated, who have assembled documents from the beginning, and are able to prove everything. Many do not have these means, like e.g. here the people of Moudjéria. *In most of the cases, where there is something unclear, we just forbid* [the use]." (Interview Khattar, zwāya, 12.10.1995; emphasis added)

150 The Ahel Swayd Aḥmed are renowned to have been among the most forceful

and frightening warriors of all ḥassān and their sūdān are supposed to share these characteristics (Interview ḥarṭāni, 5.2.1996)

151 Sūdān of the Lʿaweysyāt, living beyond their tribal territory, are to be found in several places of the Aftout, and not only at Téjal.

152 In these descriptions, as well as the one of similar configurations of conflict in the Gorgol Blanc area by Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1985a: 470f.), the tribal affiliation of the sūdān appears to be unambiguous. This is true insofar as most sūdān couples share the same tribal affiliation. In a significant number of cases, however, sūdān intermarried across tribal boundaries. In such cases their children, who today are able to claim their descent also from their father's side, gain the option to switch between two different tribal affiliations. They thus may profit from better access to land in one group, or may continue to be involved in both tribes' affairs (Interview Walid Ould Mbarek, ḥarṭāni, 7.2.1996).

153 These contacts developed in the course of an electoral campaign. Notables from the Tāgāṭ Ideyneb contacted the Lʿaweysyāt sūdān and asked for their support. As the Lʿaweysyāt bīẓān reside in a different administrative region than the sūdān at Téjal (Tagant and not Brakna), it was easy for the latter to side with the Tāgāṭ faction (Interview Ally Ould Mohamed Ghalle, ḥarṭāni, 12.12.1995).

154 Whether these accusations are right or not is difficult to discern. In fact many inhabitants of villages with a predominantly sūdān population complained about being disadvantaged with regard to project activities. Almost the same complaints, however, could be heard from bīẓān. Several points among the sūdān critics are nevertheless right. Their villages got fewer large dams (*barrages*) or hand-powered water pumps than the bīẓān. This resulted not so much from a deliberate will to act in favour of the bīẓān, as from the fact that in most cases, these villages are simply much bigger than the few and generally more recent sūdān settlements, and evidently most of the best land – where dams could be built – was in the hand of the bīẓān. All interventions focusing on a certain scale therefore automatically tended to benefit (some) bīẓān more than (some) sūdān.

In the case of Labde, the most vehement accusations against the project were that it had for a long time resisted any intervention. This situation, as described to me by the most prominent leader of the sūdān in Labde, changed only after he asked the national minister for agricultural development for help while on tour through the region in 1989 (Interview Yahya Ould Emine, ḥarāṭīn, 7.11.1995). This is one of the many cases in which sūdān, struggling for emancipation, portray their appeals to the (highest) state authorities as successful and these institutions as defending their civil rights.

155 The amount of 80,000 UM had to be paid to the project for its services. Calculating on a basis of 80 contributors, everybody was meant to pay 1,000 UM (about US$6). However, much less people than had been intended paid their share, and finally a few persons, among them a quite well-off migrant worker at the national iron ore mine (SNIM), subsidised the undertaking by paying higher contributions.

156 Local communities have the right to have their own school. As a precondi-

tion for the state to send (and pay) a teacher, the villagers, however, have to provide the building. In theory, anyway. The biggest problems in establishing local elementary schooling are witnessed in the most remote and deprived communities, many of which are dominated by sūdān (e.g. at Daber on the Tagant). Teachers (most of whom are bīẓān) do not want to live out in the bush among "ignorant" sūdān, and therefore resist, or simply leave employment there and the sūdān communities have few means to exercise pressure on the state authorities.

157 Olivier Leservoisier (1994a: 292f.) bases his conclusion that the land reform of 1983 and 1984 is not effective in the rural areas of Mauritania on the argument that attempts of ḥarāṭīn to sell land to people alien to their tribe failed. The ḥarāṭīn concerned are therefore supposed to have not yet acquired full control of their land, but to continue to be subjected to the tribal paradigm, i.e. the control by bīẓān elites. However, the tribal framework, and its restrictions with regard to land sales apply to bīẓān too (cf. p. 239-241). Within the tribe, land for cultivation today is marketed quite liberally, and sūdān buy land (e.g. plots behind dams) from bīẓān, but it hardly ever occurs that strangers not affiliated to the local tribe get the right to own or buy land.

158 Pierre Bonte (1994c: 85) too states that the sūdān effectively were attributed the right to private appropriation of land prior to the new legislation on land tenure in 1983 and 1984.

159 The zakāt makes up one tenth of the harvest, but has only to be paid if the harvest exceeds 180 mūd (a more restrictive rule declares 150 mūd to be the limiting value. i.e. either about 720 kg, or 600 kg). While harvests of full-time cultivators, ranging between 200 and 300 mūd in the area of Achram-Diouk, are likely to exceed this amount, and oblige the cultivator to pay the zakāt, no zakāt at all is due for the half of this amount. All in all, any such trick is illegal, for the zakāt has to be paid for all incomes of one domestic union – and this applied fully to master-slave households.

160 Land in these cases is sold to members of the same tribe. Exceptions are only made with regard to people who have affiliated themselves to the tribe, e.g. by marriage, and the tribal community thus remaining able to exert some control.

161 This is primarily the case for the former core locations of the emirate of Tagant, the area of Daber, Kehmeit and El Fouj. Despite a few bīẓān notables once constructing houses in this area, and one of them running a shop at El Fouj, today the locations are deserted by the bīẓān and only sūdān remain.

162 The dam at Djouengi has about 160 plots (3 m width, and 2-300 m length), and each plot was reported to cost about 120,000 UM. This price seems exaggerated given the prices at Leklewa, where plots of 25 m width and about 250-300 m length are sold for about 45,000 UM (Interview Abdel Wedoud Ould Mamma, ḥassān, 31.10.1995).

163 E.g. a study entirely devoted to the situation of women in Mauritania, and aware of almost all aspects of women's economic activities (among which is cultivation), is mute on all aspects of property rights exercised by women (cf.

Smale 1980). To my knowledge only one study focusing on women and rural development explicitly takes into account the question of land tenure and women (Blanchard de la Brosse 1986).

