

Productions of Space In Tuareg History: Power, Marginalization, And Resistance

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Abstract: Tuareg pastoralists commanded a system of trade and production in the western Sahel prior to French colonization, but events in the 20th Century rendered them marginalized and vulnerable to climatic shocks, as evidenced by the Sahelian drought of the 1970s. This paper begins with a discussion of how the Tuareg exploited the landscape and social relations of production prior to colonization. It then describes colonial re-ordering of space in what is now Niger through the displacement of the Tuareg nobility. The first disastrous drought of the postcolonial era triggered another transformation of space as respondents to the crisis challenged the logic of pastoralists' land use and implemented alternative models of production. Finally, the paper considers how some Tuareg are both re-establishing broad territories through new forms of mobility and attempting to seize greater control over resources and development processes in their homeland.

Keywords: nomadic pastoralism; colonialism; development; production of space

Introduction

This paper describes competing productions of space in Niger during the past century with a focus on Tuareg pastoralists' experience. The Tuareg's precolonial power was evident in their command of natural and human resources and their control of trans-Saharan trade. In the early 20th Century, French colonizers imposed a new spatial order in which the Tuareg were repositioned as a disempowered minority. The French sought to formalize their abrupt and artificial production of space through mapmaking, and the political entities that they shaped in the Sahel have been maintained under national governance since independence in 1960. However, recent Tuareg rebellions contest the hegemony of this production of space.

While Tuareg minorities are also present in Algeria, Libya, Mali, and

Burkina Faso, this paper focuses on Niger. Although it occasionally refers to my fieldwork in Bankilaré, a Tuareg village in southwestern Niger, it is primarily based on historical and secondary ethnographic sources. The ethnographic detail comes from studies with particular groups of Tuareg in different parts of Niger and some neighboring countries, as specified in footnotes.

Space and its “Production”

The concept of space has been problematized by scholars in geography and related disciplines since the 1970s. “Space” is too often thought of as simply a preexisting container for society, lacking any meaning of its own (Soja 1980:210). However, understandings of space are constructed, largely based on our social relations and resource needs, and an objective perspective is unattainable. Marxist thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre (1991) have shown that the production of space is a political and economic process. It is linked to production and the exploitation of resources. It shapes social relations of production, but it also influences these relations, creating a dialectical relationship of the social and the spatial.

In recent times, nation states are perhaps the most conspicuous producers of hegemonic space. States assume the authority to regulate space and subjects and facilitate economic development. Lefebvre explains that states’ authority is artificial, but not obviously so: “One important task in domination and control is to naturalize the authority of the nation-state. Subjects should see it as only natural that they live within defined national boundaries and are governed by a state and bound to certain duties” (1991:111). While many people take the current geopolitical order for granted, national boundaries and state governance are never entirely safe from critique. The Tuareg rebellions are an example of such contestation.

This paper presents an overview of the history leading up to the rebellions. It begins with a description of Tuareg spatial production in the 19th Century to show that before the arrival of the French, the Tuareg themselves exploited the landscape and social relations of production to not only subsist but also maintain their political authority. Then I discuss the French colonizers’ strategies to re-order space in what is now Niger by intentionally marginalizing the Tuareg nobility. Droughts in the post-colonial era triggered another transformation of space in Niger, as respondents to the humanitarian crises raised questions about the logic of pastoralists’ land use. Finally, I consider the Tuareg rebellions as an attempt to gain back some authority to produce space.

Environment and Subsistence

Though not deterministic of culture, the environment is an important consideration in any study of pastoralists or the production of space. Ellis and Galvin's 1994 study of the links between climate and pastoral systems in Africa provides a good starting point for thinking about Tuareg subsistence and space. The article compares precipitation patterns in the Eastern and Western Sahel and connects climate to key differences in pastoralist subsistence strategies in the two regions.

The Western Sahel has a single rainy season, lasting approximately from June through October, during which time pasture can be found throughout much of the region. For the rest of the year, however, there is very little rain and vegetation is scarce. Despite herders' migrations in search of adequate pasture and water, milk production suffers and animals may starve. Ellis and Galvin conclude that it is not possible for pastoralists to survive in this type of environment without supplementing animal husbandry with other means of subsistence. Because of the long rainy season, rain-fed agriculture is possible in some areas of the Western Sahel. Though not all Western Sahelian herders grow millet or vegetables, they all benefit from agriculture in some way. They may trade livestock for millet, or their animals may be able to graze on millet stalk remaining in fields after the harvest. Ellis and Galvin contrast this to the situation in East, where herders may live almost entirely off of animal products. The Eastern Sahel experiences two rainy seasons per year, so forage does not disappear entirely. Herds grow larger in the East than in the West, since animals are less vulnerable to starvation.

