Marriage outside of kinship

social ties among the Tubu

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Introduction: the singularity of the Tubu among the Saharan people

The Sahara, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, spreads over 5,000 km from west to east. It is the largest desert in the world. Its northern boundary is marked by the isohyet 100 mm while its boundary with Sahel in the south is more vague. According to the estimations, it is located between the isohyets 150 and 250 mm. Nomadic camel[1] herders inhabit the desert, and spread over the Sahelian area where the presence of pastureland is more regular and favours denser human and animal occupation, with bovines, ovines and goats adding to camels. From west to east, several large distinct population groups are spread out. In the west, the *Hassaniya* Arabic-speaking people (Sahrawi and Moors) live in Western Sahara and Mauritania. A very arid area separates the Tuaregs, whose territory spreads over four countries: Algeria, Libya, Mali and Niger. They speak *Tamashek,* a Berber language. Towards the east, another very arid desert, the Ténéré, separates the Tubu, whose territory spreads over northern Chad, southern Libya and eastern Niger. They are roughly divided into two large sub-groups: the Teda in the north and the Daza in the south, who speak two related dialects, *Tedaga* and *Dazaga*. South-east from the Tubu, on the Chadian-Sudanese border, the Beri (who gather the Zaghawa and the Bideyat), are farmers-herders whose language and culture are close to the Tubu's. Finally, further east, in Sudan and Egypt, there are several nomadic pastoral Arabic-speaking tribes (figure 20.1).

1. Generally speaking, we talk about "camels" in Africa, but one-hump camelids are more specifically dromedaries.

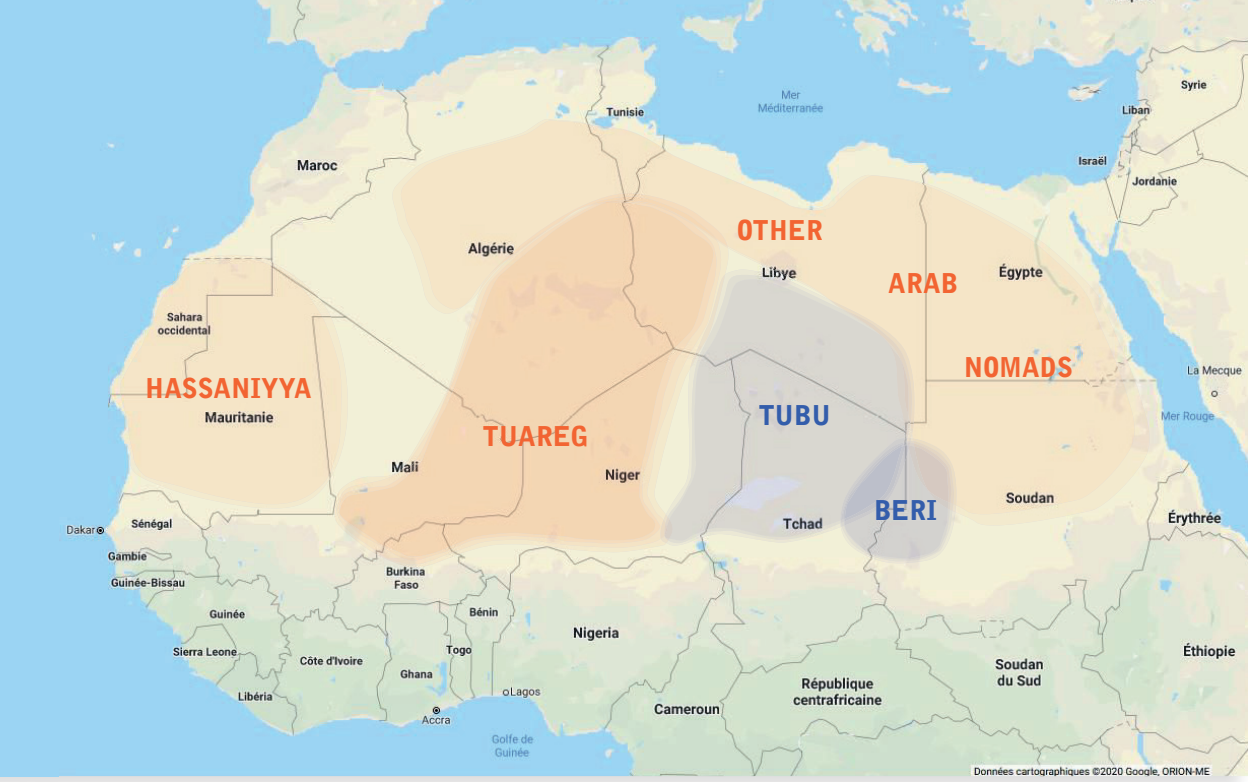

figure 20.1
Peoples of the Sahara, map C. Baroin.

