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# Going “Off road”: With Toyota, Chech and E-Guitar through a Saharian Borderland

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(Wien)

This article<sup>1</sup> deals with transregional mobility of Tuareg (Imajeghen<sup>2</sup>) in the central Sahara, in the borderland between Libya, Algeria and Niger. It concerns, however, not the cyclic and other “traditional” movements of nomads with their livestock, but it concentrates on situativ crossings of borders of “new modern” nomads, who move in the Libyan-Algerian-Nigerian borderland without papers, identity-cards or passports. With that transregional mobility they created a new space of agency and a new culture of migration. The acteurs are called Ishumar, a term derived from the French word “chômeur”, which defines originally unemployed persons. Meanwhile the term underwent a change of meaning and characterizes a certain way of life beyond tradition and convention. The Toyota, the chech, i. e. the traditional veil of men, and the e-guitar symbolize modern expressions of the Ishumar’s affiliation and characterize their way of life. In the central Saharan created new space of agency the boundaries between migration, trade and smuggling melt together and the protagonists act beyond state loyalties.

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<sup>1</sup> The material to this article originates from a 2 years field research period for my PhD thesis at the Institute for Cultural- and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna and is part of the FSP Wittgenstein research project at the Commission for Social Anthropology at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Kohl 2005, 2006b). Thanks a financial support of the OMV Business Unit Libya the continuation of this main topic was made possible for me (Kohl 2006a). The AUA, Austrian Airlines, supported the project in form of a free flight to Libya.

<sup>2</sup> Imajeghen (Sg. masc.: Amajegh, sg. fem.: Tamajeq) is their self nomination, whereas “the name Tuareg derives from the Bedouin Arabic *ṭwāreg*, a plural of *ṭārgi*, which is held to be a *nisba* adjective from Targa, the Berber name of the Provinz Fazzan in Libya, thus meaning a man from Fazzan“ (PRASSE 1999:380).

## 1. Borderliner of the central Sahara

*“We Ishumar, we are the only ones who still have freedom. We always move between Niger, Algeria and Libya. If you once got to know that way of living, you can’t go back. We are free. And we have a sort of living philosophy: laughing, drinking tee and enjoying our life.”* Ibrahim is laughing. The practical life of the Ishumar contrasts with that very enjoyable attitude and fits much more Moussa’s statement “we only know the hard life”. Most Ishumar nevertheless possess an amazingly humorous self irony, which permits to deal with their often at the subsistence level situated life. Who are these as Ishumar designated Tuareg (Imajeghen), which play a completely substantial role particularly for the central Sahara?

The term Ishumar<sup>3</sup> arose in the 1960ies and designated all those Tuareg, which gave up their nomadic life due to political crisis, phases of droughts in the Sahel and a general lack of perspectives and migrated to the surrounding states in search of employment (Bourgeot 1995:437; Hawad 1991:126). During the upheaval in Niger and Mali in the early 1990ies the term marked all resistance fighters who took up an armed guerilla-fight against the central governments. During the last ten to fifteen years, lots of Ishumar settled down with their families in Libya and Algeria with which the term got an additional dimension. It refers now no longer purely exclusively to young men, but includes also their women and families. Besides the term Ishumar is not anymore used as a devaluing othering but designates themselves self-confidently.

### 1.1 Crisis, droughts, rebellion: last exit migration

Three transformation processes were finally decisive for the formation of the Ishumar. The first transformation is to be considered against at the background of the independence of the African states in the 1960ies. The living areas of the pastoral nomads were cut, their economic cycle amputated and their political autonomy was extracted. The

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<sup>3</sup> Sg.: masc.: Ashamur, sg. fem.: Tashamurt; pl. fem: Tishumar.

Tuareg were integrated into new political systems and neither got political force nor social or economic support.

