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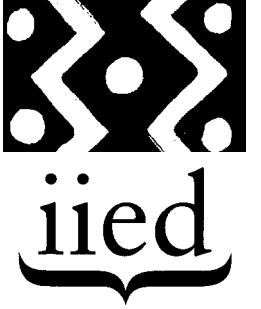

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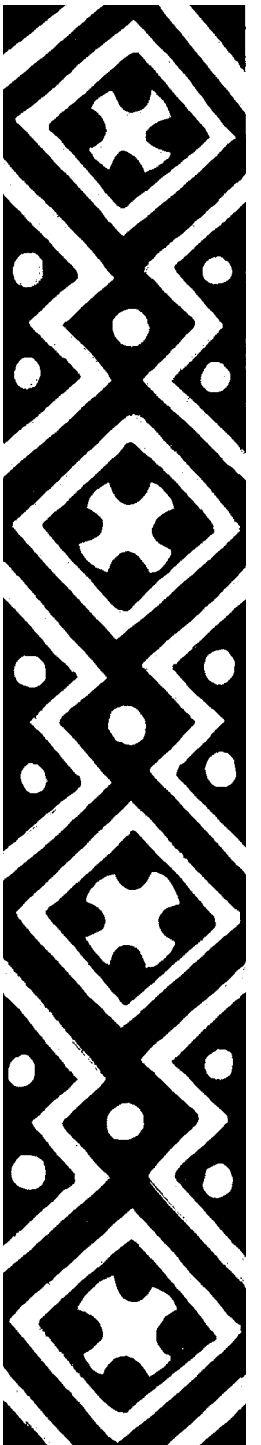

Decentralisation and local power in Niger

Abdoulaye Mohamadou

June 2009

making decentralisation work

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACTN	Association of traditional chiefs in Niger
CDS	*Convention démocratique et sociale* Social Democratic Congress
CESOC	Economic, social and cultural council
HCCT	National council for local government
HCRAD	High commission for administrative reform and decentralisation
LASDEL	*Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local*
MNSD	*Mouvement national pour la société de développement* National movement for social development
PROZOPAS	Pastoral area development project
RSD	*Rassemblement des sociaux démocrates* Social Democratic Party

1. Introduction

Niger is one of several francophone countries in West Africa whose engagement with decentralisation dates back to colonial times. The process has had a particularly chequered history in Niger, where it was restarted under the First Republic, shelved during the emergency military regime of 1974-1989 and then reintroduced in the 1990s (Hahonou, 2006).

Having been hampered by political instability, lack of State funding, tensions between villages and different ethnic and social groups,[1] and political opposition from various quarters, the local elections of 24th July 2004 marked a new stage in the decentralisation process with the emergence of municipal councils as new actors in the local political arena.

This paper will analyse the effects of decentralisation on local politics in a canton of one of the departments of central southern Niger, with a particular focus on the role of two types of actor: the 'traditional chiefs', and professionals (high-ranking officials, teachers, customs officers and union activists) originating from the canton. Despite significant differences in their status, both groups play an important role at the local level due to their position or their links with central government. Both are also concerned about how decentralisation will affect them, as the emergence of locally elected officials threatens the traditional chiefs' virtual control over local affairs, and raises questions about the professionals' legitimacy within their political parties and the state apparatus.

The aim here is to identify the issues raised by decentralisation in the canton of Birnin Lallé, and show how chiefs and officials from the area have managed to control the process and retain their position as key players in local politics. Supporters of decentralisation argue that the two main benefits of the process are the democratisation of local politics with the emergence or promotion of new actors, better public services and the opportunity for local people to have a say in how they are managed and delivered.

Experience in the five municipalities of Birnin Lallé shows that while local aristocracies still control the political process, the balance of power has shifted in favour of lower-level (village) authorities. In addition to this, political party activists and leaders of collective organisations with new approaches to development are being elected as local officials, and local development initiatives are being planned and implemented by municipal councils rather than chiefdoms.

This paper is based on data collected between 2002 and 2007 as part of LASDEL's 'Decentralisation Observatory' programme, which began monitoring about 20 municipalities in the run-up to the elections. The author was responsible for monitoring the

1. Attempts to secede by the Tuareg and Toubou, and the emergence of political groups based on ethnic and regional lines in the 1990s.

five municipalities in the canton of Birnin Lallé, using a historic and socio-anthropological approach and qualitative surveys. The first section of this paper looks at the history of local power in the department of Dakoro, where the canton of Birnin Lallé is located; while the second part covers the creation of the municipalities, focusing on the municipality in the former canton of Birnin Lallé.