The lifestyle of these various peoples is roughly comparable. It is marked by nomadism related to climatic constraints stemming from the Saharan environment. The dryness of the desert forces them to constantly look for new pastureland for their camels. Not that there is no pastureland in the desert environment, but their locations are sporadic for them depend on the places where rain has fallen, which is always random. Life in tents meets these mobility requirements and is a general rule. We shall not linger here on this lifestyle, which has been well described by other authors (Bernus 1981, Marty *et al.* 2009, Bonte 2008, Lewis 1961) or on the differences that may be observed from one case to another, whether about the materials that are being used for the tents, the furniture (always limited), the shape of the mounting saddles or other aspects of these herders' material life. On the other hand, it seems important for us to highlight the great linguistic and cultural differences between these peoples, and we shall demonstrate that in these two fields, language and culture, the Tubu show more originality than the other Saharans.

Let us start with the language. The linguistic map of the four great African phyla reveals the presence in the Sahara of two of them: the Afro-Asian and the Nilo-Saharan, while the Niger-Congo occupies the major part of the rest of the continent, with the exception of southern Khoïsan (Bernd & Nurse 2004) (figure 20.2). The Afro-Asian phylum covers almost all of the north of Africa, from Senegal to Somalia, with the exception of a large enclave corresponding to the Tubu area. The various Arabic dialects, from Mauritania to Sudan or Egypt,

