

# The Tuareg – Wanderers of the Desert

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Westerners almost always imagine them in the midst of the grandiose landscapes of the Ahaggar or of the Tassili-n-Ajjer, or following their caravans across the boundless expanses of the desert. The Tuareg are also associated in the minds of many with the figure of Père de Foucauld, who studied their language and writing and collected their oral traditions at the beginning of this century. The "blue men of the desert" or "people of the veil" are thought of as warriors and camel-drivers. It is less common knowledge that they are primarily stock-raisers and live for the most part on the southern edge of the Sahara, in the Sahel countries.

**W**hat are the Tuareg really like? Do they in fact conform to the stereotyped image of them that was popularized in the heroic days when Europeans discovered and conquered the Sahara?

Rulers, vassals, monks, smiths and servants go to make up every Tuareg political group, which occupies an exactly defined territory under the leadership of an *amenokal* or supreme chief, always chosen from one of the big noble clans. Each of these classes has its place in this highly hierarchical society, has a definite part to play and possesses an individuality of its own. The noble warrior on his racing camel and the herdsman in his leather breeches or dusty tunic are both Tuareg, and the one is not conceivable without the other.

On either side of the Sahara, from Libya to Mali and from Algeria to Upper Volta, the Tuareg live in very different environments and have widely varying economies. Some occupy themselves exclusively with

raising livestock, others cultivate oases in the mountains or take part in the caravan trade. There is no one way of life characteristic of the Tuareg.

The dominant role of the warriors at the time of the colonial conquests gave birth to the ideal image of the Tuareg: noble, tall, slim, fair-complexioned. But it should not be forgotten that this aristocracy constitutes only a very small percentage of the whole population.

The full racial range of the Tuareg was created by the successive arrival of groups driven out of the Maghreb, and more particularly of Cyrenaica, by the Arab invaders, who either dislodged or absorbed the populations of the lands they conquered.

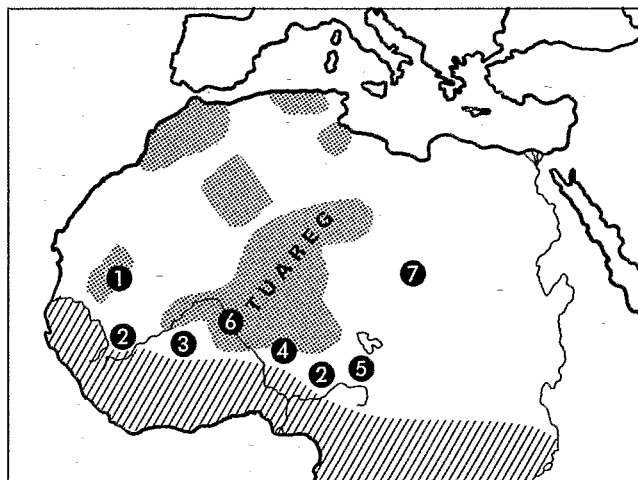
The Tuareg who were first to arrive in their new territories were pushed onwards by the following waves. They advanced to the south, where they conquered various other farming populations, some of whom they took as slaves. But they assimilated them rapidly by an integration in the Tuareg world that was so complete that these peoples abandoned their own cultures and before long forgot their origin. The Tuareg consequently cannot be identified by physical traits, nor even by a common origin: what counts is only the culture

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**The Tuareg occupy a vast territory extending from one edge to the other of the Sahara. The great majority live in the Sahel zone in Nigeria, Niger and Mali. In the north they border on Arab peoples, in the south the Fulani, Songhai and Hausa are their neighbours.**

**Die Tuareg bewohnen ein weites Gebiet der Sahara. Der Grossteil lebt im Sahelgebiet von Niger, Nigeria und Mali. In der Nähe wohnen Halbnomaden in kleinen Lagern; sie haben am Ufer des Sees Kulturen angebaut. Einwanderer aus dem Süden haben es vor einiger Zeit auch schon mit der Fischzucht versucht.**

**Les Touaregs occupent un vaste territoire qui joint les deux rives du Sahara. La grande majorité d'entre eux vit dans le Sahel nigérien et malien.**



/// Sudanese peoples  
 . Berber peoples

1 Moors 4 Hausa 6 Songhai  
 2 Fulani 5 Kanuri 7 Teda  
 3 Dogon

and the language that they share. They do not use the name "Tuareg" themselves, and many of them do not even know it. They call themselves instead "those who speak Tamashek" (Kel Tamashek) or "those who wear the head-veil" (Kel Tigelmust). A person can be born a Tuareg, or he can become one by assimilation or by imitation of their way of life; but few would later wish to give up the name, as can be judged from the many descendants of their captives who, several generations after their emancipation, continue to insist on their Tuareg culture and to assert that they know nothing of their origins.

## Tuareg Civilization

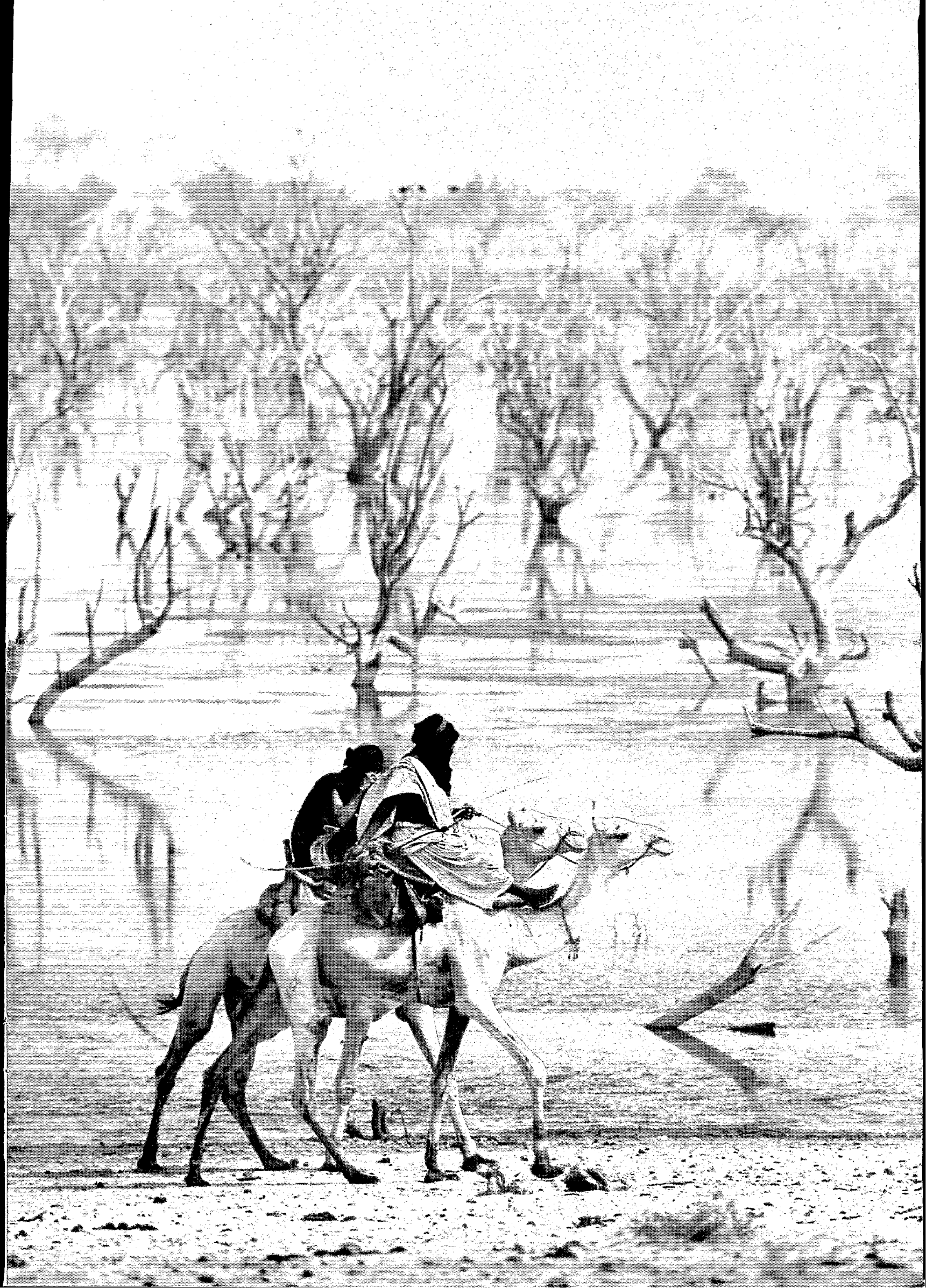
The language of the Tuareg, Tamashek, belongs to the Berber group of languages that extends from Morocco to Egypt and has survived almost everywhere in the zones of refuge in spite of the deep penetration of Arabic and of Islam into North Africa. It is interesting to note that of all Berber-speaking peoples, such as the Shluh of Morocco or the Kabyles of Algeria, only the Tuareg have retained a writing that derives from the old Libyan script found beside rock engravings in all the massifs of the Sahara. The tradition has remained alive, and faded inscriptions from days long past can often be seen today beside recent ones in which herdsmen or travellers have left their name, a message or some other

