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IS TASAWAQ A LANGUAGE ISLAND?

(Non-linguistic factors behind the creation and development of Tasawaq language, the extent of its maintenance and the putative Language Island concept)

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně a na základě uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Praze dne 19. 9. 2006

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1. Introduction

„Eine Sprachinsel ist eine durch verhinderte oder verzögerte sprachkulturelle Assimilation entstandene Sprachgemeinschaft, die - als Sprachminderheit von ihrem Hauptgebiet getrennt - durch eine sprachlich/ethnisch differente Mehrheitsgesellschaft umschlossen und/oder überdacht wird, und die sich von der Kontaktgesellschaft durch eine die Sonderheit motivierende soziopsychische Disposition abgrenzt bzw. von ihr ausgegrenzt wird.“ (Mattheier 1994: 334).

The above quotation represents one of the most elaborated definitions of '*Sprachinsel*' (Language Island). As the term itself suggests, Language Island refers to a small language unit, which is related to a larger unit, a so-called 'motherland', and is surrounded by a majority population speaking an unrelated language or languages. The nature of the relations and the resulting influence between the motherland and the Language Island on the one hand, and the relation between the Language Island and the surrounding population, on the other hand, are the main interests of Language Island research.

This research has been from the very beginning focused on describing the cultural characteristics of a splinter of German population above all in Central, Eastern, South-Eastern Europe (later on also in Australia, Southern and Northern America etc). In the early phases, the cultural makeup and development of each island was the main focus of the research. *"Echte Sprachinseln sind Siedlungen, die durch geschlossene Kolonisation eines Volkes auf Neuland inmitten fremden Volksgebietes entstanden sind"* (Kuhn 1934: 13). In later phases, language issues became more prevailing. Groups of German inhabitants were settling down in rural areas in larger numbers. They created villages, where the language of everyday communication was a variety of German. The standard German ('*Hochdeutsch*') was functioning as the medium of education, church ceremonies and published materials (newspapers, books etc.). Only the outside communication required certain knowledge of the surrounding majority language.¹

¹ As we will be able to see, the knowledge of German was sometimes fully sufficient and the knowledge of the surrounding language was not even required.

The Language Island research lost in importance with the rise of modern sociolinguistics. There were several reasons for that. First, the concept was discredited in the first half of the 20th century. It started with the World War I, continuing in the 30's in the field of ethnology. And the World War II experience led to the omission of the putative Language Island concept, although limited descriptive work continued. A research field, which was using notions like '*Deutschtum*', was not very much favoured. Second, a lot of the German Language Islands in Eastern Europe became to a certain degree extinct due to the expulsion of the German-speaking population. Third, and this is one of the suggestions of this paper, the knowledge of the German language was not very widely spread among native speakers of English, who played the major role in the emergence of modern sociolinguistics. Thus, the accessibility of the published works was limited.² The concept of Language Island came to be viewed as pre-sociolinguistic (Löffler 1987:387), and although of a great importance excluded from sociolinguistics and included as a "*Prüfstand für dialektologische Arbeitsprinzipien*" into (German) dialectology (Hutterer 1982: 178).

During the second half of the 20th century, there were several attempts to redefine and review the concept of Language Islands (Wiesinger 1980, 1983; Hutterer 1982; Berend & Mattheier 1994) because the need for theoretical and methodological basis for the Language Island Research was felt (Berend & Mattheier 1994: 7). The main reason for that was the new overall situation of the German Language Islands after the World War II. Changes already appeared in certain areas as soon as the World War I started. In Australia, a ban on publications in German, as well as on its usage in the education, was imposed in between 1914 and 1918. "*Apart from the negative stigma of the German language in the inter-war period, modernization, including new means of communication, reduced the isolation of the German settlements...*" (Clyne 1994: 108). Second, new sociolinguistic approaches and concepts had to be taken into account.

This was followed by a discussion on the applicability of this concept on non-European languages, particularly African examples. German Africanists (Vossen & Keuthmann 200?)³ considered revising this concept in order to apply it to the African

² There are several parallels of this sort between German, English, as well as French speaking academic community.

³ This paper has not been published yet.

setting because a large number of African languages, at the first glance, exhibit certain similarities with the German Language Islands' setting. It was felt that the outcome of the research on German Language Islands could be applied and tested in the research on certain African languages. As part of this discussion, questions about the nature of this concept and its importance appeared.⁴

Nevertheless, the term '*Sprachinsel*' itself has been used in linguistics in a very broad and unspecified way. As for example M. Tilmatine (Tilmatine 1991) uses it when writing about Songhay in Tabelbala. It is here applied only as a label with no reference to the Language Island research. It seems that the only criterion for calling Songhay of Tabelbala⁵ a Language Island is the fact, that a Songhay-variety-speaking⁶ small community finds itself in a non-Songhay-speaking area, regardless of the other population's structure and setting. Especially the English translation '*Language Island*' has been often used as a label to refer to any smaller language geographically surrounded by a genetically unrelated majority language or languages.

The main problem with the current attempts to apply the term has been in not considering the term Language Island itself. The scholars did not take into account (for various reasons) its specific origin, so as the settings. The persistence of the Language Islands (or low degree of assimilation) became sort of a justification for the concept. But the factors that caused it in case of German Language Islands were not considered in connection with non-German cases. This has led to a geographical usage of the Language Island label.

The aim of my thesis is to find out whether it is possible to apply the Language Island concept on an African example, in this case on the Tasawaq language. This cannot be answered without critical evaluation of the Language Island concept itself.

The methods employed are as follows. First, I will provide a critical discussion of the research on German Language Islands (historical and geographical). As all the

⁴ The theme of this paper was encouraged and later on supported by professor Rainer Vossen and professor Petr Zima who enabled me to work on it at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main.

⁵ The Songhay dialect of Tabelbala can be found in the available literature under the names *Kora-n-dié*, *Koranje*, *Konradjé* and *Kwara-n-dzi* (Tilmatine 1991).

⁶ It was classified as a dialect of 'Songay septentrional', that is the Northern Songhay (Nicolai 1981).

systematic work on Language Islands was done exclusively⁷ by German-speaking scholars in the above-mentioned German communities, and these works later served as the material basis for the theoretical suggestions and attempts, I will provide, in the first part of my thesis, a brief outline of the history of German Language Island research as well as the history of the creation of these Language Islands themselves. I find it important to at least sketch the most characteristic features of the then conditions of the German migration waves, and of the areas to which the migrations were headed, as this will serve in the following chapters as a comparison basis with the chosen African case, that is with Tasawaq. The fact, that these conditions were not very often taken into consideration, or were unknown to the linguists using the term Language Island, could have to certain extent led to misinterpretation of the Language Island research and to in a way higher expectations.

For obvious reasons, special attention will be paid to those authors who went beyond the descriptive approach and had ambitions to introduce new definitions of Language Islands and/or came with methodological and theoretical attempts. In the most elaborated and suitable definitions of Language Islands (in overall there are not that many) I would like to outline the main topics, as the authors stress them. I will point at the most characteristic features for Language Islands and I will try to systematize them. This will provide me with the questions the authors working on the methodological and theoretical level have to consider and try to answer.

I find it very important to stress the link between research and putative concept of Language Islands in German linguistics and the Language Maintenance concept. This will allow me to use the scales of this sociolinguistic concept and apply them on the African example. By doing this I would like to suggest that the Language Island research correlates to certain extent (in the language questions) with the focus of Language Maintenance theory. I would like to suggest that the Language Island research is dealing with a specific, extreme situation, or rather situations, of Language Maintenance. I will point out what data and methodology was used and what issues were considered, what questions were raised and what were the theoretical conclusions. Special attention will be paid to the definitions of Language Island themselves. They will be compared and the differing points will be analysed, so as the

⁷ That is the reason for omission of some of the French-written attempts dealing with geographical distribution of languages.

most stressed features. These will be then reworked on the basis of the Language Maintenance theory. Language Island research, and this is the second suggestion of this paper, correlates to certain extent with the focus of Language Maintenance theory and deals with a specific, extreme situation, or rather situations, of Language Maintenance.

In the second part, I will be dealing with the case language Tasawaq. Socio-historical and brief linguistic description of the Tasawaq⁸ language will be provided. I will follow the issues that resulted from the previous comparison of Language Island research and Language Maintenance theory.

The reason for choosing this language is only one. It is, at the first glance, exhibiting the ‘surface’ criterion of Language Islands’ definitions. It is a minority language, spoken in two oases in the Republic of Niger, and it is genetically classified as one of the Northern dialects of Songhay (Nicolai 1981). That means it belongs to the Nilo-Saharan language phylum (Greenberg 1963).⁹ The surrounding majority languages are above all varieties of Tamajaq/Tamasheq/Tuareg language, that are genetically classified as parts of the Afro-Asian (formerly known as Semito-Hamitic) language family (Greenberg 1963). This is only the general, geographical, language setting of that area, other interfering language factors will be analysed later on.

It is somewhat more dubious about the other criteria of Language Islands. Especially the process of creation of this language community is far remote from the German examples. In this case, we cannot really talk of a ‘motherland’ (*Hauptgebiet*) from which a migration started. Although it could seem so and some of the historical sources suggest that (Amadou 1979: 53; Hunwick 1971a: 221)¹⁰, there is not very strong evidence for any kind of a migration leading from the Songhay main territory to the nowadays habitat of Tasawaq speakers. But as will be seen in the chapter on Language Island features (Chapter 2), the question of a motherland and its importance

⁸ It is a minority language of the Republic of Niger, spoken in two oases. It is genetically classified as Songhay language (Nicolai 1981), although some have doubts about it (Wolff 2000; Wolff & Alidou 2001). See the chapter on Tasawaq language.

⁹ For the time being, I will leave aside the controversy over the Greenberg’s genetic classification, especially concerning the Nilo-Saharan languages. This will be dealt with in the chapter on Tasawaq language.

¹⁰ These theories rest on Tarikh-as-Sudan. The unreliability of these sources have been already proved in the past (Bernus 1972:21).

in the putative concept of Language Islands could be reanalysed. The question actually is, whether we can find anything like that in areas outside of Europe, where neither written sources nor other evidence is available. And what we should not forget is the fact, that in the case of German Language Islands we are dealing with relatively recent migrations.

This is also closely connected with the extent of assimilation or, let us say, influence from the surrounding languages. In the case of Tasawaq it is somewhat stronger than in the German 'ideal cases'. But the time is not the only interfering factor as will be shown in the following chapters.

In the section on Tasawaq and the Ingelshi community (speakers of Tasawaq), I will provide an overall description of the population. I will be following the matrix of questions and tasks, which will be introduced on the basis of the characteristic features, resulting from the Language Island definitions and from the Language Maintenance theory. The focus will be directed towards the description of the non-linguistic factors of the society, which accompanied the specific contact situation. This will be then compared with the linguistic evidence.

I am aware of the scarce existence of the available sources, especially concerning the situation in the 15th and 16th century, when the Songhay element must have become present in the area in question. For such periods and areas, relevant data will be inferred from these scarce hints in the historical material, from linguistic data, from the current situation, as well as from other regions and populations. This also concerns some of the data on the up-to-date situation. An additional fieldwork would have to be undergone in order to acquire them.

In the last part, the situation of Tasawaq will be compared with the one of German Islands in general. The most crucial features, as they appear in the definitions of Language Islands, as well as the settings and conditions, will be correlated with the findings on Tasawaq and its speakers. By doing this I will try to answer the question, whether it is possible to talk of a Language Island in case of Tasawaq language. To approach this problem is impossible without going back to the Language Island definitions and the proposed concept. First, it is necessary to state what is a Language Island or rather Language Islands.

2. Definitions of 'Language Islands'

Let us have a look at the criteria of language islands and at the most stressed notions as they appear in the definitions themselves.¹¹ All of them define a language island as a language community that is *separated from its main/home territory* (Wiesinger 1980, 1983: 901; Hutterer 1982; Mattheier 1994). The '*Home Territory*' is defined as an area from which the language community, under whatever circumstances (we will discuss that only later), originated.

The fact that there is a home territory and a Language Island related to this territory (to what extent or of what nature we will again only discuss later) raises the question about the *distance* between the former and the latter. Is there anything like a minimal distance? And of course, what kind of *separation* between the 'home territory' and the 'Language Island' are we talking about? Apart from the geographical one, which is obviously most easily ascertainable, there might be also something that we could call 'mental distance or rather closeness'. That is the attitude of the speakers of the language island towards their home territory. How do they feel 'linked' to their place of origin and in what manner is this performed? What kind of relation, if any, do they maintain? And of course, how is this changing with the passing *time*?

But what is a '*home territory*'? The up-to-date research on Language Islands that has focused nearly exclusively on the German populations first in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, later on in non-European regions as for example United States, Brasilia, Australia etc., does not fully answer this question. According to our opinion, this research is dealing only with 'ideal cases' where the home territory is relatively well known and the links can be to a great extent traced as enough of historical evidence is available. The difficulties that appear seem to be only on the level of dialects. The questions about the nature of the home territory have strikingly appeared only recently.¹² Strikingly, because the need to discuss it seems to be evident also in some of the Language Islands in Europe. Hutterer (1982: 178) makes a distinction

¹¹ We will keep aside the older definitions that are above all stressing the preservation of Germanhood "under the foreign/alien people".

¹² Paper presented by professor R. Vossen at the Bechyne conference in 2001 and the discussion that followed. This question was also raised in a working article of K. Keuthmann, H. Schreiber and R. Vossen.

between enclaves and exclaves¹³ and states that: "... *Einen Sonderfall bilden die Sprachinseln jener Gruppen, die nur Enklaven sind, da ein politisch etabliertes Hinterland ihnen abgeht, ...*" and one of the couple examples he gives, are the groups of Romanies/Gypsies in Europe.¹⁴ In this case we are not only facing the problem of missing political unity (politically established hinterland) but also of the sort of unclear links to the 'homeland'¹⁵ or rather of the great differences that these 'language islands' exhibit in comparison to the languages of their supposed 'home territory'.¹⁶ So the question is what role does this 'home territory' play? The speakers could be maintaining personal contacts of any kind of nature with the country of origin (some members of their families or friends stayed behind) or an official support by organisations or state appeared (schools, newspapers, radio/TV in modern times etc. - who was financing that?). If it is the 'mental relation' that has an important impact on the speakers of a language island, that means the fact that they have a notion of common 'home territory' to which they refer (part of their self-identification') helps to preserve (to whatever extent) the 'language island' (in the broad cultural sense), then we could ask whether this 'homeland' has to be necessarily 'real/matching'. The speakers could refer and very often do to the fictive, virtual territory of their ancestors or to a 'home territory' that is meant to provide social status for them and without any doubt is not truthful. We can also find examples where the common virtual 'home territory' was and is changing as in the case of the already mentioned European Romanies/Gypsies. So more common would be cases, and African continent is more then rich on them, where the home territory is not known (if there is or was any) or where there is a 'non-linear' nature in cases of 'mixed languages'. Can we then in these cases talk about *stages of development* of a Language Island?

This is a problem that has been approached only recently and rather superficially but seems to be crucial in the research of Language Islands. As most of the work has been dealing with a European language in a European setting the question of creation and

¹³ Enclave - in relation to the state or to the state language to which it arealy and politically belong; exclave - in relation to the state or states and its national language, to which language speakers belong ethnically, linguistically and at least partly culturally.

¹⁴ We do not find it important to discuss here whether the European Romanies/Gypsies are or are not an example of a Language Island as it is not the aim of this thesis.

¹⁵ We will not take into consideration the hypothesis of non-Indian origin of the European Romanies/Gypsies as they are not based on justifiable data.

¹⁶ And we are not even mentioning the 'para-romanies' as is the term suggested by Y. Matras for 'mixed-varieties' of Romani language.

development did not seem that important or seemed relatively easy with not many variations. But the moment we leave the European field and focus on areas that are historically less described, that moment we are facing serious difficulties.

All of the available definitions agree in one very fundamental assertion about Language Islands: *a relatively small / minority language is surrounded/ by unrelated relatively big / majority language/-s* (Wiesinger 1980, 1983: 901; Hutterer 1982; Mattheier 1994: 334). That brings under consideration several questions. First is the relation v. non-relation of languages. Although it has never been explicitly stated we can assume that the intelligibility respectively unintelligibility served as the decisive criterion.¹⁷

Second, what does it mean to be **surrounded** by unrelated language/-s? Does it mean a **separation** from it/them without any kind of a contact? Is there any minimum **contact situation** required to draw our attention? If we accepted any kind of areal separation we would end up with languages as for example Maltese language that is truly spoken on an island, as with a 'Language Island'.¹⁸ We suppose certain *geographical restrictions* will have to be at least tentatively introduced or certain cases will have to be viewed as extreme. The same would apply to *institutional factors*. A strong 'institutional support', as for example one-nation-state structure, would have to be discussed otherwise Hungarian could be a 'Language Island' surrounded by Indo-European languages.

