

CONQUEST AND COMMUNICATION : EUROPEANS AND TUAREG

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In my article, "Administration in a Peasant State" (1983) which summarises my research in colonial West Africa and agrarian Europe I argue that peasant societies are particularly difficult for a state bureaucracy to administer. The working methods of a bureaucracy require comprehensive written information. This is just what is lacking in a peasant society. As a result a bureaucracy is regularly complemented by two different administrative systems : intermediary and despotic administration. Both systems are to be found where a bureaucracy lacks information. Locally recruited middle men are informed about the local situation. A despotic administration can function without an accumulation of knowledge. Decisions are made "blindly" or on the basis of information gathered on an ad hoc basis. However, in the course of time a bureaucracy accumulates an increasing amount of information and forces the intermediary and despotic administration into the background.

The research on the Tuareg I carried out in the eighties complements and modifies these conclusions. It starts from the very beginning, at the time of the conquest before an administration had been established and it is based not on the results, i.e. the information but rather on the communicative process between

conqueror and conquered.

A traveller who comes from a foreign country, speaks a foreign language, dresses differently and whose skin is of a different colour, is treated with curiosity and mistrust. He is watched closely and asked a lot of questions. This is particularly true when he is the first traveller from a foreign country. Mungo Park found himself in this situation when he was the first European to penetrate into the interior of Africa at the end of the eighteenth century. In his travel report he repeatedly describes how people turned up in great numbers to observe him and ask him a 1000 questions. He was frequently interrogated by the political authorities. At times curiosity went as far as being a physical nuisance:

"The surrounding attendants, and especially the ladies, were abundantly more inquisitive; they asked a thousand questions, inspected every part of my apparel, searched my pockets, and obliged me to unbutton my waistcoat, and display the whiteness of my skin; they even counted my toes and fingers, as if they doubted whether I was in truth a human being" (Park 1983:92).

His European appearance was not so much a source of admiration, but rather of derision:

"They rallied me with a good deal of gaiety on different subjects, particularly upon the whiteness of my skin, and the prominency of my nose. They insisted that both were artificial. The first, they said, was produced when I was an infant, by dipping me in milk; and they insisted that my nose had been pinched every day till it had acquired its present unsightly and unnatural conformation" (ibid. :42).

The further the European conquest of Africa proceeded, the more the communication situation changed. Although Europeans still came as foreigners, they were now the ones asking the questions. The natives refused to communicate, withdrew or tried to influence the communication in their favour. In this paper I shall describe these changes by using the relations between Europeans and the Aïr-Tuareg living in the Sahara as an example¹. I shall examine three European expeditions and their communication with the Tuareg:

1. In 1850 an expedition sent by the British government penetrated the territory of the Aïr-Tuareg. The expedition which started out in Tripoli was led by James Richardson who, however, soon died. It became better known due to another member, the German, Henry Barth.

2. 50 years later (1899) a French expedition led by Fernand Foureau, the "Mission Saharienne" set off from Algeria into the Aïr.

3. A few years later (1904) the French Lieutenant Jean arrived in Agadez from the south (Zinder), together with a military escort and founded an administrative post.

THE EXPEDITION OF RICHARDSON AND BARTH

In 1850 Richardson, Barth and Overweg were the first Europeans to visit the Tuareg. They reported that they encountered curiosity, but not that they were

¹ My research is based on published expedition reports, on archive material and on field work among the Kel Ewey 'Tuareg in the Air (Niger)

asked "1000 questions" as Mungo Park had been. This was due not only to the greater reticence of the Tuareg but also to the organisation of the expedition which created more distance than Park who was travelling alone. But discussions frequently took place between the Tuareg and Barth and Richardson. Both had in-depth conversations with Annur, the most influential leader of the Kel Ewey. Barth reported such a conversation in which they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of their respective cultures:

"He was, in short, so pleased with our manners and our whole demeanour that one day, after he had been reposing in my tent and chatting with me, he sent for Yusuf, and told him plainly that he apprehended that our religion was better than theirs; ... and notwithstanding his practical severity, he was rather of a mild disposition, for he thought Europeans dreadful barbarians for slaughtering without pity such numbers of people in their battles, using big guns instead of spears and swords, which were, as he thought, the only manly and becoming weapons" (Barth, 1890, II:217)

Annur not only criticised the Europeans but also ridiculed them. Richardson's appearance, for example:

"I was much amazed by the predilection of En-Noor (who is not absolutely a white man) for black people. He praised Overweg, because he was getting brown and black. As for me, his highness was almost inclined to express his disgust for the whiteness of my skin" (Richardson 1853, II:77).

Here it is quite clear, as in the earlier case of Mungo Park, that Africans refused to recognise the European ideal of beauty². They spoke quite openly about this to the Europeans since they found themselves in a rather more dominant than an inferior position.