**Tuareg camel-riders passing the lake of Tabalak, Niger, about a hundred kilometres north of Tahoua. This lake is an extensive stretch of natural water that has not dried up for the last twenty years and is consequently killing the big acacias.**

**Nomad herdsmen from the neighbourhood come to water their animals here, and the semi-nomads who live in small camps near by have begun to grow crops on the shores of the lake. Fish cultures have also been tried by immigrants from the south.**

**Tuareg-Kameltreiber reiten am Tabalak-See vorüber; dieser liegt im Niger, etwa hundert Kilometer nördlich von Tahoua. Der See ist ein weites Gebiet mit natürlichem Wasser, das seit zwanzig Jahren nicht mehr ausgetrocknet ist; eine Folge davon ist das langsame Sterben der grossen Akazien. Nomadische Viehzüchter aus der Umgebung tranken hier ihre Herden. In der Nähe wohnen Halbnomaden in kleinen Lagern; sie haben am Ufer des Sees Kulturen angebaut. Einwanderer aus dem Süden haben es vor einiger Zeit auch schon mit der Fischzucht versucht.**

**Chameliars touaregs longeant la mare de Tabalak au Niger, à une centaine de kilomètres au nord de Tahoua. Cette mare forme une vaste étendue d'eau naturelle, qui ne s'assèche plus depuis une vingtaine d'années: de ce fait, les grands acacias meurent asphyxiés. Les éleveurs qui nomadisent aux alentours viennent abreuver leurs troupeaux, les semi-nomades qui vivent dans de petits campements proches ont installé des cultures sur le bord de la mare. Des essais de pisciculture ont été tentés par des étrangers venus du sud.**

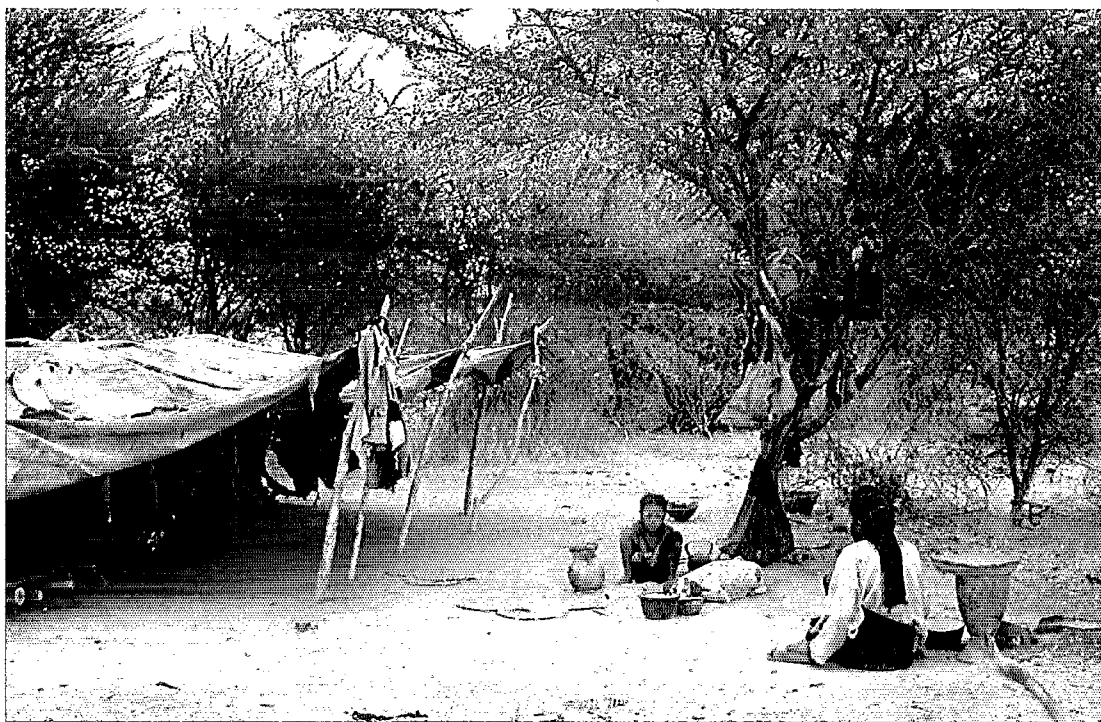
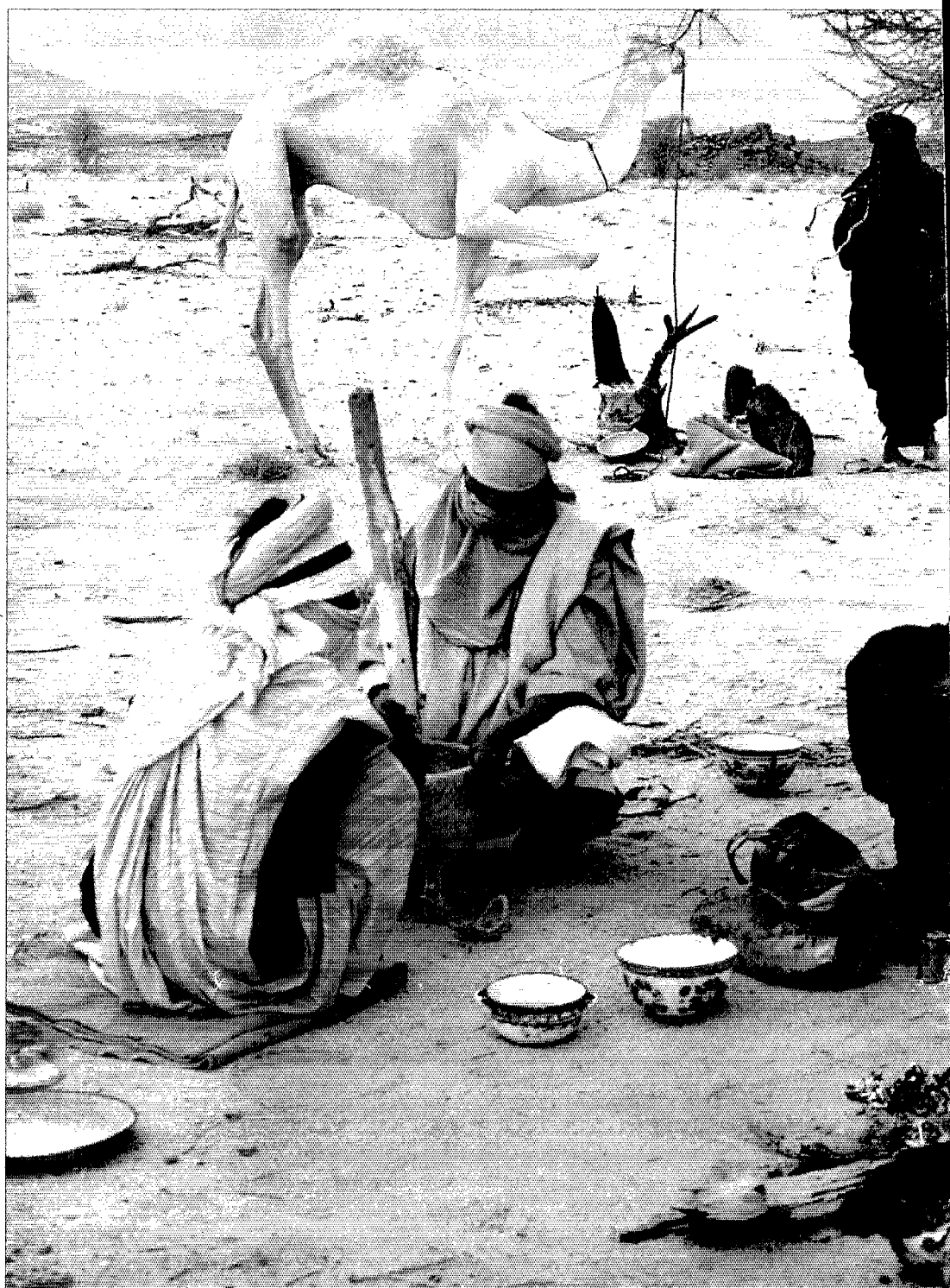




