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THE LIBYAN CONNECTION: SETTLEMENT, WAR, AND OTHER ENTANGLEMENTS IN NORTHERN CHAD*

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Abstract

Historically, connections between southern Libya and northern Chad have always been close, if only due to the fundamental need for connectivity that characterises most Saharan economies. Drawing on so far mostly inaccessible archival records and oral history, this article outlines the implications of this proximity, arguing that it led to intimate entanglements within families and an ongoing confusion of property rights. This in turn resulted in increased rather than diminished hostility during the years of war that opposed the two countries, as people attempted to define uncertain boundaries, and were – and still are – competing for access to similar resources, moral, symbolic, social, and economic.

Key Words

Chad, Libya, Sahara, war, settlement, migration, trade.

Like the rest of the country, the Libyan south – the Fazzān and Kufra – has been shaken by violent conflicts since 2011. These nominally pit 'local' Arabs against what even more careful international analysts describe as 'sub-Saharan Tebu':[1] mostly Libyan nationals whose first language is Tedaga or Dazaga and not Arabic, who are often of darker skin than their Arab neighbours, and who have strong linguistic, social, and family ties with the majority of Tubu who reside in northern Chad.[2] Tubu neighbourhoods in Kufra and Sabha were bombed; Tubu militias fought back, some say with the help of their Chadian 'cousins'; northern militias intervened, leading to an overall death-toll of, by 2013, 500, with many more

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1 International Crisis Group, 'Divided we stand: Libya's enduring conflicts', Middle East/North Africa Report no. 130, 14 Sept. 2012, 6.

2 The term 'Tubu' (Kanembu for 'people of the mountain') is an external description that designates speakers of Tedaga and Dazaga, two closely related and mutually comprehensible languages. No local term corresponds to it. In Chadian Arabic and French, Teda tend to be referred to as 'Tubu', and Dazagada as 'Goranes'. In the following, I will nonetheless use the term 'Tubu' to refer to both linguistic groups, as connections between them are close and boundaries often uncertain, and as this is the term that is most commonly used in the literature.

wounded.[3] By now, violent clashes have subsided, to leave room for sweltering tensions that dovetail with conflicts over the control of the lucrative transborder trade.[4] On the national level, these conflicts sparked various claims and counterclaims by Libyan politicians and the Chadian president Idriss Déby, accusing each other of sending 'mercenaries' to destabilise the neighbouring country, or of harbouring and training rebels.[5] These claims have been echoed locally, and Libyan websites enthusiastically show 'proof' that most Tubu fighting in southern Libya were 'foreigners', incidentally sparking further xenophobia in the region.[6] Meanwhile, large numbers of Chadian Tubu long resident in southern Libya thought it wise to 'return' to northern Chad, a country that many were thereby visiting for the first time. This led to tensions in northern Chad, where population figures in certain towns doubled, virtually over night.[7]

The emphasis on local origin and the rejection of 'foreigners' that underpin these conflicts seem to be common throughout post-Qadhafi Libya.[8] In the south of the country, however, it makes even less sense than elsewhere. Like other Saharan regions, southern Libya and northern Chad have been historically marked by a high degree of regional connectivity. Most linguistic groups and even families have connections on both sides of what has become – with Libyan independence in 1951 and even more so with the Aouzou conflict in 1973–87 – an internationally contested border. There have always been Tubu-speakers in southern Libya; indeed, the 'local' Arabs in Kufra, the Zuwaya, who

3 See, for example, 'Fighting continues in Kufra', *Libya Herald*, 21 Feb. 2012; 'More die in Sebha despite ceasefire', *Libya Herald*, 29 Mar. 2012; 'More deaths in Kufra reported', *Libya Herald*, 29 June 2012; and 'Army says it will impose order in Kufra following new deadly clashes', *Libya Herald*, 26 Feb. 2013.

4 More were killed in clashes between Awlād Sulaymān and Tubu in Sabha in the first half of 2014, where despite attempts at reconciliations, tensions persist: see 'Ijtimā' li-l-musālaha bayn qabīlatay al-Tubū wa Awlād Sulaymān', *Akhbar Libya 24*, 9 July 2014; and 'Liqā' bayn Awlād Sulaymān w-al-Tubū li-l-ittifāq 'alā ta'mīn Sabha', *Akhbar Libya 24*, 23 July 2014. In spring 2015, conflicts broke out again between Zuwaya and Tubu in Kufra: 'Lajnat al-azma li-a'yān al-Tubū bi-l-Kufra tu'akid 'alā al-bunūd allatī attafaqa 'alay-hā khilāl ijtimā'āt-hā', *Akhbar Libya 24*, 27 Mar. 2015; and, at the same time, between Tuareg and Tubu in Ubari and al-Bayda: "Aqīla wa al-Thanī yabhathān ma'a a'yān al-Tubū hall al-iqtitāl ma'a al-Tawāriq', *Akhbar Libya 24*, 20 May 2015, which speaks of a 'humanitarian crisis' in the area. On the importance of transborder trade, see B. Olesky, 'The other frontier warriors', *Libya Herald*, 13 Jan. 2013; also International Crisis Group, 'Divided', 6. A. Bensaâd, 'L'immigration en Libye: une ressource et la diversité de ses usages', *Politique africaine*, 125 (2012), 101, points out that these conflicts predate the current Libyan war.

5 See, for example, 'Chadian Tebu forces reportedly enter Libya to join fighting around Kufra', *Libya Herald*, 16 June 2012; and Idriss Déby on *Radio France International*, 29 Apr. 2013.

6 See, for example, (http://translatingfazzan.blogspot.fr), last accessed spring 2015, that displayed photographs of dead or wounded Tubu fighters and their Chadian identity papers. Officially, there are 12–15,000 Tubu in southern Libya, but real numbers are more probably in the hundreds of thousands: M. Cousins, 'Tebu delegation heading to Tripoli as another Tebu man dies in Kufra', *Libya Herald*, 27 Nov. 2012. Questions of nationality, meanwhile, are complex and contested: G. Grant, 'Kufra election boycott going ahead as 1,000 Tebu are disbarred from vote', *Libya Herald*, 4 July 2012; and 'A'yān al-Tubū yatlibūn bi-ta'jīl al-shurū' fī-l-intikhābāt al-baladiyya bi-l-Kufra', *Akhbar Libya 24*, 6 Apr. 2014.

7 Hence, in 2011 and 2012, the population of Faya-Largeau, the largest town in the B. E. T. (Borkou – Ennedi – Tibesti, Chad's northernmost region), had, according to figures provided by the town hall, doubled from 10 to 20,000.

8 International Crisis Group, 'Holding Libya together: security challenges after Qadhafi', Middle East/North Africa Report no. 115, 14 Dec. 2011, 28; W. Lacher, 'Families, tribes and cities in the Libyan revolution', *Middle East Policy*, 18:4 (2011), 140–54.

claim to be of northern Libyan origin, say that they conquered Kufra from its Tubu residents sometime between the seventeenth and the mid-nineteenth century.[9] Conversely, the towns of northern Chad were largely constructed by Libyan settlers, many of whom still have family and own property south of the border. Distinctions between both, in many cases, are difficult to make, although people publicly insist on radical and obvious difference, and moral incompatibility.[10] This proximity and uncertainty exacerbates conflict rather than attenuating it, as it means that people are fighting over access to similar resources, in similar terms. As Christian Bromberger notes with regard to the Mediterranean, 'it is not so much the differences as their loss that can arouse rivalry, even violence'.[11] This article aims to sketch several chapters in the last century of regional interactions, and the various conflicts and points of entanglement they have led to. It focuses primarily on Faya-Largeau, the main town in the Borkou – Ennedi – Tibesti (B. E. T., Chad's northernmost region, see Fig. 1). It suggests that the categories of analysis that are employed by (most) historians and political analysts mask this historical connectivity, and thereby make both historical and contemporary realities less intelligible. Although the article is organised chronologically, its aim is not so much to describe a sequence as to outline an underlying structural pattern to which layers of complexity were added over time.