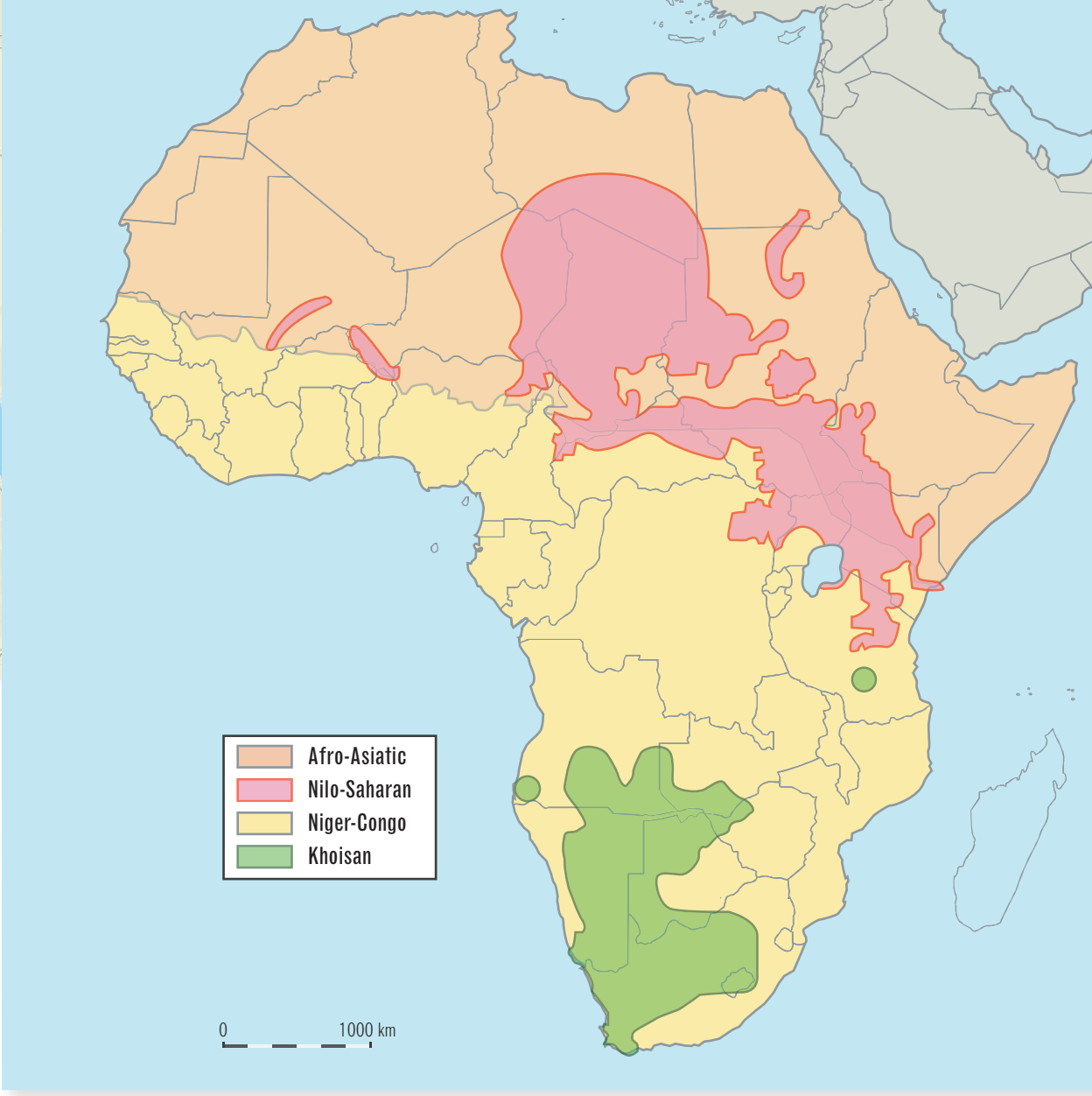

figure 20.2
African languages, modified from Bernd & Nurse 2004.

are Semitic languages, in themselves very different from the Tuareg language —*Tamashek*— which is a Berber language. But the Semitic languages, as well as the Berber languages, are classified in the same Afro-Asian phylum, which is not the case of the Tubu and Beri languages. The latter are part of the Nilo-Saharan group and closer to the languages spoken in East Africa.

So the difference is clear, on the linguistic front, between the Tubu and the Beri languages on one side, and that of the other Saharan people on the other. But the originality of the Tubu goes way beyond that. It is also cultural, and it is this cultural difference that we shall emphasise here. In this regard,

the singularity of the Tubu in relation to the other Saharans[2] is noticeable in various aspects of their social life. The global morphology of their society is different, which especially appears through the family relationships, in relation to their marriage rules, and in their social and political organisation. As a matter of fact, these various aspects are, as we will see, logically connected (Baroin 1985, 1993).

The marriage rule and the matrimonial process

Let us start with the marriage rule. Among Arabic-speaking populations, in Sahara and elsewhere, marriage preferably occurs with close relatives; the so-called "Arabic" marriage, i.e. between the children of two brothers. In these patrilineal societies, it is the closest kinship that can be conceived between two spouses. As for the Tuaregs, they do not practise this sort of marriage, and women's kinship is more important to them than it is to the Arabs, but they also favour marriages with close relatives, especially with cross cousins (Bernus *et al.* 1986). These marriages among relatives are far from the Tubu's customs, whose matrimonial policy could be considered the polar opposite of the other Saharans'.

For these herders, the marriage rule forbids a very wide circle of relatives and the more distant the relative the better. They say that marriage is prohibited "where there are three grand-parents", i.e. a common great-great-grandparent. Although they are Muslims, like all Saharans, the increasing influence of the Islamic-Arabic cultural model where marriage is best with the closest relatives has not turned them away from this rule, which to them is essential and which they consider a point of honour. Each alliance is hence established outside the circle of close relatives and each individual consequently has a personal network of relatives by marriage. That of two brothers, for instance, shall be distinct, since they each marry in different family circles. The result is a strong mixing of the population: each person has parents in many different camps, often very far away from one another. But the mixing does not only occur on the kinship level, for marriage comes with multiple animal transfers between multiple actors. These multiple exchanges have a strong influence on the social, economic and political relations. Let us see about this entire process.

When a marriage is considered, first they verify that there is no kinship between the potential future spouses. If this condition is met, the request is expressed by the parents of the young man. The parents of the young girl, after consultation, accept it on condition that the bride price be paid to them —the amount is discussed and agreed upon between the two families.

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2. We shall not be talking about the Beri here, who are comparable to the Tubu in many aspects, but who are not strictly speaking Saharans. About them, see Tubiana (1985), whose observations are in accordance with ours (Baroin 1985).

The father of the future bride, who will receive the bride price, decides on the nature of the payments that he shall receive[3]. It can be tea and sugar, because very sugary tea is a highly appreciated drink for the Tubu, or livestock. The young man must then give his future father-in-law, for instance, ten adult she-camels or the equivalent in worth. But usually the young single man does not own that many animals. He may have received, when he was born, one or two animals from a close relative, as is often the case for any baby. Then the boy receives for his circumcision around 13 years old, three or four other animals from various relatives, sometimes more, which are included like the first ones in the father's herd. But when he reaches the age to marry, around 25 or 30 years old, the young man does not recover his animals from the father's herd right away. And even counting the ones his father gives him then, he could not pay the bride price. So he must find the required livestock somewhere else. In order to collect it, he goes around visiting his relatives on his father's and on his mother's sides, close or more distant ones, who live in various camps, sometimes very far away from one another. His goal is not just to inform them of his upcoming marriage, he also comes to ask for their help, namely livestock donations, as a contribution for the payment of the bride price.