In addition two drought periods in the Sahel diminished their living conditions: a first period from 1969 to 1974, a second from 1984 to 1986 (Spittler 1989:43). The nomads of Niger had hardly recovered from the droughts, when a further crisis broke out over them which was known as the “Tuareg-Rebellion”. The fights soon spread to Mali and resulted in military collisions between Tuareg rebels and military forces.

These three crises led to the development of a new group of Tuareg, which differ by several characteristics from others: Ishumar are a heterogeneous and plural entity, in which all social strata with different geographical origins are combined and mixed. Thus developed a new group of Tuareg, whose social structure goes beyond the traditional system. They created new social connections just by their common fate and their solidarity for each other. For all Ishumar it is common, that they are victims of the political and economic mismanagement in their countries of origin. These circumstances tempted or forced them into migration. But in migration they are again a group of marginalized and discriminated, politically and economically posed at the edge of society (Bourgeot 1995:437ff.; Claudot-Hawad 2002:98ff.).

By their life circumstances at the boundaries of society and state power, they developed own strategies. Ishumar use traditional attributes, like the Chech (the traditional veil for men) in a new context and they created with bass and e-guitar a new style of music by which they describe their lifes in critical lyrics. Before we turn to their cultural expressions and attributes I will describe their new space of agency in the central Sahara, in which Ishumar developed new life and survive strategies.

## **1.2 Boundaries create new spaces of agency**

Despite, or straight because of the national boundaries, a new space of agency developed during the last years between Libya, Algeria and Niger. This action area could only be formed because of the completely

different social and political systems developed in the respective national territories. This circumstance has the consequence that commerce and trade mixed during the last two decades with smuggling and migration. The acting participants operate in both cases beyond national loyalty and established thereby a transnational space of agency in the central Sahara. In this area territorial boundaries blur and conceptions of center and periphery are newly constructed. The Libyan oases Ghat, the Nigerien town Arlit and the Algerian oases Djanet are from a national point of view peripheral borderlands far from the influence of the respective capital. In the context of the supraregional space of agency however, these villages inherit a central position from which trade-, smuggling-, and migration routes begin and end.

With these activities around trade, smuggling and migration an illicit, informal, illegal or hidden – however one would call it – economy was formed, which must not have a compelling subversive character. These also as “second economies” (Donnan, Wilson 2001:87) designated strategies are never excluding, disturbing or undermining processes of national economies. On the contrary, they can make remarkable contributions to the superordinate economies by smoothing the imbalance of the national systems. However they play not according to national rules but ignore national power or compete with it. Second economies are however doubly marginalized. They are found at the edge of economic control, at the edge of national power and they are pursued as well as expelled, since they represent a threat to the national authority. At the same time however they are not revolutionary. Neither smugglers nor illegal migrants want to undermine the state’s power and control, since their own existence is depends to a high degree on the national sovereignty (Donnan, Wilson 2001).

The name of these activities in the new space of agency is interesting: “afrod” respectively “off road”. The term “off road” is an advancement of the French word “la fraude” (fraud), which was taken into Tamasheq as “afrod”. Originally this term designated activities of Ishumar who, with with some old dromedaries or exhausted donkeys and a small capital, tried to develop a trade which was often settled

between fraud and smuggling<sup>4</sup>. With increasing tourism in the Sahara a certain characteristic of many desert lovers was developed: the organization of their journeys apart from designated roads, tracks or even settlements. This activity was called off road. Since the mobility of Ishumar is not mainly concentrated around smugglers, traders or illicit migrants only, but much more a general movement of “modern nomads”, the term “afrod” experienced a meaning of change and a modification towards “off road”. Going “off road” designates the special mobility of Ishumar, of men, women and even children, who move without passports or documents of identity between Niger or Mali, Libya and Algeria.

Although meanwhile “off road” refers to the mobility in general and refers to men and women equally, the activities of men inherit a broader area in that space of trading and smuggling. The boundaries between trade, smuggling and migration are always flowing. All three fields of action interact and intervene with one another. Those, who operate in trade, move on illicite routes and those who smuggle goods, also transport Ishumar and other migrants through the Sahara.