SAHARAN CONNECTIVITY

Saharan economies, both sedentary and nomadic, necessarily depend on exchange, outside connections and funds. Oases are rarely natural occurrences, but require a large amount of investment and labour, usually brought in from elsewhere; while pastoralists thrive on exchange with oasis dwellers and populations settled beyond the Sahara proper.[12] This leads to a high degree of regional interdependence, which has persisted throughout the Sahara despite the establishment of first imperial and then national boundaries: the Sahara is best thought of as constituted through overlapping areas of heightened exchange, of goods, people, and ideas, that are structurally comparable and mutually dependent on each other. More visible undertaking, such as, most famously, trans-Saharan trade, rely on this regional infrastructure, pulling it together when the occasion arises, but without fundamentally changing it.[13] Connections and mobility are thus prior to settlement;

9 Although all sources agree on the fact of conquest, few agree on dates. According to G. Rohlfs, *Kufra, Reise von Tripoli nach der Oase Kufra* (Leipzig, 1881), 290; R. Forbes, 'Across the Libyan Desert to Kufara', *Geographical Journal*, 58:2 (1921), 88; and J. Chapelle, *Nomades noirs du Sahara: Les Toubous* (Paris, 1957), 49, the conquest took place in the first half of the eighteenth century. J. Davis, 'La structure sociale de Koufra', *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 22 (1983), 547, dates it 'maybe four hundred years' back. J.-L. Triaud, *La légende noire de la Sanûsiyya: Une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français (1840–1930)* (Paris, 1995), 438, meanwhile, claims that the Zuwaya 'progressively occupied Kufra from the mid-nineteenth century'.

10 Davis, 'Structure sociale', 551.

11 C. Bromberger, 'Towards an anthropology of the Mediterranean', *History and Anthropology*, 17:2 (2006), 103.

12 See, for example, P. Pascon, *La maison d'Iligh* (Rabat, 1984), 9; and S. Baier and P. Lovejoy, 'The desert-side economy of the Central Sudan', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 8:4 (1975), 551–81.

13 J. Scheele, 'Traders, saints and irrigation: reflections on Saharan connectivity', *The Journal of African History* 51:3 (2010), 281–300.

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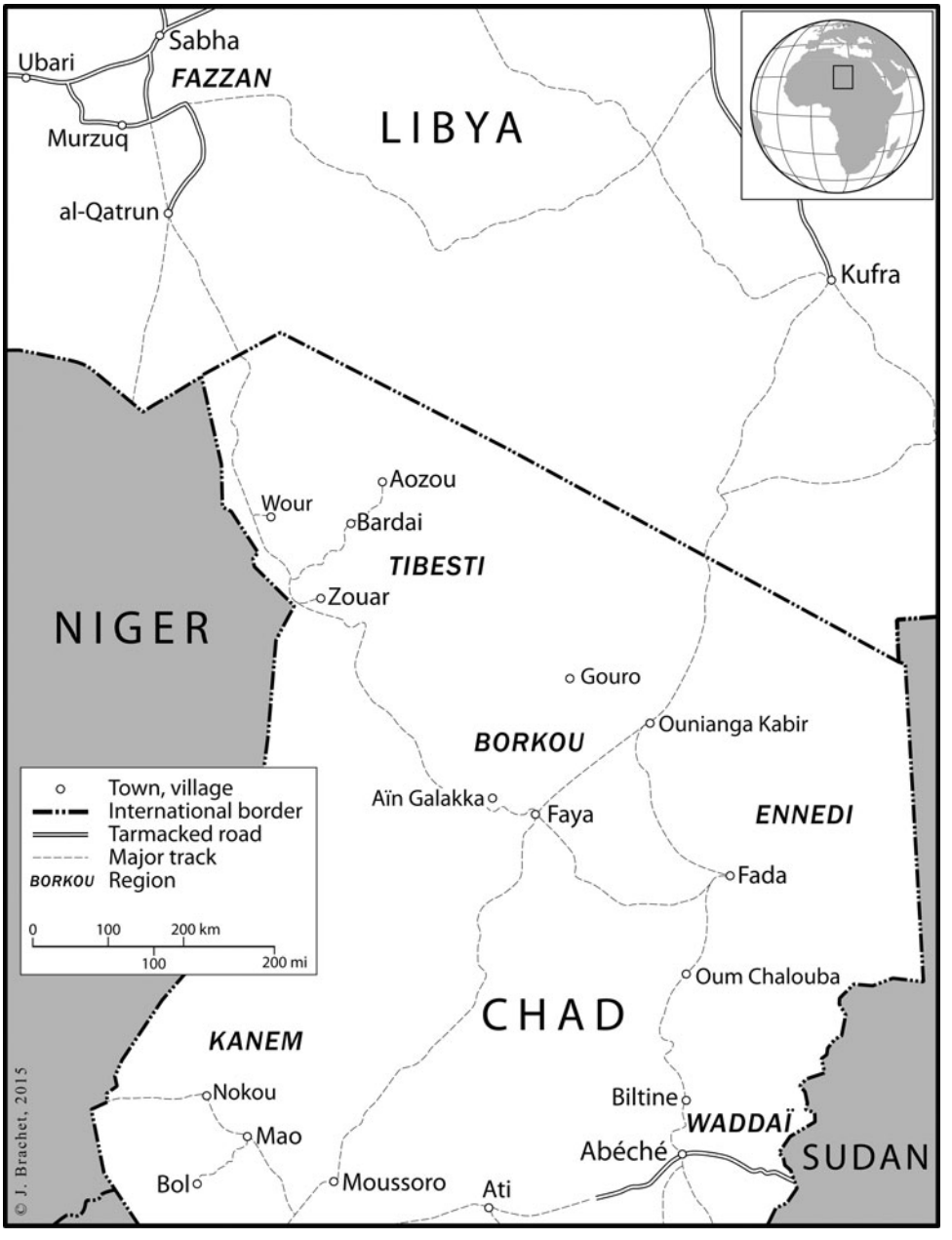

Fig. 1. Borkou – Ennedi – Tibesti (B. E. T., Chad's northernmost region).

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stability is exceptional, risk management and diversification are at the heart of local economies; and Saharan connectivity, on a regional rather than a trans-Saharan level, needs to be key to analyses.[14] As a result, political dominance is based on control over people rather than space; it tends to be decentralised, inherently mobile, and able to accommodate environmental and demographic instability.[15] Saharan kinship systems, meanwhile, can be read as expressions of the inherent tensions between a need for outside connections and the incorporation of outsiders, and a search for impossible moral containment and autonomy. Regional connectivity, in other words, might be necessary, but it is not always to everybody's liking; nor does it in any way imply equality or harmony.

The troubled history that links northern Chad and southern Libya is a case in point. The Tibesti mountains, the highest mountain range in the Sahara, traditionally allow for some goat-breeding and date-cultivation, but neither has ever produced enough to feed the local population: the region thus depends on regular exchange with either central Chad or southern Libya. Much of this exchange is mediated through property rights and kinship: in the colonial period, Teda from the Tibesti owned gardens in Murzuq, al-Qatrūn, and elsewhere in Fazzān, where they travelled each year for the date harvest and to sell pastoral produce, and where they often also had a second household.[16] Mobility, in any case, was key: 'The Tubu Sahara is permanently crisscrossed by travellers who, on their own or in small groups of two or three, travel to faraway destinations whose attraction would not always justify, in our eyes, so much effort and so much risk.'[17] In the late nineteenth century, both Gustav Nachtigal and Gerhard Rohlfs comment on the presence of Tubu-speakers in Fazzān and Kufra.[18] According to Nachtigal, a third of the population of al-Qatrūn were then counted as Tubu, while the leading family in town (who claimed to be of Moroccan origin) systematically married women from the Tibesti, in order to be able to travel south unharmed.[19] In the 1920s, Rosita Forbes mentions four to five hundred Tubu living permanently in Kufra, although she implies that they used to be more numerous; she also notes that 'weekly caravans' linked Kufra to Tubu-speaking areas to the south.[20]

14 The term 'connectivity' is taken from P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* (Oxford, 2000), 123 and *passim*. For its applicability or otherwise in the Sahara, see P. Horden, 'Situations both alike? Connectivity, the Mediterranean, the Sahara', in J. McDougall and J. Scheele (eds.), *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa* (Bloomington, IN, 2012), 25–38. On the inherent instability that characterises many African environments, in particular those used as rangelands, see W. Beinart, 'African history and environmental history', *Africa*, 99 (2000), 279.