**R**ight: A group of travellers have stopped in the shade of an acacia and have hung their water skins on it. They are all men and are preparing a brief meal: two pound millet in a small portable mortar, a third makes tea, while the fourth looks after the camels. The saddle has been taken off the camel shown in the picture and placed on the ground beside the baggage. Without women, tents or heavy loads, the men are going to market or on a visit to another camp. Bottom left: Encampment with an awning under trees. It is morning in the cool season. Some elderly members of the group have preferred to stay under the tent, while women are winnowing and pounding grain outside. The tent is open to the first warming rays of the rising sun. Bottom right: A smith's workshop in the Air region. The smith is putting finishing touches to a saddle with a cross-type pommel, which here hides bellows and anvil. The wooden support in the foreground is used by women for working leather.

**R**echts: Eine Gruppe Reisender hat unter einer Akazie haltgemacht und ihre Wasserbehälter daran aufgehängt. Es sind nur Männer, und sie bereiten eine rasche Mahlzeit zu: Zwei zerstampfen die Hirse in einem kleinen Reisemörser, der dritte kocht Tee, während sich der vierte um die Reittiere kümmert. Dieses Kamel hier ist abgesattelt; der Sattel liegt jetzt auf dem Boden neben dem Gepäck. Ohne Zelte, ohne schweres Gepäck und ohne Frauen gehen diese Männer zum Markt oder besuchen ein anderes Lager. Unten links: Lagerplatz mit Plane unter Bäumen. Es ist ein Morgen in der kalten Jahreszeit. Einige ältere Leute sind unter dem Zeltdach geblieben, während Frauen draussen Getreide schwingen und stampfen. Das Zelt ist zu den ersten Strahlen der Morgensonne hin geöffnet. Unten rechts: Eine Schmiede im Air-Gebiet. Der Schmied gibt einem Sattel mit kreuzförmigem Knauf den letzten Schliff. Blasebalg und Amboss sind vom Sattel verdeckt. Die Holztafel im Vordergrund wird von den Frauen für die Lederverarbeitung verwendet.

**E**n haut: Voyageurs arrêtés à l'ombre d'un acacia. Les outres qui contiennent les réserves d'eau ont été suspendues. Hommes seuls, ils préparent un repas rapide: deux d'entre eux pilent le mil dans un petit mortier de voyage, un troisième prépare le thé, tandis que le dernier s'occupe des montures. Le chameau visible vient d'être débarrassé de sa selle posée sur le sol à côté des bagages. Sans tentes, sans lourds bagages, sans femmes, ces hommes se rendent au marché ou en visite dans un autre campement. En bas, à gauche: Campement installé sous un couvert d'arbres. C'est le matin en saison froide: quelques personnes âgées sont restées sous la tente, alors que les femmes vannent et pilent au-dehors. La tente est largement ouverte sur le soleil levant pour laisser pénétrer les premiers rayons. En bas à droite: Atelier d'un forgeron de l'Air qui exécute les finitions d'une selle à pommeau en croix. Le soufflet et l'enclume sont cachés par la selle.



EDMOND BERNUS



PHOTO DESJEU



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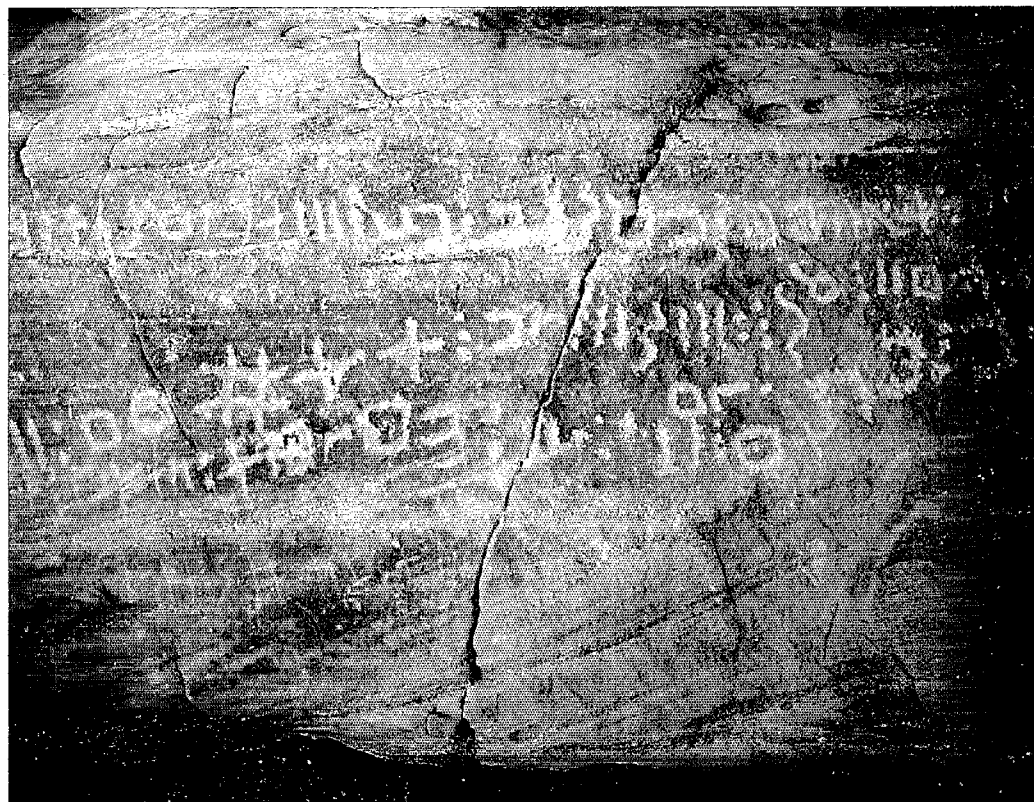
trace of their passing on a rock or on the trunk of a tree.