## 2. Going “off road“

The life of Ishumar is led between territorial and social boundaries. Their space of agency therefore can be characterized as a borderland. Borders, however, are not excluding separate interfaces and borderlands are not empty areas, but much more places of creative production (Rosaldo 1989:208; 1988:87). In this function the way of their imbedding into the superordinate national system is substantial since borderlands represent national control. Borderlands are at the same time zones in which cultures overlap, zones in which cultures develop a certain mix, zones of experimental creativity, but in addition zones of rule, control and power.

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<sup>4</sup> See Elleli ag Ahar 1990:142 (The name is a Pseudonym meaning literally “free man / noble man, son of the lion”).

The borderland between Libya, Algeria and Niger became the new space of agency for Ishumar. But not exclusively Ishumar move in that area. Those Sub-Saharan (particularly from Ghana or Nigeria) who cross Libya with the aim of reaching Europe, rely on the ways and transportation facilities of the Ishumar. The fact that this new transit passage gains an ever increasing importance recently was noticed by officials of the European Union. The EU instrumentalized Libya as a European guard in order to stop the illegal migration. Europe disguises its repressive measures as a humanitarian assistance. It pretends to save human beings from death by drowning to fight the international trade of human beings and prevents illegal immigration. According to Franco Frattini, European Union Commissioner for Law and Home Policy, the migration stream must be directed and if necessary fought because Europe needs suitable immigrants, who fill up the job market and compensate the rising costs of our welfare system (Streck 2005). Libya is demanded to stop the illegal immigration flow not only on the Mediterranean sea-border but also to reinforce the controls in the borderland between Algeria and Niger. In winter 2004 Libya was instructed by the EU to initiate large deportation campaigns. In the course of these actions armed soldiers stormed houses, arrested all persons without papers and particularly all those with dark skin who apparently were additionally suspicious. After one week the majority had to be freed since the prisons had not been furnished for the masses of arrested and neither food nor water were available. All those who spoke Tamasheq were released, no matter if they were in possession of papers or not.

Here we reach a point the European Union ignores completely. The illegal migration to Libya concerns two completely different strategies and actors: Ishumar move for years without papers in the knowledge of the several governments through the borders. But in contrast to the other Sub-Saharan migrants they stay in Libya or Algeria and move just in their created borderland. The EU however does not differentiate between potential Europe-migrants and local border liner (Kohl 2007). The consequences of that nonreflected and inconsiderated

politic will become clear in the following stories of two Ishumar who cross the borders in order to get a better living opportunity away from poverty, repression and marginalization.

### **2.1 Life in transit**

“You never know, perhaps you still drink tea with him before you go and then he lurks you behind the next bend. The bandits know, that much money goes that way. But if they don’t find anything with you, “khalas” (end), again and again people disappear on the way ...” describe Moussa and Aghali. Moussa already went the way five times. Aghali crosses it constantly. The way, that is a cumbersome footh path over the Tassili mountains, which seperate Libya from Algeria. Moussa and Aghali are typical Ishumar. Both are in the mid twenties, both grow up as nomads in the Air mountains, both moved due to the droughts in 1984 with their families to Arlit, and with the beginning of the rebellion both left their home in order to search employment in Libya. Moussa left Niger at the age of 14 together with his older brother, after some relatives had been shot in course of the rebellion. He first went to Djanet (Algeria) where he found work in a power station. Some years he spent in Illizi and In Amenas (Algeria) working only casually before he returned to Djanet. Here he got to know the dangerous and cumbersome three days long lasting footh path and decided to go to Ghat in order to benefit from the better working possibilities in Libya. During that time he became acquainted with Aghali, who crossed the Tassili mountains more frequently than others and became a guide. Aghali knows the crossable mountain passages, has information where to find even in the hot season enough water and foresees in which places bandits or soldiers could await them. But the Algerian and Libyan border posts and patros are not the only problem. The actual problem is the own people: Ishumar, which entrench themselves in the inaccessible rock formations, wait for border crossers and rob their money which often represents the savings of many years.