Conversations occur frequently in Barth's reports. However, he was really interested in historical information and was therefore methodologically better prepared than other travellers in Africa in the 19th century. He can quite rightly be considered the fore-runner of the "Participant Observation" of the 20th century. He was both an excellent linguist and an academic³. He travelled for more than five years in the Sahara and the Sudan, for the most part unaccompanied by other Europeans. This brought him into close contact with the native population; he lived and travelled as they did and learned a number of languages⁴.

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In the case of the Tuareg this is particularly interesting, since they were originally white and became darker through intermarriage with the black African population. During the colonial period the white idea of beauty was the prevailing one. This is still true today.

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When Barth set off into the interior of Africa as a 29 year old, he had already completed his doctoral dissertation in Ancient History and had gone on to write his Habilitation on Geography in Berlin after spending many years research in the Mediterranean.

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He spoke Arabic, Hausa and Kanuri fluently; they served him as the basis for other languages. He was also able to communicate in Fulfulde, Tamajegh and Bagirmi; over and above that he compiled the vocabularies of another seven languages (Teda, Wandala, Maba, Abu Sarib, Longone, Songhai, Emgedesi)

Even today a lot can still be learned from his ideas on research methods. He gave a great deal of thought to the choice of informants and the necessary preparation for an interview. The most important informants in Agadez were well-travelled merchants whom Barth particularly appreciated because of their knowledge and education. In this respect he mentioned first and foremost the merchant Abd-Allah from Tauat:

"To the Tawáti 'Abdallah I was indebted for information on a variety of interesting matters, which I found afterwards confirmed in every respect. In a few points his statements were subject to correction, and still more to improvement, but in no single case did I find that he had deviated from the truth. I state this deliberately, in order to show that care must be taken to distinguish between information collected systematically by a native enjoying the entire confidence of his informant, and who, from his knowledge of the language and the subject about which he inquires, is able to control his informant's statement, and that which is picked up incidentally by one who scarcely knows what he asks" (Barth, 1890, II:186).

Here Barth emphasised that the researcher had to enjoy the "complete trust of the reporting party" if he were interested in finding out the truth. It is also quite evident that Barth had every confidence in underlining his own knowledge. He spoke the language of the natives fluently: he could converse, for example, with this merchant in Arabic or Hausa. Moreover, he was completely familiar with his subject and knew exactly the right questions to ask.

This was, in fact, the greatest handicap of the other travellers and military men mentioned above (Park, Richardson, Foureau, Jean). Their educational background was not equal to the state of knowledge at that time - above all with respect to Arabic sources. Important reports were not accessible to them. They asked questions not on an informed, but on an arbitrary basis. Unlike Barth they were not able to check what they had been told and correct it by asking appropriate questions - even when, as Foureau and Jean were, they were in a dominant position.

But Barth was well aware that his questions often aroused suspicion and that it was therefore difficult to obtain reliable information on the Aïr. At one point he wrote:

"The entire social life of these divided and only loosely united tribes is of great interest, but, of course, as outsiders and members of a hated religion we are too far removed from them and enjoy only limited freedom of movement to observe them in all aspects of their daily lives"(Barth, 1857, I:391)⁵

Here Barth mentioned not only political mistrust but also religious tension between Moslems and Christians. Although he could frequently discuss matters with Islamic scholars due to his knowledge of Islam and Arabic, as a Christian he was often regarded with suspicion and information withheld as a result.

Sometimes this directly affected his research, as in the case of the Kadi of

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This and the following quotation did not appear in the American edition published in 1890. They were translated from Barths original German edition (1857f.)

Agadez who refused to speak with him:

"I have already mentioned above the Khadi's less than friendly attitude towards me. This is easily understood in the case of a man who was faithful to his belief and who considered me to be a heretical intruder. His disfavour, however, was extremely unfortunate for me since he was the very man who could have given me the information I required. He was obviously an educated man; I met no other natives in the town who had even a passing knowledge of Arabic literature" (ibid.:495).

Europeans were frequently considered to be dangerous intruders and emissaries of conquest. Their questions and note-taking were regarded with mistrust. With respect to Annur, the leader of the Kel Ewey Tuareg, Richardson wrote the following:

"The people have complained to En-Noor that we are 'writing the country'. This is an old complaint, and pervades all Northern Africa and the Desert 'that the Christians come first to write a country, and afterwards invade or capture it'. Travellers, therefore, especially when they venture to use the pen in public, are looked upon as spies, which may in part account for the rough treatment they sometimes receive" (Richardson 1853, I:293).