Ellis and Galvin's description of the particular challenges of the western Sahel helps explain the Tuareg's traditional use of a variety of economic strategies to allow them to supplement their diet. They taxed and sometimes raided trans-Saharan caravans transporting goods such as salt from the Mediterranean and slaves and gold from West Africa. They both traded for millet and subjugated settled farmers in order to requisition it. Tuareg reliance on other groups to meet some of their subsistence needs is not unique. Even prior to Anatoly Khazanov's influential *Nomads and the Outside World* (1984), which highlighted the political and economic ties that bind pastoralists to their sedentary neighbors, few scholars believed that any pastoral society could be understood merely in terms of itself and the environment.

Nevertheless, the environment and particularly the seasonal and spatial variability of resources help explain Tuareg productions of space. In

what is now Niger, only a narrow strip of land in the south is suitable for agriculture. Between this fertile land and the barren expanses in the north lie marginal zones where agriculture is highly unreliable and pastoralism is dependent on mobility. Average rainfall in northern Niger ranges from just 100 to 500 mm per year and tends to fall over localized rather than widespread areas, necessitating the movement of herds. The typical scarcity of forage during the dry season encourages pastoral groups to subdivide and spread out, but when the rains come they are able to reform larger units, in some cases converging at salt plains to engage in festivities while their livestock take in much-needed minerals. To meet the basic nutritional needs of their livestock year-round, Tuareg pastoralists have always required freedom of movement over a vast region that includes not just the unpredictable rangeland and salt plains in the arid north but also dry-season pastures in the wetter south. In the past, they used both diplomacy and the threat of violence to maintain control over domains with all the vital components. Though some Tuareg have ambivalent feelings about travel, associating it with danger (Rasmussen 1998), it is nevertheless a focus of their culture and a material and political necessity.¹

Precolonial Politics of Production

In addition to requiring access to variable pasture resources for their livestock, Tuareg have always needed to supplement their own diet with vegetable products, as suggested by Ellis and Galvin (1994). Formerly, Tuareg “invested” in farming estates in what is now Nigeria, which paid them tribute in grain as well as guaranteeing their access to southern pastures during the dry season (Swift 1977:462). They also raided settled villages to expand their taxable investments or directly acquire goods and prisoners who would serve as slaves. Slavery was a widespread institution in the region, not unique to Tuareg society. The Hausa enslaved pastoralists and the pastoral Wodaabe kept Tuareg and other slaves to assist with herding (Loftsdóttir 2000:441). In Tuareg communities, some subjugated individuals provided domestic service in noble households and were referred to as their masters’ “children”. Others remained sedentary farmers. Karl Prasse explains that each family of nobles or vassals had a contract with a family of serfs whose land they owned and to whom they supplied seed, agricultural implements, and clothes.² These farmers were allowed to

1 Susan J. Rasmussen is an anthropologist who works with the Kel Ewey Tuareg of north-eastern Niger.

2 Prasse’s work deals with the Tuareg of present-day Niger and Mali.

keep one fifth of their harvest in exchange for their labor (Prasse 1995:19). Most of the Tuareg nobility did not even attend to their own livestock, leaving them in the care of serfs or, more often, of vassals in the second-to-top rung of the social hierarchy. Candelario Sáenz describes these pre-colonial social relations of production as startlingly capitalistic:

When the labor of clients is used (as it is among the Twaregs)—to herd the nobles' livestock under conditions of reduced franchise in which the clients often derive only subsistence (in milk) from these animals, while the nobles cull off the capital gains (in saleable male camels)—a form of production is set into motion in which the owners of the capital become progressively richer while their clients remain a dependent class. [Sáenz 1991:105]

While one can picture the Tuareg nobility enjoying the relative leisure of being the capitalists in this scenario, they needed to maintain a way of life that bolstered their continued access to natural and human resources, and this involved diplomacy as well as intimidation. H el ene Claudot-Hawad suggests that "traveling over far-flung lands, establishing ties with neighboring or outside worlds, means in fact being capable of mobilizing a vast social network and thus being powerful" (2006:663).³ Writing in the present tense, though some of the cultural practices she mentions may be declining, she goes on to show how Tuareg children are socialized into the management of space and social relations of production. Tuareg raise their children to be broad-minded concerning other cultures and to speak multiple languages (*ibid.* 659). Some noble families send their sons to live with allies or "customers" in order to learn other languages and experience different ways of life. Children are trained to remember all acquaintances, even "someone met ten years previously for only a few minutes on a desert track" (*ibid.* 660). They should memorize their own lineages and those of others. Such training provides the children of the Tuareg nobility with skills for forming diplomatic as well as exploitative relationships on their journeys.

