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A grammar of Tagdal: a Northern Songhay language
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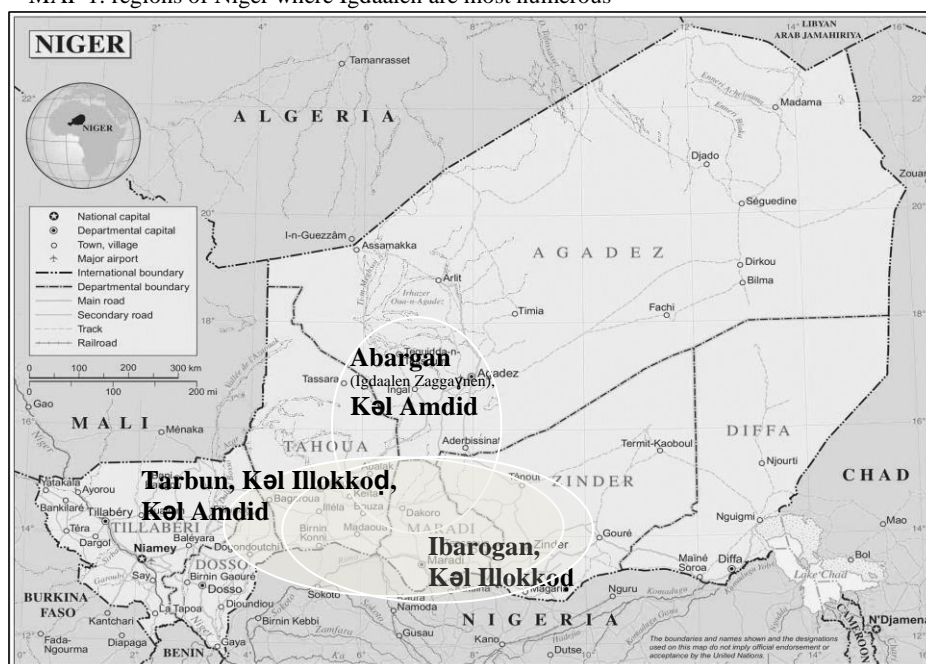
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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

Tagdal is a Northern Songhay language spoken by a semi-nomadic people called the Igdaalen, scattered throughout the central and eastern regions of the modern-day Republic of Niger. It is best known for mixing both Tuareg-Berber and Songhay structures and vocabulary. Igdaalen often refer to their language as Taheshit, or Tahitit. However, since this term could also be used to refer to other varieties of Northern Songhay, such as Tasawaq and even Tadakshak from Mali, for the sake of simplicity, in this study the term Tagdal will be used for the language, and Igdaalen for the people.¹ The following map, from Benítez-Torres (2020) illustrates the approximate locations of the largest sub-groups of Tagdal within Niger.²

MAP 1: regions of Niger where Igdaalen are most numerous



¹ A single Tagdal speaker would be referred to as an Agdal, while Igdaalen is the plural form. Since the prefix *t-* is feminine, the term Tagdal could refer either to the name of the language – always feminine – or to an Agdal woman.

² This is by no means an exhaustive list; I merely list the largest sub-groups. Tagdal speakers themselves refer to their sub-groups and clans by the term *tawfiiten*, which could have a variety of meanings – anything from tribe to clan to ethnicity, to even species of plants and animals. This makes it difficult to account for every single sub-grouping in an exact manner.

1.1 Location

Since today the Igdaalen participate in the general semi-nomadic Tuareg-Berber milieu (Lacroix 1968), most are scattered in encampments throughout the central regions of Niger. In the southern areas, some groups can be found as far south as outside the town of Zinder, near the Nigerian border. In the north, some groups extend as far north as Arlit, several hundred kilometres from the Algerian border. However, Tagdal speakers are most numerous in the central and north-central regions of Niger, especially between the towns of Tahoua and Agadez and several hundred kilometres east and west of those points (see map 1).

In the north, mainly around the towns of Agadez and Ingal, the most numerous Tagdal-speaking sub-groups are the Kəl Amdid and the Abargan. The Abargan speak a variety of Tagdal, appropriately called Abargan, which seems very similar to Tadaksahak (see Christiansen-Bolli 2010).³ This is most notable in the phonology, which appears essentially identical to Tadaksahak (see chapter 2). In the hilly, savanna grassy regions of central Niger, chiefly from the town of Tahoua to just north of Abalak and several hundred kilometres east and west, the most common Tagdal sub-groups are the Tarbun and the Kəl Illokoḍ, with a smattering of Kəl Amdid. The Kəl Illokoḍ speak a variety of Tagdal, called Tamaslokkōḍ, very similar to the Abargan farther north, while the Tarbun speak a variety similar to the Kəl Amdid, whose phonology is akin to Təwəlləmət, the most common Tuareg variety in the area.