164 In the data collected on households in eleven villages and quarters of the region of Achram-Diouk (cf. p. 129f.) many women leading a household were reported at least to have land behind large dams (*barrages*), and/or small dams (*diguettes*). Women are also able to bequeath this land to their children, but when these are affiliated to a different tribe than their mother (as a result of their father being of a different tribe), the children only get a use-right, and are not allowed to sell the land to people other than members of their mother's tribe (Interview Mahmoude Mint Ali, ḥarāṭīn, 26.7.1995).

165 A recent study of pastoral households found 19 women out of 30 to own livestock, and 10 out of 30 to own houses or tents (cf. FAO 1990: 13)

166 This is the case e.g. when men are unable to bring land for cultivation into a marriage. I observed one such case, where a sūdān migrant from the Kunta married a sūdān woman from the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed near Hella. Naturally the man did not own land. Therefore he had to cultivate on rented and borrowed land, but also on land belonging to his wife. Later he was allowed to buy land from a member of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, because his marriage into the tribe had minimised his status as a stranger (Interview ḥarṭāni, 15.3.1995).

167 Women quite often fail to get their legitimate claims be recognised in matters of inheritance. Especially when husbands die young, the spouse and the children are likely to become dispossessed by relatives of the deceased. The women then have to defend not only their own rights, but also those of their children.

168 This contradicts a view held by Véronique Blanchard de la Brosse (1986: 181), according to which gender-specific property rights are not practised by sūdān. This might appear to be the case so far as very poor sūdān or ʿabīd are concerned, having no, or very little property. Among sūdān owning land, or animals, both marriage partners are well aware of who owns what. This division becomes effective in the case of divorce.

169 Major activities promoted were gardening, dyeing veils, sewing, trade and alphabetisation. Women organised themselves in women's co-operatives, deciding autonomously what activities were to be pursued.

170 The outcome of land attribution in the irrigated perimeters is different, as the case of Foum Gleita shows. There a considerable number women signed up for a parcel, but were only the front for local elites and other groups interested in speculating with this land. However, some women profited from this opportunity themselves. Together with their children they were able to cultivate the small plots (0.25 ha) and increase their autonomy with regard to grain or rice (cf. Blanchard de la Brosse 1986: 201).

Chapter 8

1 This still applies to very few cases, but today ḥarāṭīn – given a number of favourable circumstances – are able to marry bīẓān women, and thus achieve equality in a most sensitive field of bīẓān social and symbolic relations: matrimonial alliances. This is highlighted by an interview held by Meskerem Brhane (1997a: 249) with a ḥarāṭīn woman on the subject of the marriage of a wealthy and well educated ḥarāṭīn man to a bīẓān woman: "'don't you think he should have married a Haratine woman? . . .' The woman replied, 'No, I think it's a great thing because it means that Beidanes [bīẓān] are now accepting our men as their equals. It's a step up for all of us.'" The way in which matrimonial alliances continue to play a major role for the construction of social relations in India has recently been developed for the case of the Andhra Pradesh region by Rainer Merz (1998).

2 While the emergence of a distinct ex-slaves' political organisation is unique in the context of the West African Sahelian societies, it was preceded in the Sudan. There as early as 1938 a political organisation of slaves and ex-slaves was founded (cf. Sikainga 1996: 168).

3 This position is held by sympathisers with the radical movement for the liberation of the Mauritanian black Africans from oppression by the bīẓān (FLAM: Forces de Libération des Africains en Mauritanie). This latter organisation states that all "blacks" are subject to the same social and economic discrimination by the "white" Arab bīẓān, and thus have to unite (cf. Marchesin 1992: 211ff.; Ould Cheikh 1994a: 15; Al-Akhbar nº 1, 9.7.1995: 5).

4 The activists of the ḥarāṭīn cause in this respect are taking part in the creation of an ethnic dichotomy between bīẓān, including sūdān, and the black African ethnic groups (Toucouleur and Peul, who are part of the Halpulaar'en [speakers of Pulaar language], Soninké and Wolof), who are far from forming one uniform block (cf. Ould Cheikh 1994a: 14f.).

5 Meskerem Brhane (1997a: 212ff.) assumes the social relations ḥarāṭīn practise to depend on their affiliation with either radical or conservative ḥarāṭīn. This can be questioned, as political orientation is also influenced by one's social relations. It thus seems to better suit the argument to speak of multiple correlations rather than of a model comprising dependent and independent variables.

6 A similar dichotomous characterisation of ḥarāṭīn attitudes towards the bīẓān has already been developed by Chambon (1962; cited in Martín 1991: 31). Therefore the majority of the sūdān stuck to the following description: "mon maître est mon maître, celui que Dieu a mis sur moi, je lui obéis mais il me secourt quand je suis en difficulté.", and a minority to the statement "les Maures sont d'iniques oppresseurs; les redevances ne sont pas légales, on doit pouvoir se marier et être maître de ses enfants."

7 Only few speakers of ḥassāniyya are able to follow radio broadcasts in modern standard Arabic, and therefore remain dependent on the national, government-controlled "Radio Mauritanie". In addition radio stations remain scarce in many of the remote camps and adwaba, or there is no

money to buy new batteries. The most apparent, and almost total lack of radio stations I witnessed appeared among the sūdān living on the Tagant near Daber and El Fouj.

8 The opposition of hidden versus public transcripts has received substantial criticism from Susan Gal (1995), who states that the definition of "*public* used by Scott is unexamined and inadequate. The idea of public, far from being a simple question of audience, based on the model of witnessed face-to face interaction, is itself a deeply ideological construct in western thought, often linked exactly to the separation of language from a face-to-face situation and thus to the decontextualisation of language by print." (Gal 1995: 417, original emphasis)

9 Referring to two brothers to tell the difference between sūdān and bīẓān is a recurrent scheme. According to a popular myth in bīẓān society there were once two brothers, both holding a copy of the Qur'ān, and walking around. When it suddenly started to rain, one brother took his Qur'ān to shield it under his clothes, while the other one put it on his head to shelter himself from rain. The book got soaked with water and all of the ink ran, thus staining the second brother black. For this disrespect he was condemned to slavery by Allah (cf. Acloque 1995: 98ff.; Brhane 1997a: 121ff.).