Given the importance of mobility for political purposes as well as basic subsistence, it is not surprising that camels are highly valued assets for Tuareg production of space. Control over camels allowed the Tuareg nobility to wage war, subjugate other groups, and control trans-Saharan trade (Keenan 2004:71). According to Nicolaisen and Nicolaisen, boys used to

³ Claudot-Hawad has conducted fieldwork with several groups of Tuareg, including those in the regions of Arabenda in Mali, the A ir in Niger, and with Malian and Nigerien Tuareg refugees at camps in Burkina Faso.

grow up playing with toy camels and show little interest in any other subject (1997:158).⁴

Tuareg metaphors illustrate the value of having both a territory and a society that are complete and thus secure (Claudot-Hawad 2006:657-658). Prior to colonization, the Tuareg extended their area of security by using a tent metaphor, since the tent has a protective function. Each major political pole in the Tuareg diaspora (the Kel Ajjer, Kel Ahaggar, Kel Air, and Kel Tademekkat federations) was likened to a tent pole, forming a vast Tuareg homeland in the middle. The body is another metaphor for physical and social space. In the physical landscape, different resources are like organs in the body: all are needed to complete one viable territory. Social groups (nobles, vassals, smiths, and slaves) were also considered vital to a larger functioning system, dependent on each other and on the whole. Successful conquest of the Sahel by the French, then, required the fragmentation of both physical space and social relations of production.

The French Invasion

The French arrived in what is now Niger in 1890 with a force of soldiers from their West African colonies. By 1906 they had occupied the city of Agadez, an important trading center in Tuareg territory. The French aspired to control the region spatially and socially, but over the next decade their rule was far from assured. The Tuareg were a powerful force in much of the region and were superior to the French in their knowledge of geography and the environment. Displacing the Tuareg entailed first understanding the basis of their power, that is, their production of space. A 1916 memo written by a French officer in Niger shows how the French were grappling to find the means to conquer the arid spaces of Niger ruled by Tuareg:

The Tuareg does not have any more reason to exist than the American Indian, but unhappily the climate of the desert and their fantastic camels have put obstacles in our way....It is nevertheless possible to overcome these difficulties. When the European wars are over we can have several squadrons of airplanes at our disposal. These planes will have a radical effect! The camel vanquished? So much the better! [Clarke 1977:46]

With the value of the camel so apparent to the French, it is not surprising

⁴ Nicolaisen and Nicolaisen accumulated experience with diverse groups of Tuareg in the latter 20th Century. This particular statement is presented as a generality.

that their massacre of Tuareg in 1917 included an attack on camels. The French invited three hundred warriors of the Kel Gress federation to attend "negotiations" following a Tuareg "rebellion" in 1916-1917. After capturing and killing these warriors, they continued the massacre, targeting Tuareg civilians and camels. Of 15,000 camels in the Air region of Niger, only about 3,000 survived the incident (Prasse 1995:79).

During my research in Bankilaré, I found that as punishment for supporting the resistance, two members of the local family of ruling family were exiled. Locals told me that the French resorted to removing individuals when they were not able to kill Tuareg nobles because of the magic that made them invincible. The French are said to have taken these individuals by airplane to the middle of the desert and thrown them out. Exile is a particularly literal instance of the general political displacement of the Tuareg nobility by the French.

Colonial Mapmaking

The conquest of the Sahel occurred in the larger context of the colonial powers' race to seize what appeared to them to be blank spaces on the map of Africa. Exploitation of natural and labor resources, typical colonial motivations, were secondary factors in this case. Quantity rather than productivity of land and rivalry with other European nations were more important to the French than profit (Clarke 1977:38). However, maintaining their claim to a vast new territory was a challenge, and to do so the French had to engage in the comprehensive project of spatial production, which entailed managing a population as well as terrain. Colonially-defined state boundaries are artificially produced, but they gain hegemonic meaning as their impact is experienced. Vigdis Broch-Due (2007) shows that European attempts to control subjects involved putting them "in their place on the map". Nomads, difficult to place on a map, were thus a problem for colonial powers. The French in Niger did not (or were not able to) force nomads to settle. Ultimately, they did restrict free movement by defining national boundaries that fragmented Tuareg space and rendered the Tuareg minorities in every nation that they inhabit today. Now pastoralists are required to present documentation to cross borders, though because the borders are difficult to enforce, their ideological impact may be more significant than their material one.