15 For analyses of such political structures among Tamacheq- and Hassaniyya-speakers in the Western and Central Sahara, see, for example, P. Bonte, *L'émirat de l'Adrar mauritanien: harīm, compétition et protection dans une société tribale saharienne* (Paris, 2008); C. Grémont, *Les Touaregs Iwellemmedan (1647–1896). Un ensemble politique de la boucle du Niger* (Paris, 2010); B. Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Mali* (Leiden, 2010); and B. Rossi, 'Kinetocracy: the government of mobility at the desert's edge', in J. Quirk and D. Vigneswaran (eds.), *Mobility Makes States: Migration and Power in Africa* (Philadelphia, 2015), 223–56.

16 Archives Nationales du Tchad (ANT), N'Djamena, W21, 'Rapport politique', B. E. T., 1952; see also Chapelle, *Nomades noirs*, 70, 89, 98.

17 Chapelle, *Nomades noirs*, 175.

18 G. Nachtigal, *Sahârâ und Sûdân: Ergebnisse sechsjähriger Reisen in Afrika. Erster Band: Tripolis, Fezzân, Tibesti und Bornû* (Berlin, 1879), 184–90, 210–16, 225; Rohlfs, *Kufra*, 267–8.

19 Nachtigal, *Tripolis*, 212–13.

20 Forbes, 'Across the Libyan Desert', 165.

In the Borkou, meanwhile, a low-lying area to the southeast of the Tibesti, date production is more abundant, while pastoral goods and cereals are traditionally imported from the south, in particular Kanem and Waddaï. Capot-Rey thus speaks of the 'dualism' of the Tibesti and Borkou, on the basis that the two regions rely on relatively independent economic circuits.[21] Nonetheless, in the Borkou, most manufactured goods still arrive from what is now Libya, and ties – often kinship ties – with the Tibesti and southern Libya are close. The importance of both the Tibesti and Borkou on a larger regional scale is perhaps best apprehended in political terms: while the Tibesti has long provided a haven to raiders and refugees of all kinds, the (relative) abundance of salt and date palms that thrive without the need for permanent irrigation have made the Borkou a central asset in the surrounding pastoral economies:[22]

> For both nomads and semi-nomads, the periodical return to the oasis is an essential element of their life-style. This is not only the result of the need to supplement their supplies, nor even to obtain goods to barter on the southern markets, but it expresses the sovereign right that pastoralists have long held over the palm-groves, and their continued claim to ownership.[23]

During the date harvest, the population of the towns and villages of the Borkou thus triples or quadruples.

Although today, this 'sovereignty' is mostly exercised by Tubu-speakers,[24] when Nachtigal visited the Borkou in the late nineteenth century, most of its palm-groves were under the control of the Awlād Sulaymān, Arabic-speaking nomadic pastoralists who, although originally from the Hijāz (or so they claim) via Syrte in Libya, had settled since the mid-nineteenth century in Chad.[25] By then, the Awlād Sulaymān had exerted some kind of control over the Fazzān for almost two centuries.[26] Although their preferred pastures were in northern Kanem, they periodically visited the oases of the Borkou, for raids, and to collect 'their' share of the date harvest.[27] It is difficult to say with any certainty whether this situation was exceptional, both with regard to the intensity of raids and the presence of Fazzānī pastoralists in the area. Robert Capot-Rey notes that 'northern Arabs' had long established themselves through what is now Chad, at least along common caravan routes; their initial migration in the mid-nineteenth century, fleeing the Ottoman army, sparked a continuous trickle of migrants, Awlād Sulaymān, but also Mghārba and other Libyan pastoralists; for Cordell, 'the migration of many Awlād Sulaymān to the Chad basin was in part a search for continuity'.[28] In any case, the inhabitants of the Borkou seem to have

21 R. Capot-Rey, *Borkou et Ounianga: Étude de géographie régionale* (Alger, 1961), 135.

22 Groundwater in much of the Borkou is easily accessible, at one to three meters below ground. This means that date palms, once they have reached a certain age, do not need to be irrigated, and hence allow for a primarily pastoral lifestyle. This was also the case in Kufra (Rohlfs, *Kufra*, 334).

23 Capot-Rey, *Borkou*, 104.

24 C. Baroin and P.-F. Pret, 'Le palmier du Borkou, végétal social total', *Journal des Africanistes*, 63:1 (1992), 5.

25 G. Nachtigal, *Sahârâ und Sûdân: Ergebnisse sechsjähriger Reisen in Afrika. Zweiter Band: Borkû, Kânem, Bornû und Bagirmi* (Berlin, 1881), 84–5.

26 D. Cordell, 'The Awlad Sulayman of Libya and Chad: power and adaptation in the Sahara and Sahel', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 19:2 (1985), 325.

27 Nachtigal, *Borkû*, 141–2.

28 Capot-Rey, *Borkou*, 90; and Cordell, 'Awlad Sulayman', 329.

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been happy to participate in Awlād Sulaymān raiding parties to the neighbouring Ennedi or on Tuareg salt caravans to the west.[29]

The large number of kidnappings that Nachtigal mentions as characteristic of Awlād Sulaymān dominance resulted in a considerable intermingling of populations. As Dennis Cordell notes, Awlād Sulaymān society was based on the recruitment of outsiders, women, clients, slaves, and unredeemed young Arab prisoners, a fact that goes some way towards explaining their extraordinary ability to bounce back, even after devastating military defeats.[30] On the level of diplomacy, leading Awlād Sulaymān had intermarried with Tubu and Kanembu families even before they settled in northern Chad, if only to be able to move around the area freely.[31] A similar social plasticity can be observed among all the linguistic groups that inhabit the border area. 'The Zuwaya', writes John Davis, 'do not constitute a permanently united group. They are rather a temporary assemblage of small sets that act together according to circumstance.'[32] The Tubu, meanwhile, live in 'a fluid social mesh, without centre or periphery, in which each Tubu is placed at the centre of his or her own personal network'.[33] Bilaterally exogamous over at least four generations, Tubu forcibly marry out, and marital alliances with outsiders are as common as they can be prestigious. Several Tubu clans claim Arab or Tuareg descent; virtually all say that they are of outside origin.[34] In a similar vein, although the Zuwaya, like most Arabic-speakers in the area, formally emphasise endogamy, Davis notes the high degree of incorporation of strangers into their tribal schemes, which allows them to absorb all kinds of outsiders, and makes 'Zuwayī identity' a matter of appreciation and degree.[35]

THE SANŪSIYYA

This history of longstanding connectivity, entangled settlement, kin structures, and property rights in the area was made particularly visible, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, by Sanūsī projects of regional expansion and agricultural colonisation. Based initially in Cyrenaica, the Sufi *tarīqa* moved its headquarters to Kufra in 1894 and then, in 1899, to Gouro in the Borkou. By late 1902, Sanūsī *zawāyā* had been opened in Aïn Galakka, Gouro, Yarda and Ounianga Kabir and Saghir.[36] Although in the Sahel, the Sanūsiyya has mainly been analysed for the pivotal role it played in trans-Saharan trade and anticolonial resistance, its primary focus in the Borkou seems to have been

29 Nachtigal, *Borkou*, 92; see also Chapelle, *Nomades noirs*, 61; and Cordell, 'Awlad Sulayman', 330.

30 Cordell, 'Awlad Sulayman', 335. Twice in the nineteenth century, the Awlād Sulaymān had been 'annihilated', once by the Ottomans in 1812, and then again by the Tuareg in 1850. In both cases, they recovered their fighting power within less than a generation: see G. F. Lyon, *A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa in the Years 1818, 19, and 20* (London, 1821), 54; and H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa, Volume II* (London, 1968), 275.

31 E. Subtil, 'Histoire d'Abd el-Gelil', *Revue de l'Orient*, 1:5 (1844), 28–30.

32 Davis, 'Structure sociale', 552.

33 C. Baroin, 'La circulation et les droits sur le bétail, clés de la vie sociale chez les Toubou (Tchad, Niger)', *Journal des Africanistes*, 78:1–2 (2009), 136.