After a variable visiting time, each relative he has solicited gives him the present he came to obtain. This donation is called *troko* (pl. *troka*), a word which also refers to the exceptional help that is provided to a parent in need, for instance to help pay for hospital bills. In these circumstances, and especially for a marriage project, refusing to support a relative is not an option. Not only would it be shameful, but it would also be an insult to the boy asking for this help. This essential mandatory solidarity among relatives is one of the bases of the Tubu's social life. It also occurs under other circumstances, which are just as imperative, especially in the case of a murder. A murderer's relatives are morally obligated to contribute to the blood price, an important compensation that shall be paid to the family's victim to lift the vengeance threat. But for these payments, one cannot give anything. Marriage aids, just like contribution to blood money, can only be large livestock, with a minimum of one animal, for it would be disgraceful to give a lesser present. The generosity of a gift is an honour for the donor as much as it is for the recipient, and these gestures are very important in this society where honour and generosity among relatives are essential virtues.

The pre-matrimonial tour of the boy to collect the bride price can be of varying size. The number of relatives he solicits and the importance of each donation he receives can be quite different from one case to another. During an investigation about eight marriages among the Tubu of eastern Niger in 1972, the number of donors varied from 3 to 25 people, with an average of 13 donors

3. The following data are mainly the fruit of investigations that we have led with the Tubu from Niger between 1969 and 1972.

per marriage, and the number of animals received by the future groom went from 10 to 25 animals. When he visits his relatives, the groom takes more or less time to obtain all the animals he needs. This process can take two years or more, sometimes up to ten years. The risk, if he takes too long, is that the young girl be married to a quicker and wealthier rival for as long as the bride price has not been entirely paid, the family of the future bride is not bound by any commitment[4]. To counter this threat, or out of a mere desire to show their courage, many future husbands kidnap their betrothed before they have paid their entire debt. But kidnapping is a codified act, that cannot take place without the complicity of a relative of the young girl's. Marriage by kidnapping is an honour for a woman because it demonstrates the boldness of her spouse. But it does not exempt the groom to pay his father-in-law what he owes him eventually. Otherwise, the marriage would be invalidated.

In the normal process, as the young man receives animals from his various relatives, he makes successive payments to his future father-in-law, in the form required by the latter. They can be she-camels, for instance, or large quantities of tea and sugar bought at the market with the money from selling the livestock he received.

The cycle of transfers, however, does not end there. The father-in-law keeps some of the goods he receives from his future son-in-law, but he redistributes the major part to his own various relatives and, to a lesser extent, to his wife's. So the father's and mother's relatives benefit from these donations, called *tewa*. The amount received by each of them usually totals seven *sanda*. This symbolic counting unit, the fabric piece is the unit to measure all exchanges, even though these fabrics are actually absent from all Tubu camps[5]. Seven *sanda* are worth one three-year-old she-camel. The donation may be higher[6], but there is mostly a minimum. The father of the bride cannot give less than four fabric pieces for a slim gift would be unworthy of the recipient: it needs to match at least the price of one head of large livestock, even if only for a young calf.

This wide redistribution of the bride price among the bride's relatives is followed by a last phase of transfer of wealth which takes place on the day of the wedding. The ceremony takes place in the future bride's parents' camp. In the Sahel area, the date is chosen preferably during the rainy season, because herders are then freed, thanks to the presence of some temporary ponds, from the heavy constraints of having to give their herds water. On the settled upon date, the nuptial tent is first built early in the morning with new materials. A large number of guests are invited and many festivities are organised: dances and

4. At least, it is the case with the Daza in Niger, where the investigations have been led, for it seems that the situation is different with the Teda.

5. The fabric piece (*sande*, pl. *sanda*) is a counting unit inherited from the past, quite generally in Africa. It is the symbolic way to evaluate the value of the circulating good through specific equivalences.

6. The maximum observed in 1972 in eastern Niger was 20 fabric pieces for one beneficiary.

figure 20.3
The bride- and bridegroom's kin face each other in a common prayer to "tie" the marriage, photo C. Baroin 1971.

camel or horse races[7]. And later on, during the evening or the night, the male relatives of the boy and girl gather to "tie" the marriage in compliance with Islam (figure 20.3). They appoint a guardian who shall intervene later on in case of a conjugal dispute, and set up the amount of the "marriage's guarantee" *sadag*. It is a donation made by the husband to his wife in accordance with Muslim law. Usually, it consists in one or two heads of livestock that the wife shall keep if she is repudiated.

Generally, the next afternoon, the last phase of the cycle of matrimonial livestock transfers occur. This time, the donors are the parents of the bride. The same ones who, during the previous phase, benefited from the redistribution carried out by the bride's father (*tewa*). Their donations, which we shall call "marriage animals", are called with a specific term: *conofor* (pl. *conofora*).