More significantly, while Tuareg territory in Niger was bounded in the north by borders, it was also encroached upon from the south. The French, while not intending to encourage internal migration, unconsciously did

just that by taxing densely populated areas heavily in relation to outlying regions (Fuglestad 1980:121). This policy encouraged the movement of farmers northward into pastoralists' grazing lands. A fifty-percent population increase between 1922 and 1929 had a similar effect. While pastoralists in Niger migrated north with their herds during the rains, in the dry season they sought less arid regions. Appropriate southern pastures became difficult to access. Because of changing social relations following colonization, it became more difficult for Tuareg to negotiate shared use of resources with farmers.

The Reconfiguration of Tuareg Society

Just as they realized the importance of the camel, the French colonizers also recognized that Tuareg spatial production involved a feudal distribution of labor. In 1907, a French officer theorized that liberating the slave caste would be "an excellent way of reducing the Tuareg race to nothing" (Clarke 1977:42). He prophesied that the nobles would not be able to feed themselves without their slaves. Slaves were officially liberated upon colonization, and the French tried to actually free those of the more rebellious Tuareg groups, as punishment. Some of the newly freed people invested in livestock and began to compete for rangeland with other Tuareg (Lofts-dóttir 2000:461). Of those who initially embraced freedom, particularly if they settled in the "freedom villages" designed by the French, a significant number became disillusioned and rejoined their former masters (Clarke 1977). In addition to proclaiming the end of slavery, the colonizers sought to further transform the social order by selecting new officials to replace traditional chiefs at the local level. In Tuareg communities they promoted men of relatively low status in order to marginalize the nobility and reduce the threat of an uprising. Since the nobles' role had been to raid, tax, and oversee production, they were rendered "unemployed" by the new political order (Prasse 1995:17).

The social upheaval was never entirely completed. Some members of the Tuareg nobility remain politically influential, and slavery continues in certain cases. Randall and Giuffrida (2006) note the current diversity in livelihood and status among members of the slave caste in Mali. Note that whether freed or continuing to render services to noble households, members of the slave caste are often still referred to as "slaves": Iklan in Tamasheq, Bouzou in Hausa, and Bella in Songhay.

Some have long lived in villages cultivating either for themselves or as share-croppers. Other independent Bella have their own herds and are nomadic herders or sedentary agro-pastoralists. In (Randall's) 1981 study..., substantial numbers of dependent Bella still lived in mixed nomadic camps with (noble) Tuareg, providing unpaid domestic and herding labor. Others lived separately but herded their masters' animals.

[Randall and Giuffrida 2006:431]

In Bankilaré, people until recently known as Iklan or Bella prefer to the label Tamasheq Noir, or the black (rather than Berber) people who speak the Tuareg language, Tamasheq. Many have achieved a high standard of living. Not surprisingly, nobles and former slaves have very different sentiments regarding the social changes that they have experienced. The noble traditional chief of Bankilaré, who shares power with an elected black mayor, told me that he feels entitled to be at the top of the social hierarchy. Some members of the former slave caste, on the other hand, expressed appreciation for the French notion of social justice, which is being realized in stages. Many remember a period when nobles would come around demanding livestock or labor, and Tamasheq Noir felt obliged to give them anything that they asked for. In the 1990s, an organization called Timidria provided Bankilaré residents with intensive sensibilisation concerning the equality of all people regardless of skin color or birth. This program transformed understandings of the social order, especially among former slaves. Though some nobles still command low-paid or unpaid labor, others now engage in farming themselves.

Several observers point out that Tuareg nobles became in some ways more marginalized than former slaves since colonization (e.g. Clarke 1997; Rasmussen 2002). Unlike former slaves, the nobility are said to have disdained manual labor and lacked work skills upon colonization, thus they failed to take advantage of opportunities to get ahead (Lecocq 2005; Clarke 1977). Disparity in education, an unintended consequence of French policy, also hurt the nobility. The French introduced compulsory non-Koranic education. Susan Rasmussen explains that until recently, noble families avoided sending their children to school:

They felt intimidated when armed soldiers arrived in their homes and demanded a quota of children for school registration. So instead, they sent mostly children of lower-status slaves, smiths, and tributaries to these schools, as a way of resisting what they viewed as outside control.

[2002:240]

The result is that some lower caste individuals have had greater job opportunities and the chance to rise economically and politically.