10 This is the case for Mohamed Khairat, "the slave who made the camel talk" and thus proved himself to have been wrongly enslaved (cf. Brhane 1997a: 127-137). Similar narratives are reported from the Tuareg by Clare Oxby (1978: 150f.), and are part of Arab legends (cf. Brhane 1997a: 136, note 50). The pattern equally applies to the dark-skinned and enslaved brother. He does not address the members of his family, but these recognise his voice. Today, however, undue status ascription is hardly accepted, as the case of Brahim Ould Daddah shows. He successfully brought a paternity suit against his prominent bīẓān father, who refused to recognise his paternity of his son born by a ḥarāṭīn mother (cf. Brhane 1997a: 74).

11 Indeed the term ʿabd, and its female equivalent ḫādem developed a racist connotation, denouncing the blackness of the slaves, as 19th and 20th century proverbs about slaves circulating in the Arabic-speaking world show. This terminological shift reflects that by then almost all slaves in this cultural sphere were of Sudanese origin (cf. Sersen 1985). Although strong inter-ethnic relations among the bīẓān and neighbouring Sudanese ethnic groups in which both had equal power had always existed (cf. Schmitz 1996), those members of the Sudanese ethnic groups who came to the bīẓān scholars to get instruction in Islam were treated with disrespect and as if they were Muslims of secondary rank (cf. Caillié 1830: 112ff.). The racist attitude of the bīẓān vis-à-vis the Muslim black African ethnic groups was even denounced by bīẓān scholars such as Ṭālib al-Bašīr (dec. 1197/1783) from Oualâta (cf. Oßwald 1993: 124f.).

12 It is no longer possible to undertake a direct evaluation of the old ʿamīr's behaviour vis-à-vis the slaves in the ḥella. It is, however, without doubt that his style of rule – to put it mildly – was extremely authoritarian. This lasted until his last days (cf. personal communication with Roger Botte, who in 1978

spent two weeks in the emiral camp and on this occasion was able to have a discussion with the old ʿamīr).

13 Asked about the issue of the discord his mother Zeyneb mentioned once having had with her master's family (cf. p. 66), her son Brahim, reframed some aspects of the story. Instead of speaking of the major conflict Zeyneb had located at the time of the SEM, Brahim skipped back to a much earlier event, having taken place before independence. The master's wife wanted to have two servants, i.e. two daughters of Zeyneb, instead of the one it had formerly been. When the mistress visited the slave family in order to take with her a second girl, Zeyneb started an open dispute with her, and finally the two women started beating each other. This led Zeyneb to go to the ʿamīr Abderrahmane Ould Bakkar and complain about the unjustified demands of her master. This apparently was successful. Abderrahmane was reported to have admonished the master to be good to his slaves, and not to coerce them into anything, so that they would be able to stay with him. Otherwise, the old ʿamīr told the master, he would have to free the slave family.

14 Claude Meillassoux (1986: 101f.) underlines the decisive impact the development of slavery has on the elaboration of a master's ideology rationalising the difference between master and slave in the terms of a dichotomous opposition and developing distinct social norms regulating the society's reproduction.

15 Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1985a: 406ff.) states that complementary patterns of behaviour were common among several status groups. The maʿalimīn thus were alleged to portray the counter-image of ḥassān values, namely cowardice, greed and being demanding. The case of the iggāwen is similar.

16 To a zwāya having owned quite some livestock prior to the drought in 1969 it was wholly incomprehensible how I could have imagined him to have accompanied his slaves herding the animals out in the bush, for this would have meant doing the same work twice, and thus been just a waste of time (Interview zwāya, 13.7.1995). For the master this meant also delegating much of the pastoral decision-making and responsibility to his slaves. This view is confirmed by former slaves too. A ḥarṭāniyya (Interview 22.10.1995) described her former master as having laid the organisation of most work into the hands of his slaves and as remaining with nothing but the work of supervision.

17 Depicting slaves, especially newly imported ones, as "barbarian" and "ignorant" is a common feature of the masters' ideologies. Jonathon Glassman presents four overlapping occupational categories which slaves on the Swahili coast could struggle to attain and hence reduce their marginality (cf. Glassman 1991: 289ff.).

18 I am grateful to Jutta Bischoff, my wife, for having discussed this most sensitive issue with the young ḥassān woman, and thus to have enabled me to obtain these insights.

19 The depersonalisation of slave women can also be discerned from legal practices denying the possibility of their being raped, while this crime is recognised with regard to free women (cf. Al-Bayane nº 71, 21.4.1993).

20 The matter of descendants of slaves guiding prayers – among other similar topics – animated a long, lively and controversial discussion among Mauritanian intellectuals communicating on Mauritanie-Net in early 1997 (cf. among others Tandia, Sidi [smtandia@iastate.edu], "Re: Encore l'esclavage!", In Mauritanie-Net [mauritanie-net@bat710.univ-lyon1.fr], 28.1.1997, Cheikh Traore [cheikh.traore@lshtm.ac.uk], "Re: Encore l'esclavage !", In Mauritanie-Net [Mauritanie-Net@bat710.univ-lyon1.fr], 27.1.1997). The issue is also discussed in the independent press of Mauritania (cf. Al-Bayane nº 78, 16.6.1993: 9)

21 The songs presented by Aline Tauzin (1989b) were collected in the Hodh, around Ayoûn el-Atroûs. These eastern parts of Mauritania are known to be the ones where the grip of traditional hierarchy is still felt most strongly.

22 The topic was raised in the context of the narrative of M'Barke (cf. p. 66-69).

23 Performances of meddh are supposed to happen on Fridays, but this is no strict requirement, and they are much more likely to develop out of a spontaneous mood. They start in the late evening, and may last until the early morning.

24 The development of a distinct art of meddh in Nouakchott, implying also the specialisation of its performers, may indicate the emergence of a kind of emigrant culture and lead to a revival of what is perceived as tradition.

25 The shepherd living in symbiosis with his animals out in the bush is to some extent the archetype of the ignorant in bīẓān society (cf. Caratini 1989: 98), and much fun is made of these "men of the bush" and their supposed backwardness. In many jokes circulating these people commonly fail to manage the pitfalls of modern life, and act much like poor Don Quixote tilting at the windmills.

26 In bīẓān society religious learning is not limited to men. A number of bīẓāniyyāt, i.e. bīẓān women, acquired a respectable knowledge of Islam and related sciences and educated pupils themselves (cf. Simard 1996: 95; El Hamel 1999: 74-76; see also the narrative of Brahim p. 61). Most disadvantaged in this respect were of course the sūdān women.

27 In response to the increasing dissemination of colonial education, bīẓān scholars lifted former restrictions of access to their maḥaẓra (Qurʾān schools) and hence enabled members of all social strata to take part in traditional education (cf. Hirth 1994: 157).

