

The Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi: A Reinterpretation

Abstract

This article focuses on the texts known as the “Agadez Chronicles” and “Y Tarichi,” which have been used by historians of the Central Sahara and Sahel to reconstruct the history of the Sultanate of Agadez and the Ader Kingdom in today’s Republic of Niger. The most frequently cited of these texts are published translations of copies of Arabic manuscripts that were made available to French and British colonial administrators by members of the elites of Agadez, Ader, and Sokoto in the first decade of the twentieth century. This article suggests that the copies handed over to the representatives of European empires had been altered to promote the interests of the local elites who circulated these sources. The article compares texts in the Agadez corpus with independent sources on the history of this region in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries; it discusses the political context in which the Agadez Chronicles were circulated at the beginning of the twentieth century; and it considers the implications of the proposed reinterpretations for the historiography of the Aïr and Ader regions.

Introduction

The historiography of pre-nineteenth century Aïr and Ader relies heavily on the published translations of copies of Arabic texts, known as the Agadez Chronicles, that local chiefs made available to colonial officers at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹ Basing their insights on these sources, historians of the region accepted a particular interpretation of the establishment of the Sultanate of Agadez that has two main strands. According to the first of these, the representatives of the main Tuareg confederations living in this region toward the end of the fifteenth century sought to find a sultan who would arbitrate amongst them. Having identified such a ruler, after some failed attempts at finding an appropriate location for him, they installed their sultan in Agadez and imposed him upon the whole of Aïr. In the second strand of this interpretation, a group of named “supporting tribes”² – Lissawan, Iberkoreen,

¹ See Yves Urvoy, *Histoire des populations du Soudan Central, Colonie du Niger* (Paris: Larose, 1936), 254-258; Francis Nicolas, *Tamesna: Les Joullemeden de l’Est ou Tuareg Kel Deneg* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1950), 51-52; Edmond Séré de Rivières, *Histoire du Niger* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1965), 163-164; Abdullahi Smith, “Some considerations relating to the formation of states in Hausaland,” *Journal of African History* 5-3 (1970), 329-346, 343; Nicole Echard, *L’Expérience du passé. Histoire de la société paysanne Hausa de l’Ader* (Paris: Copedit, 1975), 85-87; Djibo Hamani, *L’Ader précolonial. Contribution à l’étude de l’histoire des états Hausa* (Niamey: Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines, 1975), 91-107; Aboubacar Adamou, *Agadez et sa région: contribution à l’étude du Sahel et du Sahara nigériens* (Paris: Copedit, 1979), 47-51; and Suzanne Bernus and Pierre Cressier, “La grande mosquée d’Agadez: architecture et histoire,” *Journal des Africanistes* 54 (1984), 5-39, 6. By contrast, Francis Rennell of Rodd, who published the first edition of *People of the Veil* in 1926, had access to Palmer’s “Notes on Some Asben Records,” but to neither Palmer’s translation of the Agadez Chronicles in *Sudanese Memoirs* nor Urvoy’s “Chroniques d’Agadez.” He based his observations primarily on Palmer’s “Notes on some Asben Records,” the studies of Heinrich Barth and Lieutenant Jean, and Mohammed Bello’s *Infāq al-maysūr*. Unlike the authors mentioned earlier, he did not rely on the two texts that this article considers most problematic. To my knowledge Rennell of Rodd was the first to refer to these texts generically as “Agades Chronicles:” see Francis Rennell of Rodd, *People of the Veil* (Oosterhout: Anthropological Publications, 1970 [1926]), 362.

² The term “tribe” became commonplace in colonial times as an imprecise translation of the Tamasheq word *tewsit* or *tawsit*. In the historiography of Tuareg and Berber societies, the term “tribe” refers to named sections and sub-sections of the broader Tamasheq-speaking society (Kel Tamasheq). Each “tribe” includes members of the same lineage (succession may be uterine or agnatic) and a varying number of dependent groups, sometimes carrying a separate name, subject to the authority of the same tribal chief (in French, *chef de tribu*). This article attributes to the term “tribe” this conventional specialist meaning, without the derogatory connotations associated with it in the colonial historiography of Africa. For a discussion of this terminology, see Pierre Bonte, “Structure de Classe et

Imiskikian, and Inoussoufan – became the sultan’s closest supporters in Aïr and in the second half of the seventeenth century played a critical role in the conquest of Ader by Agabba, son of Muḥammad al-Mubārak the Sultan of Agadez. Some of these tribes, the Lissawan in particular, were consequently given land and political privileges in Ader.³

This article suggests that this interpretation should be re-examined critically because it relies mainly on specific versions of the Agadez Chronicles (text LVII published by H. R. Palmer in 1928 and text B published by Yves Urvoy in 1934) and Y Tarichi, which have not been subjected to careful critical analysis. It shows that these published versions of the Chronicles come from exactly the same source: they are copies created in 1907 and circulated by the Sultan of Agadez, Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy. The Y Tarichi was made available, also in 1907, to Captain Laforgue when he visited Agadez.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when France was struggling to crush the resistance of the two powerful Tuareg confederations of the Kel Gress and Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg, the Y Tarichi and some versions of the Agadez Chronicles legitimated the consolidation of the Lissawan’s administrative authority over a large portion of Ader and the establishment of a line of Lissawan canton chiefs. These texts confirmed the authority of the Lissawan, Aïr Tuareg, and Agadez Sultanate by magnifying their role in the establishment of the main political institutions of Aïr and Ader in earlier centuries. By the same token, they eclipsed the role of other actors – particularly the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg – who had mounted a strenuous resistance against the French and against those Tuareg who supported the French with varying degrees of conviction.

Urvoy mentions casually in his introduction to the Agadez Chronicles that the manuscripts he translated had been “copied and, when appropriate, updated in 1907 during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim-ed-Dasouqy.”⁴ It is suggested here that these documents had been altered by persons operating in the circles of the Sultan of Agadez Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy and the Ader-based Lissawan chief Amattaza Ennou, who believed they would benefit from circulating a revised text that aggrandized the role of their ancestors in the political affairs of the Sultanate of Agadez from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century.⁵ The second group of so-called “supporting tribes” (Lissawan, Iberkoreen, Imiskikian, and Inoussoufan) appears only in copies of the chronicles “copied and updated” in 1907. The names of the second group of tribes supporting the sultan do not figure in other versions of the Chronicles or in independent sources on the history of this region, and it is likely that they were included in the versions updated in 1907 for reasons of political expediency. To be sure, in our present state of knowledge this must remain a hypothesis. The data examined in this article do not allow us to

Structures Sociales Chez les Kel Gress,” *Revue de l’Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 21 (1976), 141-162, 148-149, and Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 10-16.

³ Yves Urvoy, “Chroniques d’Agades,” *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 4-2 (1934), 145-178, 154, 156; Y Tarichi in André Maurice Peignol, “Monographie du Cercle de Tahoua,” Nov. 1907, ANN 17.1.4, 33.

⁴ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 145.

⁵ In this article I am only able to inquire into the strategies of a limited number of actors involved in the circulation of the Agadez Chronicles. The article does not – for limits of time, space, and resources – attempt to reconstruct the involvement of members of groups known as Itesan and Iberkoreen, and other groups mentioned in the sources and still present in the twentieth century.

reconstruct with any degree of certainty either the genealogy of the manuscripts of the Chronicles of Agadez, or the historical dynamics described in these manuscripts. However, while we wait for a critical edition of various versions of the Arabic manuscripts of the Agadez Chronicles to appear, this article suggests why such updates were made, by whom, and with what consequences for political relations in the colonial period.

By comparing different versions of the manuscripts known today as the Chronicles of Agadez and Y Tarichi, and reconstructing the conditions of their circulation, this article exposes the political projects of some Lissawan elites, the sultans of Agadez and Sokoto, the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg, and French colonial administrators who served in the Aïr and Ader regions in the first decade of the twentieth century. It follows Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias's warning not to read chronicles as "bundles of raw information," but rather to consider critically the intellectual and political projects of those who commissioned, wrote, copied, and circulated these texts.⁶ These individuals were not only involved in struggles over material resources such as land, people, and livestock. They were also fighting over the interpretation of a contested past. Following military defeat by colonizing powers, the former political rulers of this region became unwillingly accountable to new European authorities. Amongst various strategies, they used historical sources as political resources and circulated revised versions of manuscripts that supported their claims and undermined those of their enemies.

The aim of this article is twofold. First, it aims to reopen the debate on the historical evolution of Central Saharan political structures, and particularly on the development of the peculiar institution of the Agadez Sultanate and its hierarchical relations with surrounding satellite kingdoms and/or emirates. Second, it contributes to the comparative literature on the colonial construction of knowledge about colonized societies.⁷ Africanist research shows that the colonial encounter gave rise to epistemological struggles over the interpretation of Africa's past. The most contested aspects of this past were those most likely to influence the distribution of political power in the new colonial context: for example, the boundaries of ethnicities and territorial polities,⁸ the interpretation of customary law,⁹ and the production of an official discourse about pre-colonial ruling hierarchies.¹⁰ Pioneering studies promoted the idea of a colonial "invention" of African traditions.¹¹ These interpretations were

⁶ Paulo Fernando De Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali: Epigraphy, Chronicles and Songhay-Tuareg History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), lxxi.

⁷ The classic study in this field is Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). A more recent India-focused example of this constructivist approach is Kim A. Wagner, *Thuggee: Banditry and the British in Early Nineteenth-Century India* (Houndmills, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁸ See for example Paul Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens of the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands since 1914* (Oxford, James Currey, 2003); Camille Lefebvre, *Frontières de sable, frontières de papier: Histoire de territoires et de frontières, du jihad de Sokoto à la colonisation française du Niger, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015).

⁹ See for example Martin Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁰ See for example Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Vincent Hiribarren, "A European and African Joint-Venture: Writing a Seamless History of Borno (1902–1960)," *History in Africa* 40 (2013), 77-98.

¹¹ The Ur text is Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

criticized by researchers who showed that Africans had contributed actively to shaping (new) understandings of tradition by feeding colonial administrators information that would be advantageous to them.¹² Some of this information consisted of chronicles, manuscripts, and other forms of written or oral data that the colonial administration considered sources for historical reconstruction.¹³ This article looks at transactions and negotiations that involved this type of material.

Far from rendering sources unusable, critical inquiries in their production and circulation can shed light on two interrelated orders of questions: questions on the sources' topics and/or contents; and questions on the strategies of their authors, copyists, compilers, and publicizers. Reconstructing processes of textual inclusions, exclusions, and rewriting of sources can yield valuable information on the intellectual and political visions of those making textual revisions.

It goes without saying that this approach is not relevant only to the moment of the colonial encounter. Critical studies of African sources have revealed many occasions in pre-colonial times when oral performers, writers, chroniclers, and copyists intervened in the presentation of various types of texts with the aim of unfolding their own idiosyncratic projects. Thus, for example, De Moraes Farias has shown that Al-Sa'dī's *Tārīkh al-Sūdān* was written to provide an account of history that would reconcile the visions of descendants of the Moroccan invaders and those of the Sahelian communities of the Niger Bend.¹⁴ Murray Last, M. G. Smith, John Hunwick, and Paul Lovejoy have investigated possible authors, compilers, and editors of various versions of the Kano Chronicles in order to explain the intellectual and political functions of these texts.¹⁵ Most recently, Nobili and Mathee have studied multiple versions of manuscripts of the *Tārīkh al-fattāsh*, reassessed a century of critical studies of these sources, and provided a new interpretation of the political motivations behind successive interventions in these texts.¹⁶ This article turns to the Chronicles of Agadez in the hope of stimulating new inquiries into the history of this region and its deep historiography.¹⁷

For a more recent discussion see Thomas Spear, "Neo-Traditionalism and the limits of invention in British Colonial Africa," *The Journal of African History* 44/1 (2003), 3-27.

¹² Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, 26-27.

¹³ See also Karin Barber and Paulo Fernando De Moraes Farias (eds.) *Discourse and Its Disguises: The Interpretation of African Oral Texts* (Birmingham: Centre of West African Studies Press, 1989); Karin Barber and Paulo Fernando De Moraes Farias (eds.) *Self-assertion and Brokerage: Early Cultural Nationalism in West Africa* (Birmingham: Centre of West African Studies, 1990).

¹⁴ De Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions*, lxxiv-lxxxv.

¹⁵ John Hunwick, "A Historical Whodunit: The So-called 'Kano Chronicle' and Its Place in the Historiography of Kano," *History in Africa*, 21 (1994), 127-146; Murray Last, "Historical Metaphors in the Intellectual History of Kano Before 1800," *History in Africa* 7 (1980), 161-178; M. G. Smith, "The Kano Chronicle as history," in: Bawuro Barkindo (ed.) *Studies in the History of Kano* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 31-56; Paul Lovejoy, Abdullahi Mahadi, and Mansur Ibrahim Mukhtar, "C. L. Temple's 'Notes on the History of Kano' [1909]: A Lost Chronicle on Political Office," *Sudanic Africa* 4 (1993), 7-76.

