

Greetings in the Desert

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Introductory note from the Editors

As you develop a performance-based and ethnographic approach to communication, a key question to bear in mind is what might be at stake for participants in the ways they use language. This chapter investigates the ways the Tuareg people of the Sahara greet strangers whom they encounter in the desert. What communicative behaviors do the Tuareg pay attention to as they try to predict whether the approaching stranger is friend or foe? Why is one's name among the last pieces of information that will be revealed? What is the cultural meaning of revealing one's name in this situation? What could be at stake for the Tuareg if they were to share their names too soon? How do you size up strangers in your own community? What communicative behaviors do you pay special attention to? What kind of information about yourself might you initially withhold, and why?

You can also use this account as the basis for a comparative ethnographic study of a greeting. How do greetings work in your own speech community? Try sitting discreetly in a café or public park, and begin to pay attention to how people greet one another. Can you develop an inventory of different types of greetings? Does a greeting tend to take a certain form? How does it progress? What can you tell about people's relationship from the way they greet each other? What do you think would happen if someone used a greeting form that was not appropriate to their relationship?

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Greetings¹

The people known in Western literature as Tuareg, who call themselves *Kal-tamāshaq*, are pastoral nomads who live in an area centered in northern Mali but extending across the Sahara to Niger, Algeria, and even Libya.² Much of the life of the adult male Tuareg, or Targi, is spent on the desert³ – in its infiniteness and its eternalness known as *tenere* and in its loneliness and desolation characterized by *asuf*, a Tamāshaq word which can be glossed as 'homesickness' or, more precisely, as a desperate effort to put up with the absence of men, to ignore one's human insignificance and frailty in the huge, hostile Land of the Djinnns. (*Kal-tenere* means, literally, 'those of *tenere*,' i.e., the *djinnns*.)

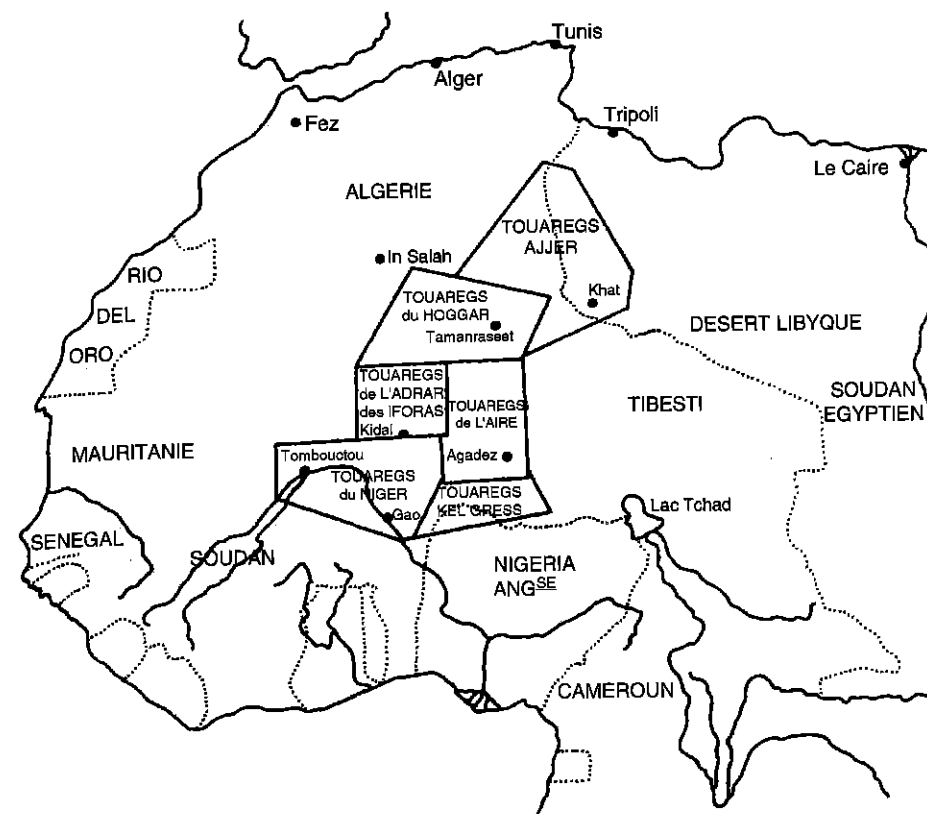
The Tuareg are compelled by the necessities of their life to move often, to leave continuously people whom they know and love.⁴ There is a kind of ambivalence in the Tuareg's relation with the hostile desert environment whereby awareness of being the only human (part of the essence of *asuf*, which is felt as soon as one is away from the sights, sounds, and smells of camp) is simultaneously ego diminishing and ego enhancing. Just as a seaman belongs less to the harbor where his boat is anchored than to the sea, so *tenere* rather than his tent is the true home of the Tuareg man.

