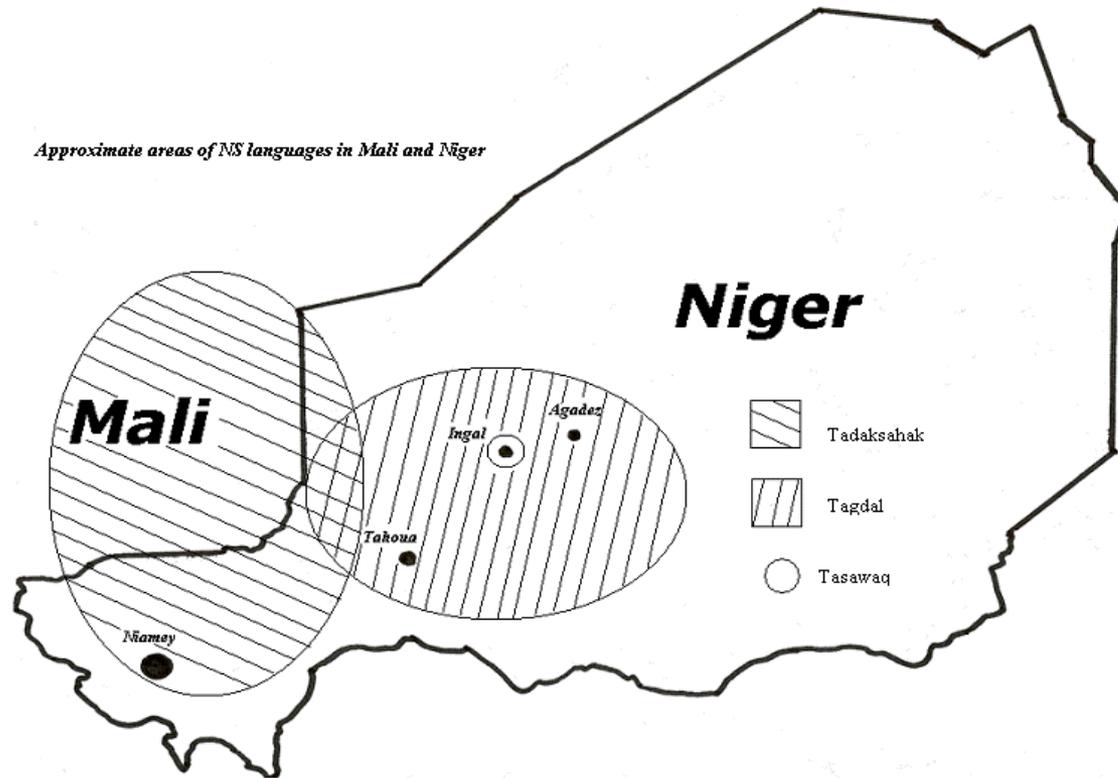# Tagdal of Niger

1. Ethnicity: semi-nomadic Berbers (Tuaregs)
2. Language family: Northern Songhay (Nilo-Saharan?????)

Approximate areas of NS languages in Mali and Niger

I. Berber and Songhay verb roots

A. All of Tagdal's inflectional morphology is of Songhay origin. Includes: subject prefix, negation, TAM. Suffixes: direct object and -kat (venitive) – nan (allative).

irisəbwa ha aɣo
iri- sə- b- wa ha aɣo
1p NEG INC eat thing DEM
'We don't eat that.' (habitually)

ɣay, **ɣan**əʃi abaydəg!
ɣay ɣa -nə -ʃi abaydəg
1s 1s NEG be thief
'I (emphatic) am NOT a thief!'

ɣadaaw-**a**
ɣa- 0 daw- a
1s COM send 3s
'I sent it.'

ɣadərən**kat**
ɣa- o- dərən -kat
1s COMP turn round VEN
'I came back.'

asəkoy goora ne da! **Am**hurru wayen ən kibay!

a- səkoy goora ne da a- m- hurru way -en n kibay

3s not go stay here EMPH 3s SBJ search woman PL GEN meeting
'She's not staying HERE! She needs to look for (where the) women are gathered!'