¹⁶ Mauro Nobili and Shahid Mathee, "Towards a New study on the *Tārīkh al-fattāsh* part 1: Through a Centenary of Scholarship to Future Developments," Forthcoming in *History in Africa* 42 (2015).

¹⁷ With the notion of "deep historiography" I wish to draw attention to two aspects. First, to the regional historiography's "deep history," that is, to evolving historiographic processes of constant interpretation and reinterpretation of historical events, starting from the observations of the authors chronologically closest to the events discussed in the sources. Second, to the need to subject all historiography to in-depth analysis of the social, cultural, or religious determinants of historical writing at any one time and in any particular location.

Following this introduction, the article's second section discusses early sources on Aïr and Ader and introduces the main institutions under discussion here. The third examines the main published versions of the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi, and compares their contents. The fourth reconstructs the production and circulation of different versions of the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi in the first decade of the twentieth century, focusing particularly on the agency of the sultans of Agadez and Sokoto. The fifth section discusses the significance of revisions in the context of Lissawan–Iwellemeden Kel Denneg–French relations at the beginning of the twentieth century. Finally, the conclusion advances some reflections on the implications of this reassessment for the historiography of the region.

Agadez and Ader outside the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi

This section introduces institutions that figure in the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi as they had been observed by early travellers and authors who wrote about the central Sahara and its people. It discusses sources that provide information on political relations in Aïr and Ader from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century – roughly the period covered in greater detail in the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi. Of course, it cannot be excluded that the sources examined in this section simply omitted to refer to events and names mentioned in the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi. However, the comparison is useful because these early sources are precisely where one would expect to find these events and names mentioned, had they been perceived as important in their own time. Some early sources provide snapshots of the political institutions that preceded the installation of a sultanate in Aïr, while others represent the first recorded evidence on the young sultanate. The primary function of the various versions of the Agadez Chronicles, when they were composed, was to explain the origin of the sultanate. By contrast, the texts discussed in this section mention Aïr in writings that were not focused specifically on Aïr's political institutions.

Writing in the 1330s, al-‘Umarī mentioned “three independent *white Muslim kings who are Berbers*; the Sultan of Ahīr (Aïr), the Sultan of DMWShH, and the Sultan of Tādmakka. ... Each of them is an independent sovereign; and no one of them rules another, but the greatest is the king of Ahīr.”¹⁸ When in 1353 ibn Baṭṭūṭah reached “Kahir” travelling in a caravan of 600 female slaves from Takedda, he described this area as “the country of the Sultan of al-Karkari,” but did not specify the name of the place where this unidentified sultan resided.¹⁹ It is noteworthy that al-‘Umarī's

¹⁸ Shihāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī, “Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār,” (extract) in Nehemia Levtzion and J. E. P. Hopkins (eds.) *Corpus of Early Sources for West African History* (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), 252-278, 274.

¹⁹ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Lawāṭī al-Ṭanjī ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta AD 1325–1354*. Translated by H. A. R. Gibb, edited and annotated by Charles Defrémery and Beniamino Sanguinetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1958–2000), 5 volumes, Vol. 4, 975-976. The “Inoussoufan” of the Chronicles are probably the same group as the “Massufa” mentioned by ibn Baṭṭūṭah and other scholars. On the name “Karkari” or “Kerkeri”, Rennell of Rodd observes that “Barth deduces that the name of the ruler's kingdom, which included Air but apparently not Takedda, was ‘kerker’, but we have seen that the chief minister of the Sultan of the Tuareg is called the Koikoi Geregeri, and it is to this title that I think Ibn Batutah is referring. Nevertheless, as a branch of the Aulimmiden in the west is also called Takarkari, this may signify that the plateau was at this period [1353] under the influence of those western Tuareg who have in history often exerted a preponderating part in the history of Southern Air.” Rennell of Rodd, *People of the Veil*, 406. Djibo

description of the Sultan of Aïr as white, Muslim, and Berber contrasts with later representations of Agadez sultans emphasizing blackness and non-Berber origin. Agadez appears again as a seat of power in the second half of the fifteenth century, when the Egyptian scholar al-Suyūṭī wrote a treatise for the kings and sultans in the land of Takrur, in which he addressed himself specifically to King Muḥammad b. Sattafan, “Lord of Agadez” and his brothers, and to Ibrahim Sura, King of Katsina.²⁰

The sobriquet “bin Sattafan” implies a dark complexion. Yet “dark complexion” can be interpreted in various ways depending on the cultural colour code that identified people and places – and the moral implications of such a code in folk theories of race and identity. Baz Lecocq’s analysis of Tuareg theories of race suggests that “sattafan” referred to a shiny greenish or bluish black that was associated with the Tuareg nobility – and not, as has been suggested, with blacksmiths, slaves, and Sudanic Africans.²¹ This implies that al-Suyūṭī’s reference to the King of Agadez as King Muḥammad b. Sattafan in the second half of the fifteenth century may have implied Berber noble descent and not – as commonly believed – Sudanic, or possibly slave, ancestry. I return to the significance of this in the following section.

The Ta’rīkh al-fattāsh and Ta’rīkh al-Sūdān mention an expedition of the Askya Muḥammad in 1500–1501 against “Tildza” in “Ayar.” While Houdas and Delafosse do not advance any interpretation on this point,²² Henri Lhote identifies “Tildza” with Tadeliza in Aïr.²³ Hunwick does not discuss Lhote’s hypothesis but, stressing that the

Hamani suggests that “Takarkari” would have referred to an Inoussoufan (Massufa) group, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie: le Sultanat touareg de l’Ayar* (Niamey: Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines, 1989), 111-112.

²⁰ The text of al-Suyūṭī’s treatise is quoted by Usman Dan Fodio in Part Five of his *Tanbīh al-ikhwān*, edited and translated by H. R. Palmer, “An early Fulani conception of Islam (continued),” *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 14-53 (1914), 53-59. On al-Suyūṭī see Elizabeth M. Sartain, “Jalal Ad-Din As-Suyuti’s Relations with the People of Takrur,” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 16-2 (1971), 193-198, 197; Elizabeth M. Sartain, *Jalal al-din al-Suyuti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 50-51; H. T. Norris, *The Tuaregs: Their Islamic Legacy and Its Diffusion in the Sahel* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1975), 45–7.

²¹ Lecocq proposes to translate *koual* as “black;” *shaggaran* as “red;” and *sattafan* as greenish or bluish “shiny black” (*zuruq* in Arabic). He argues that in Tamasheq culture “social status is connected to these categories. *Kouar* is the appearance of the blacksmiths and slaves; *shaggaran* is associated with the free but not the noble; and *sattafan* is the colour of nobility.” Baz Lecocq, “The Bellah Question: Slave Emancipation, Race, and Social Categories in Late Twentieth-Century Northern Mali,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39-1 (2005), 42-68, 46. Lecocq explains that French colonialists superimposed their own racial biases on their confused understanding of the Tuareg social “colour coding,” and erroneously translated those colours that in Tamasheq were associated with nobility as “white,” or in French “*blanc*.” When speaking French, contemporary Tuareg would have internalized the colonial colour scheme: “When speaking French, a Tuareg will now translate *koual* as ‘noir.’” However, both *shaggaran* (red) and *sattafan* (greenish black) will be translated as ‘blanc.’” Lecocq, *ibid.*, pp. 46-47. See also Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 97-100 and 352-353.

²² Mahmud Kuti, *Tarikh el-Fettach*, translated and edited by Octave Victor Houdas and Maurice Delafosse (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1964), 135. In contrast to Houdas and Delafosse, more recent scholars reattributed the Ta’rīkh al-fattāsh to the seventeenth century author Ibn al-Mukhtār. On this, see Nehemia Levtzion, “A Seventeenth-Century Chronicle by Ibn al-Mukhtar: A Critical Study of Tarikh al-Fattash,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 34-3 (1971), 571-593, and De Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions*, lxxi-lxxxv. For a new comprehensive analysis of the Ta’rīkh al-fattāsh and related debates, see Nobili and Mathee, “Towards a New Study.”

²³ Henri Lhote, “Découverte des ruines de Tadeliza, ancienne résidence des sultans de l’Air,” *Notes Africaines* 137 (1973a), 9-16.

translation of this sentence presents difficulties, explains that “Tilza Tanat was the sobriquet of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-ar-Raḥmān, the tenth sultan of Agadez,” and renders al-Sa’dī’s relevant passage in the Ta’rīkh al-Sūdān as follows: “[Askiya Muḥammad] in 907/1501–2 campaigned in Aïr and drove Tilza from his sultanate,” imposing a degree of Songhay rule over this region.²⁴

Leo Africanus, or al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Wazzān al-Zayyātī al-Fāsī, claims to have visited Agadez in 1513.²⁵ He portrays Agadez as a walled city with well-built houses that hosted a flourishing trade with Kano and Gobir,²⁶ and mentions that the sultan was a “native of Libya.”²⁷ Leo writes that in Agadez the sultan’s power depended on the support of the desert people, who also manned his army. This made him a weak and unstable regent. The inhabitants of the southern part of the Agadez kingdom are characterized as pastoralist nomads, who transport their tents of straw mats on oxen in their travels. According to Leo, Agadez was “built by the moderns,” and paid a tribute of 150,000 ducats to the king of “Tombutto.” Hunwick gives 1413 as the date when Agadez was built,²⁸ based on Luis Carvajal de Marmol’s indication that Agadez was founded 160 years before his writing in 1573.²⁹ Hamani discusses alternative dates and concludes that it was founded between 1413 and 1424.³⁰ It is noteworthy that by specifying that the sultan was a “native of Libya” Leo was suggesting that the sultan was a local – that is, one who came from the desert region (or the third division of Africa as described at the beginning of his *Descrittione*) and not from the fourth division or “land of the blacks” (*la terra di negri*).³¹ This again suggests that the tradition of the black descent of the sultan, or of the servile origin of the sultan as the son of a concubine, must have been introduced after the sixteenth century.

²⁴ ‘Abd-ar-Raḥmān bin Abdullāh al-Sa’dī, “Ta’rīkh al-Sūdān,” translated and edited by John Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa’dī’s Ta’rīkh al-Sūdān down to 1613 and other contemporary documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 108. Urvoy’s text of the Chronicles gives the name of this Sultan as “Talzi-Tanat” (Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 151), and Tardivet’s text has “Talaz Zatte,” see R. Tardivet, “Les sultans de l’Aïr,” *Bulletin du Comité d’Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l’AOF* 1928, 659-694, 691.

²⁵ Epaulard did not think that Leo reached Agadez in person, see Leo Africanus (J. L. L’Africain), *Description de l’Afrique*, translated by Alexis Epaulard, edited by Théodore Monod, Henri Lhote, and Raymond Mauny, two volumes (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1980), volume 2, 474, note 84.

²⁶ Leo Africanus, “La descrittione dell’Affrica,” in: Giovanni Battista Ramusio (ed.) *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, third edition (Venezia: Stamperia de’ Giunti, 1563), 77.

²⁷ In an earlier section Leo noted that “many historians” think that the king of “Agudez,” alongside the kings of “Tombutto” and “Melli,” originated from the Sanhaja (“La Descrittione dell’Affrica,” 3).

²⁸ John Hunwick, “Notes on a Late Fifteenth-Century Document Concerning al-Takrur,” in: Christopher Allen and R. W. Johnson (eds.) *African Perspectives: Papers on the History, Politics and Economics of Africa Presented to Thomas Hodgkin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 27. Maurice Abadie argues that Agadez was founded in 920, *La Colonie du Niger* (Paris: Société d’Editions Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales, 1927), 156.

²⁹ Luis de Marmol y Carvajal, *Descripción General de Affrica*, Granada 1573. French translation by Nicolas Perrot, Paris 1667, Tome III, 67. Following Marmol, Hunwick suggests 1413 as Agadez’s approximate foundation date, see John Hunwick, “Songhay, Borno and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century,” in: J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.) *History of West Africa*, Volume 1 (2 Vols.), Second edition (New York NY: Longham, 1976), 264-301, 282. Cooley, instead, also based on Marmol, suggests 1438: see William D. Cooley, *The Negroland of the Arabs Examined and Explained; or, An Inquiry into the Early History and Geography of Central Africa* (London: Arrowsmith, 1841), 26. See also John Hunwick, “Notes on a Late Fifteenth-Century Document Concerning al-Takrur,” 27.

³⁰ Hamani, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 146-147.

³¹ Leo Africanus, “La Descrittione dell’Affrica,” 1.