2. Building a political arena

The foundations of local power in Dakoro were first laid down during the colonial period, and progressively reinforced by successive post-colonial governments. The current balance of power at the local level shows how the families of chiefs appointed by the colonial administration and those of students in the first colonial schools still play a key role in local politics.

Box 1. Decentralisation and local government in Niger

The decentralisation process in Niger brought in three levels of local government: the region, the department and the municipality. The process in Niger is unusual in that the municipalities are the only level that is functional at present, as the departments and regions are not yet operational. The layout of the municipalities was largely determined by the former cantons and certain groupings: thus, most municipalities are the equivalent of cantons, although some large cantons have been divided into several municipalities, and certain groups with significant lands and/or populations have been elevated to municipalities. The main towns of cantons and groupings became the main towns in the new municipalities.

2.1 Creating administrative authorities

The French colonial authorities established the present department of Dakoro as an administrative and territorial entity in 1947. This was subdivided into four cantons: Kornaka (by far the most important), Birnin Lallé, Soly Tagriss and Bader Goula.[2] The administration of the so-called 'subdivision' of Dakoro was largely staffed by indigenous chiefs, interpreters and *goumiers*,[3] with canton chiefs at the forefront of its dealings with the local population.

The administration also formally recognised the two independent Tuareg tribal authorities of the Kel Ferwan and Kel Gress in 1947 (Vilmin, 1947). These tribes were not attached to any cantons, but were directly administered by the colonial head of the subdivision. Fulani groupings were attached to the chiefdoms of sedentary cantons, and represented by tribal chiefs known locally as *Ardos*. The administration officially recognised one of these groupings in 1956, granting it the title Serkin Rafi and the authority to administer the Fulani in the subdivision.

The only large village in the area, Birnin Lallé, was a stopping-off point for administrative convoys. A Hausa trader from the Aderawa group settled there and struck up a good relationship with the colonial administrators, who made him the first canton chief of Birnin Lallé in 1947. Following his death in 1972 he was succeeded by a former *goumier* from another Hausa group, the Gobirawa – an appointment the first chief's family claim was due to his service under the regional Prefect. The new chief soon left Birnin Lallé and settled in Dakoro, the main town in the canton. When he died in 1981, his son Issoufou Maidabo – a serving republican guard in the military corps that replaced the

2. Cantons and groupings were small chiefdoms, respectively composed of villages and tribes, created by the colonial administration to control the local population.
3. The *Goumiers* were a company of the French Camel Corps that the colonial administration established in nomadic areas to keep order and collect taxes.

colonial French Camel Corps – became the next chief. The family of the first chief also moved to Dakoro, where it gained control of one of the neighbourhoods.

Thus, the chiefdoms of the cantons, the nomadic Fulani Serkin Rafi and the Tuareg Kel Gress are much more recent institutions than the other customary authorities. The first chief of the Fulani grouping was appointed in 1956; he died in 1984 and was succeeded by his son, who still holds power. The current chief of the Tuareg Kel Gress was appointed in 1984 when the tribe was elevated to a grouping (something his father did not live to see). The arrival of new groups of nomadic Tuareg and appearance of sedentary villages within their domain prompted the Kel Gress to put themselves forward as the head of the grouping (Mohamadou, 2003).

The authorities in Dakoro were created by the colonial administration, and therefore had no legitimacy before the colonial period (c.f. Olivier de Sardan, 1998) when Dakoro was an outlying area on the margins of the major political centres. Its population grew with the establishment of the colonial administration (Oxby, 1996; Rey, 1989) that put these authorities in place, paving the way for the dignitaries that would play such an important role in subsequent local authorities.

These authorities were used to support the ruling political regime and provide popular legitimacy for virtually every government since Niger gained its independence. Under the single party system of the first independent President Diori Hamani, anyone seeking a position in an official party body or the administration had to do so through the chiefs. Traditional chiefdoms also played an important role in the 'Society of Development' political project introduced when the military came to power in 1974, which was intended to open up the system to other socio-professional categories. The youth movement ('*Samaria*' in Hausa), national women's association of Niger, national Islamic association and cooperative movement were also involved, but it was the authorities that decided who was appointed onto the managing bodies of these structures at the local level.

Several groupings were created to get nomadic communities to engage in this nation-building project – hence the elevation of the Kel Gress tribe to a grouping and the official recognition that enabled it to participate in the management of local political affairs. In reality, however, the village and tribal authorities have little to do with decision-making at the local level; such initiatives have more to do with the regime broadening its political base and securing votes.