Third, the **quantity** of the speakers plays certainly very important role, especially when we again look at the example of Hungarian, but also English (in Australia and on the British Islands). We are dealing with relations of numbers of speakers. Relatively small and relatively numerous language group are sort of vague terms but hardly ever will there be anything better available. This is in a way joined with the notions/concepts of *minority* and *majority* languages/groups and then questions as to what extent they are or are not overlapping with terms like *dominated* or *dominating*. If these limits were not raised we could end up with most languages, especially in the African context as being Language Islands and we are losing the relevance of such a concept.

¹⁷ We keep aside the studies on 'dialect islands' as this criterion would not apply to them.

¹⁸ Although even there a contact situation with other languages existed.

If this was not done we could only hardly talk of a Language Island concept. One of the important notions stressed by the Language Island research is about *'hindered or retarded language and cultural assimilation'* (Mattheier 1994: 334), which is considered typical for Language Islands. And if there was none or let us say 'artificially' disrupted contact between the Language Island speakers and the surrounding population the preservation of language and culture would not seem so exceptional. Of course, geographical and institutional factors do play an important part but only along with other factors, which we will also touch upon. Thus certain restrictions, as has been already mentioned, will have to be introduced. 'Surrounded' means in this sense an existence of the whole range of contact situations varying in nature and intensity. We can see that the so heavily stressed notion of *compactness* of a Language Island in the sense that it is aerially demarcated and homogenous (Hutterer 1982; Wiesinger 1983: 901) has already undergone certain critics (Mattheier 1994: 333). Mattheier finds in it a relict of the research on German Language Islands or rather dialects and tries to point out the fact that most situations do not prove that and usually speakers of language minorities live in ethnically and linguistically mixed regions (Mattheier 1994: 334), thus implicitly suggesting more intensive contact situations. The question is as well to what extent it can be 'spotted' - is there also a certain limit? As how would we look at the scanty German settlements in Namibia, with numbers that are not exceeding a larger family?

But we are dealing with a concept where the linguistic part is not playing the major role or rather other aspects have been as important as the question of language. Ethno-cultural difference has been as much stressed as the linguistic one and from this perspective the Language Islands are described as 'colonies' of a specific origin. *"Über ein auf relativer sozialer Homogenität basierendes Gemeinschaftsbewusstsein kulturell eigenständiger Art hinaus bildet in erster Linie die spezifische, arteigene Sprache das gruppenspezifische Identifikationsmerkmal der Minderheit gegenüber der Mehrheit, obwohl man mit jener durch staatliche, verwaltungspolitische, wirtschaftliche und soziale Beziehungen, vielfach aber auch durch die Beherrschung der Sprache auf vielerlei Weise mehr oder minder verbunden ist"* (Wiesinger 1983: 901).

We also have to take into consideration **outside factors** as isolation (*Verkehrsabgeschlossenheit*), political independence, confessional difference, ethnic encapsulation caused by endogamous marriage policy that played important role in preservation of German Language Island communities for centuries.

These are the definitions of Language Islands that we are working with in this paper:

Wiesinger, P. (1980):

„Sprachinseln sind punktuell oder flächenhaft auftretende, relativ kleine geschlossene Sprach- und Siedlungsgemeinschaften in einem anderssprachigen, relativ grösseren Gebiet.“

Hutterer, C. J. (1982):

„Sprachinseln sind räumlich abgrenzbare und intern strukturierte Siedlungsräume einer sprachlichen Minderheit inmitten einer anderssprachigen Mehrheit“

Domaschnew (1994)

“Unter ‘Sprachinseln’ versteht man general ein marginales Verbreitungsgebiet einer Sprache, das von seinem Kerngebiet durch eine politische Grenze getrennt ist und inmitten einer anderssprachigen Mehrheit liegt.”

Mattheier, K. (1994):

„Eine Sprachinsel ist eine durch verhinderte oder verzögerte sprachkulturelle Assimilation entstandene Sprachgemeinschaft, die - als Sprachminderheit von ihrem Hauptgebiet getrennt - durch eine sprachlich/ethnisch differente Mehrheitsgesellschaft umschlossen und/oder überdacht wird, und die sich von der Kontaktgesellschaft durch eine die Sonderheit motivierende soziopsychische Disposition abgrenzt bzw. von ihr ausgegrenzt wird.“

3. German Language Islands

The very first attempts of the Language Island research were not dealing with any theoretical issues and were description of a variable quality of the situation of various, nearly exclusively, German Language islands. The first hints on German Language Islands appeared at the end of the 15th century when Sylvius Piccolomini¹⁹ mentioned for the first time in his work *Siebenbürges Sachsen* and *S/Zipser* (Kuhn 1934: 76).²⁰

This so called pre-scientific period of this research stayed focused above all on these two areas, that is Siebenbürgen and Zips. In 1641 a publication called *Uralten Deutsch-ungarischen Zipferischen und Siebenbürgischen Landsmann* was introduced by David Frölich. Already here the interest and questions about the origin of the German settlers started to play an important role. But it was not until the 18th century, in the work called *Abhandlung von dem Ursprung der Gäschtlichen Nation* by Martin Felmer, that the question of language appeared for the first time. Felmer used the language data as a support when trying to answer the origin of the settlers.

The descriptions of the German speaking areas outside of the main territory considered above all geographical, political, social a scientific conditions and circumstances. The authors were not mostly scientists or specialists, which resulted in works describing general conditions of the German Language Islands.

The second half of the 19th century did not only gave birth to the German Romanticism but also to the German modern research in humanities and to the creation of the modern German linguistics. This period is typical with its focus on languages/dialects and with its striving for dictionaries. Also historical and general social observations were very popular. Motives of the Language Island research are in

¹⁹ Known as Pius II.

²⁰ This part dealing with the history of the Language Island research is mostly based on the work of Walter Kuhn (Kuhn 1934). Kuhn's thorough study on this research has not been overcome yet. The most important is the summary of the very first attempts as most of it has not been published and stays in archives in hand-written forms. Anyway the first attempts were not dealing with any theoretical issues and are only descriptions of a varying quality of the situation of various, nearly exclusively, German Language Islands. And thus it stays aside from our main focus. Kuhn (Kuhn 1934: 144-5) also formulated the first theoretical questions of this research: „ How does the heritage in language, art, tradition, custom/habits, way of living/housing, dressing/costumes and professions preserve? Under what circumstances does it change and when does a new independent way of life appear? What role does a foreign surrounding environment play?“

this period mostly scientifically. The nationalist ones still stay aside or at least are not so obvious.

It is also in this period that the word *Sprachinsel* was for the first time used as a *Fachausdruck* (Kuhn 1934: 83).

The 70's of the 19th century mean a political and cultural change for Germans as well as for Austrians. It is the beginning of the rise of German self-realisation. This also applies to the German Language Islands that try to manifest their connection to German by setting up German Universities, newspapers etc.

In the first decade of the 20th century we can find for the first time deliberate attempts to trace "foreign" elements in the German varieties of the German Language Islands. In the former dictionaries the loan words from the surrounding languages were even deliberately omitted (Kuhn 1934: 116). Also development of Language Islands was for the first time dealt with. The language data from the Language Islands were compared with the original dialect area inside of Germany and the interest on dialects of the new Language Islands was introduced. The Language Island research was slowly becoming part of the German dialectology.

The World War I caused an explosion of the literature on the German Language Islands, especially by the authors from inside of these communities. It is at this period when also the question of race was introduced and dealt with. And the World War II ended for some time this research.

As has been already mentioned in the Introduction, the Language Island research and the consequent theoretical proposals resulted from the research on German-speaking communities outside of the German-speaking main territory. Thus, it is crucial to sketch a general framework of these settings. This will first of all help us to understand the tendencies and focus of the Language Island research. Second, the acquired information will be used to understand the definitions of Language Islands, as they exclusively rest on this research. At the same time, we will obtain a comparison basis for the general setting and situation with the Tasawaq language.

The time and space does not allow me to go deeper into the settings of individual German Language Islands. Number of these settlements as well as of the publications

(of a broad focus and changing quality) written about them was very vast. So was the resulting number of particular situations, which were very complex and rich on differences. Nevertheless, certain common qualities/features of non-linguistic nature can be traced.

3.1 Periodisation of the migration

In the case of German Language Islands²¹ we are dealing with several migration waves, which could be classified into three main periods. The first wave of migration took place between the 12th and 14th century A.D. and its results would be mentioned in the literature under the name '*mittelalterliche Sprachinseln*'. These migrations lead especially to the South and partly to the East from the German territory but did not reach remote areas. They created 'Islands' in the bordering regions with the German-speaking mainland.

The '*neuzeitliche Sprachinseln*' appeared sometimes after the 16th century. The 18th century was especially rich on German migrant groups and the migrations headed towards South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, as well as to Northern and Southern America and Australia.

The third direction and period (much smaller in number) started after 1800 A.D. and its outcomes can be seen in Switzerland, France, Ireland, Denmark, Spain and Greece.

3.2 Geographical distribution

Among the '*mittelalterliche Sprachinseln*' we find settlement areas that are sort of attached to the German territory, they find themselves positioned on the periphery of the German speaking areas, often in northern Italy (*Walserkolonien* in Piedmont and Aosta), some of them in the southern Switzerland (*Walserkolonien* in Graubünden etc.),²² but also in several parts of the Czech Republic. The regions of northern Italy and Switzerland are of hilly character and thus some of the settlements can find

²¹ Only the '*Aussensprachinseln*' (outer Language Islands) will be considered as the '*Binnensprachinseln*' (inner Language Islands) are focused on dialects of German inside of a compact German speaking area. Thus, I do not find it relevant for the topic.

²² A map of distribution of these and other German settlements can be found in Wiesinger (1983: 905).

themselves separated from the non-German speaking territories with impassable terrain, or at least limited, rather than with a larger distance. Here the distance would be replaced by 'accessibility' as some of them, for example in Avers, could be entered through the retoromanisch-speaking territories only, in some cases the access through another language area would be easier. The distribution of a 'Language Island' population is here very often limited within the size of a single mountain valley.

More remote, in relation to the distance of the 'home territory' to the Language Island are the settlements north of Venetia (*Sette Comuni*), in Slovenia (*Zarz-Sorica, Deutschruth-Nemski Rovt*, etc.), some in Western Slovakia and Southern Poland.

In case of settlements of German speakers in eastern Slovakia (*Oberzips, Käsmarkwe* etc.) and Northern Hungary we are already talking about hundreds of kilometres. The most remote '*mittelalterliche Sprachinseln*' we can find in Rumania in '*Siebenbürgen*'.

What concerns the second migration wave can be seen when looking at a map of distribution of these Language Islands. A tendency to settle down in larger groups, next to the areas where other German groups were settling down before, is visible. If that was caused by the 'Patenten-decrets' (we will talk about them later) or by other factors we will not discuss. For us it is important that the Germans created larger units of German speaking variety of dialects and thus formed in a way majority compact population! This can be seen in Southern Ukraine, Northern Rumania, in the bordering region of Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia, in South-Eastern Poland etc. The German speakers would outnumber the local population which was very scattered and of small numbers. To populate certain areas was one of the most important reasons. That means that these areas were for any kind of a reason depopulated and thus the Germans did not find themselves in a very strong contact situation/situations.

3.3 Specification of the settlements

We can see that quite a few of the German settlements were placed in a specific natural environment. Weather in cases of Language Islands in Northern Italy, southern Switzerland, and Northern Slovenia (in the Alps the settlements would be 'locked' in valleys) or in those in Rumania, it is mountains or hills that are characteristic for the given areas and these would form a natural barrier. It would have to be investigated in

each and every specific case to what extent it separates the populations in question from the surrounding world. But it does not always have to be the case and to draw a hypothesis that mountains (natural barriers) condition the preservation of a Language Island is risky, although we have to consider it as one of the possible factors.

As the second wave of settlement was directed by governments, it had a very specific character. Areas with only a scattered population and/or deserted places were chosen thus again the newcomers would create a majority population. These places were generally very fertile which made the incomes of the new population relatively high and this would have an impact on the social status of these people.

3.4 Sociolinguistic situation (around 1930)

In the 30s of the 20th century German language was in these settlements mostly spoken only inside of the families with the Italian respectively another language functioning as official and its dialect as colloquial. (for example the *trichotomy* of Southern Bavarian - Tyrolean dialect v. standard Italian v. Italian dialect of Trient in Val Féršina/Fersental East of Trient; German Southern Bavarian v. Eastern Tyrolean dialect v. Italian : '*Friaulisch*' dialect).

In several cases the dialect of German was already extinct or was in process of becoming extinct as are the cases of '*Zarz*' and '*Deutschruth*' in Northern Slovenia where the process was completed before 1940. The same seems to apply to the situation of German settlements in Piemont (northern Italy) and in the canton Wallis.²³ Very similar situation can be found in the '*Zimbrisch*' Language Islands North from Vicenza and Verona (mountainous areas). As around 1930 in most villages old generations could still speak German (*Zimbrisch* dialect – under strong interference of Italian),²⁴ in 1981 only some members of the older generation would do so. There is one exception. In a place called Luserna also young generations fully master this

²³ The sociolinguistic situation in Issime (Wallis canton) at the beginning of the century was more complex as next to French (official language) also Italian and '*Frankoprovenzalische Patois*' played an important role. Apart from that the '*Walser*' would use '*Piemontesisch*' dialect as colloquial language (Wiesinger 1983: 904).

²⁴ A great difference could be seen between *Zimbrisch* of the 'Sieben Gemeinde' (Sette Comuni) where a written form was introduced in the 16th century and between other forms of *Zimbrisch* (Wiesinger 1983: 906-7).

German dialect. Otherwise Italian is the public language creating a *dichotomy* with the local dialects being used as colloquial.

Not always was the 'extinction' of a Language Island 'natural' (by a slow assimilation with the surrounding populations). After the end of World War II great numbers of Germans in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Poland were forced to leave thus the number of speakers was drastically reduced. In case of Zips (Spiš)²⁵ German speaking population in Slovakia, the small community is bilingual but a decline of the knowledge of German can be seen among the younger generations.

Opposite situation we find in Graubünden in Switzerland. The Germans settled here in a fully retoromanisch area and influenced it to the extent that an important part of the population shifted to the German language. But in this case other influence from the German speaking mainland could be traced as this Language Island is on a periphery of the German speaking 'mainland' and thus exercises a strong support from this connection.

3.5 Conditions for migration (organised vs. unorganised)

While the migration in the first period was rather unorganised as the state concerns, in the case of the second migration, '*neutzeitliche Sprachinseln*', which culminated in 18th century, we are dealing with a very powerful factor. These settlements were generally but not exclusively organised by the 'state'. In most cases it was the ruling Habsburgs, who issued decrees concerning the settlements, choosing place and population that would be shifted. Especially frequent were these '*Patenten*' in the 18th century, during the reign of Marie Theresa and her son Joseph II.

In other cases the settlement was favoured by the ruling dynasty of the country to which the settlement was directed. In Russia during the reign of Katharine II (1762-96) German settlers were invited and given special privileges to cultivate the fertile land at the Black Sea in what is today Southern Ukraine and at the same time "...vor

²⁵ In the German of *Zips* in the North of Slovakia there appeared, next to interferences of Slovak language, slight influences from Polish and Ukrainian (Wiesinger 1983: 910).

den nomadischen Turken Turkvölkern zu sichern" (Wiesinger 1983: 924).²⁶ Another important immigration to Russia followed at the beginning of the 19th century, during the reign of Alexander I and according to the census there were 1,312 million Germans in 1896 (Wiesinger 1983: 924) and unofficial estimation of the number of Germans in Russia before the World War I is around 1 500 000. These strong migrations at the beginning of the 19th century led to the creation of new "Tochterkolonien" (daughter colonies) in Southern Ural, Western Siberia, Kazakhstan, etc. In 1926 5/6 of all of them were farmers, craftsmen and workers living in the countryside. Until 1941 the standard German was used as the official language although the population would be bilingual (German - Russian; German - Armenian; ...). But concerning the fact that these Language Islands were relatively compact or closed, the interference of the surrounding languages was rather light, concerning only some lexical borrowings (Wiesinger 1983: 925). In between 1941-45 the German inhabitants were accused of collaborating, betrayal and spying and deported from the European regions of USSR to Ural, Ufa, etc. As Jedig states, the number of Germans in RSFR is nowadays 791 000, in Kazakhstan 900 000, in Kyrgyzstan 101 000 and in Tadjikistan 39 000, although only 57% out of these admit their nationality and only 42,6% (out of these 57%) stated German as their native language (Jedig 1994: 13-14).²⁷

3.6 Religious factors

Confessional factors must have also played an important role. Out of six villages in Konop, north-western Ukraine, the four protestant preserved and two of catholic religion are extinct. There were also several migrations (4 major ones) of

²⁶ „Schon in den Jahren 1764-1767, d.h. im Verlaufe von vier Jahren nach Veröffentlichung des Manifests der russischen Kaiserin Katharina II. vom 22. Juli 1763, in dem diese sich an die Bauern und Handwerker der europäischen Staaten mit dem Aufruf wandte, nach Russland zu kommen, um die unbebauten Ländereien in verschiedenen Teilen des Landes, insbesondere im Süden und in den Wolgasteppe, urbar zu machen, entstanden am mittleren Lauf der Wolga 104 deutsche Dörfer“ (Jedig 1994: 11).