Regrettably, information on the historical development and expansion of the Agadez Sultanate does not figure in the writings of the rare Europeans known to be acquainted with the Central Sahara in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Those we know of were not explorers, but traders, missionaries, and, possibly, slaves. Amongst them, Vincenzo Matteo, a trader from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) cited by Lorenzo d’Anania as one of his key informants, appears to have visited Kano in the first half of the sixteenth century.³² Yet D’Anania’s “Universale Fabrica” contains scanty information on Agadez and follows Leo’s description of the city. Uncertainty surrounds the odyssey of Pieter Farde, a Franciscan brother supposedly captured by pirates in 1686 in the Mediterranean and sold to a man who brought Brother Farde to Agadez as a slave. The sultan during Farde’s captivity would have been Muḥammad al-Mubārak, who together with his son Agabba figures in the Chronicles and Y Tarichi. Farde’s letters, of doubtful authenticity, mention the presence in Agadez of more than forty Christian slaves, mostly from Italy and France. But they say nothing of regional political arrangements and do not mention the names of the sultan or local dignitaries.³³ In 1711 the Franciscan missionaries Father Carlo Maria di Genova and Father Severino da Silesia may have visited Agadez, whose sultan at the time would have been Muḥammad Agabba b. Muḥammad al-Mubārak, supposedly the leader of Agadez’s expansion into Ader. The two Franciscan missionaries may have reached Agadez in a trip aimed at finding Christian communities in the Sudan. From Agadez they continued their journey to Katsina, where they are reported to have died without leaving records of observations made during their journey.³⁴

Records deriving from early travel reports on the central Sahara and Sahel do not mention Ader. Perhaps the earliest mention of Ader is to be found in Manuscript J of Urvoy’s *Chroniques* corpus, the biography of Abou-Bakr son of Attaher-Tachi, born in 1657, which does not mention the “supporting tribes,” but indicates that during the author’s lifetime Ader was conquered by the sons of the Sultan of Agadez; that on its soil wars were fought between Tuareg and Gobirawa; and that Agadez had diplomatic and perhaps commercial relations with Ader, as the author’s profession led him to “travel in Ader.”³⁵ This text is the autobiography of an otherwise unknown person, and was not written to legitimate claims to political leadership. It confirms information provided by Muḥammad Bello and in “Notes on Some Asben Records” on the southwards expansion of Agadez and its occupation of Ader following wars with Gobir in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

Muḥammad Bello’s *Infāq al-maysūr fi ta’rīkh bilād al-Takrūr* became available in Europe before colonial invasion.³⁶ It is possible – as suggested by Augi – that the

³² See Giovanni Lorenzo D’Anania, “L’Universale Fabrica del Mondo, ovvero Cosmografia” [1573-1582], translated and edited by Dierk Lange and Silvio Berthoud, “L’Intérieur de l’Afrique Occidentale d’après Giovanni Lorenzo Anania (XVI siècle),” *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale* XIV-1 (1972), 299-352.

³³ Joseph Kenny, “A Seventeenth Century Belgian Visitor to Agadez and the North of Nigeria: Pieter Farde,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 10-4 (1981), 73-89.

³⁴ Richard Gray, “Christian Traces and a Franciscan Mission in the Central Sudan, 1700-1711,” *Journal of African History* 8-3 (1967), 383-393.

³⁵ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 174.

³⁶ The general historical introduction was first published in 1826, in Hugh Clapperton, Dixon Denham, and Walter Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823 and 1824* (London: John Murray, 2 volumes, 1826). A copy of the text was obtained by Heinrich Barth during his travels in the region, see C. E. J. Whitting, *Muhammad Bello, Infaqu’l Maisuri, edited from local manuscripts by C. E. J. Whitting* (London: Luzac, 1951). Whitting’s translation is considered

Chronicles of Agadez and the *Infāq al-maysūr* were inspired by a common (lost) source,³⁷ and that they are not “independent” as Norris suggested.³⁸ However, the *Infāq al-maysūr* could not have been manipulated with the intent of supporting the *particular* configuration of interests that took shape in the initial years of colonial occupation. Like Leo Africanus, Sultan Muḥammad Bello comments on the instability of the peculiar political arrangements of Aïr, where the appointed sultan’s power depended on the support of the main Tuareg warrior tribes amongst whom he arbitrated. Aïr was initially

in the hands of Soodan inhabitants of the Goobér. But five tribes of the Tawarék, called Amakeetan, Tamkak, Sendal, Agdalar, and Ajdaraneen, came out of Aowjal, and took it from them; and, after having settled themselves, they agreed to nominate a prince to rule over them, in order to render justice to the weak against the powerful. They appointed a person of the family of Ansatfén; but they soon quarreled among themselves and dismissed him. They then nominated another, and continued upon this system, viz. whenever a prince displeased them, they dethroned him, and appointed a different one.³⁹

Rennell of Rodd interpreted Bello’s reference to a sultan from the “family of Ansatfén” as a “reference to the selection of a ruler from a slave family ... for Ansatfén, i.e. n’Sattafan, means ‘the black ones’ from the word *sattaf* = ‘black’.”⁴⁰ As mentioned above, this interpretation may require revising, if Lecocq’s translation of “sattafan” as a hue of shiny black that implies Tuareg nobility is accepted. The second group of “supporting tribes” mentioned in some versions of the Agadez Chronicles – Lissawan, Iberkoreen, Imiskikian, and Inoussoufan – does not appear in Muḥammad Bello’s text written in the early nineteenth century,⁴¹ or in nineteenth-century European sources that explicitly refer to this region, namely, those of Ulrich Seetzen, Hugh Clapperton, and Heinrich Barth.

Most significantly, the second group of “supporting tribes” does not appear in Barth’s section focusing specifically on the history of the sultanate and supporting tribes.⁴² There are two possible explanations for this silence: either the power of these four tribes had been eclipsed temporarily in the nineteenth century, and possibly earlier, due to the growth of influence of other groups, such as the Iwellemmeden and Kel Gress; or these four tribes, *under these names*, had not played a central role in connection to the early sultanate, as more recent representatives of these groups claimed in their exchanges with colonial officers at the beginning of the twentieth century, when, it would seem probable, their names were written retrospectively into Aïr and Ader’s main historical chronicles.

unreliable by most specialists, and Hunwick compared it with MS IASAR/71 accessible in the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana. An Arabic version edited by Bahija Chadli was published in 1996, Muḥammad Bello, *Infāq al-Maysūr fī tārīkh bilād at-Takrūr* (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, 1996), replacing an earlier Arabic version edited by ‘Alī Abd al-‘Azim and published in Cairo in 1964.

³⁷ Abdullahi Rafi Augi, “The Gobir Factor in the Social and Political History of the Rima Basis, c. 1650 to 1808 AD,” PhD dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1984, xxxii.

³⁸ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 51-52, cf. note 4 above.

³⁹ Muhammad Bello, ‘Infaq al-maisur’ (ed. Clapperton 1926), 160.

⁴⁰ Rennell of Rodd, *People of the Veil*, 369.

⁴¹ With the possible exception of the title “Alamtey,” which could be recognizable in the name “Matiya,” see below.

⁴² See Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa. Being a Journal of an Expedition Undertaken Under the Auspices of H.R.M.’s Government in the Years 1849–1855*. Centenary Edition in three volumes (London: Frank Cass, 1965 [1857]), Vol. I, 361-362.

It is important to emphasize “under these names”: the ethnonyms of the second group of “supporting tribes” found in text LVII published by H. R. Palmer 1928 and text B published by Yves Urvoy in 1934 appear to be relatively modern. This does not mean, of course, that the groups they refer to are also “modern” in any sense of this term, nor that their ancestors had not occupied positions of power in the Saharan region in earlier periods. It is particularly odd to find the ethnonym “Lissawan,” in various spellings, in a document that claims to be a copy of a sixteenth-century source, because to my knowledge a Lissawan identity developed late.⁴³ Nevertheless, one of the chiefly tribes of the Lissawan is that of the Illemteyen, which is generally acknowledged to be a form of the name of the old Lemta mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal in the tenth century CE and Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth century.⁴⁴ The ethnonym “Inoussoufan” is a recent variant of the older “Massufa.”⁴⁵ The Iberkoreyen’s history is linked to the site of In Tedoq.⁴⁶ And I could not find references to an ancient form of “Imiskikian,” a group which in the twentieth century was closely associated with the Lissawan chiefdom in the Keita region.

We are, therefore, confronted with two distinct questions: (1) whether the ancestors of groups known (in the twentieth century) as Lissawan, Iberkoreen, Imiskikian, and Inoussoufan had played a role in the establishment of the Aïr Sultanate; and (2) when these specific ethnonyms first appeared in the Agadez chronicles, and why. The history of ethnonyms and the history of people are separate phenomena.⁴⁷ The date from which an ethnonym is attested reflects the existence of a shared identity for persons grouped under such label – it does not mean that those persons, with their particular ways of living, had not existed before under one or more different labels. A “Lissawan” identity does not seem to have been present in fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Aïr (although the appearance of new evidence could change this perception). Yet it is possible that in these centuries people known as Illemteyen (Lemta), some of who would eventually become known as Lissawan, played a role in the establishment of the Agadez Sultanate and Ader Emirate or Kingdom. I suggest that at present we should question the assertion in Palmer’s text LVII and Urvoy’s text B that the Lissawan, Iberkoreen, Imiskikian, and Inoussoufan had played a role in the establishment of the Aïr Sultanate; and that this second set of ethnonyms was probably included in copies of the chronicles made in the twentieth century.

To sum up, before Muḥammad Bello’s writing we find no mention of specific, named “supporting tribes.” Limited evidence found in the writings of earlier authors suggests that up until the mid-fifteenth century, Aïr-based chiefs were supported by various

⁴³ I discuss the historical development of the composite Lissawan identity (and ethnonym) in Benedetta Rossi, *From Slavery to Aid: Politics, Labour, and Ecology in the Nigerien Sahel, 1800-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 103.

⁴⁴ Abū I-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawqal, “Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ,” in: Nehemia Levtzion and J. F. P. Hopkins (eds.) *Corpus of Early Sources for West African History* (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), 43-52, 46-47; Walī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘ibār (Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l’Afrique septentrionale)*, translated by William MacGuckin de Slane (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1925), 4 volumes, vol. I, 273ff.

⁴⁵ For a comprehensive discussion, see Hamani, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 95-110.

⁴⁶ See Edmond Bernus and Pierre Cressier, *Vallée de l’Azawagh (Sahara du Niger)*, volume II: In Teduq du Moyen Age à l’époque actuelle (Saint Maur: Éditions Sèpia, 1999), 191 ff.

⁴⁷ Murray Last, “Ancient Labels and Categories: Exploring the ‘Onomastics’ of Kano,” in: Anne Haour and Benedetta Rossi (eds.) *Being and Becoming Hausa: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 59-83.

groups, and their residence may have shifted in response to changing alliances and conditions of pastures. By the early sixteenth century, when Leo visited or learned about the region, it seems that the Sultanate of Aïr had become a more centralized (but not more stable) political institution, with its capital in Agadez. While asserting that the sultan was a “native of Libya” (and not of “the land of the blacks”), Leo did not provide a racialized description. Norris suggested that the discursive emphasis on a “black sultan” could have developed from close ties with Mamluk Egypt.⁴⁸ While the exact meaning of *sattafan* as “black” needs revisiting in light of Baz Lecocq’s discussion of colour coding, contacts with Egypt are mentioned in the section of the Chronicles that addresses legal questions and trade. Hamani interprets references incorporating the word *sattafan* in the texts of al-Suyūṭī and Muḥammad Bello as suggesting a western origin for the first sultans:

we have sufficient evidence today to state that the sultans of Aïr came from the Adghagh des Ifoghas, more precisely from a village (*aghram*) called In Sattafan located in the north of the valley of Telia. In this valley there existed the Tuareg group Kel-Instaffan [*sic*] (“the people of Insattafan”) which followed the sultan in Aïr, but eventually joined the Kel Gress. We ignore the exact nature of the ties that united this group and the sultan’s family, but we know that they were always close. The whole history of the Tuareg of Aïr before the arrival of the Kel Gress shows us that they were always very close to the Kel Tadmakkat. We could even say that they originally formed the same political family....⁴⁹

These two hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Indeed Norris, too, had highlighted the existence of the village of Sattafan in the Adrar-n-Ifoghas in Mali, suggesting that this was the origin of the first sultans up until the reign of Sultan Ahmat Tilza in the late sixteenth century.⁵⁰ It is possible that some of the earliest sultans had originated from a village or group known as “Sattafan” in the Adrar-n-Ifoghas *and* that at some point *sattafan* may have acquired new racial/moral connotations due to contacts with Mamluk Egypt, first, and then with European notions of race in colonial and more recent times. Now let us turn to a close examination of the most detailed sources for this history.

The Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi

The Agadez Chronicles are available in the form of published translations of copies of manuscripts made in the twentieth century and handed over to colonial administrators. Between 1910 and 1936 four publications appeared that contained translations of Arabic manuscripts, published respectively by Herbert Palmer,⁵¹ R. Tardivet,⁵² and Yves Urvoy.⁵³ Palmer’s two publications and Tardivet’s article are variants of two of the ten manuscripts published by Urvoy (Manuscript A and part of Manuscript B). Urvoy’s Manuscripts C-J had not been published previously. The Y Tarichi was annexed to Colonel Peignol’s “Monographie du Cercle de Tahoua,” unpublished and dated 1907. Professor Djibo Hamani published it as an appendix to his *Au carrefour du*

⁴⁸ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 51.

⁴⁹ Hamani, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 138-139.

⁵⁰ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 53.