Civilization is in essence a common ethic, a way of behaving, the recognition and observance of a code that governs social life. Among the Tuareg, for instance, the way a man wears his litham or head-veil can be a sign of the respect or the familiarity he feels towards another person in his entourage. A young man in the presence of an old one or of a member of his father's generation will leave only his eyes free. He will drink his tea by lifting the glass behind his veil, without showing his mouth. He does not dare to look directly at his father-in-law or at any man who might, having attractive daughters of the right age with whom he has relations, possibly become his father-in-law. Instead he turns his head away and does not speak to him, but only replies briefly when addressed. The rules of propriety are highly complex and change with the sex, age and standing of the persons involved. It is allowable that a smith or a slave should fail to respect certain rules, for a special code is allocated to them in this social interplay; but otherwise every man who does not observe the standards applicable to him will become the object of gibes and epigrams which, repeated from one encampment to another, will finally make his life impossible, since they involve the threat of social ostracism. While the fact that foreigners behave differently is accepted, their manners are usually found rather coarse, their remarks unfitting, and they are excused only as louts who know no better.

The Tuareg civilization also has its material aspects, and the objects of everyday domestic and pastoral life are made by artisans and display great originality. The tent is the home of the monogamous family which is the rule among the Tuareg although they are Muslims (Islam permits up to four wives). Divorce is common, there is considerable conjugal mobility, but monogamy persists, upheld by women who prefer to leave their husbands rather than accept a second wife. While the tent of a chief is sometimes covered with over two hundred skins sewn together, that of a poor man may consist of only forty. All households have the same utensils, but they will differ in size, in quality of execution, in beauty or in the richness of their ornament. Some tents will be old, torn and in poor condition, others will be decorated and provided with edgings and pompons. Among the common household objects are wooden bowls, mortars and pestles, carved ladles, poker-work spoons, dish-stands, beds, plaited bed coverings, cushions. The ornamentation of bags depends on the wealth of the family, some being decorated in many colours and having fringes made of thin strips of leather. The bags are closed by locks covered in finely chased copper plaques, and the keys to them are hung round the neck beside the sliding leather wallet containing papers and tobacco.

Tuareg body ornaments are made by the smiths in a wide variety of models. They are used by all the women, even those of modest means, as well as by the men, who





**A**ncient inscriptions in faded tifinagh characters are still visible beside many rock engravings, which often depict animals now extinct. And the same characters are incised in the rocks even today: the graffiti of herdsmen who wish to leave some mark of their passing.

**N**eben häufig ausgestorbene Tierarten darstellenden Felszeichnungen sind noch alte Inschriften in Tifinagh-Zeichen zu erkennen. Heutzutage findet man dieselben Zeichen auf den Felsen: Es sind Sgraffiti vorbeiziehender Hirten.

**A**ux côtés des gravures rupestres représentant souvent des animaux disparus, des inscriptions anciennes en caractères tifinagh patinés, sont encore visibles. Aujourd'hui, les mêmes caractères sont gravés sur les rochers, graffiti de bergers signalant leur passage.

are fond of rings and sometimes of amulet-holders that are attached to their turbans. Necklaces, pectorals, earrings, bracelets and rings are made of silver or copper. Camel saddles with a cross-type pommel, made in the Aïr region, or with a blade-type pommel, without any show or decoration, are specifically Tuareg and are used for a style of riding that differs from that of the Beduins.

The material culture of the Tuareg is highly original. Their craftsmen use all the principal available materials for the manufacture and maintenance of almost all the utensils they need for their domestic, pastoral or warlike pursuits. The objects they produce are optimally adapted to their application in size, form and design. This has resulted in an individual material culture embodying a permanent blend of functionalism and beauty, and obeying standards that hold good from one end of the Tuareg living-space to the other.

Cloth is the only product the Tuareg do not manufacture. They have no weavers, so

that their love of flowing apparel makes them dependent on foreign markets. The indigo-dyed litham that is an inseparable part of the Tuareg image, consisting of narrow, sewn strips of cloth, is made in Nigeria, at Koura not far from Kano. It may cost up to thirty or forty thousand francs CFA, according to the number of strips it consists of. As this example shows, the Tuareg have always maintained trade with the peoples to the north and south in order to obtain goods they do not produce themselves, such as cereals, tea, cloths or pieces of silver needed for the manufacture of jewellery.

Tuareg society, while complex, is still based on an aristocratic model. Warriors whose names and exploits are sung by the poets constitute a gallery of heroes whose indomitable courage is still seen as having swayed many decisive battles.