²⁷ These figures might dramatically differ as the German nationality became highly valued as it can serve as the German government

Mennonites²⁸ (Eastern Ukraine) and of *'pietistisch gesinnte protestantische Separatisten Württembergs'*.²⁹ These were migrations conditioned by pressure from the surrounding population of their 'home territory' which was of a different confession. In case of Mennonites it was triggered by an invitation to settle down in Russia.

But the political and social conditions changed. In 1872 the privileges of the German settlers were minimized and it led in case of Mennonites to new migration or to Canada (18 000) or to areas out of the reach of the centralized government. Here it was connected with a lack of space for the expanding population, which already earlier led to creation of several 'daughter colonies'.

3.7 Population structure

We have to differentiate between smaller and bigger Language Islands. In the case of former the social structure was not very 'rich'. It consisted from 'lower classes' as farmers and craftsmen are and there was continuity in the village life that these people lived in their home land as well. In the latter ones also towns were created and enabled the creation of a 'complete' (comparable with the home territory) social stratification (Wiesinger 1983: 901). In all of the cases there was a *continuity of the 'life style'* between the 'home territory' and the new settlement.

3.8 Size of the German Language Islands

We are dealing here with extreme differences. But generally we are talking about thousands of people, sometimes dozens of thousands and in some cases even hundreds of thousands. For example in Saratow on middle Volga 15 000 families settled down between the years 1764 and 1773. In between 1855 and 1873 they were joined by Mennonites, whose number must have also been significant as they created 10

²⁸ Originally dutch anabaptist sect which was named after the first important leader Menno Simons and which fled Netherlands as being persecuted by the Spanish. Until about mid 18th century they preserved Dutch as the language of their liturgy.

²⁹ 6 000 of them left their homeland in 1817 and settled in Southern Ukrain, partly in Georgia which they see as *"... Zwischenort auf dem Wanderweg ins Heilige Land [Jerusalem]..."* (Wiesinger 1983: 927). They reunited with the Evangelical church between 1830 and 1890.

villages. This area became in 1924 an autonomous republic of the Volga Germans of the USSR with the number of Germans reaching 442 000 (it was cancelled in 1941).

We have to bear in mind that the linguistic situation in some of the areas where the German settlements were established was far from the situation today. In most of the mentioned areas it was German that was functioning as the official language (strong institutional support) and thus there was no need to shift to another language as most of the surrounding population would have a certain command of German. This applies to situation in the Czech Republic (up to the 1918), Slovakia where German was official language up to 1867 when it was replaced by Hungarian and later on in 1918 by Slovak. In the same situation would appear the German Language Islands in Rumania. There, next to German that was the language of the official administration until 1918, a certain influence of Hungarian was apparent. In 1918 these two languages were replaced by Rumanian as the only official language and the World War II experience lead to an emigration and extinction of most of the northern settlements. Also in case of the Volga Germans we can hardly talk about a language minority as they basically outnumbered the local non-German population.

4. Ingelshi community of In-Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt

In order to explain the creation and development of Tasawaq language, the focus will be directed towards the description of the non-linguistic factors of the society that speaks it. The data will be analysed in order to gain a complete picture, as far as it allows, of the population in question and thus to show the contact situation that has been taking place in the area and that has led to the linguistic interferences. I realize, that there is not sufficient information concerning the situation of the area in the 15th and 16th century, when the Songhay element became present, nevertheless, relevant data will be inferred from these scarce hints in the historical material as well as from the current situation and changes in the past that had been mentioned and described in connection to other areas and populations.

As it was suggested earlier in this work, the Language Island research is dealing with specific contact situations when a language with a small (this could be questioned as we could see earlier) number of speakers, is situated in the midst of a group or groups whose members speak an unrelated language or languages (for the moment, we leave aside the question of the 'home territory').

What has been very much stressed in the past decades is the question of a 'surprising persistence' of a minority language surrounded by unrelated majority language/languages. I do not agree with the authors who generalize some of the outcomes from contact situations in modern urban areas and state that a language shift of minority group speakers is expected within three generations. As it could be seen in other areas as well, this 'rule' is far from being universal and cannot be applied to all geographical and demographical settings. Nevertheless, the persistence is of course a tempting issue and it was probably the main reason for reviving this forgotten concept of Language Islands. Without knowing the exact conditions of the German Language Islands as we will be able to see.

4.1 Ingelshi Society

As in other areas of Africa (and not only there), we are facing a problem of 'ethnicity' and the joined difficulty of using names for a certain population. In the case of our study, we are using, for the 'autochthonous',³⁰ sedentary population of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt, the term *Ingelshi* as used by Bernus (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 24), although we are aware of the possible simplifications of this term, as well as of the term Tuareg/Twareg/Touareg for the surrounding population. The reason for that is only of a practical nature, as we can't always use the names of the particular clans/groups. The term Ingelshi is in a way equivalent to the term Tuareg. There is a certain degree of vagueness in both of the terms but we find them as a satisfying tool for comparison. We are using the name Tuareg for mostly nomadic population with a characteristic social and political hierarchy, and speaking a variety of Tamajaq/Tamasheq. It could be argued that also the urban populations of Azelik-Takadda, In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt belonged to the same groups that are nowadays described as Tuareg, nevertheless it would be wrong to use this term for these urban populations as, first of all, it is of a recent origin and second, the town population meanwhile created different culture (Bernus & Cressier 1991), as a result of several factors (sedentarisation, trade routs, 'mixing') and they speak a language that is genetically classified as Songhay,³¹ part of Nilo-Saharan language phylum, and Tamajaq is classified as an Afro-Asian language.

The Ingelshi society is an example fulfilling, at first glance (from the linguistic point of view), more or less all the requirements drawn from the most elaborated definition of a 'Language Island'.³² A small minority population in two oases in Niger - Tegidda-n-tesemt and In Gall, speaks the language, Tasawaq. The dominant language/languages, in terms of number of speakers and their distribution, is Tamajaq/Tamasheq varieties, e.g. language/s of Tuareg nomadic groups. Also other

³⁰ Let us say 'more autochthonous' as there were former populations that were driven away by Ingelshi.

³¹ Other hypothesis about the origin of Tasawaq (language of Ingelshi society) will be discussed in the chapter on the Tasawaq language.

³² „Eine Sprachinsel ist eine durch verhinderte oder verzögerte sprachkulturelle Assimilation entstandene Sprachgemeinschaft, die - als Sprachminderheit von ihrem Hauptgebiet getrennt - durch eine sprachlich/ethnisch differente Mehrheitsgesellschaft umschlossen und/oder überdacht wird, und die sich von der Kontaktgesellschaft durch eine die Sonderheit motivierende soziopsychische Disposition abgrenzt bzw. von ihr ausgegrenzt wird.“ (Mattheier 1994: 334).

languages (Hausa³³, Arabic, Fulfulde) have been spoken in the area for quiet some time but their speakers do not create a compact settlement as in the case of Ingelshi society, the numbers of their speakers are small, and they are very often staying only temporarily for the purpose of trading.

The settlement is of a very small size, approximately 1901 persons in In Gall and 474 in Tegidda-n-tesemt (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 23).³⁴ As we will see later on, these numbers are not accurate as the size of the permanent population in Tegidda-n-tesemt is close to zero, because most Ingelshi live in In Gall and come only in the dry season to work at the salines. Thus, we shall treat the inhabitants of these two settlements just as one community; other reasons will be made clear in the following chapters.

Tasawaq is genetically classified as a Songhay language and, thus, the 'home territory', which is the Songhay-speaking area, is several hundred kilometres away. The surrounding languages are genetically distant, belonging to a different language family. So here we have a linguistic minority that has existed for several centuries in the midst of a majority community. The main aim of this study is to reveal the conditions at the creation of this Language Island and what is, or rather was, behind the 'surprising persistence' of Tasawaq, what are and were the factors interfering in it, what changes did occur on the linguistic level, what happened when a certain factor changed, what processes triggered it. We will try to set up the hypothesis on the basis of all historical, cultural, social and linguistic data available. At last but not least we will try to answer the question, whether we can in case of Tasawaq and the Ingelshi society speak of a Language Island.

4.2 Physical situation

In order to gain a complete picture of the setting of the population and all the possible factors that might have played a certain role, we will briefly start with geographical

³³ The contact situation of Hausa - Tasawaq nowadays seems to be more complex and will be dealt with later on.

³⁴ This number includes 'foreigners' as well as about 40 family heads (in total less than 200 people) who settled down in several villages of Adder about a generation ago. Some of them still come to look for wives in In Gall (Bernus 1972: 24). Unfortunately, there is no study concerning this emigration. We are using here numbers quoted by Adamou (1979); in cases where we lack a certain detail we will quote Bernus (1972). In the charts, where the proportion between the populations is essential we will confine ourselves to one source even if it is not the most recent one.

conditions of the area. We assume that the physical situation is an important co-factor in the development or preservation of a putative Language Island.

The structure/set up of the countryside itself does not seem to play in this case a major role as compared to some of the settings of German Language Islands in the Alps. The region is not of a mountainous character but it is rather typical for its flat relieve with scattered small hills. The only sort of dramatic change in the look of the countryside is the depression of the Eghazer, which winds from south to west along In Gall towards Tegidda-n-tesemt. But it does not really create an impassable barrier limiting access to the two settlements. We assume this from the fact that the caravan and nomadic routes are passing the edge of the depression in a number of places.

The climate of this area is north-sahelian which means that it is dry, irregular, with short periods of rain in between July and mid September, and the vegetation is very poor (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 6). Therefore, reliable sources of water are basic need for any kind of a stable settlement. The relatively vast sources of underground water, which can be found in In Gall as well as in Tegidda-n-tesemt (Bernus, E. 1981: 44 - Map), are enough favouring conditions. The supply of water is thus not limited to short periods of the rainy season and the time immediately thereafter but is regular all year long. In addition to that, rainy seasons fill up the beds of temporary rivers that commence on the edge of the Tigiddit depression, and one of them passes by In Gall as well.

The limited supply of water and the irregularity result in a very poor vegetation of the area. Trees and bushes, which are essential not only as firewood but also for the construction of houses and other activities, are very rare. This is not the case of In Gall where extensive palm groves (their major input will be discussed later) can be found, although the lack of fire wood is evident here too, (about the influence of the caravan routes see chapter Trade) and the wood or branches have to be looked for or imported from a distance of a dozen kilometres. In case of Tegidda-n-tesemt, which is about 80 kilometres north of In Gall, the vegetation is even poorer without the palm trees, which might have resulted in the present situation of this settlement (if we can still call it like that) when we can hardly talk about any permanent population.

Administration district of Agades and Arlit

The oases of Tegidda-n-tesemt and In Gall belong under the administration district of Agades whose total number of population is 54,017 persons living on 146,000 km² (Adamou 1979: 35). The density of the population is thus very thin,³⁵ and the distribution of the population is very uneven - the more south, the more dense. 25,27% of the total number of the population (68,972), that is 17,363 persons, lived according to official census in the year 1975 in the following centres: Agades (8,371), In Gall (1,901), Tegidda-n-tesemt (474), El Mecki (456), Arlit (3, 669), Iferwan (1,314), Timia (1,178). And there is strong tendency towards sedentarisation, especially following the recent droughts (Adamou 1979: 35).

4.3 Population of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt: 'Ingelshi society'

The term *Ingelshi* is used by Bernus for the original population of Tegidda-n-tesemt and In Gall, not including the foreigners who are permanently staying in In Gall and directly participate in the life of the society. Most towns and oases on the fringe of the desert are passed through by caravans and are thus characteristic of the heterogeneity of its population. In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt are not exceptions to this rule. According to the census, there are officially 340 families in In Gall and 77 in Tegidda-n-tesemt. The composition is as follows (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 24):

³⁵ Average population density of the Republic of Niger is 3,5 persons/km².

AUTOCHTHONOUS		FOREIGNERS	
Isawaghen	161	Hausa	38
Imesdraghen ³⁶	63	Arabs	33
Iderfan	36	Agades origin	12
Inusufa	23	Igdalen	9
Iklan	17	Fulbe	1
Isherifen	10	Others	4
TOTAL	310	TOTAL	97

The total number of the families might be misleading as they do not represent the relative proportion (autochthonous vs. foreigners) which is much in favour of the autochthonous population as their family units are of much bigger size in comparison to the 'foreign families' (Bernus 1972: 24).

Autochthonous population

As we have already mentioned, the inhabitants of Tegidda-n-tesemt have in the past settled down in In Gall and would commute and temporarily stay in Tegidda-n-tesemt only for the salt and other trade and production purposes. The size of Tegidda's population dramatically differs in the course of the year. In the rainy season only less than 100 people are present,³⁷ at the time of commercial activity the population increases to around 500 (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 83-4). Thus, we can hardly talk about two distinct autochthonous agglomerations. Most of the supposed inhabitants of Tegidda (the official number is 380) stay there only during the dry season, when the salt trade and production reach its maxima, so they confine their stay only to work

³⁶ Concerning the Imesdraghen (Imesdhaghan) there are two main hypothesis. According to the first one they would be a branch of Inusufa, in the second one they are a different group of an inferior status, subordinated to Inusufa and appeared only after their masters were defeated by Agades "... *et dont la noblesse d'origine revendiqué ne serait en fait qu'une usurpation consécutive aux aléas de l'histoire*" (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 357). They are in favor of the first one as in the case of second one there is not a single reference in the oral tradition to the take-over of power from the Inusufa as nowadays it is Imesdraghen who are holding the power. And the oral tradition is very spécifique about this period and makes a clear distinction between the two survivors of the defeat: boy amasdghagh and girl tanasafut (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 361).

³⁷ In the year 1970 it was only 26 people (Bernus 1972: 30).

activities and have their residency (houses) in In Gall. And as historical development is common to both of them (as we will be able to see) and they do not differ either culturally or linguistically, and extensive intermarriages have been and are a common feature, we can talk of a single community.

The inhabitants of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt are known by the administration and among other ethnic groups by the name of Isawaghen (the most numerous clan), although they would use for self-reference names in accordance with their clan's³⁸ origin: Imesdraghen, Inusufa, Isheriffen and Isawaghen (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 23). Does it mean that they do not view themselves as a compact single community? This would have to be questioned as it is of a great importance. The first three groups form the aristocracy of the community. Inusufa symbolise the past political power, a member of Imesdraghen always holds the actual power, and Isherifen possess religious influence. The lower or rather unprestigious status of the Isawaghen is anchored even in the oral tradition.

Historically, there was a dual division of power between In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt. The former would hold the political, the latter religious and juridical power. This traditional structure was also maintained by the colonial and later by the independent administration, and both towns were under the overall authority of the Sultan of Adages (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 23). We will only hardly find the answer to the origin of this duality. It could be the result of the power distribution in the old Azelik as Tegidda-n-tesemt and In Gall are to a certain extent inheritors of its tradition.

Foreigners

As we can see from the above stated numbers, the most important foreign elements are Arabs and Hausa. It is not only by the quantity of the speakers but also by integration into the economic and partly to the social structure of the society. Arabs

³⁸ The term clan is used, although there is no agreement about the nature of these groups (Bernus 1972: 23).

are traders,³⁹ inheritors of the long lasting trade tradition with Maghreb; thus they have been part of the society for a long time. The Hausa's main activity is also trading but, in contrast to the Arabs, who have established commercial houses in Adages and Zinder, only of secondary importance. They also perform other commercial activities as, for example, butchery/slaughtering. There is hardly any butcher in In Gall of a different origin than Hausa, which says a lot about their status (at least of the butchers), as it is seen as an unprestigious work (see chapter Trade). The Hausa are usually small market traders and sellers (tobacco and all sorts of trash and medical products from Nigeria) and the surrounding populations do not reflect the different places of their origin as they use for any Hausa speaker the name *Itefenen* (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 25). Thus the bounds with the autochthonous population are much stronger and on every-day basis. It would be interesting and useful to investigate what difference in status there is between the Hausa and the Arabs. Does the fact that the Arabs have in hands the international trade and the Hausa the local one play any role? Is it somehow reflected among the local population? Would it have an impact on the intermarriages? What causes the relatively small number of marriages between Arabs and the local inhabitants? Is it because of a low status of the Arabs or in contrary they find themselves in a privileged position?