28 Besides the claims of the sūdān interviewed, the failure of the bīẓān masters to meet the obligations arising from the precepts Islam, which describe under what conditions slavery is legitimate, are echoed in many publications; refer e.g. to RAMS (1980: 74)

29 René Caillié (1830: 150) already recognised that the (lack of) respect for Islam by slaves was a major argument by which the bīẓān legitimised their often cruel behaviour towards them. The supposed disrespect for and ignorance of Islam on the part of the slaves, however, was a matter of definition set up by the bīẓān, for Caillié recognised that there was no difference in the treatment of slaves who performed their prayers properly, and those who did not.

30 This issue was treated by zwāya scholars in legal judgements and expertises, who stress the obligation to pay zakāt for all Muslims, i.e. including the slaves who only are nominally Muslim, and thus bring to light the fact that many bīẓān did not comply with this obligation (cf. Oßwald 1993: 127).

31 Stating to have always paid the zakāt was a common means by which interviewees wished to generate legitimacy for their claim to have never been a slave.

32 Zakāt in precolonial bīẓān society in many cases came to be perceived as something of a religious tax, paid by ḥassān or znāga to zwāya in compensation for their spiritual services, while the zwāya had to pay other kinds of taxes for their military protection (cf. Oßwald 1993: 104f.).

33 One such option was the fishy argument according to which all zwāya had to be regarded as poor, and therefore were automatically entitled to receive the zakāt. However this point of view was declared to be "weak", i.e. to represent a minority opinion, by major zwāya (cf. Oßwald 1993: 120).

34 Tebiba Mint Salem (Interview ḥarāṭīn, 29.7.1995) reported her former master to have redistributed the zakāt payments of her family partly among his own family, and needy people.

35 The local qāḍi of the region of Achram-Diouk, Ahmed Ould Aly (Interview 24.12.1995) renowned for his in many respects orthodox interpretation of Islam offered a definition of zakāt payment by manumitted slaves that fits closely into the traditional framework. Here the zakāt is destined for the poor, but can also be given to a former master, who because of his nearness becomes like other closely affiliated poor. While poverty and nearness, according to this interpretation, are criteria of equivalent importance to qualify for the right to perceive zakāt, under certain circumstances, nearness outweighs poverty.

36 The development of an ethic based on the appropriation and revaluation of the former social stigma of physical power and work has also been noticed by Christine Hardung (1997: 133-135) among former Fulbe slaves in northern Benin.

37 Most valuable insights on the role of work as a means of identification among slaves are provided by Eugene Genovese's (1974: 310ff.) sensitive study on plantation slavery in the southern United States. The slaves' work was prominent in both how they were perceived by the free, and how they defined themselves. Common prejudices saw slaves either as wild and uncontrolled but strong workers, or valued attributes of their work like steadiness. Among slaves, the hardest work, like harvesting, was remembered as being the favourite. It was also subject to competition among the slaves themselves, who remembered this time of the year as the best. Then great numbers of slaves assembled and social life among the slaves was at its climax.

38 Indeed El Hor is campaigning for the spread of capitalist wage labour, which is to replace the unpaid work of slaves and ḥarāṭīn. According to the constitutive charter of the organisation, El Hor wants to cultivate among the sūdān the "spirit of work by inciting them to refuse all activities that are not remunerated in a just and equitable manner." (El Hor, constitutive charter,

cited and translated in Brhane 1997a: 307) While the question whether there can be a "just remuneration" of workers within a capitalist economy nowadays has been put aside under the predominance of neoliberal economic theory, the criticism vis-à-vis this ideology initiated by Karl Marx ([1863] 1983a) and Friedrich Engels ([1880] 1978) still is on the agenda. Some sūdān also refuse to mould their existence to fit the needs of the labour market, as the case of Hadama shows. This slave woman preferred to return to her master's brother rather than work for pay as a housemaid in Nouakchott (cf. Brhane 1997a: 306ff.).

39 The increase of livestock marketing in the course of this century, and the start of a wholesale market production of meat may have transformed the attitude of bīẓān pastoralists towards their livestock, by giving it a more instrumental touch. Today sarcastic comments on the bīẓān voracity for meat and the lack of respect for the animals slaughtered fills the columns of Nouakchott (bīẓān!) newspapers.

40 The largest herds of camels in today's Mauritania are owned by urban residents, who reinvest their capital gained in the modern sector in animal property. This has to some extent an economic rationale (cf. FAO 1990: 3f.), but is also driven by the high symbolic value the possession of camels and the link to the nomadic past still has in bīẓān society (RAMS 1980: 38), but also in other desert societies, like those of the Arabian peninsula.

41 Clare Oxby (1978: 155f.) in her study of slavery in a Tuareg community has already focused on the impact of generosity on master–slave relations. According to the masters only noble people are generous enough to maintain a slave's attachment, while slaves who became free men and slave holders are judged unable to attain this moral stance, and fail to be successful slave holders.

42 Colonel Dubost (1924: 463) noticed that the impact of the colonial policy in Tidjikja increased sedentarity not among the bīẓān, but definitely among the ḥarāṭīn.

43 Mohamed Ould Ahmed Meidah (1993) puts the distinction between adabay and vrīg in the following words: "Comme concrétisation de cette ségrégation basée sur la liberté échelonnée, on refusait de désigner par 'campement' l'agglomération constituée par ces Haratines. On lui préfère le terme 'Adabaï' à connotation primitive." Another perspective on how bīẓān perceive sūdān camps is developed in the narrative of Tourad (cf. p. 74).

44 A thorough discussion of the meanings and often contradictory use of attributes like nomadic, transhumant, etc. is given by Fred Scholz (1991). Günther Schlee (1991) discusses the multitude of pastoralist patterns of mobility and the paradox that a decrease in mobility in one animal sector becomes used by the same pastoralist group to increase mobility in another.

45 This is especially true of the adwaba in the remote areas of the Tagant. Living under a tent today is not in itself a sign of modest property, as tents can be anything from a costly luxury item to a piece of recycled cloth. Among the sūdān, most tents are of more or less modest quality.

46 For a discussion of different concepts of space among hunter-gatherer and

nomadic societies, as well as the influence of nomadism and sedentism on this issue refer to Ingold (1986: chapter six and seven) and Schlee (1992).