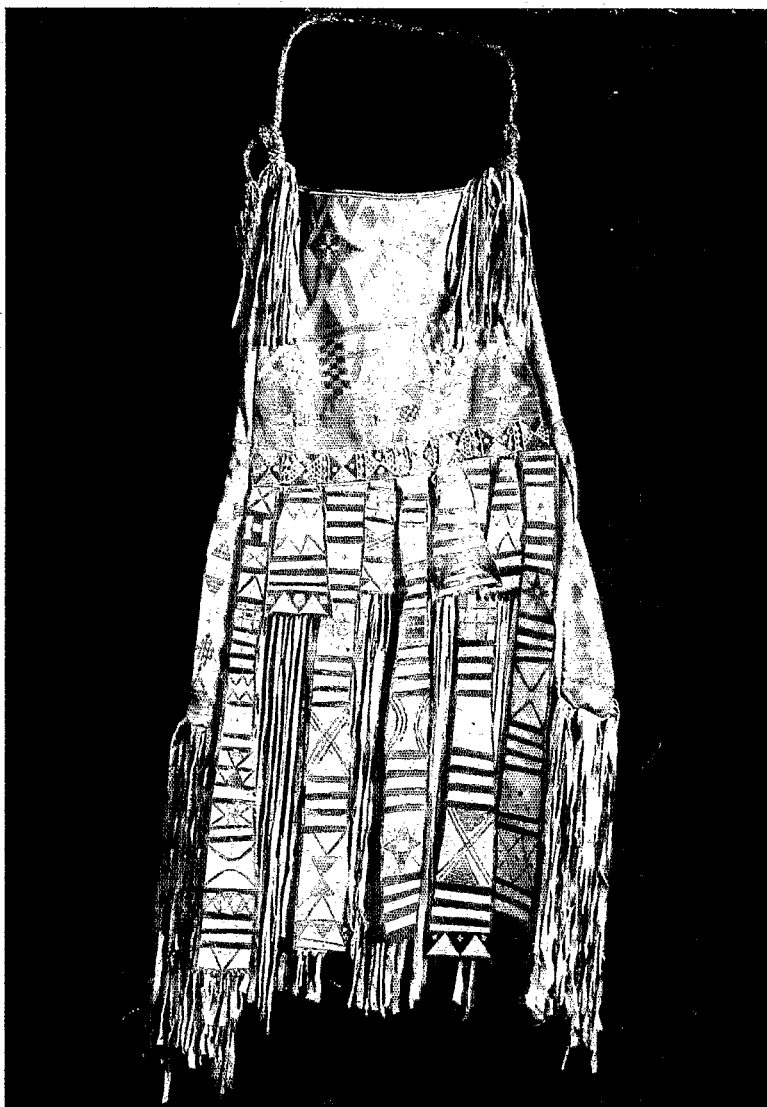
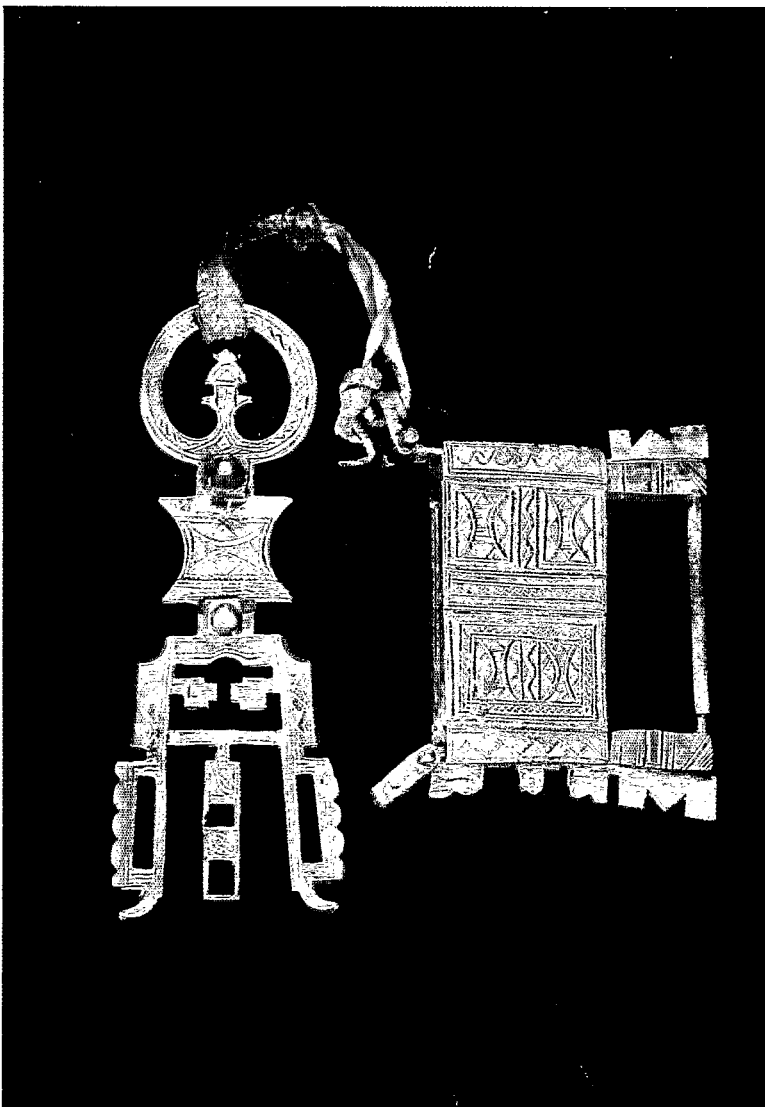
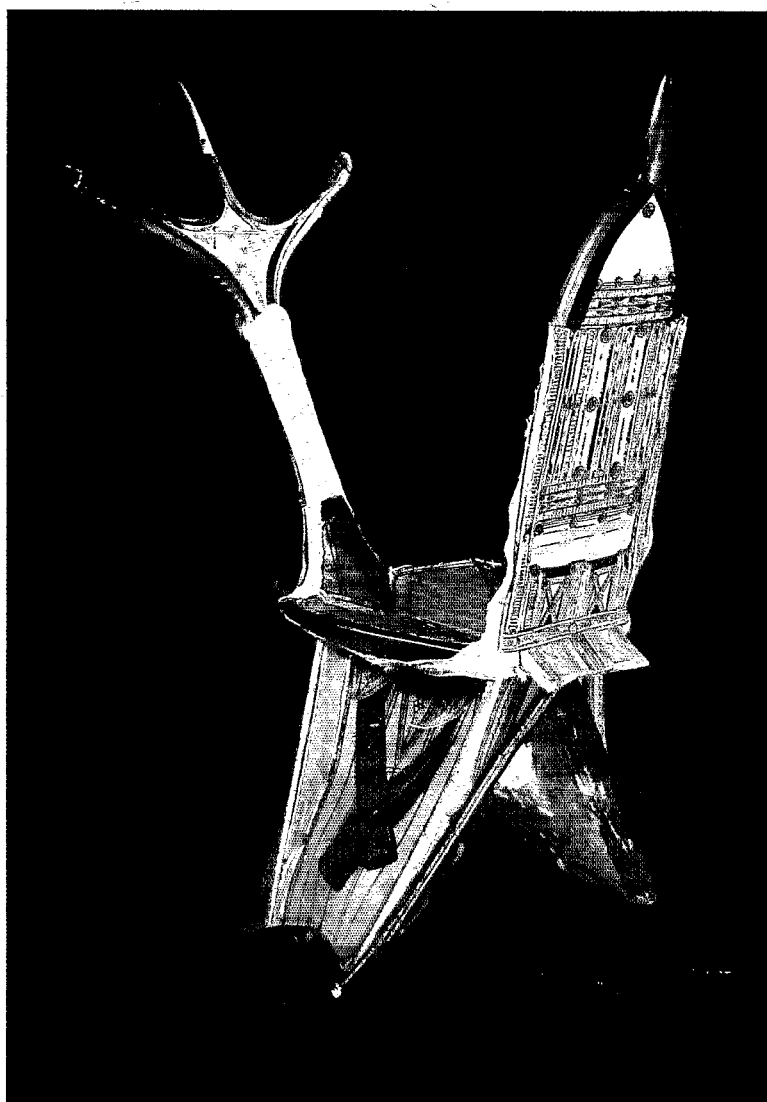
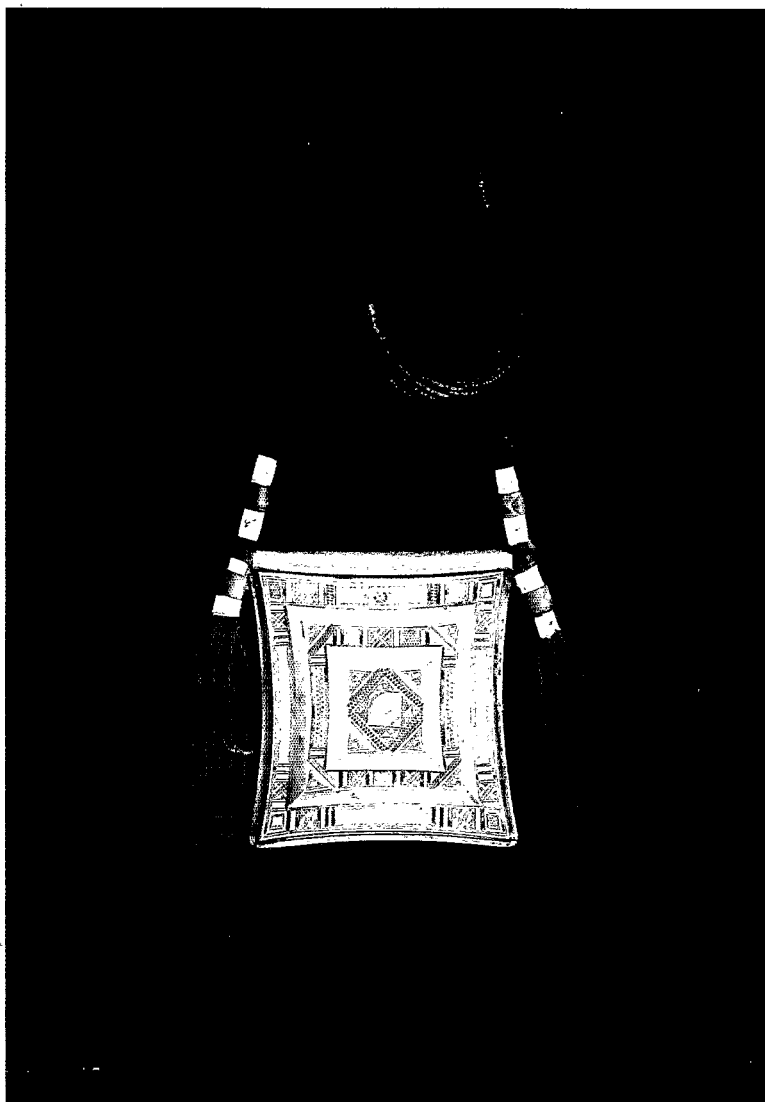
### Life in the Past