The third largest foreign group is of Agades origin. As we will be able to see in the section on history, there have been strong historical and political relations between these two populations, and the fact that this group is the most integrated of the 'foreign elements', is just reminding us of those bounds. Intermarriages with any of the autochthonous clans or other foreign groups have occurred and they take part in the most common activity of the local population of In Gall, which is the work in the palm groves (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 26).

Marriage patterns inside of the Ingelshi society

Although there is this certain notion of hierarchy in the population, it does not exclude intermarriages among the four clans. The three more prestigious groups of the Ingelshi

³⁹ Small communities of foreign populations resulted from the extensive trade activity (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 362).

society (Imesdraghen, Inusufa, Isheriffen) would intermarry with Isawaghen which is obviously for demographic reasons as more than half of the population belongs to the Isawaghen clan. The same applies to the intermarriages between the inhabitants of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt, or rather those who originally came from Tegidda-n-tesemt. There is no prohibition on any kind of marriages between them (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 27), but concerning marriages outside of the community, it is only Isherifen who do not, for religious reasons, oppose it, which is, for example the case of the *alqali*'s family (Muslim judge) that has been for generations connected with the family of the Sultan of Agades (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 27-8).

Marriage relations with the 'foreign sedentary populations' are far less frequent. We are not able to state at this point of our work whether this is caused by one of the populations involved, by a certain self-identification that does not allow for such 'mixing', or what other reasons could play a role here. This could be caused by the tendency to 'keep the property' and also by the fact that the marriage habits of the different cultures might differ. This is the case of the marriage dowry that has to be paid by the bride's father in the form of life stock in case of the autochthonous Ingelshi society. In case the father does not possess any, palm trees can theoretically replace it but it is not often realised (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 56). This differs from the surrounding cultures where mostly the groom's father is expected to pay the dowry. The only restriction is among the Isherifen as the religious importance inside of the population makes their marriages with "foreign" partners more difficult.

The number of intermarriages between the Arabic traders and autochthonous clans is very limited. Those who have stayed in In Gall for a longer period got married with local women who would only rarely belong to the autochthonous population. Bernus (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 25) states 4 marriages with Isherifen women (which is actually quite high, concerning the total numbers) as well as 4 with Isawaghen ones, 3 with Tuareg women⁴⁰ but 11 with another Arab woman. A significant number (11) of Arabs is unmarried, living alone, which concerns especially the recently arriving individuals. That means that not only one fourth of the members of the Arabic

⁴⁰ Only after having left their clan so as to be regarded as 'free women'.

population of In Gall has married a woman from the autochthonous clans and from this number again half with the most prestigious and also the smallest clan.

A similar situation can be seen among the Hausa population. There are large numbers of celibates (11), 8 marriages with women from an autochthonous clan, several of them '*d'affranchies*', and only one of them is with a woman from the Isherifen clan (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 25). It is a case of a Hausa Marabou, which in a way supports our presumption that the Hausa are generally considered as being of a lower status among the autochthonous clans. From the available material we could not trace any data on intermarriages between Hausa and Arabs and we assume, from the omission of this data, that the number must be very small.

Only in the case of the 12 persons of Agades origin we have mentioned before can we see a certain degree, at least on the level of marriages, of integration into the original population as they have all married autochthonous women (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 26).

Marriage patterns from the viewpoint of the 'foreign sedentary populations' (a male 'foreigner' marrying a woman of any kind of origin):

	Arab	Hausa	Ingelshi ⁴¹	Agades	Tuareg	single
Arab	11	?	8 (4; 4; 0; 0)	none	3	11
Hausa	?	?	8 (1) ⁴²	none	?	8
Agades	None	none	12	none	none	none

As we can see, a proper and detailed fieldwork would be needed in order to gain a full picture of marriage patterns among the sedentary populations of In Gall and Tegiddan-tesemt. There are at the moment more questions to be answered than those already answered. We are lacking information especially on the sedentary inhabitants of Tuareg origin. At the same time, we do not know anything about putative changes resulting from these intermarriages. Would it have any influence concerning integration, status, etc., if a member of a 'foreign population' married an autochthonous woman?

⁴¹ We are using the general term for the autochthonous population. In cases where specific clans are quoted they will be stated in the following manner: total number and in the brackets the specific numbers in the following order (Isherifen; Isawaghen; Inusufa; Imesdraghen).

⁴² Some of them have been separated, as already mentioned above.

As we can see from the marriage patterns, the community although in a heterogeneous setting and thus under various sorts of contact situations maintains a high inner homogeneity. There are rarely any marriages between men of one of the clans and 'foreign women', which led Bernus to the statement that "... *la communauté Ingelshi reste repliée sur elle-même, notamment en pratiquant une endogamie presque totale*" (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 26).

We are also lacking sources that would reveal the marriage patterns in the past. We suppose that such a small population had to intermarry with the surrounding groups as degenerative signs would have emerged.

At the same time, there have not been any restrictions on marriages between inhabitants of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt. These two factors together must have played an important role in shaping a unified community with a strong identification of its members with the rest of the related population. It is not only very clear who and/or what oppose these intermarriages between the 'autochthonous' and 'foreign' communities. Is it the original population, as Bernus indirectly suggests (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 27), or is it the foreign population? And what was the situation in the past? We do not really get any closer to the answer about the relation of this population to the Songhay and Tuareg.

Other contact populations (nomadic)

As we will be able to see, the population of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt is exceptional in at least one sense: it is the only permanent, sedentary settlement in an exclusively nomadic area (the closest important sedentary population is in Agades). The population surrounding Ingelshi society is mostly nomadic Tuareg. Some of them are itinerant permanently around the area of In Gall, some are coming from the south only at the time of 'salt cure'/*cure salé* (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 8).

The overall number of population administered by In Gall is 14,885. Without the 1,901 in In Gall and 474 in Tegidda-n-tesemt we are left with quite a number of nomadic ones who dramatically outnumber the sedentary Ingelshi population.

In general, there are two main groups of nomadic Tuareg,⁴³ *Kel Air* and *Kel Ahaggar*. The former live during the rainy season in areas south of Tegidda-n-tesemt, the latter have their original territory more north-eastern (Bernus, E. 1981: 8) and started migrating to this area only during the 19th century. Some of them (Kel Rebsa, Isokonuten, etc.) have already integrated into the population of Air. The main two tribes of Kel Air are *Igdalen* and *Kel Fadey*. Members of Igdalen⁴⁴ have various religious functions and speak a language (*Tagdalt*) similar/related to *Tasawaq*, "...où s'associent les termes et les formes d'origine tamasheq et songhay" (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 8). They came from the area of Ahaggar and do not create a political unity as they are spread over several regions and each of the fraction is adjusted to its neighbours - warriors (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 9).⁴⁵ It is not only language that makes them so distant from the other Tuareg populations. They preserve also their distant culture and their way of life is radically remote from the other Tuareg groups (Adamou 1979: 27).⁴⁶ In the area of In Gall there are two main sub-groups of Igdalen, *Kel Tofey* and *Kel Amdit*.⁴⁷ On the other hand, members of the second main Tuareg tribe *Kel Fadey*⁴⁸ are warriors (causing in past a lot of disturbance on the caravan routes) and create an autonomous political confederation with a hierarchic structure, which was preserved until very recent times. They started migrating to the area of In Gall at the end of the 18th century after spending a certain period of time in the mountainous area north-east of the Air, in the valley called Fadey (Adamou 1979: 30). The migrations from Ahaggar were generally driven by the seek of better pastures and their appearance in the area of In Gall are of recent date; some of them came at the beginning of the 20th century only (Adamou 1979: 30-31).

⁴³ We should bear on mind the very hierarchical structure of Tuareg population. Families or tents group into tribes (Taouchitt), tribes into confederations or groups and they are under authority of the Sultan/Aménokal of Agades. There is severe inequality between the tribes in accordance with social classes. Nevertheless the social structure of Tuareg society has undergone serious decomposition since the droughts in 1968-1974 (Adamou 1979: 39).

⁴⁴ They are the only remaining group from the Libyan and Berber migrations that have not mixed up with the Black populations (Adamou 1979: 27).

⁴⁵ Adamou (1979: 27) states that most Tuareg are afraid of them and therefore prefer to live in isolation.

⁴⁶ Adamou (1979: 27) also states that they call themselves Isherifen and that they came from an area close to Mecca. So what is their real connection with the Isherifen, prestigious clan of In Gall? Do they belong to the same population as both of them possess the religious influence?

⁴⁷ We will get to their relations with the Ingelshi population later on.

⁴⁸ They migrated to the area of In Gall some time at the end of the 18th century (Bernus 1981: 23).

In addition to these Tuareg groups, creating generally early migrations, there are two Arabic-speaking groups, *Kunta I* and *Kunta II*, which came from Mali at the beginning of the 20th century (Adamou 1979: 31).⁴⁹ *Kunta I* are nomadic in the region west of In Gall, *Kunta II* east of Tegidda-n-tesemt, in the vicinity of Kel Fadey. To this recent emigration belong also the Fulbe groups (Adamou 1979: 31).

Population numbers of the various groups belonging to the administrative district of In Gall are approximately (Adamou 1979: 37):

Kel Faset	4,516
Igdalen	3,088
Kel Ahaggar	2,555
Kunta	1,365
Fulbe	986

At first glance we can see a minority population of Ingelshi in the midst of a Tuareg majority. If we compare the numbers of the sedentary Ingelshi with the nomadic groups, the situation is not that clear anymore. First of all, the population structure of the neighbouring areas is dispersed in groups. They do not create a compact homogeneous cultural unit which would impose a permanent and strong pressure on the putative Language Island. And as they are nomadic, the intensity and forms of contact situations vary along the season as we will deal with in the following paragraphs and are not obviously as strong as they would be between two neighbouring sedentary populations.

Occupation

There are two major, and nearly exclusive, professions exercised by the Ingelshi society. First is the exploitation of salines in Tegidda-n-tesemt, the second considers the palm groves and their maintenance in In Gall. As the population of both of the places has blended through frequent intermarriages (Tegidda's *Inusufa* and *Imesdraghen*, and In Gall's *Isherifen* and *Isawaghen*), and as the children stay

⁴⁹ Intermarriages between the *Kunta* and Tuareg women (especially from the Kel Fadey) are very common (Adamou 1979: 31).

integrated in the father's family, the ownership is not anymore restricted to the groups that have their origin in the respective oasis (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 56). Thus some of the inhabitants or descendants of the original population of Tegidda-n-tesemt posses palm groves in In Gall and vice versa, which adds another reason for considering inhabitants of these two oases as single population.⁵⁰

Salines of Tegidda-n-tesemt

The creation and development of Tegidda-n-tesemt was closely connected, and so far is, with the fact that an important source of salt had been found there. As we can nowadays see, this is the only condition for the existence of this settlement. This has of course attracted traders who have been coming there in the time of salt production, but would not stay for long. Other favouring factors could be only hardly found, and at the moment we can not talk any more about a permanent settlement as the former population is resident in In Gall. It seems even, when considering the historical facts, that it was a transitional place. After the destruction of Azelik-Takadda sometimes in the 16th century, part of its population moved to this place (Azelik-Takadda consisted more or less of a pentagon of places and Tegidda-n-tesemt was one of them), and part moved south, towards In Gall. We could interpret this as part of the continuous, general tendency to move south of Sahara, as the climate and conditions have been getting harsher.

The exploitation of salt is undergone in the dry and cold months,⁵¹ that means between December and May and the salines are abandoned in the rainy season when only few people are remaining in Tegidda-n-tesemt. In the year 1970, it was 26 persons staying in Tegidda-n-tesemt, the rest was at that time in In Gall (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 30). *"Dès premières pluies, Tegidda se vide, et tout le monde rentre à In Gall, où les maisons sont plus confortables pour affronter les intempéries, et où va commencer la saison de dattes"* (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 89). This quotation of Bernus confirms not only the fact that there is not any more significant permanent population of Tegidda-n-

⁵⁰ „...on arrive donc à une situation foncière extrêmement complexe: en fait, le dattier est un bien immobilier, qui peut être hérité, donné ou vendu.“ (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 56).

⁵¹ The climatological year, in Sahel, is divided into 4 seasons: rainy season (Jun/July to mid September), followed by a short hot period, still very humid (mid September to mid November), then cold season to the end of February, followed by a hot period from March till the end of May.

tesemt, but also the complementarity of these two activities (salt production and date harvest) which are assigned to a certain period of the season.

But only rarely is the owner (exclusively man) of the salines working on them by himself. He gets usually involved in other activities as for example selling at the market and lets his family (wife and relatives) take care of the salt production (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 35) as the status does not allow it.

It is difficult to express the importance and value of the salt but the production of it is generally regarded as the best and safest way of making living as can be seen on the following common local opinion: *"Si l'on a du courage, et si l'on sait s'organiser, le travail du sel est d'un bon rendement"* (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 88).

The tradition and datation of the salt mining⁵² is connected with the creation of this settlement. There were suggestions made by Barth and supported by Lhote about the possibility that Takedda as mentioned by Ibn Battuta (his journey took place around 1350) and by Ibn Khaldun is in fact Tegidda-n-tesemt and that the description of copper mining is so closely reminding of the today's salt mining that in fact it was just a result of an inappropriate transcription of the script and what they saw were salines and not the copper mines (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 14). This would put the existence of these settlements and also the existence of the salines even before the year 1350 when Ibn Battuta's sojourn took place. Urvoy situates the discovery to the 18th century and Abedie suggests that it is older then two hundred years (Bernus & Bernus 1972:30). Bernus does not find any historical support for these statements and supports his hypothesis on the state of the accumulated soil around the salines which would be possible within three centuries (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 30). There is evidence that the salt mining had an importance tradition even before 18th century (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 13).

In Gall and the palm groves

In contrary to Tegidda-n-tesemt, In Gall's main income comes from palm trees. There are extensive palm groves attached to the town from the south positioned on both

⁵² Terms for the salines are in Tasawaq as well as in Tamajaq (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 35).

banks of the seasonal river passing by. The tradition of date production is long lasting but it is difficult to trace its origin. As it has already been mentioned in the chapter on creation of In Gall, the local tradition assigns the importation of palm trees to two *Isherifen*, founders of In Gall (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 18). The legendary place of origin gave the name to the trees with better dates, *el medina* (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 50). Unfortunately, from the age of the trees we can not estimate any supporting datation as they are annually changed for new plants in order to gain better harvest.

The maintenance of the groves and especially the harvest requires a strong cooperation from non-Ingelshi population. Some families have servants in a semi-independent position, who look, accompanied by members of the owner's/owners' family, after the palm groves all year round. Just before the fruits get ripe and before the harvest starts, nomadic Tuareg tribes of *Iburgalen* and *Izeliten* (from the *Kel Fadey* confederation) are very often called to camp in the palm quarters, in order to guard the harvest in exchange for the dates that fell down due to the winds (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 54).

As we have already mentioned, quarters of palm groves can be possessed not only by In Gall inhabitants but through the intermarriages, also by the former populations of Tegidda-n-tesemt. Also foreigners are not excluded from the ownership. But there are no traces of a division of the palm quarters in accordance with the origin or social status of the owners, as one would expect (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 56).

The palm groves and salines are in a certain way bounding factors of the Ingelshi community. Some of the ownerships in case of palm trees are, as a result of marriages, combined (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 56), that means that there are more owners and thus all of them have to perform their duties together. The acquisition and heritage does not differ from the Tuareg tradition, only that in this case, it plays much more important role as the property is immobile and of a great value.

For preparing the palm beds there is a need for acacias which can only be found 6 or 7 kilometres away from the town, in Shimumenin in the North or in Aselila in the east and as the delivery would be very difficult especially in the dry season the prize is quite high (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 50).

Other professions

As we could see, salines and palm groves are inner bounding factors of the Ingelshi society. In comparison to that is life stock the strongest bounding factor between the Ingelshi society and the nomadic Tuareg groups. The breeding of animals is of a great importance, as marriage compensation consists, by the sedentary Ingelshi, along the Tuareg tradition, of camels.⁵³ Other dowry (given by the bride's father) is regarded, by Isherifen, Imesdraghen and Inusufa, only as a replacement of the camels, and above all, as a failure to fulfil the strong ancient tradition, which is of the Tuareg origin (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 76). The assistance of nomadic Tuareg is thus required as they are the ones who look after the herds of the Ingelshi. In exchange for a monetary compensation, the Tuareg also use the camels of the Ingelshi inhabitants for caravan trading.