B. All of Tagdal's derivational morphology is of Berber origin. Includes: Causative, Reciprocal and Passive affixes (i.e. anything that changes verb valence).

Verb root
ərkəb 'pull'
əskat 'separate'
əstəq 'protect'
əlkəd 'overtake'
əkla 'take a rest'
əɣli 'surround'

Causative verb
sərkəb 'cause to pull'
səskat 'cause to separate'
səstəq 'cause to protect'
səlkəd 'cause to overtake'
səkla 'cause to take rest'
səɣli 'cause to surround'

Active
ənjəx 'conquer'
ərkəb 'pull'
ənfa 'feed'
ətkəl 'take, lift'
əwər 'climb'
ədgəd 'jump on'
əxfəl 'lock up'

Passive
tuwənjəx 'conquered'
tuwərkəb 'pulled'
tuwənfa 'be fed'
tuwətkəl 'taken, lifted'
tuwər 'climbed'
tuwədgəd 'jumped on'
tuwəxfəl 'locked up'

Verb root
ərkəb 'pull'
əmənfa 'murder'
əqəl 'wait'
ənfa 'benefit'
səsləm 'greet'

Causative verb
nəmərkəb 'pull each other'
nəmənfa 'fight each other'
nəməqəl 'wait for each other'
nəmənfa 'benefit each other'
nəmsəsləm 'greet each other'

C. Derivational morphology, of Berber origin, cannot be affixed onto Songhay verb roots. Therefore, when forming verb derivations, a Berber verb root with a lexicalized derivational prefix already attached suppletes the Songhay verb.

Songhay verb root	**Causative form**
koy 'go'	→ səglu 'cause to go'
kəkay 'construct'	→ səkrəs 'cause to construct'
dab 'dress'	→ səlsa 'dress someone else'
nin 'drink'	→ ʃəʃəuw 'give someone a drink'
zumbu 'descend'	→ zəzəbət 'cause someone to come down'
hanga 'hear'	→ sədərgən 'listen'
zay 'steal'	→ səbaydəg 'cause to steal'
gora 'sit'	→ səqima 'force to sit'

Songhay verb root	**Reciprocal form**
dab 'dress'	→ nəmsəlsa 'dress someone else'
bay 'know'	→ nəmzəday
zoq 'fight'	→ nəməggər 'fight each other'
hanga 'hear'	→ nəmsəddərgən 'listen to each other'
harhor 'play'	→ nəməddəl 'play together'

Songhay verb root	**Passive form**
bay 'know'	→ tuwəsən 'known'
nin 'drink'	→ tuwəju 'drunk'
jin 'grab / take'	→ tuwətkəl 'grabbed / taken'

II. Interactions between nouns of Songhay and Berber origin: nominalization

A. Nouns of Songhay origin do not have any nominalizing affix. This means that location in the sentence determines whether a given item of Songhay origin is a noun or a verb.

a**hanga** ɤay.
a- 0-   hanga ɤay
3s COMP hear   1s
'He heard me.'

ayirkəb ɤan **hanga**!
a- 0-   yirkəb ɤa- n   hanga
3s COMP pull   1s   GEN ear
'He pulled (on) my ear!'

a**zay** an anarag ən way.
a- 0-   zay a- n   anarag   n   way
3s COMP steal 3s GEN companion GEN wife
'He stole his neighbor's wife!'

anga abaɤa sa atəkoy, ha ji anəʃi **zay**.
anga a- baɤa sa a- tə- koy ha ji   a- nə- ʃi zay
3s   3s want CNJ 3s FUT go   thing DEM 3s NEG be steal
'She (emphatic) wanted to go, that's not stealing!'