Postcolonial Crisis: The 1970s' Drought

The new Nigerien state took over governance at independence in 1960. The nation-state model originated in Europe and its application to multi-ethnic former European colonies is problematic, yet it is now hegemonic as a unit of space. The state, often fetishized and referred to as an independent and animate being, normally undertakes several functions: it grants rights and assigns duties to citizens, creates a national identity to unite diverse peoples, regulates subjects and space, and directs economic development. However, the Nigerien state struggles with these tasks. To a large extent, the diverse inhabitants of Niger have not allowed a common national identity to take priority over their ethnic identities. The Tuareg have violently resisted the nation-state's regulations. Finally, the state has only limited ability to direct economic development, since about 95% of its investment funds come from foreign donors (Loftsdóttir 2000:468). Humanitarian crises provoked by droughts have exposed and augmented the state's deficiencies and have largely shaped postcolonial productions of space in rural Niger.

The post-colonial era in Niger has been marked by major droughts and famines and by the work of international organizations responding to these disasters. The Sahelian drought of the early 1970s, in particular, strongly influenced both Tuareg livelihoods and development programs in the late 20th century. It represented a dramatic shift from a period of relatively good rainfall in the 1960s to several years of low precipitation, beginning in 1969 and culminating in 1974. Throughout the Sahel, 300,000 people and five million livestock died. Some Tuareg refer to this event as "year of the death of cattle", as many households lost so many cattle and other livestock that they were forced to seek other means of livelihood. The drought was immensely influential in the politics of the production of space, causing experts to question the sustainability of pastoralists' relationship with the environment and prescribe changes.

Though all rural Nigeriens suffer during drought, pastoralists have unique vulnerabilities. Harvest failures cause the price of meat to plunge in relation to the price of grain, and pastoralists are unable to trade their animals to farmers for sufficient amounts of millet or sell them for decent prices. They are also liable to lose large numbers of livestock to starvation and thirst. Being physically marginalized from the centers where aid

is distributed, they usually do not receive as much assistance as populations in towns. In Bankilaré, I asked herders and former herders about their wealth in livestock before and after the major droughts they have experienced. Some lost all of their animals in the 1970s, and others lost so many that they have not yet been able to recover. The drought truly marked a turning point in their ability to subsist as pastoralists, and millet farming has become the mainstay of most families in the region. In parts of the country where millet farming is not possible, households have had to turn to other economic activities, often sending individuals to the city or abroad to work.

The 1970s crisis demonstrated the inadequacy of pastoralism as a sole means of livelihood in the Sahel. Deprived by the process of colonization of supplementary means of subsistence such as taxing caravans and exploiting a hierarchical food production system, the Tuareg relied almost entirely on their livestock by the mid-20th Century. They were therefore highly vulnerable to shocks such as drought. However, when the international aid community witnessed the tragedy of livestock loss and famine among Nigerien pastoralists, its response was not to help herders diversify their livelihood but rather to impose new models for managing livestock and pasture resources (Fratkin 1997).

Politics of Pastoral Resource Management

The 1970s drought gave rise to discourses about pastoralists' overexploitation of rangeland. Most NGOs and specialists felt that pastoralism had caused ecological degradation and aggravated the effects of the drought (Berge 2001). However, this idea may have been largely based on unsound theories about the logic of pastoral rangeland use (Fratkin 1997). Garrett Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" theory (1968), for example, was extremely popular at the time. It suggests that every individual will attempt to extract the maximum personal benefit from commonly held land while disregarding the ultimate shared consequences of a degraded resource base. Pastoralists were considered the most irresponsible of resource users because of supposed disincentives to conservation inherent in their nomadism and common property regimes. Interestingly, the favorable stereotype of indigenous peoples as "ecological noble savages", living in harmony with the environment, has scarcely ever arisen in the case of Sahelian natives (Redford 1991). While it is desirable to avoid romantic labels, one can argue that pastoralists with many generations of experience in the Sahel are likely to have developed an appreciation for

the environment and sustainable practices (Stoffle et al. 2003). Indeed, Tuareg culture entails a deep respect for the land and forbids allowing livestock to trample growing grass, wasting water, or using green wood (Claudot-Hawad 2006:661).