In spite of these difficulties Richardson has recorded many details about numerous journeys in the Sudan. He also managed to obtain a list of the towns and villages in the vicinity of Tintellust. Richardson was also interested in the number of inhabitants in the area but his informant, Richardson does not mention

him by name, refused to tell him.

Later he managed to obtain a complete list of the settlements and the number of adult males resident there from Annur's secretary. The number of men was given as 12,731. By computation Richardson arrived at the total figure of 58,874 Kel Ewey Tuareg (Richardson 324-326). We do not know how reliable these figures are. It seems unlikely that the secretary would know how many men there were in the various villages. Also his figures would not have been based on any scientific interest.

THE SAHARA MISSION

The exploratory expedition of Richardson and Barth is a part of the pre-history of conquest. At the Berlin Conference in 1884-85 the division of Africa between the European powers was set out. In 1890 and 1898 bilateral agreements between England and France divided the interior regions of West Africa: the Sahara and the Sudan, i.e. areas where the Tuareg lived, came under the jurisdiction of the French. But in accordance with the principles of the Berlin conference possession also involved actual occupation.

In 1899 France sent three large military expeditions to ensure the effective possession of the Sahara and the Sudan. The *Mission Saharienne* was sent out from the North from Algiers under the command of Foureau and Lamy. From the West the *Mission Afrique Centrale-Chad* set out in the direction of Chad led by

the officers Voulet and Chanoine. From the South, from the Congo, the *Mission Centrafricaine* led by Gentil penetrated northwards.

The three expeditions joined up in the Chad area and on 22 April 1900 defeated the army of Rabah in the battle of Kousseri. This defeat at Kousseri meant conquest and practically put an end to the disputes regarding division between the European powers and signified the beginning of real colonial rule.

In this paper I am only concerned with the *Mission Saharienne* ⁶which is usually presented as a purely military expedition. In reality it was conceived primarily as a scientific expedition. The Ministry of Education was responsible for it. Foureau, the leader was a civilian, Colonel Lamy was only the deputy leader. The *Mission Saharienne* was the most expensive French expedition to be sent out in the 19th century (Broc 1982:271) Foureau's escort on leaving Algiers in October 1898 consisted of 287 soldiers with appropriate weapons, including two cannons. On setting out he had no fewer than 1004 camels.

The expedition was so strong from a military point of view that the Tuareg were unable to defeat them, even though they attempted to do so in several skirmishes. The strategy of the Tuareg was different: they withdrew and waited. Time and again their leaders promised to supply the expedition with camels, but none were delivered. Thus, the expedition spent three months in Iferouane (in the Air mountains) and two months in Agadez. In Agadez they finally took over

⁶ We are well informed about the *Mission Saharienne* since many of its members wrote reports (Foureau 1902; Reibell 1931; Guilleux 1904). Further diaries have been published recently (Abadie 1989; Britsch 1989). The following translations from French into English were all made by Gerd Spittler.

the town wells in order to force the Tuareg to deliver 100 camels.

What were the scientific results of the expedition which were published in two volumes of over 1,200 pages and a separate map collection (Foureau 1905)?

The largest part was taken up by scientific facts in the fields of geography, geology, meteorology, hydrology, botany, zoology and archaeology. However, the *Esquisse ethnographique* and the *aperçu commercial* together comprised less than 200 pages. This is all the more astonishing when the concluding remarks are considered which emphasised that the population and its increase were of vital importance for French colonial rule.

The approximately 50 page extract on the Tuareg of the Aïr is far less informative than Barth's descriptions and contains hardly any new information. Descriptions of the ethnic and political structure are scant. Details about settlements and the number of inhabitants, to which Richardson paid even more attention, are almost completely absent.

How can this oversight be explained when information about the population was of prime importance for the future colonial rulers ? Foureau gave two reasons for the scanty detail: 1. The rapid advance of the expedition left little time for careful investigation such as Barth, for example, had been able to carry out. 2. The "somewhat hostile feelings" of the natives.

How should these explanations be assessed ? It is certainly correct that expeditions are concerned with reaching their goals as quickly as possible and

therefore have little time for in-depth local research. In the case of the Aïr-Tuareg however, a comparison with Barth is misleading. The expedition remained in the Aïr for half a year, i.e. longer than Barth had done. In Agadez, where Barth collected a large amount of material in three weeks, the expedition stayed for two months.

The second reason, the hostile feelings of the natives is probably the more important one. Foureau gave no reason for this, but one is easily found. In addition to the changes in the political situation since Barth's time - Timbuctoo, for example, was conquered by the French in 1894 -it was the behaviour of the expedition itself which kept the natives at a distance. The expedition carried out raids in order to steal camels, donkeys, cattle and goats. They bought provisions at prices fixed by the French themselves. Sometimes they took hostages in order to exchange them for provisions and camels.