Over time, the authorities established by the colonial administration assumed the attributes of pre-colonial chiefdoms, setting up aristocratic courts with dignitaries and representatives in the different sectors of their domain, and taking advantage of the lack of any municipal experience to play a prominent role in local politics. They are seen as the last link in the administrative chain, and as such are on the payroll of the Ministry of the Interior, charged with settling conflicts, collecting taxes and getting local people involved in development activities. In addition to this, they control local access to land, which is a key issue in this recently populated agro-pastoral area.

Decentralisation has revealed the extent of their political influence, for while the national association of traditional chiefs (ACTN) has pledged its allegiance to the regime, it also carries considerable weight lobbying in defence of its members' interests. These chiefs are ex-officio members of two institutions created as part of the decentralisation process – the National Council for Local Government (HCCT) and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (CESOC), as well as advisory members of the municipal councils, and have also retained their role as collectors of head tax.

Box 2. Responsibilities of the HCCT and CESOC

The responsibilities of the National Council for Local Government (HCCT) include:

- Studying decentralisation policy and giving advice on all related matters
- Assessing annual reports on the enforcement of rules relating to decentralisation, the evolution of the regions, departments and municipalities, and decentralised cooperation
- Monitoring and evaluating the application of decentralisation policies, and producing periodic reports through the inter-ministerial committee for territorial administration.

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (CESOC) is responsible for the following tasks:

- Advising public authorities on economic, social and cultural affairs
- Encouraging collaboration and dialogue between representatives of different socio-professional groups in order to bring them closer together
- Enabling representatives of these socio-professional groups to participate in defining national economic, social and cultural policies.

2.2 Emergence of a local intellectual elite

The first schools in the department of Dakoro were established in Dakoro (1947), Mailafia (1948) and Kornaka (1955). The school in Mailafia was set up for the children of nomads.

These colonial schools acted as a breeding ground for the first generation of graduates and executives – the children of canton chiefs, their dependents and the families of other agents of the administration. Unlike their counterparts in other regions, the chiefs in Dakoro agreed to send their children to school, and their families benefited handsomely from this strategy by gaining the cultural capital that is the key to the local power base. The first generation of pupils from Dakoro is very active in national politics, with four former pupils from the school in Mailafia heading political parties, one as President of HCCT and one as President of CESOC.

The introduction of a multi-party system and freedom of association resulting from the liberalisation of the 1990s allowed these professionals to return to their home villages (Jacob, 2006), where they played a key role in setting up political parties and founding and running development associations. They also threw themselves behind the process of transforming the former departments into municipalities and holding municipal elections. Many of those involved in the pastoral associations collective in Dakoro have become municipal councillors.

Since the introduction of the multi-party system in the early 1990s, professionals seeking political promotion have had to prove their weight through political activism. As

the current practice is for political parties that are in power to share posts, their officials have to go into the field to seek local political legitimacy. Our observations in the Dakoro area show that they operate at different levels. At one level, there is the intellectual elite: a group of iconic officials with degrees and positions in political parties in Niamey. They set up local sections of their parties, drawing on an entourage of family members, clients and professional connections at the regional, departmental and municipal levels. At the municipal level, these professionals are predominantly teachers and nurses, who play an important role linking the central and the local levels.

The second group mainly consists of civil servants working in financial administrations (particularly customs) and projects, whose financial standing enables them to help fund their political parties. The ruling party's campaign during the last local elections was supervised and financed by a high-ranking customs official who subsequently secured a place for his wife as an MP.

The third group includes various professionals and graduates based in Niamey, Maradi and Dakoro: political activists and leaders of collective organisations who channel their energies into local politics and development initiatives.

3. Setting up the municipalities

After considering various options, the Government of Niger decided to base the new territorial divisions on the layout of existing sedentary cantons and certain nomadic groupings.

The High Commission for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation (HCRAD), a body set up by the State to supervise the decentralisation process, established various technical and administrative criteria for the layout of the municipalities. These included population size, geographic location (weighted in favour of outlying areas), infrastructures available for the future main towns of these municipalities, and distances between the main towns (which differ between rural and urban municipalities). However, studies conducted by LASDEL show that these technical criteria were only applied when they were strategically useful to those concerned, and that the new subdivisions were largely determined by social and political factors.

3.1 Key issues in the canton of Birnin Lallé prior to decentralisation

The prospect of having the department divided into municipalities and new forms of local government for and by their constituents rekindled old rivalries and created new social dynamics in the canton of Birnin Lallé.