34 Chapelle, *Nomades noirs*, 18, 42.

35 Davis, 'Structure sociale', 549; see also Rohlfs, *Kufra*, 243, 290.

36 G. Djian, *Le Tchad et sa conquête, 1900–1914* (2nd edn, Paris, 1996), 117.

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agricultural.[37] A 1907 French report notes that a large percentage of Sanūsī settlers were slaves, employed in agriculture, and that great effort was put into date cultivation and in particular into the gardens that surrounded the Sanūsī *zawāyā*. Agriculture also constituted the principal base of Sanūsī taxation, and largely determined the location of *zawāyā*.[38] As Jean-Louis Triaud observes, 'there is an obvious consistency between the Sanūsī network and a map of the principal natural resources of the country'.[39] Agricultural produce grown in Sanūsī gardens was mostly destined for export to Gouro and Kufra, hence strengthening northbound regional connectivity, although the quantities produced never seem to have fulfilled Sanūsī expectations. At the height of Sanūsī influence in the area, Sanūsī settlers accounted for 1,000 of the estimated 20,000 inhabitants of the Borkou.[40]

Alongside new settlers and new crops, the Sanūsiyya introduced a different way of conceptualising the world: a legal system, based on private property in land (which was necessary both to make endowments work, and to set up gardens), forms of labour exploitation, in particular slavery but also salaried agricultural labour, and a divergent hierarchy of values. As 'heirs to an ideological model, that of the *shurafā*' [descendants of the Prophet]' shared throughout North Africa and the Sahara, or as imitators of Western Saharan *ribāt* (fortified religious lodges), the Sanūsiyya aimed to change local systems of production as much as local ways of life. Indeed, the two were inseparable:

> In this area controlled by nomads, where agricultural labour was scorned as servile, the Sanūsiyya, acting as agricultural entrepreneurs, promoted a new system of values. In a society where only the old, the ill and the dependent used to have a fixed abode, they established sedentary communities, encouraged agriculture and fought against the nomadic practice of plundering. Only strangers, imbued with *baraka* [blessing] and under divine protection, could have introduced such factors of change to the social order, by making up with their own charisma for the inferiority associated with sedentary life and farming.[41]

A similar 'civilising mission' and emphasis on agricultural colonialism also animated the Sanūsiyya in what is now southern Libya. It prompted them to resettle the oases of Kufra, which, by the early nineteenth century, had been abandoned by all permanent settlers, and to set up irrigated gardens, largely relying on slave labour.[42] This, then, is perhaps the most straightforward and best-documented example of saintly figures founding

37 On trans-Saharan trade, in particular on the route that linked the Waddaï to Benghazi via Kufra, see Cordell, 'Eastern Libya, Wadai, and the Sanusiya: a tariqa and a trade route', *The Journal of African History*, 18:1 (1977), 21–36; and G. Ciammaichella, *Libyens et Français au Tchad (1897–1914): La confrérie sénoussiste et le commerce transsaharien* (Paris, 1987). On the anticolonial struggle, see A. Salifou, *Kaoussan ou la révolte sénoussiste* (Niamey, 1973); and A. Bourgeot, 'Les échanges transsahariens, la Senoussya et les révoltes touaregs de 1916–1917', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 18:1–2 (1978), 159–85. I agree with Triaud, *Légende noire*, 257, however, that the Sanūssiyya's initial purpose was primarily religious and 'civilisational' rather than military, and that, in Chad at least, anticolonial battles were mostly forced upon them.

38 Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence, FM/SG/Afrique IV Dossier 36 ter, Mangin, 'Situation de la Senoussia au Borkou', 1907.

39 Triaud, *Légende noire*, 504; also Cordell, 'Eastern Libya', 31.

40 Triaud, *Légende noire*, 659.

41 *Ibid.* 549, 659, 508.

42 Rohlfs, *Kufra*, 333; A. M. Hassanein Bey, 'Through Kufra to Darfur', *Geographical Journal*, 64:4 (1924), 288–9.

towns and agricultural settlement, a development that is observable throughout the Sahara.[43] Spiritual ambition and missionary endeavours often seem to have been at the heart of Saharan settlement, beyond considerations of local productivity. Meanwhile, individual *zawāyā* were viable because they combined all possible local and regional sources of income, and could make up for each other's losses.

We only have glimpses of the relations of the Sanūsiyya with the people in the Borkou, and these are filtered through French translations of Sanūsī perceptions. These are contradictory. On their arrival, Sanūsī representatives were offered gifts of water and palm-trees, and they established *zawāyā* on land that had been given to them voluntarily and publicly. Taxes were paid, both on local agricultural produce – dates and some cereals – and on livestock. Based on Sanūsī internal communications, Djian calculates that the three *zawāyā* in the Borkou – Aïn Galakka, Yarda and Faya – received 140 camel-loads of cereals, and four to five hundred loads of dates annually, in addition to their own production. Meanwhile, in Bedo, they received a quarter of salt extracted.[44] At the same time, Djian mentions a series of quarrels, brawls, and raids on Sanūsī caravans, clients, and slaves.[45] Similarly, Jean Ferrandi notes that during each of the many French raids on Faya, residents had been eager to point out to the French where Sanūsī stores were kept, while the Sanūsī suspected the people of Aïn Galakka of calling upon the Ottomans to reduce Sanūsī influence in the area.[46]

If, then, we do not know to what degree the Sanūsī 'civilising mission' was a success locally, it was – at times grudgingly – recognised as such by the more perceptive of French colonial officers. Yet although, according to one French colonial officer at least, 'the Sanūsiyya acted like a genuine state' or even a 'colonial state', the Sanūsiyya seems to have had some success in northern Chad precisely because it did not act as a state in the European sense, aiming at full territorial sovereignty.[47] Rather, it attempted to control strategic points, by setting up trade relays and agricultural colonies with labour they had brought with them. In line with longstanding Saharan political traditions, their focus was on people rather than territory, arbitration rather than force, a reliance on gifts rather than taxes, and flexibility instead of centralised governance.[48] Indeed, as it emerges from

43 For parallel examples from the Western Sahara, see, for example, Pascon, *Maison*; H. Elboudrari, 'Quand les saints font les villes: lecture anthropologique de la pratique sociale d'un saint marocain du XVII[e] siècle', *Annales ESC*, 40:3 (1985), 489–508; R. Boubrik, *Saints et société en islam: La confrérie ouest-saharienne Fadiliyya* (Paris, 1999); and D. Gutelius, 'The path is easy and the benefits large: the Nasiriyya, social networks and economic change in Morocco, 1640–1830', *The Journal of African History*, 43:1 (2002), 27–49.

44 Djian, *Tchad*, 90, 118, 119.

45 *Ibid.* 146, 176, 187.

46 J. Ferrandi, *Le centre africain français: Tchad – Borkou – Ennedi* (Paris, 1930), 147: and Djian, *Tchad*, 168.

47 ANOM 10 APOM 401, Boujol, 'La Senoussya au Tchad', 7 June 1939. A small Ottoman military detachment was based in Faya and Aïn Galakka from August 1911 to February 1913, but they were logistically largely dependent on the Sanūsiyya, and several officers were affiliated to the order: ANOM FM/Tchad I/2, 'Rapport de reconnaissance', 9 July to 7 Sept. 1912.

48 In the Sahara and Sahel more generally, 'power is constituted not so much by the ability to master the local environment than by the ability to master the *system* of localities': O. Walther and D. Retaillé, 'Le modèle sahélien de la circulation, de la mobilité et de l'incertitude spatiale', *Autrepart*, 47 (2008), 110, emphasis added. See also D. Retaillé, 'L'espace nomade', *Revue de géographie de Lyon*, 73:1 (1998), 71–81; and

Sanūsiyya correspondence, its internal administrative structure was rather loose, with different *zawāyā* vying for resources, and little influence over the nomadic *dūr*.[49] This was so because the Sanūsiyya, instead of superimposing an alien political construct on local resources that could not finance it, infiltrated existing patterns and structures, temporarily pulling them together into a larger whole. In the precolonial Borkou, such pre-existing political structures seem to have been limited in scope, reducing the Sanūsiyya's ability to co-opt these in the way they were able to do further north.[50] Hence, perhaps, the *tarīqa*'s visible fragility (they were easily defeated by the French and ostensibly left few traces when they collapsed), coupled with an underlying long-term resistance (the patterns of ownership they established in Faya are still visible, as are the trade networks they co-opted and expanded).