B. On the other hand, nouns of Berber origin have either a– or t– as nominalizing prefixes.

afud	'knee'
agodrar	'dust'
azəfa	'illness'
agammak	'victory'
al'adat	'custom/tradition'
amaɣlal	'Creator (i.e. God)'
awatay	'year'

tahardan	'traditional guitar'
takomar	'cheese'
taməklaw	'noonday meal'
teemər	'season'
təaqaq	'lightning'
tayte	'intelligence'

Note: in Berber languages, the prefixes a- and t- represent masculine and feminine nouns, and would require agreement at various levels of the grammar. However, since Tagdal is a Songhay language (no grammatical gender), this does not apply.

This makes it easy to determine whether a root of Berber origin is a noun or a verb, though location in the sentence does not change.

verb

ŋoun

abəʃʁəl an imarawan daʁo.

a -b -əʃʁəl a -n imarawan daʁo
3s INC work 3s GEN ancestors place
'He works at his family's (historical) location.'

aʃaʁal aʁo, anəgəraz asa.
aʃaʁal aʁo a -nə -gəraz a -sa
work DEM 3s NEG please 3s BEN
'He doesn't like this work.'

ahələklək an amawal kan.

a -0 -hələklək a- n amawal kan
3s COMP cough 3s GEN cover in
'He coughed into his turban.'

ahələklək aʁo, asərmaʁ ʁay.
ahələklək aʁo a -sərmaʁ ʁay
breathing hard DEM 3s scare 1s
'That cough scares me.'

III. General vs. Specific

Most nouns of Songhay origin present a generic item. In order to specify which type of item, or which part, a noun of Berber origin will usually replace one of Songhay origin.

Songhay (generic)	Berber (specific)
kamba 'hand, arm'	
	aɣəl 'right hand'
	taɣmur 'elbow'
	amansur 'forearm'
	tagəltəm 'upper arm'
	adad 'finger'

Songhay (generic)	Berber (specific)
hinʃini 'goat'	
	azolaɣ 'large male goat'
	aynəs 'small goat'
	asagay 'goat, 6-12 months'
	eɣayd 'young goat'
	afeli 'newborn goat'

IV. Male / female, large / Small

A. a– and t– also function to distinguish whether a given noun of Berber origin is male or female.

Songhay referent	Berber equivalent	Feminine form
hanʃi 'dog'	abərjia ' hunting dog'	tabərjia 'hunting dog' (f)
koy 'king/master'	amanokal 'master'	tamanokal 'queen'
baari 'horse'	bagzan 'horse'	tabagzan 'mare'

Songhay (general)	Berber (masculine)	Berber (feminine)
ize 'child'		
	barar 'child/boy'	tabarar 'girl'
	agugel 'orphan'	tagugel 'orphan' (f)
	amawa 'adolescent'	tamawat 'adolescent girl'
	awta 'youngest child'	tawtat 'youngest girl'

B. In nouns of Berber origin, in which the male / female distinction does not apply, the t– prefix can differentiate between a small and a large item.

aɣrəm 'town / city'   taɣrəm 'village'

akabar 'bowl'   takabar 'small bowl'

akaʃwar 'mountain'   takaʃwar 'hill'

V. Conclusion

A. It seems likely that the structures of the Tagdal verb were the result of bilingualism; the Songhay and Berber portions are too well-formed and recognizable to be the result of imperfect learning. Furthermore, the kind of strict compartmentalization between Songhay and Berber elements hints at this being – at least initially – a bilingual mixed language. (Benítez-Torres: 2009)

B. It also seems likely that the noun structures in Tagdal were the result of the Songhay vocabulary originating from a vehicular form of Songhay, to which were added Berber elements, according to the perceived need.

> *Le songhay véhiculaire, en raison de sa fonction, ne pouvait pas posseder l'emsemble des formes et items nécessaires à l'actualisation normale de la communication interne et située d'une communauté nomade; on peut donc s'attendre, au moment où les locuteurs ont commencé à fonctionnaliser le songhay pour leur communication interne, à ce qu'ils aient, en même temps – et tout particulièrement au niveau lexical – conservé la partie du lexique touareg dont ils avaient besoin.* (Nicolaï: 1990: 141)