Huge as it is, the ocean does not prevent sailors from meeting other sailors.⁵ Similarly, in *tenere* a Targi may go for several days without meeting a soul. Nevertheless, encounters do occur. The greetings which are part of such encounters are to a considerable extent ritualized and formulaic. They are also critically important, and lapses can have grave consequences for the offender or errant traveler. The other party may be an enemy – or he may be made one. The withholding of information critical to survival can be as damaging as an assault. If someone will not tell you where there is water – or gives you false information – it can be damaging indeed.

Identification of the Other

The desert peoples have a history of intertribal warfare and intratribal feuds. If the Targi meets another, or others, in *tenere*, the identification of the other – as early as possible – is critically important.⁶ For, once another person is sighted on an intersecting trajectory, there is no turning aside (in a desert, as on the sea, there are distant travelers who are briefly glimpsed and then fade out of vision), for that can be interpreted as a sign of either fear or potential treachery and ambush, which invites countermeasures. There are rules for distant encounters (e.g., across a gorge in the mountains, *salaams* will be exchanged as shouts – as will information) and for those on divergent courses; once they are seen progressing towards one another the parties *must* meet.⁷

The preliminary stage of some encounters is a long one. The flat desert landscapes allow participants to see each other from a great distance – perhaps as much as several hours travel by camel. Sometimes the distance is so great that, in the mirage, the dot on the skyline could just as well be a stone or the bleached trunk of a dead tree as a



The dialect used in this paper is spoken between Tombouctou and Gao

Figure 1 Homelands of the Touareg (source: Lhote 1955)

fellow human (unlike a stone, a traveler may disappear and reappear on the horizon as the landscape undulates).⁸

If several ride together and a traveler is seen, a game is often played in which someone will say, "*jaray kay s wen*" or, "I challenge you to recognize that one over there." All members of the group, or solitary riders, have the following cues available to them:

(1) *location of the encounter* In many remote areas of Western countries one's first guess on sighting someone would be that he was a native. In the same way, although the Tuareg range widely, each tribal group has its own homeland. In the absence of further information, which becomes available as parties close, an initial estimate can be made solely on the basis of location.

(2) *distinctive mounts* Just as boys and young men in our society recognize and identify makes and models of automobiles by distinctive features of profile, equipment, and even patterns of acceleration and cornering, so the Tuareg and other people of the desert are very attuned to differences in kinds of camels. Tribes specialize in breeding different kinds of camels. There are camels which are known to be bred for speed; there are camels which are known to be bred for endurance; there are individual

camels which are the pride of a whole camp, or even tribe, which are known and recognized over a large range⁹ (much as is the case with the occasional well-polished Cord or Dusenbergs seen in this country). Thus, the camel itself is a clue.

(3) *saddles* There are two kinds of saddles, *tamzak* and *tahiasht*. *Tamzak* is considered the best; those made in the area of Agades (Niger) are particularly prized. They cost a camel and are at the same time beautiful and fragile so that they require skilled riders. *Tahiasht* are plain but sturdy; they meet the requirements of everyday use. The use of a *tamzak* by an unskilled rider produces a contradiction that brings a smile to the face of a Targi, just as we smile at the incongruity of overly cautious drivers of sports cars.