In the southern region of Niger, south and west of Tahoua and east toward the town of Maradi, the most numerous sub-group is the Ibaroogan, with a smattering of Kəl Illokoḍ. The Ibaroogan are historically a separate ethnic group, socially and economically tied to the Igdaalen, who speak a variety of Tagdal called Tabarog.⁴ In their survey of Northern Songhay varieties of Niger, Rueck and Christiansen (1999) found a high degree of intelligibility between Tabarog and other varieties of Tagdal. Furthermore, I myself have observed that speakers of the various varieties of Tagdal, including Tabarog, who travel to large towns such as Tahoua and Agadez seem to understand each other and communicate quite well.⁵ Therefore, for the purpose of this study, Tabarog will be treated as a variety of Tagdal.

³ Interestingly, the Kəl Amdid in this northern region seem to speak a similar variety of Tagdal to the Tarbun much farther south, while the Kəl Illokoḍ in the south speak a variety more akin to the Abargan in the north (and to Tadaksahak in Mali). A study of historical migration patterns among Igdaalen might be revealing.

⁴ Most differences between Tabarog and other varieties of Tagdal are phonological (see chapter 2), though some vocabulary differences exist as well.

⁵ Tabarog speakers, as well as speakers of other varieties of Tagdal that I have been in contact with, often refer to their speech varieties as 'accents'.

1.2 Sociolinguistic situation

Over the years, a number of ideas have circulated concerning the origins of modern-day Igdaalen, from oral traditions⁶ to historical accounts,⁷ to educated guesses based on available linguistic data.⁸ Unfortunately, with the lack of written historical records, the origins of modern-day Igdaalen has been lost in antiquity, and retracing them is an almost impossible task. Most Igdaalen today would be considered Tuaregs (Lacroix 1968: 93) within the Niger-Mali sub-region, many living as client communities by providing religious services in exchange for payment and / or protection.⁹ Many others make a living as pastoralists, though with the spread of political instability in the region, this traditional lifestyle has come under increasing threat. Regardless, the focus of this study will be on providing a synchronic linguistic description of Tagdal as it exists today. Therefore, most questions about the origins of the Igdaalen are outside of the purview of this study.

What is fairly certain is that the ancestors of the Igdaalen were likely present when the Songhay Empire conquered the region of modern-day Niger and Mali in order to exploit the numerous trade routes between sub-Saharan and North Africa. Subsequent to this, Songhay became the Language of Wider Communication (LWC) in modern-day northern Niger until the arrival of the French in the late 19th century CE.¹⁰

Today, Songhay no longer functions as the LWC of northern Niger, and the only place where Northern Songhay and mainstream Songhay languages occur in the same area is in Mali (Christiansen-Bolli 2010) and southwest Niger. This means that most modern-day Tagdal speakers do not speak a mainstream Songhay language.

Outside of the towns and villages, Tuareg languages tend to function as the LWC. The most common Tuareg languages in the region include Təwəlləmmət in the southern and western regions of Niger and into eastern Mali, and Tayart in northern

⁶ Some postulating Jewish Moroccan, or some other North African, origin, while others posit Arab, or even Turkish origin.

⁷ See, for example, Adamou (1979) and Hamani (1989).

⁸ Among these are Nicolai (1990a, 1990b; 2003; 2006a, 2006b), Souag (ms, 2010, 2012, 2015a, b) and Benítez-Torres (2010, 2017). These will all be discussed further in this chapter.

⁹ Many Igdaalen, especially in the central regions of modern-day Niger, live in fairly closed encampments a short distance from, but attached to, larger Tamajaq (Berber)-speaking encampments. These provide religious services for their Tamajaq-speaking Tuareg patrons, from leading the five Islamic daily prayers to providing magical charms for protection and other esoteric purposes. Many Igdaalen have done quite well economically this way.

¹⁰ It is far from certain what language(s) functioned as the lingua franca(e) prior to this. Adamou (1979) and Hamani (1989) suggest an ancestor of modern-day Hausa. However, much of their work is meant to refute claims by some Tuaregs wanting to establish the independent state of Azawad in what is now Mali and Niger, that Hausa speakers are merely recent arrivals, and that Berber-speaking Tuaregs are the "original" population of the region. Regardless, no one is certain what the LWC was before Songhay.