In theory, each donor gives the equivalent amount of what he has received, but he can give whatever he wants, there is no absolute obligation. On the other hand, these donations can only be in the form of large livestock heads, and there is only one recipient: the groom. The animals in question are gathered by the father of the bride before the crowd who loudly approves: gunshots, drum rolls, ululations, and women's cheerful songs. This herd is mainly made of young females, which is a promise of growth for the prosperity of the young couple.

7. Horses are prestigious animals reserved to mounting, a luxury in these arid areas.

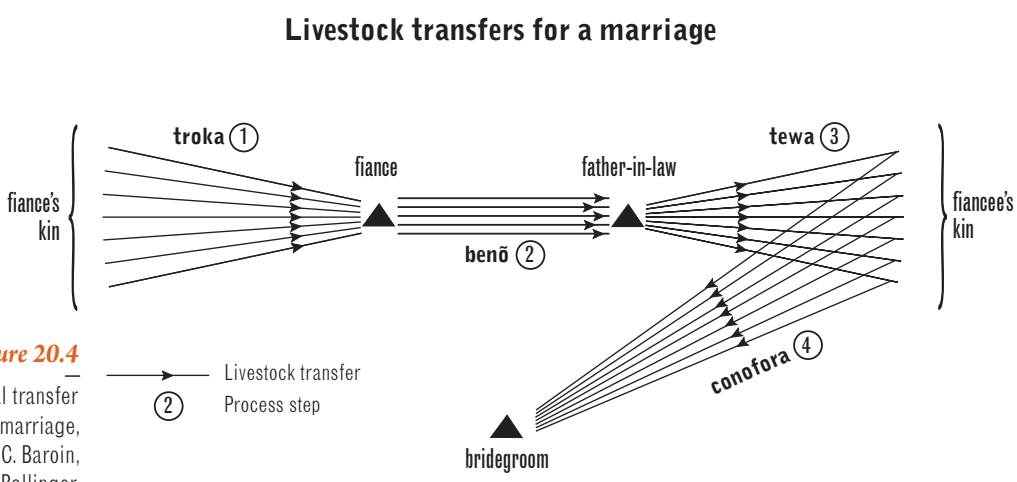

figure 20.4
Animal transfer for a marriage, drawing C. Baroin, CAD M. Ballinger.

In total, this entire transfer of livestock consists in a four-steps cycle, each distinguished by a specific term (figure 20.4). First, the future groom calls his relatives, men and women, to help him get married. The wealth he thus attracts (called *troko*) is then given to his future father-in-law under the name *benõ*. The latter then redistributes this wealth to various relatives of the future wife's, under the name *tewa*. The number of beneficiaries in this third step is proportionate to the number of initial donors, one leading to the other. In a fourth step, the beneficiaries of the *tewa* become donors themselves, for the benefit of the groom, and the given animals are then called *conofor* (pl. *conofora*).
This entire process involves a great number of animals and partners, among the young man's and the young woman's relatives. These exchanges result in the formation of a herd that is given to the groom on the day of the ceremony. It mostly consists in young females, because the intended purpose is the growth which will ensure the newlyweds' economic independence. However, the consequences of this cycle of exchanges are not only material, they are also social, moral, legal and political.

The social repercussions of the matrimonial livestock transfers cycle

After spending a year or two in the camp of his wife's parents, the husband chooses his place of residence. He often chooses to stay close to his own parents, but not always. Since he now has his own herd, consisting of the donations he received from his family-in-law to which he adds the animals he received throughout his childhood and which were up to then kept in his father's herd. This herd, made of multiple inputs is the basis of his economic independence.

He no longer answers to anyone in particular, and this freedom allows him to take his family wherever he wants and consider himself as his own boss. Hence the spirit of anarchy that prevails in Tubu land, where no one has to obey anyone (Baroin 1985: 74-79).

But this formal freedom is not total. From the livestock he has received from his wife's relatives, which is a major part of his herd, result lasting ties between the son-in-law and his family-in-law. In a way, he remains obligated to his in-laws. This situation can later on intensify for if the in-laws hold him in high esteem, they will give him more animals. This generosity marks the strong cognatism of the Tubu society where the wife preserves her ties with her original clan and extended family. The clans are patrilineal, but all the cognatic relatives bring their support when a difficulty or a marriage project arises. For instance, if a couple is visited by a young relative of the wife's who wants to marry, the animal that is given for *troko* is taken from this stock of animals, the *conofora* that the husband had himself received from his wife's relatives on the day of his marriage. These animals and their young ones constitute a distinct legal category from the husband's personal livestock, on which he has more rights. As for the *conofora*, they must be managed for the benefit of the wife and her children.