(4) *riding style* Even from a great distance the Targi can tell something about the kind of person(s) approaching – his age, his attitude toward the world – from the way he sits on his camel. A young man sits erect and holds the camel's head back and high, whereas an older man, knowing that he and his camel have a long way to go, will let his camel relax a little and will himself ride in a more relaxed manner. Moreover, a man heading for Timbuktu and one looking for a stray cow will not have the same camel-rider silhouette; nor do they drive their mounts at the same speed. The former has a definite destination and, although he must spare his camel, wants to reach that destination as soon as possible. He will take shortcuts and eventually even travel at night (which is often a dangerous experience in the desert). Knowing that he will not always find people to host him he carries bulky bags of food and water. His general appearance is austere and businesslike. The other man does not carry supplies; he has no fixed destination; he is investigating – an activity incompatible with haste. He drives his camel very slowly and pays attention to everything: fresh grass, potential camping sites, tracks of animals, a flight of vultures hovering above the remains of a lion's banquet (his cow? another's?). It is this second man who can best provide information. Once again there are obvious parallels, e.g., "Sunday drivers" and "sightseers," "damn kids," and so on.

Finally, while the training of all camels is essentially the same, the gait of each camel distinctively reflects its trainer's (and rider's) aesthetic values and personality. Camels are trained by men and become extensions of the personalities of their trainers or riders. One may even speak of the idiolects of camel walks (as well as of regional and generational variations). Again, there are similarities with, e.g., "hot-rodding" and other driving "styles."

(5) *the veil* No self-respecting Tuareg male of either noble or servile status will allow himself to be seen, even by intimates, without a *tagalmust* over his face.¹⁰ There are two kinds of veils, a plain white cotton one (*ashshash*) and a more elegant veil made of some forty strongly dyed indigo strips¹¹ (*alashsho*). Although it conceals all but a tiny part of the face, the veil does not prevent the Tuareg from recognizing one another. Rather, without the veil recognition would be difficult.¹²

The potential encounter produces an ambivalence in travelers who are continuously torn by a conflict between that affinity toward other humans which is a consequence of *asuf* and, on the other hand, an awareness that interaction is not always harmonious and the knowledge that most of the harm done to men is done by other men. Whatever may go through the traveler's mind, however, he and the other do meet – the preliminary stage of the encounter ends – and the participants greet one another and engage in talk.

The Encounter Proper

The newcomer, or visitor, is required by Tuareg rules to initiate interaction.¹³ (It should be kept in mind that in the Tuareg case interaction begins before identifications have been made.) In many encounters this requirement, itself, poses a problem: How is it determined that one or another party is a newcomer? This becomes particularly important when neither is on his native ground – when men meet far away from their own camps. There is a complex interplay of such variables as perceived age status and other status variables in such an instance. This assignment of roles as visitor and host has further implications for subsequent rights of interrogatory priority. The assignment, moreover, is influenced not only by the perceived attributes of the participants themselves but also by such additionally complicating factors as the relative status of the participants' tribes and of their status within their own tribes.¹⁴ Finally, even such factors as numbers are important; one person meeting a group will initiate greetings.

A typical greeting exchange goes through three stages, following which questions for specific information may be asked. Proper utterances, and responses, for the several stages, are presented in Figure 2.

These greeting exchanges are strongly rule governed but are not totally prestructured. Information is available to interlocutors in the course of the exchange, and cues are closely attended. This is particularly the case in the fourth stage when the actual information questioning occurs. It is critically important to meet people because they may possess information necessary for survival. At the same time it is also critically important that each participant protect himself.

the salaam The exchange always starts in the same manner, with the *salaam*. The *salaam* is a summons (Schegloff 1968) or, in Firth's usage, an *attention-producer*, and will be repeated until a response is given (see Bowles [1950]; repetition is functionally equivalent to hellos in an apparently empty house).¹⁵ However, once that initial exchange has been completed, the formulaic routines of the second and third stages can be, and often are, repeated over and over again.¹⁶

Two additional points may be made, however, about the *salaam* itself. First, there are differences in the way this formulaic utterance is produced, and the participants use distinctive productions as information. These differences reflect such things as regional provenance and other attributes of the participants. Second, although the exchanges are formulaic, they are, nonetheless, functionally distinctive, and the difference between *salāmu 'aleykum* and *salāmu ḡaleykum* indicates to participants an associated difference between a more "Islamicized" man as contrasted to a man whose behavior may not predictably follow Islamic law.¹⁷ One speaker may use these two forms in what appears to be random variation, but whereas this variation might well be unnoticed between familiars, it becomes a vital signal with those whom one does not know – a traveler may well suspect his γ-using interlocutor as someone who, not fearing God, may attack him. This suggests a parallel to Sack's (1972) "maxims," viz., "If a stranger can be seen as potentially dangerous, then: See him that way." Thus, right at the onset of the encounter, phonological variation provides advisedly attended cues.¹⁸

the handshake Immediately after the *salaam*, participants must shake hands.¹⁹ As is true of other parts of the desert meeting, the handshake presents problems. As