Niger. Tetsrerret, a Western Berber language whose speakers also participate in the larger Tuareg milieu today (Lux 2011, Souag 2015b), is also present in the region, and a number of Tagdal speakers (PC) have claimed to speak Tetsrerret, as well as other Tuareg languages.

Those Igdaalen who are bilingual or multilingual often tend to speak one or more varieties of Tuareg, then possibly Hausa. A very few speak French, if they have attended school. When traveling into town, Igdaalen tend to function in Hausa or in Tuareg, depending on whom they are speaking with. Unless they have occasion to travel to the capital, few Igdaalen learn Zarma or any other nigerien language.

1.3 Classification

What follows is a brief discussion of Songhay languages in Section 1.3.1, followed by the criteria for classifying Northern Songhay languages and, specifically, Tagdal in Section 1.3.2.

1.3.1 Songhay

At present,¹¹ many researchers place all Songhay languages within the Nilo-Saharan family (see, for example, Bender: 1997, Ehret: 2001), though the idea is not without its detractors. Mukarovskiy (1966) and Creissels (1981) suggested a convergence between Songhay and Mande languages, of the Niger-Congo family, sometime during Songhay's formative period, in order to explain the presence of Songhay features in certain varieties of Mande and vice-versa. Nicolai (1977, 1984, 1990b, 2006a) also suggested a relationship between Songhay and Mande languages, though for different reasons (see below). Creissels (1980), noting many shared syntactic features between Songhay and Mande, explored various explanations for them, including the possibility of placing Songhay within the Mande family. On the other hand, Dimmendaal (2008, 2019) considers Songhay an independent language family all its own.

Harrison, Harrison and Rueck (1997) found a high degree of intelligibility between all of the mainstream Songhay varieties spoken along the Niger river, from northern Benin through Niger and all the way to just south of the city of Gao in Mali. A number of these could be considered vernacular varieties. These include Wogo, which is likely to be a variety of Kaado, and Kurtey, spoken along the Niger River in both Mali and Niger. Nevertheless, they were essentially asking questions about intelligibility between the languages. Heath (1999 a,b) described both the Songhay varieties spoken in Gao and Timbuktu, spoken in modern-day Mali.

Nicolai suggested several possible scenarios for the development of Songhay (c.f. Nicolai 1977, 1990a, 1990b; 2003; 2006a, 2006b; Nicolai ms.). In one scenario, an extinct, possibly creolized or Koinéized, Afroasiatic language could have served

¹¹ i.e. since Greenberg's (1963) classification

as the lingua franca in the region of modern-day Niger and Mali. Having then lexified surrounding languages, which then eventually became modern-day Songhay,¹² this language subsequently disappeared, leaving only lexical items as evidence of its existence. During the period during which Songhay grammar would have been coalescing, Mande areal features would have entered into the language, as well as Songhay features entering into Mande languages.

A second possible scenario by Nicolai proposes that ancient lingua franca of the modern-day Niger and Mali *was* Songhay, which at the time had many more Afroasiatic features than modern-day Songhay. Subsequently, Mande features would have made their way into Songhay afterward, leaving only vocabulary of Afroasiatic origin. If so, then modern Songhay varieties are effectively a vernacularisation of this ancient 'Proto-Songhay', for lack of a better term.

Based on various criteria, Nicolai (1979: 12-14) divides the Songhay family of languages, into southern and a northern branches, which divided from Proto-Songhay.¹³ Languages in the southern branch include the western Songhay, spoken in the ancient Malian city of Timbuktu (Heath 1999a); central, which includes the Hombori in Mali and Marese in Burkina Faso; and eastern, most notably the variety spoken in Gao (Heath 1999b), sub-branches. It also includes Kaado, spoken principally in northern Niger; Zarma in Niger and Dendi in Benin. Souag (2009; 2010a, b; 2012) questions the idea of a southern branch, while accepting the idea of a northern one. Instead, he proposes a northwestern and eastern, with Tagdal and other Northern Songhay languages being actually identified as northwestern.¹⁴

Regardless, for the purposes of this synchronic study, Tagdal, Tadaksahak and Tasawaq will be referred to as "Northern Songhay", purely for the sake of convenience, essentially because of the history of the term "northern". No claim is meant about whether Songhay should be considered Nilo-Saharan or an isolate, since that question is beyond the scope of this study, nor about the question of northern vs. southern Songhay or eastern and northwestern.