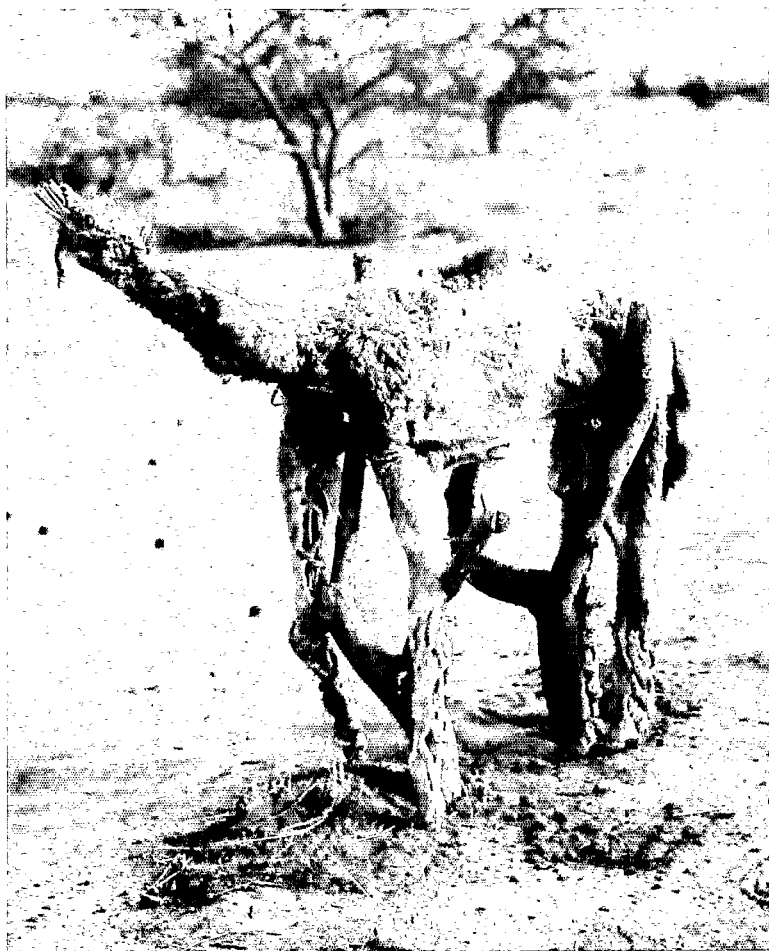
The Tuareg are a warlike people, and it is not long since they were carrying out raids and forays on the nomadic and sedentary populations around them. There were also endless wars between the various Tuareg confederations, the Kel Ahaggar, Kel Aïr, Aulliminden and Kel Geres. The commonest form of aggression was to take one's adversary by surprise and to seize his slaves and his herds. Since every attack could be counted on to produce a counter-attack, it was often preferred to launch raids at a considerable distance so as to preclude immediate reprisals. The warrior's equipment comprised a spear-javelin together with the protection against it, a shield made of the hide of a male Saharan oryx antelope, a knife and a sword. These last two weapons were intended for in-fighting. The sword (*takuba*) had a blade that was often obtained from abroad but was mounted in a standard fashion by the smiths (guard, pommel, scabbard, etc.). Some blades came across the Sahara from Europe from

**T**uareg smiths make utensils that are both functional and aesthetically valuable. Their material civilization is highly individual. Top left: This piece of jewellery is worn around the neck by either men or women. The silver plate is embossed and incised and is mounted in a metal case containing a text from the Koran as a bringer of luck. Top right: The saddle with a cross-type pommel is a model made by smiths in the Aïr region. It is so coveted that people will come from Djanet or Tamanrasset to get one. Bottom left: Lock and key, objects of everyday use, are also works of art. The key slips along a slot and compresses a spring-loading mechanism that frees the end of the case. The locks are all of the same model but differ in size, in ornamentation and in the incorporation of "secrets" that conceal the location of the key by a movable plaque. Bottom right: This woman's handbag, richly decorated with coloured leather and fringes, is one of the many models made by the women shoemakers, who are wives of craftsmen.

**D**ie Schmiede der Tuareg fertigen Gegenstände, die zugleich ästhetisch und funktionell sind. Oben links: Dieses Schmuckstück wird von Männern oder Frauen getragen. Die ziselierte Silberplatte ist in ein Metallgehäuse eingefasst, das einen Koranvers als Glücksbringer enthält. Oben rechts: Der Sattel mit kreuzförmigem Knauf wurde von den Schmieden der Aïr-Region gefertigt und ist so beliebt, dass Leute von Djanet oder Tamanrasset kommen, um einen zu kaufen. Unten links: Vorhängeschloss und Schlüssel sind alltägliche Gegenstände und zugleich Kunstwerke. Die Schlösser sind alle vom selben Typ, sie unterscheiden sich nur durch ihre Grösse, die Verzierungen oder die Einverleibung von «Geheimnissen», wobei die Schlüsselnische durch ein bewegliches Plättchen verdeckt wird. Unten rechts: Dieser Damenbeutel, reich verziert mit farbigem Leder und Fransen, ist ein von den Handwerkerfrauen gefertigtes Modell.

**L**es forgerons touaregs, en fabriquant des objets, qui répondent à un double critère fonctionnel et esthétique, ont créé une civilisation matérielle profondément originale. En haut à gauche: Ce bijou est porté en sautoir, indistinctement par les hommes ou les femmes. La plaque d'argent, repoussée et incisée, est sertie dans un boîtier métallique contenant un texte coranique porte-bonheur. En haut à droite: La selle à pommelle en croix est un modèle fabriqué par les forgerons de l'Aïr: elle est si réputée qu'on vient de Djanet ou de Tamanrasset pour s'en procurer. En bas à gauche: Le cadenas et sa clef sont à la fois des objets usuels et des œuvres d'art. La clef, en glissant le long d'une fente, serre une pince-ressort qui libère l'extrémité du boîtier. Construits sur un même modèle, les cadenas varient par la taille, le décor ou par l'invention de «secrets» dissimulant la loge de la clef par une plaque mobile. En bas à droite: Ce sac de femme, richement décoré, est l'un des nombreux modèles confectionnés par les cordonnières, épouses des artisans.