Greetings	Notes
STAGE ONE	
(A) salāmu { _γ } aleykum	Conditions: (A) is a newcomer
(B) { _γ } aleykum sālam	// represents Arabic "ain". Its use signals more Arabic influence /y/ signals less Arabic influence Gloss: derived from Arabic: 'Peace be on you' – no referential value in Tamāshaq.
STAGE TWO	
Either (A) or (B) takes the role of interrogator depending on age, social status, and/or sex. Older persons with higher status and males are more likely to assume interrogator roles.	
(Q) mā d tolahad?	general form Gloss: 'What do you look like?' Has no referential value.
(R) alxer γas (al { _h / _x } amdullillahi)	general response form: h represents Arabic "hā" Gloss: 'Only peace' (Praise be to Allah) The optional form in parentheses indicates stronger Islamic influence. Optional form used generally by older men indicating humility before God and men. Gloss: 'May He do good and well for you'
ljak alxer d a iknan	The responder is now generally required to take the role of the interrogator, unless inhibited by the above factors.
(Q) mā d tolahad	
(R) alxer γās	
STAGE THREE	
This stage begins the transition from formulaic, non-referential greetings to a referential (non-pragmatic) exchange of information. The role of interrogator is governed by the same conditions as in Stage Two; there is, however, no necessity for role change in Stage Three. There is no limit on recursiveness.	
(Q) mā iyshādan mā ijān labāsan?	Gloss: 'What has gone wrong?' Gloss: 'What bad has occurred?' These questions have little referential value.
(R) kalash kala, wer deγsh a s ofrayay alxer γās	Gloss: 'Nothing' (None) Gloss: 'None, not that I have heard' Gloss: 'Only peace'
(Q) mā d ishṛāyan isalān	Gloss: 'What is new?' Gloss: 'The news?'
(R) kalash alxer γās	No responses in Stage Three can be other than formulaic
STAGE FOUR	
At this stage, questions can be asked for specific information. This stage is governed by many factors in addition to those stated above.	
(Q) hār n-dake	Gloss: 'Up to where?' 'Where are you going?'
n-dake s-ihal asīkel	Gloss: 'Where does travel take you?'

Figure 2 Tuareg Greetings (Tamāshaq Dialect)

Firth (1972) points out, the handshake has a number of subtle functions in modern society, where threats are more likely to one's personality than to one's person. In a hostile environment where the threat of assault is real, the handshake retains its function as equivalent to a disclaimer of aggression. For those who have been in *tenere*

for some time and are suffering from *asuf*, the handshake provides an opportunity for the reassurance of human bodily contact. At the same time, however, there is always the danger that an unwary traveler can be suddenly pulled from his camel. Just as in the *salaam*, so there are fashions and conventions in the handshake.

Some people try to express respect or to get in touch emotionally through physical contact. This may be expressed by holding the hand either firmly or softly and releasing it little by little. In the wilderness this can be interpreted as a furtive way in which to get a hold on someone in order to pull him from his camel. Suspicion and wariness dictate shaking hands with the fingers stiff – or at least tense – with the muscles ready to react in case an attempt is made to unseat one. But the genuine sufferer from *asuf*, who is only trying to be human, will resent this.

This situation is further complicated by the camels themselves. Both participants are, of course, riding camels – beasts which look graceful at a distance but which can be ungainly in close maneuvering. The camels must first be worked into position, and even then the bulk of the animals makes it a long stretch for a handshake. The riders are almost unbalanced, and that fact – coupled with the ever-present apprehension about the intentions of the other – creates great discomfort and tension.

status reflective nonreferential politeness exchanges With the *salaam* itself, and the handshake, completed, participants turn to the second stage. In contrast to the first stage, the initiative in this exchange (viz., the initial assumption of the interrogator role) is likely to be taken by older persons and/or those with higher status. In contrast to the third stage, recursiveness is limited, and when the first sequence of questions and answers is completed, the initial responder is generally required to take the role of interrogator.

