

PILOTP ROJECT: ARCHIVING CARAVAN IMAGES

During all my trips around the Sahara – and I have made more than a few – I never failed to observe how the nomads, the Tuareg, lived in the desert. Side by side we crossed vast expanses of dune seas and immense stony deserts; side by side we journeyed to extraordinary areas that even the Tuareg had not yet conquered. A select few:

'The great North-South desert crossing, 3000 km, 1089/90'

'First crossing: Egédé de Mourzouc, Libya, 1998/99'

Such enterprises make it abundantly clear that there are hardly any caravan guides left capable of assuming responsibility of humans, animals and material goods. Knowledge of the present conditions and water availability in far-flung places is scarce at best. The slow extinction of the once-proud caravans carries political and technical changes in its wake: with North African countries having defined their borders, the nomads are more hemmed in than ever. And roughly eighty years ago the motorcar made its first appearance in the desert, only to be followed by aircraft. Both transported goods more quickly and in larger quantities than had ever been done before.

Images of the 'Nomads' Caravan' and others like them are undeniably worth preserving and keeping accessible for future generations. The question is: how? Ectachrome slides and digital storage media only last so long.

While speaking with Rainer Tewes from savedpictures in Stuttgart, my interest was aroused by a new procedure designed to archive both digital and analogue images reliably. I'm convinced that present-day storage media have seen their day and that this new procedure is more than capable of preserving modern data. This is precisely the reason why I chose to archive my images with Ilford microfilm – so that generations to come will find my impressions of the caravans just as striking and valuable as I do.

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