This canton was created in 1947, with a sedentary zone to the south predominantly inhabited by Hausa, and a pastoral zone to the north occupied by Tuareg and Fulani. Tensions arose over the status of the pastoral area as it was gradually eroded by agricultural activities and the installation of numerous villages attached to the canton authorities. While the canton chief tended to regard the area as part of his dominion, especially as herders are seen as landless, the chief of the Tuareg Kel Gress grouping argued that his domain in the Tarka valley was not part of the canton of Birnin Lallé, but a 'residual' area specifically set aside for pastoral purposes under the land distribution of 1947.[4]

Although the authorities of the Fulani Serkin Rafi are based in a sedentary village on the edge of the Tarka, which is attached to the canton of Birnin Lallé, the Fulani claim historic occupancy rights to the land. Like the Tuareg, their main concern is who controls access to land and natural resources, as the power base in rural municipalities extends beyond the political arena to management rights over pastoral resources.

The canton and pastoral area were also occupied by semi-autonomous village authorities. These were not attached to the cantons, as many village chiefs had moved into the canton with their villagers rather than being appointed by the canton chief.

4. When the cantons were created in 1947, the colonial administration divided the Dakoro subdivision into two zones that were divided by the Tarka valley. The cantons in the south were recognised as territories, while the so-called 'residual' area in the north was occupied by nomads, who merely had rights of use over the area.

In addition to disputes over land, there were also rivalries over the local loyalties established as each group of new arrivals forged strategic links with the different authorities. For example, many sedentary villages associated themselves with the nomadic chiefdoms in order to gain access to land; and when the chiefdom of the Kel Gress tribe wanted to become head of the grouping it helped farmers settle on the land to increase the number of people under its administration. The Government has elevated tribes with large populations and a degree of political weight to groupings in order to involve nomads in policy management, and certain nomadic tribes have linked up with sedentary cantons so that they can carry on using pastures and water points in the area.

There are also internal divisions within the three main socio-linguistic groups in the canton: the Hausa, who include the Gobirawa and the Aderawa; the Fulani, who comprise the 'Farfaru' or white Fulani and the Wodaabé; and the Tuareg, a group that encompasses people of varying social status involved in different economic activities.

The conversion of cantons and certain groupings into municipalities generated considerable debate, negotiation and compromise. The canton and group chiefs had a vested interest in the process because they were responsible for the land and populations concerned, and because they wanted the future rural municipalities to be overseen by the cantons. In the event, the law worked in their favour, giving them advisory positions on the council of any municipality established on their territorial or administrative domain. Their ambitions for the main towns of cantons and groupings to become the main towns of the new municipalities were also largely fulfilled, as nearly all the headquarters of the canton authorities in the department of Dakoro became the main municipal towns. The only exception was the canton of Soli Tagriss, where a powerful national political leader made his village the main town.

The technical and administrative criteria established by the HCRAD[5] seemed to offer an objective means of dealing with this complex mix of social capital and conflicting claims to historical and political legitimacy.

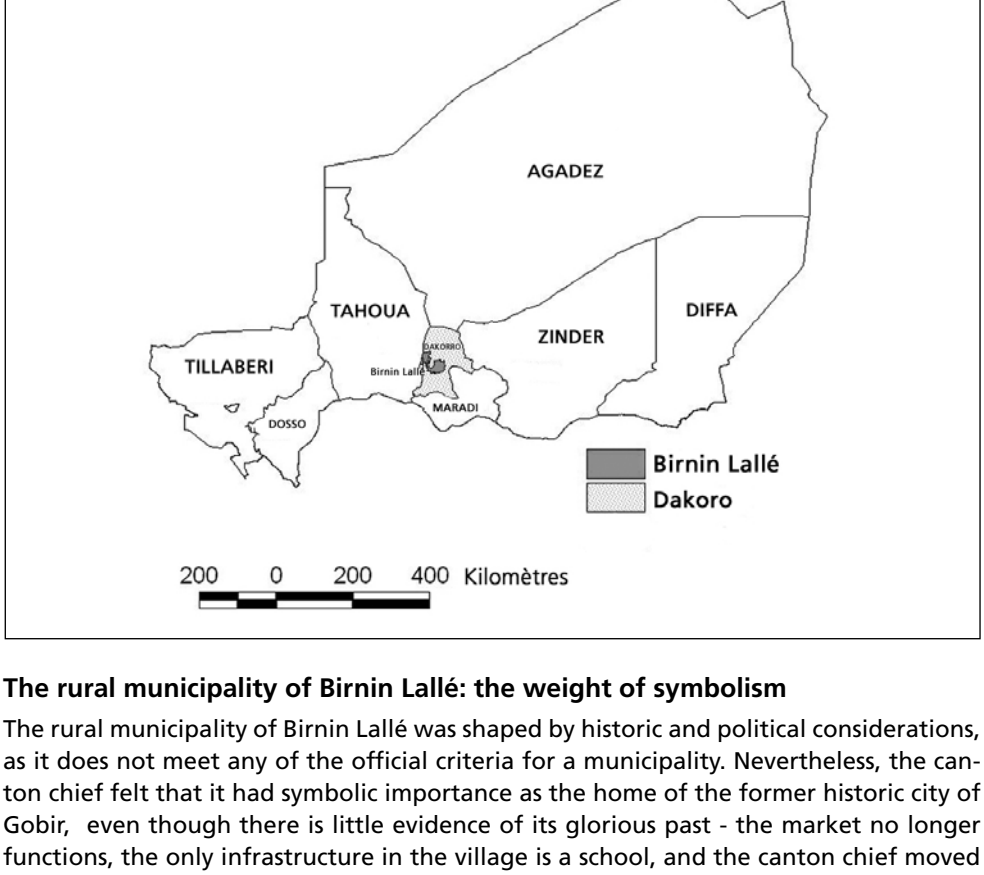
3.2 Dividing up of the canton of Birkin Lallé and the pastoral zone