The first words spoken by the "interrogator" in the second stage will be "mād'tolahad?" or some functionally equivalent phrase.²⁰ These openers gloss variously as "What do you look like?" "What have you created?" and even "Are you sane?" ("Are you crazy, what's the matter with you?"); they are not to be taken literally.²¹ The queries are formulaic, and under ordinary circumstances with friendly familiars on one's home ground they are unproblematic. In the wilderness, however, where one is dealing with strangers who may be enemies and possibly even with *djinns*, marked productions as insults (in the case of enemies) or as questions to be taken literally (a possibility in the case of *djinns* masquerading as humans and unfamiliar with formulaic rules) are possible, though of very low probability, and the possibility of nonformulaic usage cannot be ignored.²² Extension of the greeting exchange permits individuals to monitor closely while postponing their reactions until they have sufficient ground to respond routinely to the expected greetings or angrily to intended violations.

movement toward referentiality The third stage continues the transition from formulaic, nonreferential greetings to the information exchange of the fourth stage. The role of interrogator is, again, initially assumed by the more senior of the participants; in this stage there is no requirement for role change. The questions and answers may, however, be repeated many times, with or without variation, and frequently are.²³ There may be, moreover, frequent long periods of silence.

Standard openings in this stage are "mā i γshādan?" or "isalān?" which gloss, respectively, as "What has gone wrong?" and "The news?" Whatever disaster may have occurred, the proper initial response is "Nothing," or "Only peace." There are

exceptions, and under emergency conditions (see below) one party may even interrupt a polite colloquy to volunteer the nature of a catastrophe that requires him to violate the rules and hasten on. Ordinarily, however, reports of bad news will be postponed, although perceptive interlocutors may read other cues and return to the question later. Interlocutors do not expect the news. Rather, this stage can be seen as one in which the interlocutors express their interest in and willingness to hear news – and to share their own information. *Unless those who have met were already known to one another, interlocutors still will not have identified each other.*

the exchange of specific information The proprieties accomplished, the participants may turn to a quest for the information which will ease their continuing journey.²⁴ Even in this stage the questioning is cautious and carefully gauged to avoid insult or injured sensibilities. Many questions and answers are phrased euphemistically. The appearance of arrogance is as much to be avoided as untoward curiosity.

If the participants do not know one another, each will seek the other's identity. Direct questioning here would be rude in the extreme; euphemisms in any language are by their very character ambiguous and subject to various interpretations. Asking someone his name is out of the question. But it is no less impolite to offer one's own name. This implies: (1) that by giving your own name you claim a right to learn your interlocutor's; or (2) that henceforth you expect your interlocutor to remember your name, since forgetting a person's name is a serious social transgression; or finally (3) that you expect your interlocutor to have heard of you and your exploits, and thereby to be interpreted as a sign of egotism and conceit. The solution is cautious circumlocution.

The traveler needs information on where camps may be located – and where water may be found. Sooner or later an attempt must be made to obtain this information. Presumably, the other traveler spent the night where food and water were available. It will be useful to learn where that was. Yet even here the questioner must be cautious. The question cannot be asked as, "With whom did you sleep last night?" Such phrasing is open to two negative interpretations: first, it can be seen as an intrusion into private sexual matters; second, it can be interpreted as implying that the person questioned is incapable or afraid of spending the night alone in the desert.

Rather, a traveler met in the afternoon might be asked, "Where did you start your journey this morning?" and on a place being named, "Are there any camps there?" If there were, the traveler is then likely to volunteer the information himself, *viz.*, "I spent the night at X camp in Y place." It is then proper to ask, "What was the name of the camp?" (camps are referred to by the name of the principal elder present). This information having been provided it is then legitimate to inquire, "Are you one of them?" or "Do you belong to that part of the country?"²⁵

Even at this point it is not proper to ask directly for identification. If the responder says that he is from the camp or the area, the questioner must draw on his own knowledge and, on the basis of physical appearance and other cues, make an inferential leap and ask, "Aren't you the nephew of M?" or "Aren't you N's brother (or cousin, or whatever)?" Frequently he is.²⁶ If he is not, he will usually offer a stated relationship himself (*viz.*, "No, P's brother [or cousin, etc.]."). If that information is not offered it

means that the person is reluctant to reveal his personal identity. Some respondents will simply keep silent or, in extreme cases, may even lie.