⁵¹ Palmer, “Notes on Some Asben records,” 388-400; and H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs. Being Mainly Translations of a Number of Arabic Manuscripts Relating to the Central and Western Sudan* (London: Frank Cass, 1967 [1928]), vol. 3, 48-49 (republished in H. R. Palmer, *The Bornu Sahara and Sudan* (London: John Murray, 1936), 57-58.

⁵² R. Tardivet, “Les sultans de l’Aïr,” *Bulletin du Comité d’Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l’AOF* October 1928, 659-694.

⁵³ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 145-178.

Soudan et de la Berberie in 1989.⁵⁴ Hamani provides the classification references for the Arabic manuscripts that he identified as corresponding to the published translations of the Agadez Chronicles held in the archives of the *Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines* (IRSH) of Niamey, alongside information about each of the manuscripts.⁵⁵ In Volume II of their bio-biographical reference work on the Arabic literature of Africa, Hunwick and O’Fahey include bibliographical information on Aïr and Ader. Hunwick (who compiled Volume II) follows Hamani and adds information on copies held outside Niger (mainly in Nigeria) and on published translations.⁵⁶

The published translations include precious information on how the translated manuscripts were obtained. Coupled to a comparison of differences across these published versions, this information sheds light on the perceptions of the past of those who passed on copies of manuscripts to French administrators. This knowledge constitutes a fundamental “interpretative key” for analysing the different versions of manuscripts that reached us.

H. R. Palmer published two sets of texts, which he believed to be derived from the same source. The first one, entitled “Notes on Some Absen Records” and published in 1910, is his translation “of some notes in Arabic compiled by a Hausa Mallam [whose] information was derived from Tuareg sources – probably in part from MSS.”⁵⁷ It is not clear in what form Palmer accessed these “records,” whether he translated written texts handed over to him, or transcribed and then translated an oral account. Palmer says that he “lays no claim to be translating an ancient MS. The ‘Records’ rank as ‘oral testimony.’ This, however does not imply that they are not reliable, for the Sudanese memory is usually more accurate and reliable than Sudanese copyists.”⁵⁸ This suggests that Palmer accessed some Arabic notes written on paper by a Hausa mallam who drew upon an orally transmitted repertoire of historical knowledge and probably some Arabic manuscripts (possibly obtained from Tuareg sources) in his possession.

Palmer divided the Mallam’s account in three sections numbered I, II, and III. Section I corresponds roughly to Urvoy’s MS B, Palmer’s text LVII in *Sudanese Memoirs* (1928), and the initial paragraphs of Tardivet’s translation. Section III is a chronological list of sultans of Agadez, and corresponds roughly to Urvoy’s MS A, Palmer’s text LVIII (1928), and the bulk of Tardivet’s translation. Section II is very short (one paragraph) and corresponds to the sub-section of Urvoy’s MS B entitled “Origine des Sandals.”

In 1928 Palmer published a large compendium of translations of Arabic manuscripts intermixed with historical information, under the title *Sudanese Memoirs*. The third volume of this work includes an English translation of the Chronicles of the Sultanate of Aïr, based on an Arabic manuscript, Palmer noted, that had been “sent by the ruling family of Agadez to the present Sultan of Sokoto, and by him given to the Resident, Mr

⁵⁴ Hamani, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 421-430.

⁵⁵ Hamani, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 18-23.

⁵⁶ John Hunwick and R. Sean O’Fahey (eds.) *Arabic Literature of Africa: The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), volume II, 561-566.

⁵⁷ Palmer, “Notes on Some Asben records,” p. 388.

⁵⁸ Palmer, “Notes on Some Asben Records,” p. 388.

G. W. Webster, MBE.”⁵⁹ He arranged this material in two separate texts numbered LVII and LVIII, which correspond roughly to Urvoy’s MS B and MS A, respectively.

R. Tardivet provided another list of the sultans of Aïr, published in 1928. He consulted a set of Arabic manuscripts that belonged to “*mon ami, le Sultan de l’Aïr, Oumarou*”⁶⁰ (son of Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy) and had one manuscript translated by the district interpreter, a man from Agadez called Adam, and re-translated by the colonial interpreter Kouradou Kamara.⁶¹ This text mixes information similar to that provided in Urvoy’s MSS A and B and in Palmer’s two publications.

The longest and most detailed publication is Yves Urvoy’s article “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” published in 1934. Urvoy translated ten manuscripts, designated A to J and preceded by an introduction in which he summarized the history of the region and provided some information on the manuscripts and his translation thereof. Text A is a “list of the sultans of Agadez” from Yunus (1405) to Oumarou (1923).⁶² Text B describes the respective origins of the Sultanate of Aïr, the Sandal Tuareg, and the Sultanate of Ader. Text C contains an account of the origin of the Sultanate of Bornu. Text D is a list of the sultans of Gobir. Text E provides a concise chronology of events in the Aïr region between 1683 and 1771. Text F continues this chronological history from 1788 to 1890. Text G is a short list of the female apical ancestresses of the different tribes of the Kel Ewey Tuareg. Text H is another chronological list of events occurring in the Aïr region from 1683 to 1829, continued in Manuscript I from 1816 to 1869. Finally, Text J is the “Diary of Abubakar son of Attaher-Tachi,” which presents in an autobiographical style a mix of political, environmental, and personal events that occurred in the lifetime of the author between his birth in 1657 and 1699. I could not identify any data on the history of this manuscript.⁶³

H. T. Norris provided an English translation of “the diary of Abu Bakr b. Al-Tahir Tashi.” Norris consulted a copy in the possession of the Sultan of Agadez, which, he noted, did “not seem to be identical with the copy previously translated [i.e. Urvoy’s copy], here and there *incorrect dates* are given. Yet, *there is no mistaking its originality* [emphasis added]. An exciting period in the history of Agadez is disclosed.”⁶⁴ Regrettably, however, in spite of – or perhaps due to – his enthusiasm, Norris does not tell us why he chose to characterize this text as “unmistakably original,” nor on which basis some “dates” (which dates?) in one or the other copy (which one?) should be deemed “incorrect.” According to Abdullahi Augi, “the chronicle pertaining to the memoirs of Muhammad Attahit [sic] Tashi (b. 1657), which is called manuscript J in Urvoy’s translation, was certainly compiled by the author, i.e. in the 17th century.” Like Norris, however, Augi omits to tell us whence he derives such certainty.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Vol. 3, 50.

⁶⁰ Oumarou, son of the Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy, was enthroned in the place of his deposed father in November 1919. He reigned until 1960. See Aboubacar Adamou, *Agadez et sa région: contribution à l’étude du Sahel et du Sahara nigériens* (Paris: Copédith, 1979), 101.

⁶¹ Tardivet, “Les sultans de l’Aïr,” 689.

⁶² Unless otherwise stated, all dates in this article refer to the Christian calendar.

⁶³ Hamani does not provide information on the manuscript itself, other than its classification at the IRSH archives (ms XIII, cote IRSH no. 47), *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 22.

⁶⁴ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 77, my italics.

⁶⁵ Augi, *The Gobir Factor*, xxxiii.

In contrast to the better-known Agadez Chronicles, the Y Tarichi is cited exclusively in the specialist historiography of Ader. It is a text copied and part-written in 1907 (possibly on the basis of older manuscripts), obtained by Captain Laforgue in his second trip to Agadez in September–October 1907. Captain Laforgue transmitted it to Lieutenant Peignol, who was stationed in Ader near the Lissawan canton chief.⁶⁶ The Y Tarichi illustrates the role played by the “supporting tribes,” in particular the Lissawan, in the seventeenth-century politics of Aïr and Ader. According to Lieutenant André Maurice Peignol, who included a typed French translation of the Y Tarichi as an appendix to his Monograph of the Cercle (District) of Tahoua, Laforgue

had the idea of making Malam Zubrina, cleric of the Ahmet Taza Annar [Amattaza Ennour] copy the documents concerning the history of Ader, provided by Amadou Ben Detchoukou in the annals “Y Tarichi” [*consignés par Ahmadou Ben Detchoukou dans les annales “Y Tarichi.”*] I was charged to analyze them, but I realized immediately that a complete translation would be much more engaging. It would be a pity to shun a text so pleasantly naïf under the childish pretext of presenting a serious study with a more or less correct and precise style: the translation of the Y Tarichi as it was dictated to me by the interpreter is therefore in the appendix of this monograph.⁶⁷

In his 1947 study of the Lissawan, the administrator Souchet further explains that the Y Tarichi consists of copies of an Arabic text composed in Agadez by Malam Ahmadou Ben Detchoukou, cleric at the service of the Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy, and copied by Malam Djibrina, cleric at the service of the Lissawan chief Ennour.⁶⁸ Peignol’s monograph and the Y Tarichi in its appendix are both typewritten and now kept in the National Archives of Niger in Niamey.⁶⁹ The Y Tarichi describes events leading to the installation of a sultan in Agadez and the creation of a cadet “sultanate” in Ader. Some of the information provided in the Y Tarichi on the tribes supporting the sultan coincides with sections of Manuscript B of Urvoy’s “Chroniques” (which Urvoy considers “very ancient”) and sections of Palmer’s text LVII in *Sudanese Memoirs*. The Y Tarichi expands substantially the information provided in the section entitled “Origins of the Ader Sultanate” in Urvoy’s MS B. But, unlike the latter, it does not tell Ader’s history from the perspective of Birnin Ader and Illela, where the emir of Ader was installed up until colonial rule. It narrates Ader’s pre-colonial history following Agabba’s conquest from a Lissawan-centred perspective that emphasizes relations between the Lissawan, Kel Gress, Iwellemmeden, and Sokoto.

The table below summarizes schematically the themes covered by each of these five sources, showing areas of broad thematic overlap. Because Urvoy’s article is the longest and most detailed, I have placed it first to show thematic correspondences with the other texts. I only included in this table those themes in Urvoy’s texts A and B that are the most relevant to this article’s focus.

Urvoy 1934	Palmer 1910	Palmer 1928	Tardivet 1928	Y Tarichi
MS B, section “Origins of the Aïr Sultanate”	Section I	Text LVII		
First Tuareg tribes in Aïr	First Tuareg tribes in Aïr	First Tuareg tribes in Aïr	First Tuareg tribes in Aïr	Lissawan pre- Aïr

⁶⁶ Peignol, “Monographie du Cercle de Tahoua,” 18, note 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Souchet, “Les lissauan et le canton de Keita: esquisse d’une histoire de l’Ader,” 1947, ANN 17.1.9, 8.

⁶⁹ Peignol, “Monographie du Cercle de Tahoua,” Nov. 1907, ANN 17.1.4.

Identification and installation of sultan List of tribes supporting sultan Legal question about collection of horses as tribute	Identification and installation of sultan List of tribes supporting sultan	Identification and installation of sultan List of tribes supporting sultan Legal question about collection of horses as tribute	Identification and installation of sultan	[Lissawan's support for sultan (with other supporting tribes)]
MS B, section Origin of Sandal Tribes Origin of the Sandal	Section II Origin of the Sandal	Text LVII Origin of the Sandal		
MS B, section Origin of the Sultanate of Ader Agabba conquers Ader with the support of Lissawan (3 sub-groups) & Tawantakat Chronological list of Ader sultans in Birmin Ader and Illela				Agabba conquers Ader with the support of Lissawan (3 sub-groups) & Tawantakat [Pre-colonial history of Ader following installation of sultan and establishment of Lissawan as electors]
MS A Chronological list of sultans of Aïr and main events	Palmer 1910 Section III Chronological list of sultans of Aïr and main events	Text LVIII Chronological list of sultans of Aïr and main events	Chronological list of sultans of Aïr and main events	

The thematic overlap between various versions of the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi is not precise. Although the same theme may be covered in multiple texts, the names or numbers of tribes mentioned or the details of particular events often differ across versions. The question addressed here is not whether it might be possible to establish which version is closest to a hypothetical “original” or “true” source, for there is no such thing. The question is what explains the differences between versions.

Let us examine four main orders of difference that can be grouped as follows: (1) acknowledgement of sources; (2) number and names of Tuareg groups; (3) identity of the first sultan; (4) the Sultanate of Ader.

(1) Acknowledgement of sources

In Palmer's “Notes on Some Asben Records” (1910), Section I cites a certain Ibn Assafarani (otherwise unknown)⁷⁰ as the authority from whom the Mallam's information is derived. By contrast, Section III – the chronology of Aïr sultans – begins by stating that it is “a chronology of the chiefs of Asben and their wars according to Abu Tali ‘of the house of Annaju, Sherifs, who built the mosque at Abzen.’”⁷¹ Hamani states that this attribution did not figure in the Arabic manuscript that he consulted, but identifies Annaju as “Abu Tali, a descendant of the Imam Al-Najīb ... who was the first Imam of the great mosque of Agadez.”⁷² None of the other published versions of the Agadez Chronicles acknowledge the source or authority of their information. However,

⁷⁰ Hunwick refers to Assafarani as “unidentifiable,” see Hunwick and O’Fahey, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. II, 563.

⁷¹ Palmer, “Notes on Some Asben Records,” 391.