Indeed, although, according to French accounts, the Sanūsiyya completely retreated from northern Chad after their military defeat in 1913, their influence was in fact more tenacious. The Sanūsiyya's commercial dominance in the area had largely been based on their ability to co-opt and protect Libyan traders who had long travelled through the region, such as the Mghārba, and to open up new routes for others, such as the Zuwaya. While the Sanūsī *zawāyā* were destroyed or occupied by the French army, these traders remained.[51] Indeed, as the French army faced problems of supplies for the newly established garrisons in northern Chad, they rapidly became indispensable to the French colonial project. The first caravan from Kufra arrived, with French blessing and a letter of recommendation from Muhammad al-'Abdī, the leading Sanūsī *shaykh* in Kufra, in Faya in March 1914, barely three months after the French had taken the last Sanūsī *zāwiya* in Ounianga. Faced with the refusal by local pastoralists to supply pack animals to the French army, the French were obliged to deal with the 'Sanūsī trader' 'Abd al-Rahmān Dallālī, based in Abéché, in order to obtain vital supplies.[52] Six months later, in July 1914, a group of 'Tripoli merchants some of whom are [Sanūsī] *ikhwān*' obtained from the French colonial authorities the establishment of a weekly market in Faya, so that they could trade in salt.[53] By 1919, French collaboration with Sanūsī traders was such that the commanding officer of the B. E. T. suggested that all army supplies should be brought up either through Abéché, or from Egypt via Kufra, rather than from the French colonial capital Fort Lamy.[54] If the more visible trans-Saharan caravans have thus been interrupted by the French military conquest, regional trade in staples and

B. Lecocq, 'Distant shores: a historiographic view on trans-Saharan space', *The Journal of African History*, 56:1 (2015), 23–36.

49 Djian, *Tchad*, 123; also E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'The distribution of Sanusi lodges', *Africa*, 15:4 (1945), 187.

50 Tubu 'anarchy' is a colonial trope, but one that clearly has some grounding in reality: see, for example, C. Baroin, *Anarchie et cohésion sociale chez les Toubou: les Daza Késerda (Niger)* (Paris, 1985); also J. Scheele, 'The values of "anarchy": moral autonomy among Tubu-speakers in northern Chad', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 21:1 (2015), 32–48.

51 ANOM FM/Tchad I/2, 'Territoire militaire du Tchad, rapport d'ensemble', 17 May 1913.

52 ANOM FM/Tchad I/2, 'Rapport trimestriel du colonel commandant le Territoire militaire du Tchad sur la situation des circonscriptions', Feb.–Apr. 1914.

53 ANOM FM/Tchad I/8, 'Câble', 27 July 1914.

54 ANT W19, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 2nd quarter 1919.

some imported goods continued, and was spurred rather than hindered by the presence of a sizeable French army contingent in the area.

THE ENEMY WHO CAME ON FOOT

Barely ten years later, these ties became even more visible, as refugees from the brutal Italian 'pacification' of southern Libya (1928–34) started to arrive in large numbers in what had in the meantime become northern Chad. In autumn 1928, the French colonial archives mention the arrival of a group of 'Fezzanais': 19 traders from Kufra, who had come to Faya to seek shelter for themselves and their families. In the first quarter of 1929, the French counted 150 arrivals from Kufra – presumably Muhammad al-'Abdī and his retinue – and 1,185 from the coast near Syrte.[55] Later the same year reports mention another 300 tents or 1,411 people, with 290 sheep and 3,132 camels.[56] Numbers further increased with the Italian conquest of the Sanūsī headquarters in al-Tāj in Kufra on 24 January 1931, leading to the arrival of 400 refugees in Ounianga in early 1931. Their flight was marked by considerable hardship:

> These refugees . . . were in a state of total destitution. Machine-gunned by Italian planes after their flight from Kufra, robbed by the Gongoi gang, they had also lost a quarter of their number in the Erdi, and the itinerary they had followed was marked by the dead bodies of those who had died of thirst.[57]

More generally, for most of these refugees, travel south was difficult, and the French colonial archives note several incidences in which refugees were robbed and killed by local pastoralist groups – unless they could pay, dearly, for safe passage and guidance.[58] Indeed, the phrase 'the enemy who came on foot' that is still used locally to refer to these arrivals in the 1930s and to one of the quarters they subsequently built in Faya, bears witness both to the familiarity with the newcomers and to the momentary reversal of status hierarchies it implied, as former raiders – or people assimilated to them – now arrived without their mounts, begging for shelter.

In October 1930, the French granted land to needy refugees by the abundant natural spring of Yen near Aïn Galakka – that is to say, and perhaps not coincidentally, near the ruins of the largest Sanūsī *zāwiya* in the Borkou and within the former sphere of influence of the Awlād Sulaymān.[59] As the French had paid no attention to the refugees' background and agricultural experience, or indeed the availability of the necessary tools, this settlement at first did not hold its promise: the 'natives', as a 1930 report notes, 'prefer to spend their time with palavers and quibbles instead of work, and this in an area where water is abundant and agriculture easy'.[60] Spontaneous agricultural settlement in Faya and Fada was more successful. A March 1931 report notes that:

55 ANT W19, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E., 1st quarter 1929.
56 ANT W18, Rottier, 'Rapport de Mission', 1929.
57 ANT W18, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 1st quarter 1931.
58 See, for example, Rottier, 'Rapport'; and ANT W89, Aubert, 'Lettre au Lieutenant Gouverneur du Tchad', 16 June 1929.
59 ANT W18, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 3rd quarter 1931.
60 ANT W18, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 3rd quarter 1930.

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> these refugees seem to have adapted perfectly to Faya and Fada, where they can find wheat, which is their preferred food. They would regret leaving their families now, as their fields are already planted and their houses half-built.[61]

Local memories clearly associate the arrival of these refugees with a renewal of agriculture, or rather the introduction of horticulture as practiced in the Libyan south. Many varieties of dates, wheat, and most fruit trees are said to have been introduced at this time from the north. In Faya, the best and most central gardens, with old date palms, are remembered as owned and planted by settlers from what is now Libya. In a sense, then, part of the Sanūsiyya's 'civilising mission' was fulfilled by a later wave of settlers, many if not most of whom were still connected to the order.

By October 1934, 3,000 refugees had settled in northern Chad, mostly in towns or large villages, where they probably constituted the majority of inhabitants.[62] Although some of these refugees were merely travelling through, on their way towards joining relatives who were already established as traders or pastoralists in Abéché and Kanem, most stayed in the north. Those who had enough livestock to live independently settled on pastures just south of Faya or further south in the Bahr al-Ghazāl and northern Kanem. Those who came empty-handed preferred to stay in Faya, in order to work as day labourers on date plantations and construction sites, or in retail trade.[63] Oral history in contemporary Faya mostly stresses the poverty of the new arrivals, crediting them with the invention of a whole range of servile occupations, from the fabrication of mud-bricks to salaried agricultural labour. This is generally explained with regards to the poverty that then reigned in the Fazzān and Kufra.[64] People there, so the story goes, needed meat so badly that their tongue would hang out of their mouth, swollen, and then when you gave them a piece of meat, they would chew it for a while and then take it out of their mouth to keep it in their pocket, and chew it again later. Fazzānī traders hence could make a lot of money by collecting old bones in Chad, and animal skins, and by selling them to their relatives back home, who would suck the skins and make soup with the bones – while in the Borkou, an area of relative abundance and precommercial naïvety, or so these stories imply, people threw these things away without second thoughts.[65] These stories somewhat obscure a situation that seems to have been marked by real socioeconomic differences, mostly between those settlers who had former ties with the area and had managed to bring livestock, and those who did not. By summer 1934, in any case, forty settlers had constructed mud-brick-houses in Faya, as a tangible proof of their wealth.[66] Apart from French military constructions and other buildings linked to the colonial conquest, these were the

61 ANT W18, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 1st quarter 1931.

62 ANT W153, 'Bulletin no. 2', 1 Oct. 1934. Similar numbers of Libyans, essentially pastoral nomads, settled further south, in the Egueï in northern Kanem: ANOM 10 APOM 399, Masson, 'La Senoussiya au Tchad', 1 June 1938.

63 ANT W19, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 1st quarter 1929; and ANT W18, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 3rd quarter 1932.

64 According to ANOM AEF Série D 4 (4) D 49, in 1939, Kufra had not got enough resources to feed the local population. This situation had not improved fifteen years later: ANT W20, 'Bulletin politique mensuel', B. E. T., Dec. 1954.