**L**eft: This straw puppet is covered in the skin of a still-born camel. It has been made to persuade the mother camel, by virtue of the smell of the skin, to accept a substitute camel calf and thus to begin lactation, as otherwise camels sometimes retain their milk after the death of their young. Right: The herdsman first initiates the flow of milk by allowing a young camel to suck, then he takes it away and milks the camel himself into a large wooden bowl. Here, after milking, he allows the calf to suck the rest of the milk. Camel milk, frothy and slightly salty, is the milk preferred by the Tuareg.

the end of the fifteenth century onwards. Among the most famous of them were the Durendal, which are still to be found today in the hands of renowned chieftains or the descendants of a famous warrior. Their origin can be identified by the trademarks they bear; they come from Germany (Passau, Solingen), France (Vienne), Italy or Spain (Toledo). Other blades, by far more numerous, are made of local iron or reworked steel, but they are mounted with no less care.

The stories of battles and of the exploits of Tuareg warriors have come down to us in long poems that survive in the memories of some of the older people, who recite them in a monotone voice and should not be interrupted in their narrative lest the rhythm of the verse and with it the thread of memory be broken. Many of these poems have been collected, written down and published, more and more often by educated Tuareg who are interested in their heritage and wish to preserve these epics as irreplaceable treasures of a civiliza-

**L**inks: Diese Stroh-puppe wurde mit dem Fell eines totgeborenen Kamelkalbes bedeckt. Ihr Zweck ist, die nach einer Totgeburt häufig die Milch zurückhaltende Kamelmutter durch den Geruch des Fells zu täuschen und sie so dazu zu bewegen, ein Ersatzkalb anzunehmen, damit die Milchproduktion angeregt wird. Rechts: Der Viehzüchter regt den Milchfluss an, indem er ein junges Kamel an der Mutter saugen lässt; dann nimmt er es weg und melkt selbst die Milch in eine grosse Holzschüssel. Hier lässt er das Kalb nach dem Melken die restliche Milch aussaugen. Die schaumige, leicht salzige Kamelmilch wird von den Tuareg bevorzugt.

tion today in the throes of change, many features of which may soon have vanished for ever.

While wars are the subject of many of these poems, love has also been sung with unstinting lyricism. The warrior draws courage in the combat from the thought of the woman he loves or of all those whose beauty, elegance and intelligence people his memory and bind him to the peaceful camp he has had to quit for a while. Before he advances against his enemies he invokes the women in whose name he is about to risk his life; they will value his deeds and repay them with their favour or with the renown they will bestow on him in their songs of praise.

Wars in the past were a permanent threat to human lives and goods. The power of the warriors reposed on their duty to protect those who were dependent on them. But the resources of this pastoral society were and are due to a much greater extent to stock-raising, which provides the Tuareg with milk and less frequently with meat.



**A** gauche: Ce mannequin de paille est recouvert de la peau d'un chamelon décédé à la naissance. Il fut confectionné pour que la chamelle-mère, qui retient souvent son lait à la suite de ce décès, soit abusée par l'odeur de la peau de son petit et accepte alors un chamelon de substitution qui amorcera la lactation en tétant. A droite: Le berger laisse tout d'abord téter le chamelon pour amorcer la montée du lait, puis il l'écarte et effectue la traite dans un large bol de bois. Ici, la traite terminée, il laisse le chamelon téter le lait qui reste. Le lait de chamelle, mousseux et légèrement salé, est le plus apprécié des Touaregs.

Without their mounts and their beasts of burden these nomads could never be as mobile as they are. The hides of their animals are used for making their tents, their bottles, bags, ropes and saddles. Stock-raising in these parts calls for a clearly defined area in which the animals can move, and a seasonal itinerary to permit optimum use of the resources of water and pasturage. The production of fodder varies with the succession of dry and wet years, which follow each other like the seven fat and the seven lean cows in Pharaoh's dream in the Old Testament. The uncertainty of the climate is one of the constants of the world's semi-arid regions.

The herds are also threatened by the epizootic diseases that break out at intervals, often decimating the stocks. The historical calendars that qualify each year with its most outstanding feature read in succession somewhat as follows: "year of drought", "of famine", "of lack of pasturage", "of cattle plague", "of rain", "of plentiful grass in such and such a region".

## A Changing World

In this second half of the twentieth century the Tuareg still live on their traditional territory, but their so well structured society has suffered some shocks and even some major upheavals. At the end of last century the balance of power among the various groups of the Tuareg was upset in favour of the Tuareg of the north, who acquired rifles. After that the warriors in the south got the impression that their courage was no longer taken seriously and that the moral values that had imbued all their actions had ceased to mean very much.

But it was the arrival of French forces early this century that led to the gravest confrontations before the precarious truce that preceded the revolt of 1917. In the course of the subsequent fighting the Tuareg warriors displayed incredible bravery. They charged on horseback or on camels with bared weapons, or they attacked on foot, attached to each other by their belts so that they could not retreat, in the face of soldiers waiting in position with their rifles at the ready. The talismans against bullets given them by the marabouts proved ineffectual, and the warriors were destroyed by their own blind courage. After this revolt, the colonial authorities broke up the traditional divisions of the country, split the Tuareg area into administrative districts that interfered with nomadic life, and fixed frontiers between the new colonial territories that separated allied or related Tuareg groups. The position of the chieftains was weakened when they lost the arguments of warfare. The role of protector had been taken over by the colonial administration, which also intervened in all social questions.

The cessation of warfare and the advent of security has enabled livestock breeders to use the land better because they no longer need remain in the proximity of the warriors who previously defended them. The big salt caravans have attained dimensions formerly unheard of because they no longer need fear attacks. The later vaccination campaigns, by cutting back livestock epidemics, have led to an increase in the numbers of the herds. Tuareg society now evolves in less compact groups, freed from the absolute power of the *amenokal*, who is still a recognized and often admired chief but is in a rather uncomfortable position between his dependants and the administrative authorities. The slackening of dependency relations and the disappearance of the former slaves has thus altered the fabric of Tuareg society ever since the establishment of independence.

While the colonial powers and later the independent states have been successful in ensuring peace by preventing the warriors from continuing their raids, and while they have eradicated epizootic diseases, they have not been able to stop the droughts. The unpredictable climate, with the threat of lack of fodder for the animals and of famine for man, is an ever-present danger that has not so far been overcome and has often not been given sufficient attention in development policies.

## The Present Day

The Tuareg today live in several states that adopt different policies for controlling them and supervising their movements. They are minorities in all of these states, and it is only in Niger and Mali that they are a sufficiently important minority for their special culture to be recognized and occasionally encouraged. Traditional ways of life still survive in many camps where domestic utensils continue to be made and used. While the leather employed for tents is often replaced by tarpaulins or plastic in the Ahaggar, it is still in use in Niger. New implements are accepted, and car pistons may replace a hammer for crushing sugarloaves. New materials such as nylon thread or plastic string salvaged from baskets may substitute leather thongs or be used for decorating wallets or key-carriers with the traditional fringes. Aniline dyes have taken the place of vegetable pigments. In the modern encampment there will probably be a few radios that can be tuned in to near or more distant stations, thus linking the nomads to the rest of the world, and cassette players may reproduce the voices of the best singers recorded at some feast or wedding.