Pastoralists' more destructive land use practices often derive from necessity rather than a disregard for the environment. Michael Bollig (2006) points out that herders sometimes have to abandon conservation practices during drought, when pasture is at its most vulnerable to intensive grazing. Globalization, capitalism, and governance can also influence pastoralists' rangeland use for the worse. For example, cash crop production in southern Niger has contributed to the dislocation of pastoralists into marginal lands where grazing is more likely to be deleterious to perennial vegetation. Pastoralists' decrease in mobility is another concern. The reduction of nomadism in Niger reflects a worldwide trend, as pastoralists are either forced or compelled to settle (Fratkin 1997). Perhaps Tuareg and other pastoralists exacerbated the effects of the 1970s drought by overgrazing rangeland, or maybe the drought merely provided outsiders with an excuse to intervene in Tuareg land use practices. In either case, the result of the disaster and surrounding discourses was an assault on pastoralists' production and management of space in the rangelands of northern Niger, mainly through the introduction of ranching projects.

Rural Development: Science, Capitalism, and Immobility

Ranching in rural Niger links "scientific" stocking rate calculations, to prevent overgrazing, with the commoditization of livestock, and facilitates a rural-to-urban flow of pastoral products. While attempts to "modernize" the pastoral economy go back to the later colonial period (Loftsdóttir 2000:497), the 1970s' drought spurred these ambitions further. Development agencies at the time lacked an appreciation for the value of mobility in pastoral production. They hubristically implied that through their own formal studies, they could measure and define rangeland production and teach pastoralists proper use of the environment. This was one goal of USAID's Range and Livestock Research Project in the early 1980s. I interviewed a returned Peace Corps volunteer who was assigned to collaborate with this project as part of his service. Roy Simpson and another volunteer were asked to implement a study of the carrying capacity of Tuareg grazing lands in the Tahoua region (interview, March 14, 2007). Simpson and his partners fenced three pastures, of seven, fourteen, and twenty-eight acres. Then they put ten head of cattle in each pasture. They

were supposed to measure the weight gained by the animals and the damage done to the perennial vegetation and determine an optimal stocking ratio. However, the vegetation in the pastures kept drying up and dying between rainfalls, since the rain was so intermittent. The failure of the experiment highlighted the variability and patchiness of arid lands and suggested that cattle need to be moved to pasture that has received recent rain rather than waiting for the rain to come to them.

Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, the Nigerien government established several ranches with USAID funding. One of the keys to the ranches' survival has been that although pastoralists' livestock are not allowed into their pasture reserves, ranch livestock are allowed out as needed to follow the rain during drought. The USAID ranches initially purported humanitarian goals. Tuareg and Fulani pastoralists who had lost their livestock during the drought were to receive breeding animals on loan to rebuild their herds. However, the main impact has perhaps been the expansion of capitalism into the pastoral domain (Bourgeot 1981). Pastoralists were encouraged to sell young calves to the ranches. While the ranches could boast about providing pastoralists with a source of income and could indirectly work on the problem of pastoralists' "overstocking" of the range, the system was a bad deal for the Tuareg. Because of the higher mortality of younger versus older calves, they carried more risk, and the ranches made the higher profits after fattening the calves (Loftsdottir 2000:504). Many pastoralists remain opposed to ranches, which take up valuable pasture. However, some have begun to focus on the generation of income themselves, exploiting the labor of poorer kin as they seek profit (Bourgeot 1981:117). Development organizations encourage this by consistently advocating for the commercialization of livestock.

The USAID ranches in pastoral zones of Niger were unsolicited by local people, but many other development measures have focused on real needs. Limited water has always been a challenge in the Sahel, and well-making has been a development priority since the colonial era. Since creating and maintaining traditional wells is exhausting, most pastoralists desire easier access to clean water. Unfortunately, modern wells have had the effect of concentrating human and animal populations and causing localized environmental degradation (Little 1994). Other services provided in rural areas, such as schools, clinics, and distributions of aid, have also encouraged pastoralists to settle, thus putting their livelihood, which requires mobility to reach variable pasture resources, at risk. Karen Greenough contends that the development agencies that establish stationary rather than mobile services in rural areas fail to consider "the motives,

rationalities, opportunities, constraints and strategies of and for nomadic life" (2003:23). The latest development trend aimed at helping pastoralists cope with drought is to encourage them to sell some animals and use the money to purchase feed for the others. This strategy threatens to replace or diminish migration, and the purchased feed (for example, millet chaff) is a poor nutritional alternative to actual vegetation (interview, Roland Hammel, June 20, 2009).