⁷² Hamani, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 20; cf. Hunwick and O’Fahey, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. II, 562, citing Hamani.

in his book *The Tuaregs*, published in 1976, Norris states that the Aïr history of the origin of the sultanate

is derived from a text, now lost, written by one of the Shaykhs of the Aïr village of Jikat, al-Mukhtār b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jikatī. His history is not particularly old. Urvoy dates the bulk of its content to the seventeenth century, incorporating matter from other sources perhaps a century earlier.⁷³

In a footnote Norris cites the passage in Urvoy’s text where this seventeenth-century dating is suggested (without explanation), but he omits to explain whence he derived the information about al-Mukhtār b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jikatī’s authorship. In a later passage of *The Tuaregs* Norris notes that “there is no certainty that the manuscript ends in this fashion in the original book of al-Mukhtār b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jikatī, although the copyist specifically claims to have quoted the original.”⁷⁴ From this it can be conjectured that Norris, who analyzed manuscripts of the Agadez Chronicles in possession of the Sultan of Agadez, found a reference to al-Mukhtār b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jikatī in a copy that he consulted in Agadez. Djibo Hamani argues that al-Mukhtār (the author) was the son of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jikatī, a companion of the Sufi shaykh Sīdī Maḥmūd al-Baghdādī, founder of the Maḥmūdiyya branch of the Khalwatiyya. This attribution, if confirmed, would imply that this work was first composed in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁷⁵ However, none of the published translations mentions al-Jikatī, and Harris and Hamani do not specify which manuscripts contain this reference, or where they found this information.

(2) Number and names of Tuareg groups

In Palmer’s 1910 article the Tuareg Itesan (Iteseyen), and no other groups, figure as the first supporters of the sultanate in Aïr.⁷⁶ This version states that the establishment of a Tuareg sultanate in Aïr replaced a previous arrangement whereby the Gobirawa ruled over this region in association with “Abalkoran” clerics. War with incoming Tuareg groups forced the Gobirawa to move to “Hausaland,” while the Iberkoreen (“Abalkoran”) went westwards, to the land of the Iwellemeden (“Auelimmiden”).⁷⁷ The sultan, with the Itesan and the Kel Ewey (also mentioned), remained in Agadez. Tardivet’s translation, too, mentions only the Itesan and the “Magadeziens (confidants and servants of the sultan)” as supporters of the first sultan. In both these sources the Itesan are responsible for bringing the sultan to Aïr from Stamboul (Palmer 1910) or Constantinople (Tardivet) and, after a series of displacements in Aïr, for building the sultan’s palace and mosque at Agadez.

⁷³ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 51.

⁷⁴ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 60.

⁷⁵ Hamani, *Au carrefour du Soudan et de la Berberie*, 18; cf. Hunwick and O’Fahey, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Vol. II, 563, citing Hamani. On Sīdī Maḥmūd, see H. T. Norris, “‘A la recherche de Sidi Mahmud al-Baghdadi....’ The *silsila* of the Mahmudiyya tariqa in the ‘Qudwa’ of Shaykh (Abu’l-‘Abbas) Ahmad al-Sadiq b. al-Shaykh Uways al-Lamtuni,” *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* iii, 128-158; and H. T. Norris, *Sufi Mystics of the Niger Desert: Sīdī Maḥmūd and the Hermits of Aïr* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

⁷⁶ According to Urvoy, the Sandal – “the most ancient of the Tuareg tribes to have come to Aïr” – changed their name into Itesan “at an early stage,” Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” p. 150. Hunwick specifies that “It was at the beginning of the fifteenth century that the Arumbulu, or supreme chief, of the Itesan confederation, took the initiative of seeking out a neutral figure who could be ruler, or rather arbiter of the Tuareg of Aïr [*sic*].” Hunwick, “Songhay, Borno, and Hausaland,” 281.

⁷⁷ Palmer, “Notes on Some Asben records,” 390.

Unlike Palmer's 1910 article and Tardivet's text, both Urvoy's "Chroniques" and Palmer's *Sudanese Memoirs* mention two (not one) sets of tribes, which allegedly supported the Agadez Sultanate in its early stages.⁷⁸ In these texts the Lissawan, Iberkoreen, Imiskikian, and Inoussoufan appear to have played prominent roles in the early history of the region and the establishment of the Sultanate of Agadez. The same information is provided in the Y Tarichi, which describes the Lissawan's role as supporters of the first sultans and their subsequent establishment as electors of the Sultan of Ader.

Who are the two sets of tribes mentioned in Urvoy's MS B and Palmer's text LVII? The first set of tribes of the Sandal group figure as "Itissines, Ijadaranines, Iza'aranes, and Ifadalenes" in Urvoy and "Ita-se-angh, Jadanar-angh, Izarar-angh, and Fede-angh" in Palmer 1928 – in effect, the two authors use different spellings of the same names. This first group of tribes is said to have come to Aïr from Awjilah⁷⁹ and to have chased away the black populations that lived there before them. Initially, according to MS B, these tribes lived in Aïr without a designated overarching ruler. Then, they decided to look for a sultan. They found him in the country of "A'arem-Çattafane" (Urvoy) or "Agrim Sotafan (city of the blacks or black city)" (Palmer 1928). They installed his residence in Tadeliza, but the rocky soil there was hard for the pack oxen that carried millet and provisions from the southern markets, and they moved the sultanate to Tinchamane ("Tenchamane"). In Tinchamane a second group of four tribes – "Lissaouanes, Balkoraïs, Amiskikines, and Amoussoufanés" in Urvoy; "Al-Suwan (Alis-Su-Wan), Ibal-Karan (Ibal-Koran), Imiskikin, and Imissufan" in Palmer – built a fortified palace for the sultan, and became his closest supporters. Again, Urvoy's and Palmer's versions have different spellings of the same tribal names. Both texts sometimes mention "five tribes," but only list four names for each of the two groups.

The connection between the two sets of tribes, the first group from Awjilah and the second group, which supports the sultan, is not clear, and none of the texts that refer to two sets of tribes attempts to explain it. Norris simplifies the problem and assumes that the two groups reflect two waves of migrations by different tribes into the Aïr region: "a federation of clans from Awjila comprising Sandal (including Itisan), Ifadalen, Ijadaranen, Izagharen. To these were joined Ilisawen, Barkurey, Imiskikian, Inussufen (and later Igdalen of In Gall)."⁸⁰ But, as mentioned above, the ethnonyms of the second set of tribes are not found in the same form in pre-colonial sources for the history of Aïr. Hence, Norris's simplification does not consider the possibility that the second

⁷⁸ Urvoy, "Les Chroniques d'Agadès," 154 ff. ; Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 46-48.

⁷⁹ Awjilah is an oasis in the Libyan north-eastern desert. In the twelfth century, al-Idrīsī noted that from Awjilah "one may go to many of the lands of the Sudan, such as the land of Kawar and the land of Kawkaw. Awjilah stands at the road-head of the route, and there are many travelers both coming and going," Abū 'abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Idrīsī, "Kitāb nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq," in: Nehemia Levtzion and J. F. P. Hopkins (eds.) *Corpus of Early Sources for West African History* (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), 104-131, 129. Al-Dimashqī (1256-1327 CE) tells us that, adjacent to Ghadames, in the region of Awjilah "dwell a tribe of the Lamta, who resemble most the Berbers and the Sudan," Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Dimashqī, "Kitāb nukhbat al-dahr fī 'ajā'ib al-barr wa-al-baḥr," in: Nehemia Levtzion and J. F. P. Hopkins (eds.) *Corpus of Early Sources for West African History* (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), 204-214, 210. The oasis of Ghat, from where a section of the Lissawan originated, is on the route linking Awjila to Agadez and other sites of the Sudan.

⁸⁰ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 13.

group of tribes had been inserted in these manuscripts in the twentieth century and possibly did not (under these names) participate in the events of the early sultanate.

The general historical section of Bello's *Infāq al-maysūr* mentions five tribes from Awjilah: "Amakeetan, Tamkak, Sendal, Agdalar, and Ajdaraneen,"⁸¹ whose names do not correspond exactly to those of the two groups of tribes in the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi. Two of the five names listed by Muḥammad Bello are the same as two of the first set of tribes in Urvoy and Palmer's versions, namely the Sandal and, possibly, the "Ajdaraneen" (Bello) / "Ijadaranines" (Urvoy) / "Jadanar-angh" (Palmer 1928). They are said to have chased the Gobirawa away from Aïr and to have established the political arrangement described in the Agadez Chronicles. The omission of reference to the second group of tribes, who at the time of Bello were probably already based in Ader, could not have been based on ignorance about Ader's society, because Muḥammad Bello's father, Sheikh Usman dan Fodio (Arabic Uthmān ibn Fūdī), was born in southern Ader, at Maratta near Galma, in today's administrative department of Madawa in the Republic of Niger.⁸² If Muḥammad Bello deliberately chose not to mention Ader-based groups, it was because he did not deem them sufficiently significant to be recorded amongst the main political rulers of the time.

(3) *Identity of the first sultan*

In the Urvoy and Palmer versions of the Chronicles, the delegation found the sultan in the country of "A'arem-Çattafane" (Urvoy) or "Agrim Sotafan (city of the blacks or black city)" (Palmer 1928), conventionally translated "country/city of blacks."⁸³ These remarks echo earlier references to "Sattafan" that have been discussed in the previous section. A widespread oral tradition argues that the first sultan was the son of a slave concubine of the Sultan of Istanbul (Stamboul). According to this story, a delegation of Tuareg men from Agadez went to Istanbul to ask the sultan to send one of his sons back with them to act as ruler and arbitrator amongst the Tuareg of Aïr.⁸⁴ Contacts between Borno, Tripoli, and Istanbul are attested in the second half of the sixteenth century, although to my knowledge there is no independent evidence, such as correspondence or archaeological records, demonstrating direct links between Agadez and Istanbul.⁸⁵ The current state of knowledge does not allow us to establish when this tradition would have become widespread.

(d) *The "Sultanate of Ader"*

The section of Urvoy's Manuscript B entitled "Origin of the Sultanate of Ader" tells how, at the end of the seventeenth century, a junior branch of the Sultanate of Agadez

⁸¹ Muhammad Bello, "Infāq al-Maisur" (ed. Clapperton 1926), 160-163.

⁸² Fathi el-Masri, "The life of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio before the Jihad," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* II-4 (December 1963), 435-448, 435; in fact, Maratta, which I visited in May 2010, is near Galma, in today's Department of Madaoua, region of Tahoua, and not Galmi (which is, however, not distant). Also note that Abdullahi dan Fodio, brother of the Shehu, refers to "Thanbu al-Maratti" as one of his relatives, Abdullahi dan Fodio, "īdā' al-nusūkh man akhadhtu ānhu min al-shuyūkh," translated and edited by Mervyn Hiskett in "Material Relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before Their Jihad," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 19-3 (1957), 550-578, 568.

⁸³ Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Vol. III, 46.

⁸⁴ For a discussion of this tradition, see Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 70-71.

⁸⁵ B. G. Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzān: Notes on the political history of a Trade Route," *The Journal of African History* 10-1 (1969), 15-27, 22.

established its rule over Ader following wars led by Agabba b. Muḥammad al-Mubārak, son of the Sultan of Agadez. Agabba, according to this text, entrusted the country's administration to three Lissawan sections headed by chiefs whose titles were Amattokes, Amattaza, and Alamtey, and who were accompanied by the tribe of the Tawantakat.

Origin of the Sultanate of Ader: Mohammed-el-Mobareck [ruled] at the time when [the Kel Aïr] took the land of Ader away from its kings of the race of Kebbi. He gave it to his son, Sultan Agabba. He sent his son from Abzin (Aïr) to war against Ader. [The son] left with the tribe of the Lissauanes, the group of the Amattoukiès, the group of the Amataza, the group of the Alamtey, and the tribe of the Tawantakat.⁸⁶

Francis Nicolas, who carried out extensive field-based research in Ader and Aïr in the 1920s–1940s, provides the following explanation: “[T]he Lissawan and Kel Ader were suzerain groups in the Black sedentary territory of Keita (in today’s Cercle of Tahoua), which they conquered as part of the forces led by the chief Agabba, son of the Sultan, before they themselves became vassals of the immigrants Iwellemmeden. The Lissawan Chiefs were: the Amet-Tesa (or ‘first amongst the Itesan’), Amet-Tunkies (first of the Tawantakat) and Elemtey (first of the Illemteyen).”⁸⁷ Hence, Nicolas suggests that the three Lissawan chiefly sections originated from altogether different Tuareg groups. This begs the question of why and how, if at all, these separate sections decided to join together and create a new group labelled “Lissawan.”