1.3.2 Northern vs. mainstream Songhay

Despite the disagreement about what language family Songhay languages belong to (if any), the idea that Northern Songhay languages form a distinct unit apart from

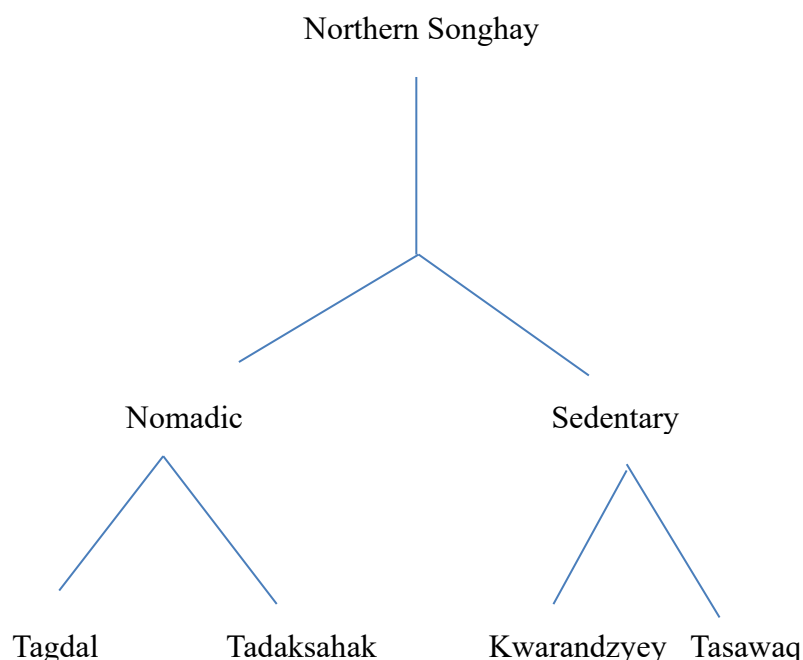
¹² Dimmendaal (1992, 1995) Kossmann (2005) and Benítez-Torres (2005) criticize Nicolai's theory and approach. Dimmendaal especially decries what he considers Nicolai's over reliance on word lists in order to come to sweeping conclusions about an entire language family.

¹³ Christiansen-Bolli (2010) and Kossmann (PC) refer to "Southern Songhay" varieties – i.e. any Songhay language not in the Northern Songhay group – as "mainstream Songhay", a practice which I will carry on as well.

¹⁴ Dimmendaal (2019) seems to accept Souag's assessment, pointing out that the shared features shared with surrounding languages could just as easily be attributed to borrowing, as to genetic affiliation.

other Songhay languages is not controversial at all (Kossmann 2008: 109). As was mentioned previously, the main difference between Northern and mainstream Songhay languages has to do with the heavy influence of Berber (Benítez-Torres and Grant 2017). Souag (2015a) notes a Tetserret substratum from the Western Berber family in Tadaksahak, which would likely apply to Tagdal as well. Nevertheless, the most recent Berber strata in Tagdal come from Tuareg languages, especially Təwəlləmmət.

Figure 1: Northern Songhay languages



Further, Nicolai's division of Northern Songhay into two sub-branches, the nomadic and the sedentary, is generally accepted and bears out from a grammatical standpoint (Benítez-Torres and Grant 2017). The main differences between the various Northern Songhay languages have to do with the relative degree of Berber influence.¹⁵ In the sedentary branch, one finds Kwarandzey (Kora-n-dje in Christiansen-Bolli 2010)¹⁶ of

¹⁵ In fact, one of the first things one notices upon hearing a Northern Songhay language being spoken is its heavily Berberised phonology. On numerous occasions, I witnessed uninitiated mother-tongue Songhay speakers who, upon hearing a Northern Songhay language for the first time, mistook it for Tuareg-Berber. This, despite the fact that, for example, Tasawaq and eastern Songhay from Gao share a very similar phonologies, at least on paper. On the other hand, Tuaregs who come from areas where Songhay is the LWC immediately recognise NS languages as not Tuareg.

¹⁶ The term Kwarandzey itself in Songhay means simply 'the language in/of the town/village'.

Algeria and Tasawaq in Niger, both of which are spoken by non-Tuaregs.¹⁷ A third language, Emghedeshie, was once spoken in the city of Agadez, in the modern-day Republic of Niger (Barth 1851, in Kirk-Greene 1972; Lacroix 1975), but has gone extinct.¹⁸ Tagdal and Tadaksahak are both part of the nomadic branch. Figure 1, based on Nicolai (1979), demonstrates the existing relationships between the various Northern Songhay languages.