When Moussa went the footh path for the first time he swore never to go again. Meanwhile he went it five times. Since he also tries to

work in tourism and to sell silver jewellery and handicraft to tourists, the annual way to Niger and back to Libya became a firm component in his life. But Moussa had always luck. His cousin was attacked by bandits last autumn when he wanted to bring two large bags full with silver jewellery from Agadez to Ghat. The bandits only left his small French-English-Dictionary. The entire jewellery, a sleeping bag once he got once from tourists, water cans and meal supplies were taken by the armed robbers. But he had also luck. It was autumn, the daytime temperatures were already bearable so that the lack of water was no risk for life and the night temperatures had not yet reached zero degree.

When the Ishumar finally reach Djanet after three days permanently walking, only the first part of their journey is absolved. The second part leads from Djanet to Arlit directly through the Ténéré. The Ténéré is a mountainless plateau without vegetation which is considered as epitome of life hostility. During the Trans-Saharan-Trade that part of the desert was the highest challenge for humans and animals. Today the distance is put back with Toyotas which are overloaded with persons and badly equipped, inclined to accidents and technical defects. In summer the heat and the lack of water are additional sources of danger.

*“My uncle worked for many years between Djanet (Algeria) and Arlit (Niger)”, tells Sumoyya: “he knew the Ténéré like nobody else. He could drive alone or even at night, that was all no problem. Last summer his Toyota had a breakdown. Weeks later we found his body lying beside his car.”*

Also Moussa knows the Ténéré and describes it like followed: *“You always travel in convoy, three, four or five Toyota pickup. You have to drive together because it happens so much on the way. Mostly accidents or damages of the motor, so that the car burns out. Last summer we also had an accident. Our car tilted about 50 kilometers behind Ghat. We were simply too heavily loaded. When we started to climb up a hill diagonally our car tilted. ‘Alhamdu lillah’ (Thanks Allah) nothing happened to me and my friend. But one of our colleagues broke his foot. Now after one year he still can’t move. We turned the tilted car that it could bring all the hurt passengers back to*

*Ghat to the hospital and we climbed on to the other Toyotas. There we were up to thirty persons on one car. Can you imagine! Thirty people in the back of one Toyota pick up? For five days! Everyone with his luggage and an additional 20 liter water can. You don't know where to sit. In dangerous areas like near the border the car is driving permanently, sometimes 12 hours without any stop. If you don't have a Check to cover your face the sun and the hot wind will burn you. Last time we had la little girl with us. We hardly saw her during the journey because she was put between luggage and cans and only her head was seen.”*

I would like to emphasize once more that the borders are not exclusively crossed by men acting in trade or smuggling but also by women and children: Mothers who visit their migrated daughters in Libya, sisters who visit themselves mutually in Algeria and Libya or children, who cross between their parents and grandparents from Niger to Libya.

Let us summarize finally the Ishumar's activities around the fields of trade, smuggling and migration. The actors in the inner-Saharan space of agency are exclusively Tuareg (Ishumar), who act beyond national authority and state sovereignty and avoid the state's control. They are motivated by the fact that they do not have working opportunities in the countries of origin. Ishumar established an informal action field in the borderland of Libya, Algeria and Niger which has two characteristics:

1. The first characteristic is the fact that the actors in this field are not part of subversive processes by which national economies are disturbed or even undermined, on the contrary, the informal trade/smuggling/migration seems to help adjusting national irregularities and imbalances of goods (Grégoire 2002). It seems obvious, that Ishumar working in Libya actually do stabilize the economic situation of the country.
2. Secondly the ways through the Sahara are oriented on pre-colonial historical caravan trade routes. With the colonial power and the post-colonial nation building process the Sahara became a remote area. Meanwhile the Sahara recovers from that development and is no

longer an isolated range or barrier between Sahel and Maghreb but much more an area of movement and mobility of goods, human beings and ideas. The Sahara exhibits a dynamic variety of historical and recent relations which are characterized by a constant change and translocal and transregional relations between Maghreb and Sahel are manifested (Marfaing, Wippel 2004).