The camel herds are even of a greater importance than it could seem. Animals that are used for milk production are often an element of prestige and they manifest the system of complex relations of the inhabitants of In Gall with the nomadic Tuareg tribes (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 77).

The Ingelshi are then people of salt and dates. There are hardly any other professions they would do, except for the trading connected with dates and salt and other supplementary jobs in time of low activity at the salines and/or in the palm groves. This is, for example, the case of mats' production which is an activity of women, who work in the dry season at the salines and produce these during the rainy season. And it is meant especially for sale to the passing Igdalen and Kel Fadey Tuareg. This narrow specialisation means that they are strongly dependent on other populations and above all on the import of products. Instead of a relation of dependency we could talk of symbiosis, especially with the nomadic Tuareg. Another example for that, next to the breeding of life stock, is blacksmithing. There is about a dozen of Tuareg families who are doing the blacksmith's work not only for the sedentary population but also for the passing nomads (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 77).

Apart from the blacksmiths, there is no tradition of an attached social category (on ethnic basis) of craftsmen in the Ingelshi society as it can be found among other

⁵³ It is two camels in case of Isawaghen, three animals by Isherifen and even more by Imesdraghen and Inusufa.

sedentary populations south from here. Thus most of the required products must be imported. This concerns all the products of weavers, that has been always imported from the south or north and nowadays also the shoes as the local products are struggling to compete with the strong, foreign competition from Tanout and Zinder. Also pottery is bought from the Ikanawan who specialise on it. The local Ingelshi women produce only certain types of pots (less fine than the imported products), as for example pots for kus-kus, which are of a specific shape (the same ones would be found in Agades!) and can not be found among the nomadic Tuareg tribes (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 81-82).

What could remind us of a category of profession on ethnic basis is slaughtering of animals as most of the butchers are of Hausa origin. But it is more of a profession for poor people and unwealthy members of the Ingelshi society who can also perform this profession as it can be very lucrative. It is not only regarded as a profession of a very low status but also the local population believe that "*...il faut être l'objet d'une malédiction divine pour en venir à exercer ce métier*" (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 77).

Trading and function of the market

In Gall oasis has a complex, important economic role in the region. The market that takes place there is visited not only by the local sedentary population and the nomadic tribes, but also by producers and merchants from the south. In the vicinity of 100 kilometres we cannot find a market of a similar importance. But it would be false to think that this 'triangular' exchange (local sedentary population - 'local' nomadic groups - foreign merchants) is happening at the same time. It is not always an institutionalised market with a set, specific time, when the traders would meet, but it highly varies along the year as respective season plays a major role in the life of the three populations involved and have an affect on the goods they are offering (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 83), and/or demanding.

Thus the commercial activity goes all the year round, and only the products, their importance and the groups of population involved differ. Nevertheless, the most active period is the 'winter season' when not only the nomadic groups of the region (Kel Fadey, Igdalen, Kel Ahaggar) but also animal breeders from the south (Iullemmeden

from Azawagh, Kel Gress from Madaoua region and Fulbe-Bororos from the region of Tahoua or Dakoro) arrive for "*la grande transhumance et la 'cure salée'*" (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 90).

Only the trade with various crafts and other (than dates) alimentation takes place 4 times a year. The same pattern is followed in Agades, in contrary to the weekly markets in the southern areas (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 90).

This does not apply to Tegidda-n-tesemt. Although the salt is the most important trade product of the Ingelshi society itself, as it is the major source of cash (although cases, when it would be exchanged for other products are not rare), the trading with it, as well as with other products in Tegidda-n-tesemt has a specific character, due to the fact that most of its inhabitants are nowadays resident in In Gall. This leads to a limited need for a trade activity in Tegidda-n-tesemt, when most of the trading has shifted to In Gall and thus it does not really lead to any stronger and long lasting contact situations and we can talk of one market place in In Gall with its extension in Tegidda-n-tesemt.⁵⁴

It is mostly Kel Gress Tuareg and Hausa-Damergou along the Iullemeden from Azawagh (they come from the region of Kano, at the limit of Ader, and trade with corn/grain) who come with the caravans, but also other nomadic non-Tuareg buyers as for example Arabs, who pay for the salt in cash, and are according to Bernus always made to pay more than the others (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 86). Is this caused by the fact that they have not any other importance for the Ingelshi society than monetary that they are forced to pay more?

These groups do not usually stay very long as the commodity/load (salt) is ready in bags. When the caravan has to wait for loading, the prize of salt drops down and is disadvantageous for the producer. For those who have to stay for a few days, there is a special camp for this purpose just south of the village. These groups are not accommodated by the Ingelshi members as in the case of Kel Ahaggar, Kel Fadey and Tegareygarey Tuareg as they do not maintain any closer personal and institutional relations with them (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 86).

⁵⁴ The merchants of salt come with their caravans only after selling or 'pre-changing' their goods in In Gall. It is virtually exchanged with the owner of the salines in In Gall, who would then send a message with the caravan to his employees in Tegidda, where he would state the amount of salt they are supposed to give out (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 85).

As we have already mentioned, the salt production is limited to certain period of the year and then the importance of date trading in In Gall takes over. The moment the rainy season starts, groups of nomadic Fulbe and Tuareg break their camps around In Gall as dates become, in this period of the year, the most important alimentation.⁵⁵

Nevertheless it is not only the trading with dates and salt that the inhabitants of In Gall are involved in.⁵⁶ In these two cases they are direct sellers and it is the most essential monetary income. They play an important role in other transactions as well. Very often the local inhabitants (Ingelshi, sometimes joined by Hausa) serve as intermediates. The products are usually bought, from the foreign traders, 'en gross' and then it is only sold further to the nomadic Tuareg in smaller quantities, as they possess very limited financial means which do not allow them to buy anything more but amounts satisfying their urgent need at each time.⁵⁷

Even in cases, when the actual sellers and buyers are present at the market at the same time, members of Ingelshi society function as interpreters, as they speak Hausa as well as Tamajaq/Tamasheq, and thus provide a connection between the nomadic and agricultural world. There is a function of *dillali* who negotiates the price for the seller and at the same time is feasting him at home.⁵⁸ It is always the same Ingelshi family who is hosting the Tuareg family (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 95-6). This specific relation goes to such an extent, that houses of the most influential Isherifen families have even, for this occasion, a special room called *zawre*, which serves for accommodating their 'clients'/foreigners (nomadic Tuareg neighbours or inhabitants of Agades) or storing parts of their equipment there (fire wood, parts of tents). For example the chief of Kel Fadey and his sons always stay in the house of *alqali*, the Muslim judge (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 80). After the deal is made it has to be approved by a written decree in Arabic. For this reason a marabou of Adages origin is established at the market (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 96).

⁵⁵ Just to show the importance of the production: the total of the harvest can amount to about 140 tuns a year.

⁵⁶ The trade in In Gall is directed in both directions. There are also caravans organised by inhabitants of In Gall going about three times a year to the markets in the south.

⁵⁷ This also applies to the salt purchase by nomadic groups of Tuareg, Arabs and Fulbe (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 95).

⁵⁸ This applies to the traders with animals but not with corn/grain who sleep at the market (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 97).

As can be seen, the groups that play the most important role in the trade are Ingelshi, Tuareg as well as Hausa (although their number is lower). The latter have, apart from other activities, nearly a 'monopoly' on traditional medications and In Gall is to a certain extent changing point of these products between the Sudan zone and central Sahara (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 99).

We have already mentioned earlier the ancient tradition of the Arabic commercial activities in In Gall (and not only there). They lived in quarters attached to the market, more at the periphery of the society and did not integrate too much into the local population.⁵⁹ The flourishing Arabic trade between Air and Fezzan and Libya and the 'commercial houses' diminished at the end of the 19th century as a result of the new European partition of the continent as well as because of the competition of the ports in the Guinea Gulf. Only a minor commercial activity remained on the route Tamanrasset - Tahoua (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 100). They are of a greater importance to the nomadic population. Certain nomadic groups establish special relations with an Arab trader who then becomes their 'exclusive supplier' of tee, sugar, cloth and other smaller products and sells it very often on credit (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 101).

The proof of a long lasting caravan activity on the axe Agades-In Gall and from there south-west to Abalak, Tahoua and so on is supported by the fact that the areas along this route are completely deforested which makes the wood so expensive (Bernus, E.: 1981 - Maps). We would have to compare the situation with other places in order to find out about the course of such a process and its duration. What it proves for sure is the current trade activity along this caravan path but it does not really say much about the past activities as the area has not been rich on trees so the deforestation did not have to take too long.

⁵⁹ They were even called 'White' (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 100).

5. In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt in the mirror of history

What we have to try to approach and find answers to in this section is the actual creation of this sedentary settlement. We will try to point out reasons for the preservation and changes of a cultural and, above all, linguistic unit. What interests us is the relation between the Songhay population and, thus, the Songhay Empire and the Tuareg world. The reason for that is that we need to find putative factors involved in the creation and later on development of this possible Language Island. First, we will briefly describe the overall social, political and economic situation in the area under consideration that is of the Air region and Air/Agades Sultanate. Second, we will list the possible relations of the Songhay Empire to the Air Sultanate and the commercial activities that were the strongest bounding factors of the area. We will point out the most important events and dates concerning the Songhay Empire.

Available sources

We are facing very scarce and limited historical sources in quantity as well as reliability. We only deal here with secondary works based on Arab, European works and above all on the two *Tarikhs* of Timbuktu by Sudanese authors Al-Sa'dī and Mahmūd Ka'ti, who focus on the middle of the seventeenth century and serve as the fundamental source for the history of the Songhay Empire for this specific period. And although the history of the Songhay Empire is well known and documented through internal and external sources it does not tell us much about the ethnic constitution and about the geographically peripheral areas of this Empire. Native scholars focused their attention on writing down the historical situation of the Songhay Empire quite late, only in the 16th century and only in the middle of the following century two chronicles were comprised independently from each other. Ta'rīkh al-Sūdān and Ta'rīkh al-Fattāsh were written only two generations after the Songhay Empire was destroyed (1591 by Marokans). But also the older history was incorporated into the chronicles by using oral tradition. There are many sources and works on the history of Songhay but only the history of dynasty Gaskia in the 16th century stays on profound fundament. And the oral tradition gives us only very imperfect picture and more questions are raised than solved (Cissoko 1992: 187).

Early history of the Air area

The original population of the area of Air was of Negroid race, apparently of Hausa, or rather proto-Hausa (Nicolaisen 1962: 15). This is supported by Tuareg oral tradition as well as by Gobirawa, Azna and Tazarawa traditions (Adamou 1979: 26) and also by the fact that the name Air is of Tuareg origin and younger than the Hausa expression *Azben* (Nicolaisen 1962: 14 - quoting Barth) or *Abzin* (Hunwick 1971a: 218; Adamou 1979: 27). Several successive immigration waves of the Tuareg populations took place in the 11th and 12th century⁶⁰ and would slowly drive out the autochthonous Gobirawa⁶¹ with the chief's settlement in Asode and by the 16th century there would hardly be any of them left (Hunwick 1971a: 219). They established here a loose political organisation reflecting the needs of the largely nomadic Tuareg society. The new accumulation of nomadic tribes resulted in tensions between them over the new territory,⁶² especially over the division of pastures.⁶³ This political need was joined by an economic one as the area was an important commercial crossroad, and it became necessary to secure the trade routes and to make sure that some Tuareg groups did not collect tolls which would threaten the trade. Thus, a need for some functions of a state became evident⁶⁴ and to secure the neutrality of the ruler who was meant to be an arbiter of the conflicts, a person from outside of the Tuareg society⁶⁵ was looked for. The Sultan was an outsider (his origin is not very clear) and even today he is chosen among the offspring of mothers of servile (Buzu) origin (Hunwick 1971a: 220; Nicolaisen 1962: 26; Adamou 1979: 48). Thus, sometimes in the 14th century we are facing a new phase of the social and economic organisation of the Air area with the Takadda as the centre of this area, including Tegidda-n-tesemt only a few kilometres south.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ There are other hypotheses about an earlier arrival of some of the Tuareg in the 1st millenium; others were driven towards Air by Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaim in the 11th century (Nicolaisen 1962: 21; Adamou 1979: 27).

⁶¹ Another hypothesis is that Gobirawa created only the ruling alien aristocracy over proto-Hausa-speaking people (Hunwick 1971: 192).

⁶² As Hunwick suggests (Hunwick 1971: 219) they were intensified after driving out most of the Gobirawa and when this common enemy stopped playing a unification role among the Tuareg.

⁶³ The high quality of pastures was according to Nicolaisen (1962: 21) the main reason for the first migration of Tuareg to the Air.

⁶⁴ It was an agreement between several Tuareg groups (Bernus 1981: 81-2).

⁶⁵ Some state that only from outside the major Tuareg groups.

⁶⁶ "*L'itinéraire d'Ibn Battûta ne l'amène pas par hasard dans cette cité; c'est son rôle économique régional qui y attire cet auteur.*" (Bernus & Cressier eds. 1991: 363).

The Sultan (the first one was elected in 1405)⁶⁷ became an arbiter of the clans' and tribes' disputes, he represented the Tuareg societies in the outside world, especially in the Songhay Empire (Hunwick 1971a: 218-9), but never really held political power (Smith 1971: 166). Although his authority was always very limited, the position and role of the Sultan was surprisingly long-lasting (Bernus 1981: 82). This was surely supported by his prestige resulting from the commercial income, when every trader passing through Agades had to pay a certain tax to him. The Sultanate of Air/Agades could compete in wealth and power with Bornu thanks to the location on the trade routes from Hausaland to the north. The peak of Air was attained during the reign of Muhammad el-Mubarak (1654-87) and it profited from political instability of the neighbouring states (Adeleye 1971: 514).

Apart from that the only populations paying annual tribute to him were black inhabitants of Agades and then In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt (Nicolaisen 1962: 27)! As the respect for the Sultan even ceased in the following centuries, Kel Fadey Tuaregs replaced him in the 19th century and started collecting the taxes from In Gall themselves (Nicolaisen 1962: 31).

Concerning the population we have a layer of Tuareg (speaking Tamasheq/Tamajaq and other Tuareg varieties), mostly nomadic, who drove the Hausa speaking Gobirawa to the south, leaving only remnants, insignificant numbers of the autochthon population. Then we still have to find out from where and how the Songhay-speaking population of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt emerged. We will also consider the situation of Agades, as linguistically it seems to have had a similar destiny although at a certain point (and we will try to point out when and how) it took a different direction.

Songhay Empire and the 'control' over the Air (Agades Sultanate) - trade routes

During the reign of Sunni *Ali* (1464-92) Songhay changed from a somehow homogeneous state into a large multi-ethnic empire (Hunwick 1971: 225). The main

⁶⁷It was only in the mid 15th century when the town of Agades (neutral position and just off the routes) was founded as a commercial centre of Air and the stool of the Sultan (Nicolaisen 1962: 26; Bernus 1972: 17). But it started playing an important role only after defeating the town of Azelik (Bernus 1972: 18).

source of wealth of Songhay (as already before of Mali empire) was coming from the trade along the Gao-Takkeda-Ahir (Air)-North Africa caravan route (Adeleye 1971: 491)⁶⁸, and it was necessary to secure it as the trade was interfered by local Tuareg groups (Hunwick 1971: 231). It became even more urgent since the Bornu Empire started expanding towards Songhay (and the Air region was on the way) at the beginning of the 16th century (Adeleye 1971: 491).

According to *Tarikh-as-Sudan*, Ali's successor Askia *Mohammed* launched in 1500-1501 an expedition against Agades to secure this commercial highway to Egypt.⁶⁹ It was not his first experience with Air as he passed through here on the way to Mecca⁷⁰ in 1498 and we can assume that the 'reason' of the expeditions against Agades must have been inspired by the richness of this place. After this campaign Agades had to pay annual tribute to the Songhay Empire but it was left rather semi-autonomous, than fully under the control of Songhay,⁷¹ although in general a systematic centralization and absolute monarchy differed Songhay from the traditional political systems of federation kingdoms, as was the case of the empires of Ghana and Mali (Cissoko 1992: 196). This situation led to another punitive expedition in 1516.⁷² The troops spent a year in Agades "*enforcing Songhay authority and exacting tribute*" (Hunwick 1971a: 221)⁷³ and, what is even more significant, Songhay garrison was left in the town. "*La seconde conséquence fut l'instalation dans le sud-ouest de l'Air, notamment à In Gall et Agadez, des colonies songhay pour consolider la conquête mais aussi pour renforcer la route caravanière Gao-Egypte*" (Amadou 1979: 53). This conquest of Air by Songhay is put under doubt by Bernus who suggests that this might have been only 'invented' later by Songhay historians in order to make the power of the

⁶⁸ Cissoko states that during the reign of Sunni 'Alī Ber, during the second half of the 15th century, the salt and merchandise trade went via Tadmekka, couple of hundreds kilometers east of Takedda and Agades, to/from Egypt and Libya (Cissoko 1992: 187-188).