65 Interviews, in Faya and N'Djamena, spring and summer 2012.

66 ANT W18, 'Rapport trimestriel', B. E. T., 2nd quarter 1934.

first permanent houses in Faya; and most of the current town centre was constructed in this way.

Stories of fortunes made from old bones – in addition to providing a commentary on Libya's current dominant economic position – might also serve to rationalise the rapid economic success experienced by some of the settlers. By 1934, the French were hiring camels from wealthy settlers who pastured their herds south of Faya, and whom the French increasingly judged to be 'more perfectible than our natives'; and army supplies were largely in the hands of 'Fazzānī' traders until the 1950s, despite French attempts to foster local competition.[67] To this was added a growing market in local and regional trade:

> Renting camels cheaply from the Tubu, Fazzānī traders incessantly organize convoys that, from Abéché, their main supply-centre, transport goods and objects of all kinds to [Faya-]Largeau and Zouar, but also to Murzuq and Sabha.[68]

It is noteworthy here that Fazzānī traders had quickly branched out into (or revitalised) trade with central Chad, while maintaining at least some of their privileged connections with the Libyan south.

The war-years and the money pumped into the area with the Colonne Leclerc allowed these traders to invest in trucks – at a time when the French military administration was still on camelback.[69] From then on, the settlers almost exclusively appear in the archives as rapacious traders and usurers, exploiting local agriculturalists and herders. In 1948, Fazzānī traders were accused of stockpiling seeds; according to the French, they were the only people who paid taxes, as they were the only ones who had any money. French-appointed local chiefs handed over the taxes they had collected not to French officials, but to Fazzānī traders, who in turn lent them out against high interest rates.[70] In 1956, the then *chef du district*, Le Rouvreur, describes the ten richest Fazzānī traders in Faya as follows:

> The best part of their income is not derived from retail, but rather from speculation on local dates and camels brought by their clients to pay their debts, also on millet that they stockpile as soon as it arrives from Waddaï and then sell bit by bit at a premium during food shortages, and on tea, sugar, cloth imported from Tunis and Tripoli by the TAT via Faya to Fort-Lamy and the southern markets … Every trader has a correspondent in each trading post between the Mediterranean and Chad and between Nigeria and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.[71]

A few among these traders owned their own trucks, which they mainly used to trade with Fort Lamy; others exported dates bought cheaply at harvest time on planes, before prices in

67 *Ibid*; and ANT W22, 'Lettre du chef de la région du B. E. T. au chef du Territoire du Tchad', 13 Sept. 1956. Most successful traders were from the Fazzān rather than from the Mediterranean coast, and in the archives, 'Fezzanais' is used throughout (locally, people speak of 'Libyans'). Many of these 'Fezzanais' had trading and family connections on the coast, however.

68 ANT W20, 'Rapport politique', B. E. T., 1st term 1944.

69 ANT W20, 'Rapport politique', B. E. T., 1st term 1945. The Colonne Leclerc was a military raid by the Free French armed forces that captured, in 1941, Kufra from its base in French Equatorial Africa, overland via northern Chad. It greatly relied on local auxiliaries and 'indigenous' (mostly West and Central African) soldiers, and led to a regional boom in infrastructure and the availability of ready cash.

70 ANT W20, 'Rapports politiques', 1st term 1948 and 1st term 1949.

71 ANT W21, 'Rapport économique', Borkou, 1955.

the capital went down with the new harvest. 'The amount of wealth that is thus siphoned off by a thousand Libyans at the expense of 40,000 Tubu is incredible.'[72] It is perhaps not surprising, then, that despite Libyan and Chadian independence and subsequent attempts by the Libyan government to repatriate them, many Fazzānī traders stayed in the Borkou until the early 1970s.[73]

Such success was only possible through lasting involvement in local and regional social networks. This was mostly done through marriage. While the French archives tend to stress the 'intransigent racial prejudice' that stopped 'white' Libyans from getting married locally, and claim that only the poor would get married to Tubu to avoid the more expensive bride-price that they would otherwise have to pay, local memories and indeed the presence of descendents of mixed unions paint a different picture, as do off-hand remarks in the French colonial archives.[74] Hence, in 1955, a note dealing with a homicide or rather the subsequent reconciliation describes the intervention of the victim's 'maternal uncles', Zaghawa from Waddaï, defending their own against 'the Zuwaya' in Faya.[75] Intra-Libyan conflicts thus involved their in-laws, and could easily oppose local groups against each other. The best known descendent of such a mixed marriage is certainly Ahmād Tuwār, whose father 'Abd Allāh became in 1907 the Sanūsī *khalīfa* of the *zāwiya* at Aïn Galakka. 'Abd Allāh married into a locally influential Kokorda family, before he was killed by the French in the Ennedi in 1913.[76] Forty years later, his son Ahmād's double attachment to both the Libyan settlers and a powerful fraction of Tubu was at the heart of his considerable fortune, as a date trader with privileged access to the rich palm grove at Kirdimi, one of the first locally to be able to invest in trucks.[77] Although the French colonial administration was rather unhappy about his continued contact with the Sanūsiyya, his multiple connections clearly underpinned his political success in the 1950s, as the first *député* elected in Faya.[78]

WAR AND PEACE

The B. E. T. obtained full independence from France in 1964, and rebellion against the central government, mostly led by the Frolinat (Front de Libération Nationale du Tchad), broke out in the Tibesti two years later. With international involvement, this rebellion

72 A. Le Rouvreur, *Sahariens et Sahéliens du Tchad* (Paris, 1962), 395.

73 ANT W125, 'Lettres de l'Ambassade du Royaume Uni de Libye, au Ministre des Affaires Étrangères tchadiennes', 11 Dec. 1961, 24 Jan. 1962, and 14 June 1962; Archives de la Préfecture de Faya (APF), Faya-Largeau, 'Enquête de moralité sur les commerçants étrangers', 30–1 Oct. 1973. Permission to use these archives was granted by the Prefect of the Borkou in May 2012.

74 ANT W125, 'Lettre de Laurentie', 21 Apr. 1939; ANT W18, 'Lettre du Gouverneur Général de l'A. E. F. au commandant du territoire du Tchad', 4 Aug. 1938.

75 ANT W22, 'Bulletin politique mensuel', B. E. T., Sept. 1955.

76 Ferrandi, *Centre-africain*, 223.

77 ANT W21, 'Rapport politique', B. E. T., 1957; see also 'Rapport économique', Borkou, 1955.

78 ANT W22, 'Bulletin mensuel', B. E. T., June 1958. Otherwise, and despite French fears encouraged by rumours of the Libyan government's claims to property rights in northern Chad (see, for example, ANT W22, 'Bulletin mensuel de renseignements politiques et économiques', B. E. T., Mar. 1951), Libyan settlers never seem to have attempted to develop any political institutions in Faya, indicating that their aspirations lay elsewhere: ANT W21, 'Rapport politique', B. E. T., 1957.

turned into civil war, fuelled by funds provided by Chad's neighbours with aspirations to regional control. Libya was one among them, and for long it was the most successful, at least in northern Chad. As a result, much of the war was fought in northern Chad with Libyan aid, and the Libyan armed forces occupied the B. E. T. for several years. There is no room here for a detailed history of this rebellion and the subsequent civil war (although much of it remains to be written).[79] I will thus content myself with various moments of confusion that indicate that beyond international diplomatic strategy, what was often at stake – and turned this war into a particularly bloody one – was not the intrinsic difference between Chadian locals and Libyan occupiers, but perhaps rather their excessive proximity.

By 1972, most of the B. E. T. was controlled by the Frolinat, part of which received Libyan aid by 1976. Two years later, the Libyan-sponsored branch of the Frolinat led by Goukouni Oueddeï took control over Faya and stayed there, with a few interruptions, until 1987.[80] Over the years, the number of Libyan soldiers present in the area increased gradually, until it seems justified, by 1983, to speak of military occupation.[81] Nominally, however, local Frolinat fighters remained in charge; and most of the 'Libyan soldiers' garrisoned in northern Chad were in fact non-Libyan mercenaries. Many of these had been recruited (by force or otherwise) among Chadian Tubu in southern Libya, where tensions between 'Libyans' and 'Chadians' (or rather, those resident in southern Libya who had the necessary paperwork to obtain food, and those who did not) led to several violent clashes throughout the 1980s.[82] Other Chadian Tubu joined the Libyan army in the Tibesti, as this was the only way to obtain basic supplies. According to one Chadian Tubu returning from southern Libya in 1986, and who had spent some time in the Libyan army camps in the Tibesti, 'I did not see any soldier among them who looked like a Libyan. They are all Chadians forced to serve Libya.'[83]

Libyan army bases in southern Libya, in particular the air base at Ma'tan al-Sārah which was famously attacked and taken by the Chadian army in 1987, were also predominantly staffed by Chadian and Libyan Tubu; and this is indeed cited by some as a reason for their defeat, as the defending soldiers mistook the attacking Chadian army for reinforcements. Whether this is true or not, it clearly indicates a shared imagery of uncertain categories and fuzzy boundaries.

