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langage.) Paris: CNRS, 1990. Pp.
209. F 190.

This book proposes a solution to the problem of Songhay classification. A group of West African dialects and, according to Nicolaï, languages, spoken in Niger, Mali, Burkina, and Benin, Songhay has been variously classified as an isolate, as Nilo-Saharan, and as Chadic. N proposes that Songhay is a mixed language, based on Touareg and Mande.

N's previous publications include two other books and several articles on Songhay; he has worked extensively with several Songhay dialects, including Dendi, Central Songhay, and Northern Songhay. His work has a strong sociolinguistic base, which is frequently absent from comparative studies, but—at least in this book—it lacks a fleshed-out historical framework on which to hang his findings. Moreover, while criticizing traditional comparative methodology, he seems to overlook the basic method by which (genetic) linguistic relationship is demonstrated: reconstruction.

However, N's argument and his evidence are convincing. First, he provides an account of the various Songhay dialects based on a hypothesized parent Songhay with two functional varieties, vernacular and vehicular. Using a three-level model of linguistic transmission (material—phonological, lexical; structural—morphological, syntactic; and normative—traditions and norms for speaking, i.e. communicative competence), he then shows how the various Songhay dialects could have arisen. For example, he proposes that transmission of the vernacular variety on all levels produced Eastern Songhay, Kaado, and Zarma; Western Songhay resulted from transmission on all levels of the vehicular variety; and Dendi emerged from transmission of Bariba norms with material and structures from vehicular Songhay.

Next, N treats the question of the origin of Songhay itself. Through lexical (phonetic, semantic, and semiotic), morphological, and typological comparison—the corpus consists of 412 'cognate' sets from Kaado and Touareg, of which about 10% seem highly questionable—he concludes that Songhay is a mixed language that originated as a pidginized variety of Touareg superimposed on a Mande structural framework. In other words, transmission occurred at the material level from a Touareg pidgin, structural transmission was from

Mande, and the normative rules arose during the creolization of the Touareg-Mande mix.

The implications of work of this kind for historical and comparative linguistics are obvious. The theoretical and methodological contribution of the book to linguistic classification and to the study of pidginization and creolization is minimal, however. The work suffers from a total absence of historical and ethnohistorical information on the languages and regions involved, there is no discussion of time depth, and there is no reference to linguistic reconstruction as a methodological tool. In addition, N seems to assume uncritically that the Songhay forms in the corpus CAME FROM Touareg, and not from an ancestor of Touareg.

This book is above all a comparison of living languages, and it presents a working hypothesis on the origin of Songhay which ought to stimulate further research in the area. In addition, it offers a possible case study for work on creolization and dialectology. [KIMBERLY SOTO, *University of Pittsburgh.*]