⁶⁹ Ibn Battuta (1353) gives a number of 12, 000 camels that get each year from Egypt to Mali (quoted by Adamou 1979: 49).

⁷⁰ According to *Tarikh El Fettach*, the number of slaves and servants accompanying Askia Muhammed was about 800 (Hama 1980: 47). Cissoko talks about 800 horesmen and other religious dignitaries (Cissoko 1992: 194). The Songhay were traditional warriors and the privileged were the cavalry. The infantry were the most numerous and were drawn from all ranks of society, including slaves (Cissoko 1992: 200).

⁷¹ Indirect rule was applied also to the Hausa states of Kano etc. (Cissoko 1992: 199).

⁷² Amadou states 1514 to 1515 (1979: 52) and other slight differences appear in the dating of these events.

⁷³ This was a common procedure, which can be seen from on the example of Katsina that was also tributary to Songhay Empire at the beginning of the 16th century but as the tribute was not paid a military expedition was sent in 1514 (Hunwick 1971a: 214-5).

empire look more impressive (Bernus 1972: 21). Although there might be some doubts about the reliability of the written sources (the two *tarikhs*) on the Songhay empire, from the linguistic situation we assume that there must have been a Songhay speaking population living in these towns (and also in Tegidda-n-tesemt) for a certain period of time.

Not only do we lack exact numbers on how large the garrison was and how long it stayed, to what extent they integrated or if they stayed aside, we also have no knowledge about their ethnic origin as the army was multiethnic.

Songhay control over the area did not apparently last long. Although there is no persuasive evidence about the tribute and relation to the Songhay empire,⁷⁴ we know that as early as in 1532 the Air/Agades Sultanate was wrested by Bornu and that in 1549, after the death of Askia Ishaq, most of the satellite states had stopped paying the tribute (Hunwick 1971: 232) as the Songhay Empire was undergoing a serious decay, which made its conquest by the Moroccan army much easier (Hale 1996: 2).⁷⁵

The position of Air was very tempting also in the following centuries. It was first Bornu, then Kebbi, later on joined by Kano and Katsina, that kept showing their interest in this area, which remained over several centuries a staging post along important commercial highways. First from the Western Sudan to North Africa (Adeleye 1971: 485) and later, after its decline and extinction at the beginning of the 17th century, the focus was slowly shifted to Bilma in Kawar (sources of salt) which became a central factor of the trans-Saharan caravan trade in the 18th century.⁷⁶ From Agades the trade route would then continue to the South, to Gobir and Kebbi (Adeleye 1971: 516), where grains and other products would come from in exchange for salt.

After this date we can't really expect, as far as the data provide, any regular contact with the Songhay-speaking population and, thus, the Songhay element of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt must have already been settled by then. What we have to ask is why

⁷⁴ According to Amadou, the tribute was paid until "...la fin de l'Empire songhay en 1591" (Amadou 1979: 53), but he does not provide any sufficient evidence.

⁷⁵ The Songhay Empire reached its apogee during the reign of Askiya Dāwūd (1549-83) when the trading towns were more active than ever (Cissoko 1992: 195). After his death a civil war sparked off and the empire collapsed.

⁷⁶ And also the control over it was a new element in Air and other Tuareg rivalries with Bornu, which escalated from the side of Tuaregs especially in the second half of the 18th century (Adeleye 1971: 506).

the trade with salt went to such a distance when the sources of salt were much closer, in our case in Tegidda-n-tesemt? As we have already stated the salines in Tegidda-n-tesemt were already established at that time, which probably means that the trade exceeded the capacity and possibilities of the salines in Tegidda-n-tesemt and thus there was a need to look for new sources.

Creation of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt

Just to give a possible idea about the creation of these urban settlements on the fringe of Sahara we have to have a look at Arabic scripts of the 10th to 16th century. Several authors (for the first time Ibn Haukal - cca 998) mention tribe Massufa (it is hard to say if they were 'Tuaregs' and we will not go into the discussion about moving and untraceable ethnicities). They were in the first references fully nomadic and slowly started taking part in the trade routs and playing role in several towns. So we can see a progressive adaptation to changing conditions. Bernus & Cressier suggest that the only population that kept the name of the Massufa tribe are the Inusufa of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 358). But there is no chance to find out their demographic constitution, what other groups were there and whether they were only one group out of many groups who specialized on trade activities. "*...nous serions plutôt tentés, ..., au moins dans une première période, des relations de complémentarité, d'alliances, d'emprunts réciproques, tels qu'ils ont finalement perduré jusqu'à nos jours, faisant apparaître ou disparaître, au gré des circonstances, des groupes nouveaux issues d'un métissage culturel bien attesté au moins sur le plan linguistique*" (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 360).

In case of In Gall we are dealing with a few phases of sedentarisation which could have taken place sometimes between the 6th and the 12th century. This is based on the C14 datation but no written sources mention these "urban dwellings" (above all Takkada as the social and economical centre) until the 12th century (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 362).

At this period of time the central role was played by Takkada, which was constituted from several cores that can be nowadays found under the names of Azelik wa-n Birni, Azelik wa-n Tadghaghat, In Zazan, Bangu Béri, Gélél and Tegidda-n-tesemt (Bernus

& Cressier 1991: 365).⁷⁷ Takkada's importance was based above all on the copper mines, salines⁷⁸ and caravan trade routs passing by.

When looking at the available sources we can assume that the importance of towns was shifting and the excavations have revealed that a number of urban centres used to be much higher and their importance was shifting, which led to extinction of some of them. Agades, In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt are the only remaining urban centres of this area. There were more of them as the ruins show and their importance was also changing.

At the pre-colonial time there were other permanent centres whose importance was restricted. One of them, Aouderas, was in 1905 the second biggest agglomeration after Agades and its population constituted above all from war prisoners working palm hoves and wheat fields (Adamou 1979: 32). It seems that there were two different structures of permanent settlements. One could be called towns; the second were agglomerations whose population focused on the alimentation of the surrounding population.

The change that took place around the beginning of the 16th century seems to be very important. Worsened climatique conditions as well as decline of the copper mines caused the decay of Takkada and of the surrounding pentapole. The political power shifted to Agades and at that time the settlement in In Gall was apparently founded, following the tradition of Takkada as part of its population moved to In Gall, the southernmost palm hove of Sahara (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 368). And the current symbiosis of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt was then constituted.

Also the oral tradition of the Isawaghen in In Gall tells us about the dispersion of the Azelik's population after it was defeated by Agades Sultan. According to it part of the population went to the south, part established itself in Tegidda-n-tesemt where the salt activity was already existing (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 289). So In Gall could have been established sometimes around the year 1520 (Hamani 1989: 179).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ No archeological evidence concerning In Gall for this period of time has been found.

⁷⁸ By Takkada's salines we mean the salines in Tegidda-n-tesemt as this oasis was part of this important pentapole.

⁷⁹ This is the time of the reign of Askiya Muhammad who encouraged agriculture by setting up numerous farming settlements for slaves brought back from his wars

Before the Sultan moved to Agades and thus converted it into an important commercial and also political centre there were no references about this town. The early Arabic authors as Al Omari (1137) and Ibn Khaldun (1395) would mention above all town called Takadda as its copper mines were main source of wealth of the Mali state. The archaeological excavations revealed that it actually corresponds with Azelik, just north-east of Tegidda-n-tesemt.

Agades became known and drew attention only in the 15th century when it became seat of the Sultan and after the defeat of Takedda. Thus the data concerning its earlier stages rely on the oral tradition only, which supplies us with several versions of creation of the town which do not show a great extent of coherence (Adamou 1979: 43).

We are lacking sufficient data to state the exact creation of these two settlements and above all the appearance of the Songhay element in these two oases. There are several hypotheses suggesting their origin but none of them can be taken for granted as they are based on unreliable sources. As the *Tarikhs* suggest the population are descendants of those who were left behind by Askia Mohammad. The problem is that the *Tarikhs* cannot serve us as a reliable source as they are commenting events that had taken place a few centuries before they were written and are partly based on oral history, which could have been influenced by many factors as for example the religion.⁸⁰ The same applies to the connection of the population of Igdalen, Agadez and In Gall, which resulted from the insufficient knowledge of Barth (Bernus 1972: 137 and 178). Urvoy (1936: 186) also suggests that In Gall was inhabited by the rests of Songhay population from the time of Askia Mohammad and adds that Tegidda-n-tesemt was created in the 18th century and at that time the centres of the area were In Gall and Azelik⁸¹. In Gall's population lived from palmhoves and in Azelik the richness came from the trading of copper and although there are suggestions that it came from the

(Cissoko 1992: 194). But we would not like to go that far and speculate about this possibility.

⁸⁰ „Au terme d'une analyse minutieuse des divers manuscrits du *Tarikh el Fettach* cet auteur arrive à la conclusion que les manuscrits en notre possession ont été manipulés et complétés au XVIII^e siècle sur l'ordre de Sheku Amadu“ (Levtzion 1971: 571-593).

⁸¹ About 75 km north from In Gall and about 20 km west from Tegidda-n-tesemt.

town itself, there is no evidence about the actual place of the mines. It is obvious that the Urvoy's assumptions are based on the two *Tarikhs*, partly on the oral history as he does not provide any other data.

The other source is the oral tradition of the inhabitants of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt. *“Les habitants d’In Gall prétendent que l’emplacement de leur village avait été acheté par leurs ancêtres du sultan d’ Agadez. Ils attribuent en effet à des blancs venus du nord la création de cette localité. Selon leur tradition, deux Isherifen (descendants du Prophète) venant de la Mecque avaient tenté le long de tout leur parcours de faire pousser des palmiers. Ils ne réussirent leur operation qu’au bord du kori In Gall où ils décidèrent de s’installer définitivement après avoir acheté le terrain au sultan d’Agadez...Les habitants de Teguidda-n-Teçum par contre se donnent une origine plus modeste. Ils se considèrent comme descendants des rescapés de la destruction de la ville d’Azelik par le sultan d’agadez. Il s’agit des gens de la ville d’Azelik qui furent épargnés par le désastre parce qu’ils étaient aux salines. A ce groupe se sont joints plus tard deux orphelins : un garçon, Amasdragh et une fille, Tanassafut dont l’éducation fut confiée à une captive par le sultan d’Agadez.”* (Adamou 1979: 32).

Bernus is also quoting local tradition (apparently using the same version as Adamou) that is mentioning two *Sherifs* from Mecca who brought palm trees to this area and who found favouring conditions for planting them in In Gall. They asked the Sultan of Agades to sell them the land which he found unusual as there was no habit of buying land in a nomadic area but finally fulfilled their wish. They were changing the dates and later on also established marriage relations and thus Imesdraghen and Inusufa left the unfriendly area of Tegidda-n-tesemt for In Gall (Bernus 1972: 18-19). It is hard to guess when these events took place and how to connect them with known historical data (installation of the first Sultan of Agades in 1405 according to the Chronicle of Agades; the journey of Leo Africanus at the beginning of the 16th century; reign of Askia Mohammed in the years 1493-1528; his travel to Mecca in 1495-97 and his possible "conquests" of Air (according to the two *Tarikhs*). We can not exclude that the local tradition is dealing with mystique creation and that the whole process could have been much longer and disrupted.

What the local tradition takes for granted is the common arrival of the Isherifen and Isawaghen. Isawaghen were in charge of preparing and planting the palms. So it seems that they have always been denied of the access to political power and had hierarchically subaltern position (Bernus 1972: 27).

The origin of the most numerous group Isawaghen is rather unknown. In the oral tradition there is not a single notion about their Songhay origin and it is rather extremely improbable that they would be slaves as there is no awareness of that among any of the members of the Ingelshi society: "*Les informateurs de toutes categories étaient d'accord sur un point : les Isawaghen ne sont pas des captifs.*" (Bernus 1972: 27).

The discovery of the salt mines is not very clear as well and the time around the mid 18th century was suggested (Abadie 1927: 276). But Bernus thinks that this late date would be rather surprising concerning the number of caravans and also the nomadic tribes passing through this area where sources of water are and were very limited (Bernus 1972: 13). This is supported by the importance and number of excavations/dig-ups that can be found in the areas and which suggest an activity prior to the 18th century (Lhote 1955: 386 - quoted by Bernus 1972: 13).

There were suggestions made by Barth and supported by Lhote about the possibility that Takedda as mentioned by Ibn Battuta (his journey took place around 1350) and by Ibn Khaldun is in fact Tegidda-n-tesemt and that the description of copper mining is so closely reminding of the today's salt mining (not really mining) and that in fact it was just a result of an inappropriate transcription of the script (Bernus 1972: 14). This would put the existence of these settlements even before the year 1350 when Ibn Battuta's sejour/journey took place. But although these theories were popular for quite some time there is no support for them and they are being refused as it is obvious that copper mining activities were vital in Takedda and the surrounding area (Bernus & Cressier 1991) and thus the connection with the salt mines is false.

The only thing we really know about is the situation of these two sedentary populations under the Air/Agades Sultanate. They were situated at a junction of influence of competing federations and thus in the middle of various and frequent

clashes between them. Only the archaeological excavations can help us in testing whether the hypothesis about the correspondence of Takedda and Tegidda-n-tesemt is correct but so far this hypothesis seems rather weak.

Agades

Agades is situated in an arid region, there was no important mineral wealth but the income and importance arose from the position and function as a middleman in the trans-Saharan trade. With the decline and extinction of the Gao-Agades-North African route, the Agades-Gobir-Kebbi route had supervened (Adeleye 1971: 516). First the Gao-Ahir route declined at the beginning of the 17th century and the focus was transferred to Bilma (grains and other articles in exchange for especially salt). The trade on the new route from Air to the south would focus especially on grain from Hausaland and other products from south of it. The control over this new route brought into conflict Air with Zamfara and Gobir. Especially the route to Katsina was more heavily used as the area was more peaceful (Adeleye 1971: 520).

There are several hypotheses about the origin of Agades. In one of the oral versions the creation is ascribed to the Gobirawa population who, after the penetration of Tuareg groups into the Air area moved south and created new villages just off the Air. Later on they were pushed away by Tuaregs. What we can draw from them is that the Gobirawa populations lived in the Air before the conquest of Tuaregs. They pushed them south and new towns were created (Adamou 1979: 43). Other version is that Agades was created only at the arrival of the first Sultan who came accompanied by 400 soldiers after the place was mystically shown to him.

What we need to focus on is the structure of the population at those times. After the trade was introduced it became an important centre and we can even talk about re-foundation of the town. There were still some of the Gobirawa remaining, later on after a revolt their number declined thanks to their new wave of migration, joined by the inhabitants of Katsina who arrived with the caravans and set up a commercial colony and then of course the Tuaregs mainly from the privileged tribes who symbolised the power of the Sultan (Adamou 1979: 51). They were of a great importance and numbered up to about 400 (Adamou 1979: 57). It became a crossroad of two main commercial routs. One leading from the bend of river Niger towards

Fezzan and to Egypt, second from the Hausa states towards the oasis Tuat, Fezzan and to Tripoli. Traders from all of these directions started to settle down in Agades (Adamou 1979: 51-52).

For this period of time there is evidence of Leo Africanus who visited Agades in 1513 AD. According to him Agades was "*largely inhabited by Berber and Arab merchants and the 'few blacks are almost all artisans or soldiers of the king'*" (Hunwick 1971a: 221). Hunwick's quotation differs largely from the Adamou's as he talks about a majority of black inhabitants (1979: 55). Already here there is a reference to the trade with salt and dates which was mediated by Kel Air as they possessed the camels (Amadou 1979: 57).

From the 17th till 19th century the area characterise constant clashes between main Tuareg groups and leads to vast migrations and moves of populations. During the 18th century the populations of Kel Fadey started occupying the area north-east from In Gall and the Kel Ahghar arrived as well (Amadou 1979: 67).

During the 18th century Sultan had to leave Agades several times and settle elsewhere, couple of times in In Gall (Adamou 1979: 70-71).⁸² This was not for the first time as he left the time also in 1687 when the town was ravaged by an epidemic.