47 Here the logic of relativistic references to context-sensitive levels of segmentation, as developed by Clifford Geertz (1977: 487ff.) in his study of Sefrou/Morocco, comes to bear. Any reference to people depends on the proximity or distance between the actors. A camp of foreigners in the region of Achram-Diouk would be identified first of all by its tribal affiliation.

48 Achram e.g. is named after the nearby wād Achram (i.e. wadi Achram), Debissa is named after the neighbouring hill etc. Exceptions, however, exist: Hella, a large village directly neighbouring Achram, is the name the camp of the ʿamīr had in former times. Sedentarising beneath Achram, this community maintained this designation.

49 Members of different bīẓān tribes and fractions are likely to have separate land-rights, and thus to be not obliged to construct villages in direct proximity to one another. This is more frequent for sūdān whose claims over land are relayed to the periphery of tribal lands. Factions, constituted by dissension still internal to one tribal grouping, necessarily share the same tribal lands and agricultural plots.

50 This has been a common practice throughout the history of bīẓān society. Colours like black and white are sometimes connected with disputes over social status, but there is no universal and consistent use of blackness (Arabic/ḥassāniyya akḥal) in a pejorative sense (cf. Taine-Cheikh 1989a: 98ff.; Acloque 1995: 118-28). Distinctions by the attribution of colour (most often black, white and red, but green too) seem to be much more a general phenomenon in Sahelian societies and among other African ethnic groups. Among the Fulbe e.g. places are commonly attributed colour characteristics (Youssouf Diallo, personal communication). Colours (black white and red) are also used to distinguish ethnic groups and to qualify social and status groups as well as lineages among Fulbe of the Senegal valley (cf. Botte/Schmitz 1994: 15). Among the bīẓān e.g. the season of tiviski, lasting from the end of February until the end of May, is distinguished in a white and a black half (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 47; 97ff.). This does not inhibit that colour attributes are used in a pejorative sense. In bīẓān society the blacksmiths, i.e. the maʿalimīn, are often described as being of red phenotype. Among the Gabbra and Afar of East Africa attributes like white and red are used to distinguish between different strata, e.g. nobles and commoners. The association of colour with social status for these East African people is the opposite of the one common among the bīẓān, i.e. red means "noble", and white "commoner" (cf. Schlee 1989: 19; Lewis 1955: 155).

51 Topographical descriptions indeed still have to be clear in bīẓān society, where designations like "left" and "right" are still unknown, and directions in almost all contexts are referred to from the matrix of the four cardinal points. This is also a phenomenon common to many societies, who like pastoral nomadic peoples depend strongly on exact references to places and directions. In parts of East Africa, the native terms for "left" and "right" still remain related to the cardinal points, and can partly replace them. To properly reproduce the meaning of "left", as used e.g. in English, which

makes the body of the speaker the point of reference, one has to take the detour of the expression of "to your left side" (Prof. Günther Schlee, personal communication 16.10.1998).

52 One field in which French domination still is well remembered is school policy. Here, the focus of colonial policy lay on the spread and promotion of the French language. Accordingly, of thirty hours of schooling per week only three were dedicated to Arabic (cf. De Chassey 1984: 184). Or as Sid Mohamed Ould Dey (ḥassān, Interview 27.8.1995), who was already a teacher under French colonial rule, put it: "Arabic had a lean time then, and now it's the turn of French to have lean time."

53 Bīẓān decry the use of istʿammār as a synonym for slavery by sūdān as revealing an insufficient command of Arabic. The correct term, ʿabūdiya, however, is not adequate for the sūdān, for they not only want to name "slavery" as an institution that is recognised within certain limits by Islam, but the illegitimacy of enslavement too (cf. Brhane 1997a: 150f.).

54 In contrast to the reactions of several sūdān in the region of Achram-Diouk, an elderly slave woman living in the Trarza region displayed an indifferent attitude towards Ould Haidalla's speech: "[I feel just as I always have] – a member of the community and above all, the mother of all the young people, black or white."(Yellin n.d.)

55 The SEM thus were somewhere half way between political mass organisation and administrative structure. According to Mohamed Abderrahmane Ould Khalil (zwāya, Interview 1.8.1995) the SEM had to intervene in a great many local problems: conflict, disaster relief, the building of schools, and organisation.

56 Recent trends in the religious landscape of Mauritania, showing a declining significance of traditional authorities and the emergence of fundamentalist discourses, are discussed by Constant Hamès (1994), Diana Stone (1994) and Rahal Boubrik (1998, 1999).

57 The very first elections after the coup d'état in 1978 were the municipal elections in Nouakchott in 1986. From 1989 the electoral process was significantly amplified. In January 1989 the municipal councils and mayors of thirty-two administrative centres were elected. In December 1990 finally, elections were held in all 208 municipalities, thus finally reaching the capital of the "commune de Soudoud" Achram (cf. Ould Cheikh 1994b: 31f.).

58 This observation contradicts the findings presented by Philippe Marchesin (1992: 186ff.), according to which the SEM enabled a number of old notables to re–enter politics. This probably is true in many cases, but the outcome of the SEM was more ambivalent, for the strong influence of the state administration which Marchesin rightly noted also led to a noticeable weakening of many members of the old tribal notability. One such prominent victim was the son of the old ʿamīr of Tagant, Ethman Ould Abderrahmane. Within the SEM he became only a "chief of zone" (an area that by and large corresponded to the today's municipality of Achram, and thus much inferior to the sphere of influence of his father). Later his authority was cut down even further, when several villages were assigned to another zone (Interview Mohamed A. Ould Khalil, zwāya, 5.9.1995).

59 Sūdān still enjoy telling how they experienced this new attitude of the government and administration becoming effective.
SOS: There once was an assembly, together with the region's reviser, the latter explained that now there were no more slaves, i.e. he explained how to build up a cell, etc., how all this had to be organised.
Author: Did this man come from Nouakchott [the capital]? [Sidi Ould Salim laughs]
SOS: Yes, of course . . . There was a teacher here from the Legwāṭiṭ. When they began to explain everything with the SEM, that everybody was equal, one had to take ten families, and that bīẓān and sūdān could be mixed, then this man began to ask, and tell that he had not well understood what had been said. The reviser therefore told him that he now would explain it one more time for him that there are no more slaves. (Interview Sidi Ould Salim, ḥarṭāni, 30.1.1996)

60 This perspective complies with the argument developed by Susan Gal (1995: 412) that contradictory opinions which actors express in specific circumstances cannot be spoken of in terms of a dichotomy of genuine versus posed. Rather they reveal the presence and weight of contested discourses.