For the purposes of this study, all of the languages outside of the Northern Songhay subgrouping will be referred to as "mainstream" Songhay languages. This is because to a large extent, questions of their origin and of whether they should be called "southern", "northwestern" or "eastern" are not relevant for the purposes of this synchronic description.

Historically, relatively little has been written on Northern Songhay languages in general. Apart from Nicolai's work (1977 and 1979, 1990a, 2003, 2006), Kossmann (2008) describes adjectives in Tagdal, Tadaksahak and Tasawaq (more on how Tagdal treats modifiers in section 3.3). In addition, in their survey of Northern Songhay languages of Niger, Rueck and Christiansen (1999) did much of the preliminary work that led to this study.

The most notable literature on Tadaksahak is Christiansen and Christiansen (2002, 2007), Heath (2004), Christiansen and Levinson (2003) and Christiansen-Bolli (2003, 2009, 2010). In 2007b, Kossmann discusses how Tasawaq treats y-initial verbs, almost exclusively of Tuareg origin. Since both Tagdal and Tadaksahak share many of these same cognates with Tasawaq, y-initial verbs, which instead in Tagdal are ə-initial by default, will be discussed especially in section 3.2.¹⁹

Alidou's (1988) master's thesis is the most complete description existing of Tasawaq. Wolff and Alidou (2001) and Kossmann (2007a,b, 2016) also published on this language. In 2007a Kossmann discusses grammatical mixing in Tasawaq, pointing out some features of the noun in that language, many of which Tagdal also shares (see especially section 3.1 below).

¹⁷ Bernus (1972) suggests that modern-day Tasawaq speakers could be descended from Berbers who mixed with local populations. Adamou (1979), on the other hand, suggests descent from a Songhay-speaking colony established as a trading post in the town of Ingal in northern Niger.

¹⁸ Michael Rueck (PC) once shared with me an account of meeting with very old people in Agadez in the 1990s, whose grandparents had spoken Emghedeshie. Though they themselves had clearly shifted to Hausa, they still remembered some Songhay vocabulary, which they had heard from their grandparents. Regardless, due to its being extinct, I have not included Emghedeshie as part of the Northern Songhay ensemble.

¹⁹ Benítez-Torres and Grant (2017) and Benítez-Torres (2020) argue that at least some y-initial verbs in Tasawaq could be unproductive as-is borrowings, even though they are productive in Tagdal and Tadaksahak.

Relatively little exists on Kwarandzey. Most notably, Souag's (2010) thesis discusses various features of the language. Others include Champault's (1969) ethnographic description,²⁰ Tilmatine's (1996) brief description and Kossmann's (2004) discussion of the TAM sub-system. Not much will be mentioned here about this language, except that as a Songhay language, Tagdal shares much of the same features, including the TAM system (see section 3.2.1 below).

Lacroix (1968a, 1981) was possibly the first to call Northern Songhay languages "langues mixtes", due to the obvious Tuareg influence. Nicolai, while recognising Tuareg vocabulary as borrowing, theorised that Tuareg prosodies underwent a "reinterpretation", via the new Songhay schema, possibly during a process of shift.²¹ Wolff and Alidou (2001) went a different way and posited a non-genetic origin for Tasawaq, due to the mixed nature of its structures, which could not originally have come about by means of normal parent-to-child interactions.²² Benítez-Torres (2009) also suggested that Tagdal is a mixed language, which likely came about abruptly, in order for speakers to establish a separate identity from surrounding groups. Vellupilai (2015), based upon structural criteria, relying heavily on categories for mixed languages found in Bakker (2003) and Meakins (2013), classified Northern Songhay languages as Form-Structure (F-S) mixed languages, where the lexicon and grammar come from one language, while the syntax and formal structures come from another. On the other hand, Norval Smith and Anthony Grant (2019), based on sociolinguistic criteria, classify Northern Songhay languages as "neo-ethnic symbiotic" mixed languages, where languages arise out of speakers' perceived need to establish a new, unique, identity from the other groups around them. Ultimately, question on the origins of Tagdal and other Northern Songhay languages are somewhat beyond the scope of this study and will, therefore, not be discussed further in great detail.