Rennell of Rodd discusses separately the Alamtey (“Ilemtin”), and the Lissawan (“Kel T’ilimsawin” or “Kel Telamse”). Of the latter, he says that they are a sub-group of the Itesan, and that their name derives from the name of a village near the Auderas Valley (north of Agades in the Massif of Air).⁸⁸ I am grateful to Dr Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias for his suggestion that the ethnonyms “Kel T’ilimsawin” or “Kel Telamse” could derive respectively from “Tīlemsī” and “Telāmse,” the former being the Moorish/Saharan Arabic form, and the latter the Tamasheq form, of the same name “given to valleys rich in vegetation, in which water only runs immediately after the rains.”⁸⁹ It is possible, then, that the distinct Tuareg groups that at some moment settled in the “tīlemsī” (or telāmse) of Keita in Ader decided to call themselves collectively “those of the tīlemsī.” One or more sub-groups amongst them originated from a similar environment near Auderas. Another sub-group, the Alamtey or Illemteyen, came from the village of Albarka near Ghat in today’s Libya (possibly via Auderas).⁹⁰

This is how the Y Tarichi explains their role in the history of the Sultanate of Agadez:

A long time ago the Lissawan lived in the village of Tadeliza to the east of Tripoli; and the pack oxen went to the country of Kano to bring back millet. But the rocks of Tadeliza are hard and the animals’ legs suffered [*les animaux ont mal aux pieds*]. This is why the Lissawan abandoned Tadeliza and moved southwards. They saw the Arab well

⁸⁶ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 156; see also Y-Tarihi; M. A. Landeroin, “Notice historique,” in: *Documents scientifiques de la mission Tilho, 1906–1909* (Paris: Ministère des Colonies, 1909), 309–552, 483–491; Yves Urvoy, *Histoire des populations du Soudan Central, Colonie du Niger* (Paris: Larose, 1936), 156; Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 76.

⁸⁷ Francis Nicolas, *Contribution à l’étude des Twareg de l’Aïr* (Paris: Larose, 1950), 459–480, 463. This contrasts with Souchet’s finding that the Amattokies was chief of the Araman (Souchet, “Les lissauan,” 22).

⁸⁸ Rennell of Rodd, *People of the Veil*, 432.

⁸⁹ De Moraes Farias, e-mail dated 9 March 2011.

⁹⁰ Souchet, “Les lissauan.” On the Illemteyen [“Ilemtin”] Lissawan section in Ghat, see Henri Duveyrier, *Les Touareg du Nord* (Paris: Challamel Ainé, 1864), 367.

of [Tousama] where water is lifted using a wooden pole. And they stopped there. This happened 1,121 years after the Hegira. The four tribes are named: Lissaouanes, Balkorei, Immiskikien, Immuoussoufanés. But the Lissaouanes are the richest. They asked the sultan of the Malinke if they could build him a palace. Each tribe did one side. When the palace was built, the Lissawan erected the tower of the great mosque which never fell. Then, the great mosque was surrounded by a wall and each tribe built earthen houses. Another family called Ittesanes came from the north. They also worked and remained in Agadez.⁹¹

This appears to be an attempt to connect the Y Tarichi with the versions of the Agadez Chronicles that were circulated in 1907. “The four tribes” reappear, but only to highlight the primacy of the Lissawan, who had mandated the part-writing and/or part-copying of this document. Other sources that do not mention the Lissawan situate Agabba’s conquest of Ader toward the end of the seventeenth century, which corresponds roughly to Muḥammad Bello’s reference to Agabba’s victory against Kebbi in 1674 in the *Infāq al-Maysūr*.⁹² Although it is obvious that Agabba would not have acted alone, Muḥammad Bello’s text does not mention his supporters.

General remarks

The French administrators who collected these manuscripts were cautious about their usefulness in historical reconstruction. They acknowledged the biases that could have been introduced by the clerics who produced them at the service of local elites. Souchet qualified the Y Tarichi as “a Tarikh narrating the Lissawan saga, composed in Agadez by Malam Ahmadou Ben Detchoukou, marabout of Sultan Ibrahim, copied in 1907 by Malam Djibrina, marabout of the Lissawan chief Ennour, *with several major interpolations*. It is often difficult to discern in these writings real facts from legendary ones: *they are the work of chroniclers hired by masters* and not testimonies of objective historians.”⁹³

More recent historians, too, have noticed the problems raised by the Agadez corpus. It is not only that the role attributed to the “second set of tribes” is neither confirmed by other independent sources nor mentioned in the two published versions of the Chronicles (Tardivet’s “Sultans de l’Air” and Palmer’s “Notes on Some Absen records”) that were not accessed through official channels. It is also of concern that only recent copies of these manuscripts have ever been seen by scholars and researchers. Commenting on Urvoy’s “Chroniques,” John Hunwick noted in 1973 that “in no case has a facsimile of the Arabic versions of any of the above documents been published; nor yet have I been able to lay my hands on one.”⁹⁴ In 1995 he cautiously omitted to include Arabic manuscripts written by “modern Tuareg authors” from Niger in a publication on bibliographical tools for the study of Arabic sources for African history because he could not contextualize the information provided in these texts.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Y-Tarichi in Peignol, “Monographie du Cercle de Tahoua,” p. 33.

⁹² Muhammad Bello, *Infāq al-Maisuri* (ed. Arnett, 1922), 15. The version published in Clapperton 1826 does not give a date for this defeat. He states that the power of the dynasty of Kabi “was only destroyed when Sultan Mohammed Ebn Sharooma of Ghoobeér, Agabba Ebn Mohamed el-Mobarek, Sultan of Aheer, and the Prince of Zanfarah, allied together and marched against them, taking possession of their dominions” Muhammad Bello, *Infāq al-maisur* (ed. Clapperton, 1826), 164.

⁹³ M. Souchet, “Les lissaouan,” 8. My italics.

⁹⁴ John Hunwick, “The Dynastic Chronologies of the Central Sudan in the Sixteenth Century: Some Reinterpretations,” *Kano Studies* 1 (1973), 35–56, 36.

⁹⁵ “Professor Harry Norris kindly passed on to me some fragmentary manuscript material concerning modern Tuareg authors who have written in Arabic, but this could not be contextualized, and in the end I reluctantly omitted it [from bibliographical tools on the Arabic literature of Africa].” Hunwick and O’Fahey, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, xii.

But not all historians of the northern Central Sahel have been as cautious as Hunwick. H. T. Norris defined the Chronicles as “not a history of the Sultanate of Agadez but a romance of the Tuareg tribes.”⁹⁶ Djibo Hamani argued that the Y Tarichi “while inspired by the information contained in earlier sources, relies heavily on the Lissawan’s oral traditions, sometimes in spite of historical truth.”⁹⁷ Yet both Norris and Hamani based their historical reconstructions of the history of Agadez and Ader precisely on these sources without considering the circumstances of their production and circulation.

Production and circulation of the manuscripts: the positions of the Sultans of Agadez and Sokoto

To make sense of the differences across versions of these texts and attempt to establish which versions are most reliable for the purpose of historical reconstruction, it is necessary to consider how the copies of the manuscripts that were eventually published had been circulated in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Urvoy obtained his version of the “Chroniques d’Agadès” from Sultan Oumarou of Agadez, who according to him provided a “very clean copy” made by clerics at his court. We know that the documents held by Sultan Oumarou had been copied *and updated* in 1907 under Sultan Ibrahim’s power:

Almost all [of these chronicles] appear to have been *copied and, when appropriate, updated in 1907* during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim-ed-Dasouqy [*Presque tous semblent avoir été recopiés et mis au besoin à jour en 1907 sous le règne du sultan Ibrahim-ed-Dasouqy*]. The latter, exiled from Aïr and installed a few years ago near Konni, where we created a small chiefdom for him, had been enthroned by us on 1 August 1907 in Agadez, at the place of Osman. He must have had all the historical manuscripts available in Agadez properly copied and updated in order to be able to demonstrate to the French – if need be – his chiefly credentials and the glories of his dynasty.⁹⁸

Urvoy goes on to say that the section entitled “Origin of the Sultanate of Ader” was redacted (*rédigée*) in 1907.⁹⁹ In this same year Lieutenant Peignol obtained the Y Tarichi on the history of the Lissawan, the Tuareg group which in 1900 was placed at the head of the newly created district of Tamaské (later renamed Keita) in north-eastern Ader. As has been mentioned, the two texts on the Sultanate of Aïr (numbered LVII and LVIII, respectively) published in Palmer’s *Sudanese Memoirs* “are translated from two manuscripts sent by the ruling family of Agadez to the present Sultan of Sokoto, and by him given to the Resident, Mr. G. W. Webster, MBE.”¹⁰⁰ The Sultan of Agadez who transmitted the documents to the Sultan of Sokoto was almost certainly Sultan Ibrahim. Palmer’s Document LVII, coming from the same source as the texts translated in Urvoy’s “Chroniques d’Agadès,” refers to both sets of tribes and cites the same names as those found in Urvoy’s copy.

Urvoy did not attempt to clarify the possibly common derivation of his Manuscripts A and B and texts LVII and LVIII published by Palmer in *Sudanese Memoirs*. He stated simply that Manuscript A is “surely authentic and at all times multiple copies of it must

⁹⁶ Norris, *The Tuaregs*, 51.

⁹⁷ Hamani, *L’Aïr précolonial*, 16.

⁹⁸ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 145.

⁹⁹ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 146.

¹⁰⁰ Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 50.

have existed. The sultans had and have the habit to share it easily in order to demonstrate the antiquity of their lineage. In particular, some copies of it existed amongst the southern Hausa sultans. One, which was in Sokoto, has already been translated in English by M. Palmer.”¹⁰¹ A few paragraphs below this, Urvoy reiterated that “Manuscript A and the first part of Manuscript B are already known. A translation was published in 1909 in the *Journal of African Society* based on a copy found in Katsina [this is Palmer’s “Notes on Some Asben records”]. A second, better one [was published] by Sir H. R. Palmer based on copies held by the Emir of Sokoto and published in the author’s *Sudanese Memoirs*”¹⁰² Urvoy then compared Palmer’s 1928 text and his Manuscript A and highlighted a few minor differences (mainly in the dates), explaining where he had adopted variants of names from Palmer’s version and where he had followed his copy of Manuscript A.¹⁰³

Urvoy seems to have imagined that the Sokoto version of the manuscript had circulated in Sokoto for an indeterminate number of years, possibly decades, and that it was one in a set of copies that the Agadez sultans recurrently circulated like pamphlets for propagandistic purposes. But Palmer’s information, while very general, suggests a more focused process, through which this particular manuscript had been “sent by the ruling family of Agadez to the present Sultan of Sokoto, and by him given to the Resident, Mr. G. W. Webster, M.B.E.”¹⁰⁴ Palmer’s word “sent” suggests that this manuscript had been dispatched from Agadez by a sultan residing there. However, in 1907 Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy was in fact residing in Sokoto, having been driven out of his sultanate by Mohamed El Baqary, who was reclaiming a position usurped just a few years earlier by Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy. Following these turbulent events and having lost the sultanate to his old foe, Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy sought refuge in Sokoto. This is where the French administration found him in August 1907 and brought him back to Agadez to reign as Sultan.¹⁰⁵ Shortly afterwards, Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy was deposed by the French and replaced with the son of Mohamed El Baqary, Abd-Er-Rahim Tagama – the Sultan Tagama who participated in the anti-colonial revolt of 1916–17.¹⁰⁶

After the brutal suppression of the revolt, Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy was reinstated as Sultan. In 1918 Sultan Ibrahim publicly summoned the people of Agadez and forbade them to provide information to Europeans. He “systematically forbade all natives to visit the French Post without passing through him and receiving orders on what they should say or do.”¹⁰⁷ The Sultan was arrested on 10 August 1919 for “disloyal behaviour.” He was provisionally liberated from prison but deposed in November 1919 for “incapacity” and replaced with his son Oumarou, who reigned until 1960.

It is possible that in 1907 Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy could have handed over a copy of some of the Agadez manuscripts (A and B) to the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Attahiru II, in Sokoto: these manuscripts were later made available to the Resident Mr Webster

¹⁰¹ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 146.

¹⁰² Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 147.

¹⁰³ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 148.

¹⁰⁴ Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, 50, my italics.

¹⁰⁵ Adamu, *Agadez*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ Adamu, *Agadez*, 84-101; cf. Finn Fuglestad, “Révolte et mort de Tegama, Sultan d’Agades (1920),” *Notes Africaines* 152 (Octobre 1976), 96-101.

¹⁰⁷ Rapport du Capitaine Vitali, commandant le Cercle d’Agadez, sur le Sultan Ibrahim, 23 Sept. 1919, SHD-BAT GR5 H209.

and were eventually published by Palmer in *Sudanese Memoirs*. Always in 1907 Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy left Sokoto and returned to Agadez, where copies of the manuscripts were made available to the French in that same year. These manuscripts would be published by Urvoy as “Agadez Chronicles.” The second set of tribes appears in both these versions of the Agadez Chronicles (and not in other versions). The second set of tribes also appears, with the same names, in the Y Tarichi and the “Origin of the Sultanate of Ader” (in Urvoy’s Manuscript B), both created and circulated in 1907. In short, the second set of tribes only appears in the “1907 versions” of the Air and Ader chronicles, which were – as mentioned above – “copied and, when appropriate, updated in 1907 during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim-ed-Dasouqy.”¹⁰⁸

Palmer’s mention of “the present Sultan of Sokoto” in his 1928 publication is confusing. Sokoto’s Sultan in 1928 would have been Muhammadu Tambari (1924–1931).¹⁰⁹ Sultan Muhammadu Tambari was deposed by the British in 1931 and forced to abdicate. He absconded from house arrest on 6 February 1931 and moved to the French Colony of Niger, where he remained until 1932.¹¹⁰ The Sultan of Agadez at the time of Muhammadu Tambari’s stay in Niger was Oumarou, son of Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy. Hence, the copy of Manuscript A translated by Palmer could either have been given to Sultan Muhammadu Attahiru II by Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy during his sojourn in Sokoto in 1907, or else have been sent to Sokoto’s Sultan Muhammadu Tambari by Agadez’s Sultan Oumarou, son of Ibrahim, before 1928. Muhammadu Tambari’s stay in Niger in 1931–1932 suggests close relations with Niger’s Islamic elites of the time: the Sultan of Agadez and, further south, the Lissawan chiefs in Ader and the paramount chiefs of the Itesan and Kel Gress Tuareg in the Gobir area.