The town of Dakoro lies at the centre of the canton of Birkin Lallé, which has four main sectors: the western sector around the village of Korahane, the northern sector whose main village is Intuila, the north-eastern sector around the Sakkabal market, and the south-eastern sector whose political centre is Birkin-Lallé. These sectors are organised around key villages with important village authorities, a weekly market or an educational or health infrastructure.

The canton chief initially suggested that the canton be divided into twelve municipalities, and every large village in the canton asked to be made into a municipality. Having noted these requests, the HCRAD retained just three municipalities, and a fourth was added by the National Assembly. We will now look at the retained municipalities and the prevailing logic behind them.

5. Regarding infrastructures, outlying location, distance between main towns, community agreement, etc.

Location of the canton of Birnin Lallé



The rural municipality of Birnin Lallé: the weight of symbolism

The rural municipality of Birnin Lallé was shaped by historic and political considerations, as it does not meet any of the official criteria for a municipality. Nevertheless, the canton chief felt that it had symbolic importance as the home of the former historic city of Gobir, even though there is little evidence of its glorious past - the market no longer functions, the only infrastructure in the village is a school, and the canton chief moved his residence to Dakoro (the main town of the urban municipality some ten kilometres away) in 1972.

Other large villages in the rural municipality argued that Birnin Lallé should not be its main town because of its location and lack of amenities. The inhabitants of Intuila lobbied hard for this status as their village met all the official criteria, but it was eventually divided between the rural municipality of Birnin Lallé, which wanted to incorporate it, and their preferred option of the urban municipality of Dakoro. Five villages are currently engaged in litigation with the two municipalities, and look set to be integrated into the urban municipality of Dakoro. As this absorbed the market in Intuila, and Sakkabal market went to the municipality of Roumbou 1, Birnin Lallé has been left with no tax base, and seems to be little more than a fiefdom of the canton overseen by the customary authority because of close social links with its inhabitants.

The rural municipality of Korahane: a much-disputed area

The village of Korahane lies on the edge of the Tarka, 23km west of Dakoro on the laterite road between Dakoro and Keita. Before the village was founded by a Hausa hunter called Nahantchi, the area was criss-crossed by groups of nomadic Tuareg and Wodaabé Fulani. The first well there was sunk by the Fulani, both to provide a water point and to stake out some kind of claim to the surrounding land.

There were four customary authorities in the village:

- One in the village of Korahane I presiding over the descendants of the Hausa hunter who founded the village;
- One in the village of Korahane II, whose chief Chipkao arrived with the villagers from Sourakane some four kilometres to the west following a dispute with the Fulani. Although he was from a social caste group, he was a powerful personality who took over from the first chief;
- The head of the Fulani Serkin Rafi grouping, which settled on the outskirts of the village;
- Another Fulani authority known as the *Ardo* Dodo, established by a breakaway group that left the two first villages following a dispute between the sedentary and nomadic authorities.