Recent Tuareg Re-Productions of Space

Despite the growing interest in the commercial value of livestock, few Tuareg can be considered well-off on the basis of their herds alone. Instead, some are establishing profitable new ventures that share attributes with precolonial productions of space. Some Tuareg are once again "traveling over far-flung lands, establishing ties with neighboring or outside worlds...mobilizing a vast social network and thus being powerful" (Claudot-Hawad 2006:663). While legitimate trans-Saharan trade is now dominated by other parties, such as Libyan truck drivers, Tuareg are finding economic opportunities in tourism and smuggling. In the area of tourism, Tuareg smiths make renowned silver ornaments for sale to tourists, and many visitors to Niger employ Tuareg tour guides. Europe-bound migrants from central Africa often hire Tuareg drivers to transport them across the Sahara. Some Tuareg are also involved in smuggling goods such as counterfeit Marlboro cigarettes toward Europe. Géraldine Chatelard explains that some Tuareg pursue both tourism and smuggling: "as tourism to the Sahara is seasonal—from October to April—it leaves ample time to those who own cars and camels to be hired in other sectors of transport, such as smuggling of cigarettes or migrants" (2006:718).⁵ Both the seasonality and the migratory aspects of these jobs are reminiscent of precolonial Tuareg production of space. The long, subsidized journeys allow the guides or smugglers to bring trade goods to remote rural communities and maintain vast social networks (ibid. 729). Whether smuggling or working with tourists, Tuareg are contesting modern forces for sedentarization.

Another change in Tuareg livelihood is that a large proportion of men now travel to other West African countries to seek employment as migrant laborers. Motivations for such migrations vary. Some men need to save money to pay a bride price while others are merely striving to feed their

5 Chatelard's findings are based on fieldwork with Tuareg in Algeria. I include them here because smuggling and tourism are livelihood alternatives for Nigerien Tuareg as well.

families. Still others go abroad for adventure or to be able to afford consumer goods. Migrant labor has become a vital source of income, filling a gap left by the loss of precolonial livelihood activities. It seems to hold extra significance for former slaves. Florence Boyer (2005), basing her research in Bankilaré, found that the experience of travel has helped former slaves to remove themselves from their community's social hierarchy, and many refuse to enter back into it upon their return home.

Ironically, the experience of the migrant worker tends to erode rather than reinforce mobility among pastoralists. City life can transform their values:

Many migrant laborers get used to other ways of living than they know in the bush. They get accustomed to the consumption of expensive clothing, to more expensive tea drinking, having money between their hands, and owning various "luxury" items. They may no longer wish to return to herding life, or they may take long to do so. [Loftsdóttir 2000:209]

One Tuareg man that I interviewed affirmed this perspective and noted that some Tuareg's exposure to capitalism in cities is having a major effect on the entire culture as a new "mentality" spreads:

Before, the Tuareg didn't care too much about money. You didn't need money to live your nomadic life. Now, people have started loving money too much. A big portion of Tuareg lost their livestock and live in cities. They have to pay rent, pay for water, food. That changed the Tuareg mentality. It's spreading even to Tuareg that are still nomad. [interview, anonymous, March 18, 2007]

Not only does traditional pastoralism become less desirable as a result of such changes; it may also be less feasible. Since houses are needed to store goods, accumulating material possessions is incompatible with a nomadic lifestyle (Randal and Giuffrida 2006:456). As people live in cities, work as laborers, and become consumers, the possibility of returning to nomadism decreases.

Rebellion

The Nigerien Tuareg rebellions, in the 1990s and again at present, have arisen out of an array of problems. Two key issues are a chain of grievances triggered by the 1970s' drought and the extraction of uranium from

northern Niger, with its negative effects on the local Tuareg population. The rebellions have harmed Tuareg communities by preventing aid organizations from providing services in areas considered insecure, halting income from tourism, and provoking military counterattacks on the families of suspected rebels and even on random, innocent herders and their livestock (phone interview, Jeremy Keenan, January 30, 2009). The actions of rebels may also have contributed to the Bush administration's association of the region with Islamist terrorism and funding to the Nigerien military (International Crisis Group 2005). However, gains from the rebellions include decentralization measures written into the 1997 peace agreement signed by rebels and the government, and, I would argue, a sense of empowerment for Tuareg as the rebels seek to redefine space by upsetting the order established by the state and foreign agencies.

Uranium, discovered in the Tuareg region of Niger near the town of Arlit in the 1950s, is the country's main source of wealth. Production is increasing: the Nigerien government plans to double uranium extraction in the next several years and has issued over a hundred extraction licenses to foreign mining companies (McConnell 2007). Despite being Niger's most profitable enterprise, uranium extraction has indirectly exacerbated poverty rather than alleviating it. The high price of uranium in the 1970s allowed the Nigerien government to borrow money from the World Bank to finance infrastructure to expand extraction, but the price fell in the 1980s, causing an economic crisis. The World Bank then forced Niger to implement structural adjustment programs, which involve cutting back on basic services to the rural poor. Even at times when uranium is profitable for the Nigerien government, the Tuareg communities scarcely benefit. Tuareg are not even hired by the foreign companies that descend on their territory with an imported labor force. Uranium extraction has severely compromised the health of Tuareg rangeland and communities. A Nigerian coal burning power plant supplies energy to the mines, and because of the low-quality lignite employed, spews contamination on pasture and water sources (Finch 2007). Groundwater is confiscated for mining purposes at the expense of Tuareg communities.