1.4 Fieldwork, methodological framework

The Tagdal data in this paper are taken primarily from field work done in the modern-day Republic of Niger, compiled between 1999 and 2019. Most of these data were taken from 45 texts, mostly recorded between 2001 and 2003, of varying lengths and genres. A short lexicon of a few thousand items, based primarily on these texts, is a direct outworking of these texts, and is a work in progress. A few of the data were elicited, or were observed and recorded later by hand. Some material in this document

²⁰ With some linguistic discussion as well.

²¹ See Nicolai 1982: 306, for example, where theoretically, Tuareg vocabulary where stress falls on the penultimate syllable (described as the ['---] schema) would be mentally processed the same way as vocabulary with three low tones (described as ````).

²² Benítez-Torres and Grant (2017) and Benítez-Torres (forthcoming), while agreeing with a non-genetic origin for Tagdal and Tadaksahak, follow Lacroix (1968) in suggesting at least the possibility that Tasawaq might be a heavily-Berberised mainstream Songhay language.

came from Rueck and Christiansen (1999), Benítez-Torres (2009) and Benítez-Torres and Grant (2017).²³

Of the 45 texts which form the main corpus from which the data is drawn, 36 were narrative genre. Of these, 26 were folk tales of varying length, with the shortest being 12 lines long and the longest comprising of several hundred lines. The rest of these were personal stories, though not necessarily factual.²⁴ Five of the texts were descriptions (e.g. "what life was like when I was a child") three were procedural (e.g. "how to make tea"), and one was a sermon.

Seven men provided the recordings. They ranged in age from their late 70s to their late teens or early twenties at the time when the recordings were made.²⁵ Most were in their thirties or forties. Of these, one (around age 30 at the time) spoke the Tabarog variety of Tagdal; three were of the Kəl Amdid (two around their late 30s or early 40s, one in his 20s) or Tarbun, or from their sub-groups; two were Kəl Illokod (in their 40s or 50s), or their sub-groups; and one was an Abargan (in his late 20s or early 30s).

A few of the examples in this document came from a paper notebook I kept, mostly for ethnographic and linguistic notes written down by hand. Almost all of these were written between 2002 and 2009. In at least three cases, the events or utterances it contained were written several hours after they occurred, due to lack of opportunity at the time to write anything down. Nevertheless, most of the observations were written down within minutes of the events they related. I have endeavoured to keep this document as free of anthropological observations as possible, and as far as I know the data appearing here is largely limited to linguistic utterances.

Over the years, additional data has been elicited. Some of this occurred when the data in the recorded texts (or in the course of SIL work) caused more questions to be asked. A few examples of this are: 1. over half of the apophonic nouns in Section 3.1.2 were elicited; 2. Tables 3-36-3-38 were almost entirely elicited, as were Tables 3-44 and 3-77. All of the other tables containing noun data have at least some elicited vocabulary. For example, whenever I encountered an unknown noun, it was usually – though not always – either in its singular or plural form. Therefore, I asked my teammates to provide the missing plural or singular form, along with whether stress falls on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable. I also asked about various derivations of the root (e.g. Agentive, masculine, feminine). I have endeavoured to limit the elicited data to vocabulary, and not to full-sentence examples.

²³ Rueck and Christiansen (1999) provides a 360-item wordlist containing most of the items on the longer and shorter Swadesh lists and also a specimen of French text translated into several Northern Songhay varieties, including Tadaksahak, Tasawaq, Tagdal and Tabarog.

²⁴ One common technique I used was asking the teller to relate a story of a moment when he was really scared. A few of these were so outlandish (e.g. being attacked by a snake with two heads) that I have some doubt about their veracity.

²⁵ It is not uncommon in the Republic of Niger for people to not be sure of their exact age.

In every work, there will necessarily be some limitations in the data. This one is, unfortunately, not an exception. Some of the limitations include: 1. due to the suspicions of most Tagdal speakers vis-à-vis recording equipment, most of the recordings were made with a Marantz tape recorder, on cassette tapes. Since then, these have been backed up several times and digitized. However, in their original form, all of the recordings were done in analog format, rather than the more desirable WAV files of today. 2. All of the data recorded was from men. Over the intervening years, my wife and I were able to take quite a few ethnographic notes concerning women and we noticed no discernible grammatical difference between the way Tagdal-speaking men and women talk.²⁶ Nevertheless, the lack of data from women limits the usefulness of this document, at least to some extent. 3. The data transcriptions and the original lexicon were stored in an old SIL computer programme called "Shoebox", then transferred to another programme called "Toolbox" in 2007. Unfortunately, neither Shoebox nor Toolbox used unicode fonts. Therefore, in 2015, I transferred the lexicon into Field Works, another SIL programme which uses unicode fonts. In the past year I have also begun to transfer the text transcriptions into Field Works. Unfortunately, this process takes quite a bit of time, and will likely continue into the foreseeable future.