Wherever the expedition appeared in the Aïr the local people fled. Consequently, even the long sojourns did not lead to close contact. Haller, one of the two doctors accompanying the expedition, wrote the following about their stay in Agadez:

"The natives refuse to have anything to do with us. If, by chance, we meet one, he runs away, hugging the walls without even turning his head and disappears into one of the mysterious houses" (Abadie 1989:143).

Barth's experience could not be more different! While Barth complained about the obtrusiveness of the inhabitants of Agadez, above all the women, the *Mission*

Saharienne came across an empty town! Another illuminating example is the contact with the Sultan of Agadez; while Barth visited the Sultan of Agadez the day after his arrival with his Tuareg friend Hamma, the first contact between the Foureau expedition and the Sultan was rather more spectacular. The Sultan visited Foureau's camp - not the other way round! - and was received with all military honours. After ten days, however, it turned out that the real Sultan had never left his palace in Agadez and had sent them an impostor. Thereupon, Lamy aimed both cannons at the Sultan's palace and delivered the ultimatum that he should present himself at their camp on the very same day or risk seeing his palace razed to the ground.

To sum up, the *Mission Saharienne* was much closer to conquest than Richardson's expedition in 1850. At this stage, however, the *Mission Saharienne* did not attempt conquest, but attempted to preserve its autonomy and suffer no defeat. But it is clear that it was operating in an area that was subject to French colonial power. Therefore, it was interested in information concerning the economy, the population and the geography of the region. The expedition had hardly any contact with the native population. In contrast to Barth, who spent time with the Tuareg and lived among them in Agadez, the expedition pitched its camp outside of Agadez. They lived, so to speak, in a ghetto.

Conditions for communication were unfavourable. Essentially, the expedition acquired information which required no communication. They *collected* botanical, mineralogical, ethnographic and archaeological material. They *measured* latitude

and longitude, the height of mountains, the temperature and atmospheric pressure. They took *photographs*. But they did not engage the Tuareg in *conversation*; it was rather *interrogations* which were recorded. The Sultan had to submit to a kind of interrogation, because he had refused to come to their camp. The native guide was interrogated because he had given them the wrong directions. Tuareg they met along the way were questioned about the geography, economy and population.

How did the Tuareg behave in this situation? The ban on contact, the refusal to communicate or even interrogation on the part of the Tuareg, such as Barth and Richardson had experienced, no longer existed. Here power relations had radically changed. Now it was the French and not the Tuareg who were in a position of power. The strategies of the Tuareg were defensive; the most important strategy was that of *withdrawal*. Not only the Sultan, but the whole population withdrew. In the Air the French met hardly any people, the Kel Ewey had withdrawn with their camels. Only when the expedition carried out a raid, in other words, behaved despotically, did they meet people, capture and question them.

When contact and communication could not be avoided, the communicative behaviour of the Tuareg was *defensive*. The Sultan sent another man in his place. Anyone who was questioned, answered evasively, defensively and told lies. The Tuareg were generally suspected of lying. While Barth emphasised the honesty of Annur and the French traveller, Henri Duveyrier, praised the Tuareg

for not knowing how to lie (Duveyrier 1864:385), Foureau started from the premise that they always lied and could not be trusted.

THE EXPEDITION OF LIEUTENANT JEAN

In July 1900, shortly after the *Mission Saharienne*, the colony of Niger was founded, initially as the *Territoire Militaire de Zinder*. Agadez and the Air both belonged to it. But this nominal annexation had to be followed by factual occupation. After the "Mission Saharienne" passed through in 1899 the French were at first no longer represented in the region of Agadez. It was only in 1904 that Agadez was occupied and a post founded. I shall now consider in greater detail the expedition led by Lieutenant Jean which undertook the occupation⁷.

Jean's expedition lasted no longer than seven weeks (26.8-13.10.1904). At the end of August he set out from Zinder with 70 soldiers. He accompanied, as protective escort, a Kel Ewey caravan with 10,000 camels to Agadez. He arrived on 12 September. The leaders of the various Tuareg tribes were instructed to present themselves and to pay a tax. Their weapons had to be handed over. The traditional rulers were confirmed as such but had to recognise French supremacy and were no longer entitled to collect any tithes themselves. The Kel Fadey, the

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We are particularly well informed about this expedition since Lieutenant Jean wrote a book about it (Jean 1909). In addition, there are three hand-written reports from 1904 by him in the National Archives in Niamey

only tribe who refused to submit, were pursued and defeated in a military action. Following the expedition the post of Agadez was founded and the foundations of an administrative system were laid down.