61 Eugene Genovese (1974: 4ff.), basing the analysis of plantation slavery in the US South on Gramsci too, highlights the contradictions inherent to paternalism. As a mode of domination it produces both affection *and* hatred.

62 Meskerem Brhane (1997a) is far from schematising sūdān (or ḥarāṭīn) attitudes, but by focusing on affiliations to two opposite identities she runs the risk of veiling the many contradictions underlying social practices in both camps. In this respect the activists campaigning for ḥarāṭīn identity resemble much the young women aspiring to initiation into Islamist subculture in Cairo described by Karin Werner (1997). This demands engagement in a permanent process of self-domestication, meaning the refinement of practices and attitudes which remain open-ended, because the ideals are never met. Rather than reflecting an incomplete, or else defective identity formation process, the incongruent nature of these identities is crucial to maintaining the competitive and hence dynamic nature of identification.

63 Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1985a: 505ff.) reports how in 1967 a metal box was found beneath a tomb. The enclosed document, written in traditional manner, made it possible to rewrite – and thus ennoble – the genealogy of the Ahel Šayḫ Sidyya. Their status had remained contested because the group's genealogy did not match the hegemonic position it had achieved during the 19th century.

64 The ideological nature of this concept becomes apparent by the fact that, of the Arab terms defining relations of parenthood, ʿamm is one of the ones with the most fluctuating meaning. It designates not only the father-brother, but also all male members of a group assembled by a common ancestry, and even the male members of the whole Arab nation. All these people can be treated as if patrilateral parallel cousins (cf. Conte 1991: 56).

65 Ibn Khaldun is famous for his distinction between urban and nomadic group solidarity (ʿaṣabiya). According to his vision consciousness of common ancestry vanishes and is no longer maintained once people settle in cities.

The once existing solidarity is weakened. Among the nomadic peoples, ancestry does not become blurred, and these groups are thus able to maintain strong ties of solidarity due to their purity (cf. Hamès 1987: 112).

66 This basic meaning is also referred to by Pierre Bonte (1987a: 77, note 28): "ʿaṣaba désigne le lien entre une chose et une autre, les relations entre un homme et ceux rassemblés autour de lui pour combattre ou se défendre; ʿaṣaba(t) désigne les gens ou les partisans d'un homme qui se liguent ensemble pour la défense, les relations du côté des hommes, les relations d'un homme du côté de son père parce qu'elles le soutiennent et le renforcent."

67 Tribal affiliation and sharing an ʿaṣabiya do not necessarily coincide. The solidarity of diyya payment may concern only parts of a tribe (cf. Bonte 1987a: 71), but can also cross cut these boundaries. Tribes may contract assistance in the payment of levies which can be called ties of ʿaṣabiya too. Narrow ties of ʿaṣabiya which are limited to those who share reciprocal rights of inheritance, i.e. common descent from an ancestor in the fifth or sixth generation, may also transcend tribal boundaries, several sūdān living in such circumstances insisted. This notion of a nucleus of solidarity is also used to portray tribes with a strong group solidarity (Interview Mohamed Ould Khassar, zwaya, 7.8.1995).

68 This interpretation, as Pierre Bonte (1987a: 71) remarks, stresses masculine relations of solidarity, created most often for reasons of defence, by referring only to patrilineal filiation. This downplays matrilineal ties which were and still are important in creating affinity and solidarity in bīẓān society.

69 This seems to be no specificity of bīẓān society, for aṣl has come to be used in quite the same way as nasab in other Arab tribal societies, like e.g. the Awlād Ali of western Egypt (cf. Lila Abu-Lughod 1986: 41).

70 The Idawʿlš claim of an Arab origin is a recent phenomenon and contrasts their renowned descent from the Lemtūna. These were Berbers, who like the early Idawʿlš spoke a now almost forgotten Berber dialect called znāga (derived from the ethnonym Ṣanhāǧa; cf. Amilhat 1937). While the supposed antagonism between "Arabs" and "Berbers" was taken first of all by colonial authors to explain conflict in Mauritanian tribal society, contemporary analyses have revealed the many weaknesses of this approach (cf. Ould Cheikh 1991a: 108f.). Nowadays the remnants of a Berber past in many bīẓān tribes is reconciled with the wish for an Arab ancestry by statements saying that there is no problem in having a Berber ancestry, for the Berbers concerned had Arab ancestors (Interview Cheikh M. Ould Jiddou, ḥassān, 7.12.1995).

71 For a short evaluation of the difficulties of many bīẓān tribes developing legitimate claims to an Arab descent refer to Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh (1991a: 11ff.)

72 For a comparative presentation of different traditions of bīẓān origins refer to Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais (1997). Different versions of traditions telling of how Bou Bakkar ben Amar founded the tripartite bīẓān society are documented by Harry T. Norris (1972: 129-32, 152-54) and Rainer Oßwald (1986: 314-21, 342-54).

73 Times are changing, and thus new terminologies enter the discourse on

individual origins and actual social position. The local qāḍi Ahmed Ould Aly (Interview 24.12.1995) e.g. told me his origin was Liglāgma (i.e. his father's tribe), but as he had passed all his life among the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, these had become his "waṭane", i.e. his nationality, and he expressed this differentiation by referring to a classical Arabic term derived from a modern context, but now fitted back into the tribal framework. Others who could be suspected of being of znāga status were unable to detail their tribe's nasab beyond the most general claim that it was Arab.

74 These kinds of sūdān family genealogies could be classified as matrilineal, because only descent from free mothers and foremothers allows one to prove ḥarāṭīn status. It is a bitter irony that while becoming ḥarāṭīn is supposed to bring all the social rights a freeborn person has (right to kinship, and consequently to patrilineal filiation) to defend this status, ḥarāṭīn have to step back to the slaves' mode of filiation by uterine descent.

75 Having a free mother was indeed the only issue that mattered in achieving and maintaining the freedmen's status of descent, for as this interviewee explained to me, one did not need a ḥarāṭīn father to become ḥarāṭīn, but a ḥarāṭīn mother. Therefore there is little to gain from free male ancestors in a ḥarāṭīn family genealogy.

76 In fact the kwār, i.e. the members of the black African ethnic groups, were described by sūdān to be like the bīẓān, meaning that they were as much free men as the bīẓān, and only used to speak a different language.