Due to their economic as well as moral ties, the husband's freedom is limited by the intervention of his in-laws in case of a conjugal dispute. The wife can run away at her parents' and they will be the ones to arrange the dispute with her husband. They can demand the payment of a livestock head in compensation for the damage he caused, before authorising the return of the wife home. That is probably why the Tubu wives, while they are socially subordinated to their father's and then their husband's authority, are confident and achieve their aims playing on the husband/original family interface.

The animal's transfers cycle that occurs before a marriage materialises and strengthens the interpersonal ties among the extended relatives, and the women's kinship play an important part. This mutual support thus defines the legal categories among the family's herd, which it is essential to specify, for the rights on the animals influence the relations between the individuals.

The rights over livestock

Depending on its origin, the livestock that constitute the family herd is divided into distinct legal categories upon which the actors (husband, wife, children) each exercise specific rights. These rights are independent from the biological nature of the livestock (camels, cows or small livestock) and persist in time. Each young animal comes to increase the category to which its mother belongs, and the herd consists in a juxtaposition of matrilineal lineages of animals upon which various rights are exercised.

During the wedding ceremony, two livestock categories are created. The first one, the most important one for the young couple, is the *conofora*, the animals given by the bride's relatives to the husband. The second one is the "marriage's guarantee" *sadag*, given by the husband to the wife according to the Islamic rule. Other animals can then be added to the family herd. They are the personal property of the husband's, the wife's, one of their children's or even a third person's.

The spouses exercise distinct prerogatives over the "marriage's animals", *conofora*. The husband is in charge of the livestock, but since it has been given to him for the benefit of his couple and his future children, he is not entirely free. He can sell one animal once in a while to face family expenses (purchase of millet, tea and sugar, clothes, tax payment, etc.), but he cannot squander this property, for instance to contract a second marriage. His in-laws would be opposed to it. As for the wife, she benefits from the milk of the females for family use as a priority. Only the children born from this union shall inherit this herd.

The "marriage's guarantee" *sadag* belongs more specifically to the wife. The husband cannot use it without her permission. Sometimes more animals come to complete this categroy, but only as reparation for a damage caused to the wife. In the event of a divorce, the herd becomes an issue because the men usually try to distort the Islamic rule to their benefit. The rule provides that the *sadag* is recovered by the wife (unless she is the one to leave her husband[8]), but the husband who wants to repudiate his wife often manages to keep this herd to himself[9]. It is bequeathed to the children born from this union when they become adults. Their mother can sell one animal to buy silver jewels for her daughter, or her son may dispose of the animals without any objection. It is only a pre-inheritance, since the livestock is destined to them anyway.

There are other categories besides these two, and their quantity and importance vary depending on the cases. These animals belong to the husband, the wife, one child or another, or one or several third parties, in their own right. The husband's personal herd is of various origins: birth or circumcision gifts from relatives, inheritance or pre-inheritance, livestock bought upon return from an employment stay abroad, in Libya most often. He has full rights over these animals, but the moral obligation to donate applies if a relative comes to solicit help, to get married for instance.

Often, the family herd includes the women's personal herd, either the wife's or a female relative of the husband's. The case also occurs after an inheritance. The Muslim rule stipulates that the sons shall inherit double what the daughters shall, hence the women own fewer animals than men do, but many of them also lack interest in this herd. Some prefer to leave their inheritance to their brothers, rather than to their husband by including it to the family herd. Especially in

8. According to the Maliki rite, see Ibn Abi Zayd Al-Qayrawani (1975, chap. 32).

9. Out of twenty divorces studied in our investigations, there were only three exceptional cases where the wife had left with the herd.

the event of widowhood, they know that they can always count on the support of their brothers in case of a difficulty if they do not have a son to provide for them in their old age.
Sometimes, some animals of the herd belong to a more distant relative, or even to someone outside the family circle. They have been entrusted to the couple for various reasons. It is a temporary loan of dairy animals to avoid a relative in need to lack milk or the result of a risk diversification strategy. For a wealthy herder who cannot manage his herd alone, the hazards of extensive farming in the desert and on its margins are such, due to drought and livestock robbery, that it is wise to spread part of his animals among different herders. In total, the herd farmed by a family is composed of animals of extremely varied statuses, upon which complex rights tangle involving multiple partners. It is important to understand the architecture of these rights for it explains many behaviours.