Hamidan, a young Ashamur, a borderliner, who operates for many years between Libya, Algeria and Niger summarizes their form of mobility as follows: “*We Ishumar, we have the freedom to go wherever we want. We don’t know borders. But on the other hand we don’t have any papers. No passports, no birth certificate, no identity cards, nothing. We are like prisoners of the Sahara We can never escape it.*”

## **2.2 Legal or illegal, transregional or transnational?**

Hamidans description defines the main distinction between Ishumar and other Sub-Saharan migrants. Although they also do not possess passports to a large extent, they do not care about that circumstance while crossing the Mediterranean in order to reach Europe. Once more I mention this kind of migration because it relies on the strategies the Ishumar have established in the Sahara. But while Ishumar move likewise cross borders illegally, their movements take place within a certain framework. I argue that their space of agency and their movements are better described as transregional than as transnational. Although they act beyond national loyalties, they operate at the same time in a pre-defined field, where they can not leave and often do not want to leave. I will clarify this with Moussa statement: “*Libya is the Europe of Ishumar!*” By the way, their inner-Saharan space is an area whose once corresponds to their former nomadic radius and represents their traditional area of living and pasturing, whose use was only limited or cut by colonial forces and the post-colonial nation building process. And not to forget, for years (before the EU intervention) their crossings of the border were known and approved by the Libyan government, as their – strictly spoken – illegal presence in the country

was tolerated by the Libyan authorities. Algeria however pursues a substantially harder migration policy and stronger deportation measures. But also the Algerians are outwitted by the Ishumar, Moussa and Aghali tell me laughingly: *“Algeria catches all Ishumar without papers, puts them on large camions and drives them back to Niger. In As-samakka (the Nigerian border post) the passengers are reloaded on Toyotas which are supposed to bring the Ishumar to Arlit or Agadez. The camion turns and goes back to Djanet or Tamanrasset. The Toyotas instead of driving to their proposed villages also turn round, drive another way back to Djanet and arrive there, since they are much faster, long time before the camions.”*

### **3. The Ishumar way of life**

It still became clear that Ishumar act beyond traditional norms and values. This traditional concept of nomadism and associated thinking is called “temujagha”, a term denoting the identity and the ideal behavior of the Imajeghen. The Ishumar’s way of life is called “teshumara”, a concept which breaks with tradition and convention, extracts several elements, changes them or brings them into a new context. Teshumara characterizes a form of resistance against tradition, breaks with tribal affiliation and stratification, smoothes social hierarchies and separates itself from regional or geographical destinations (Hawad 1991:123).

Nomadism is a key element in the distinction between traditional concept of Tuareg identity and those modern variation of the Ishumar. The traditional and cyclic movement of nomads constitutes the difference to the mobility of Ishumar, which follows not cyclic but situatic rules. It can go in all directions, is temporally variable and adapted to individual taste. If one assumes an Ashamur in Sebha (Libya), he emerges in Ghat (Libya). Here he remains for several weeks or month before he turns to Djanet (Algeria), returns somewhat later again, moves to Agadez (Niger) and works finally for a couple of month in Tripolis or Benghazi (Libya). His property fits in a small bag. Accommodation he gets with other Ishumar who live in families or house-similar structures. His passion is satisfied by roaring music cassettes,

whose e-guitar sounds deals with the Sahara, the isolation, the far away living love. He is coming and leaving without any announcement, one day here, the other there.