This of course had an impact on the caravan trade and as the area was insecure it drastically declined. The population decreased not only through the clashes, unstable political situation caused by constant clashes over the throne and the decline of the trade but also through the epidemic in 1687 and draught and famine in 1696-7 (Adamou 1979: 71).

At the turn of the 17th and 18th century only ruins stayed from some of the quarters and population number declined as well. In 1740 a great number of the inhabitants of Agades were massacred by Kel Owey Tuaregs. The town's importance was more and more diminishing and from around 60 000 inhabitants at the time of its apogee there were only around 5 000 in the middle of the 19th century (Adamou 1979: 72-81).

This decay might explain why the language Emgedeshi, the Northern Songhay dialect spoken in Agades, stopped being used as *lingua franca* sometimes in the mid 19th

⁸² One of the sultan's dignitaries was in charge of the sedentary population of In Gall and of the Igdalen Tuaregs at the same time (Adamou 1979: 57).

century (Hunwick 1971a: 221). Its importance in the region must have dramatically declined as the Agades stopped playing any important role in the area.

And the massacre of most of the population of Agades in 1920 by the French army (Adamou 1979: 100)⁸³ might be behind the extinction of this Songhay language/dialect.

There is a generally accepted idea that the population of In Gall is of Songhay origin established here sometimes during the reign of Askia Mohammed. But there is not a sign of that among the today's population of In Gall, which is rather surprising as the heritage of the Askia's tradition is very popular and strong in other regions as for example in Ayorou and Téra on Niger banks (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 20). "*Nous n'avons relevé à In Gall , jusqu'à ce jour, aucune tradition relative à la „conquête“ d'Askia Mohammed, ni à un peuplement de „colons“ Songhay venus du Sud, ni à des esclaves vendus lors du Pélerinage de l'Askia*" (Bernus & Bernus: 1972: 27).

In Agades the tradition would mention that part of the Askia's suite was left behind as they were not able to continue and sold them as slaves to gain financial means for the journey.

But even if it was true that or some members of the Askia's suite or the garrison stayed in these oases, it would be extremely difficult to state, what was their ethnic composition as Songhay people had a considerable admixture of the blood of the Soninke, Berbers, and other peoples like the Mandingo, the Gobir and the Hausa (Cissoko 1992: 209). And as the army was usually composed of slaves, this question gets even more difficult.

It is not even very clear, what was the origin of the first rulers of the Songhay Empire. Some state their mixed Songhay-Berber origin, some think that the rulers were

⁸³ „Agadez devint une ville où ne vivaient que quelques femmes... L'insécurité qui régnait dans toute la région, en raison des nombreuses opérations de poursuite des rebelles, et de la disparition du bétail portèrent un coup dur au trafic caravanier. L'Air et le Kawar en souffrirent beaucoup. La caravane de sel, vitale pour ces deux régions, ne put être relancée qu'en décembre 1919 avec le maigre effectif de sept cents chameaux et sous la protection d'une section méhariste d'Agadez. La cure salée, ce grand rassemblement des Tuareg dans la région d'In Gall – Teguidda-n-Teçum, qui avec la caravane de sel (ou azalaï), constituent les grands événements de l'année dans la région d'Agadez, n'eut úa lieu en 1916 et en 1917. Celle de 1918 regroupa surtout des Tuareg Kel Gress de la région de Dakoro et de Madaoua, d'ailleurs sous la surveillance de la section montée du lieutenant Bourguès" (Adamou 1979: 100-101).

Christians converts Lemta Berbers; others consider them to be minority group of the northern Songhay, also of mixed blood (Cissoko 1992: 188).

And we cannot even say what the ethnicity of the Ingelshi society is. As it has been already suggested we are facing here moving and/or untraceable ethnicities. As it was proposed by Bernus & Cressier at least part of the Ingelshi society, the Inusufa, were originally fully nomadic and slowly started taking part in the trade routes and playing role in several towns. Only later they adapted to the new conditions and settled down (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 358).

Also among other sedentary populations as for example in Azelik we can find names of tribes as Inusufan, Imesdhaghan (to these two inhabitants of In Gall and Tagidda refer) and also Igdalen, Lisawan, Tawantakat and Iberkoreyan. Some of them we can still find as part of the nomadic Tuareg world although not in the closest area (Bernus & Cressier 1991: 357).

But it does not mean that we could really use the term Tuareg for the populations of the towns. Nor for Azelik-Takadda,⁸⁴ nor for In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt. They were at the beginning set up by populations that might have belonged to the groups that nowadays form the Tuareg world but this ethnonym is rather recent and as vague as terms like Hausa, Arabs, Fulbe, and the sedentary populations have meanwhile created a different culture. They are above all sedentary, they have in case of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt, earlier also Agades, their own language which differs from the language of the Tuaregs. And they have probably gone through a certain level of mixing during the last few centuries.

⁸⁴ These two names can be used interchangeably.

6. Tasawaq language

6.1 Position of Songhay languages in the West African context

In the case of Songhay we are dealing with a complex process concerning the genetic classification. We can not talk in this case of a direct continuity, as it is reflected in the classical genealogical trees. In the case of Songhay we are facing continuity only at certain levels.⁸⁵ “...*Une langue peut être génétiquement apparentée à plusieurs autres si l'on peut faire la preuve qu'il y a. Aux différents niveaux de pertinence que nous avons reconnus, une transmission sans rupture à partir des langues différentes...*” (Nicolai 1990: 30).

6.2 Songhay language/dialect⁸⁶ cluster and the position of Northern Songhay

Songhay languages/dialects are spoken over a vast area of the Western Africa,⁸⁷ geographically stretching from Mali, Burkina Faso through Benin to Niger, with a few remnant dialects as far as in the Republic of Sudan or in Mauritania.⁸⁸

In most cases the Southern Songhay dialects are used as a national language.⁸⁹ They are used on the radio (Western Songhay for Mali, Zerma for Niger, Dendi for Benin),

⁸⁵ The language continuity, so closely linked with problems of genetic relations, is constructed by Nicolai as a complex process consisting of three distinct levels: that of the continuity of language data (lexems and morphemes), the continuity of typological structure, and the continuity of norms.

⁸⁶ In this case it would be, from synchronic point of view, more appropriate to use the term language as intelligibility is one of the important criterion for establishing boundaries between languages and dialects.

⁸⁷ There are over 3,200,000 speakers of Songhay dialects/languages (Heine, B. & Derek, N.: 2000: 51).

⁸⁸ “*Compte tenu de son éparpillement et de la fonction de véhiculaire attribuée à certains de ses dialectes, sa zone d'influence est étendue: il est utilisé comme véhiculaire à Jenné et au nord du Bénin (dans sa forme dendi); les nomades qui vivent aux marches du pays songhay connaissent tous assez de mots pour établir une communication élémentaire dans cette langue; la toponymie agadésienne présente encore de nombreuses traces du songhay (par exemple, les noms de lieu tels oguberi, yebutara, tanuberi, bangutara); les tribus igdalen dessinent en bordure de l'Azawaq un périmètre où le songhay qui dépasse largement la vallée du fleuve Niger; il n'est peut-être pas trop hardi de supposer qu'il a dû y avoir un temps où aussi bien dans le Gourma que dans tout l'Azawaq, le songhay était la langue véhiculaire de contact entre les nomades et les sédentaires, plus précisément dans le périmètre défini par la région de Jenné à l'ouest et la région d'Agadez à l'est.*” (Nicolai 1981: 20).

and for adult literacy in Mali and Niger. Only the Northern and Central Songhay are marginal vernaculars, the rest of these languages possess an economic and vehicular function (Nicolai 1983: 15).

Thus we have a sort of compact territory in case of the Southern Songhay speakers and a few isolated “islands” of the Northern Songhay. This linguistic situation exhibits at the first glance similar situation with the German Language Islands in Europe.

Although it has been frequently seriously questioned Songhay languages are considered as part of the genetic family of the Nilo-Saharan languages. The Songhay language group finds itself surrounded by genetically very remote language groups. From the South it is the Kwa group, from the North the Afro-Asian (Hamito-Semitic) languages and from the sides there are the Mande and Chadic languages.

In the most accepted classification of Songhay (Nicolai 1981), its dialects are divided into two independent dialect groups/clusters:⁹⁰ Northern Songhay⁹¹ and Southern Songhay,⁹² with a little or no comprehension between them but with inter-comprehension within the latter group. This does not fully apply to the Northern Songhay as mutual intelligibility can be questioned.⁹³

Speakers of these two dialect clusters also exhibit important ethno-cultural differences. In case of the Southern Songhay cluster we deal with Sahelo-Sudanese millet culture as in case of the Northern Songhay cluster we have a pastoral world, commerce and culture of the oasis connected with nomadism and caravan traffic.

⁸⁹ National languages as opposed to official languages are recognized at the state level, but not used for official documents and not institutionalized; in general it can be a vehicular language or a language of an important ethnic group.

⁹⁰ KABA (1986: 81) reminds us not to forget that it is a diachronic approach that Nicolai (1981) undergoes.

⁹¹ The discovery of these dialects by P. F. Lacroix in 1960s meant a new turn in Songhay studies.

⁹² Minimal set of criteria for distinguishing between dialects are established as follows: 1) syntactic (SVO order fixed or optional); 2) morphological (presence or absence of the definite/indefinite contrast); 3) phonological (presence or absence of a tone system); 4) 2, 3, or 4 contrasts in the tone system (Nicolai 1981: 25-26).

⁹³ “...il est évident qu’un locuteur toubouctien aura du mal à comprendre un locuteur dendi, mais il semble bien qu’il ne s’agisse que de difficulté et non pas d’impossibilité de compréhension.” (Nicolai 1981: 21).

The Southern dialects, along the river banks of Niger, are in a way reflecting the migrations of Songhay population after the Songhay Empire was conquered by the Moroccans in the 1591.⁹⁴

The suggested classification of these dialects is (Nicolai 1981):

1. Western Songhay (spoken in Mali, above all in Timbuktu, Djenne and Mopti)
2. Central Songhay (spoken in Mali and Burkina Faso; south of the Niger river bend)⁹⁵
3. Eastern Songhay (spoken in Mali, Republic of Niger; from the Malian border to about 30 km from Niamey)
4. Zarma/Zerma (from Niamey south to the Benin border)
5. Dendi (northern Benin)
6. Kaado (spoken in Niger and a few villages in Burkina Faso)

Nicolai's criteria for its classification are as follows (Nicolai 1981: 26):

- a) syntactic criterion: fixed v. unfixed subject-verb-object structure, which differentiates Southern and Eastern Songhay from the rest of these languages;
- b) morphologic criterion: presence v. non-presence of the determination mark, which differentiates Southern, Central and Dendi from the rest of these languages;
- c) phonologic criterion: existence v. non-existence of the tonal system, which differentiates Southern Songhay of the Nomads from the, Central Songhay and apparently Korandje from the rest of these languages;
- d) phonologic criterion: existence of a system of two, three or four possibilities of a tonal opposition, which differentiates Central Songhay and Kaado from Dendi and Zarma.

⁹⁴ Dendi, the southernmost dialect means in Songhay 'float down the river'.

⁹⁵ This dialect group was formerly (Prost 1956) included into Kaado. Nicolai finds it reasonable to exclude these languages from the Kaado group and forms an independent group (Nicolai 1981).

	Zarma	Kaado	Eastern	Central	Western	Dendi	South. Nom.	South. Sed.
SVO	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+
Determination	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-
4tone system	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
3tone system	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+

In Northern as well as Western Songhay we do not find tones any more as they were replaced by stress. That is an influence of Tamasheq (and Arabic). The same, influence of Tamasheq⁹⁶, is valid about the strict SVO order in both of these groups.

As it seems, there are many grammatical interferences as well as lexical ones in the Northern Songhay. This brings the question about the genetic relations of Northern Songhay into being. And as we could see it has been there present from the very beginning although only later on linguistic observations. But that is not what we would like to focus on in our discussion although a small excursion into this problemacy would have to be introduced.

6.3 Tasawaq and its place in the Northern Songhay dialect/language cluster

Songhay languages are placed in the middle of linguistically remote language groups. From the south it is the Kwa language group, in the centre it is neighbouring with Voltaic, Mande and Chadic languages and from the North there is an intensive contact with Hamito-Semitic (Afro-Asian) languages.

Although a very thorough and important classification of Songhay languages/dialects was introduced in the work of Prost in 1956,⁹⁷ it was not until 1968/1971⁹⁸ that also the Northern Songhay languages/dialects were added as "mixed languages", including

⁹⁶ In case of nomadic group of Songay the entire consonant system is from Tamasheq.

⁹⁷ R.P.A. Prost divides Songhay dialects into 7 groups: Gao, Wogo, Dendi, Kourtey, Tera, Tilaberi and Zerma (Prost 1956: 11-13).

⁹⁸ Lacroix used the Prost's classification adding a new group, which he named Northern Songhay (songhay septentrional). He included there Tadaksahak, Tihitit and Tagdalt and he also raised the question whether Tasawaq is part of this newly formed group of Northern Songhay or if it belongs to Southern Songhay (Lacroix 1968: 92-93).

Tihitit and Tagdalt, and the question was raised whether the Tasawaq⁹⁹ spoken in In-Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt (and also in Agadez) should be included into this group or linked with the rest of Songhay, with the central group (meridional). As Lacroix lacked relevant data he left the question open.¹⁰⁰

At the end of the 1970s "Songhay Septentrional" (Northern Songhay) was regrouped on linguistically sound basis by Nicolai (1979).

A. The "nomadic" dialects"

1. Tadaksahak dialects (spoken by transhumant nomads between Menaka in Mali and Abala in Niger)

2. Tihishit dialects (spoken in the triangle Agadez-Abalak-Tanout in Niger)¹⁰¹

a) Tagdalt (spoken by the nomadic Igdalen)

b) Tabarog (spoken by the nomadic Iberogan in the area southeast of In-Gall)¹⁰²

B. The "sedentary" dialects

3. Tasawaq¹⁰³ dialects

a) Ingelshi/Ingelsi

b) BARTH's "Emghedeshi" of Agades (nowadays extinct)

4. Koranje/Korandje dialect

The first two are spoken by "maraboutic" tribes of the Berber origin, which show a strong influence of Islam and Arabic language. Koranje dialect is spoken in the Algerian oasis of Tabelbala. Tasawaq language/dialect is then spoken by sedentary populations in the oases of In-Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt in the Republic of Niger. The numbers of the Northern Songhay speakers are very insignificant. Around 3000 in case of Tihishit, in case of Tasawaq the number does not exceed 2500 in total,¹⁰⁴ 1901 inhabitants in In-Gall, 474 in Tegidda-n-tesemt, although the numbers vary and cannot be taken for granted and according to others these numbers might be slightly overestimated.

⁹⁹ LACROIX (1971). He uses the name Tadaksahak.

¹⁰⁰ Here we could discuss difference and other names used by TERSIS (1978).

¹⁰¹ There are only minor differences between these two varieties (Nicolai 1983: 15).

¹⁰² Iberogan are nomadic dependents of the Igdalen.

¹⁰³ We will use this term throughout our paper for the language of the sedentary population of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt only.

¹⁰⁴ This number is based on the 1975 census quoted in Wolff & Alidou (2001: 536).

Tasawaq is in this classification used as a general term for two dialects. One spoken by Ingelshi population in In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt, the other one used to be spoken in Agades by Emgedeshie population as H. Barth suggested but is nowadays extinct (Nicolai 1981: 25).

6.4 Tasawaq¹⁰⁵

We will focus here only on a few examples of the grammar as the aim is not to provide a full description of the Tasawaq language but to give a hint about its extent of persistence. We are also facing here insufficient data on most of the aspects of the grammar apart from the phonology.

A) PHONOLOGY:

The position of Tasawaq among other Northern Songhay dialects is in this respect very specific thanks to its tonality, which makes it closer to Songhay-Zarma dialects. Tasawaq is the only language of the Northern Songhay group that is tonal.¹⁰⁶ In case of Tasawaq we have a three-tone system, high, low and a falling. The latter one is very rare. Tasawaq (typologically the closest to the Southern Songhay cluster) is the only one from the Northern Songhay dialects to actualize opposition of length in the case of mid-vowels (Nicolai, R. 1983).

Vocalic system

I		U		i:		u:
E		O	ʔ ¹⁰⁷	e:		o:
	A				a:	

¹⁰⁵ This part on Tasawaq language and its brief linguistic description is based on Nicolai's work (Nicolai 1981 and 1986), partly on the unpublished paper by D. O. Alidou (D.O. Alidou: Tasawaq d'In-Gall. Esquisse linguistique d'une langue dite 'mixte') whose contents was quoted by Wolff and Alidou (Wolf & Alidou 2001).