Korahane seems a logical choice for the main town in the municipality because of its good geographic location and infrastructures, which include a market, a (non-functioning) borehole, a mini-water supply system, a cemented well, a school, an integrated health centre and a large mosque. It is also home to the headquarters of a Fulani grouping whose members hold powerful positions at the national level, and have covered or contributed to the costs of most of the infrastructures in the village.

The younger brother of the head of this grouping is former Prime Minister Cheiffou Amadou. He funded and helped put in place the mini-water supply system and integrated health centre, and owns a large residence that his entourage claim could be used for municipal services; while one of the chief's nephews (a high-ranking officer) financed the construction of the mosque and was responsible for getting the well dug and cemented. While members of the grouping see these as laudable efforts to contribute to the development of the village and locality, the Hausa view them as an attempt to buy control of the village.

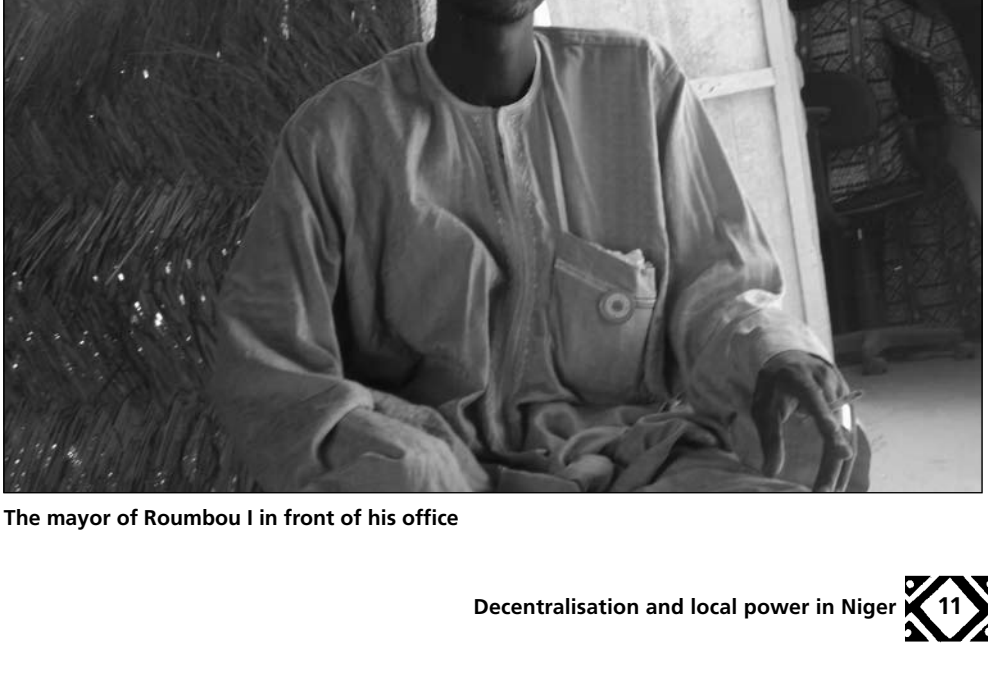
There are political and economic issues at stake here: on a political level, the canton chief and Fulani grouping are fighting for control over the municipality, continuing a longstanding rivalry that began with each group claiming to be the first to settle in the area. Both groups also want to establish an economic hold over the Tarka valley and its natural resources, and there is fierce competition between agriculture and livestock rearing in what is the last land and grazing reserve in the zone. The farmers want to make Korahane into their home territory and fodder reserve, while herders believe that their livelihoods will be threatened if farmers hold sway in the municipality as they will clear the Tarka.

Competition between the two communities also extends to the political party level. The brother of the head of the grouping was an international civil servant and Prime Minister in the civil transition government of 1991-1993. He now heads the RSD Gaskiya (Rassemblement des sociaux democrats), a political party that broke away from the CDS-RAHMA (Convention démocratique et sociale), and is President of CESOC, an institution set up to advise the government. Korahane is a fiefdom of the party, drawing many recruits from the Fulani community. The other group in the village, the Hausa Gobirawa, generally vote for the MNSD-Nassara (Mouvement national pour la société de développement), whose local representative is a telecommunications technician, the grandson of the first village chief, who was himself elected mayor of the municipality. Each party obtained five of the eleven councillors' posts up for grabs in the elections on the 24th July 2004.