Here I am not concerned with the military and administrative aspects of the expedition but rather with its significance for the acquisition of knowledge on how to govern the region. Agadez and the Aïr were no longer unknown regions at the time. Barth's travel report had appeared 50 years earlier, the findings of the *Mission Saharienne* had admittedly not yet been published - they appeared in 1905 - but there was already one travel report (1902) and probably the military in Zinder had access to other important information about the expedition.

This existing information, however, was deemed to be inadequate with regard to the occupation of Agadez by the Commander in Zinder:

"Captain Lefebvre wanted to increase our knowledge of the Aïr. Understanding was an urgent necessity for him. He believed that ignorance about a country with which he was involved in many respects and over which he exerted considerable influence in his capacity as ruler was a great disadvantage" (Jean 1909:34).

The primary aim of Jean's expedition was therefore not occupation but exploration (*reconnaissance*). This was made quite obvious in the instructions he received from his superiors: "Your true goal is to investigate the political situation in the Aïr on the spot and to inform your superiors about the nomads' attitude towards us"(ibid:72).

In addition to this political reconnaissance a further duty was defined which concerned the future administration of the area:

"Within the framework of relations which you will have with the leaders of the various tribes of the Aïr and in the course of the numerous conversations with the Sultan of Agadez and the Anastafidet, you should collect all possible information on each tribe in order to carry out a reasonable division according to groups and families, so that for each tribe we may know the name of their chiefs, those of the Tuareg, the number of freed slaves and the approximate size of their camel herds and other animals.

It is important to know where the leaders live in the Aïr, in Damergou, in Damagaram or in Katsina at different times of the year, so that we can always find them and they themselves are aware that they are known and that they cannot escape our authority" (ibid:74f).

As we have seen, Jean had only seven weeks to carry out this extensive programme of investigation and this in addition to many other military and administrative duties. How did he go about it and how successful was he?

The Sultan of Agadez and the Anastafidet, the ruler of the Kel Ewey Tuareg, accompanied Jean on the march from Zinder to Agadez and were also always at his disposal in Agadez. Jean ordered the chiefs of the individual tribes to appear before him. During these visits, which were primarily to be seen as acts of submission, they were closely questioned by Jean in accordance with his superiors' instructions. Two thirds of the chiefs appeared before Jean at the time;

the others were not informed in time or could not come because of the distance involved. The chief of the Kel Fadey was the only one who openly refused to appear and submit.

Thus, in a short time, Jean was able to gather a lot of information since he, qua the supreme authority, summoned the chiefs of the various tribes to appear before him. His informants were almost exclusively these leaders. From his reports it is quite clear that he could indeed summon the leaders, but that he frequently had problems in obtaining satisfactory information. He noted in one report:

"At four o'clock this afternoon a visit from the Sultan, Yérina, the Anastafidet, Attif and the old Marabout of Agadez. I attempt to reconstruct the history of the Aïr from their confused explanations. They are not very good and it is difficult to get them to understand and answer. We shall frequently return to this topic" (Jean Rapport 19.10.1904).

Elsewhere he writes about his daily talks with the chiefs:

"In our talks I attempted to establish their characters and their moods, to get to know their tribes and to estimate their wealth and strength. These talks were never very long since the Tuareg cannot concentrate on the same topic for very long. Whether they are lying or telling the truth, they always answer enthusiastically at the beginning of the conversation. But when the questions are lengthy, they yawn and stop paying attention. It is better not to continue but to make them come several times whenever this is possible. If they are interested in

the subject or if they see the point, then they point out important details which otherwise would have been omitted. They even proudly take pains to be less confusing than they usually are. Whatever their worth or social position, they always seem to be in good faith and never hesitate, even when lying, to swear by Allah that they are not digressing from the truth" (Jean 1909:270).

Lieutenant Jean was particularly interested in the political history of the Aïr, since the French colonial rulers initially had to build on the existing administration. However, Jean did have a long-term vision of development which anticipated direct rule and the reduction or elimination of the role of the chiefs. It was his idea for the chiefs to help make themselves superfluous. The most important means of achieving this was the census, which, although it was first based exclusively on the chiefs' information, nevertheless supplied direct information about their subjects:

"Each tribe gave information about their camp ground, together with other relevant details: the chiefs, who were mostly present themselves, were described; the Tuareg population were counted individually; the number of freed men and women, slaves and other socially inferior groups, the whole population as well as the number of animals were discussed; the mentality of each tribe was noted, their past, the raids they had suffered, the villages in Damagaram, Damergou and Katsina, where they were chiefly nomadizing since their freed slaves were there" (ibid:286).