77 An interesting parallel here is opened with works focusing on bīẓān representations of hierarchy. Pierre Bonte (1987a; 1991), in his critique of the theories of segmentary society, developed a model of bīẓān society according to which filiation can be interpreted to stress either equality or hierarchy. The production of equality thus is seen as part of the male domain, i.e. the patrilineage (which creates the solidarity of the awlād ʿamm, i.e. all members of the tribe), while statutory difference is created by the female domain, i.e. the matrilineal filiation. This fundamental difference is well anticipated by the bīẓān.

78 A similar distinction is drawn, however, in the terms purity versus impurity by Yūba, a ḥarṭāni living in Nouakchott (cited by Mariella Villasante-de Beauvais 1991: 189). Living in slavery therefore is associated with impurity, while manumission purifies the former slave.

79 The interview was held in the presence of two bīẓān, of whom one directly interjected that "ḥarāṭīn" could not be considered an origin (in this case the term aṣl was used by both interviewer and interviewee), for it designated only a status within bīẓān society.

80 These are alms handed out on the occasion of the celebration of the ʿaīd al-fiṭr, at the end of the Ramadan.

81 A similar view is expressed by a member of the ḥarāṭīn of the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed, who claim that their ancestors were never slaves. Therefore the relations of this distinct group of ḥarāṭīn with the ʿamīr of Tagant (which now is no longer an official title) are to be compared with a family among whose members the inheritance is still undivided.

82 In another section of the interview Brahim told me that slavery indeed has

no origin, i.e. in the beginning, all people were free. Similarly a slave once he is dead again becomes equal to those who have been considered free men before. A slave's estate ends with his death.

83 In fact Brahim knows very well of his kūri (matrilineal) ancestry. In another section of the interview he recalls that one of his grandmothers had been captured by Samori Ture, whom he described as a great ḥassān (i.e. warrior), who captured many sūdān and sold them to the bīẓān.

84 Speaking about a different conclusion on aspects of sūdān identity formation and sūdān aspirations, I first have to acknowledge how much the present line of arguments has profited from Meskerem Brhane's Ph.D. thesis (1997a), without which this book would not have taken its present shape. With regard to the different conclusions in our respective analyses, the major point – in my opinion – concerns the issue whether sūdān identify themselves as bīẓān or as distinct from bīẓān. A discussion of this divergence follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

1 Well aware of this problem, Jeffrey Rubin (1995) opts for viewing only conscious acts as resistance. On the basis of the preceding analysis, it could be argued that consciousness too is laden with the very same ambiguities as resistance, and therefore is unlikely to make of resistance a rigid analytical category. Rather than undertake global definitions of resistance and subservience, I would plead for a detailed and differentiated analysis of what are *moments* of resistance and subservience in everyday acts. This paves the way for the appreciation of the many subtleties in everyday interaction, and the recognition of contradictory elements within gestures and discourses which fail to be either "resistant" or "subservient".

2 Meskerem Brhane (1997a: 122, 127, 133) herself reveals several of the difficulties these sūdān experience when trying to get their claims accepted. A large part of sūdān discourses reject not only traditions portraying the sūdān as an accursed group, but also traditions speaking of sūdān who turned white, i.e. became bīẓān or at least very close to them. Such status ascension is rejected because it means a bīẓān appropriation of what could be the nucleus of a sūdān elite. The very power of these doubts is revealed in an interview with a woman claiming descent from Mohamed Khairat, a slave who became a saint and thus bīẓān, after having made a camel talk. While this woman nominally, and according to bīẓān statements, should be regarded as a bīẓān, she refrains from stating her bīẓān-ness publicly. Living in an all-sūdān environment in a Nouakchott shantytown, she prefers instead to make evasive claims of a šurva origin. This is known to have become something of a safety-valve for all sūdān seeking a bīẓān status (cf. the Interview with Brahim, p. 281f.).

3 Morally, this argument raised by sūdān is certainly right, but it misses the point Islamic jurisprudence makes about the illegitimate acquisition of

slaves. According to this perspective, only the enslavement of pagans and other non-Muslims is legitimate, for it can be seen as a means of saving the unbelieving. This stipulation surely was one of the most blatantly violated in the many slave raids in sub-Saharan Africa (cf. Willis 1985a; on the legal and ethical aspects of enslaving black Africans see especially Barbour/Jacobs 1985).

4 This is the goal Brahim (cf. p. 281f.) wants to achieve: to have a bīẓān providing evidence of him being a free man and full member of bīẓān society. This seems to work best when there is no more co-residence and master-slave relations can be relegated to past generations (see also the case of Ahmed presented by Meskerem Brhane 1997a: 142ff.).

5 Among others, Meskerem Brhane (1997a: 249f.) cites the case of Youba Ould Abdi, the son of Abdi Ould Embarek, who had been a former slave and right hand of Bakkar Ould Soueid Ahmed (ʿamīr of the Tagant until the French conquest). After colonisation both successively became very powerful and prominent figures in Tidjikja politics. However, the colonial records of this case, as well as the study of Ould Khalifa (1991), are more or less mute on the issue of how and whether the low-class origin of Youba and his father became a topic in their fights with the bīẓān notability. To my knowledge the slave past of Youba's father, which supposedly forbade him a leading position in political life, was put forward by a bīẓān delegation to the French administrators on the occasion of one major conflict at least (cf. Ould Khalifa 1991: 693; see also p. 168).

6 This can also be interpreted as being revealing of an increasing dichotomisation of bīẓān society into bīẓān, or here perhaps rather white Moors versus sūdān, i.e. black Moors, which Meskerem Brhane (1997a: 46) assumes.

7 Sūdān who manage to make a career are accused of forgetting about their past once they have attained a good post. Often having been supported by influential ḥarāṭīn themselves, they fail to haul up members of their own community, for fear of endangering their newly acquired position. Consequently they are accused of forgetting those whom they come from, and of not showing the same solidarity towards their brethren as bīẓān do.

8 Such definitions are used by bīẓān, who state that there is nothing different about the sūdān and bīẓān except their colour, for both speak Arabic, and thus are as Arab as residents of Egypt or Tunisia, where there are people of light and dark complexion too (Interview Tourad Ould Taleb Mokhtar, zwāya, 3.2.1996).