The injustice of environmental degradation from uranium extraction and the simultaneous confiscation of the profits by foreigners are some of the Tuareg rebels' key grievances. The neglect of Tuareg in the aftermath of the 1970s drought is another lingering source of antipathy. Because of a lack of aid to their communities, many Nigerien Tuareg emigrated to Algeria and Libya during the ensuing famine. Some were conscripted into the Libyan army. Those who settled in Algeria were deported back to

Niger in the 1980s, where they were placed in refugee camps. They lacked sufficient livestock to survive as pastoralists and received little government aid but lingered in the camps for many years. In 1990, a small group of young Tuareg men from the camps attacked the local police station, stole guns and ammunition, and then fled. In retaliation, the authorities killed between three hundred (government estimate) and one thousand (Tuareg estimate) civilians and massacred their cattle (Prasse 1995:57). Clashes continued, and in 1991 the Tuareg Front de Libération de l'Air et de l'Azawak emerged. Many of its members had military experience from their service in the Libyan army, and some had even brought arms and ammunition with them when they returned to Niger.

The rebels demanded the re-drawing of national borders and the creation of a Tuareg state. Although the rebels were unsuccessful at renegotiating political boundaries, they did receive several promises from the government in the 1995 peace agreement, notably, some government decentralization, the integration of Tuareg rebels into the Nigerien military, and a 15% return of Niger's uranium profits to the affected communities. Because of what they feel is the government's failure to fulfill its promises, some Nigerien Tuareg are again rebelling, now under the name *Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice* (MNJ). Many Tuareg who were granted employment in the Nigerien military following the 1997 peace agreement deserted their posts to join the rebellion. MNJ rebels launched attacks on government facilities in the north, raided uranium mines, took hostages, and succeeded in getting the French mining company, Areva, to stall operations (BBC 2007b).

The Tuareg rebellion intentionally upsets the state and development agencies' productions of space in northern Niger. The state-sanctioned political hierarchy does not function, state/foreign resource extraction is upset, and development interventions have stalled. Such disruption potentially creates an opportunity to negotiate the reestablishment of Tuareg production of space on some level.

Conclusion

The rebels are reacting against a century of marginalization. Never able to achieve livelihood security through herding alone, the Tuareg nobility once ordered physical and social space to assure their access to resources. Freedom of movement was crucial, and diplomacy and social and military hierarchy allowed Tuareg to access southern pastures during times of drought and to procure grain and vegetables from sedentary

communities. The Tuareg focus on commanding space is evident in their metaphors, such as the expansive tent, and in the way that children were raised, for example, playing with toy camels and learning to speak multiple languages.

When the French sought to displace the Tuareg nobility, their strategy focused on spatial restructuring. They defined political boundaries that fragmented the Tuareg homeland, limited Tuareg mobility by slaughtering camels, and upset the political order by exiling traditional leaders and choosing individuals of low status for government positions. In colonial and later national policy, the interests of sedentary and particularly urban populations were favored over those of pastoralists, who were pushed northward toward the most arid regions of Niger. While some former slaves have been able to benefit from new opportunities in the past century, the nobility have been greatly hurt.

The 1970s drought was a serious crisis for all rural Nigeriens. Many Tuareg were left without livestock and had to take up sedentary livelihoods. The crisis brought development interventions to the pastoral zones of the Sahel, and well-intentioned projects such as the creation of wells and schools are resulting in the concentration of pastoralists in areas that are not suited to year-round grazing, ironically making pastoralism more like the destructive livelihood that it was once wrongly assumed to be. However, some Tuareg are resisting immobility while re-diversifying their livelihood through tour-guiding, smuggling, and engaging in migrant wage labor. These activities allow Tuareg to make needed income and to enjoy the agency of redefining space in subtle ways. Rebellion is a more blatant critique of post-colonial spatial production in Niger. It upsets both the hegemonic rule of the state and the progress of development along capitalist lines, if only temporarily. While specific injustices are prominent in the rebels' motivations, the rebellion is part of a much longer struggle over the power to produce space.

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