Since Libya is open for Desert-Tourism (Kohl 2002, 2003) new working perspectives for Ishumar and additionally regularly and seasonal movements have developed. Many Ishumar found occupation in the trade with silver jewellery, arts and handicrafts. In summer they buy silver and leather goods, swords and cloths in Agadez (Niger), a center for Tuareg handicraft. In autumn they pass the dangerous ways through the Sahara in order to sell it to tourists in Libya. End of the season in spring they return to Niger, visit their families before once again they head to Agadez, buy their goods and go back to Libya for the new tourist season. But their work chances are not limited to jewellery. Due to their French knowledge they are engaged as interpreter, cook or even guides for local Libyan and Algerian travel agencies.

### **3.1 Toyota, Chech and E-Guitar**

Three attributes define and characterize the “Ishumar way of life” like no others: the Toyota, the Chech and the e-guitar. In addition the consumption of strong green tea, who is a characteristic of all Tuareg but among Ishumar it can reach however excessive extents, defines their way of living. All these elements are embedded in the traditional context and the nomadic surrounding. Ishumar modify them, give them a new meaning and replace them in a new context.

#### **Toyota versus Dromedary**

In former times the dromedary was a symbol of wealth, prestige, status and reputation and making the caravan trade in North Africa possible. Today the Toyota<sup>5</sup> got its position. The dromedar experienced in

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<sup>5</sup> Tuareg use the Toyota as a synonym for all four wheel drives. But the Toyota itself is much more used than other marks.

several areas (f. e. in Libya) a loss in meaning. Either it is idealized and associated with the life out in desert or it is reduced to a folkloristic relict in the context of tourism (Bourgeot 1995:434). The dromedary was replaced by the Toyota which represents nowadays an economically profitable capital, which attained during the “Tuareg rebellion” greatest importance for the rebels and can optimally be used for trade, smuggle and migration in the inner-Saharan space of agency.

The Toyota does not only play for Ishumar a substantial role, but represents one of the most important modern achievements. With its assistance the herds can be supervised better, transportations are organized more easily and faster and a better supply for remote areas is assured. The Toyota supports not only the mobility and therefore the independence of nomads but also supplies new possibilities of employment and thus new life strategies. Since the establishment of desert tourism in the Sahara in the early 1970ies the situation in the respective countries changed a lot. Ten years ago Sahara crossings with own vehicles were not restricted and in such a way more or less well equipped desert lovers or rally freaks crossed the desert from north to south and from west to east. Today selfdrivers are confronted with national prohibitions and restrictions which cut the development of an individual tourism in favor of an organized tourism development. Most Saharan states forbid free movements and turn the desert tourism on local travel agencies. These need lots of four wheel drive vehicles to manage and master the European, increasingly Japanese and recently also American tourists. All those, who possess a Toyota – no matter in which condition – have the chance to work either as drivers or their Toyota works “self-employed”. Which means, that during the tourist season the vehicle is rented by local travel agencies while one attends to its usual work. So the Toyota supplies a small auxiliary income in the tourist winter months.

### **The Chech and the mutation of tradition**

The “Kalashnikov generation” of the Ishumar meanwhile has put down their weapons. The Chech however they kept up. In red, yellow, pink or

orange, combined with sun glasses, jeans and leather jacket, swung casually over the shoulders or impudently combined with hair-styles, the Chech became a fashionable accessory of the new Ishumar generation. Traditionally the Chech symbolizes the whole construct of moral, norms and values among Tuareg and is a sign of mutual respect (Claudot-Hawad 1993, Keenan 2004, Rasmussen 1991). For the Ishumar the Chech became a modern attractive attribute far away from an expression of authority, respect, status or prestige. In addition, behind the modified Chech a political statement is hidden. During the rebellion, Mano Dayak, a leading rebel and political voice, wore a dark red Chech, which developed as the symbol for resistance against the national governments. He was not only used by active Ishumar, but also by others, who wanted to express their political conviction.

But also the cosmetic aspect of the men's veil may not be ignored. Beauty and attractiveness play a large role in Tuareg society, which are consciously used by both sexes in order to impress the opposite sex.