Lying involves a risk of discovery since in the very formulation of the question some familiarity with the group in question has been demonstrated and both parties know that stories can be checked. Silence is sometimes interpreted as noble politeness. Taciturnity is believed in some instances to reflect a profundity of spirit – perhaps a consequence of sadness in earlier life. Such taciturnity is sometimes believed to be affected as an unearned sign of imagined responsibilities. Silence may reflect the fact that the identified person is an enemy of one's interlocutor. Finally, silence may be a cue that treachery is intended. In any event, silence rather than a response in such circumstances is a clear signal for circumspection, tact, and caution.

If the responder does agree that he is related to a specified person in a specified way it is still improper to ask, "What's your name?"²⁷ Rather, the questioner will say something like, "I don't know you. I know your brother (or whoever) and I know a, b, c...n of your family and still I don't know you." At this point the responder may simply provide a reason for not being acquainted, such as extended residence at another relation's camp. He *may* provide his name; he is not required to. Here, as elsewhere in the encounter, there are questions which must not be asked. It is an insult of the worst sort to ask a man his father's name – such a question is equivalent to telling an adult male that he, "with all his inches of beard, is nothing save by virtue of being his father's son."²⁸

While names and full identities may never be revealed, travelers usually can establish a categorization of the other.²⁹ This accomplished, information questions may be asked directly (such queries may actually be asked in the course of negotiating identifications) and, where relevant, invitations to stay at a local resident's camp solicited indirectly. Hospitality is offered whenever possible; today's roles may be reversed at another time.

disengagement In a truncated encounter (described below), minimum social amenities and optimal information exchange may be accomplished within minutes. Two men burdened by *asuf* and in no great hurry to return alone into *tenere* may prolong an encounter to a very considerable length, particularly at conventional resting periods, *viz.*, through the heat of midday or, if the encounter is close to sundown, through the night. The time will come, however, when politeness routines exhausted and information replenished, the travelers must part to continue on, each to his own destination. In some instances the encounter will have been, if not warm, at least open, and the interactants will feel fairly comfortable. However, even where relationships have been identified and information apparently given freely, some residual caution – if not suspicion – will remain.

Even if identifications have not been successfully negotiated, information about water, and possibly even camp locations, will have been. One party will begin to move, cautiously, so as not to expose his back. When both parties sense that sufficient distance separates them, the end of the interaction will be marked by an exchange of, "*Bismillah*," "in the name of God." At this same point each will tell the other to carry his greetings to those to whom he travels – giving names where

they are known. They then turn their mounts and go on their separate ways. They do not look back.

The encounter is over.³⁰

[...]

Notes

1. Ibrahim is of the *Kal-tamāshaq* and a veteran desert traveler. Bird has worked extensively in Mali. Whenever possible we have checked Ibrahim's detailed recollections with other informants. While there are doubtless some minor differences, the greeting exchanges described below seem to vary little throughout the Tuareg area (we have no way of telling what the effects of recent climatological catastrophes and wide-ranging social upheaval may have been).
2. Three good ethnographic references on the Tuareg are Lhote (1995), Nicolaisen (1963), and Nicolas (1950). Bowles (1950) provides a vivid fictional account of the dangers of encounters in the desert. Morehouse (1974) has a brief description of greetings in the Mauritanian Sahara which is generally consonant with that we present.
3. The tribes generically labeled Tuareg by Europeans speak a language whose dialects are variously called *Tamāzhaq*, *Tamāhaq*, and *Tamāszhaq*. These variants represent cognates of the historical phoneme /z/ and are regionally based. This paper is based primarily on the *Kal-Tamāszhaq* group, whose homeland is in the southwestern part of that range in northern Mali (see 'Soudan', Figure 1).
4. The term "desert" will evoke, for many readers, an image of unvegetated sand dunes. It can be better characterized as a wilderness area inhospitable to human habitation and includes mountainous areas, rocks, and a sparsely vegetated baked earth landscape as well as the shifting sands of the stereotype.
5. This is a recurrent theme in Tuareg oral tradition (see Foucauld 1951).
6. The intended comparison is with the seas in the days of ships under sail, but will be evocative for wartime sailors who apprehensively watched a smudge on the horizon turn into a recognizable friendly or enemy vessel.
7. Identification (of oneself or of one's interlocutor) is a major function of all greeting behavior. Where, as in the desert, accurate identification may be requisite to one's safety, the process may begin well before greetings can take place.
8. The likelihood of any such meeting is, probabilistically, relatively low. The probabilities of encounters are everywhere inversely related to population density (in New York the density is that of known or accessible others and not every person). Probabilities of encounters are directly related to the visibility of relevant others. In the desert, visibility is high. In a crowded urban place or in a deep forest, visibility may be quite low. On visibility in urban areas of changing character see Lofland (1974). She argues that the visibility of comembers in traditional or preindustrial cities was heightened by distinctive costumes.
9. Readers who saw the film *Lawrence of Arabia* will recall the building tension as Omar Sharif emerged out of the mirage. They will also recall the denouement – Sharif's slaying of Lawrence's companion.
10. Such camels are beyond price and do not belong solely to their owners. Every man, woman, and child who rides them loves them and is proud of them. Songs are composed to praise their beauty, endurance, and speed.