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79 The main references here remain R. Buijtenhuijs, *Le Frolinat et les révoltes populaires au Tchad (1965–1976)* (Paris, 1978); *Le Frolinat et les guerres civiles au Tchad* (1977–84) (Paris, 1987).

80 A. S. Bodoumi, *La victoire des révoltés: Témoignage d'un 'enfant soldat'* (N'Djamena, 2010), 106, 162. Throughout this time, the Frolinat found it difficult to 'govern' the area in any meaningful way: see Bodoumi, *Victoire*, 166, 194–5; APF Frolinat, Conseil de la révolution, 'Décision N 002/ETAM/G/FAP/79', 3 Feb. 1979; Frolinat, Secteur No 1, Commission de redressement, 'Note de service', 14 Aug. 1980; Frolinat, Secteur no 1, 'Décision 001/CCFAN/CCF/80', 22 Sept. 1980.

81 According to M. Azevedo, *Roots of Violence: a History of War in Chad* (Amsterdam, 1998), 89, when Faya was taken by the Chadian army in 1987, it was defended by 1,000 Libyan soldiers. This roughly corresponds to local estimates.

82 APF, 'Compte rendu des renseignements', 18 Jan. 1983; see also 'Procès-verbal d'audition, I. I. K.', 23 Dec. 1987; and 'Procès-verbal d'audition, C. I. W.', 30 Dec. 1987. These sources are all police records of statements made by migrants who returned to Chad after Libya had been defeated, and who clearly felt obliged to exaggerate Libyan wrongdoing and their own patriotism.

83 APF, 'Fiche de renseignement sur C. T.', 10 Aug. 1986.

Tellingly, clashes with 'Libyan' soldiers recounted in the town archives of Faya speak not so much of hostility with a foreign occupying force, but rather of too much intimacy with unpleasant and belligerent in-laws: a grenade explodes during a party; grenades are thrown into individually targeted courtyards; conflicts break out over girls, children, and donkeys.[84] Even more frequent are accusations of theft and rape. If, in a few cases, there can be no doubt over the veracity and horror of these claims – as with the case of the rape and murder of a forty-year old woman near the military camp of Amoul as she was collecting firewood – they concern low-status women probably judged to be of little account by Chadians and Libyans alike, and it is indeed not clear which army the perpetrators belonged to.[85] Otherwise, according to local memories, many of these incidents resulted in lasting marriages, mostly with girls migrating to Libya (which of course does not make these incidents less violent, but indicates that they were carried out within rather than beyond the bounds of shared sociality).[86] In the end, the problem does not seem to be one of 'foreign' occupation, but rather of the presence of any kind of military in the area:

> The people of Faya like those of any other country need to live in peace and dignity and honour. The people ask the Chadian and Libyan officers to master their soldiers' bad behaviour so that they do not commit acts of barbarism and banditry. Many of such cases have been reported to the Popular Congress. They are: the theft of sheep, or of goats every day, the deliberate killing of donkeys, the devastation of gardens, rape of women, followed by murder. All of these factors are incompatible with the way of life of these people and sow the seeds of withdrawal and hatred in the heart of the Chadian people towards our armed forces.[87]

As a side effect of the shifting nature of categories, suspicion of 'traitors' was always alive, although few accusations seem to have led to violent persecution.[88]

Libyan involvement also created or reinforced local and regional distinctions and categories that dovetailed with Chadian political oppositions. This meant that what was on one level an international conflict was read on another as yet another chapter in local hostilities; while conversely local quarrels were inflated with international meaning and, more dangerously, funds and supplies. The most salient of these distinctions, and the one that is still instrumental in current conflicts in southern Libya, is that between 'Tubu' and 'Arabs'. Roughly 10 per cent of Chad's contemporary population self-identify as Arabs; this is primarily a linguistic distinction, and one that is inherently flexible. During its involvement in the Chadian civil war, the Qadhafi government was often accused in Chad of furthering pan-Arab dreams, and of giving local Arabic-speaking groups and 'politico-military tendencies' preferential treatment and supplies – if only to better control their own Tubu minority in the Libyan south.[89] This at times created an 'Arab solidarity', both within Chad

84 APF, 'Le responsable de la sous-commission sécurité au camarade président de la Commission de gestion de la ville de Faya', 13 Sept. 1983.
85 APF, Congrès populaire de base de Faya, 'Bulletin politique et économique', May 1984.
86 APF, 'Interrogatoires', n. d. (Oct. 1983).
87 APF, Congrès populaire de base de Faya, 'Bulletin politique et économique', May 1984.
88 See, for example, APF GUNT, 'Compte-rendu de la semaine du 6 au 11 septembre 1983'; 'Liste nominatives des prévenus détenus à la maison d'arrêt de Faya', 27 Oct. 1983; and 'État nominatif des personnes appréhendées pour des diverses infractions et libérées par la suite', Nov. 1983.
89 See especially Bodoumi, *Victoire*, 170, 182, 190, and *passim*.

and across the Libya border, that had no historic precedent; and it fed into oppositions between particular Tubu-speaking and Arabic-speaking groups. The longstanding conflict between Dazagada from Faya with Arabic-speakers over pasture near Oum Chalouba was thus reinvented in struggles over the control of Faya, between branches of the Frolinat that all claimed support from Libya. These struggles culminated, in 1978, with the 'Arab' conquest of Faya, which lasted only a few hours but led to a high death toll, and in the (alleged) massacre of Tubu-speaking fighters by their Arabic-speaking colleagues and locally recruited auxiliaries of the Libyan army in Kalaït near Oum Chalouba in 1980.[90]

Lest one should think that these are simple manifestations of 'natural ethnic divisions' or results of a clever 'divide and rule' strategy deployed by the Libyans in Chad with no connections to their own country, these categories could easily subdivide and had ramifications in Libya itself. Chadian refugees from Libya thus recount how, in the Libyan airbase of Ma'tan al-Sārah, conflicts broke out between 'black' and 'brown' Arabs, some of whom were from Chad, but who also included Libyans on either side.[91] Lower-level categorisations also came to the fore in the struggles over Faya, where local divisions into 'cantons' (the term and administrative structure here is French) overlapped with (accusations of) partisanship, and were read, in local police records at least, as indicative of more less close proximity with the Libyan army or with the resolutely anti-Libyan FAN.[92] Conversely, war contributions – demanded of civilians in the Chadian side even after the war had ended, and names of whose contributors (and non-contributors) were read out on national and local radio – mostly seem to have been used to reinforce local conflicts over resources.[93]

Economically, northern Chad was made wholly dependent on trade with Libya during the period of Libyan aid and then military occupation. By 1980, the Libyan dinar was used in Faya alongside the CFA franc; it gradually came to replace the former, despite official attempts to either fix its value or to ban it altogether.[94] After the war had ended, it took years and a considerable inflow of non-Libyan foreign aid to reverse this situation.[95] This forced exclusivity of economic ties with Libya led to much hardship on the ground: while economic ties between northern Chad and southern Libya have always been strong, they were not in themselves sufficient, as the Borkou produces – alongside camels for export to Libya – dates for exchange against cereals, which are grown in central Chad rather than further North. In other terms, its economic survival depends on regional connectivity stretching both north and south. In Faya, the 1980s were thus years of famine, and people attempted to leave the area as fast as they could – heading either north or south. The archives are replete with accounts of arrests of unsuccessful migrants, accounts that only leave us to guess at the number of those who made it. After the war, this tendency