The rural municipality of Roumbou I: vindication for the Ibroubak Tuareg

This sector of the canton lies in the agro-pastoral zone around the large Sakkabal market, and is occupied by Ibroubak Tuareg agro-pastoralists and Hausa farmers. These Tuareg soon became sedentary and hold the same land rights as Hausa farmers. Both communities fall under the administration of the canton chief in Birnin Lallé

Although the rural municipality of Roumbou I was one of the first twelve municipalities proposed for the canton, it did not figure on the list of municipalities submitted to the National Assembly. Tuareg village leaders saw this as an attempt to weaken the tradi-



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The mayor of Roumbou I in front of his office

tional village authority, and sent a letter of protest to the HCRAD indirectly accusing the canton chief of having removed their sector from the list of proposed municipalities.

In the end, one of the traditional leaders in Roumbou, a bank official and serving MP at the time, managed to get it added to the list of municipalities before the law deciding the number and names of the main towns was adopted. The number of municipalities initially proposed by HCRAD almost doubled as a result of similar initiatives by government and parliamentary officials. The large market village of Sakkabal was passed over as the main town for the municipality, in favour of a nearby village where the MP's family home is located.

Having seen their political power removed by the colonial administration and transferred to other Tuareg and Hausa groups in the department, the Ibroubak Tuareg regarded the creation of the municipality of Roumbou I as long overdue political recognition for their group, and a victory over the canton chief of Birnin Lallé and head of the Kel Gress grouping in Azagor – both of whom had designs on the villages in this sector, especially the Sakkabal market. Its creation also shows the role that people from the area play in linking politics the national and local levels.

The urban municipality of Dakoro

Although the centre of the district of Dakoro was elevated to an urban municipality in 1998,[6] it had neither territory nor an elected municipal council until 2004, when the district became a department. The canton authorities have their headquarters in the town of Dakoro, but exert little power there now that the town has established itself as an administrative centre and seat of central government power. These days it is a virtually autonomous entity with a cosmopolitan population and an economic and intellectual elite drawn from across the department.

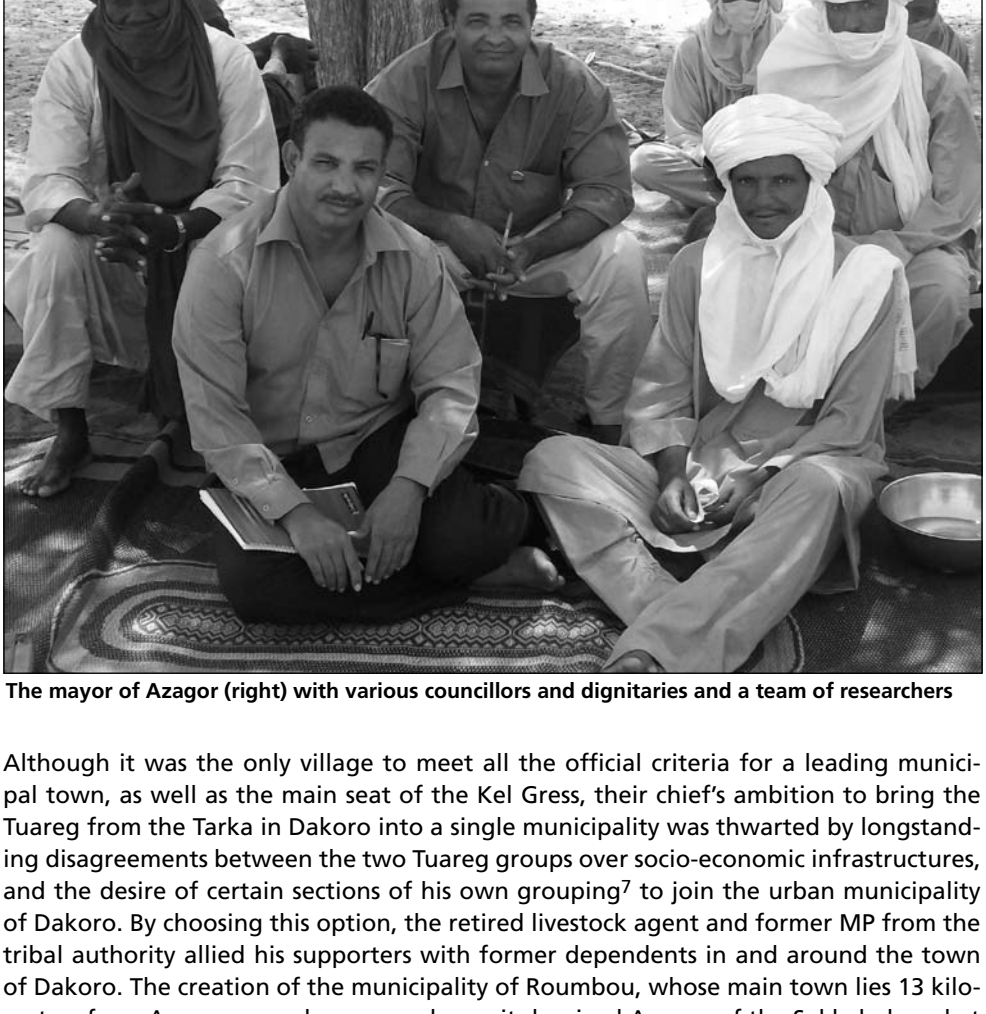
The town of Dakoro is made up of various villages and neighbourhoods that are home to every social group in the department, from the Gobirawa and Aderawa Hausa to the Kel Gress and Roumboukawa Tuareg, the Fulani and other groups. The canton chief has no jurisdiction over some of these neighbourhood chiefs, and his attempts to control the rural sector of this urban municipality have run into opposition from communities in the peri-urban zone that would rather be attached to the urban municipality, as it is closer and provides more services.