10. There are old women among the Tuareg who claim never to have seen the mouths (which are covered by the veil) of their husbands. This is regarded as a credit to their husbands who have thus expressed respect to their women. The veil protects its wearer from heat and dust on the desert but is worn everywhere. In contrast to many Muslim women, Tuareg women go unveiled.
11. The indigo veils, the best of which are made in Kaura (in Nigeria, near Kano), are very costly (besides requiring a long journey). Some writers have spoken of white Tuareg and blue or black Tuareg on the basis of the different veils. In actuality, the wearing of one or the other veil reflects no more than social status, financial resources, and a search for comfort.
12. Even close relatives will not recognize one another, at any distance, without their veils. Men's faces are not seen; they sleep, eat, and live in their veils. When eating, the lower part of the veil is raised – but one hand is used to conceal the mouth. Differences in the wearing of the veil have been nicely characterized by Lhote:

La manière de porter le voile, d'en placer sur la tête les différentes parties, peut varier d'une tribu à l'autre et certains donnent leur préférence, par goût personnel, à certaines modes locales. C'est ainsi que ces dernières années, les jeunes gens de l'Ahaggar adoptèrent la façon de porter le voile des *kel Ferouan* de l'Air, ce qui leur valut les critiques acerbes de la part des anciens de la tribu. Mais, en dehors de ces différentes modes, il y a aussi la tournure, le tour de main qui le rend plus ou moins élégant. Il y a également une psychologie du voile; à la façon dont il est placé, on peut avoir une idée de l'état d'esprit de celui qui le porte, un peu comme chez nous, le port de la casquette ou du chapeau permet de faire des déductions analogues. Il y a la manière réservée et pudique, usitée lorsqu'on se présente dans un campement ou il y a des femmes, la manière élégante et recherchée pour aller aux réunions galantes, la manière altière des guerriers conscients de leur importance, comme celle fantasque de l'imrad [*sic*] ou de l'esclave fanfaron. Il y a aussi la façon détachée, lâche, du garçon jovial, bon enfant, ou désordonnée de l'homme instable, de caractère facilement irritable. Le voile peut aussi exprimer un sentiment passager. Par exemple, il est rabattu sur les yeux devant des femmes ou des personnes respectables, alors qu'au contraire relevé sur le front, il est un signe de familiarité. Pour rire à son aise d'une facétie, le Targui relevera très haut la partie inférieure de son voile sur son nez, et, en cas d'irritation, la serrera comme une jugulaire pour masquer sa colère. (1955:308–9)

Veil management is, thus, clearly an important element in the Tuareg communicative inventory.

13. While visitors seem everywhere to be required to announce their presence if their coming has not been noticed, rules governing the initiation of interaction proper vary widely by culture. Thus Irvine (1974) reports that lower status participants initiate greetings among the Wolof (acceptance of lower status, however, gives the initiator the right to petition for favors), while Homans (1950:145) hypothesizes that in the United States, "a person of higher rank that another originates interaction for the latter more often than the latter originates interaction for him."
14. There is no determinant rule, for example, when an older man with high status meets a younger, less prestigious man from a tribe of higher status. Social characteristics and personality attributes interact in instance-specific solutions.
15. At least four interpretations are available to a summonser when he or she receives no response to a summons: (1) the summons was not heard (in such an instance the summons will usually be repeated); (2) there is a "reason" why a response cannot be made

(see Dickson, n.d.); (3) the summons represented an inappropriate initiation; (4) the party summoned engaged in rule-violation, viz., has been intentionally rude.