Sultan Muhammadu Attahiru II had witnessed the British occupation and faced a Mahdist revolt in 1906. He collaborated with the British in the revolt’s suppression.¹¹¹ Both he and his “guest” – Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy – were well aware of the military strength of the European invaders and had developed strategies to appear collaborative while possibly harbouring resentment toward the European administration.¹¹² It is not surprising that the Sultans of Air and Sokoto harboured ambivalent feelings toward Christian invaders, feelings that would not have changed one generation later. Their relationship with colonial authorities was complex, as they knew they owed their positions (and precarious safety) primarily to European support. In northern Nigeria, both Sultan Muhammadu Attahiru II and Sultan Muhammadu Tambari had been

¹⁰⁸ Urvoy, ‘Les Chroniques d'Agadès,’ 145.

¹⁰⁹ The British colonial authorities unilaterally appointed Sultan Muhammadu Tambari in 1924, against the will of the traditional electors, and deposed him in 1931 when fears of a Mahdist revival had waned and their policy toward the appointment of native rulers had changed, see Peter Tibenderana, “The Making and Unmaking of the Sultan of Sokoto Muhammadu Tambari, 1922-1931,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 9-1 (1977), 91-134.

¹¹⁰ Archives Nationales du Sénégal, ANS 11G28. See also Tibenderana, “The Making and Unmaking of the Sultan of Sokoto,” 131-134.

¹¹¹ See Rowland Aderemi Adeleye, “Mahdist Triumph and British Revenge in Northern Nigeria: Satiru 1906,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6-2 (1972), 193-214, 203; Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn, “Revolutionary Mahdism and Resistance to Colonial Rule in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1905–6,” *Journal of African History*, 31-2 (1990), 217-244, 224-225.

¹¹² It is worth noting that both sultans, however, owed their power to European support. In particular, Sultan Attahiru II faced violent resistance in the Caliphate by revolutionary Mahdists who sought to overthrow both the Fulani political elites who had collaborated with the British and colonial authorities, cf. Lovejoy and Hogendorn, “Revolutionary Mahdism,” 229.

appointed by the British administrators in disregard of the Fulani electorate's views.¹¹³ In Agadez, Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy and Sultan Oumarou faced similar predicaments. Like most native chiefs who had witnessed the fate of those who dared to resist European rule, they were anxious to convince colonial authorities of the legitimacy of their power and the sincerity of their loyalty to colonial government. Whatever their personal feelings toward the French invaders, they seem to have convinced administrators that it was in France's interest to support them. Lieutenant Jean, who was in Aïr in 1903–1904, argued in his study of the Tuareg of Aïr, completed in May 1907, that “the role of the Sultan of Aïr should be enhanced by us, his relations extended so that he could act as our agent and feel obliged to us.”¹¹⁴ It is surprising how little consideration post-colonial historians have given to these circumstances, which are the context in which the collection of manuscripts took place.

The text published by Palmer as “Notes on Some Asben Records” does not coincide with the “view from Agadez,” which was actively publicised by Sultan Ibrahim of Agadez in 1907 through the distribution of copies of the Chronicles to French and (via Sokoto) English colonial administrators. In his introduction to “Notes on Some Asben Records”, written before the version provided by Sultan Ibrahim became available, Palmer noted that “the jealousy with which such information [historical information in manuscripts on Tuareg history] is released by the Tuareg, and to some extent by the Sudanese, is well known. With regard to Asben, a recent French writer, Lieutenant Jean, states that he was informed that *all records had been burnt some years ago*,”¹¹⁵ that is, before the 1907 copies were provided through official channels.

Had manuscripts been destroyed to keep them from falling into the hands of European occupants? Or was the “fire” an initial excuse to avoid having to comply with French demands and to buy time during which extant Arabic manuscripts could be copied, and appropriate alterations introduced in the copies? As for the Y Tarichi, Urvoy tells us that the original manuscript written by “Mallam-ben-Detchoukou, marabout du sultan d'Agades” had “disappeared” (*a disparu*) in a Tuareg raid against Keita of 1917.¹¹⁶ No attention was paid to the curious circumstances in which manuscripts were first denied, and then circulated. Nor to the fact that the *internal* consistency that ran through the manuscripts circulated from Agadez was not supported by other available sources on the history of Agadez and Ader.

Colonial and post-colonial scholars lent unwarranted support to the versions of the Agadez Chronicles published by Urvoy in 1934 and the corresponding texts published by Palmer in *Sudanese Memoirs*, both of which mention two – not one – groups of Tuareg tribes; and both of which were congruent with the political arrangements that existed in the first decade of the 1900s. Yet such congruence should have triggered caution rather than confidence. The set of names contained in Urvoy's Chronicles is

¹¹³ Peter Tibenderana, “The Role of the British Administration in the Appointment of the Emirs of Northern Nigeria, 1901–1931: The Case of Sokoto Province,” *Journal of African History* 28-2 (1987), 231-257, 250-256.

¹¹⁴ Jean, *Les Touareg du Sud-Est* (Paris: Larose, 1909), 42.

¹¹⁵ Palmer, “Notes on Some Asben records,” 338, my italics.

¹¹⁶ Yves Urvoy, “Histoire des Oulliminden de l'Est,” *Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'AOF* 16-1 (1933), 66-97, 67. Urvoy refers to the raid on Keita of 14 February 1917, in which Afedandan, the Lissawan canton chief, was killed “by the men of Kaoen, Manit and Rhezi who came from the north with about 400 men armed with 17 rifles,” *Journal de renseignements de la Subdivision de Tahoua, 1912-1919*, ANN 17.8.9.

likely to be the most unstable element of the traditions pertaining to Aïr and Ader's pre-nineteenth-century history. Colonial researchers expressed awareness of the potential bias of these texts. They knew that these texts had first been denied, then made available by rulers anxious to prove their chiefly credentials. But they chose to ignore these facts. Doubts were raised only to be cast aside, and sources declared problematic continued to be used as foundations for doubtful reconstructions.

The inclusion of the second set of tribes in the 1907 versions: the position of the Lissawan

The absence of the second set of tribes from sources that became available before the French occupation of the Central Sudan suggests that these names might have been added to Palmer's text LVII and Urvoy's text B shortly before it reached French hands, together with other documents gathered in the same period and illustrating the history of the Lissawan and their allies and dependants (the Y Tarichi). At the arrival of the French the Lissawan were given the role of traditional chiefs of the Canton of Tamaske. Later the Tamaske area was rendered independent from the area of Keita, and the latter section of the original "Group of Tamaske" was renamed "Keita" and remained under Lissawan control to this day. The Agadez Chronicles legitimize Lissawan power in this region by linking it to the history of the foundation of the Sultanate of Agadez.

In the first years of the twentieth century, this version of history appealed to French colonialists, Agadez, and the Lissawan. I have not been able, yet, to establish what may have been the relationship between Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy and Amattaza Ennour in 1907. But it is clear that both chiefs sought to gain French confidence in order to avoid, for them and their people, colonial repression and violence.¹¹⁷ The Chronicles strengthened the credentials of the Agadez Sultan and of the Lissawan, who did not pose a threat to French interests, and omitted reference to the Tuareg confederations of the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg, who had ruled the region of Tamaske and Keita at the time of the French occupation and had mounted a strenuous resistance against France.

Amattaza Ennour allied himself with the French in 1900. As a result of this alliance, his power was considerably strengthened. The Lissawan were the first local chiefly group to sign a peace treaty with the French. As shown in the quotation below, this earned them the resentment of the chiefs of the Iwellemmeden Kel Denneg, first and foremost of Makhammad, paramount chief (*amenokal*) of the Kel Denneg, who refused to collaborate with France and conspired against French power until 1917:

The ruler of Tamaske is Ahmed Taza [sic], the only Tuareg chief who surrendered to us without fighting as soon as we arrived. Hence, we treated him with particular regard. He obviously took advantage of this by raiding extensively the Aoulliminden [sic], more or less disbanded. Recently, for fear that the surrender [of the Iwellemmeden] would have marked the end of his profits, he obstructed negotiations. Mohamat [sic] and he are not on good terms, and each claims that he shall have the best of the other, as soon as the French will have left the country.¹¹⁸

The French administration was in a highly precarious position in Ader in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Up until the bloody repression of 1917 they were unable to constrain the activities of the Kel Denneg resistance, which pillaged and raided continuously villages that used to fall in their area of power before French

¹¹⁷ See Jean, *Les Touareg du Sud-Est*, p. 56.

¹¹⁸ Charles Gouraud, *Zinder-Chad: souvenirs d'un Africain* (Paris: Plon, 1914), 70.

occupation. In this context, the French saw the Lissawan's collaboration as "the most important [submission] of all, that of the Amattaza Ennour, the sole hereditary chief of the region who, thanks to his authority and energy, was going to be a serious support to us."¹¹⁹

On 2 November 1901 the Convention of Tamaske, also known as "the Peace of Tamaske", was promulgated publicly.¹²⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Peroz, who commanded the French Third Military Territory, explained at a public meeting the norms regulating relations between Ader's Tuareg and Hausa groups and the French government. Most chiefs attended the meeting, except for Makhammad and the Iwellemeden. The privileged position of Amattaza was forcefully asserted. At the beginning of this speech, Peroz saluted "Amattaza, chief of the Lissawan: I gave him and all his children command of the country and the Asna villages of Tamaske, because he is the only Tuareg chief who came to us and understood that we brought the justice and peace of God."¹²¹ Peroz went on to greet the other chiefs, including Ouarzagane Tambari of the Kel Gress and the Asna. Then he spoke to Makhammad, who was not there to hear his warnings, and reminded him of the necessity of his submission and the requirement that he pay taxes to the French authorities and obey their orders.

In his early correspondence with French administrators, Makhammad attempted to undermine Amattaza's position and influence:

I had started to gather the goods you demanded, when a representative of Ennour, known by the name of Amattaza, arrived and instructed me: "If you do not send the goods to Amattaza, there shall be no peace between you and the French."¹²²

Our meeting has only been prevented by what I had heard before your arrival: that you depose chiefs and replace them with their subjects. I have seen that this is the case, because you elevated the humble Amattaza and made him chief of the villages, letting him take care of my own business. I cannot pay visit to him who raises my subjects above me, or makes me their equal. If what you say is true, that I am your subject, the chief of the country must make justice between the oppressor and the oppressed. Amattaza has kept my horse and my slaves, Arkilla and others. He took them from me because of you, and because Arkilla and the others were making war. And because of you I did not wage war against him. By God, get me back my horses, my slaves and everything that belongs to me which he has appropriated, because you repress the oppressors. Or if you prefer, do not interfere between us. ... As for Amattaza, all he tries to do is to create misunderstandings between us, because when his messenger ... went to see him and reported my words to him, he said: "Tell Makhammad that he will only have peace with the French if I allow that."¹²³

By 1907 Makhammad had died, and his succession was disputed between Ismaghil and Rhezi. In January 1907 the chiefs of various Iwellemmeden sections were summoned to the office of the Commandant de Cercle in front of the Amattaza of Tamaske¹²⁴ for the public announcement of Decision No. 122, which was an attempt to settle once and for all tensions within the Kel Denneg, and support the feeble authority

¹¹⁹ Roger Malfettes, "Monographie: Rapport d'Ensemble sur le Recensement du Canton de Calfou, Province de Tahoua," 1951, ANN 17.1.10

¹²⁰ "Convention réglant la situation des Touaregs et de l'Adar, arrêté no. 58 du 2 novembre 1901," signed by Colonel Peroz, ANN 17.1.2.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Makhammad to French Command, attached to Ouaoua's letter of 10 December 1901, ANN 7B1.

¹²³ Makhammad to Commandant Gouraud, 29 December 1901, ANN 7B1.