The main ideas for the organisation and content of this document began with Christiansen-Bolli's (2010) description of Tadaksahak and Alidou's (2008) sketch of Tasawaq. Throughout, I have worked to maintain a "theory-neutral" stance, or at least as much as was possible. Nevertheless, some theory did inform the writing and analyses. For Chapter 2, I mostly depended upon the excellent analyses done on Northern Songhay languages by both Christiansen-Bolli (*ibid*) and Nicolai (especially 1980 and 1990a). In the course of my own analysis, I relied upon Burquest (2006) and Krager (2004).

Chapter 3 was a particular source of stress, due to the relative scarcity of descriptions of Tuareg languages, and especially of their prosodic processes. Therefore, Kossmann's (2007) description of Ayer Tuareg, along with Lux's (2011) description of Tetseret were invaluable, as was Heath's (2005) description of the Tuareg variety spoken in Mali. Once again, the aforementioned Christiansen-Bolli (2010) was also useful in helping me know what questions to begin asking. For organising the description, I used Thomas Payne's (1997) guide to describing grammar. Dixon's (2009, 2013) *Basic Linguistic Theory* was also helpful. Kroeger (2005) was useful in analysing clauses. Givón (2001) and Dooley & Levinsohn (2001) were helpful in the analysis of complex sentences and the relations between clauses. Chapter 4 relied heavily upon the work of Dooley and Levinsohn (*ibid*), as well as Brown and Yule (1983).

²⁶ Though we were able to gather quite a bit of data concerning music, poetry and other art forms present among Tagdal-speaking women. And the subjects that Tagdal-speaking women usually talk about are different from those of men.

1.5 General typological sketch of Tagdal

This section will include a portion of a text, along with some brief grammatical notes to guide the reader. The text was recorded in 2005. The speaker was a young Abargan from near Agadez, who is now deceased. Therefore, where the transcription reflects his variety of Tagdal, it is noted. The story relates the teller's experience as a member of a caravan. The section included here relates a moment when some of their camels escaped and they had to recover them.

1.1 zazji n awélan aayó, iiriɣikəl,
zazji n awelan aayó iiri= ɣikəl
day GEN hot season DEF 1PL travel
'One day in that hot season, we traveled

iirikóy ággaala, iirimhurrú háyni.
iiri= koy aggaala iiri= m- hurru hayni
1PL go south 1PL SBJ search millet
and went to the south to get some millet.'

1.2 Ȳamáy yu, Ȳamáy amúgay,
Ȳa= may yu Ȳa= may amugay
1SG have female camel 1SG have male adolescent camel
'I had a female camel (and) an adolescent male camel,

Ȳamkórəf-i.
Ȳa= m- kərəf =i
1SG SBJ hobble 3PL.OBJ
I needed to hobble them.'

1.3 Haziġga, Ȳazumbú, Ȳakórəf yu. Hajinaláqqam
haziġga Ȳa= zumbu Ȳa= kərəf yu hajinalaqqam
therefore 1SG descend 1SG hobble female camel then
'Therefore I got down and hobbled the female. Then

Ȳakáwkat amúgay ən téfar
Ȳa= kaw -kat amugay n tefar
1SG remove VEN male adolescent camel GEN rope
I took off the male's rope.'

1.4 Ȳatɣín Ȳamkórəf-a, təzzár
Ȳa= tɣín Ȳa= m= kərəf =a
1SG say 1SG SBJ tie 3SG.OBJ
'I said that I should tie him (first),

yamkaw á-kan geerí.

təzzar ʔa= m- kaw a= kan geeri
 then 1SG SBJ remove 1SG in saddle
 (only) then I should remove his saddle.'

- 1.5 Əṅguuʔi, iirin imṅas iyíwəf. Aafó, tʃiyáʔyaanen
 əṅguuʔi iiri= n imṅas i= əwəf aafó tʃiyáʔyaanen
 suddenly 1PL GEN camels 3PL startled INDEF sacks of grain
 'Suddenly, our camels were startled. One was carrying sacks of grain.

iyiwər-a. Aafó, aráwki iyíwər-a.
 i= əwər =a aafó arawki i= əwər =a
 3PL mount 3PL.OBJ INDEF bags 3PL mount 3PL.OBJ
 The other was carrying bags.'