The canton chief succeeded in making his historic seat of authority the main town in the municipality, even though it did not fulfil the official criteria for this. However, he still stands to lose political control of part of the canton after failing to create a large rural municipality whose economic viability would have been assured by the inclusion of Intuila and Sakkabal. The creation of the municipality of Roumbou revitalised an aristocratic Tuareg lineage group that had been on the political margins for a long time, and the emergence of the municipality of Korahane could strengthen the customary authority of the Fulani grouping.

6. Under Law No. 096/98.

The municipality of the Kel Gress grouping in Azagor

Azagor, the main village of the Kel Gress grouping, lies about 20 kilometres north of Dakoro. The village school and canteen, health centre, cereal bank and animal vaccination pen were funded by the PROZOPAS pastoral development project, which was initiated as part of the 1995 peace agreements between the central government and the Tuareg. It also has two cemented wells, one of which was sunk by the Government, and the other by the Village Water Project.



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The mayor of Azagor (right) with various councillors and dignitaries and a team of researchers

Although it was the only village to meet all the official criteria for a leading municipal town, as well as the main seat of the Kel Gress, their chief's ambition to bring the Tuareg from the Tarka in Dakoro into a single municipality was thwarted by longstanding disagreements between the two Tuareg groups over socio-economic infrastructures, and the desire of certain sections of his own grouping[7] to join the urban municipality of Dakoro. By choosing this option, the retired livestock agent and former MP from the tribal authority allied his supporters with former dependents in and around the town of Dakoro. The creation of the municipality of Roumbou, whose main town lies 13 kilometres from Azagor, was also unpopular, as it deprived Azagor of the Sakkabal market and several villages that were ready to join its municipality.

7. The Zongo and various tribes.

4. Conclusion

The local elections of July 24th 2004 confirmed the customary authorities' power in the new municipalities, with the election of leading village officials as mayors in all five municipalities.

The elected mayor in the rural municipality of Birnin Lallé is a former civil servant and dignitary in the chief's retinue; in Azagor this post is held by the son of a tribal chief who attended one of the local schools; and in Roumbou, the mayor and his deputy are former pupils from the local village aristocracy. It is interesting to note that although they are active in two different parties, family interests took precedence during the elections. The grandson of the first village chief was elected as mayor in the municipality of Korahane; and the mayor and his deputy in the municipality of Dakoro are both executive officials and the sons of village chiefs.

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The deputy mayor of Dakoro (right) and the secretary-general of the municipality

The composition of the municipal executives reveals a local political landscape little changed by decentralisation: the power still lies in the hands of the same actors, although the village authorities have probably come out of it better than those at the canton level. We also noted that while the chiefs and political officials have pulled together to defend their socio-linguistic groups, they have had their differences over affiliations and elections.

Although it is probably too early to draw any definitive conclusions about the democratisation of local public life, it is already apparent that most of the mayors from village-level authorities are differentiating themselves from the chiefs of cantons and groupings in order to build up their own political constituency. The political parties have a role to play in opening up the electoral register to 'popular' actors, and with many groups (women, farmers, youth) expressing surprise at the outcome of the last elections, those of 2009 are likely to be much more contentious.

Decentralisation has brought about marked improvements in local development planning following the introduction of municipal development plans, and communities are very pleased with the local services on offer (public records offices, prevention of conflicts between farmers and herders, livestock vaccination, etc.) and the markets, stations and slaughterhouses resulting from investment in economic infrastructures. At the moment citizens are monitoring the situation at two levels: the rumour mill on the one hand, and the institutions put in place by certain development projects on the other.

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