Men's wealth, women's wealth

We must also note that the behaviour of men and women regarding personal livestock ownership is very different. Men attach great importance to the number of animals they own, for they are the source of their economic independence, and hence of their feeling of freedom. For women on the other hand, what matters most is having enough lactating animals to feed their young children and their family. We have seen that they usually own way fewer animals than men do, not only because of the Islamic rule over inheritance, but also because of their tendency to leave their rightfully own animals to their male relatives. Furthermore, the donations of a wife to her husband are frequent, and not the other way around. However, some women own significant herds, especially if they do not have any brother and are the sole heiresses of a wealthy father. Unsurprisingly, when the wife is a wealthy owner, she has more influence in her household and the couple's residence is more likely to be uxorilocal.
Generally speaking, the Tubu wife provides wealth for her husband. Before the wedding, thanks to the contributions of his own relatives, the future husband gives his father-in-law a matrimonial compensation or bride price, whose amount is then compensated by the donations he receives from his wife's relatives on the day of the ceremony. But later on, the parents of the wife keep enriching him with more animals, which strengthens the imbalance between what he has paid at first and what he receives afterwards. As a matter of fact, the wife is often the one to solicit these subsequent donations. Once in her lifetime, she tours her relatives on camel-back. She takes a few small gifts, mostly tea and sugar which are always highly appreciated. Sometimes she also takes her last born to introduce him to her relatives. From each relative she visits, she receives one or two heads of large livestock, and comes back home from

her tour with a dozen or more animals. These come to grow the "marriage's animals" stock *conofora* in the conjugal herd.

Also, it is frequent that a wife donates animals she owns to her husband. These gifts are lesser than the ones coming from her relatives, for usually women do not own many livestock heads. It is often the promise of an unborn animal: she shall give the "womb" *kiši* of such cow or she-camel, i.e. the next calf or camel-calf. The average example is that of Sugumay, owner of fourteen animals, who gave her husband seven "wombs" of one of her she-camels. These gifts, even when they are small, are significant, for with luck, if the "womb" turns out to be a female and she produces many young ones, the result can be an entire herd.

Conversely, the husband does not usually give his wife animals, except for the "marriage's guarantee" *sadag* required by Islam. However, he grants her and their descendants a part of his personal animals and thus forbids himself to use them for any other purpose. She benefits from the milk, and the livestock will be inherited by the children. But personally, she does not receive any other animal from him, except in reparation of a damage he has caused.

The most common damage in the eyes of women is the taking of a second wife. There are few bigamists among the Tubu, and even fewer trigamists, because polygyny is only accessible to the wealthiest men. But a second union, when it happens, is always difficult for the first wife and her parents. This second marriage does damage their interests, for the first wife and her children lose the exclusivity of the access to the wealth of the father, which they will have to share with the children of the second union. When she hears about this second marriage, the first wife engages in codified behaviour. She becomes "angry" *oworci*, i.e. she abandons her tent and goes back to her parents'. A while later, when she is less upset, the husband seeks to negotiate with the in-laws for her coming back. He then gives her a cow or a she-camel called *oworsam*, "to soothe her heart"[10], to convince her to come back. This animal shall be a personal property of hers, just like the inheritance livestock.

Throughout her conjugal life, the wife maintains ties with her relatives. She can go to her parents in case of a difficulty, and in the event of a conjugal dispute, she takes refuge with them. If she is repudiated, she goes to live with them until she remarries. Her parents are her best support and her most committed defenders in all circumstances, while no systematic solidarity bounds the conjugal partners. Only the birth of many children can save the mother from repudiation, while bringing her the support she hopes for her old age. The Tubu woman is never economically autonomous. She always depends on a man (husband, father, brother or son) to provide for her. That is why owning animals is not crucial to her, and we cannot wonder why, under such circumstances, she does not show as much interest for the livestock as men do.

10. Of *owor*, heart and *sam*, soothe.

A network social logic

Kinship, for men and for women, is crucial. Even though each head of family rests his economic dependence on his herd, the recourses to family relations are frequent, among his own relatives and among his wife's. It is the case when a marriage project from a son or a cousin arises, or when a relative is in need, for instance if he was the victim of camel robbery, assault or murder. The relatives of the concerned party must intervene, out of solidarity.

But since each man and woman is at the heart of their own network, due to the marriage rule that spreads alliances far away, the overall result is an entanglement of networks that only overlap on the margins of one another. The solidarities are based on these kinship networks, and not on clearly defined groups. This network sociability does not only influence the economic life of the herders. Its consequences are also political. Each nuclear family, included in a wide entanglement of mutual assistance relations involving relatives and allies, is both autonomous and solidary of the others. The result is a fluid network, with no centre or periphery, a type of organisation that allows each individual to feel independent and to consider he does not have to answer to anyone, while benefiting from these various solidarity ties.