90 *Ibid.* 202–3, 307–8. Bodoumi, himself Tubu and highly partisan, but clearly representative of current local readings of the events, speaks of a 'Tubu hunt'.
91 APF, 'Procès-verbal d'audition, C. I. W.', 30 Dec. 1987; 'Procès-verbal d'audition, A. M. H.', 30 Dec. 1987.
92 APF, 'Commission de gestion de la ville de Faya, Sous-commission de sécurité publique', 14 Sept. 1983.
93 APF, 'Procès-verbal de la réunion du Comité Régional à propos de l'Effort de Guerre', 1 Aug. 1989.
94 APF, Frolinat/CCFAN, 'Notes de service', 5 Oct. 1980, 29 Oct. 1982, and 29 Jan. 1983.
95 APF, 'Lettre du Préfet du B. E. T. au Ministre des Finances', 19 June 1987.

continued, despite attempts by the Chadian government to stop it, and periodic expulsions of Chadians from Libya. In June 1995 alone, 3,800 people officially left the Borkou towards Libya, and it is difficult to know how many went without telling anybody.[96] Overall, the war years seem to have strengthened regional ties rather than disrupted them, if only by supplying the necessary infrastructure, incentive and equipment for intensive small-scale transborder trade and migration.[97]

LASTING ENTANGLEMENTS

This continued connectivity led to considerable entanglement on the ground, in particular with regards to property rights. As outlined above, most of the town of Faya and its surrounding gardens was constructed and planted by Libyan settlers in the 1930s. These Libyans had brought with them a legal corpus – the *sharī'a* – that provided laws of ownership relying on written proof, and that had been, albeit grudgingly, recognised by the French colonial administration, a *de facto* recognition that was carried over into independent Chad. Under the various revolutionary regimes that governed Faya from the late 1970s onwards, however, all Libyan estates were expropriated (in the absence of their original owners) for many among them several times over.[98] Some of these expropriations indicate that even in the late 1980s, the category of 'Libyan' was not necessarily straightforward. Hence the following case (that incidentally concerned the stepson of Ahmād Tuwār's, Faya's first *député* who was mentioned above):

> I am honoured to approach you very respectfully [with] my present declaration, to indicate that the man named Foto Morin is a *métis* [that is, son of a French father and a Tubu mother]. His mother is Chadian but she is married to a Libyan called Ahmād Tuwār. Foto Morin left Chad after Felix Maloum's attempt [to govern the country from 1975 to 1979] to go to Libya and stay with his mother, and he stayed in Libya for good like a Libyan. Now, I declare his goods that are in Faya, but his relatives who are here in Faya consider that his wealth belongs to them, and keep it until further notice.[99]

To be 'Libyan' here seems to be the result of political allegiance and affinity rather than nationality or descent. Moreover, this example clearly indicates that struggles over 'Libyan' goods hid conflicts between locals with different and mutually exclusive claims

96 APF, 'Bulletin de renseignement mensuel', June 1995; see also 'Procès-Verbal de réunion sur l'examen de la situation de sécurité dans la préfecture du B. E. T.', 26 June 1995. Not all of these were from the Borkou, as otherwise, the region would have been emptied of its inhabitants within a few months.

97 In the late 1980s, virtually all small vehicles used for trade with Libya were former army vehicles that had been 'privatised' by Frolinat fighters: APF, 'Rapport succinct sur l'état d'esprit des Toubou qui sont à Faya', 9 Jan. 1988.

98 In 1980, when Hissène Habré took Faya; then again in 1982 and 1983, when the GUNT (then led by Goukouni Oueddeï) attempted to extract rent-payments from current occupants; and again in 1987, after the Libyan army was defeated: APF, Frolinat, 'Notes de service', 22 May 1980 and 29 Oct. 1982; 'Décision du préfet par interim', 3 May 1983; and 'Décision portant formation d'un comité de recensement, construction et remise à l'État des biens abandonnés par les Libyens (maisons, boutiques, jardins et palmiers)', 1987.

99 APF, 'Déclaration par le responsable des boutiques – maisons – jardins de Faya-Largeau', 17 Apr. 1987.

to ownership. This also explains why in many cases expropriations remained ineffective, as occupants simply refused to leave.[100]

Effective or not, certain expropriations were annulled by the prefect or other high-ranking officials in the 1990s, although it is difficult to know on what grounds. While the first restitutions underline that the former owners of the land were in fact Chadian, and hence had been illegally expropriated, later restitutions were made irrespective of the claimant's nationality. One of them mentions a presidential decree, another a correspondence with the Chadian Minister of the Interior, in a general context in which both Libya and Chad were striving to normalise their diplomatic relations.[101] But these interventions were case-specific, and not all Libyan houses were returned; there can be no doubt that the ability to put pressure both on local and national office-holders was crucial – an ability that is in itself indicative of ongoing transborder connections. A few of the beneficiaries of these restitutions sold their land immediately, and one at time wonders whether the buyers (often high-ranking state officials or local dignitaries) might not have had a hand in the restitution. But most did not sell, leaving their estate with their Chadian families and clients. Thus the following note, sent by the descendent of b. Awaysha, whose father had come to Faya with the Sanūsiyya, to his local representative in Faya in the 1990s:

> I am writing to you to give you my news. I greet you and I greet all the family. Dear Mūsā I ask you to give the little house to Mme I. O. Enclosed the photocopy of the power of attorney and of my passport. And if somebody is renting the house, he will just have to move out quickly. I ask you to send me the money for the rent of the houses for the last years and also the money for the dates and the mangoes sold over the last years. You take ten percent and you send me the rest. By 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Hamīd b. Awaysha.[102]

Recently, these questions have taken on a new urgency, as Faya is scheduled for refurbishment. Houses and gardens that will have to be knocked down qualify for (some degree) of compensation. This means that for once, ownership will have to be determined without doubt, at least temporarily. The civil servant, himself from the south of Chad, who was sent to Faya to do this quickly realised that his task was not so much impossible – 'I found lots of title deeds, at the town hall, but the only valid ones belong to Libyans' – as dangerous. He thus left Faya as quickly as he could, worried about his personal safety.[103]

CONCLUSION

'Libyan' and 'Chadian' are certainly categories that matter in the contemporary border region. The Chadian national army fought a bloody war against its Libyan counterpart in 1987, and won, and memories of this struggle – now mostly referred as being 'about'

100 APF, Sous-préfet du Borkou, 'Note de Service', 10 June 1988.
101 APF, 'Sous-Préfet au Commandant de la Région militaire no 1', 16 Mar. 1993; and 'Attestation de restitution des biens immobiliers', 27 July 1994.
102 Undated letter to Moussa Khayrallah, written in the 1990s, in the addressee's possession.
103 Interview in Faya, Sept. 2012.

the Aouzou strip – are still painfully alive on both sides of the border. However, the border region, like other Saharan regions, is also an area that always has been and still is closely connected, and to focus uniquely on categories of national distinction that emerged with imperialism and war is to ignore important tools of historical analysis.[104] This article has retraced various periods of heightened connectivity between northern Chad and southern Libya, and the regional entanglement they have led to. Entanglement of this kind, and the at times uncomfortable degree of intimacy it involves, in no ways implies equality, or an absence of tension or conflict. On the contrary, it thrives on hierarchy, mutual distrust and disdain, the reification of rigid categories of belonging, and, in both a moral and a practical sense, on war. As elsewhere in the Sahara, the dominant vocabulary of distinction employed in the area today is thus not one of ethnic opposition, but of moral shortcomings, which are attributed with great liberality to anybody who might have turned themselves into an 'outsider'. 'Libyans' are thus accused by B. E. T. residents not only of strange sexual mores, arrogance and gluttony, but also of the regular theft of children; while Chadians resident (and often also born) in Libya who 'returned' to northern Chad with the 2011 war were treated as *bunduq jāb-ha* – those brought by the guns – in other words, as cowards. There can be no doubt that Libyan stereotypes about Tubu are hardly more flattering. Connectedness in this sense might attenuate hostility, but it might also make conflicts worse, as any new offence is read in the light of past grievances, and as all feel equally entitled to the resources at stake (such as, in this particular case, transborder trade). Much as the history of Libyan involvement in what is now Chad thus cannot be understood simply as 'foreign meddling', contemporary conflicts in Libya's south are partly 'domestic', with all the potentially gruesome implications of this term.

104 This point was made, thirty years ago, by Cordell, 'Awlad Sulayman', 319–21, but to little avail.