Jean then noted how much time this took and why it had been worthwhile:

"The work took a long time, but it was so significant and was such an important weapon in the hands of the officers responsible for administration that as much time as possible was devoted to it. From now on it was possible to call on the Tuareg by name. Each and every one of them could be made aware of the fact that he was caught fast in the web of our investigations by saying to him: you are from such and such a tribe, such and such a family, these are the names of your chiefs, your parents, your camp grounds. On a purely practical level the study also enabled the fiscal contribution of each tribe to be calculated exactly" (ibid:286).

The controlling function of a census could not be made more obvious! The important thing here was the information about the individual subjects which weakened the intermediary role of the chiefs. Of course, the information itself still came exclusively from the chiefs and was therefore subject to their manipulation.

How important this collecting of information was, was shown by the amount of work invested in it. During his one month stay in Agadez Jean was occupied for most of the time in carrying out a census of the 82 Tuareg tribes and in researching the history and the economy of the Air. Administrative and military duties were of secondary importance. Owing to lack of time he initially left the pursuit of the Kel Fadey, who had not yet submitted, to other Tuareg groups.

Both the *Mission Saharienne* and the *reconnaissance* of Lieutenant Jean can be considered expeditions within the framework of conquest. Admittedly, Jean spoke of *causerie* and *conversations*, but in reality there were no conversations

between equals. The Europeans did not have to go to the Tuareg, but the other way round. But there were important differences between the missions of Foureau and Jean. The former was an "autonomous" expedition which, because it was well equipped, was relatively successful in moving around in a hostile environment with which it hardly came into contact. The possibility to communicate was accordingly limited.

Lieutenant Jean's expedition, on the other hand, represented the "dominant" expedition which was not cut off from the environment in which it moved but rather dominated it. Jean succeeded in summoning two thirds of the 82 tribal chiefs to Agadez for questioning. Only the Kel Fadey openly refused to come, the others were prevented from coming or at least pretended to be so, i.e. they adopted a defensive strategy. The great majority, however, did turn up and present themselves for questioning. Jean's dominant position in the interviews was quite clear: he summoned the chiefs, including the Sultan and the Anastafidet, and sent them away when they gave unsatisfactory answers so that they might reconsider.

If one considers the interview situation as described by Jean and with the additional knowledge gained from my field work with the Kel Ewey, then it is clear that not only information is being requested and that the situation is far more complex. In Kel Ewey Tuareg society there is no such thing as an interview in every day life where one person asks another about his or her life. There are situations such as court *interrogations* or the *questions* of the Archangel Gabriel -

in Tamaschek he is called *amasestan*, the questioner - on the Day of Judgement. In daily life there is only one interrogation situation. A herdsman who is looking for his camel will ask people along the way if they have seen a camel of such and such a colour and such and such a marking; where and when; the direction it was going in; here the herdsman is asking about things which exclusively concern him; he does not ask about the other person's life *questions*.

In everyday life the Tuareg are familiar with *conversation, dispute, narration*. These forms of dialogue are apparent when Jean notes that the interview partner freely goes into details "when they are interested in the subject or see the point". However, this is not very often the case, since these kinds of questions are meaningless for the Tuareg, but mainly because Jean understood so little of the Tuareg's history that his questions and comments seemed meaningless to them. Their "confusion" which he noticed was rather more often his own, since he himself did not understand a complex situation. He is one of those questioners of whom Barth said that they themselves scarcely knew what they were asking about.

But the power context of these *interviews* is more important than these cultural misunderstandings and Jean's ignorance. The Tuareg had an interest in appearing "inattentive" or "confused" by many questions. Here they adopted a defensive communication strategy since they were unable to accurately assess the situation. Sometimes Jean himself felt that it was not so much a case of inability as of strategy on the part of the other side. At one point he wrote:

"The Sultan and his advisers were afraid of compromising themselves and waited. They gave no clear information about their administration" (Jean 1909:280).

Refusal, withdrawal, defensive communication are already familiar from Barth's and Foureau's communication situations. In Jean's case a new type appeared: *manipulated communication*. Not all of them avoided answering Jean's questions. Some took the opportunity of furthering their own interests by giving selected pieces of information. The Anastafidet, Yahoo, was such an informant. He was able to pass on to Lieutenant Jean a version of history in which the Kel Ewey had lived in the Aïr for over 1,000 years and all the Tuareg - with the exception of the Kel Fadey - who were subject to the sovereignty of the Sultan were descended from them. At the same time the Anastafidet was able to present himself as being the undisputed head of the Kel Ewey with almost the same rank as the Sultan.