But above all the chech is a symbol to express identity and a self expression to distinguish themselves from others. For Ishumar the Chech can be described in Moussa's words: *"We (Ishumar) have also in the north of Libya no problem. The Libyans like us. They say we are poor, we have no country and no president. But we are free and the Chech is our indication. 'eshesh, albasbor wan imajeghen` – the Chech is the passport of the Tuareg!"*

#### **"Sweet like love and bitter like life"**

Very strong and with much sugar, the green tea, "eshahid", has an energetic effect. The joy of tea is a rather recent tradition, which found entrance in the Sahara in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today the tea is imported from China and only packed in Niger or Algeria. But not each green tea stands the high requirements of the Tuareg. "Eshahi once", a very strong tea with a delicious taste which got its name from its number (4011, 11 = once), is considered as the epitome of perfect tea and enjoys not only general popularity but also everyday presence. Ishumar do not drink tea like other Tuareg after meals but consume tea all day

long. As Qat in Yemen or Betel in India the tea energizes the communication, creates a social frame of the maintenance and results in a temporally limited ritual, which belongs to the rules of the tea consumption. Usually three times the tea is made. The joy of drinking is increased by preparing the tea: the dark green thick liquid is poured several times from large height to improve the production of foam, which gives the tea its unique taste.

*“The first glass is bitterly like life,  
the second sweet like love,  
and the third dental like death.”*

This proverb, probably created in context of tourism, clarifies the different intensities of the tea. A common game among young Ishumar is connected with the tea ceremony. If young Ishumar sit together, everybody writes the name of his girlfriend or loved one in Tifinagh (the writing of the Tuareg) on a small paper and puts it with the others in a pot. A certain number of papers is pulled from the pot, depending on the number of the existing tea-glasses. Every written name is read loudly and the author gets with rejoicing calls a glass of tea. That one who goes out without tea, has the mockery that his love does not want him to drink tea, thus their relationship a limited success is illuminated.

#### **“The Rolling Stones“ of the Sahara**

A special expression of the Ishumar is connected with music. The Ishumar exchanged their Kalachnikovs for acoustic and e-guitars, synthesizer and turntables and created their own music style. The music was developed as a form of representation of their identity in order to give voice to frustration, fear and hope and transport their messages. The eloquent metaphorical lyrics express protest against their living conditions, criticize the political systems, tell of ancient times, call for retaining the inheritance, besing the infinity of Sahara, their isolation, sadness, loneliness and describe the necessity of friendship and social contacts.

One the one hand Ishumar are considered as those, who break with tradition and break out of their social system. On the other hand they

are also those, who hold the memory. Like anthropologists they collect traditions: proverbs, narrations, reports, poems and all other forms of their cultural oral production (Hawad 1991:130; Claudot-Hawad 2002:132ff.). With lyric, poetry and music Ishumar attach to an old tradition which generally designates Tuareg as “gens de parole” (Casajus 2000). Lyric talent ranked among the virtues of men and women. With the adoption of this habit Ishumar provide the base of resistance of a new nomadism. A nomadism which departs more and more from original spaces and traditions, but however respects and defends the associated memories. With that Ishumar retain a piece of history and prevent the Tuareg tradition for the future.

### **Conclusion**

In this article I described the living strategies of new modern nomads in the central Sahara, called Ishumar, who created with several activities around trade, smuggling and migration an inner-Saharan space of agency. Finally I want to summarize my ideas and want to stress three important remarks:

First: The development of Ishumar is the result of several political crises, droughts and rebellion in the Sahel states Niger and Mali. These circumstances forced them to migrate to the surrounding neighbouring states in search of employment, especially Algeria and Libya. Meanwhile they move in the Libyan-Algerian-Nigerian borderland without papers, identity-cards or passports and created an inner-Saharan space of agency beyond national loyalties, in which strategies of migration, trade and smuggling melt together.