¹⁰⁶ The dialects of the nomadic populations (Tadaksahak, Tihishit) as well as of the sedentary have a stress system instead of tonal one. This puts them typologically closer to Tamajaq (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 538)

¹⁰⁷ The central vowel ʔ was formerly included into the vocalic system of Tasawaq as an exterior phoneme, result of a contact situation with Tamajaq (Nicolai 1981: 39), but some would not fully agree as the vowel might be present only in Tamajaq borrowings. Alidou doubts its phonemic status as in her corpus she found only three forms and those were by Tasawaq speakers declared to be Tamajaq words (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 539).

Consonant system¹⁰⁸

	T	Ky	K	q
B	D	Gy	G	(‘)
F	S		X	h
	Z	(sh)	Gh	
M	N	(zh)		
	R			
	L			
W		Y		

Although there is also an evident influence of the Tamajaq (e.g. Afro-asiatic) on the consonant system of Tasawaq, it is minor compared to other Northern Songhay dialects. It is the least “afroasiatoid” of all the Northern Songhay dialects (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 538). It lacks the pharyngelized or velarized consonants that are common in the nomadic dialects (Tadaksahak, Tihishit), which makes Tasawaq look more like non-Northern Songhay dialect.

B) MORPHOLOGY

There are surprising similarities in the distribution of clitics and grammatical morphemes (i.e. pronouns, postpositions, demonstratives, inflectional markers and derivational markers) that can be linked to cognate morphemes in Songhay-Zarma dialects. This is true for pronouns and verbal morphology. “Agglutinative” structure of the Tasawaq verbal complex is typologically much closer to Songhay-Zarma than to the highly intricate “inflectional” characteristics of the Tamajaq system (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 539-550).

On the other hand there are grammatical elements in the nominal morphosyntax that show etymological links with Tamajaq as for example:

¹⁰⁸ There are minor differences between the consonantal system as stated by Nicolai (1981), Nicolai (1986) and Alidou (Wolff & Alidou 2001). As Alidou (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 538) postulates two palatalized velars /ky, gy/, Nicolai (1981: 41-42) finds there the glottal stop /ʔ/ but only in one example (Wolff & Alidou 2001).

- noun “prefixes” to derive patronymic gender-sensitive nouns reflecting Afro-asiatic gender distinction

á-	masc. sg.	í-	masc. pl.
tá-	fem. sg.	sí-	fem. pl.

- allomorphs pertaining to one of the major noun plural classes¹⁰⁹

a/e > i (initial vowel alternation) -à*n*, àwà*n*, -tàn (suffixes)

- “genitival” linking morpheme

possessor - *n* (linking morpheme)- possessed¹¹⁰

A) SYNTAX

For the Southern Songhay typical word order S-O-V is not applied in Tasawaq, which makes it closer to Tamajaq or Hausa. On the other hand the existence of postpositions (POST) is typologically closer to other Songhay dialects and does not appear in Tamajaq neither in Hausa.

N1 + AUX + V + N2 (N3) (POST)

B) LEXICON

There is an important influence of non-Songhay languages. The Alidou’s data (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 552), although based only on a list of 311 lexical items from the so called basic vocabulary, provide us with the following figures:

¹⁰⁹ “...nouns which have cognates in Songhay-Zarma will use the “Songhay” way of marking plural, i.e. by suffixing {-yó}. Nouns which have cognates in Tamajaq tend to have more complex plural shapes (making use, among others, of one or several suffixes shaped {-à*n*/-àwà*n*/-tàn} in Tasawaq which also correspond to the cognate plurals in Tamajaq” (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 547).

¹¹⁰ This structure is common for Tamajaq whereas other Songhay languages (apart from the Northern Songhay) are generally without any possessive linking morpheme.

Songhay-Zarma	66,2%
Tamajaq	25,7%
Hausa	4,5%
Arabic	2,25%
Unidentified	1.3%

This slightly differs from the data quoted by Nicolai (1987: 3) as he arrives to the following:

Songhay-Zarma	30%
Tamajaq	48%
Hausa/Arabic	22%

7. Conclusion I

In case of Tasawaq we face a lack of historical evidence to state the home territory of the population. Or rather this is an example where a home territory, from which the speakers of the language came from, does not really exist, or the genetic tree is not as linear as in the cases of European languages.

The area south of Sahara desert is rich on cases of languages where genetic relations are not very clear due to the lack of historical data and to the long-lasting mixing between populations, which can be only hardly traced. Tasawaq language and its speakers are an ideal example of this.

From the very beginning there were strong doubts about genetic affiliations of the Songhay languages and these have continued until today. Greenberg (1963) grouped it into a very questionable language family of Nilo-Saharan languages, which represents a vast number of very often small languages and groups of languages whose affiliations are sometimes closer to the neighbouring genetically unrelated languages than to the remote members of their own group.¹¹¹

The question was raised above all about the genetic affiliations to the Mande languages of the Niger-Congo language family (Nicolai 1983) as well as to the Chadic (Zima 1990) and Berber languages (Nicolai 1990, 1991) of the Afro-Asian languages. These authors above all questioned and put under doubt the traditional idea of a tree-like character of the genetic relationships that is related to only one language ancestor. This is in case of Songhay languages and above all the Northern Songhay dialects, including Tasawaq, not valid at all.

According to Nicolai the genetic relations are a complex process that consists of three distinct levels: the continuity of language data (lexemes and morphemes), the continuity of typological structure, and the continuity of norms (Nicolai 1990: 30). The classical genealogical tree works with a direct continuity at all of these three levels but this is not the case of Songhay. Songhay, with all its dialects, represents a model where the continuity exists only at certain levels, whereas there is a break or discontinuity at others. *“Une langue peut être génétiquement apparentée à plusieurs*

¹¹¹ „From the point of view of its genetic alliance, the place of Songhay among the „Negro-African“ languages has been controversial, and the research undertaken has not yet allowed arriving at a consensus of all the linguists who have been interested in the question“ (Nicolai 1983: 34).

autres si l'on peut faire la preuve qu'il y a, aux différents niveaux de pertinence que nous avons reconnus, une transmission sans rupture à partir des langues différents..." (Nicolai 1990: 30).

Nicolai finds solid affinities between Songhay and Mande, Saharan as well as Berber (Tamajaq/Tuareg) languages and comes up with a new hypothesis concerning the genetic origins of Songhay languages. He supposes that Songhay languages are a result of a creolisation of an ancient trans-Saharan vehicular language. "*Le songhay résulte non pas d'une diversification obtenue à partir d'une 'langue-mère' mais de la creolisation d'un ancien véhiculaire transsaharien à base berbère ou, plus précisément, touarègue...*" (Nicolai 1990: 187).

The creation of these languages is thus an outcome of a very complex sociolinguistic and historical linguistic situation. It is not apparently only a result of a division and then diversification of a single language. Nicolai supposes that there were two distinct varieties of Songhay existing at the same time: vernacular Songhay (Songhay A) and vehicular Songhay (Songhay B). The first one was used by Songhay population or assimilated populations for intra-ethnic communication and the vehicular Songhay was developed along the Niger riverbanks (the outcome are the Western Songhay dialects) and it was used as a *lingua franca* during the time of the Songhay Empire by populations whose mother language was different (Nicolai 1993: 52). Later on also the speakers of Songhay A adopted Songhay B in the sense of a true creole, which explains the relative homogeneity of Songhay, the cultural and ethnic diversification of its speakers and the double ancestry of its lexicon and morphology (Nicolai 1984: 148). From there the vehicular Songhay B spread along the caravan trails and resulted in the Northern Songhay dialects including Tasawaq. This vehicular form of Northern Songhay then underwent a process of revernacularization, which explains the differences between the Northern Songhay dialects and the rest of Songhay. The revernacularization took place under the influence of the contact languages, which were above all the Berber languages, that is Tamajaq, and this resulted in nearly complete typological transformation of their structure. "*...we shall recall that all the dialects of the northern Songay are found to possess a "Berber" phonological system, that Dendi has a system very close to Bariba, that the Marensé varieties of Central Songay have acquired some traits which are characteristic of the Mossi language and*

that, alone among the dialects coming from the vehicular, Western Songhay and Homborian have kept a neatly Songhay phonological typology, although Western Songhay had undergone at a recent time an important confusion between the phonemes /j/ and /z/, probably caused by the neighbouring Mande languages” (Nicolai 1993: 53).

But it does not mean that the spread of Songhay B was accompanied by vast migration of population as Nicolai assumes a historical shift of originally berberophone groups and the pre-Hausa population towards this vehicular Songhay (Nicolai 1984: 153).

The theory about a creole origin of Songhay is supported by its rather simple and transparent morphological structure, combined with a rich potential of creating new lexical items through composition and derivation from a rather limited basic lexical stock (Nicolai 1984: 153). In this case the Tasawaq would be first re-pidginized and then re-creolized creol.

Wolff & Alidou (2001) suggest 4 stages of development of Songhay. First was the creation of *lingua franca*, pre-Songhay, that served to connect sedentary and nomadic groups sometimes between 1100 and 1500. This was developed by speakers of Mande as well as non-Mande populations along the River Niger together with berberophones, arabophones and Fulfulde speakers. Later on, sometimes during the time of the Songhay Empire these populations gave up their original languages in favour of the then creolized pre-Songhay, which is equivalent to Nicolai’s Songhay A, they became again monolingual and slowly developed, under the contact with neighbouring languages, regional variants (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 555). Third, in certain areas, especially at the periphery, pidginized variant of Songhay proper, that is Nicolai’s Songhay A, started to be used as a second language of certain populations in order to maintain economic and social contact with the urban centres of the Songhay Empire and with the trans-Saharan trade. This also concerns the area of In Gall and Tegiddan-tesemt. What followed was a simplification of this bilingualism due to complex reasons caused by the decline of the Songhay Empire. In our case it was followed by a revernacularization of *lingua franca* Songhay under the contact of berberophones, arabophones, Hausa and Songhay-Zarma, which formed the Northern Songhay dialects, that is also Tasawaq (Wolff & Alidou 2001: 557). Wolff & Alidou (2001) thus assume that Tasawaq language is a non-genetic and mixed language.

It was also suggested that Tasawaq is not a dialect of Songhay but rather a dialect of Tamajaq with a massive borrowing of Songhay vocabulary (Kaba 1986) but this was based on very weak linguistic evidence.

8. Conclusion II

The weak and very problematic point of the whole work on Language Islands is the lack of theoretical criteria. The term Language Island has been from the very beginning used as a label for any German settlement outside of Germany and nobody focused on the fact that in this case the conditions were very specific, diverse and often changing, and thus cannot be implied on any other languages. The term was then used as a label on non-German cases of language minorities inside of genetically remote language areas.

The fact that the term Language Island was introduced for German language communities in Europe meant that it came out from a very specific and at the same time very clear situation. The term was used for smaller exclaves of speakers of German language and interrelation with the "home territory" played a very important role in this "concept". We would like to state that these Language Islands are in a sense representing "ideal examples" and that the term is very Eurocentric. We know quite a lot about the origin of the creation of these settlements and it is supported by relatively strong linguistic and historical evidence.

Thus none of the scholars focused on the fact that these were very extreme situations. The German population created communities of a high social status, often in scarcely populated areas where the German was often functioning as an official language or at least it was a prestigious form. The education, newspapers and the whole agenda was kept in German and only basic communication required a very basic knowledge of the language of the majority and/or of the autochthon languages.

The whole concept, which was never thoroughly worked on never included anything concerning changes and thus the surprising persistence of these languages (German varieties) communities drew such an attention. But as we were able to see before, the

moment these favouring conditions changed, the whole situation changed and it often lead to an extinction of these Language Islands.

None of the scholars working on German Language Islands felt the need for a profound theoretical description. The term Language Island was thus used more as a label. Any German community outside of Germany was *Sprachinsel* (Language Island).

We can draw the criteria only from the definitions that were basically set up on the German cases and for the German language communities outside of Germany (see Chapter 2).

All of the definitions define a Language Island as a language community that is ***separated from its main/home territory***. The '*Home Territory*' is defined as an area from which the language community, under whatever circumstances originated. This raises a question about the ***distance*** between the Language Island and its home territory as well as about the nature of the ***separation***.

All of the available definitions agree in one very fundamental assertion about Language Islands: *a relatively small / minority language is surrounded/ by unrelated relatively big / majority language/-s*. That brings under consideration several questions. First is the relation v. non-relation of languages, second is the ratio between the minority and majority languages, and third is the nature of being surrounded. What kind of a minimal ***contact situation*** are we talking about?

We suppose that certain *geographical restrictions* would have to be at least tentatively introduced or certain cases would have to be viewed as extreme. The same would apply to *institutional factors*. A strong 'institutional support', as for example one-nation-state structure, would have to be also excluded.

The very much stressed notion and to a certain extant justification for the Language Island research is the ***'hindered or retarded language and cultural assimilation'***. And this is the point which we would like to discuss.

The surprising persistence of the German culture and language inside of the German communities outside of Germany was the reason why this research was recently revived. But none of the scholars focused thoroughly on the conditions of these settlements. The persistence would be surprising in urban mixed areas where the assimilation is taking place within three or four generations as usually only the

language of the majority holds the institutional advantages but in the case of Germans the settlements were compact, of a high status supported with certain privileges, often in scarcely populated areas, official language was in some cases German so as the education, and the pressure of the surrounding linguistically remote culture was not strong. And the moment these conditions changed, the development of the Language Islands shifted, sometimes even so dramatically that it led to their extinction. This is a problem that has been approached only recently and rather superficially but it seems to be crucial in the research on Language Islands. As most of the work has been dealing with the German language in a European setting the question of creation and development did not seem that important or seemed relatively easy with not many variations. But the moment we leave the European field and focus on areas that are historically less described, that moment we are facing serious difficulties.

This leads us to an assumption that we could speak of stages of development, or rather phases, of Language Islands. The case of German Language Islands before the changes caused by the WWI and WWII could represent an extreme example of a clear Language Island; the case of Tasawaq would represent another extreme case, this time very questionable.

In case of Tasawaq we can hardly talk about a home territory, which was so important in the German Language Island research. This home territory, or rather territories, would be for the inhabitants of In Gall and Tegidda-n-tesemt hard to identify with as they are unclear and impossible to trace. This could also explain the fact that none of the oral evidence shows any connections with the Songhay Empire or with the Songhay main territory; although among other Songhay populations there is still a life tradition of epic about the Askia Mohammed (Hale 1996: 6).

There is a generally accepted idea that the population of In Gall is of Songhay origin established here sometimes during the reign of Askia Mohammed. But there is not a sign of that among the today's population of In Gall, which is rather surprising as the heritage of the Askia's tradition is very popular and strong in other regions as for example in Ayorou and Téra on Niger banks as well as in Agades where the tradition mentions that some of the Askia's suite was left behind as they were not able to

continue and sold them as slaves to gain financial means for the journey (Bernus & Bernus 1972: 20).

The speakers of Tasawaq created a certain self-identification, which is not connected to the Songhay Empire and to the rest of the Songhay speaking populations as there is no linear ancestry leading to any of these but it differentiated them from the surrounding remote world of Tuareg nomads.

What is also quite questionable is the way how Tasawaq and its speakers are “surrounded” by a majority population/language. In the case of nomadic area where the contact with the neighbouring population is regular but far from being intense and stable, the language shift towards the majority population does not seem that inevitable or rather the slow nature of the shift does not seem to be that surprising, although Tasawaq has been for centuries under the influence of the “traditional contacts” represented by Tamajaq and Hausa. But the new post-colonial socio-political situation offers new contact situations as well (Nicolai 1983: 16).

We suppose that the situation of Tasawaq represents only a stage of development of Language Islands and that the non-existence of home-territory (not only as a symbolical concept) does not exclude it from the concept of Language Islands. This African example shows that the cases do not always have to be as clear as in the European setting (and even there we would find variants) and that the theories based purely on European languages get a new dimension when applied outside of Europe. But we assume that the notion Language Island is justifiable also for these cases where the evidence and knowledge about the "home territory" is not as strong as in the "ideal cases" and the transition was not as "smooth" as in for example cases of German in Eastern Europe.

The whole concept of Language Islands thus raises above all one question and that is the applicability of concepts created in the European context on the non-European areas.

We would also like to suggest that the Language Island concept represents, a specific, we could say, extreme case of Language Maintenance or rather Contact-Induced Change. What the definitions deal with, is to certain extent an ideal case, from which other cases would differ. The reason why this concept, or let us say an attempt of a

concept, was omitted and why it was not included into the modern sociolinguistics could be caused by two reasons. First, the Language Island research was more than rich on expressions like „Germenhoo“, which discredited the research after the World War II. Second, most of the available literature was written in German, which made it inaccessible for the English speaking academic community that was behind the creation of modern sociolinguistics.

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