16. The *salaam* and its response are not repeated except as noted in the text. In Stage Two a movement toward referential meaning begins. Tamāshaq will be used, although there will be occasional Arabic insertions. There is no English equivalent to the recursiveness of Stages Two and Three, but one could get some sense of what happens by iterating a "How are you?" "Fine, how are you?" exchange for 15 minutes or longer.
 17. Tamāshaq does not include the Arabic sounds "ain" and "ha'." The former will be represented by /ʔ/, the latter by /ħ/.
 18. Additional information can be picked up at the time of the initial greeting. The *djinns* who live in *tenere* can assume human form. It is believed, however, that they cannot properly pronounce the greeting, but at best produce a mumble which can approximate it very closely. Young women are proscribed from using the *salaam*. Even older women seldom do – and then only in response.
- In the camp, where visitor status is not ambiguous, rules are clear. Visitors must shout their *salaam* from the gate or threshold so that the host may take steps to protect his private life and prepare to be a host. The analogy to our knock – or diplomatic cough at an open door – is obvious.
19. One reason for the early handshake is politeness. It is also the only sure way to determine that your partner in interaction has a thumb. (*Djinns*, as noted, can assume human form. They are, however, thumbless.)
 20. There are variants besides that shown. Elderly men, clinging to tradition, will use an almost archaic form like *manawennak*. Others say *ma dar tolahad* or *ma taxlakad*. These variations reflect regional provenience and tribal membership.
 21. American "How are you?" and its variants are not to be taken literally as invitations for detailed reports. They can be taken in such a way, however, and respondents can respond, "Not too good" or "Really great" and expect to be asked details – however grudgingly. There are circumstances under which asking "How are you?" could be seen as insensitive or thoughtless; it is hardly an insulting question.
 22. An American parent can say to his/her child. "You're really a dum-dum" and have it interpreted as affection. But a stranger, even knowing that the expression could be used affectionately, might suspect that addressed to him/her it might not imply affection. Such expression in English may be intentionally ambiguous. The *Tamāshaq* expressions are not intentionally ambiguous, but the ambiguity which lies behind them is known to all participants.
 23. The colonial French frequently became impatient with these rule-governed politeness exchanges and used the Arabic expression *salām aleykum* as an expression for never-ending verbiage.
 24. At this point, it can be said that the greeting proper has been completed. The participants, however, have neither identified each other nor obtained the information which is the prized objective of desert encounters. Although this paper is focused primarily on description of the greeting proper and its rules, we now provide an abbreviated description of the remainder of the encounter and of the continuing search for information (including the other's identity).
 25. This is sometimes interpreted, and not infrequently intended, as a polite announcement of willingness to be invited to be a guest.
 26. For most greetings there is a finite and manageable number of likely "others." In this feature the Tuareg case obviously differs from that experienced in many other societies.

27. There are exceptions in instances of great haste or where the questioner enjoys a very personal relationship with the identified family. In the latter instance it would be unlikely that the questioner could not identify his interlocutor.
 28. This created problems for French census takers. The census taker would, by asking a man's father's name, put him in a cruel dilemma. He would not want to answer since this would mean degradation in the presence of men of other tribes, who would characterize him as having given his father's name out of fear. Refusal, on the other hand, meant exposure to the risks of flouting French authority – risks of jail, humiliation, perhaps even death.
- The culturally acceptable resolution to this impasse was that someone else would provide an identification, "He is X, son of Y." Even here there are restrictions on who may make such a report – it may not be an equal but someone who is either older or of lower social rank.
29. Much of the negotiation described can be seen as the progressive delimiting of boundaries of categorization devices (Sacks 1972).
 30. Commenting on the dangerous potential of these encounters one of us once commented to a Tuareg, "If I were in that kind of a situation and had to confront it often I would teach my camel to back up." His response was, "We do."

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