9 This is the view held by the present majority of ḥarāṭīn activists. While it seems to have a great support among the (many) sūdān living in the kébbé, the shanty towns of Nouakchott and the other few large cities of Mauritania, it has – as could be revealed in the present analysis – only a partial influence on sūdān practices in the rural hinterland.

10 Mokhtar Ould Daddah liked to portray Mauritania as a hyphen between black and white Africa, i.e. between sub-Saharan and North Africa (cf. Balans 1980: 523; De Chassey 1984: 291). In some respects the country still is perceived in this way, e.g. it is of concern to both scholars of North Africa and the Middle East and to scholars of sub-Saharan Africa. On the political

level, however, the northwards drift of Mauritania seems to be definitive. Already a member of the UMA (Union du Maghreb Arabe), uniting the Maghrib states of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, Mauritania recently was even recognised as a border state of the Mediterranean Sea by the European Union (1995 Madrid conference on the economic integration of nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea).

11 Discrimination against black Africans occurred all over Mauritania, including remote rural areas such as the region of Achram-Diouk. However, it has to be noted that many bīẓān and sūdān also protected black Africans and people of Senegalese origin from persecution, sometimes facing considerable dangers themselves in the process.

12 The initial incident had taken place between Senegalese Soninké farmers and Fulbe herders from Mauritania. In the course of this conflict two Soninké were killed. In Senegal an estimated 15,000 to 40,000 bīẓān shops of a bīẓān community estimated between 300,000 and 500,000 people (thus controlling about 85 percent of the small retail trade), were looted. The later "repatriation" was managed by an airlift linking Dakar and Nouakchott (cf. Baduel 1989: 46ff; Magistro 1993: 203ff.). For further information on the 1989 conflict, euphemistically called "événements" in Mauritania, refer to: Santoir (1990a, b); Marchesin (1992: 210-25); Schmitz (1993, 1996); Clausen (1993, 1994b); Wegemund (1990); Park/Baro/Ngaido (1993).

13 John Magistro 1993: 203) reports that most ḥarāṭīn involved in the 1989 riots in Nouakchott were brought into the capital on trucks. Such accounts leave much room for speculation. First they are able to relieve the Nouakchott ḥarāṭīn at least partially of the charge of having performed and encouraged the killings. Second, the government is charged with having deliberately fuelled the riots instead of fighting them. And third, those having done the dirty job again are the most "ignorant" and "backward", i.e. the rural ḥarāṭīn. The rationale for the riots taking place in the Senegal valley was first of all an economic one. Landless ḥarāṭīn sought to appropriate black African land and belongings. This was supported by the state authorities, equipping groups of ḥarāṭīn with weapons supposed to be used for self-defence, but which were more likely to have served other ends, while groups of displaced black Africans started from Senegal raids on their homeland, to get back at least some of their property and herds (cf. Ould Cheikh 1994a: 36, note 12; Santoir 1990a)

14 Mauritania recruited teachers for the new Arabic branch of state education first of all from the traditional Qur'ān schools. Therefore the country did not import teachers from other Arab countries, such as Egypt, on a large scale. These people, for a number of reasons such as social antagonisms in their countries of origin, were likely to be adherents of ideologies such as Islamic fundamentalism and, as Werner Ruf (1997: 71ff.) showed for the case of Algeria, had a decisive impact on the spread of these new ideologies.

15 There continued to be two branches, a French and an Arabic one, in the Mauritanian educational system. Former reforms had minimised the amount of French in most classes, and closed down bilingual classes. The division into two distinct branches, a French one preferred by the black Africans, and

an Arabic one preferred by the bīẓān and sūdān, then lived on, especially on the level of secondary education and university teaching. This policy, however, hits only a part of the Mauritanian population. The poor quality of the state schools, as well as their failure to provide an adequate knowledge of foreign languages, made most members of the Mauritanian establishment send their children to private schools, thus escaping all attempts at Arabisation (cf. Taine-Cheikh 1994).

16 The Fulbe Aynaabe are a pastoral group within the Halpulaar'en community of Mauritania. They used to occupy the right bank of the Senegal river valley. During the conflict between Mauritania and Senegal in 1989, the Fulbe Aynaabe are reported to have been among the black African ethnic groups who suffered the most from persecution at this time (cf. Sall 1999). Commonly the Halpulaar'en in Mauritania are distinguished into three broad, and partly overlapping categories: the Fulbe (or else Peul) jeeri, who are principally pastoralists and practise some rainfed farming, the Fulbe waalo, who besides pastoral activities put a stronger emphasis on recession agriculture, and the Fulaabe, who mainly live in the Guidimaka region, and combine rainfed agriculture and pastoralism (cf. Santoir 1990b: 569f.). For further aspects of the Halpulaar'en in Mauritania refer to Santoir (1990a, 1993, 1994); Schmitz (1990a, b, 1993, 1996). Further aspects of Fulbe identity formation are e.g. elucidated by Botte/Schmitz (1994), Diallo (1997), and Guichard (1996).

17 The claim of the Fulbe to have an Arab origin is reported to have first occurred in the central Sudan in the early 19th century. According to this claim, the Fulbe descend from Uqba ben Nafi (cf. Braukämper 1992: 84). This interpretation of Fulbe origins, however, never gained broad acceptance, and is contradicted by anthropological evidence.

18 Parti Républicain Démocratique et Social

19 Hans-Dieter Evers and Günther Schlee (1995) provide a thoughtful analysis of how ethnicity and the production of difference comes to be a decisive factor shaping statehood in certain countries of the third world in the age of globalisation.

20 This concerned a violent conflict between large parts of the Tarkoz and the Ahel Swayd Aḥmed at Achram in 1983 which was – again – instigated mainly by sūdān. The clashes in these times were so violent that the army intervened and had to separate both parties.

21 A household servant in 1995 earned, in addition usually to sharing food and shelter with the employers, between 2-3,000 UM per month; the wage sometimes also depended on the amount of work.

22 Very sensitive discussions of how slaves and former slaves use distinct religious practices, most often derived from Sufi spiritualism, to create their own religious sphere are provided by Jonathon Glassman (1991) and G. Makris (1996).

23 Praying in a community and especially guided by a learned man is always to be preferred.

24 Some of these were hosted by sūdān and of course in the presence of such prestigious personalities there was no question of going to the mosque.

Instead the prayers were performed at home and guided by the guests, thus giving their sūdān hosts a renowned opportunity to experience the traditional bīẓān mode of prayer.