This feeling is all the more founded that, even though there are leaders (of lineages or clans) among the Tubu, they play the part of mere mediators. They have no coercive power on the members of their patrilineal group. The members of a clan, or even a lineage, are geographically scattered and never gather. The Tubu clan is not a corporate group. It is more of an honorary blazon, defined by several attributes: a historical tradition, a nickname, a prohibition and clan mark (Baroin 1985: 83-92). The members of a clan make sure that these common emblems of their honour are respected, by reacting to the offences and potential insults that their prohibition or nickname might be the object of, to avenge murders or pursue a thief of livestock bearing the mark of the clan. The Tubu have a very strict sense of honour that makes them pull out their dagger instantly —which they carry in a sheath tied above their left elbow— to rush on their adversary. But the challenges and vengeance motives are frequent, all the more so that this bellicose society promotes boldness and livestock robbery, which is not safe for it creates a permanent, diffuse and systematic vengeance threat on the thief. However, in such cases, solidarity is limited to the closest relatives for "the vengeance obligations [...] do not go beyond [...] a certain level of kinship within the clan" (Chapelle 1957: 346).

In terms of politics, we may say that the Tubu clan is not really a clan, if we look at the sociological structures that are usually called as such. Its essential role is to regulate endemic violence through vengeance obligations which persist in time, save for a compensation in the case of a murder. But overall, anarchy prevails, in the absence of leaders with actual powers. In this social logic based on entangled networks, we cannot really see how strong leadership could find its place.

Comparison with other Saharan societies and conclusion

The situation is very different among other Saharan peoples. With the Moors and the Tuaregs, the social stratification is much more clearly marked than with the Tubu. The latter only include two categories that are separate: the slaves (berfore slavery was abolished) and the blacksmiths. The blacksmiths are strictly endogamous (Baroin 1991, 2012) and the slaves do not have any rights (Baroin 1981). But there are blacksmiths and there were slaves in all Saharan societies, with the same characteristics. On the other hand, there are also other social categories among the Moors and the Tuaregs that do not exist among the Tubu, namely the noblemen, the tributaries and the religious men. On this stratification is based a strong political power, that of the *emir* among the Moors[11], the *amenokal* among the Tuaregs. So there is "quite a resemblance between, the social and political hierarchies of the Moors and the Tuaregs" (Bonte *et al.* 1991: 47).

In the Mauritanian Adrar emirate, these hierarchies result from matrimonial practices (Bonte 2008). Though the Arab marriage (as practiced by the Moors) "prevents the scattering of the family and lineage heritage" (Bonte 2008: 78), only 60% of the marriages are contracted within the tribe (Bonte 2008: 93), leaving room for marriage alliances in which political hierarchies are inscribed (Bonte 2008: 101):

> It is the game of marriage alliances between the men, mediated by feminine values through the rule of the prohibition of feminine hypogamy, which immediately introduces the effects of hierarchy and inscribes the social affiliations in the field of cognatic kinship. The tribe thus constantly appears open to new alliances to redefine its content, which must be interpreted in the local history, or preserve its status by refusing these alliances, which only appears possible in the long run when, in the case of an emirate society, for instance, these statutory differences turn into political hierarchies.

The situation is comparable to the Tuaregs', where the tribe (*tawshit*) is an almost entire endogamous group, which has one common ancestor in the agnatic or uterine line. The *amenokal* is at the head of several tribes; he is a warlord who redistributes the spoils, but whose function is not hereditary (Bernus 1981: 77-78).

As for the Arab tribes of Sudan, their organisation is segmentary, like the Nuer's in the same country (Evans-Pritchard 1947). It is centred around agnatic kinship, with various levels (lineage, clan and tribe) each led by a leader in a pyramidal structure. There can be blacksmiths and slaves, but no additional social stratification as with the Moors and the Tuaregs. They are societies composed of "corporate groups" which also have strong political organisation, quite contrary to the Tubu model.

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11. Bonte talks about "powerful leaderships" in eastern Mauritania (2008: 510).

This brief comparison highlights the Tubu's great originality in relation to the other Saharan peoples. Contrary to these other nomads, the Tubu society is characterised by an entanglement of interpersonal networks where each man has his own and considers himself his own leader. Marriages out of kinship help circulate the wealth, from one kinship to another, through a series of livestock transfers that result in the formation of a young couple's herd, upon which their economic independence is based. Beyond the nuclear family, however, the relations established or perpetuated through these donations of animals are the source of diffuse solidary relations. Since clans do not constitute corporate groups and clan leaders have no decision-making power, it is the spirit of anarchy that characterises this society in the political front, while the spirit of solidarity creates the link within individual networks.