¹²⁴ The Lissawan chief Amattaza Ennour had moved his residence from Agouloum to Keita in 1905. However, the main administrative post was in Tamaske.

of Ismaghil, the French-designated chief. Until 1908 the Lissawan Amattaza ruled over a large region with the town of Tamaske as its main centre. But in 1908 this region, known as “Group of Tamaske,” was divided into three separate cantons: Tamaske, Laba, and Keita. Only the canton of Keita remained under Lissawan power, while Tamaske and Laba selected their own chiefs, who were seen as representatives of the Hausaphone Asna.¹²⁵

In 1907 Amattaza Ennour must have felt vulnerable, faced with the defection of Hausaphone groups that initially had supported him and were now seeking to achieve independence from him, and under the ongoing threat of Kel Denneg resentment that concretized tragically ten years later, during the 1917 revolt. On 14 February 1917 Keita was sacked and the Lissawan canton chief Afedandan was assassinated “by the men of Kaocen, Manit and Rhezi,”¹²⁶ some of whom were the last representatives of Kel Denneg resistance in Ader (including the same Rhezi mentioned in the paragraph above). These events prove unequivocally that Lissawan anxieties were well-founded: anxiety would have been intense in 1907, just before the partition of the canton that had been given to them in 1900. And this would have pushed the Lissawan, alongside other chiefs, to “update” the historical records so as to strengthen their position in the eyes of the French.

The Chronicles that were circulated in 1907 endorsed both the Lissawan’s claims to power and French support to the Lissawan. No one raised questions. As we have seen, French researchers knew – or suspected – that the texts of the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi had been circulated with the aim of advancing a specific agenda. Yet, if the French administration had good political reasons not to question the version of history contained in the documents they received from the chiefs they supported, it is perhaps more surprising that recent scholars have not been more inquisitive.

It seems likely that the main function of the Agadez Chronicles, whenever these texts were composed orally and put into writing, was to explain how political transformation from a less to a more centralized structure of rule came about. Subsequent revisions, such as the introduction of the specific names cited in the copies updated in 1907 and given to colonial administrators in the first decade of the twentieth century, accommodated the political concerns of the times.

Conclusion

Tampering with chronicles for political purposes was a recurrent activity that took place well beyond the Central Sahara and Sahel region discussed in this article. It reflected reconfigurations of interests occurring on the micro-scale of politics. Such tampering turned the Agadez Chronicles and Y Tarichi into polyvalent sources on Aïr’s distant and recent past.

While it is possible that some of the second group of tribes, under other ethnonyms, played important roles in the history of the Central Sahara and Sahel, the sources that we currently dispose of are too problematic to enable us to use the information they convey as evidence on the distant past of these groups. But, as has been suggested, a

¹²⁵ Nicolas, *Tamesna*, p. 87.

¹²⁶ “Journal de renseignements de la Subdivision de Tahoua, 1912–1919,” ANN 17.8.9.

close analysis of different versions of these sources sheds light on these groups' twentieth-century circumstances and the nature of their political relationship with other local elites and French administrators.

It has been suggested here that the versions of the Agadez Chronicles that were circulated by Sultan Ibrahim Ed Dasouqy (or his son Sultan Oumarou) were copied and revised in 1907 in collaboration with the Lissawan Amattaza Ennour and those close to him to produce *a written history that French colonialists would understand and use in a certain way*. We cannot conclude that their forebears did not live that particular – or any other – history. But we must acknowledge the problems raised by the chronicles: the history of these groups in relation to the origins of the Sultanate of Agadez and, later, the kingdom or emirate of Ader, must for now remain open questions. A comprehensive and critical analysis of sources on this region is needed to open up new coordinates for inquiry and correct what are likely to be erroneous interpretations in the regional historiography. This said, some tentative hypotheses can be advanced by way of conclusion.

We should think of the chronicles as composite texts, with some sections more likely than others to have been recurrently edited, updated, and amended. Whereas the names and number of “supporting tribes” are probably the most unstable aspects of the Agadez corpus, what has been treated as background information of no importance could provide insights into the social and economic arrangements of pre- and early-sultanate Air. For example, the emphasis on building a stable residence for the sultan and selecting a sultan who came from a *settled* village (*aghrem*) are not random narrative and lexical choices. In the sagas of a nomadic society, they signal rearrangements in the political organisation with consequences for relations with sedentary neighbours. Tuareg nomadic chiefs broadcasted their power by projecting the frequencies of their drums across vast spaces as they moved.¹²⁷ But the sultan's authority was broadcasted from a fixed location, based on an Islamic model of settled political hierarchy. What forces and which actors had induced such transformation? How was this transition perceived and experienced by different groups living in, or interacting with, Air?

Some of the main scholars who considered these issues focused a little too much on reconstructing the actual displacements of the Sultanate's “capital”, and too little on interpreting the significance of the inclusion of these details in the chronicles when they were composed. The discussion of displacements across Tadeliza, Tinchamane, and Agadez in the Chronicles emphasizes the movements of a sedentary ruler and supporting groups. Some scholars seem to have imagined a foreign sultan imported from abroad (“land of the Blacks”, Istanbul) and moved through ever-safer “capitals” by “supporting tribes”. Raymond Mauny argues that “we know that the sultanate was established in Air in 1405, with successive residences (*résidences*) in Assode, Tadeliza, Tin Chamane and finally Agadez. Agadez was therefore capital in the XV century; Tadeliza was [capital] in 1500 at the time of the first incursion of the Askia in Air narrated in the tarikh; the stay in Tin Chamane was short and Agades was capital before

¹²⁷ The notion of ‘broadcasting’ political power comes from Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: comparative lessons in authority and control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

1513.”¹²⁸ Henri Lhote identified and studied the ruins of Tadeliza.¹²⁹ Having interpreted “Tildza” in the *Tārīkh al-fattāsh* and *Ta’rīkh al-Sūdān* as referring to the Tadeliza of the Agadez Chronicles, Lhote suggested that the Sultan’s residence was moved from Tadeliza to Agadez between 1502 and 1513 after the defeat inflicted upon him by the Askia’s first attack of 1501. In Lhote’s view, the sultan and his supporters resided temporarily in “Tinchamane,” at the outskirts of Agadez, while a new palace and fortifications were built for him in Agadez. However, these efforts did not suffice to protect him against the Askia’s second expedition, which the Agadez Chronicles qualify as a “calamity.”¹³⁰ Mauny and Lhote’s considerations are surely important, but they overlook a prior question: what explains the establishment of a sedentary arbitrator amongst Tuareg chiefs in Air in the fifteenth century?

Al-‘Umarī’s mention of “three independent *white Muslim kings who are Berbers*,” ibn Baṭṭūṭah’s mention of a Sultan of Takedda and a “Sultan al-Karkari” in “Kahir” in the fourteenth century; and As-Suyuti’s letters to the King of Agadez and his brothers at the end of the fifteenth century suggest that before the fifteenth (or early sixteenth) century there may have been more than one ruler in the area. These rulers may not have had a fixed residence, but may have moved around several named locations within a specific region, across the year.¹³¹ This may refer to a period when local rulers came from the tribes which lived in the area and the arrangement of the “outsider (settled) arbitrator” had not yet been established.¹³² It is possible that Tuareg chiefs co-existed with other non-Tamasheq speaking chiefs in the same region. But by the time Leo Africanus was writing in the mid-sixteenth century Agadez had a sultan, whose power depended on the support “of the desert people”. The formation of a sultanate in Agadez suggests a process of political centralization and a new emphasis given to sedentary political structures arbitrating amongst principally nomadic elites.

James Webb showed that increasing climate aridity after the sixteenth century gave advantages to pastoralist nomadic societies over sedentary black African peoples who were forced to move southwards at once by the desert and by pastoral newcomers.¹³³ Charles Stewart suggested that the seventeenth century was a moment of political transformation stirred by conflicts and migrations across the entire southern Sahara.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Raymond Mauny, *Tableau Géographique de l’Ouest Africain au Moyen Age* (Dakar: IFAN, 1961), 141-142.

¹²⁹ Henri Lhote, “Découverte des ruines de Tadeliza, ancienne résidence des sultans de l’Air,” *Notes Africaines* 137 (1973a), 9-16.

¹³⁰ Urvoy, “Les Chroniques d’Agadès,” 152. Palmer’s version, in “Notes on some Asben records,” 392, has: “in their time the ‘Accursed Askia’ came, and ate up all the land of Agadez.”

¹³¹ What I am suggesting does not seem to coincide with the institution of peripathetic rulership described by Anne Haour, *Rulers, Warriors, Traders, Clerics: The Central Sahel and the North Sea, 800–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 64-66. In Haour’s model “the ruler’s physical presence was necessary to renew loyalties, collect taxes, punish rebels, and dispense law; out of sight, out of mind” (ibid., 65-66). I am describing a situation in which rulers were nomadic, see Benedetta Rossi, “Kinocracy: The Government of Mobility at the Desert’s Edge,” in: Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran (eds.) *Mobility Makes States: Migration and Power in Africa* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press), 223-256. See also Norris, *Tuaregs*, 49-51.

¹³² For a discussion of outsiders as rulers in West African history, see Anne Haour, *Outsiders and Strangers: An Archaeology of Liminality in West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹³³ James Webb, *Desert Frontier: Ecological and Economic Change along the Western Sahel, 1600-1850* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

¹³⁴ Charles Stewart, “Southern Saharan Scholarship and the Bilad al-Sudan,” *The Journal of African History* 17-1 (1976), 73-93, 77-78.

It is possible that the long-term changes analysed by Webb triggered progressive changes in the organization of movement, trade, and governance that led to the adoption of political structures modelled on Mamluk Egypt. Beyond the unstable specificity of names and identities, the Agadez Chronicles describe a rising number of Berber (“Tuareg”?) groups converging in the Aïr region and entering into conflict. Eventually, this situation was remedied through political centralization: the appointment of a settled sultan arbitrating amongst these groups. The potential influence of the Mamluk model is a hypothesis that deserves closer attention. We may hope that new evidence – in the form of archaeological records, written chronicles, correspondence, commercial records and legal documents – will be analyzed as part of a new wave of Saharan studies and will shed new light on these questions.¹³⁵

Any interpretation of Ader’s role – and of the role of what would become Ader-based groups – in this story must remain hopelessly impressionistic. But let us attempt to sketch a working hypothesis based on the information presented above. The Agadez Chronicles highlight the movements of allied Tuareg groups travelling with pack oxen for trading with Hausaland and early relations with Hausa-speaking groups (Gobirawa) in Aïr. Oral traditions collected in Ader, at the boundary between Aïr and Hausaland, highlight the early association of Tuareg and non-Tuareg groups travelling with oxen.¹³⁶ The Illemteyen, one of three elite sections of the group that later would become known as “Lissawan”, were a semi-sedentary group in the village of Al-barkat near Ghat in the Fezzan. Writing in the nineteenth century Duveyrier characterised Ghat’s Illemteyen as “*citadins*”, city dwellers living in towns of dried mud-bricks.¹³⁷ It may be possible that in Ghat, Agadez, and eventually Ader, the Illemteyen’s settled habits had enabled them to act as intermediaries between a settled sultanate, sedentary Hausaphone groups (including merchants who used pack oxen to trade with Hausaland), and Tamasheq-speaking groups with whom until recently they shared the same idiom.¹³⁸ Progressively, however, groups whose political and economic supremacy was associated with camel husbandry and, in the case of the Kel Gress, with trade based on the organization of camel caravans, came to the fore. Toward the mid-twentieth century the Lissawan of Keita adopted Hausa as their first language. Seen in a long-term perspective, this was yet another step in a slow process of distancing themselves from a nomadic ethos and lifestyle. The new context did not require building a residence for a sedentary sultan in Agadez, but establishing themselves as traditional chiefs of what colonial authorities classified as a “sedentary canton”. In these

¹³⁵ Ghislaine Lydon, “Saharan Oceans and Bridges: Barriers and Divides in Africa’s Historiographical Landscape,” *Journal of African History* 56-1 (2015), 3-22; Baz Lecocq, “Distant Shores: A Historiographic View on Trans-Saharan Space,” *Journal of African History* 56-1 (2015), 23-36.

¹³⁶ Benedetta Rossi, “Being and Becoming Hausa in Ader (Niger),” in Anne Haour and Benedetta Rossi (eds.) *Being and Becoming Hausa: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill), 113-140.

¹³⁷ Henri Duveyrier, *Les Touareg du Nord*, 367.

¹³⁸ For the presence and functions of oxen in North Africa in classical times, see Stéphane Gsell, *Histoire Ancienne de l’Afrique du Nord* (Paris: Hachette, 1920), Tome I, 100-128; H. Lhote, *A la Découverte des Fresques du Tassili* (Paris: Arthaud, 2006 [1958]); Nicolaisen, *Ecology and Culture*, 53. Xavier de Planhol, “Le boeuf Porteur dans le Proche-Orient et l’Afrique du Nord,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 12-3 (1969), 298-321. Rodd mentions that in Aïr “loaded oxen can march comfortably with water only every third day,” Rodd, *People of the Veil*, 203. Quoting Rodd, Bovill notes that a herdsman of Tanganyika to whom he had spoken could water his cattle no more than once in five days in dry season, and he had met a veterinary officer in Kenya who could get his unloaded herds “through eight successive waterless days,” E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener, 1999 [1958]), 16.

new circumstances some Lissawan reasoned that proving their earlier association (real or imagined) with the Agadez Sultanate would work to their advantage.

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Bio-sketch

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