Second: The Ishumar's mobility in the innersaharian space of action is not to be described as a transnational movement, but much better designated as a transregional one. Although they act beyond national loyalties, they operate in a pre-defined field, which is nothing more than their former nomadic radius and represents their traditional area of living and pasturing whose use was only limited or cut by colonial forces and the post-colonial nation building process. The migration of Sub-Saharanans to Europe Union highly restricted by the European

Union, is a completely different migration movement, which just relies on the strategies developed by Ishumar.

Third: The Ishumar's life in transit resulted in the development of own living strategies who are at the edge of tradition and convention, which break with them or put several elements in a new context. Toyota, Chech and E-guitar symbolize their identity and express their ideas, fears and hopes.

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**Going “Off road”: With Toyota, Chech and E-Guitar through a Saharian Borderland (Ines Kohl)**

This article deals with transregional mobility of Tuareg (Imajeghen ) in the central Sahara, in the borderland between Libya, Algeria and Niger. It concerns, however, not the cyclic and other “traditional” movements of nomads with their livestock, but it concentrates on situativ crossings of borders of “new modern” nomads, who move in the Libyan-Algerian-Nigerian borderland without papers, identity-cards or passports. With that transregional mobility they created a new space of agency and a new culture of migration. The acteurs are called Ishumar, a term derived from the French word “chômeur”, which defines originally unemployed persons. Meanwhile the term underwent a change of meaning and characterizes a certain way of life beyond tradition and convention. The Toyota, the chech, i. e. the traditional veil of men, and the e-guitar symbolize modern expressions of the Ishumar’s affiliation and characterize their way of life. In the central Saharan created new space of agency the boundaries between migration, trade and smuggling melt together and the protagonists act beyond state loyalties.

## Content

Acknowledgments .....7

### **Cultures of Migration: Introduction**

*Georg Klute & Hans Peter Hahn (Bayreuth)* .....9

### **Part I: Migration as Expeditions and Encounters**

Pastoral Nomadism and Urban Migration. Mobility among the Fulbe  
Wodaabe of Central Niger

*Elisabeth Boesen (Berlin)* .....31

Finding One's Way through Places – A Contemporary Trade Journey  
of Young Zanzibari Traders

*Julia Pfaff (Bayreuth)* .....61

Going “Off road”: With Toyota, Chech and E-Guitar through a  
Saharian Borderland

*Ines Kohl (Wien)* .....89

### **Part II: Migration as Challenge: Experiences and Conflicting Values**

Mobility and Society in the Sahel: An Exploration of Mobile Margins  
and Global Governance

*Mirjam de Bruijn (Leiden)* .....109

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Politics, Patriarchy, and New Tradition: Understanding Female Migration among the Jola (Senegal, West Africa)         |     |
| <i>Michael Lambert (Chapel Hill, North Carolina)</i> .....  | 129 |
| Migration as Discursive Space – Negotiations of Leaving and Returning in the Kasena Homeland (Burkina Faso)           |     |
| <i>Hans Peter Hahn (Bayreuth)</i> .....   | 149 |
| Junior-Senior Linkages: Youngsters’ Perceptions of Migration in Rural Burkina Faso                                    |     |
| <i>Dorte Thorsen (Uppsala)</i> .....  | 175 |
| <br><b>Part III: Localizing Transcontinental Migration</b>  |     |
| What’s New With the ‘Been-to’? Educational Migrants, Return From Europe and Migrant’s Culture in Urban Southern Ghana |     |
| <i>Jeannett Martin (Bayreuth)</i> .....   | 203 |
| Dreaming of a Good Life – Young Urban Refugees from Eritrea Between Refusal of Politics and Political Asylum          |     |
| <i>Magnus Treiber (München)</i> .....   | 239 |
| Being from Faraway: Constructing the ‘Local’ in Kabylia   |     |
| <i>Judith Scheele (Oxford)</i> .....  | 261 |
| Abstracts .....   | 279 |
| Notes on the Contributors .....   | 289 |