On 1.11.1904 Jean summarised the results of his investigations in a 90 page, hand-written report to his superiors: *Residence d'Agadez. Etude sur les Kel-oui et la situation politique de l'Azbin, et projet d'organisation après la création de la Residence d'Agadez* (Archives Nationales Niamey). This report contained information which was relevant for the colonial rulers and which Foureau had been unable to supply. In Part I Jean gave a *Résumé de l'Histoire de l'Azbin*. In Part II *Organisation donnée à l'Azbin par les Autorités Indigènes* he described the political organisation of the Aïr before the arrival of the French, in Part III *Situation politique de l'Azbin* the current political situation. Part IV *Projets d'organisation de l'Azbin* deals with the administrative organisation of the Aïr

under French colonial rule. The appendix included the census figures. The tables included the number of Tuareg liable to pay tax, *bella* (freed slaves) and camels. Altogether in the Aïr there were 2,149 Tuareg and 834 *bella* who were obliged to pay tax. The total population of the Aïr was estimated at 14,009 individuals. In addition to the above Jean also drew up a map of the Aïr based partly on Foureau's and partly on his own explorations and also partly on oral reports.

The definitive division of the Aïr into two confederations, 9 groups (*groupements*) and 82 tribes (*tribus*) obviously did not match the pre-colonial situation, but it was now an administrative reality. The chiefs acquired thereby an important administrative role: *chef de tribu*, *chef de groupement*, also the Sultan and the Anastafidet. Jean was aware that they all enjoyed only limited authority within their groups. He interpreted this as a degeneration of their earlier authority and tried to re-establish this authority under French sovereignty. It would be wrong to present this as a construction of the colonial rulers. Admittedly, it was a construction, but nevertheless one created by Lieutenant Jean together with the Sultan and the Anastafidet and the privileged informants who were introduced to him as chiefs.

Once constructed and set down in writing this colonial history took on a reality *sui generis*. It justified the appointment of the Anastafidet as an intermediary chief and thus became part of the administrative system. However, during the course of colonialism it was discovered that the pre-colonial importance of the

Anastafidet had been overestimated and his sphere of influence had been far less extensive than had been assumed. Nicolas, a civil servant interested in anthropology, realised in the fifties that the Anastafidet had been accorded far too much importance (Nicolas 1950). But his attempt to revise the administrative structure on the basis of his findings was unsuccessful: the "erroneous" construction had become its own reality.

The census, however, was a different matter. When Jean wrote that each and every Tuareg was now "caught fast in the web of our investigations", then this was an illusion, for the census was hardly more than a construct arrived at by mutual agreement between the chiefs and the colonial administrators and probably no more than half the population had been included. But here fiction was increasingly approaching reality. During the colonial period the "commandants de cercle" spent a good part of their time on tour in the bush in order to count the population. Gradually, the census became more accurate, approaching the ideal of a nominative census in which each and every person is included by name. Thus, a direct, bureaucratic administration, which weakened the intermediary position of the chiefs, gradually became a reality⁸.

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But even in the post-colonial period the registration of the Tuareg is still not complete. This is made clear by the discrepancy between the figures given in the census of 1977 and the head count for the distribution of food during the famine of 1984/85 (Spittler 1989:158). There is a discrepancy of 30%.

CONCLUSION

The amount of work the Europeans invested in collecting information is astonishing. In 1850 the British "Foreign Office" sent an expensive mission through the Sahara into the Sudan, supposedly to make political contacts but primarily to gather information about the countries and peoples. What is even more astonishing is the fact that even at the time of conquest by the French there was still this overriding interest in information. Foureau and Jean spent more time in getting to know the country and the people than in subduing them. It was not only a case of information which was of immediate importance for conquest: strength and position of the enemy, attitude of the population towards the French, logistics, i.e. trails, wells, supplies.

Moreover, even at the moment of conquest, the conquerors spent a lot of time and effort in obtaining information which was irrelevant for the military situation at the time and could only be of long-term interest. Why? An initial answer might be as follows: efficiency. An informed administration could achieve better results with less effort than an uninformed one. Exact information about the number and distribution of people and camels made more efficient taxation possible. Respect for the traditional power structure on the appointment of middlemen ensured a smoother-running administration than the arbitrary appointment of middlemen. Both intermediary and despotic administrations have been empirically shown to be less efficient than a bureaucratic administration based on information.

The collection of this information initially required thoroughly despotic and intermediary assistance. Foureau and Lamy forced the Sultan to appear before them by threatening him with cannons. In the same way, Jean threatened the chiefs with violence if they failed to appear before him to offer their submission and provide him with information. As middlemen the chiefs supplied census information which in the long-term made them themselves superfluous.

But this efficiency did not provide sufficient explanation. The necessary collection of information still meant an enormous amount of work for Foureau and Jean. And this fund of knowledge did not only limit the power of the middlemen, but also their own. This fund of knowledge provided a narrow framework in which decisions could be made. Very often it would have been more convenient to forego the collection and evaluation of information.