But otherwise life in the encampment continues as in the past, and the traditional stock-raising methods are still employed. The men still do not move around without a sword swinging at their side. Neither master nor servant will travel without his weapon, whether it has an ancient blade or one of recent manufacture. Camel saddles with a cross-type pommel are still made in the Air region and are sought after throughout the Tuareg living-space. The code applying to social life is still respected, and in the face of attack from the outside even Tuareg far from their encampments continue to uphold their cultural heritage. They learn their own writing, using it today on bought stationery with ball-point pens; even though it is not a very flowing script, it is being adopted even by the young educated classes.

It is in the Sahel zone that the Tuareg have best succeeded in preserving their traditional way of life as a result of their large-scale and diversified stock-raising activities, which have enabled them to face up to the climatic hazards and to remain true to their long-standing travel patterns. The recurring droughts and the need to build up the herds quickly again after each hecatomb, however, combine to menace the fragile milieu. In view of the risks of the advancing desert, the public authorities do their best to regulate the movements of herdsmen and animals, allocating exact itineraries to each group and tribe so as to preclude overgrazing. The liberty of the nomads in time and space, no longer held in check by the weakened chefferies, has become somewhat anarchical in recent years. For this reason management policies aimed at maintaining an equilibrium between the herds and the pasturage resources – policies which have gradually replaced the former attempts to make the Tuareg sedentary – ought to be able to

count on the support of the stock-raisers. In a few instances spontaneous attempts among the breeders (supported, it is true, by the public authorities) to form co-operatives have already shown some promising results.

## The Future in Question

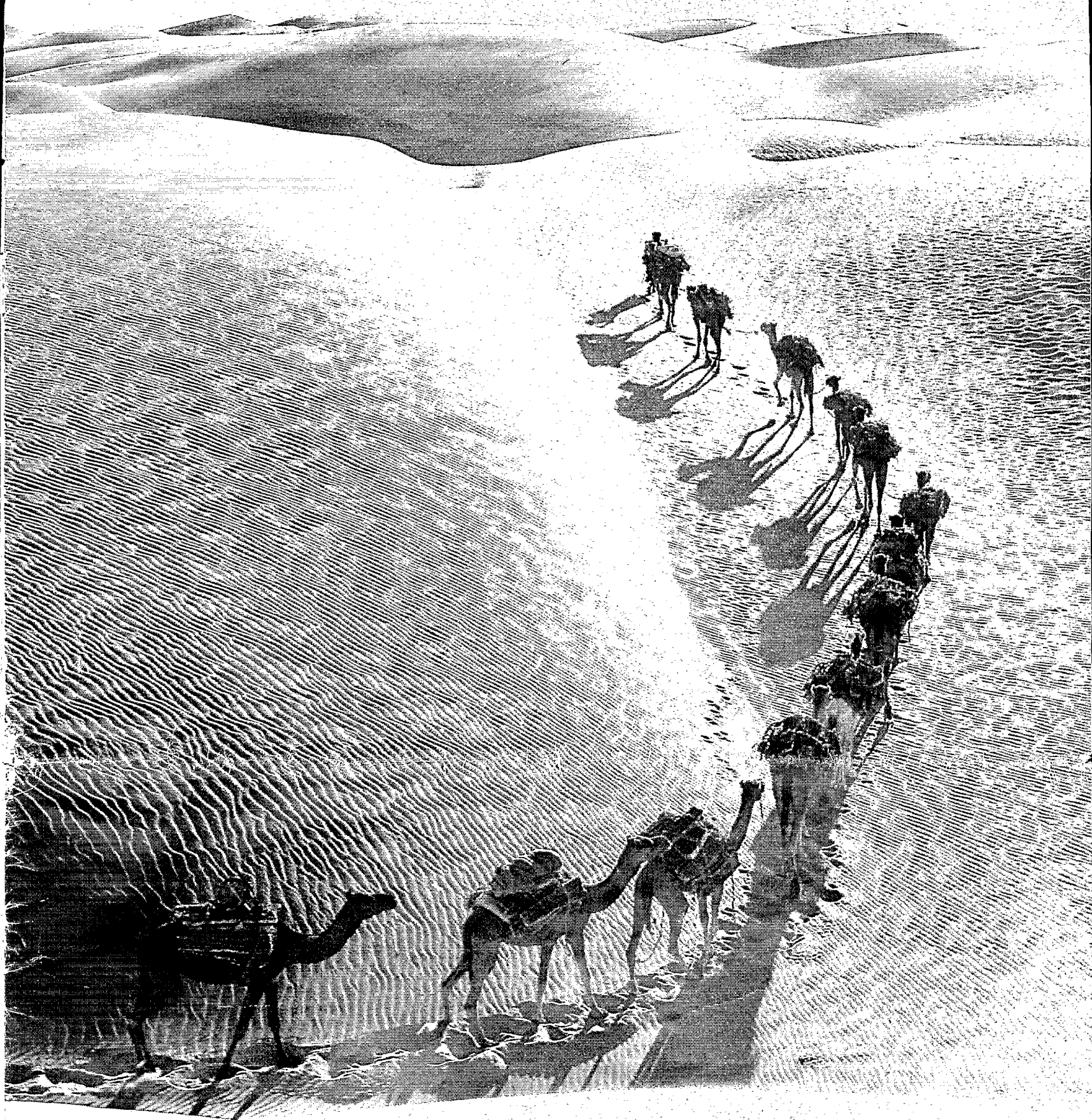
Tuareg society has shown great powers of adaptation in the course of the centuries. It has succeeded in retaining its individuality in spite of the shock of colonization and of the various policies adopted to make the Tuareg sedentary or to assimilate them in centralist states. We cannot expect today to keep pastoral societies in a timeless stability on the grounds that their traditional way of life corresponds to some sort of "golden age" that must be perpetuated at all costs. That would be making the Tuareg the guardians of a past order of things on a rather grand scale, as part of a natural park in which people and herds would have to be protected in much the same way as we protect wildlife.

In reality the Tuareg have been wise enough to modify their techniques in the course of the years, to adapt them to the needs of the new regions into which they have migrated. They have accumulated, down the centuries, a wealth of know-how about stock-raising and the natural environment, and it would be a tragedy if they lost it. Pasturage, flora and fauna, water resources and practical meteorology are only a few branches of the encyclopaedic knowledge of the herdsmen and stock-raisers who have to face the harsh conditions of their trade. All those who have lived close to the Tuareg feel that it is an essential task to collect this century-old experience. Many arid regions have never known any other form of exploitation than that of the pastoral nomads, for no other is viable when rainfall is so meagre and so variable. This rich patrimony is now menaced by the levelling principles of our own civilization. The Tuareg themselves feel that their traditions and knowledge ought to be preserved and are making great efforts to do so. But they also realize that their culture ought not to be fossilized in books and museums, but should be kept alive on the spot to serve as a reference and an aid in the inevitable times of change. This knowledge should help them to uphold a tradition which means a great deal to them; and thus to remain true to themselves even while they adapt in certain respects to the requirements of the modern world. ○

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