- 1.6 Imúggaayan foonén, idərrəg
 imuggaayan foonen i= dərrəg
 some adolescent males 3PL flee
 'Some of the adolescent males ran away,

idá huunú aayó ággaala wáni.
 i= da huunu aayo aggaala wani
 3PL do exit DEF south POSS
 and went south.'

- 1.7 Yu nda amúgay aayó kan geerí
 yu nda amugay aayo kan geeri
 female camel with male adolescent camel DEF in saddle
 '(and) The female and the adolescent

əbháw, idərrəg.
 ə- b- haw i= dərrəg
 SUB.REL IMP tie 3PL flee
 that had the saddle tied on, (also) fled.'

- 1.8 Iyédkat, idá huunú aayó támmasna wani.
 i= yed -kat i= da huunu aayo tammasna wani
 3PL return VEN 3PL do exit DEF north POSS
 '(then) They came back and went to the north.'

- 1.9 ʔaay, ʔaqáyitkat yu nda amúgay.
 ʔaay ʔa= qayit -kat yu nda amugay
 1SG.IND 1SG chase VEN female camel and male adolescent camel
 'As for me, I chased the female and male camel.'

1.10 Amúgay, abkərəbkərəb. Aŋ geerí
 amugay a= b- kərəbkərəb a= n geeri
 male adolescent camel 3SG IMP bounce 3SG GEN saddle
 'The male was jumping up and down. his saddle

nda an bidóntan
 nda bidontan
 with water containers
 and the plastic water containers

nda káyyaatan, ibkərəbkərəb
 nda kayyaatan i= b- kərəbkərəb
 with baggage 3PL IMP bounce
 and the baggage were bouncing around

felás abərmaγ, abdórrəg.
 felas a= b- ərmaγ a= b- dórrəg
 because 3SG IMP scared 3SG IMP flee
 because he was scared and was running away.'

1.11 Yu, aŋga da, abtərəgtərəg
 yu aŋga da a= b- tərəgtərəg
 female camel 3SG.IND EMPH 3SG IMP short hop
 'The female, she (emphatic) was hopping around

felás téfar báara.
 felas tefar baara
 because rope loc
 because she had a rope on (i.e. she was hobbled).'

1.12 Yaay, yaqáyit-i, yaqáyit-i, ar yaýéhag.
 yaay ya= qayit =i ya= qayit =i ar ya= ehag
 1SG.IND 1SG chase 3PL.OBJ 1SG chase 3PL.OBJ til 1SG long time
 'As for me, I chased them and I chased them for a long time.

tʃiidzǐ da, keení ahín yaay.
 tʃiidzǐ da keeni a= hin yaay
 night EMPH sleep 3SG overpower 1SG.IND
 That night, sleep overtook me.'

1.13 Təzzár sa alfızər, yađzín amúgay əfáydaan,
 təzzar sa alfızər ya= zín amugay ə- faydaanan
 then when morning 1SG take male adolescent SBJ.REL other
 camel
 'Then in the morning I took another male camel

yayilkəm ísa.
 ya= əlkəm i= sa
 1SG follow 3PL DAT
 and I followed them.'

The first item of note is that Tagdal is an SVO language. Grammatical relations are generally communicated by their position in the sentence. The Subject is normally encoded in the verb by means of a proclitic, unless the verb contains a Subject Relative *ə-*, as in lines 1.7 and 1.13. The functions of the Subject Relative will be discussed in Chapter 4. Since the Subject is normally encoded in the verb, pronouns are usually present for focalisation. For example, in line 1.12 the first person singular pronoun *yaay* is there for focalisation. Full NP Subjects and Objects are also often present either when an element is being introduced for the first time (e.g. line 1.2), when it is being re-introduced after being absent (e.g. lines 1.10 and 1.11 when *yu* 'female camel' and *amúgay* 'adolescent male camel' are reintroduced), or for focalisation.

Some further notes: in line 1.4 the verb *tfin* 'say' reflects the Abargan pronunciation (see Table 2-3). The pronunciation usually used in this document is *fin*. In line 1.12, the pronunciation *tfiidzi* 'night' also reflects the Abargan variety, rather than *fiizi*. The same goes for line 1.5 where *tfiyáyyaanen* 'heads of grain' contrasts with *fiyáyyaanen*. Finally, I draw attention to line 1.10, where the noun *bidóntan* 'water containers' is a loan word from French *bidon*, with a Tuareg plural suffix *-tan*.