It was therefore not only a question of efficiency. A belief in the legitimacy of such an administrative system and in the illegitimacy of an intermediary and despotic administration also played a part. This belief was also necessary since information often failed to fulfil the function accorded to it because it was incomplete and inaccurate. Probably, an "informed" administration was often no more efficient than a despotic or intermediary one; particularly in the early stages when information was very rudimentary. Here the collection and application of information could only be justified by the hope of a later improvement.

Of the three expeditions described here, the *Mission Saharienne* was the best equipped from the point of view of staff and equipment to carry out and collect observations. Communication was not a prerequisite for obtaining and collecting this information. On the other hand, the "results" of the *Mission Saharienne* were exceptionally scanty with regard to oral information since the communicative situation was particularly unfavourable. Here, the use of instruments was not the deciding factor, but rather human interaction. Above all in the case of the *Mission Saharienne*, but also partly in the case of Jean and his predecessors, Barth and Richardson, very often no communication took place. There were various reasons for this:

1. *Prohibition*. In the case of Barth and Richardson the Tuareg were unequivocally the stronger party and therefore they could often prohibit communication. Thus, for example, Barth was unable to meet the Anastafidet, the formal head of the Kel Ewey. The Europeans were also not able to move around freely to carry out observations.
2. *Refusal*. Refusal also requires a position of strength, as when the Kadi of Agadez refused to speak with Barth or an informant refused to give Richardson the population figures.

3. *Withdrawal/Flight*. In the case of Foureau and Jean, refusal was no longer possible and withdrawal or flight took its place. The Sultan of Agadez did not refuse to come to Foureau's camp, but he sent an impostor. The Tuareg chiefs who failed to appear before Jean did not refuse - with the exception of the chief of the Kel Fadey - but pretended not to have been informed in time.

Islamic scholars largely prevented communication both prior to and during colonial rule by refusal or withdrawal. Aghumbullu, the most influential religious figure in the Aïr during colonial rule was always able to avoid any meeting with the French by refusing to acknowledge that he himself had any political authority and by sending others in his place. It was only in the forties that a scholar was ready to come into contact with the French. Information about Islam in the Aïr in travel and colonial reports is therefore particularly incomplete and distorted.

When communication did take place, on the part of the conquerors it consisted of questions on the one hand and answers on the other. In a benevolent frame of mind one could talk of an interview here, but more often than not it was, in fact, an interrogation. The interviewees often reacted defensively: they pretended to be uninformed, tired easily, gave evasive answers. But even a one-sided interview can be used for manipulative purposes by the interviewee in that he can further his own interests. This is particularly true when the interviewer himself has no background knowledge. This was Lieutenant Jean's situation. The Anastafidet was able to feed him his own version of history and power relations which then remained in effect throughout the whole period of colonial rule.

Talks and discussions with the Tuareg, as mentioned by Barth and Richardson, no longer took place at the time of Foureau and Jean. Communication now took place in a power setting. The fact that the Tuareg expressed their opinions - possibly negative - of Europeans occurred more frequently in conversations among themselves and not in interactions with the French.

In spite of all the limitations of communication the Europeans had two advantages which led to a long-term accumulation of knowledge: they asked questions systematically and recorded the information in writing. The "1,000 questions" which the natives asked Mungo Park were not based on a research concept but were quite spontaneous and part of a conversation. They were not interested in studying a European, but in satisfying their own curiosity about a stranger. Park, Barth, Foureau and Jean, however, had a systematic research programme. When they obtained no immediate answer, they did not give up but tried a different approach. When Richardson failed to get any population figures from his first informant, he tried with a second and was more successful. Even if one accepts Barth's criticism of other researchers, that the questions were imprecise due to lack of background knowledge, the questions were still rather more programmed than those of a normal conversation.

Part of the communication between Europeans and Tuareg was recorded in writing by the Europeans. This is certainly only a small part of the conversations, but considerably more in the case of interviews and censuses. The data were first recorded in diaries and lists, then written up in reports and parts were later published.

Thus, the content of communication was recorded and made accessible to a wider public. If we accept Mungo Park's statement that people everywhere asked him a "1,000" questions, then this means that he was asked more questions than he himself posed. But he recorded only a few of the Africans' questions and his answers, the rest have been lost. However, the results of his questions have been recorded in writing and can still be referred to today.

This information has not only been stored and made available to a wide circle, but it has also been accumulated. Based on earlier information knowledge can be extended. This is true above all for the census. When Jean was jubilant that as a result of the census every Tuareg was under his control, this was somewhat utopian at the time since the Tuareg were not known by name and the figures were very inexact. But the census was repeated at regular intervals and became increasingly accurate. In the course of colonial rule the goal of a direct, bureaucratic government over their subjects - with the elimination of intermediary and despotic elements - came ever closer, even when it was never completely realised.

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